

Tourism Possibilities and Marketing in Gaya District



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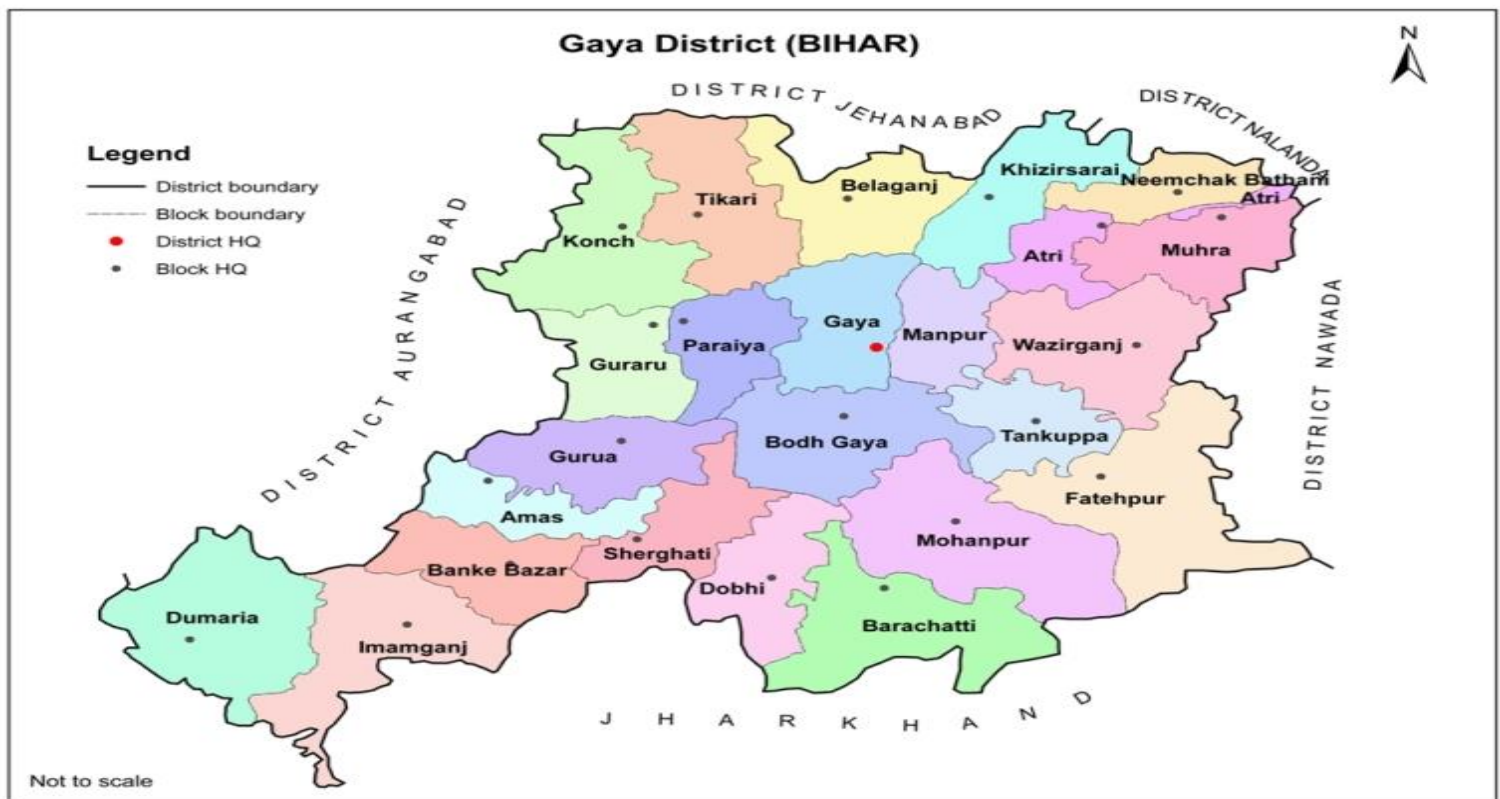
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1. INTRODUCTION



Gaya has a glorious past that commands a unique position in the human history of the world. Gaya, specially Bodh Gaya has been an important centre of civilization since ancient times. Gaya has derived its name from Gayasur, who has taken blessings from Lord Vishnu, a mythological demon. It has played an important role in the history of India and consequently influenced the greater parts of the world by its culture and heritages. The excavation sites in Gaya have found neolithic tools, potteries and other objects. These excavation sites have also brought up the evidences of chalcolithic cultures. Bodh Gaya has been always been a subsequent cultural civilization because of which it has named as World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Governments have also focused on boosting tourism in Gaya which have helped taking its culture to world level.

