

# **Heritage tourism: A case study on the international, local and social efforts involved in putting Ajanta on the traveler's list**

*Ms. Nivedita Pantawane\**

## **Introduction**

India expects a tourist inflow of around 10 million in 2010. The country's tourism sector was growing steadily with 3.92 million tourist inflow in 2005 and 4.43 million in 2006, a confidence is being generated that the inflow would touch the eight million mark in 2009.

There is considerable government presence in the travel and tourism industry. Each state has a tourism corporation, which typically runs a chain of hotels /motels and operates package tours, while the central government runs the India Tourism Development Corporation. Divestment of these state-run tourism corporations have either already taken place or are in process.

Incoming foreign tourist arrivals have shown a 6% compounded annual growth rate over the last 10 years. The government has realised the potential and has advanced several incentives to promote infrastructure growth in the tourism sector.

Current investments are likely to see hotel room capacity increase by 20% over the next three years, with several international hotel chains entering the hotel industry.

With specialised types of tourism becoming a craze throughout the world, India is coming up with Dubai-type shopping tourism facilities at several places besides focusing on health tourism. At least four such destinations would come up soon and another is likely in West Bengal.

Aurangabad near Ajanta-Ellora in Maharashtra is one of the leading shopping tourism destinations coming up amongst others like Noida in Uttar Pradesh with world class facilities, Shilpagram near Hyderabad, permanent art and crafts fair at Bhubaneswar.

## **Tourism in Aurangabad**

The incredible India campaign has given a brand new dimension to the marketing of India as a country. Aurangabad and particularly Ajanta - Ellora have enjoyed a steady stream of local and international visitors from a long time, even before any specific promotion or campaign was done for it.

The tourists are classified as " Budget Tourists" and " Star Tourists". They can choose the type of vacation they want to enjoy in this part of the country. It also enables the government and other bodies to subsequently divide their efforts on them

The center organizes exhibitions and trade shows especially in the Aurangabad region. These give an excellent platform for rural and ethnic culture of the region to be displayed before the international tourists. Various handicrafts, local crafts, food etc are exhibited.

Over the past 5 + years, Aurangabad has seen a regular flow of both national and international tourists. Acknowledged as one of the fastest growing tier-II city, Aurangabad offers a range of site seeing, shopping and experiencing opportunities. But amongst all, the most visited and most revered, still remain the beautiful Ajanta Ellora caves.

In addition, the city has seen the development of relevant education providing institutes, courses – vocational, developmental etc to provide world class atmosphere and service to the customers. The contributions of such entities were indeed exemplary.

Mentioning the infrastructure actors, the presence of three five star hotels in a tier-II city speaks a lot. Good quality roads, renovation of squares, bus stands, and railway stations, restoration works have been the focus to give a world class experience to the tourists. Promoting the place as a 'must see' on the list of the international Buddhist traveler has indeed been a national effort, but in line with that the contributions of local authorities can be seen in their adaptation of every heritage signage, symbol and story in their day to day activities.

## **The JBIC project**

An entire project named 'Ajanta – Ellora Conservation and tourism development project' is dedicated to the conservation of Ajanta – Ellora site.

MTDC (Maharashtra tourism Development Corporation ) an undertaking of Maharashtra state conceived the Ajanta – Ellora Conservation and tourism development project and prepared in 1991 a master plan from Tata Consultancy Services, on the basis of which the Government of India requested the Government of

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*\*Faculty, Smt.Hiraben Nanavati Institute of Management and Research for Women, Pune. nivedita\_pantawane@yahoo.co.in*

Japan to consider grant of financial assistance for the project. The Government of Japan got the plan assessed from the Overseas Economic Co-operation Fund (OECF) now Japan Bank for International Co-operation (JBIC) and offered loan assistance for the implementation of the master plan as phase –I of the

Sr. No	Sub project	Implementing Agency	Estimated Cost	Actual Expenses
Phase –I programmes				
1	Monument conservation	ASI	13,230	3,440
2	National Airport Authority	AAI	148,270	156,380
3	Afforestation	FD	31,240	33,000
4	Roads	PWD	435,360	539,870
5	Water Supply and sewerage	MJP	51960	58814
6	Electric Power Supply	MSEB	32320	23824
7	Visitor Management System	MTDC	27340	6010
		MOT	9400	3620
Extended Phase- I				
1	Monument Conservation	ASI	89600	85192
2	Aurangabad Airport	AAI	9000	6924
3	Afforestation	FD	13600	11255
4	Roads	PWD	124400	195565
5	Visitor Management system	MTDC	200100	14678
	MOT	-	2862	
Total			1185820	1281528

project. The government went into agreement for the loan in 1992. A Joint Venture of Pacific Consultants International (PCI) and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) were appointed in November as consultants for planning and overseeing the implementation of the works under the loan.

