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## Prospects and Problems of Tourism in Sivasagar District, Assam

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**Abstract:** *Tourism is the general term to refer a temporary, short term movement of people to destination outside the places where they normally live and work their activities during the stay at each destination. It is the fast-growing service industry and economically very important in the present-day situation as it has vast scope for the generation of income and employment. The district of Sivasagar in Assam has immense potentiality for the development of tourism. It is the treasure house of the unique natural beauty with flora and fauna, tea gardens, historical monuments, pilgrim centers, and its colorful cultural festivals etc. All these potentialities can make the district as one of the best destinations of the tourists. In this write up an attempt has been made to highlight the main prospects and problems of tourism in Sivasagar.*

**Keywords:** Tourism, tourist, Sivasagar, Nature, etc.

### 1.Introductions:

Tourism is a phenomenon of modern civilization. The term 'Tourism' literally means travel and its associated aspects. If we consider the term in the present-day context, it includes the totality of relationships and phenomena arising from the travel and temporary stay of strangers (Bhatia, 1991). Tourism is defined by the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as the circulation of people who travel to or stay in places outside their home country (their normal place of residence and/or work) for short periods, usually no longer than a year, and for different purposes such as leisure, business, or any purposes other than formal employment (Ghalia, 2016). Tourism is nowadays considered as the fast-growing service industry which has vast scope for the generation of income and employment. It is regarded as a leading sector in the 21st century due to its significant share in the global economy which has a major contribution towards the economic development and social welfare.

### 2.Study area:

Sivasagar, the historic town is one of the 33 districts of Assam state in Northeast India. The district lies between 26.45°N and 27.15°N latitudes and 94.25°E and 95.25°E longitudes. Sivasagar is located on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra River covering an area of 2668 square kilometers. The district is bounded by the Brahmaputra River on the north, the Nagaland on the south, the Charaideo on the east, and the Jhanji River on the west. It has immense potentiality for the development of tourism. Its natural beauty, religious historical places, culture, and tradition can easily attract the tourist to the district. Recently the government of Assam has taken some notable initiatives to the development of tourism by undertaking certain plans to preserve the important monuments and other important tourist spots in the district.



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### **3. Historical perspective:**

The district of Sivasagar is historically very significant. Assam was ruled by the mighty Ahom rulers nearly about for long six hundred years. The Ahoms arrived in the Brahmaputra valley in 1228 under the leadership of Saulung Sukapha. After visiting many places in the valley, finally he settled in Charaideo and established the first Ahom capital in this hilly area where he also felt safe from the flood. The Ahom rulers created capital cities made several buildings and temples, constructed roads, and dug many tanks during their rules. Among the five permanent Ahom capitals, Rangpur is the most important for various constructional activities. It was founded by the great Ahom ruler Rudra Singha on the bank of river Dikhow. The glorious remains of powerful Ahom rules are scattered everywhere in the district. The name of the District appears to have originated from the name of the huge tank 'Sivasagar', which was dug during the reign of Siva Singha in 1734. (Borah and Ahmed, 2015) Ahoms constructed numerous structures of both religious and secular architecture. Some of the remarkable heritage sites of Ahom rules are various temples, Rangghar, Talatal Ghar, Kareng Ghar, group of Maidams at Charaideo, stone bridge, ramparts, etc. In this way, the entire Ahom period covered the activities of almost 38 Ahom kings until the beginning of the British colonial rule in Assam.

### **4. Objectives**

The objective of the research paper is to review the various tourism destinations in Sivasagar and to access the potentialities of tourism in the district.

### **5. Methodology :**

The source of this research have been drawn from a wide range of primary and secondary materials collected from varied sources of published sources like books, journal, magazine etc. along with the use of the internet on occasions and also personal observation. The present study is carried out on descriptive mode of analysis.

### **6. Discussion:**

#### **6.1. Prospects of Tourism in Sivasagar:**

The state of Assam is best known for her unique natural beauty with flora and fauna, historical monuments, pilgrim centre, tea gardens, and its colorful cultural festivals, etc. which helps the tourist to find the state as the tourist destination. Similarly, tourism in the district has immense potentiality and is primarily based on wildlife, natural beauty, architectural monuments, etc. From the above discussion we can categorize the prospects of tourism in Assam as follows: (a) Wildlife, (b) Nature Tourism, (c) Eco-Tourism, (d) Cultural Tourism (e) Pilgrim Tourism (f) Others.