• Geography

Gaya is not only city with ancient history but also have some beautiful hills and caves. Gaya is 100 km from the Patna the capital city of Bihar. Gaya lies in south-central part of Bihar state. The only river flows through it are Phalgu River, which is a tributary of River Ganga. Gaya is situated at the junction of Gangetic Plain and Chotanagpur Plateau. Gaya is surrounded by several hills including Manala-gauri, Ramshila, Shringashila, and Brahmayoni. Gaya is located at longitude of 84.40° E to 85.50° E and the latitude is 24.50° N to 25.1° N. It has a total area of around 4976 km square. Gaya district is 4th largest (2011 census) population of Bihar and is one of the fastest growing population regions in the state. The population density is around 880 per sq.km.

Sex ratio in Gaya district is 932 females for every 1000 males and a literacy rate of around 66.35%.

Climate and Vegetation - Gaya being surrounded by hills from 3 sides and one side by a river makes the region experience seasonal temperature. Its Summer begins in May and continues till July and temperature goes up to 44°C. It receives rainfall from month of July to October and has an annual rainfall of about 214 cm. During winter temperature ranges between 3.5°C to 25°C and last till February.

Gaya has tropical vegetation with forests on hills and agriculture near river. The main agriculture crops are paddy, wheat, potato and lentils. In year 1976 Gaya got his wildlife sanctuary named as Gautam Buddha Wildlife Sanctuary, which has an area of 260 sq.km.

• **History**

Gaya is a classic example and living example how some silent pages in history can become so important in today's time. Imagining gaya without its history is difficult as it derives all its important cultures and heritages from ancient to medieval period. Many dynasties have ruled Gaya since past. In Hindu dharma it is believed that this place is Dharmapraस्था, the land of Dharma. Gaya was known as Gayapuri during Mahabharata. It is also said that Lord Rama comes here with Sita and his brother on banks of river Phalgu to offer Pind-daan for his father Dasharatha.

Gaya major flourished during Maurya empire during 321 BC. Maurya kingdom was ruled from Patliputra. It was around 600 BC when Gautam Buddha arrived in Bodh Gaya and attained enlightenment under pipal tree, from where Bodh Gaya got its major culture and heritages. During Ashoka rule, Buddhism was on peak. He embraced Buddhism to different places. Mahabodhi Temple which most important temple situated in Bodh Gaya was also built by Ashoka during this period to remember Goutam Buddha enlightenment.

During Gupta empire the period Hindu revivalism began during 4th and 5th centuries. Samudra Gupta brought Gaya into limelight by making it capital of Gupta empire. In around 12th century Gaya was invaded by Muhammad Khilji and its destroyed some parts of Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya. After the battle of Buxar gaya comes in the hand of British rule in 1764. The repairs and restoration work of Bodh Gaya was also undertaken during this time by JD Beglar on orders of Sir Ashley Eden, the lieutenant governor of Bengal during that time. Gaya also played important role in Independence Movement. The 37th session of Indian National Congress in 1922 was held in Gaya under the prudency of Deshbandu Chittranjan Das.

2. Tourist Places in Gaya district

Since Gaya has influenced by different dynasty's and kingdoms, so it has developed different culture and heritages assimilation over the years. Gaya is an important pilgrimage tourist place especially for peoples of Buddhism and Hinduism. Gaya not have tops in its cultural diversity but also have some natural tourist attraction for adventure tourism. Being surrounded by hills from 3 sides makes a beautiful destination for attraction for natural scenic beauty. Let's see some of the major tourist places of Gaya district which comprises of Monuments, Hills, Museums, Temples etc.

