DARK TOURISM: DESTINATION ASSOCIATED WITH TRAGEDY AND DISASTER

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ABSTRACT

With the increase in tourism market segment, new niche markets are popping up to satisfy the ever-changing human desires. These market segment creates a unique travel phenomenon which attract tourism enthusiasts towards them. The notion of experiencing something unique and peerless, standing apart from conventional travelling behaviour excite them and stir up their dormant traveller. One such travel occurrence encourages the tourist to visit destination or places linked with death, tragedy, mystery, mass bloodshed and disaster, this tourism phenomenon is known as Dark tourism. The act of visiting sites associated with such horrendous events are controversial in nature, some view this as an act of paying respect and other thinks of it as an unethical practice. Dark tourism has received increasing attention from the public, Tv shows such as Dark tourist, Black earth rising and Chernobyl, have introduced the concept to the mind of many tourists around the world. Although the academicians have recognized the idea of such tourism in late 90’s but the concept itself is very old. From ancient time people visited Rome to witness the gladiatorial games which had death factor associated with it, The Colosseum is one such ancient marvel where such fight took place. Medieval public executions or pilgrimages, battlefields, are all examples of early attractions associated with tragic incidents. In modern times places related to such dreadful events have become a tourist hub- some of the examples being Chernobyl disaster in Ukraine, Hashima island in Japan, Ground zero in New York, Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland, Jallianwala Bagh in India, Pompeii in Italy and numerous other locations spread throughout the world. The motive behind this research study is to familiarize with the global trend of dark tourism, getting to know about various sites associated with dark tourism and the dreadful history linked with these places.

Keyword: Dark Tourism, Dark tourists, Death, Tragedy, Suffering, Historic
INTRODUCTION

Travelling has always been in human blood, from time immemorial people have undertook arduous journey from to coldest region to the hottest region on earth, only to satiate their desire for transpiring historical events. Human are curious being, they aspire to witness the events unfolding themselves rather than sitting at a corner and reading about them in some paperback. Throughout the history the events that have occurred and people who have witnesses the incident unravel itself have took to the books to records the events, so that future generation can get to know how and when, what took place. This exclusive knowledge gained through the manuscripts not only make today’s traveller curious about the events but they also wish to behold the site first hand. People in this day and age, travel locally and globally with varying motives ranging from leisure, business, VFR, adventure, cultural, religious, gastronomy, or other reasons only to satisfy their craving for learning and experiencing something distinct and fascination in nature. With the change in tourist behaviour towards their travel aspiration, new special interest segments are turning up to keep up with the touristic demands. Traditional travel for enjoyment and leisure are now things of the past, tourism involving catering to the targeted market segments, with more customized and personalised features to showcase unique touristic experience are now in trend. It consists of activities which are parallel to the tourist and provides learning, enriching in addition to rewarding experience. Tourist motivation for the destination they desire are no longer related to traditional sun, beach and beautiful sceneries. The concept of diversion in pleasant places is evolving and broadening into new market demanding, more complex and unusual (Wight, 2006). One such niche market is Dark Tourism, which indicates to those sites and locations of crime, incarceration, assassination, holocaust and genocide that have served to attract visitors (Lennon, 2017). The term dark tourism was first coined by John Lennon and Malcolm Foley in the year 1996. Dark tourism is the tourism trend which involves travelling to places which are historically associated with death and tragedy. Other terms are also coined by researcher and academician to define such travel behaviour Thana Tourism (AV Seaton, 1996), Black spot tourism (Rojek, 1993), Morbid Tourism (Thomas Blom, 2000), death focused travel (Collins Kreiner, 2016) and Grief Tourism. Many dark tourists are not even aware about the term, they just engage in activities that includes
uncovering or witness the sites and monuments which fascinates them. When they come across the term which indicates their travel behaviour them are surprised to know that there exists a term which defines what they are doing. What dark tourist does, is often considered as bizarre and dangerous and are looked down upon to by the society to even think about doing so. What dark tourist takes into consideration while undertaken journey to such sites is to get in depth understanding of the histories and backgrounds involved with sites rather than just visiting the destination just for the sake of seeing it. The tourism experience has a one-of-a-kind time travel aspect to it. One of the characteristics of a responsible dark tourist is being mindful of what they do, one should remain respectful and not offend people. Having a purpose is what enhances the travel experience and dark tourism not gives the chance of engagement with dark site but also getting to know about the destination through its wildlife, scenery, culinary and cultural aspect, which balances the experience.