The objectives of the project are:

1. To conserve and preserve monuments and natural resources in the Ajanta - Ellora region.
2. To improve infrastructure in order to accommodate the increasing number of tourists to the region and enhance their experience by providing improved facilities and services.

The first phase consisted of building up essential infrastructure facilities. The consultants, then as was stipulated in Terms of Reference drafted a proposal for Phase –II. It was presented by the Ministry of Tourism for consideration of OECF in the Interministerial Meeting in 1998.

Phase –I and extended phase –I Expenditure

The project cost was estimated at Yen 4,406 million which is equal to

Rs.817.1 million at the exchange of Rs. 1 = Yen 5.39. The support from JBIC was Yen 3,745 (Rs. 498.8 million) which was 85% of the total project cost.

### **Ajanta - Ellora Conservation and Tourism Development Project**

#### **Phase-II**

The second phase of the Ajanta - Ellora Conservation and tourism development project with the Japanese Bank of International Co-operation (JBIC) sanctioning a soft loan of Rs. 300 crores became effective from July 31, 2003. the loan clearance was announces after JBIC held a series of talks with the central department of tourism and culture and MTDC in Delhi. The first phase of Ajanta – Ellora heritage circuit up gradation scheme won appreciation not only from Japanese government but also UNESCO. The second phase envisaged taking forward the conservation and a development scheme initiated in the first phase.

The second was targeted to be completed in 5 years time and was meant to generate additional employment in Ajanta - Ellora region. The plans envisaged restoration and repair of entire cave circuit of Maharashtra i.e between Mumbai and Aurangabad. The work carried out at these places includes structural reinforcement, chemical conservation of the paintings and artifacts, preservation of percolation within the caves, upgrading the environment, training conservation staff and improving visitor management system.

**Phase –II expenditure**

Type of work	Estimated cost in million Rs	Implementing Agency
Monument conservation	368	ASI
Improvement of Airport	607	AAI
Afforestation	14	Maharashtra FD
Roads	185	Maharashtra PWD
Water supply systems	49	MJP
Tourist complexes at Ajanta - Ellora with interpretation centers and replica caves	532	MTDC
Public Awareness Activities	302	MTDC
HRD	9	MTDC
Computerization of tourism information	18	MTDC
Micro credit	5	MTDC
Lonar conservation and development	25	MTDC
State archeological monuments	9	MTDC
Additional sub projects in vicinity of Buddhist caves circuit	237	MTDC
Contingency	270	
Consulting services	169	
Interest during construction	194	
Total		2992

**A brief account of the work being done**

- Monument conservation

(Executing Agency- Archeological survey of India)

It included the conservation and repair of the cave belt. Project packages of ASI (chemical branch) for chemical conservation of monuments, survey and maintenance / operation of equipments and purchase of equipments for conservation laboratory at Aurangabad and detailed documentation of heritage monuments.

The package included:

1. Protection of rock mass
2. Prevention of water seepage in the caves
3. Slope stability of caves and adjoining hills
4. conservation, preservation and protection of sensitive paintings
5. Surface water management
6. Landscaping the adjoining region
7. Visitor management
8. Restoration of essential / structural elements and investigate / exploration of surroundings

- Aurangabad Airport

(Executing Agency – Airport Authority of India)

The major work included to facilitate domestic and international flights to land in Aurangabad and the airport facilities to be upgraded. The development was aimed to significantly boost the international tourist traffic.

The package included:

1. Construction of new passenger terminal building and ancillary support facilities
2. construction of new apron 500 x 400 and construction of taxi track

- Afforestation

(Executing Agency – Forest Department , Maharashtra)

The central idea was to enhance the greenery adjoining the classic plains surrounding the caves. This was aimed to improve vegetation cover which will prevent soil erosion subsequently reduce pollution vicinity of the caves.

The package included:

1. Major afforestation activity in adjoining areas of the caves
2. Information and maintenance, erection of fire tower, fire line cutting every year, fire fighting equipments, display card on trees
3. Tourist facilities, camping and accommodation facilities, establishment of nature trails and watch towers.

- Road

(Executing Agency – Public Works Department, Maharashtra state)

A number of roads were selected for repair and up gradation. All the roads lead to tourist destinations and it was considered that these improvements will lead to reduction in time and commuting costs. Also the towns and villages in the vicinity of these roads will also benefit.

- Water Supply

(Executing Agency – Maharashtra Jeevan Pradhikaran)

Water supply and sanitation was the main focus. The aim was to provide essential facilities to tourists visiting the caves.

- Tourism and Marketing and Visitor Management System (MTDC)

Development of Ajanta Tourist Complex : which included construction of visitor information center, arrival area, interpretation center, site museum, virtual reality hall, cave replicas, restaurants, plazas and service areas.