- **Mahabodhi Temple**



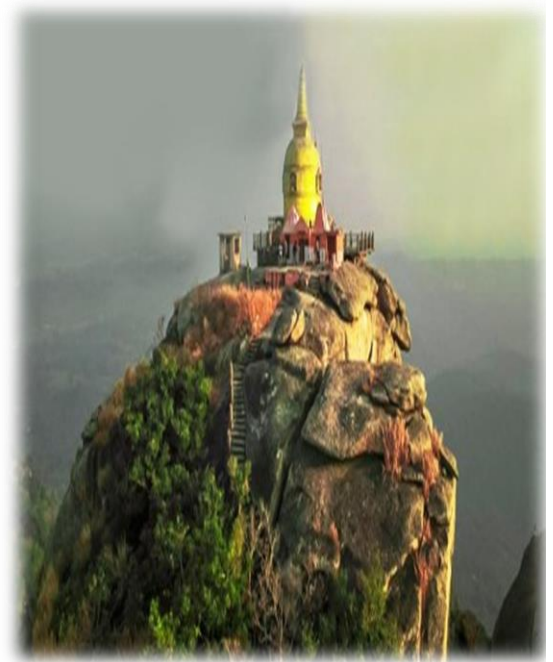
Gaya is most famous for its Mahabodhi temple. It was the place where Buddha attained enlightenment. **Mahabodhi temple** consists of four corners that give balance to the structure. Inside the main temple there is glided image pf buddha. The carved railings round the temple are the oldest remains at Bodhgaya. There is no specific evidence for the origin of this temple but some traditions say it occurred during 3rd century BC. The Temple was one damaged by the wife of king Ashoka but soon Ashoka restored it. It is said that when Bakhtiyar Khilji arrived, he damaged various section of the temple. Later on, temple was repaired and restored in 1880 under the orders of Lt. Governor of Bengal during British Rule.

Bodh Gaya also consist of tree known as **Bodhi tree**. It is the most sacred Pipal tree under which Siddhartha become Buddha and attained enlightenment. It is believed to have continued exist since days of Buddha. As per some Buddhist tradition, the queen of Ashoka destroyed the tree out of rage but king revived it immediately.

There are various other monasteries also located near Mahabodhi temple like Royal Bhutanese Monastery, Terger Monastery, Karma Dhargye Monastery, Taiwanese Temple. There two museums also located which consist Hindu and Buddhist artifacts. There is large 80-foot statue of Buddha is also situated is backside of Mahabodhi temple which attracts tourists. Bodh Gaya is biggest pilgrimage site of Buddhist and it is so connected by different means of transport. Neary airport is Gaya airport which is around 30km from the Mahabodhi temple.

• **Gurpa Hills**

Gurpa hills are also called Gurupada Giri. It is one of the natural and historical places located in Gaya district. Its is situated at the border of Bihar-Jharkhand and is around 40km from Gaya main town. Here Mahakasyapa, the last disciple of Buddha attained Nirvana, because of which this hill has importance in Buddhism. Gurpa hill is also known as Kukkutapada Giri. This hill has beautiful natural view, forest, waterfalls, sunrise and sunset and is one most the major tourist attractions in Gaya district. Gurpa hill has also an temple named Gurupada where it is assumed to have footprints of Lord Vishnu.



• **Ramshila Hill**

Ramshila hills is situated on the south-east side of Gaya and is considered to be the most sacred place as it is believed that Lord Rama with his wife Sita and his brother arrived here and has offered pinda on this hill. From then its has become one of the most important Hindu pilgrimage site A number of stone sculptures belonging to the ancient period can be noticed on the hill. There is a temple which is situated on the top of the hill called as Ramesvara temple which was originally built in 1014 AD. In front of this temple pindas are offered by the Hindu devotees during Pitrapaksh month.

• **Pretshila Hill**

This hill is 873ft high and is situated 8km from Gaya and 10km from Ramshila hill. Right below there is Brahma Kund where people to take dip before going to pinda-daan. There is a temple on the top of the hill which is dedicated to Lord Yamaraj, the god of death in Hindu mythology. This temple was built by queen Ahilya Bai in 1787. It is said by some devotees that this hill was haunted by evil spirits.

- **Sita Kund**



Sita Kund is situated on the bank of River Phalgu on the opposite side of Vishnu pad temple in the Gaya city. Sita Kund is an invaluable heritage from cultural point of view. Sita Kund is associated with the Ramayana period, and it is believed that Goddess Sita performed the ritual of pinda-daan for her father in law Dashrath here only. Some other priest says that she took bath here before going to exile for 14yrs with her husband Rama and brother-in-law Lakshman. There are various small temple here dedicated to Lord Rama and Goddess Sita and Goddess Durga which are visited tourist. Today this Kund is spiritual site where devotees took soak to take sacred vibes.

