



Development of Sikh Circuit in Bihar Challenges and Possibilities

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Abstract : *The Sikh Circuit is a route that traces the presence and activities of Sikh Gurus right from Guru Nanak Dev, the First Guru to Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and the last one and their disciples. Our research work aims to highlight challenges and possibilities in the development of Sikh Tourism. The strategy outlined in this research project seeks to probe the impact of tourism along with the growth of the Sikh circuit in its socio-economic and cultural folds.*

The State of Bihar carries the image of itself as a Centre of Buddhism, though it also has the potentials to be recognised as a Sikh centre of Tourism, with a world-wide fame and recognition. The 350th Prakash Parv or the Birth Anniversary

celebration of Guru Gobind Singh ji in Jan-2017, in Bihar exhibited the numerous possibilities of developing Sikh circuit and promote the state as a prominent pilgrimage for national and international tourists. The proposed study reflects the possibilities as well as challenges in initiating this project, and the affirmative efforts undertaken by the Government and the NGO's.

Keywords: *Guru Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, Patna Circuit, Sikh Circuit, Possibilities, Challenges, Tourism.*

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Introduction:

The state of Bihar is one of India's greatest reservoirs of history, culture, philosophies, and religions. Bihar is famous for its Buddhist and Jain heritage; simultaneously a discussion of its rich cultural heritage is incomplete without accepting its hidden treasures underlying in the state of several renowned Sikh Gurus. In fact, Bihar enjoys a Special status on account of it being the birthplace of their revered Guru, Guru Gobind Singh in 1666 C. He was the pioneer who united the followers of Guru Nanak. However, few of us know that such a connection can be pushed back even earlier to the 17th century when a journey was made by the first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak Dev to Bihar, traversing across boundaries of provinces. Subsequently, in the following centuries, other Sikh Gurus and thousands of their

disciples ranging from devotees to traders visited Bihar and established themselves.

It is high time now to showcase the trail of the Sikhs in a manner that benefits the citizens throughout the world. According to a State Tourism Department Report, the arrival of foreign tourists has seen a 12-fold captive increase in last twenty year, from 85,673 in 2001 to 10.9 lakh in 2019.

The Sikh Circuit will become an important pilgrimage destination for the 23,227,000 practicing Sikhs along with tourists, Scholars, and business oriented people who are interested in capturing the on-going progress of cultural heritage in Bihar. In addition this can be a strong impetus for making Bihar self-reliant and opening several job opportunities in the fields of hospitality, tourism and transportation.

Review of the Literature:

1. "Guru Gobind Singh A great Nation Builder", Joginder Singh (ed). 2011. Prabandhak Committee. takht Shri Harmandar Ji patna Saheb, Patna-It reflects light on the life of Guru Gobind Singh. It gave us a picture of the early years spent by Bala Pritam, childhood name of Guru Gobind Singh, in Patna.
2. "Khalsa Panth K Mool Kendra Takht Shri Harmander Ji Patna Saheb ka Pavitra itihaas", 2005, Prabandhak Committee Takht Shri Harmandir Patna sahib-This book traces the history of second most revered Takht of Sikhs i.e. Harmandir Sahib.
3. "A History of the Sikhs", Vo;-I and Vol-II, Khushwant Singh- The comprehensive volumes of the writer throws light on the social, religious and political history of Sikhs.
4. "Development of management of Urban Infrastructure in India" (ed. Sister M. Rashmi A.C., Debjani Sarkar Ghoshm and Amrita Chowdhry), 2017, Chapter-19, by Divya Kumar entitled 'Lesser Known Heritage-cum- Tourists Sites of Patna: Need for Infrastructural Upgradation', Rajesh Publication, New Delhi- This Article highlights the importance of Sikh

Shrines as Tourists Sites with Historical background.

Aims and Objectives:

- To show that Bihar holds the prospects of Sikh Circuit since it inherits rich history of Sikh Gurus.
- Development of Sikh Circuit in Bihar will promote religious harmony and socio-cultural assimilation.
- Along with the Jain and the Buddhist sites, Sikh Circuit will help in tapping the growth in Tourism and transport Sectors, boosting the economy as well as enhancing the prestige of the State at the International Level.

To trace the possibilities and threats to meet the goal in developing Sikh Circuit in Bihar.