According to Lennon and foley (2002) Dark tourism refers to the events that took place in the recent times, which forces the travellers to question modernity. Dark tourism is seen as the commodification of anxiety and doubt. Dark tourism can be referred to as visitation to location and sites where tragedies or historically noteworthy death has occurred and that continue to have an impact on lives. Marcel (2003) states that “people have always been attracted to places where important or mass deaths have taken place. The route followed by Jesus when he was crucified is one of the examples. Tombs of Egypt and colosseum in Rome are some of the notable tourist attractions”. The study of the concept is relatively new, although people since antiquity have been visiting places related to death and violence. Lennon in his study states that evidence points that dark tourism goes back to battle of waterloo in 1815, public hanging in London in 16th century, bloody spectacle which took place in gladiatorial fight in ancient Rome. Philip stone believes that appetite for such destinations is growing. He stated that people have got cultural fascination with darker side of history. Meaningful sites can help people understand the present and be more thoughtful about the future. These dark tourism sites teach us what it is to be human and reflect on and try to understand evil we are capable of.
SUB-CATEGORIES OF DARK TOURISM

**Grave tourism:** Grave tourism involves visiting graveyards, shrine and cemetery around the world to seek out the grave of famous individual or grand mausoleums of Mughals, emperors, spiritual leaders and prophets. For example: Taj mahal in India, grave of Elvis Presley, Bruce lee, Abraham Lincoln.

**Genocide tourism:** Visiting places where genocide took place such as Jallianwala Bagh in India, Rwanda massacre, killing Field in Cambodia.

**Holocaust tourism:** It involves travelling to destination related to extermination of Jews during the holocaust in world war II. For example, Nazi concentration camps, memorial sites and museum.

**Nuclear tourism:** Visiting site where nuclear disaster took place or destruction of site took place due to nuclear warfare. Example Chernobyl in Ukraine, Hiroshima Japan.

**Haunted tourism:** Ghost Tourism or haunted tourism involves visiting place which are associated to paranormal activities such as haunted houses in Amityville, crop circle or UFO sighting, Aokigahara forest in Japan.

**Icky medical tourism:** Visiting medical exhibitions and museums to witness medical monstrosities such as deformed baby, brain specimen, specimen of parasite. Example Mutter museum in Philadelphia.

**Disaster tourism:** Practice of traveling to areas that have recently experienced natural or man-made disasters which have wreaked havocs. For example, Bhuj in India, Fukushima in Japan.

**Communism tourism:** Visiting sites related to communist era of the past and the present. For example, North Korea and Bulgaria.

**Prison tourism:** Visiting former place of persecution and imprisonment. For example, Cellular jail in India, KGB prison in Lithuania.

**War tourism:** This type of tourism encompasses visiting sites and monuments related to war. For example, war memorial at elephant pas in Sri Lanka, Berlin wall, Memorial of waterloo.
MOTIVATION TO VISIT DARK SITES

Kuzik (2018) came up with 7 travel motivation for why travellers seek to visit dark tourism sites.

Curiosity: Tourists are attracted by bizarre and the unique things. The reasons why tourists are attracted to dark tourism sites is because it is out of the ordinary experience, and thus attractive for its uniqueness and as a means of satisfying human curiosity. So, the main reason is the experience of the unusual. They have purpose to travel, that is to visit historic monuments and site related to death, violence, tragedy and disaster. They get to witness something irregular and peculiar in nature which stand apart from conventional travel.

Empathy: Visiting dark tourism sites may be empathy, which is an acceptable way of expressing a fascination with horror…In many respects, the interpretation of dark tourism sites can be difficult and sensitive, given the message of the site as forwarded by exhibition curators can at times conflict with the understandings of visitors. The sites have capacity to develop positive emotions and impart knowledge to the visitors.

Horror: It is regarded as one of the main reasons for visiting dark tourism sites, and in particular, sites of atrocity, paranormal activities and genocide. Examples are: Ghost Walks around sites of execution or murder (Ghost Tour of Prague), Murder Trails found in many cities like Jack the Ripper in London, Aokigahara suicide forest.