- **Vishnupad Temple**



Vishnu pad temple is situated in gaya town around 3 km from gaya railway station. It is a temple of Lord Vishnu 40 cm feet. According to stories, demon Gayasur attained the blessing from Lord Vishnu of granting people with salvation whoever touches him. This was incorrect because salvation can only be achieved by walking on the right path and by doing good karmas. So to stop this Lord Vishnu puts his feet on Gayasur cheat.

Lord Vishnu submerged him under the earth, which caused these footprints printed on solid rock. From this incident Gaya district got his name according to Hindu mythology. There are temple of Lord shiva and Lord Narsimha inside Vishnupad. This temple is very crucial for Hindu pilgrimage and large number of Hindu tourist visit this place.

- **Bodhi Tree**



Bodhi tree is the pipal tree under where Gautam Buddha attained Nirvana. In Buddhist tradition its is most scared tree. This tree is just behind Mahabodhi temple, where all Buddhist sat under it and meditate. It is a major sight of pilgrimage tourism. Exact age of tree is still unidentified but as this was the tree where buddha attained enlightenment. Some story are that Ashoka daughter took branch of original Mahabodhi tree to Sri Lanka and planted it there. Today bodhi tree at Mahabodhi temple is successor of original one. This tree is one of the reason for tourism in Gaya district because of its religious importance.

- **Statue of Buddha** - It is the big 80 ft statue of buddha situated near Mahabodhi temple at distance of 500m. This statue represent Buddha seated in a meditation pose on a lotus in open air. The total height of construction is 80ft of which 64ft is Buddha and 10ft is Lotus. This statue was designed by Ganpati Satpati and took 7 years to complete.
- **Thai Monastery** - Thai monastery is also situated in Mahabodhi temple campus at a distance of 200m from main temple. It is one of the oldest foreign monasteries built in Regal Thai architectural style. The designing of exterior is eye catching and attract tourist for its beauty. Its has Buddha statue with mural paintings inside.



- **Baba Koteshwarnath Temple**

Baba Koteshwarnath temple situated in village main, Belaganj around 35 km Gaya main town. This temple is very famous for scared Lord Shiva temple. It is believed that the temple is been built around 8th century. Temple sanctum is carved in a single piece of Redstone and within it a large sized Shivalinga is installed around 1200 years back.



- **Dungeshwari Temple**

Dungeshwari Temple is situated on Dungeshwari hill. This temple is also known as Mahakala Caves or Dungeshwari Caves. It is located 12 km north east of Bodh Gaya. It is said that lord Buddha have mediated in this place for six years before he went to Bodh Gaya to achieve enlightenment. A golden Buddha sculpture is situated inside one of the cave. Another cave have a large statue of Lord Buddha of about 6ft high. A Hindu deity Dungeshwari is also inside the cave temple. Chinese pilgrim also mentioned this hill in his story's. These caves are visited by both Hindu and Buddhist Pilgrims.



- **Archaeological Society Museum**

This museum is situated close to Mahabodhi Temple around 100 m. Archaeological Society Indian Museum have excellent collection of various Buddhist and Hindu relics, most of them are related to Pala and Gupta period. This museum was established in 1956. It has two galleries and one open courtyard. Tourist visiting here can find exhibits of bronze statues, terracotta items, images of Lord Buddha and stone sculptures, idol avatar of Lord Vishnu.



3. Tourism Possibilities and Travel Services

As we see in chapter 1 and 2, the geographical features that gives some of the best natural beauty scenes. It also has very important historical monuments and pilgrimage sites that attracts large amount tourist and has great possibilities to further boost tourism in this area and can make Gaya district one of the important pilgrimage tourist destination in the world. Being centre for religious tourism, there has been somehow less tourism promotion of this area, mostly this area is visited in religious and culture perceptive. Lack of tourism infrastructure and facilities has been also an important reason for less tourism in this area. Recent years we have seen some of the infrastructure being developed like hotels, tourist refreshment centres, waste disposal management etc. But still these development have been mostly centred around the Bodh Gaya whereas other tourist destinations are still underdeveloped. Gaya district has a lot tourism potential but somehow it lacks to realise it. Let discuss what are the tourism possibilities Gaya have in various aspect.

