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FOREIGN FEMALE TOURISTS' FEAR OF SEXUAL ASSAULT- A NEW CHALLENGE TO TOURISM

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Abstract: Tourism has emerged as an instrument of employment generation, poverty alleviation, and sustainable human development. Foreign tourists make a major contribution to the country's economic development. India is a captivating country known for its rich culture, history, and diverse landscapes. However, safety concerns are a topic of discussion for many female travelers. In this blog, we'll delve into the various aspects of traveling as a woman in India, providing valuable insights, essential tips, and up-to-date information to help you make informed decisions and ensure a safe and memorable journey. Tourism has become the second largest net foreign exchange earner for the country. Sexual assault on foreign tourists in India is a major setback to the tourism industry. In 2022 Foreign Exchange Earning from tourism was Rs. 134543 Crore with an annual growth rate of 106.8%. The ratio of female travelers flying from developed countries to India has been on a consistent rise. On a year-on-year basis(y-o-y), the first quarter of 2023 saw the proportion of female international flyers rise to 49% of all travelers. The Indian government has taken measures to address issues related to women's safety. Also, engaging with local communities and seeking assistance from trusted sources, such as hotel staff or tourist information centers, can enhance your safety and overall experience in India as a female traveller.

Keywords: Tourism Industry, Foreign exchange earnings, cultural heritage, sustainable human development, Asia Pacific Region, Foreign Exchange Earning, Sustainable Development Goals, sexual assaults,

Tourism is the fastest-growing industry in the world today. It is also one of the world's most competitive industries. This competition is constantly growing as more and more destinations seek to attract tourists and more companies and organizations become involved in this industry. There is a shift from the world of work to the world of pleasure. India is a country known for its lavish treatment of all visitors, no matter where they come from. Its visitor-friendly traditions, varied lifestyles and cultural heritage, colorful fairs, and festivals held abiding attractions for the tourists. The other attractions include beautiful beaches, forests and wildlife and landscapes for eco-tourism, snow, river, and mountain peaks for adventure tourism, technological parks, and science museums for science tourism, centers of pilgrimage for spiritual tourism, heritage trains and hotels for heritage tourism, Yoga, Ayurveda, and natural health resorts also attract tourists. Tourism has emerged as an instrument of employment generation, poverty alleviation, and sustainable human development. During 1998-99, employment generation through tourism was estimated at 14.79 million.

Foreign tourists make an essential contribution to the country's economic development. The number of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in India during 2010 increased to 5.78 million as compared to 5.17 million in 2009. The growth rate in FTAs during 2010 over 2009 was 11.8% as compared to (-) 2.2% during 2009 over 2008. The growth rate of 11.8% in 2010 for India was better than UNWTO's projected growth rate of 5% to 6% for the world in 2010. The share of India in international tourist arrivals in 2010 was 0.61%, which is a 0.02% improvement over 2009. However, India's rank improved to 40th, in 2010, from 41st in 2009. India accounted for 2.83% of tourist arrivals in the Asia Pacific Region in 2010, with the rank of 11. (Indian Tourism Statistics 2010, Government of India Ministry of Tourism Market Research Division, Nov.2011). The number of Foreign Tourist Arrivals in India during 2019 increased by 10.93 million as compared to 10.56 million in 2018. The growth rate in foreign tourist arrival during 2019 over 2018 3.5% as compared to 5.2 0% during 2018 over 2017. The share of India in international tourist arrivals in 2019 was 1.23%. India accounted for 4.97% of international tourist arrivals in the Asia Pacific region in 2019 with the 7th rank. Tourism continues to play an important role as a foreign exchange earner for the country. In 2019 international tourist arrivals worldwide registered a growth of 3.7% as compared to growth of 5.6% during 2018 over 2017. The international tourist arrivals during 2019, 2018, and 2017 were 1459 million 1407 million, and 1332 million respectively. The international tourist arrivals during 2022 were 6.19 million with an annual growth rate of 305.4%. Foreign exchange earnings from the tourism sector during 1998-99 were estimated at Rs.12,011 crore. Tourism has thus become the second-largest net foreign exchange earner for the country. Tourism also contributed Rs. 24241 cores during 1998-99 towards the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Foreign tourists make an essential contribution to the country's economic development. Tourism overall accounts for 6 percent of India's Gross Domestic Product, 10% of organized employment in the country, and 20 million jobs. An estimated 60 million to 70 million more people make their living off foreigners in an unorganized sector. Foreign tourism specifically contributes about \$18 billion, or approximately 20 percent of India's Current Account Deficit. Tourism continues to play an important role as a Foreign Exchange Earner for the country. In 2010, the FEE from tourism was US \$ 14.19 billion (Indian Tourism Statistics 2010, Government of India Ministry of Tourism Market Research Division, Nov.2011). In 2019 foreign exchange earnings from tourism were US \$ 30.06 billion as compared to US \$ 28.59 billion in 2018 registering a growth of 5.1%. In 2022 earnings of FEE from tourism was Rs. 134543 Crore with an annual growth rate of 106.8%.

Traveling to India as a woman can be an enriching experience, but it's essential to be aware of potential challenges to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip. Firstly, you may encounter varying cultural norms and customs, so it's advisable to dress modestly and respect local traditions. Harassment, particularly in crowded areas, can be a concern, so staying vigilant and assertive can be helpful. Using reputable transportation services, sharing your itinerary with someone you trust, and opting for accommodations in safe neighborhoods are other precautions to consider. Food and water safety should not be overlooked to avoid gastrointestinal issues. By staying informed, taking precautions, and embracing the rich culture, cuisine, and history of India, you can have a memorable and rewarding journey as a woman traveler.