Hypothesis:

- There are immense possibilities of developing Sikh Circuit in Bihar.
 - This Circuit will create religious and cultural understanding and mutual harmony among different sects in Bihar
 - This circuit will bring the Gurudwaras on the forefront and will enhance the prestige of Bihar
- There are certain challenges and limitations too, in developing this circuit.

Methodology:

- Information is are based on both Primary and Secondary sources.
- Data has been collected through newspapers, internet, documentaries, magazines and books.
- Information has also been elicited through Interviews and Surveys.
- This Project is a Research based project based on both quantitative and qualitative approach.

Tracing the Indomitable Presence of the Sikh Gurus in Bihar and Growth of Sikhism in the State:

Though most of the Sikh population predominantly reside in Punjab, Bihar has preserved unique treasurable moments from the pages of Sikh history related to our revered Sikh Gurus.

The connection of Sikhism with Bihar would become evident from the following description of Gurudwaras; most of them are marked by the divine presence of the Gurus while some of them were established by the Masands sent by the Gurus.

Harmandir Sahib:

Harmandir Sahib is situated in Patna City, Bihar, India. It is also known as Takht Shri Patna Sahib. It is one of the Five Takhts which are considered as the Authority of the Sikhs. The Takht commemorates the birthplace of the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, who was born in December 1666. Harmandir Sahib was built by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who also built several other Gurudwaras across the Indian subcontinent. The monument of the present Patna Sahib was erected in 1950s. Originally, the haveli of Salis Rai Jouri, a great devotee of Guru Nanak, stood at this place. Harmandir Sahib has several relics related to Guru Gobind Sahib and some other artefacts of historical importance which are persevered within with utmost care.

Gurudwara Guru ka Bagh:

Gurudwara Guru Ka Bagh is situated in Patna City, three kilometers East from Harmandir Sahib. The garden originally belonged to Nawabs Rahim Bakhsh and Karim Bakhsh. When Guru Tegh returned from his four-year long odyssey, he stayed in this garden along with his supporters. The young Sahibzada, Gobind Rai along with the sangat of Patna came here to receive Guru Tegh Bahadur. A shrine was made here to commemorate the first meeting of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Gobind Rai. Its present building was constructed during 1970s and 1980s.

Gurudwara Gai Ghat:

Gurudwara Gai Ghat is also known as Gurudwara Pahila Bara. The Gurudwara is situated in Ashok Rajpath, Patna and is 4 kilometres away from Harmandir Sahib. Legends hold that an old man, Bhagat Jaitmal, used to live here. Once Guru Nanak visited him, Jaitmal asked Guru's permission to free him from the mortal world. Guru Nanak asked him to remain alive till the 9th Guru arrives. Jaitmal had become incredibly old and could not go to Ganga Ghat for bathing, hence Guru

Nanak assured him that Devi Ganga would come (as a cow) and would give him bath.

Gurudwara Handi Sahib:

Gurudwara Handi Saheb is situated in Danapur, 20 kilometres west of old Patna City. Guru Tegh Bahadur had returned to Punjab leaving his family in Patna. The family after leaving Patna Sahib made their first stop in Danapur. An old lady, known as Mai Pardhani cooked Khichdi in Handi and served it to the Guru and his family and his followers. Mai requested Guru Gobind Singh to stay by serving Sangat, his presence would be felt. Taking his words, Mai converted her house into Dharmshala. Till her last breath she cooked khichdi in that Handi and served it to people. Subsequently, a shrine was built here. It was named as Handiwali Sangat, which is now known as Gurudwara Handi Sahib.

Gurudwara Kangana Ghat:

Gurudwara Kangan Ghat is also known as Gurudwara Shri Gobind Singh Ghat. It is situated in Patna City, hardly 200 yards from Harmandir Sahib. Baal Govind has shown several astonishing miracles in Patna. Gobind Ghat has also witnessed one such miracle. One day, Gobind Rai was playing on the bank of the river Ganges and he threw his gold bangles in the water. When the news reached his mother, Mata Gujri, she asked people to search his bangles. When people descended into the river they encountered a magical sight. They saw thousand pairs of gold bangles immersed in the water. Guru Gobind made people realise that the world is full of illusions and is covered with Maya. He urged people to give up Maya completely.