- **Tourist destinations with International importance** - Gaya has state best tourism destination for cultural, pilgrimage and eco-tourism. In chapter 2 we have seen some of the most important tourist destinations and their historical importance.

- **Fairs and Festivals** - Gaya being pilgrimage destination and has hub for different religion, it has different types of fair and festival. Famous festivals are Buddha Poornima, Buddha Mela, which is celebrated in April – May on the birth anniversary of Lord Buddha. Pitra Paksha Mela, which is a long week cultural festival which usually takes place in the month of September. Millions of Hindus across the India come here for attaining Moksha for the souls of their ancestors. Some other festival celebrated here are Chaiti Pooja, Janmashtami, Ram Navami.

- **Languages of Gaya** - Gaya do not have its unique language or dialect. Hindi is mostly spoken in various parts of Gaya district. Other language like Magahi and Bhojpuri are also widely spoken in some parts of Gaya.

- **Music and Dance of Gaya** - Gaya doesn't have its own dance or music but Indian classical music has always found appreciation and following here. Gaya Gharana is one of the prominent musical gharanas. Besides Indian classical music, Buddhist music and dance of south east Asian countries are also practiced here. Some traditional Bihari folk dance are also practiced here such as **Bidesia**, its is a folk dance of Bihari people and its is

originated in around 20th century. **Pika**, this dance is the showcase of courage, agility and excitement. Performers of this dance wear colorful turbans and dhotis. **Kajari**, these dance are usually performed during Monsoon Season.

- **Arts and Craft in Gaya** - Gaya is famous for its beautiful Buddha statues made up of metals and marbles. These beautiful statues displaying different postures of Buddha showcase the artistic craftsmanship and artwork of the people of Gaya. Wood Craft of Gaya at Vishnupad Temple also unique and is quite different from the existing wood crafts available in the market. It has huge religious importance for Buddhist and Hinduism followers. The purchase of idols made of wood has got a big ritual significance. The raw material used for the wood craft include Gambhar wood. This craft provides livelihood support to families of about 200-400 artisans on regular basis in Gaya district.

- **Transport** - Gaya is very well connected with the rest of the country and internationally through airways, railways and roadways. Its district has its international Gaya airport which has various operators such as Air Asia, IndiGo, SpiceJet, Jet Airways and Tai Airways etc. Its has a railway junction which is connected to all major cities like Patna, Delhi, Kolkata, Ranchi etc. Its road links are also well setup connecting different cities with good qualities of roads.

- **Hotels** - Gaya as an international tourism spot has many different accommodation options standard option. There is still no five star hotel but there are many budget hotels, dormitories to suit the needs of tourist coming from different all over the country. Most of the hotels are located on station road, near airport and some in Bodh Gaya. Some of them are Hotel Virat International, Hotel Rose Valley, Uruvela International, Hotel Ajatasatru, Mahabodhi Hotel, Taj Darbar etc.

- **What is the best time to visit Gaya?**

Gaya being situated on Northern Plains experience hot summers and cool winters. In summer temperature goes up to 47° C and then it will be very difficult for tourism. July, August have heavy rainfall with humid climate. So, October to February is best time for tourism where climate is cool and tourist peak during these time only.

- **Tourism helpline service**

Gaya has many tourist helpline centers which are setup by government and others organizations to help tourist in exploring places of Gaya. Tourist are advised to these government run information centers in order to get fair and safe information about the area. By these it is easier to avoid frauds. They can also file complain related to any issue in these centers.

These tourism services and tourist destination with its unique culture makes Gaya district an rich tourist destination where tourism possibilities are very high

4. Tourism Marketing And Strategy

Tourism marketing is the coordinated execution of business policies by both private and government bodies at local, regional, national, or international level to achieve the optimal satisfaction tourist. Travel industry is volatile and to promote tourism and to get long time survival and growth marketing knowledge and skill are necessary ingredients. Tourism marketing is not very old concept. It came into the play in 2nd half of 20th century. The development of the marketing concept is the outcome of political, technological, social, economic and business pressures. When we discuss about marketing, it is a social and managerial process by which consumers obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging product services and values with other.