##### **6.1.1. Nature tourism:**

Nature-based tourism is a broad term that covers all tourism experiences centered on wild or natural environments. The district as well as the North-Eastern region of India falls in the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot (Chutia, 2015). Nature-based tourism in Sivasagar includes the Pani Dihing Bird Sanctuary, famous for its various bird species and the scenic beauty of the sanctuary. In Sivasagar alone

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there are more than 170 tanks (Chauley, 2016) which also offer nature-centric tourism. Besides these, Borhill in Bihubar is a very beautiful picnic spot in the district.

### **6.1.2. Pilgrim Tourism:**

Sivasagar is a place included with various temples. Many temples are scattered in the different parts of the district. The most important place to be visited as a part of the religious tourism in the district is the Siva Dol. It is situated at the heart of the town on the bank of the great Sivasagar tank. Towering a height of forty meters, the temple is one of the tallest Siva temples in the country and records as the tallest Ahom architecture in Assam (Barpujari, 1992). This temple is surrounded by other two beautiful temples dedicated to Lord Vishnu and goddess Durga. The temple campus is well planned to make comfortable for the visitors.

The temple is one of the major tourist spots of the district and. The architectural designs of these three temples are the key attraction for the tourists. During Mahasivaratri lakhs of people gather in the Temple premises every year. Many people across the globe come to this holy place to worship Siva to fulfill their expectations. A great Mela (fair) is also held at the temple surroundings even now simultaneously the Shivaratri celebration.

Temples were mainly constructed in the Sivasagar, Jaysagar, and Gaurisagar areas. The Jaysagar group of temples is also a tourist attraction of the Sivasagar district. Among the three temples of Jaysagar, the Joy dol is the most beautiful. These temples were constructed during the tenure of the great Ahom king Rudra Singha. Siva Singha also constructed three temples viz. Devidol, Sivadol, and Vishnu dol on the north bank of this tank. Apart from these temples, many other temples are scattered in the different parts of the district.

Charaideo was the first capital of the Ahom kingdom. This place is famous for the numerous Maidams of the kings and the other members of the royal families. Charaideo, therefore, received importance from the tourist for both historical and religious perspectives. Besides these religious places, Azan Peer Dargah Sharif is also important in the tourist map of the district. The Dargah Sharif of the 17th century Muslim Saint Azan Peer was built at Saraguri, near the bank of the river Dikhow. Later on, this sacred place became an important religious spot for the tourist. But most of the tourist places do not provide adequate facilities to the tourists and pilgrims, for which these places of religious importance fail to attract a large number of tourists to the district.

### **6.1.3. Cultural tourism:**

Cultural tourism is a type of tourism in which tourists travel to a destination to experience cultural attractions, including historic sites and artistic and cultural events like fairs, festivals, food, arts, etc. Assam is a land of various ethnic tribes and groups each have their own cultural heritage. Similarly, the district of the Sivasagar is also a confluence of various ethnic tribes and groups each having unique traditions in its socio-cultural life including customs, language, culture, religious beliefs, dress, way of life, food habits, etc. This unique cultural heritage shows that there is ample scope for cultural tourism in the district which can easily attract the tourist to the historic place. One of the important cultural festivals

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of Sivasagar is Mahasivaratri. It is celebrated with a great fair at the Siva temple every year. Lakhs of people across the country gather in the temple every year to celebrate during the great festival. On the other hand, the district is also well known for buffalo's fight. The fight is conducted during Magh Bihu in January at some places of the district i.e. playground of Rangghar, Dikhowmukh, etc.

#### **6.1.4. Wildlife Tourism:**

The Pani Dihing Bird Sanctuary is one of the famous bird sanctuaries in Assam. This is located 19 km northeast of the Sivasagar town in Sivasagar district and was created in the year 1996 with an area of about 33.93 square kilometers (13.1 sq. mi). Containing a huge species of birds the sanctuary is a unique and important bird area for the migratory and resident birds. This protected area is also well known for many endangered bird species. During winter season thousands of aquatic birds migrated from the cold land of Siberia, Tibet, and Europe to this sanctuary. The most common species of birds seen here are a goose, mallard, gadwall, shoveller, pochard, stork, kingfishers, garganey, wigeon, vultures, a variety of ducks, and many more. Several varieties of fish along with many species of amphibians and reptiles also found here.