Gurudwara Sunartoli Patshashi Pehli:

While on his visit to Bihar, Guru Nanak stayed at GaiGhat. Mardana, a disciple of Guru Nanak asked for food. Guru Nanak gave him a Laal, a precious stone, to sell in the market and a food from the money that he will get. Mardana went to Patna City to sell the Laal. He reached SunarToli market and met Murlidhar who took him to Salas Rai Johri. Salas Rai then visited Guru Nanak who advised him that the way he has recognized the precious stone, Laal, he should also recognize the value of the precious life which is useless without the

remembrance of God. Salas Rai became his follower along with Murlidhar. Murlidhar invited Guru Nanak to come to SunarToli and deliver a Satsang. Thus, a Sikh shrine was erected in SunarToli in the memory of Guru Nanak.

Gurudwara Baal Leela Maini Sangat:

Gurudwara Bal Lila Maini Sangat is situated in Patna City, few meters away from Harmandir Sahib. Once lived a local chieftain Raja Fateh Chand Maini with his queen in this area. The couple was childless. One day, while the Queen was deeply absorbed in prayer, Guru Gobind Singh came and sat on her lap and addressed her as 'Maa'. Later, Fateh Chand and his wife converted their house into a Sangat which came to be known as Maini Sangat. This Gurudwara is maintained and served by the Nirmala priests.

Gurudwara Shri Chacha Phaggumal Sahib, Sasaram:

Gurudwara Shri Chacha Phaggumal Sahib is situated in Sasaram town, Rohatas District. It marks the old site of Masand's house where Guru Tegh Bahadur stayed. This one is the principal Gurudwara in the town, the other two come under it. It is housed in a spacious high-ceilinged wall with a gallery at the mid-height.

Gurudwara Taksali Sangat, Sasaram:

Guru Tegh Bahadur did not directly come to Patna from Banaras. He made a tour to Sasaram and Gaya. Sasaram is in the Shahabad district of Bihar. A Sikh Sangat was already established in Sasaram under Chacha Phaggu Mal. He waited for years to welcome Guru into his house. Guru Tegh Bahadur fulfilled his wish. Gurudwara Taksali Sangat, also known as Gurudwara Bari Sangat, was built in the memory of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Gurudwara Shri Guru Tegh Bahadur, Gaya:

Gurudwara Shri Tegh Bahadur is situated in Gaya near an ancient Hindu pilgrimage centre on the bank of the Phalgu river. Hindu pilgrims have come here for centuries upon centuries to perform rites for their departed ancestors. Firstly, Guru Nanak and later Guru Tegh Bahadur visited here. This Gurudwara is controlled by Udaasi priests. Three copies of Shri Guru Granth

Sahib in Gurumukhi and Devanagari are kept side by side in a rectangular pavilion on a raised platform.

Gurdwara Rajauli Sangat, Nawada:

Gurudwara Rajauli Sangat, which is about 4 acres in Rajauli has the Khapar of Bhagat Bhagwan, presented to him by Hinglaj Devi Sanga. One can take a glimpse of the 100 year's old handwritten copy of Guru Granth Sahib and a couple of pictures of Hindu deities.

Gurudwara Shri Guru Nanak Sheetal Kund, Rajgir:

Rajgir is known for its natural springs. It is said that Rajgir initially had 22 hot springs, fuelled by the high sulphur content in the region. As both weather and water were incredibly hot during summers, the residents of Rajgir desperately searched for some respite. When Guru Nanak reached Rajgir, his first stop was the town's central attraction, Brahma Kunda. The people of Rajgir complained about the prevailing condition of water. It is said that he calmly pointed at one of the 22 hot springs, declaring that the water there would now flow cold. Ever since the water at the Guru Nanak Sheetal Kund has flowed cold.

Gurudwara Guru Tegh Bahadur, Munger:

Gurudwara Tegh Bahadur is also known as Gurudwara Pakki Sangat and is situated in Munger district which is 170 kilometers away from Harmandir Sahib. While on his Eastward journey, Guru Tegh Bahadur stayed here. It was during his stay he got the news of the birth of Guru Gobind Singh.