Education: One of the motivational factors which encourages people for travel is the gaining of knowledge, and the quest for authentic experiences. Visits to dark tourism sites to gain knowledge, understanding, and educational opportunities, continue to have intrinsic educational value. Many dark tourism sites are considered important destinations for school educational field trips, achieving education through experiential learning.

Nostalgia: Nostalgia can be broadly described as yearning for the past or as a wistful mood that an object, a scene, a smell or a strain of music evoke. In this respect Smith (1996) examined war tourism sites and concluded that old soldiers do go back to the battlefields, to revisit and remember the days of their youth.
Remembrance: Remembrance is a vital human activity connecting us to our past. Remembrance helps people formulate an identity, allowing them to learn from past mistakes, and to go forward with a clear vision of the future. In the context of dark tourism, remembrance and memory are considered key elements in the importance of sites.

Survivor’s guilt: Dark Tourism attracts such visitor who are related to the location in some way, which include survivors and victim’s families returning to the scene of death or disaster. These types of visitors are particularly prevalent at sites associated with Second World War and the holocaust. For many survivors returning to the scene of death and atrocity can achieve a therapeutic effect by resolving grief, and can build understanding of how terrible things came to have happened.

POPULAR DESTINATION AROUND THE WORLD

Dark tourism has now become the catchword of the modern times. In the past it was only limited to topic of research papers and journals, but now tourist consciously or sub consciously engage in this tourism phenomenon. There are countless destinations around the world that are popular just because of the dark past linked to them. Even though visiting these places might give someone goosebumps, but at the same time they also give thrill as well as deeper understanding of the world by venturing through the turbulent past. Some of the world’s popular dark tourism destination are listed.

- Hashima Island, Japan

Also known as Gunkanjima or Battleship Island, is an abandoned offshore mining facility in Nagasaki, Japan. It was considered as mecca for undersea coal mining, which was a representation of Japan’s rapid industrialization. It was functional as coal mining facility from 1887 to 1974. What remain unknown to the world is the darker side of the era of industrialization, during world war 2 many Korean civilians and Chinese prisoners of war were made to engage in forced labour. They were made to work under harsh conditions, unsafe environment and proper food resourcing which led to thousands of deaths due to malnutrition and exhaustion. Later in 2015, it was declared as a UNSECO world heritage site.
• Ruins of Pompeii, Italy

The ancient roman city of Pompeii in Campania, Italy was covered under thick volcanic ash and pumice after the catastrophic eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 A.D. This catastrophic event claimed thousand of lives and total destruction of the ancient city. The ruins of Pompeii were first discovered by Domenico Fontana in late 16th century. The layer of ash helped in preserving artworks, roman architecture and even bodies as they decomposed. Endeavour are being made continuously by European and Italian government to restore the ruins of Pompeii.

• Chernobyl, Ukraine

Chernobyl disaster is one of the horrific and terrible radioactive accident that occurred on 26 April 1986 in the Chernobyl Nuclear power plant, near city of Pripyat, Ukrainian SSR. The accident caused large amount of radioactive substance released into the environment and the air was polluted for several days. The accident’s severe radiation effects caused 28 deaths of the 600 workers within 4 months of the event. Several other received doses high enough to cause radiation sickness. The Chernobyl accident 2 workers died within few hours of explosion. Thousand of other clean-up worker were given doses for radioactive material contamination. After the explosion area within 18 miles was restricted and people were evacuated. Tv show named ‘Chernobyl’ was also produce to reiterate how the events went down which led to the catastrophic event of Chernobyl.

• Auschwitz Concentration Camp, Poland

Auschwitz was one of the largest German Nazi concentration camp and extermination center in the history of mankind. It had around 40 camps which were built during world war II. Around 1 million to 1.5 million innocent lives of men, women and children were lost due to cruelty and hatred of German soldier. Most of the prisoner were Jews. It is a symbol massacre, bloodshed, torture and death. The camp is one of the popular dark tourism destinations in the world and attracts quarter million tourists every year.
**Hiroshima Peace Memorial, Japan**

The continuous conflict with Japan led to the event of atomic bombing in Hiroshima and Nagasaki proclaiming hundreds of thousands of innocent lives. After the attack on Pearl Harbour by Japanese force which exterminated US naval forces, US president Harry S Truman was left with no choice but to use the newly developed weapon to subdue the Japanese force. After testing the nuclear weapon in Bikini Atoll, US targeted the primary Japanese military base in Hiroshima on 6th August 1946, so that Japanese military might will shatter at once. At least 65,000 people were killed due to initial blast but what followed was radioactive exposure which claimed another 70,000 lives as a result. The US dropped another atomic bomb on Nagasaki, on 9th August 1946, which resulted in 80,000 death. The 5-year death toll exceeded over 200,000 as cancer and other ailments related to radioactive exposure took hold. 4 years after the tragic event, a Peace memorial was built to pay homage to victims and also retrospect consequences of nuclear war.