#### **6.1.5. Eco tourism:**

Eco tourism is comparatively a new concept in the tourism industry. It is developed around the idea of traveling to places of natural beauty, moving around, and staying with the places of nature for a couple of days. The international ecotourism society (TIES) has defined Ecotourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people and involves interpretation and education" where Education is meant to be inclusive of both staff and guests. However, it has the twin objectives of conserving the environment and improving the welfare of the local people. Many countries have already promoted eco tourism successfully. Similarly, the small district of Sivasagar has immense scope for eco-tourism. Its green tea gardens, natural beauty, enchanting rivers are the basis for which Eco-friendly tourism can be developed in Sivasagar. But proper strategies i.e. development of good transport and communication system, provisions for hygienic food, progress in nautical tourism should be overlooked for the development of eco tourism in the district.

#### **6.1.6. Others**

Apart from the above-mentioned tourism prospect, the district has some other tourism potential too. Tea tourism is a recent concept; its potentiality remains unexplored. The importance of the Tea industry can be realized from the fact that Assam alone produces more than 50% of the country's total tea production (Chutia, 634). Tea gardens are the storehouse of the exotic beauty of nature with residential facilities. Some of these have polo fields and golf courses. Thus coordination with the management of the tea gardens can promote the tea tourism activities in the tea estate, which can attract tea-tourists to the district. Besides many archaeological remains are scattered in every part of the district which can easily receive the attention of the tourist across the globe. Ahoms were the great builder of both religious and secular architecture in the region. The most important tourist spots of the district are Rangghar, Talatal



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Ghar, Kareng Ghar, Bakhar Bengena Tree (Bakata), etc. Thousands of tourists came to visit this architectural heritage of the district every year.

### **6.2. Problems of Tourism in Sivasagar:**

- ❖ **Lack of Infrastructure:** Infrastructure deficit stands as a barrier in utilizing the potentialities of the tourism sector in the district. Well-equipped infrastructure may lead to the development of the sustainable tourism industry. To attract tourists, some primary infrastructural facilities like-development of a good approach road to the spots, clean and hygienic food and accommodation, etc. have to be developed. Inadequate infrastructure facilities in the state tourism sector strong discouraging factor, which works against a good inflow of the tourist.
- ❖ **Publicity:** Poor publicity is one of the major problems in the tourist industries of the district. Due to the absence of publicity of tourist spots of Sivasagar, people from different parts of our country as well as the world are not able to know about the tourist spots of Sivasagar.
- ❖ **Absence of tourist guides:** The absence of trained tourist guides in the major tourist destinations in the district is another problem. Due to this reason, when tourists arrive at various tourist spots, there is hardly anyone to satisfy the inquisitiveness of the tourist. Although, recently
- ❖ **Absence of a Tourism Policy:** The absence of proper tourism policy is also a notable problem of tourism development in the district. Government initiatives as well as public awareness to develop the tourist spots are very poor. So, adequate financial assistance and proper strategies for the development of tourist spots can remove these barriers.
- ❖ **Lack of coordination:** For the development of the tourism industry, it is necessary to have proper coordination among all agencies related to the tourism industry. But, lack of coordination among the agencies associated with the tourism industry creates several issues in handling the demand of the tourists in places of both religious and historic importance in many times.
- ❖ **Insurgency:** Insurgent Activities help to reduce the inflow of the tourist to sensitive areas. Foreign and domestic tourists consider it risky to visit the destination, because of the prevailing law and order situation. Tourist feels insecure at such destination and tries to live the destination early.

### **7. Conclusion**

From the above discussion, it is cleared that the district has immense potentiality for the development of tourism. But merely having a good number of attractive tourist spots is not enough if they cannot provide the adequate requirement to the tourist. The government should arrange proper strategies for the development of the important tourist spots of the district which can significantly contribute to the tourism industry of Assam. The proper implementation of State tourism policies can make Sivasagar a major national and international tourism destination.



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