Development of Ellora Tourist Complex: which included construction of visitor center, arrival area, interpretation center, site museum, virtual reality hall, restaurants, plazas, and service areas.

- Public Awareness Activities

For promotion of Maharashtra and Buddhist circuits along with Ajanta - Ellora region using press, print, audio visual and electronic media.

- Human Resource Development

Training of staff for maintenance and operation of tourism destinations, visitor management systems, and tourism planning and environment conservation was the main focus.

- Computerization of tourist information:

A new system to be set up for computerization of tourist information.

- Conservation of state archeological monuments

A number of sites, monuments and gates in the Aurangabad city and its vicinity were chosen for repair and conservation and also beatification so that it would act as an additional tourist attraction in line with the caves.

Development of Lonar crater: Lonar is the lake formed by an meteorite. Hence the focus was to promote it as a “must see” site. Roads, fencing, restoration, clearing of prosopsis plants, creation of visitor information centers etc were undertaken.

Additional sub projects at the vicinity of the caves: These included restoration and maintenance of various cave belts and regions. Development of access roads, signage, power and water infrastructure at these tourist places were on the list.

- Micro credit for low income tourist service providers

This is the first of its kind in tourism sector in India and aimed at organizing and training service providers at tourist sites who are otherwise considered as nuisance by tourists and planners alike but are essential part of Indian tourism scenario. Along with the development of infrastructure in Aurangabad there is a need to cater to small necessities of tourists which are met by mushrooming hawkers whose service to tourists leave much to desire. The micro financing sub projects aimed at organizing, training, and financing this low income segment. Women entrepreneurs will be given preference and suitable NGOs have been identified to training, disburse and monitor the micro credit funding credit and recovery. The beneficiaries include of the

scheme small restaurant owners, tea shops, kiosks, guides, photographers, hawkers, fruit vendors and taxi operators. This would make them more presentable as well as increase their entrepreneurial skills and abilities. The loan amount of the will be chanelised through rural banks.

### **Marketing the Shopping District**

Aurangabad has an exclusive set up of mini markets and lanes dedicated to selling ancient craft. The areas near Panchakki, Ajanta – Ellora, Paithan, Daulatabad and the Aurangabad city have their own shops, which sell exclusive specialty items. Aurangabad has seen the thriving of many retail, government owned privately held outlets that offer a variety of regional handicrafts, clothes, jewelry, food etc. This has immensely contributed to local employment generation. The marketing of Ajanta as a shopping destination is also a driving factor that made customers come to buy region specific products like Himroo shawls, jewelry etc. A best example is ‘Paithani Saree’ which is handmade and known to have originated at Paithan which is a 30 minutes drive from Aurangabad. On the way to Ajanta - Ellora there are number of government owned and also privately owned shops which sell Paithani sarees, Kurtas, Scarves handkerchiefs etc. All of these have a contributing effect on the marketing of India.

The shopping markets that have evolved in the form of mini shopping districts around the place/ site made the shopping experience more relevant to the heritage promotion of Ajanta and Ellora.

Even the five star hotels that are running successfully here have exclusive galleries dedicated to the handicrafts made in this region. Here the international traveler gets a glance at the Indian culture. This is a good place for shopping for the tourist who does not want to be bothered by local vendors and sellers.

### **Rural tourism- “ Atithi Devo Bhava!”**

This is the central idea behind all the tourism activities done by the government. The tourists are given the taste of the Indian hospitality and treated as ‘God’ just the way it is written in scriptures and taught to every Indian.

The authorities have very strategically promoted the theme of ‘Rural Tourism’. The focus is on promoting rural culture and enabling employment generation. Tourism is considered to be the major revenue generator in these regions. Typically the allied and dependant areas like restaurants, tourist guides, handicraft shops have been considered to be the focus areas for revamping and enhancement. An active platform is given to boost the generation of income in rural households. Tourists can now stay at the very homes of rural citizens. The government has started the ‘ Bed and Breakfast scheme’ where they can stay at a local household and get an exclusive experience of the ethnic and rural flavour of India. The housewives get a chance to earn as they provide Indian food and shelter to these travelers. While staying with these local families these tourists get a chance to enjoy the day to day life of an Indian village. As this region is extensively dependant on tourism, here the government is also helping them out to get a more professional way to carry on their business.

Along with the handicrafts that are widely sold, special promotion is given to the Indian wear like sarees, kurtas etc. Also women are given a chance to set up their units where they can put mehndi on the hands of the tourists. An entire package of rural site seeing, staying with a local family and enjoying Indian flavours, traditions and handicrafts is being successfully sold to the tourists. India is internationally known to be a diverse yet very vibrant and colourful country. Marketing it as an ‘rural experience’ that is a must have for every tourist has many varied dimensions to it. The basic beneficiary is rural India and also the international tourist in many ways. On one hand it gives a good platform for rural India to showcase its culture and also earn from it. And for tourist, it is a very different and exclusive experience. The incredible India campaign has given a real boost to the inflow of international tourists. The global and local authorities are striving hard to maintain the eco friendly zone which they have recently declared around the caves.

