



A MIXED BLESSING: SLUM TOURISM

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Abstract:

“History is written by the rich, and so the poor get blamed for everything.”

Slum tourism is an emerging industry in India. Most of us are familiar with the word 'tourism', but 'slum tourism' or 'poorism' is a new subject. It is proving to be one of the big businesses of the international tourism market. Because of its uniqueness to regular tourism, the new form of this tourism is an opening for tourists to learn more about the real life situations of the poor relate to them and their circumstances. Western countries' richest people like to see the poor people's life style. South Africa, Brazil, India are emerging countries for this type of tourism. For those who fancy a chance to see how the other half of the world lives without the luxurious amenities of life, goes to these special tours to the underprivileged neighborhood of the world. Slum tourism business increased by 25 percent after the movie Slumdog Millionaire was released. Slum tourism has become a niche segment in the global tourism industry. Slums are an apparent misfortune for every country but this paper traces an apparent misfortune that eventually has good results.

Keywords: *Slum Tourism, Tourist Places, Boon or Bane.*

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INTRODUCTION

Slum means “a run-down area of a city characterized by substandard housing and squalor and lacking in tenure security”. The dictionary meaning of the slum tourism refers to "Poverty tourism or poorism, also known as “shack tours”,” township tours” and “reality tours or slumming. It is a type of tourism, in which tourists travel to less-developed places to observe people living in poverty." According to slum tour operators, tourists use this as an opportunity to learn about real slum life.

A MIXED BLESSING

- To promote awareness of poverty
- To pump money in to the local economy
- Some slum-tour companies donate a portion of their profits to help build community centers, clinics and other necessities.
- Tourists do spend money, but rarely on the communities do they visit. Most money is spent on airline tickets, resorts, restaurants, and hotels, and very little trickles down to impoverished communities
- The tours can hurt the sentiments of those who live in the slums.

The concept of slum tourism is criticized as an attack on the privacy and dignity of the poor. It is not only considered an unethical way of raising funds and showcasing poverty, but also results in mental trauma for the slum dwellers, specially the women and children.

SLUM TOURISM PLACES IN ABROAD

The impoverished areas in the world like the African countries or the remote areas in the Indian sub-continent top the chart of this innovative travel trend, Shack tourism is also popular in Namibia, Kenya, Mexico, Bronx, Brazil’s Favelas, the townships of New Orleans’ Lower, Ninth Ward and many other countries in the developing world. Slum tourism is promoted by travel companies as a means to reduce poverty and enable local people to participate more effectively in the process. It is also aimed at improving the local economy of a developing country. The most popular venues of slum tourism are:

- The black townships in South Africa
- Favelas in Rio
- Natives in Bolivia or villages in Cambodia



SLUM TOURISM PLACES IN INDIA

India is one of the few countries in the world that has a great number of gigantic sized slums and these days many of them are drawing interest of the western tourist crowd best places for slum tourism in India.

Dharavi in Mumbai

Dharavi as a slum area is the place that boasts of highest level of variety of living hood and living atmosphere in India and Asia. This is one of the largest slums in the entire continent which spread along the Mahim River in Central Mumbai with a stretch of 1.75km. Dharavi being in the heart of the biggest and busiest city of India is considered as one of the best places for slum tourism in India. In India, slum tourism is popular in Mumbai's Dharavi, which is Asia's largest slum settlement. Dharavi covers 530 acres with a population of 1,000,000. Most of its residents are potters, plastic and metal recyclers, tailors, and washer men. The residents of Dharavi own goods worth \$500 million, indicating that the poor here are not lazy or helpless, but rather working hard to improve their living conditions.

KusumpurPahari in Delhi

The slum in Kusumpur Pahari is arguably the largest slum in Delhi with a more than 15000 living accommodations and a great variety of living standard and premises. This major slum area in South Delhi is one of the places that recently become a tourist attraction to the western tourists who feel attracted to the dimensions of the poverty stricken survival of slum dwellers and this new popularity as a tourist destination made this slum as one of the best places for slum tourism in India.

Tiljala in Kolkata

Tiljala in the eastern fringe of the Kolkata city is considered to be the largest and most diverse kind of slum area in Kolkata with a surrounding posh upper middle class and also a section of lower middle class population and this slum area compared to many other slum areas scattered in various Indian cities boasts of a comparatively better lifestyle and living standard, though the variance of poverty along with dimensions of development is present all through the area that makes this one of the places for slum tourism in India. With superfast eastern metropolitan bypass and lagoons of fisheries in the far eastern part of the city nearby this slum area is really worth a look for the tourists coming from different part of the world.



Borabanda in Hyderabad

Though the city of Hyderabad has come up in the map of India as a newly rejuvenated tourist destination and a preferred destination for technological boom and industrial development, the rocky terrain of Borabanda in Hyderabad remained as one of the most underdeveloped slum areas in the city which is the home of the biggest slum area of Hyderabad with a slum living population of more than five thousand and nearby access to the posh south suburban areas in the southern part of the city. The slum area with multiple ethnicity and different types of struggles of development is considered to be one of the place that can attract tourists from other part of the world who has an interest in the living hood of slum dwellers.

Parvati Slum in Pune

Though this slum is not that much big in size and encompass, the Parvati slum in Pune is typical of its two level constructions around the hillside in Pune and possess one of the very varied population from different parts of Maharashtra. In regard to its typical size and incoherent demographic characteristic this slum can really be one of the best places for slum tourism in India.

The best places for slum tourism in India as mentioned here could not include all the varieties of slums in India but at least could produce an idea of the slum living hood that can be attractive tourist spots for people who have a special interest in the life and living hood of the poor and downtrodden

SLUM TOURISM: BOON OR BANE

With pros and cons of the poor tourism coming in the fore front of the world and the educated society, it becomes the duty of the affluent class to monitor and influence the practices which will inevitably augment the growth of the rural areas in the world. The implementation of sustainable tourism, adventure tourism in the remote areas should be blended in the right proportion to bring in the best results. UNWTO and the other travel association of the world should take keen interest in this developing travel trend of the world, popularly indicated as "Poor Tourism".

Arguments in Support of Slum Tourism

- Profitable business practice that employs locals who live in these impoverished areas,



- Opens Westerners eyes to poverty in other parts of the world and perhaps motivates them to do something,
- Many tours donate a percentage of their profits back to the community in some way (e.g., maintaining parks, schools, or community centers)
- Increasing tourism to these impoverished areas leads to increased income for locals selling products and services
- Increased tourism leads to increased government investment in infrastructure (e.g., roads, telecommunications, bridges, water supply) that will benefit both travelers and locals.

Arguments against the Practice of Slum Tourism

- Slum tourism is a practice only geared towards making profits out of viewing the poverty of others.
- The practice is exploitative and voyeuristic.
- Locals do not like or want to be put on display for tourists and may feel demoralized by it,
- Most tourists only visit out of curiosity, not with the intent of giving back to the community
- Viewing poverty in an idealized manner only downplays the real and horrendous living conditions of people in the slums.

CONCLUSION

With the advent of “Slum tourism” or Poor tourism, it arguably becomes unethical and exploiting at times. Consider a situation where a group of travelers get inside the house of a local family to experience their living standards. It is really pathetic and demeaning for that family. With the boom of this tourism comes a wave of disapproval. But the Slum tour operators said that, the tourists use this as an opportunity to learn about real slum life and also improving the local economy of a developing county. However, in reality, this is quite doubtful. Every coin has two sides, every data point that doesn't meet expectations usually has an upside somewhere.



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