Gurudwara Bari Sangat Tegh Bahadur Ji Ki Chauki, Bhagalpur:

Gurudwara Bari Sangat Tegh Bahadur Ji Ki Chauki is situated in Bhagalpur district, near the right bank of the river Ganga. Guru Tegh Bahadur visited this place in 1667. An old hand-written copy of Guru Granth Sahib, acquired from the former Udaasi priest of the shrine, is preserved in Gurudwara Sabha. The other Gurudwara, Gurudwara Chhoti Sangat is also situated on the bank of river Ganga, a little distance from Bari Sangat.

Guru Tegh Bahadur Aitihaasik Gurudwara, Laxmipur, Kathihar:

Guru Tegh Bahadur Aitihaasik Gurudwara has a history that goes back to the time when ninth Sikh Guru,

Guru Tegh Bahadur first halted at this place while on his way to Assam. This place is also known as Karah Gola Ghat. Relics preserved here are two hukumnamas sent by Guru Gobind Singh from Machhiwara and a very old Guru Granth Sahib.

Apart from these fourteen **Gurudwaras**, **Gurudwara Guru Singh Sabha, Kishanganj, Gurudwara Sahib, Darbhanga and Gurudwara Sri kirtangarh, Muzaffarpur** also shares the historical importance.

Summary and Analysis of the Current Situation:

Since the action plan for the development of the Sikh Circuit was launched in 2012, very fragmented efforts by the government were seen to develop and promote the Sikh Circuit as a mainstream tourism. The rationale for investing in Sikh Circuit is to improve the experience of visiting the Sikh shrines and link that to the potential of tourism to deliver sustainable and inclusive economic growth through job creation and income generation opportunities for micro and small enterprises and by growing a related tax base.

The strategy outlined in this research paper seeks to grow the economic impact of tourism along the Sikh Circuit by attracting higher-spending tourists and linking them to local service providers. This strategy recognises that investment is required from both the public and private sector to increase demand and improve quality of experience while respecting, preserving, and enhancing the religious value and significance of the sites. The process starts with an analysis of the current situation, a vision for a desired future, and an analysis of the gaps that need to be filled and the challenges faced to progress the vision. The following activities were carried out:- A comprehensive analysis of legal and regulatory challenges and constraints., Interviews with public and private stakeholders, Consultations with the Patna Sahib Gurudwara Committee, Review of existing reports and plans.

Analysis of the Current Situation

Commemoration of the 350th year of birth celebration of Guru Gobind Singh was organised on a grand scale in Patna by the Dept. of Tourism, Bihar

during 3-5 January, 2017. On this occasion millions of pilgrims visited the city from all over the world. The Hon'ble Prime Minister of India inaugurated the function and special commemorative postal stamps were released.

The Secretary of the Tourism Department, Ms Harjot Kaur, an IAS officer of Bihar cadre, at that time said that 'attracting pilgrims and devotees from every corner of India and around the world in large numbers to Bihar to participate in this grand event was a major challenge'.

The huge response of the people has made the State think of developing a Sikh Circuit connecting all important Sikh sites of the State. She has confirmed that the Bihar government has started its work on Patna Circuit and Guru Circuit.

The Guru circuit:

Besides, enjoying the exalted status on account of its being the birthplace of the tenth Sikh guru Guru Gobind Singh, it has witnessed the visits of the first and ninth Sikh gurus. These places have now evolved into pilgrimage centres. The Government of Bihar is developing these places and connecting them through a circuit called the Guru Circuit.



Guru Circuit made by Bihar Government

The Circuit starts from Patna Sahib, goes on including **Sasaram, Gaya, Nawada, Rajgir, Munger, Bhagalpur** and ends at **Katihar**. The Bihar Government is taking necessary steps to improve road connectivity and electricity to all the Gurudwaras situated along the Guru Circuit. Besides this, Department of Tourism, Government of Bihar has sanctioned funds to construct

basic amenities such as Community Hall, Boundary Wall, Civic amenities among others for the devotees at the identified Gurudwaras like Chacha Phaggumal Gurudwara, Sasaram, Taksal Sahib Gurudwara, Gurudwara Lakshampur among others. Apart from this, major infrastructural development -projects like development of Patna Sahib worth 29 Cr., development of Prakash Punj worth 61 Cr. and Sikh Heritage and Research Centre worth 11 Cr. have also been undertaken to provide amenities to the devotees and to attract them in large numbers.