Today's there are many countries in the world, where tourism plays a major role in enhancing their economy. In such cases tourism marketing becomes an important thing. Many of the places are generally the hotspot for tourist like Bodh Gaya in Gaya district. But there are some other places which are less discovered but it has a great tourism potential and their tourism marketing will play an important role. Now tourism marketing is all about applying several marketing techniques and strategies to boost the tourism industry of that place. In tourism marketing it's become easy to find and draw the attention of targeted customers towards the place by various promotion methods. Thus strategic planning and branding is key to effective tourism marketing of Gaya district.

• Tourism Marketing Strategy's

- 1. SWAT analysis** - A swat analysis is a exercise that identifies the Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats of the destination or the product which is promoted. Here it is Gaya district. Strength and Weakness are internal factors that can be control by us like team, resources and location. Opportunities and Threats are external factors that come and go randomly, such as travel trends of an area, economic downturns and competitor landscape.
- 2. Creating a guest persona** - A guest persona is a detailed description of a fictional character what represents idea guest. It answers who they are, where they are from, what matters to them, where they hang out online, in tourism perceptive they are expected tourist. Tourism branding needs to appeal a large chunk of tourist population which are likely to visit our tourist destination and are ready to enjoy its experiences.

By this way we can effective with our targets and understand what makes them tick and what makes them book.

- 3. Creating a competitor profile** - The travel industry is tight bond, so much that can turn our competitors into partners. But that doesn't mean we can't still keep tabs on them. Knowing what rivals are doing is the best way to gain a complete edge. Not only it gives valuable insight into their strengths and weaknesses but it also helps to stay one step ahead since we can spot potential threats and opportunities before they happen. But this Strategy is not fully applicable to Gaya as this place is already ahead due to its pilgrimage tourism hotspots.
- 4. Pinpoint goals and activities** - in tourism marketing there should be goal that we needed to achieve this year and how it is going to make it happen. When it comes to setting marketing goals, its is important to be SMART.
 - Specific : which clearly explains what we want to achieve
 - Measurable : Has a metric we can objectively measure
 - Attainable : something we have to stretch for but still within our rich
 - Realistic : relevant to our tourism business
 - Time : when we want to accomplish by.
- 5. Developing a tourism marketing mix** - Tourism marketing mix is a combination of factors which we can control to influence tourist decision to visit our destination. There are 6 tourism marketing mix -
 - **What are the pillars of Tourism marketing ?**
 - (I) Product** - The experiences one destination offers and what included goes in product description such as duration, itinerary, special features and other important details.
 - (II) Place** - where people can book destination experiences, it would be ticket office or travel agents, but there are now countless ways such as email, facebook, and website.
 - (III) Price** - it is the third pillar and discuss about the price tourist will pay based on the received value. Factor in what our competitors charge, how much it costs us to provide tourist the experience, our revenue target and where marketing is heading.
 - (IV) Promotion** - this is the fourth pillar of tourism marketing. In this numerous of different strategies and technologies are used for the promotion of any specific area or tourist destination.
 - (V) Planning** - The measures that is taken to keep tourist in the loop. To ensure them to show up prepared, tell them about the flexible travel means, their bookings and cancellation.

(VI) Processes - The processes which need to be followed to guarantee tourists get the maximum experience they expect. Everything should run smoothly from the get to go. Proper planning of tourist management, their check in and check out.

5. Government Role and its Policies

Since Gaya has become an important pilgrimage tourist destination, the government of Bihar and Central government has promoted tourism and developed infrastructure to attract a large number of tourists. As tourism economy can play a very important role in boosting the overall economy of state and country as they will get huge foreign exchange from international tourists. Several developments took place in Gaya district specially in Bodhi Gaya and Mahabodhi temple. Gaya international airport was set up in 2002 to facilitate international and domestic tourists with ease. Road networks were also developed by government for its connectivity with major cities. There were many dharmshalas built by government for tourists but they didn't stand up to expectation. Many tourist places such as Vishnupad Temple to different hills were developed to some extent to support tourism, still the focus was majorly on Mahabodhi temple area. Similarly to boost tourism in country Central government formulated A National Tourism Policy in 2002, its main objective was to make tourism the one of the important engines of economic growth of country. Some of its functions were -

- To regulate tourist destinations like Bodhi Gaya.
- To improve the quality of tourist visiting different parts of countries.
- Government to concentrate on the basic infrastructure rather than hospitality sector.
- To keep the destinations clean, sustainable and environmentally pleasing.
- Helps preserving Indian heritages and cultural.
- Brings socio – economic benefits in terms of employment, income generation, revenue generation.