**Aokigahara Suicide forest, Japan**

Aokigahara forest is also commonly known as Jukai or sea of Trees. Aokigahara is infamous as a popular suicide spot. According to local legends Aokigahara was once a place where people practiced ubasute – taking an elderly or sick to a remote location and leaving them to die. The suicide forest clearly captures the darker side of the imagination. After a high number of suicides were reported in 2004, the officials stopped publicizing deaths for fear of glorification of death. One can easily come across evidence of suicide such as discarded jackets, empty campsites, empty bleach bottle, noose hanging from tree, clothes and footwear. One such incident occurred where a famous youtuber Logan Paul came across a man hanging on a noose from a tree, this goes on to show that suicide still occur at the place. The paranormal activity linked to this place attract many foreign tourists to venture into the forest at night.

**9/11 Memorial, New York**

9/11 is considered as one of the deadliest terrorist attacks that shook the 21st century on September 11, 2001. The 9/11 memorial is a tribute of remembrance, honouring the
2977 people who lost their lives in the terror attacks of September 11, 2011 at World Trade Center site, near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, and the pentagon also the 6 people killed in WTC bombing on February 1993. Ever since the attack numerous museums, monuments and other architecture were built. It is one of the famous dark tourism destinations in the world which reflects new start and celebrates New York’s resilience.

- **Murambi Genocide Memorial, Rwanda**

It is situated Gikongoro near the town of Murambi, Southern Rwanda. It is a site of mass murder and genocide. This memorial is one of the 6 centres that commemorate the Rwandan Genocide. Initially this museum was a technical school, where thousands of Tutsis were murdered by Hutu Interahamwe militiamen after they were weakened after starvation and constant fighting. The memorial was founded on April 21, 1995. The corpses of some 800 victims were exhumed, preserved and put on display show the atrocities done to the people. The curator wants people to know what actually went down in that place. It is considered as grimmest and darkest site for a tourist to visit.

**DARK TOURISM SITES IN INDIA**

One of the most rapidly expanding forms of tourism in India, Dark Tourism also known as grief tourism, is often described as a form of travel associated with places that have experienced death, mystery, and pain. Locations that are reminder of human torment and massacre are parameter of dark tourism. It is popular amongst people who are interested in history and want to explore the deep and dark untold stories that are buried deep in the past. Although the very thought of visiting such location is gruesome and scary but it has started to spread like a wild fire, catching attention in Indian tourist. Some of the places are listed down below that have some dark history linked to them.

- **Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar**

Jallianwala Bagh massacre, also known as Massacre of Amritsar, was an incident which took place a century ago on April 13, 1919, in which many lives of unarmed Indian were taken when British troops open fired on a large gathering who came together to celebrate Baisakhi. The incident was result of action taken by British force
to take down all those who were against the Rowlatt Act and were standing in opposition to withdraw the act. It was estimated that approximately 500 people lost their lives during the incident. This massacre was a turning point in India’s struggle for freedom. A memorial was later built in 1951 at Jallianwala Bagh to pay tribute to all those soul and revolutionaries who lost their lives in the brutal massacre. There are still bullet marks on walls from the incident and the well in which many people jumped to save their lives is also well preserved.

- **Cellular Jail, Andaman and Nicobar Islands**

  Widely known as Kala Pani, Cellular Jail was built by Indian British government in 1906 to capture and imprison all the freedom fighters and political prisoners who stood against the tyranny of the British led government. It is also referred to as prison of death as very few made it back alive after being sent there. Since the prison was built on an archipelago, it isolated the activists from mainland and hardly provided the chance of escape. The cellular jail still has some of the equipment intact which was used to torment the prisoners. The place has withstood a lot of sufferings and now, the complex serves as a national memorial monument.