### **Ajanta - Ellora Festival**

A large crowd is pulled annually by the Ajanta Ellora festival, formerly known as Ellora festival, which sees a lot of national, state, local and international involvement. It is one of the best ways to study the marketing mix involved in promoting the site as a tourist attraction. Local students from institutes like hotel institutes, tourism courses etc are invited to join the organizers and delegated various tasks to be a part of this mega event. It has been one of the drivers of tourism has been the Ajanta –Ellora festival that was

started as a cultural event by the authorities. Many well known Indian artistes perform on this occasion. Of all the 4 P's the most used, necessary and exemplary were the heritage place itself, people involved, products/ services offered and the simplified processes in making Ajanta to top the traveler's list.

### **Entrepreneurship development and capacity building**

The major drivers of tourism are a number of entities that are also dependant on it. These include restaurant owners, hawkers, fruit and vegetable sellers, handicraft shop owners, tourist guides, taxi drivers and many more small time players. Many of them have started on their own with whatever assets and capital they had. But the newer generation is more business oriented and have taken up many ways to stay in this field. They also are keen to explore the various ways of financial assistance that can be availed. One of the most important part of the tourism wheel are tourist guides which provide not only information but also entertainment to the tourists. These guides the local people who are born and brought up in Ajanta – Ellora. They know the history of the region by heart. But they do not have any formal training. Although they are skilled in their knowledge they lack sophistication to present it. The Central government has taken up training programmes for these youths who want to make their career in being tourist guides. Last year a formal and unique training programme was undertaken to give them an orientation about the skills and expertise needed to be a tourist guide. The first batch consisted of eight boys and girls who were groomed. The flux and flow of employed human resource in and around the site has added to give an ethnic experience to the visitors.

Capacity building programmes are extensively undertaken for taxi drivers, coolies, potters, rickshaw drivers etc to make them aware of the latest trends in tourism. They are provided with latest information and given formal training so that they can become more professional towards their approach towards the tourist and tourism industry as a whole. The training sessions cover a gamut of topics from marketing skills to ethics, behavior and even cleanliness. These are the people that are the closest to the tourists and who have an very extensive interaction with them. Hence these capacity building programmes have been very helpful in arming hem with the ammunition required to deal with international tourists. “Atithi Devo Bhava!” is been inculcated in them so that they treat the tourist with respect and kindness. Formal announcements are made at various places like bus stands, railway station and tourist offices prior to the start of such sessions so that whoever is interested can join. They are paid some money as incentive and on successful completion of the workshop they are given certificates of participation. Information about the loans that are available and also the banking transactions is provided. Gomukh organization, and NGO has worked with close association with the government on various aspects of capacity building.

### **Tourist's stance**

The tourists that throng Ajanta - Ellora have various reasons to visit this ancient site. A majority of them are local tourists who come from all parts of India. Local tourism takes a new turn as visiting Ajanta - Ellora is the primary goal of coming to this part of the country. Known for its scenic beauty and amazing weather, Aurangabad is a preferred destination to visit in the summer vacation. It is also a week end get away for the local people. Many of them come from far off places to get a glimpse of the rich heritage of the Buddhist era.

In addition and for contextual reference, customer's view point with reference to their decision in picking it as a place to visit, their experiences were studied and it was found that it indeed was a preferred location to revisit or referral.

Another reason for visit to the caves was the shopping experience it gave to the tourists. The products available here like sarees, handicrafts, leather crafts, accessories, shawls have created their own mark even in the international arena.

Ajanta-Ellora have been the most revered place for the Buddhist countries. Even today, many Buddhist tourists, come down here to pay their reverences to this holy place. A majority of them are Japanese. They usually come in study groups who have taken up Indian or buddhist culture as their area of research. These tourists have appreciated the efforts the Indian government has taken to restore and also market Ajanta-Ellora. They also give strong mouth publicity when they get back. Majority of them have responded that they would recommend others to visit India and especially Ajanta- Ellora. Ajanta village has been adopted by the Japanese government to promote investigative, study and tourist visits.

India is incredible, enchanting, unlimited and simply God's own country if we go by some of the popular themes of the Incredible India campaign! The efforts taken by our government, the local authorities and the

social elements are indeed exemplary. The region has seen drastic changes in all aspects of infrastructure development, restoration works, connectivity and of course marketing. The efforts have made this site a 'must see' for the national and international tourist.

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