A Vision for Desired Future:

Proposed Circuit:

Since Guru Circuit starts from Patna Sahib and ends at Laxmipur, Katihar, tracing the footsteps of the three Gurus who has visited Bihar, we felt the need to extend the circuit further and include those Guruwaras which were not visited by the Gurus but were established by the Masands of missionaries were sent by Guru Shri Amardas in 15th and 16th Centuries.

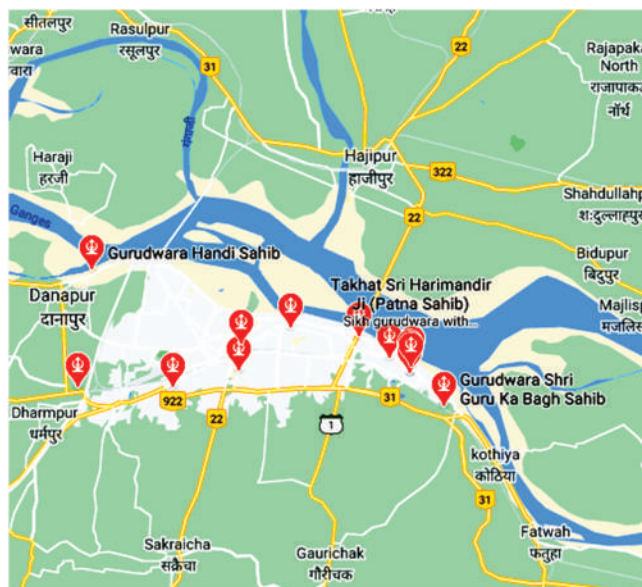


Proposed Circuit

Hence, the addition of the Sikh shrines of **Kishanganj**, **Darbhanga** and **Muzaffarpur** in the Circuit would form a complete loop. A tourist can travel further along the Guru Circuit and reach Patna again.

Sub-Circuits:

The complete circuit would prove to be expensive, time-taking and tiresome, especially for women, children and aged people. Hence, we have formulated three tourist-friendly sub-circuits as per the needs and demand of tourists. The visitors who will have a lack of time can visit these sub-circuits one by one.



i) Patna Circuit

The Patna Circuit includes Gurudwaras in the district of Patna. The circuit starts from Patna Sahib, **Patna City** and ends at Danapur, **Patna**. Following is the sketch of the proposed Patna Circuit



A Sketch of the Proposed Patna Circuit

It will be a mini-circuit.

ii) Guru Gobind Singh Circuit

Our proposed Guru Gobind Singh Circuit connects all the Gurudwaras which were graced by the presence of Guru Gobind Singh. It's route starts from **TakhtShri Harmandir Sahib** and passes through **Gurudwara Guru Ka Bagh**, **Gurudwara Kangan Ghat**, **Gurudwara Bal Leela Maini Sangat**, **Gurudwara Sangat Sunar Toli**, **Gurudwara Gai Ghat** and ends at **Gurudwara Handi Saheb**.

iii) Sub-Circuit – 3

This sub-circuit connects the **Gurudwaras of Patna, Sasaram, Gaya, Nawada and Rajgir**. It is for the convenience of those tourists who would not have the time to visit all the Gurudwaras of Bihar. Through this Circuit, they can visit some of the major Sikh shrines of Bihar.



Sub-Circuit – 3

The development of the Circuit by the Government of Bihar can be done in three phases:-

1) Phase-I

In the first phase, Government can develop the infrastructure of Gurudwaras of Patna, i.e. Takht Shri Harmandir Sahib, Gurudwara Bal Leela Maini Sangat, Gurudwara Guru Ka Bagh, Gurudwara Handi Sahib, Gurudwara Kangan Ghat, Gurudwara Sunar Toli Patshahi Pehli.

2) Phase-II

Gurudwaras along the Guru Circuit outside Patna i.e. Gurudwaras of Sasaram, Gaya, Rajauli, Rajgir, Munger, Bhagalpur and Katihar can be developed in the second phase.

3) Phase-III

The Gurudwaras of Kishanganj, Darbhanga and Muzaffarpur can be developed in the third phase.

The Role of Private Sector

The Government's role in this Circuit is very important however we can't ignore the role of Private Sectors, too.

