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## Economic Contribution of Jain Pilgrimage Centers in Karnataka: A Case Study of Shravanabelagola

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### ABSTRACT

Contemporary Jainism is a small but influential religious minority with 4.2 million (0.4 percent) followers in India and 42,25053 population in Karnataka with highest literacy rate of 94.1 percent in India and 84.3 percent in Karnataka which is above the national average. Jains have significantly influenced and contributed to ethical, social, political, historical, literature and economic spheres both in India and Karnataka from long ago. Jainism had been a very old religion of Karnataka and have profound influence on the religion. There are number of famous Jain pilgrimage centers in Karnataka. Some of them are Shravanabelagola, Moodabidri, Karkala, Badami, Humcha, Sonda, Narasimharajapura, Gommatagiri and the like. Shravanabelagola known all over the world for the famous Gommateshwara monolithic statue, is one of the most sacred Jain pilgrimage centre and it attracts large number tourists, devotees from all over India and abroad and positive impact on Karnataka Economy. Hence, the present paper focus on economic contribution of Jain pilgrimage centre in Karnataka and need for development of such pilgrimage destinations.

Key words: Religion, Jain Pilgrimages, Religious tourism, Economic contributions

### Introduction

There are natural and manmade tourism resources. Natural tourism resources are water falls, wildlife and bird sanctuaries varied flora and fauna. Manmade tourism resources are monuments, religious places, temples, historical places and the like. Karnataka endowed with such potential natural and manmade tourist destinations and can attain rapid tourism growth in the era of globalization which had ushered new opportunities for economic development. Thus tourism play a proven role in economic booming both in India and Karnataka. The reason being the presence of wide range of stimulating inclusive economic growth, employment generation and social integration.

### Economic benefits of Tourism

From the review of literature it was found that the Tourism is a multifaceted economic asset as it is an effective tool of economic growth as far as the natural and manmade tourist destinations are concerned.

In 1973 an eminent Tanzanian academic Issachar Diwan in the preface to his book '**Tourism and Social Development**' that the justification for tourism in terms of it being economically



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good..... Completely fails to appreciate the integrated nature of the system of underdevelopment.

In 1970 a group of students at the University of Dar Es Salaam contributed a long article about the Economics of Tourism to a local newspaper. There was a three months demand among academics, town people and civil servants about the economic benefits of tourism and provides a good example of the political economic perspective.1.

➤ **A rise in the Gross National Product**

Many economic analysis claims that a multiplier effect follows investment in Tourism. A tourist purchases handicrafts in a local shop and part of the proceeds of the sale becomes income to a shop owner. The latter buys food with it at another store, some of which may leak out of the country if imports are involved, but the residue is income to the food store owner. This is repeated and soon. The operation of this economic multiplier is said to raise the entire GNP and will vary from country to country and on a regional basis.

➤ **Earners for a Revenue to the Government**

This refers to the small share of tourism economic benefits gained by a government from taxes and duties on things tourists use and buy. Thus heavy duties in terms of taxes constitute an extra source of national income from the tourist industry.

➤ **A generator of employment**

A new job would be created by investment in tourism and many tourist jobs are created in tourist destinations both rural and urban areas. It is more beneficial to rural people since most of the tourist destinations are located in rural areas. The modern sector employment in rural areas is scarcest and could thus be said to be worth more than equivalent in the city.

➤ **Improvement in Social and Economic Infrastructure**

Social infrastructure makes public health, sanitation and housing and economic infrastructure like transportation and communication, drinking water, power and soon are positively stimulated by Tourism.

➤ **Foreign Exchange earnings**

Due to foreign tourists visiting our tourist destination brings more foreign exchange earnings. An American economist Frank Mitchell argued that tourism is a good thing if the economic indicators are positive.

Overall in assessing the economic implications of tourism we need to look at it from an overall view of our economic philosophy and not from the narrow and short-term view of whether it makes profit or loss at a given period of time. Economists also suggested that tourism makes its most valuable economic impact in the early phases of development in a third world country or developing country like India.



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## **Karnataka and Tourism**

Karnataka is glittering among India states due to its rich in scenic beauty and contribution to the development of Indian civilization is located at the southern part of India. Karnataka's thousands of years of history, its length, diversity and variety of geographical features made it larger and varied tourism basket and will also be a tourism hot spot. It presents heritage, cultural and natural tourism along with medical business and sport tourism. Both natural and manmade effort have combined to make Karnataka a tourist paradise. It has been ranked as 4<sup>th</sup> most popular destination for tourism among states of India. It has the second highest number of protected monuments in India. It is home to 507 3600 centrally protected monuments in India.

