

A STUDY ON THE IMPRESSION OF CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT ACT 2019 AND COVID-19 OUTBREAK IN TOURISM SECTOR: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ASSAM

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Abstract - In Assam, tourism is the most affected industry due to the violence in Assam during Citizenship Amendment Act 2019, which was passed by the Parliament of India on 11th December, 2019. This complication in the state's tourism already started during the Anti- Citizenship (Amendment) Act protests and the corona virus crisis just added to the already heavy losses that the sector was sustaining. The paper attempts to focus on the Impact of CAA 2019 as well as Covid pandemic in the tourism sector of Assam including the rebuild strategies that have been marked in order to take the focus off the crisis.

Key Words: Tourism, Citizenship Amendment Act 2019, Covid 19, Losses, Rebuild strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

Assam, which is one of the elemental states of Northeast India, the personification of natural beauty, with countless species of wild animals and plants, dense forests, countless varieties of Flora Fauna, Handlooms and handicrafts, historical monuments, throbbing folk music, festivals and its green landscape has always been the heart of tourist attraction.

It is a well known fact that tourism is a very important sector to any country for the development of its economy and due to the outbreak of CAA 2019 and COVID-19 pandemic, the contribution of the Assam tourism sector has been cut back on since it is one of the most affected industries in the state.

Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 states that the migrants who entered India by 31st December 2014 such as Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian religious minorities who were mistreated in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan are to be provided the path to Indian citizenship. Various kinds of criticisms and violent protests erupted in Assam as soon as the passage of the act since the protesters believed it to violate the prior agreement of Assam Accord which was signed between the leaders of Assam and Government of India agreeing to secure the International Bangladesh India Border. Due to the violent protests, curfew had been declared and the internet services were suspended for around one week. Since the whole scenario had taken place in the month of December which is considered to

be the peak month for tourism sector in Assam, thus it faced a enormous amount of loss.

Assam Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) started taking various initiatives after the scenario in order to rebuild the image of the tourism sector of Assam but then COVID-19 outbreak has left an unfold impact on the tourism scenario of Assam in Particular. SARC CoV-2 was first identified in the city of Wuhan in China in 2019 and on March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization declared the incident as a global pandemic.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since it's a very recent phenomenon so a very few number of studies have been conducted. Some of them are-

Bhaskar Bhuyan, Bitu Baruah, Rupam Gogoi (2020) focused on the impact of Covid -19 in the society and culture of Assam and its future and discussed the aspects such as future of the educated unemployed in Assam and the problems related to the health sector of Assam, its interstate transport system and the future of tourism sector, possible changes in the field of literature and media and the problems in the culture of Assam

Subhanshu Das (2020) focused on the impact of Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2019 in the state of Assam and concluded that more than religion, an idea of being Assamese has been a major factor to protest against immigrants.

3. OBJECTIVES

The present paper has been developed with the following objectives-

- To study the Impression of Citizenship Amendment Act 2019 and COVID 19 outbreak in the tourism sector of Assam.
- To review the rebuild strategies adopted by the Government of Assam in order to rebuild the tourism sector of Assam

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of carrying out the study, data are collected mainly from secondary sources. The secondary data has been collected from the newspaper reports, literature review, previous reports on similar topics available on the internet. The area of study is Tourism Industry of Assam. The data collected specifically for the years 2019 and 2020.

5. SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study will help the further Researchers to have a comprehensive understanding and to access the impact of the CAA 2019 and COVID Pandemic in tourism sector of Assam. It will also lend a brief description about the rebuild strategies adopted by the Government of Assam which will help the tourist operators to have a better understanding of it.

6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Since COVID 19 pandemic is still prevailing so as a result the data related to it are estimates. As some secondary data includes unpublished literature, it may not always be confirmed and verified.

7. IMPACT OF CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT ACT 2019 IN TOURISM SECTOR OF ASSAM

- In Assam, as per Assam Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) around 50000 people are engaged directly or indirectly in the tourism sector and a magnificent part of it was affected during the situation. State Tourism states that the earnings of the state from the tourism sector is Rs 2000- 2500 crore per annum but it had suffered losses to the tune of Rs 1000 Crore in the year 2019 due to Anti CAA violent protests and there has been around 80% cancellation of bookings from domestic and foreign tourists. The losses were sky high since November to March is the peak season for tourism in the state which accounts for around 48% of the sectors contribution for the entire year.
- Assam Tourism was expecting around 65 lakhs domestic tourists and around 45000-50000 foreign tourists this year which slowed down fewer than 3% since at least 10 countries including USA, UAE, Canada, UK, Australia, France, Israel, Taiwan, Russia and Singapore have issued travel advisory which is an official warning statement to the citizens following the violence in Assam.
- The hotel industry alone suffered a loss of Rs 60crore in 15 days since December 11 and in Guwahati alone, Rs 13.25crore was lost between December 11th to December 25th for cancellation of hotel bookings.
- There are around 437 jeeps that offers safaris services to tourists in Kaziranga National Park which took a huge loss in UNESCO World Heritage. Jeeps who generally do at least 2 trips per day were just sitting idle since there were no visitors.
- Around Rs 100crore of cumulative loss was incurred by the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) till 30th Dec 2019, due to the violent agitation by protesters.

