

... *Spiritual Tourism*

Editorial

Tourism and Pilgrimage have been said to be closely related. Why tourists travel to places of religious significance and how they conceive of their travels are important questions. Tourists who engage in religious practice or have some form of spiritual experience in a religious context are called as '**Spiritual Tourists**'. Study of their experiences can yield us information on the nature of touristic experiences and the position of religion within society. These patterns are conspicuously played out in the context of travel writing, where stories of personal transformation and self-discovery can often seem the standard. One of the key distinguishing factors of pilgrimage is that it is formed out of the desire for some form of change and the belief that this can be found at the pilgrimage site. Pilgrimage and tourism, despite operating on different planes of meaning, can have some significant areas of overlap. We can see that there may be tourists having similar experiences to pilgrims, and pilgrims may be indistinguishable from tourists. Spiritual tourists are for the most part regular tourists. They differ from pilgrims in that they are not necessarily affiliated with one religion (or at least not with the one(s) at the locations they journey to as tourists), and that they are not necessarily there for the same reasons as pilgrims. Spiritual tourist is valid and useful in the study of religion in the world today. It may help us to understand better the shifting trends in popular religiosity. These revolve around such issues as how spiritual aspects of tourism are marketed, what we can make of the notion of holidays if some people are travelling for spiritual reasons, and following from this the sorts of spiritual explorations they wish to embark upon and their willingness to change according to what they discover. Further questions about the demographic make-up of spiritual tourists also arise. Thus, spiritual exploration seems to be undertaken within certain limits of familiarity. Spiritual tourists do share the common trait of travelling within religious contexts. Spiritual tourism is a manifestation of the increasing acceptance of individuated formations of personal identity, and a way to explore concepts of truth, morality, and belief that are typically either ignored or not accepted. Spiritual tourist allows for a comprehensive analysis of tourist behavior and motivations with relation to religion.



Dr Abhinav Kamal Raina
Chief Editor