## **Karnataka and Jain Pilgrimage Centers**

Karnataka has the some of the most scared pilgrimage centres and it would be no exaggeration to the term it as a hot bed for the religion of Jainism since it has a long association with Jainism, a religion which enjoyed patronage of major historic kingdoms in the state such as Shatavahanas, Gangas, Kadambas, Badami and Kalyani Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas and Hoysala dynasty. In coastal districts of Karnataka Jainism was flourished by rulers like Alupas of Tuluva, Ballalas of Puttige, Bangas of Bagewadi, Tolahas of Surali, Choutas of Mudabidri, Ajilas of Venuru, Samantas of Mulike, Bhairavaras of Karkala and Kalasa and made Jainism as the State Religion. Apart from this many feudatory rulers like Rattas of Soundatti, Senavaras of Kadur, Salvas of Sangitapura (present Haduvalli), Chengavas of Hunasur, Kongavas of Hassan and Shantaras of Tirthahalli patronized Jainism and constructed innumerable temples. This historical association of Jainism in Karnataka dates back to ancient period to early medieval period and that period was a strong hold of Jainism in Karnataka. Today the state is home to a number of Jain pilgrimage centers like shravanabelagola, Moodubidri, Karkala, Halebeedu, Belgaum, Bijapur, Lakkundi, Dharmasthala, Varanga, Venur, Humcha, Narasimharajapura and kanakagiri are venerated by all and are directly and indirectly contributing to the Karnataka economy.

## **Case Study**

I selected Shravanabelagola as sample because inflow of both domestic and foreign tourists are more according to the Department of Tourism source. After Mysore the second preferred place is Shravanabelagola with 14,38,635 domestic and 41,773 foreign tourist visited. Tourist visited not only to see Lord Bahubali but also to visit Department of Jainology and Prakruti Research Institute for research purpose from across India. For the study primary data has been collected from local residents, vendors and Shri. B.N. VaraprasadReddy, KAS, Government of Karnataka, A special officer of Mahamastakabhisheka-2018.



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## Shravanabelagola: A Pilgrimage Tourist Destination

Shravanabelagola is in Hassan district, 157 km away from Bangalore and 85 km away from Mysore is an important jaina pilgrimage centre. There is a pond called by name Kalyani and two stony hills called Chandragiri and Indragiri. Chandragiri has the Chandragupta basadi of Gangas and other 28 basadis. Indragiri has the Lord Gommateshwara 57feet monolithic statue installed by a Ganga general and scholar Chavundaraya in 822 AD. It is considered to be the world's largest monolithic stone statues and stands one among the seven wonders of India. In the opinion of Ferguson "Nothing grander or more imposing exists anywhere out of Egypt and even there no known as status surpasses its height".

Mahamasthakabhisheka, the head anointing ceremony of the Lord Gommateshwara is great grand event held once in 12 years is one of the main attraction. The statue of Bahubali is worshipped and bathed in holy water, milk and pastes of astagandha, turmeric, saffron, chandana, flowers and other natural herbs that have their own significant importance. Every 12 years lakhs of devotees and tourists congregates here from all over the world to perform the Mahamasthakabhisheka. The last anointing took place in February 2018 from 17<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> under the leadership of CharukeerthiBhattarakaSwamiji of Shravanabelagola. It is said to be the 88<sup>th</sup> in the series as it commenced in the year 981 AD by Chavundaraya,

## Religious Tourism and Economy

In India Religion and Economy are the two faces of the same coin. Religion is the engine of economic growth. From ancient period people are more attached to the celebration of festivals and worshipping god. In religious tourist destinations people spent a part of their income to purchase worshipping items which are the sources of income of local people. India also famous for mega religious events like Mahamastakabhisheka of Lord Bahubali at Shravanabelagola and Dharmasthala, Rathayatra at PuriJagannatha, Kumbhamela at Prayagraj, Shrinivasakalyana at Tirupati and the like. To meet the needs of the devotees government created both social and economic infrastructure.

## Economic Aspects of Mahamastakabhisheka

It is known fact that during age old period Mahamastakabhisheka was conducted by kingdom of that region from time to time for every 12 years without break. Accordingly even today it is conducted by the Government of Karnataka in collaboration with Jain Mutt, Shravanabelagola. Shri.B.N.VaraprasadReddy, a special officer, is of the opinion that the state government took the responsibility of providing civic amenities in and around Shravanabelagola and spent crores of rupees for various social and economic infrastructure work like drinking water supply, health and sanitation, cleanliness, medical facilities, underground drainage system, temporary township for accommodation with all basic facilities for devotees and mendicants and sheds for free food arrangements and the like. During this mega event nearly 38 lakhs of devotees and tourists visited Shravanabelagola.



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## Analysis and Findings

As a Religious tourist place Shravanabelagola contributed to the expansion of various economic activities of that place in general and during Mahamastakabhisheka event in particular. These development activities of the government adds income to the local people and also brought revenue to the government.