Development of Mahabodhi Temple Complex

Bihar government along with Bodhi Gaya Temple Management Committee carried out development of Mahabodhi Temple complex with sensitivity to the spiritual and historic values of the site. In the early development plan there was, a meditation park, a museum, and Information center. Some developments carried out are -

- **Meditation** centers were built in the temple complex for the worshippers as well for visitors. These centers played an important role in decreasing crowd from the main temple.

- **Platform around trees** - Platform have been erected around the larger trees, specially for the meditation purpose. Although these was done without proper planning as trees grow, it broke the platforms.
- **Movement of Channels** - The pathways were built in around the main Temple with are made up of marble or concrete.
- **Public Address System** - A public address system was planned in a way that the monks could talk to the assembled worshipers in groups at suitable locations.
- **Tourist Attractions** - A lotus pond area was being prepared for the relaxation of the visitors, who are not very serious about meditation. It also include widening of the space area near entrance pavilion of the pond.
- **The Entrance Gate** - The boundary wall near the entrance gate was extended for easy moving in and out. The structure of the entrance gate was also changed to Buddhist style.
- **Excavations Plans** - The state archaeology department of government of Bihar has also drawn up a proposal for a major excavation and conservation of burial ancient city of Mahabodhi temple.

What are scope of other development needed by Government

- All the major development was focused on Mahabodhi temple whereas Gaya has many other important cultural and natural tourist destinations which left out these development works. Such destination like different hills and Vishnupad temples, Sita Kund need to developed to attract and accommodate tourist.
- Government and local peoples must have focus on development of refreshment centers, public toilets and bathrooms. Being so important tourist destination this city somehow lack in it.
- Development of Waste treatment and enabling dustbins in various parts for the city to make it look clean environment friendly.
- Gaya has variety of hotels but still lacks in good one. Still there is no five star hotel in the city. More world-class hotels and restaurants should be setup to facilitate international tourism.
- Government must setup certain laws and organization for safety preserving culture and monuments of the area.
- Government must use modern marketing strategy stated in chapter 4 and internet for promotion at world level.
- The road network of city must be developed as the roads are badly damaged which cause inconvenience for tourist visiting the city.
- Government must setup advance information centers to help tourist as old one are outdated and their information are irrelevant.

- Government must team up with local organization to spread social lessons to local peoples about preserving the culture and heritage.

6. Conclusion

Since covid 19 has badly affected tourism industry all over the world and so Gaya also. Government of Bihar has now taking various steps to revive tourism. The State Minister in 2021 talked about the massive infra boost from ropeways and skywalks on hills to hotels. (NDTV)

In this project work we have gone through different tourist places of Gaya, its historic culture and heritages, It geographical features and how it is an important center for various religion. In chapter 3 we discussed about the tourism possibilities and services which are their and Gaya district which has the potential to attract large numbers of tourism to the city and state and boost the economy. Boosting tourism in this area will also lead to employment generation. In chapter 4 we discussed important tourism marketing strategy which can be used in promotion of tourism in Gaya. Using these strategy will showcase Gaya and its culture and heritage in the entire world through Internet. In chapter 5 we see government roles in development of the city and what further more development can be taken out.

This main focus of the study was too highlight the major tourist places and boost sustainable tourism in that area with regulated manner. Gaya has seen many ups and downs in history to recent times. From Mahabodhi temple getting damaged by Ashoka queen, to Bakhtiyar Khilji destroying the city and the temple. On 7th July 2013 there were 10 bombs exploded in complex of Mahabodhi temple injuring five peoples including some Buddhist monks. After this incident the security of temple was tightened and was handed to CISF from local police. Covid 19 also affected tourism in this area but slowly it is getting its affection back and tourism will influx in coming years with development plans. Local peoples and Government's have to play their important role in that. Their sustainable approach will surely boost tourism economy in this district



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