Following areas have been identified for direct participation of the private sector: Creation of

accommodation facilities, creation of entertainment facilities and developing tourism based infrastructures, setting up world class shopping plaza, power generation, running of tourist coaches, conducting packaged tours, marketing and incentives.

Challenges- Identifying Obstacles:

As mentioned by Shri Mahinder Pal Singh, General Secretary, Takht Patna Sahib Management Board, in his interview, told that the rich history of Sikhism in Bihar is known to the Sikh community, but the wider global Sikh Community has very little awareness about it and even lesser in the Non-Sikh community. There is a lack of organized online marketing for this tourism. Gurudwaras of Bihar have preserved several relics related to Guru Nanak, Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh, but there are limited interpretations of the rich history behind them. There is no clear brand identity of this tourism and it is fragmented among private and public sector role players. The tourism quality is limited since restaurants, coffee shops, shopping malls and others are not found in the vicinity of most of these Gurudwaras. In total there are 16 Gurudwaras in Bihar, some are in remote regions that makes the circuit a large network of Gurudwaras, but we see inferior quality of roads which connect these shrines. Railway's schedule is not convenient between the sites. There are very few opportunities to engage with the local community and perhaps more interactive experiences can increase the demand in Sikh Tourism. Lack of local awareness and understanding of the benefits and responsibilities with tourism growth limits the output. Destruction and pollution of Sikh Heritage also poses a threat to the Sikh Circuit. Overlapping Government's mandate often results in inaction. Lack of hygiene and poor food, lack of security measures may threaten visitor health and taint the circuit's brand.

Possibilities-A Glimpse into the potentiality of the circuit:

The Sikh population in the world is 30 million which could boost the Sikh tourism in India and particularly in Bihar. The Global Sikh community can contribute to Sikh circuit in two ways:

Firstly, by collaborating with the state government of Bihar, they can invest in Sikh tourism sector and globalise the Sikh heritage of Bihar.

Secondly, by visiting Bihar, they can contribute in boosting up the Sikh circuit tourism. The state government can tie up with the central government along with the government of foreign countries. This will attract big investment in every sector and will improve the current infrastructure markets exhibition seminars and other recreational and educational facilities should be setup to attract a large population. People of different occupations will find employment in this Sector. For instance, merchants, artisans, Cloth sellers, cooks and several more can business here. The contribution and relevance of teaching of Sikhs gurus is unique as it have elements of both Hinduism and Islam along with some impact of Christianity which will foster a better understanding in the society. Bihar holds prospects of various tourism circuits as the Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, Sufi, Shaiva and Shakta (related to Shakti or Goddess Durga) Circuits, combining them with each other would be a major attraction for the tourists in the form of combined circuit.

Interviews:

In order to make our research project more authentic and genuine we have interviewed several dignitaries.

Mrs. Harjot Kaur, IAS, who was the Principal Secretary of Tourism Department of Bihar Government during the time of 350th Prakash Parv, who said that the success of this grand event led the State Government to formulate the plan of the Guru Circuit.

Dr. Bhupendra Kalsi, head-coordinator of Department of Hindi in the Nalanda Open University said that there is a need of proper interpretation of the teachings and legends that the revered Guru Granth Sahib holds since the majority of the common mass is unaware of the historical background of Gurudwaras in Patna and other districts of Bihar.

Shri Mahinder Pal Singh Dhillan, General Secretary of Takht Patna Sahib Management Board, suggested that the government should develop the Sikh circuit as an industrial setup that will include hotels, hospitality and other things, necessary attractions for the tourists.

Bijoy Chowdhary, Executive Director, Bihar Heritage Development Society, suggested that the Gurudwaras of Patna can be developed in the first phase, Gurudwaras in the nearby areas of Patna can be developed in the second phase and those of far flung areas of North Bihar in the third phase.

Dr. Divya Kumar, Assistant Professor in B.D. College of Patliputra University, suggested that the Sikh Circuit can also be combined with the existing circuits of Bihar.

Dr. Ranjit Kaur, Assistant Professor of Shri Guru Nanak Girls Degree College in Lucknow said that Bihar lacks proper infrastructure in order to develop a full-fledged tourism circuit.