- Around 2000 small cars were associated with the tour operators in Guwahati alone which were totally halted lead to huge loss due to protests and also due to suspension of internet services.
- Jayanta Malla Baruah , Chairman of the ATDC claimed that in the year 2019, only around Rs 300-400 Cr of revenue was being collected while in 2018 the state had allocated Rs 1200-1500crore revenue and around 30% was being collected in the month of December alone. So revenue earned in the year 2019 was way more reduced as compared to the previous year due to the violent

8. REBUILD STRATEGIES

ATDC announced the launch of a digital campaign of “Awesome Assam” in collaboration with Google in order to revamp the image of the tourism sector of Assam which took around 3 years to build and just took a month to destroy it completely. As a part of the campaign, the ads of the the tourism department of Assam will be put in front of the people to drive interest and also remind those people who previously visited the site by grasping the google display network in order to capture probable tourist attention. Also youtube will be put in maximum use to reach the most pertinent audience as online video audiences are both open- minded as well as confined since more than 264 million people get engage with youtube every month .ATDC also claimed to hold road shows in Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Goa to promote Assam as the safest and best tourist destination. All the above strategies were made in strive to take the focus off the crisis by taking correct and positive action.

9. IMPACT OF COVID 19 PANDEMIC IN THE TOURISM SECTOR OF ASSAM

- The whole tourism value chain across hotels, restaurants, resorts, travel agencies, tour operators as well as dhabas and fast food businesses directly or indirectly associated with the tourism sector in the state have been damaged.
- The Coronavirus pandemic has had a deliberate impact on Assam’s tourism industry with an estimated loss of around 200crores of income by the tour agencies alone in the state.
- Around 20,000 local youths have been engaged in hotels, restaurants, jeep safari, elephant safari, dhabas, hotels, folk artists in and around the Kaziranga National Park alone. The hotels near the Kaziranga National Park engage 60 per cent local youths during the season and 40 per cent permanent staff. Such youths earn around Rs 20,000 monthly. But because of the anti-CAA agitation in 2019-end and the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020 , they failed to earn any money in two back-to-back seasons

10. REBUILD STRATEGIES

With no chance of surge in the number of visitors to Assam, the state tourist department has put on the responsibility on domestic travellers to revive the tourism sector. Boosting the

local demand seems to be the only way in the ongoing pandemic. It has been noticed that there are many people in Guwahati who didn't visit Majuli or Kaziranga and similarly many people of Upper Assam have not visited the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary in Morigaon district or Manas Wildlife Sanctuary in lower Assam and this is the time when this gap needs to be bridged in order to revive this sector to at least some extent. Also, Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal announced that a new scheme 'Paryatan Sanjeevani Scheme' under which loan between ₹1 lakhs and ₹20 lakhs will be granted to interested local youths to take up new initiatives so that the tourism sector can start fresh amid the Coronavirus crisis.

11. FINDINGS

- It had suffered losses to the tune of Rs 1000 Crore in the year 2019 due to Anti CAA violent protests and there has been around 80% cancellation of bookings from domestic and foreign tourists.
- The number of domestic and foreign tourists slowed down fewer than 3% since at least 10 countries issued a travel advisory due to the violent protests in Assam.
- The hotel industry alone suffered a loss of Rs 60crore in 15 days since December 11 and in Guwahati alone and around Rs 100crore of cumulative loss was incurred by the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) till 30th Dec 2019 due to the violent protests.
- Only around Rs 300- 400 Cr of revenue was being collected in the year 2019 which is very low as compared to 2018.
- Some rebuild strategies were made in order to revamp the image of Assam Tourism sector but COVID-19 outbreak has left an unfold impact on the tourism scenario of Assam in particular.
- Due to COVID 19 pandemic, Assam Tourism estimated loss of around 200crores of income by the tour agencies alone in the state.
- Assam Tourism changed its focus from Global to Local in order to revive the tourism sector and had put the responsibility on the domestic travelers since arriving of the international tourists was not possible.
- A loan between 1 lakhs and 20 lakhs will be lent to the local youth entrepreneurs of Assam under the scheme 'Paryatan Sanjeevani' in order to start fresh amid the Coronavirus crisis.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

- The social media influencers or bloggers and video creators of Assam can play a vital role in promoting the tourism sector of the state by creating popular travel blogs of the various tourist places which can be circulated in youtube and social media and thus will influence the tourists in near future to visit here.
- Since now the focus is on attracting the local visitors so instead of paying a huge amount on outside celebrities and stars, the tourism industry needs to

engage the local icons and stars like Zubin Garg, Papon etc in promoting the sector since local people will get attracted to the local icons.

- It is not only the task of government alone in improving the tourism sector of. The local people of the state shall also make equal efforts in the process. The locals who visit the other states or any other country for any other grounds shall make immense efforts to advertise about the cultural heritage and beauty of our state to their friends or colleagues and near ones so that curiosity arise among them to visit Assam. This way the number of tourists visits in the state may increase.

13. CONCLUSION

At present the future of tourism sector is not certain and if this situation continues for long then a lot of small hotels may wind up which will ultimately make the young youth jobless. In order to avoid such a situation, it is the responsibility of the society and the citizens to apply their expertise in order to revive the tourism sector. If all the sections of the society provide a helping hand to each other then this tough time shall pass soon since tourism sector basically runs on goodwill and now the primary duty is to remodel that goodwill which has been hampered due to CAA 2019 violent protests and COVID 19 pandemic.

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