- **Union Carbide subsidiary Plant, Bhopal**

  Often considered to be one of the worst industrial disaster in the world, Bhopal Gas Tragedy was a Gas leak incident that took place in December 1984, at Union Carbide India Limited pesticide plant in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh which resulted in nearly 3800 immediate death and half a million were affected by it causing various ailment related lungs. At least 40 tonnes of methyl isocyanate gas leaked from UCIL plant. Today this site serves as one of the major dark tourism destinations in India.

- **Kuldhara Village, Rajasthan**

  Kuldhara is an abandoned village situated in Jaisalmer district of Rajasthan. The village was established in 13th century and was inhabited by the Paliwal Brahmmins. According to legends narrated by the local native the village was abandoned by the Brahmmins when the diwan of Jaisalmer Salim Singh declared to marry the daughter of village chief and if his wish was granted would result in heavy taxation on the villagers. To escape from the diwan grasp, the villager just fled from the village without a trace. Till the date no one known where they vanished into the thin air. The
village was abandoned in 19th century. People to claimed to witness paranormal activities at the place. Now, the village is promoted as tourist site by state government.

- **Roopkund, Uttarakhand**

Situated in inner part of Chamoli district of Uttarakhand, Roopkund is a high-altitude glacial lake. The lake is popularly known as Skeletons Lake. Every year when snow melts, one can easily spots hundreds of skull and bones lying around. After intense research by scientists, they have come to a conclusion that skeletons found around the lake numbering up to 200 belonged to 9th century Indian tribe who died due to hail storm. The skeletons were first discovered by British forest guard in 1942. Many trekkers and pilgrims visit this lake every year. With time the number are also increase with the rise in popularity of this mysterious lake.

- **Gandhi Smriti, Delhi**

Gandhi smriti, also known as Gandhi Remembrance, is the name given to house and gardens where Mahatma Gandhi known as father of nation, spent his last 144 days of life before he was shot to death by Indian fanatic Nathuram Godse on January 30, 1948. Earlier known as the Birla house, the house was converted into memorial museum in 1970s in remembrance of Mahatma Gandhi.

**DARK TOURISM CLASSIFICATION**

Sharpley proposed that there exists a continuum of purpose of supply of dark tourism attractions or experiences varying from accidental supply to supply that is intended to exploit for profit. Based on this theory Sharpley & Stone constructed a matrix of dark tourism demand and supply. Within this matrix, dark tourism experiences and attractions are measured by extent to which both a fascination with death is a dominant consumption factor and the supply is purposefully directed towards satisfying this fascination. This outcome of this matrix is four shades of dark tourism:

*Pale tourism* – minimal or limited interest in death when visiting sites unintended to be tourist attractions.
Grey tourism demand – tourist with a fascination with death visiting unintended dark tourism sites.

Grey tourism supply – sites intentionally established to exploit death but attracting visitors with some, but not a dominant, interest in death.

Black tourism – in effect, ‘pure’ dark tourism, where a fascination with death is satisfied by the purposeful supply of experiences intended to satisfy this fascination.

Withing these shades, we can easily identify specific attractions or experiences. For example, tourism involving visiting to the graves of popular people would be categorised as pale tourism.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this article is to understand dark tourism and its fundamentals. The ever-increasing demand and supply of such niche market are resulting socio-economic growth of countries. The study also covers some of the popular sites in the world and in India along with their respective history. Dark tourism has reaped the attention from academicians and public in recent years. The opportunity to take part in dark tourist are far ranging as it covers various forms of tourism such as prison tourism, war tourism, etc. Dark tourism can be considered contrary to escapism. Rather than getting away from it all and forgetting about the problems, it provides the opportunity to engage with the real world and probe its contemporary history at authentic locations. Witnessing something first hand at its locations for real is very different from reading about it at home or school. Dark tourism is on the rise, documentaries & shows re-enacting the incident and telling the tales of the sites has only amplified people’s focus towards visiting places with ghastly appeal. These sites are the product of ideology and dominant belief systems, and they act as the meeting place for history and visitation where questions of authenticity and fact are sometimes brought together with the operation of tourism facilities. The main attraction to dark locations is their historical value rather than their associations with death and suffering. Dark Tourism site has some impact on memory and heritage. Although the Colosseum or Pompeii have a dark history but they are known worldwide as historical sites. Dark tourism site is not only limited to dark history linked with the destination or experiences but also their historical and cultural significance.
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