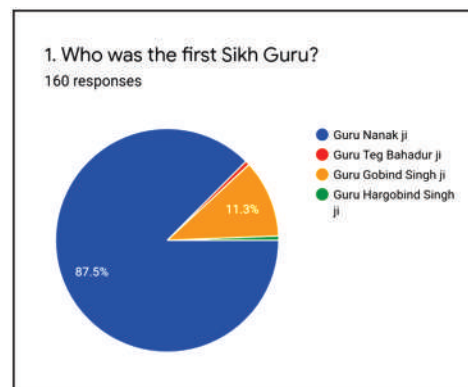
Rajee Jaisawal, a student of Patna Women's College, who resides in Patna City, shared traffic increased manifold during the 350th Prakashotsav which caused many road blockages, and people had to spend many hours in the traffic. However, she also adds that the State Government is making improvements in the infrastructure and there were fewer hindrances in the traffic this year.

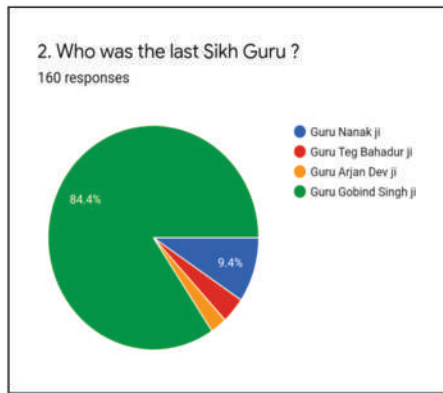
Survey:

According to the 2011 Census, 1.72% adheres to Sikhism in India and 0.02% in Bihar. So the main goal of this survey is to know the percentage of individuals familiar with the rich culture and heritage of Sikhism, although without aiming at any form of comparison between individuals. The survey was conducted in the months of December 2020 and January 2021.

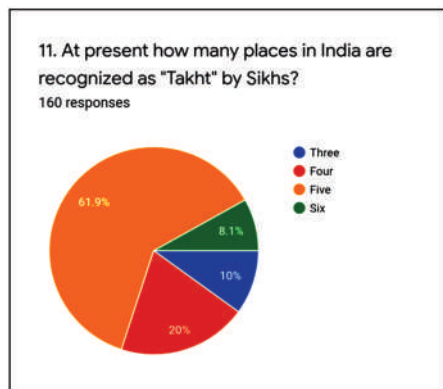
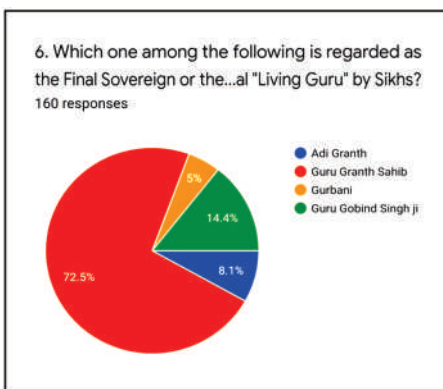
The survey has three parts:

- The first part is about the Sikh Gurus.

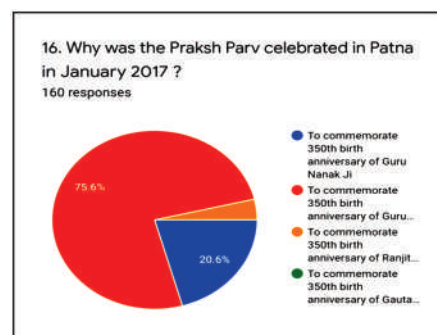




- The second part is about the Sikh Tradition.



- The Third part is Sikhism in Bihar.



Though the results seem to be very positive regarding the awareness of Sikhism among the non Sikh community, we cannot ignore the loopholes of online surveys, so this survey needs to be used carefully.