The major findings related to Shravanabelagola are

### I. Income and Employment concerned

- Masthakabhishekha is considered crucial for developing the state tourism potential.
- More than 1000 surrounding people are able to get employment opportunities to maintain various guest houses, temples, and Jainmutt during regular time and during Mahamastakabhisheka more than 5000 people from both surrounding and across Karnataka got temporary employment.
- Throughout the year the inflow of pilgrim and tourist to shravanabelagola is good. Even for research purpose 8 to 10 foreigners visiting Shravanabelagola per month.
- The local market at Shravanabelagola is quite colourful with its collection of hotels, restaurant, ATM centres, fruits and vegetable vendors, stationery shops, gift shops and soon. The market is well established and provides everything that is essential and are the regular source of income of local vendors.
- Government and mutt can get income from Temporary Township which was constructed to accommodate thirty thousand devotees and
- Apart from temporary accommodation facilities provided by government jointly with jainmutt, the local people convert their residences into temporary rental accommodation for the use of tourist and thereby making a regular income.
- Mutt also can get income from selling kalashas and other worshipping items to devotees
- Ultimately a string of business units, small and big, spring up to cater the needs of the tourist indirectly contributing to the local economy.
- Government developed watersports in Janivaralake near shravanabelagola for recreation and it is also a source of regular income of local people.
- Hassan district is a land of coconut plantation and majority of coconut growers are concentrating in shravanabelagola surrounding areas. Hence, as a part of Mahamastakabhisheka Karnataka government initiated **Kalpamrutha** to promote healthy drink tender coconut water in different flavours and from this project local farmers get more revenue . Now it is successfully run by **Bahubali RaitaSangha**.



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## **II. Economic infrastructure is concerned**

- Road works undertaken at the cost of Rs.10 Crores.
- During Masthakabhisheka there are special KSRTC buses ply to connect shravanabelagola with other parts of Karnataka.
- For accommodation yatri nivas, KSTDC hotels, guest houses are constructed.
- Under integrated tourism and environmental development programme, the department of tourism, Government of Karnataka has prepared project file for the economic hotel at Sharavanabelagola, with the objective of promoting tourism.
- New irrigation project of 29 crores for Channarayapatna taluk to provide water to Sharavanabelagola and its surrounding areas.
- New Hassan Shravanabelagola railway line of 43kms long work is completed and Hassan- Bangalore railway line had been undertaken since 1996 at the cost of 4.13 crores but due to many unavoidable reasons the work has been delayed. This railway line would be instrumental in connecting Shravanabelagola with other parts of India,
- Even though Hassan district is a favorite destination for tourist especially for foreign visitors tourism industry has not grown as expected due to lack of availability of tourist accommodation. The district has heritage sights like Belur, Haleebedu and Jain pilgrimage centre Shravanabelagola which attracts lacks of tourist from across the world every year. According to department of tourism source nearly 25 lakhs tourist visit the district every year but the tourism industry has not grown to the extent it was expected to considering the potential in the district.
- Even though positive impact on the economy, the local have not yet been benefited greatly from the inflow of tourists. All these because the visitors do not stay in the place, they prefer to move on either to Bangalore or Mysore by evening. Tourism department assistant director Bhaskar Said Belur, Halebid and Shravanabelagola are of top jain pilgrimage centre in the world attracts the highest number of visitors in the district. These 3 place can be covered in one day and that itself is the dis-advantage for the growth of tourism sector in the district.
- The tourists are unhappy with the amenities of Shravanabelagola and its surrounding areas, There are no good hotels close to the temple in the town. Over all lack of better facilities for tourist to stay.





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- Besides there are many places worth visiting around Shravanabelagola is Kambadahalli 19Kms from it which has panchakuta basadi and also as famous as Shravanabelagola in earlier period. Now it is run by Jain Mutt of Kambadahalli with lack of resources and it is also not coming under the picture of department of tourism. These places have no proper approach roads, route direction, facilities to visit places etc.
  - But compare to other tourist destinations of Hassan district Shravanabelagola has better facility for tourists.

## Conclusion

Inspite of the limited facility and lesser economic affluence the Karnataka Tourism industry is contributing significantly to the state economy. Karnataka Government framed tourism policy of 2009-2014 under the theme of **One State Many World**. This policy focused on how Karnataka integrates its modern Silicon city with being recognized globally as a **Cradle of Stone Architecture**. The tourism policy of 2015-2020 aims to position Karnataka as a visible global brand in Tourism for visitors as well as investors by encouraging development of relevant infrastructure through partnerships between private sector, Government and the Community. This tourism policy is economic oriented with the objective of making tourism the largest economic activity and provide employment opportunities, generate revenue and income. In this content connects the tourist destinations with better infrastructure is the need of the hour.

## Suggestions

1. Promoting infrastructure development with private public participation.
2. State and local Government should create better facilities for tourists.
3. Encourage foreign tourist by developing into world class tourism destination.
4. Importance of home stay concept for foreign visitors without affecting the environment. If tourist stays for a day different sections of the society can get benefit. Owners of local hotels or homestays will get customers and petty shops and shop keepers will do business. As a result the local economy will improve and with that the standard of living will improve.
5. Special authorities should be developed for over all development of the town with active participation of local communities and civil bodies.
6. Make responsible tourism.



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