Findings:

- Our first hypothesis -'there are immense possibilities of development of Sikh Circuit in Bihar', People of different occupations will find employment in this sector. For instance, merchants, artisans, cloth sellers, cooks and several more can do business here. The government of Bihar is also eager to develop it. Hence, our first hypothesis is proved.
- Our second hypothesis i.e. 'such a circuit will not only create religious harmony and promote tourism but will also lead to cultural amalgamation. Sikhism being influenced by both Hinduism and Islam, to some extent, it also bears the impact of Christianity, particularly its doctrine of Grace (parsaad). When we read the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib, we found it to be true. Also, Mrs. Harjot Kaur and Shri Mahinderpal Singh Dhillan have agreed that this Circuit will add to the culture of Bihar. Langars, signifying the Sikh tenet of selfless serving, will play a very important role in ensuring cultural exchange. Thus, our second hypothesis has also been proved.
- The third hypothesis i.e. 'development of such a Sikh Circuit by bringing the Gurudwaras on the forefront would enhance the prestige of Bihar'. The global Sikh Community is more than eager to contribute in the development of a Sikh Circuit in Bihar. The state government can tie up with the central government and can also collaborate with the governments of the foreign countries. This will bring big investments in the sector and will also promote the Circuit on a global level. The Sikh Circuit will become an important pilgrimage destination for the 23,227,000 practicing Sikhs as well as travelers interested in history, culture or religion. This will

give Bihar a global recognition. Hence, our third hypothesis has also been proved right.

- Our fourth and last hypothesis was that 'there are certain challenges in the way of development of this Circuit.' These challenges would need special attention of the administration, major one being the limited rail and road infrastructure. Thus, our fourth and the last hypothesis are also valid.
- In addition to these we found that the Guru Circuit which has been planned by the government can also be extended further to include three more Sikh destinations in its route. Three sub-circuits can also be made under it.
- Sikh Circuit can be combined with other existing circuits such as the Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, Sufi, Shaiva and Shakta (related to Shakti or Goddess Durga) Circuits. There are many sites in Bihar where circuits overlap. Such places hold greater prospects of development. Patna, Rajgir, Gaya, Muzaffarpur, Bhagalpur and Katihar are some of the examples. Its development would be an added lucrative and definitely it will open prospects of employment for local people.

Suggestions:

- A comprehensive Sikh Circuit combining the Guru Circuit, the proposed Circuit and the Guru Gobind Singh Circuit can be developed.
- Proper coordination between Central, State Government, Governments of Neighboring States and religious bodies is needed because overlapping mandates over sites on the Sikh Circuit may threaten the viability of collective actions that can contribute to the transformation envisaged by stakeholders.
- Allocation of funds at both the Central and the State level for the Circuit is required.
- Restoration and preservation of the gurdwaras is a must. Those at Munger and Sasaram seek special attention. Gurdwara Beni Sikh Sangat and Gurdwara Baba Saryu Das Ji of Sasaram

are in a dilapidated state. The government need not to ignore such exigencies.

- Publicity of the Sikh Circuit, through print and electronic media and through social sites, in other parts of India and outside is recommended..
- Proper coordination between the Departments of Tourism, Health and Transport in addition with ASI and Municipal Corporation requires attention.
- Bihar holds prospects of various tourism circuits as the Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, Sufi, Shaiva and Shakta (related to Shakti or Goddess Durga) Circuits. In 2017, emphasis was also laid on the Sikh and Champaran Circuits. There are many sites in Bihar where circuits overlap. They can be developed as a combined circuit. We have discussed its prospects in our findings. All these suggestions need promotion from within the framework of Govt. and non- Govt. organizations.

Conclusion:

In 2016, just a year before the 350th Prakash Utsav of Guru Gobind Singh, Sikh Tourism in Bihar received special attention in the form of Guru Circuit: a plan was formulated by the Bihar Government to connect all important destinations visited by the Sikh Gurus in the State. It brought into its ambit the Gurudwaras of Patna City. Then, it also connected the Guru Nanak Kund in Rajgir in addition to the Gurudwaras of Katihar, Gaya, Nawada, Sasaram and Bhagalpur. In our project, we have proposed an extension of the existing Guru Circuit and have also proposed three sub-circuits. During the process of our research, we unearthed several challenges that stood in the way of development of such a Circuit of which ignorance on part of the general populace, neglect of the shrines and relics and lack of infrastructure figured prominently. However, the possibilities of the development of this Circuit outweigh its challenges. This is very encouraging.

The development of the Circuit needs to be taken up phase wise and needs to be combined with other circuits. Once it starts rolling, it would be of great benefit

to the State in terms of religion, culture, tourism, financial gains, and industrial growth and would definitely provide employment opportunities. Above all, it would enhance the status of the State on both the national and international levels. This research work is a humble attempt to discuss the Sikh Circuit of Bihar amidst its challenges and possibilities.

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