International tourism recovered strongly in 2010 from the blow it suffered due to the global financial crisis and economic recession. International tourist arrivals worldwide registered a positive growth of 6.6% during the year 2010 as compared to a negative growth of 3.8% during 2009 over 2008. India's rank has also witnessed improvement from 34th in 1998 to 16th in 2010. The Govt. aims at positioning tourism as a major engine of economic growth and harnessing its direct and multiplier effects for employment and poverty eradication in an environmentally sustainable manner. The growth of the Indian tourism sector in recent years has hinted at the untapped potential of the sector to contribute to national income and employment. It is important to gauge the perception of tourists' past as well as prospective in selected foreign markets about tourism in India and also assess the impact of the ongoing overseas campaign launched by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, to promote India as a high-value, up-market tourist destination. (Indian Tourism Statistics 2010, Government of India Ministry of Tourism Market Research Division, Nov.2011)

The major constraint in the expansion of international tourist traffic to India is with non-availability of adequate infrastructure including adequate air seat capacity, accessibility to tourist destinations, accommodation and trained manpower in sufficient numbers, and incidents of touting and harassment of tourists in some places are factors that contribute to poor visitor experience. Social, cultural, and environmental factors are not divorced from tourism activity. Sexual assault on foreign tourists in India is a major setback to the tourism industry. Violence against women and girls remains one of the most prevalent and pervasive human rights violations in

the world. Globally, an estimated 736 million women — almost one in three — have been subjected to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both, at least once in their life says U N. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women issued by the UN General Assembly in 1993, defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.” Violence against women continues to be an obstacle to achieving equality, development, peace as well as to the fulfillment of women's and girls' human rights. All in all, the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - to leave no one behind - cannot be fulfilled without putting an end to violence against women and girls.

A new study shows tourism has plunged, especially among women, since a 23-year-old Indian student was raped on a New Delhi bus and later died from her injuries - a case that garnered worldwide publicity. The gang rape and subsequent death of a 23-year-old student on a bus in Delhi in December 2012 elevated concerns over women's safety in India and caused widespread outrage. Reports of sexual assaults on Indian women emerge daily – official statistics show 24,206 rape cases were registered in India in 2011. This discouraged tourists from visiting the country. More than 76% of respondents in a March poll by The Wall Street Journal said that India isn't safe for female travelers. (Online.wsj.com The Wall Street Journal 'Alleged Sexual Assault on Tourists in India' Nov.25, 2013.) A decade ago, 25% of foreign tourists were women. By 2013 40% and in 2023 49% of foreign Tourists were women tourists. Half of them traveled alone in India in 2013 and the share of solo women travelers has reduced, as more family groups are visiting, according to data shared by travel intelligence company. But the question is foreign tourist women safe in India? The incidents of attacks on Foreign tourists, women tourists in India and the subsequent reaction from foreign Governments created an alarming situation. Let us look into some of the incidents of sexual attacks on foreign women tourists.

A 23-year-old South Korean student has been allegedly drugged and raped by a hotel owner's son in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, in January 2013. The manager of a resort in Madhya Pradesh's Bandhavgarh tiger reserve has reportedly confessed that he raped a South Korean student holidaying there. The manager, Deepak Vishwakarma, told the police that he raped the 23-year-old student on January 14. The student, who is in India on a tourist visa and was on a visit to the national park, has alleged that her drink had been spiked following which she was raped. (www.ndtv.com). A Chinese woman was raped in Delhi by a party organizer in Feb 2013. The attack took place in Hauz Khas, a popular night spot for foreigners in south Delhi. The accused man was arrested and produced before a local court, which sent him to judicial custody for two weeks; China has lodged a strong protest with the Indian authorities after a Chinese woman was raped in Delhi. Beijing has also asked Delhi to protect "the security, legal rights and privacy of the victim" and punish the accused. The Chinese embassy in Delhi has warned its citizens, especially women, to be alert at all times and avoid going out alone in Delhi, China's official news agency Xinhua reported. (www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-21378283). A British tourist jumped from a second-floor hotel window to escape a potential rape attack during a trip to see the Taj Mahal. The terrified woman, said to be a London-based dentist in her thirties, fled after the drunk hotel owner allegedly tried to get into her room at 4 am offering a 'massage'. Eventually, Sachin went away but returned for a third time with a security guard and started banging on her door. 'She thought if she opened the door she could be raped or murdered. The woman panicked and leaned out of the window and screamed for help. When she saw that no help was forthcoming, to save herself, the woman jumped from the window, landed on the first-floor balcony, and ran down the stairs out of the hotel and onto a tea stall nearby. She suffered head, rib, and leg injuries, but got to the road and hailed a rickshaw which took her to a police station. (http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2295663/British-tourist-25-jumps-window-Indian-hotel-man-tries-rape-her.html)

A Gang attacked the couple and then gang-raped Swiss women as they camped overnight in a Madhya Pradesh Forest in May 2013. The women and her husband, who was cycling from Orchha to Agra, said they were attacked by six men as they camped en route. The husband was tied up and the woman was raped. The couple told police that the woman had been raped by seven or eight men, but that it was dark and they could not be sure of the exact number. Her husband also was attacked by the men. The couple, who were on a three-month vacation in India, had visited the temple town of Orchha and were planning to cycle to Agra to visit the Taj Mahal, nearly 210 kilometers (130 miles) away. (http://www.cbsnews.com/news/india-arrests-6-over-swiss-tourists-gang-rape/) In **June 2013** an Irish woman filed a complaint with police in Kolkata against a man who

had allegedly raped her after the two met at her 21st birthday party. The woman volunteered at a children's charity in the city, the capital of West Bengal. **In June 2013** an American woman was allegedly raped by three men near the northern Indian town of Manali. Police said the 30-year-old had accepted an offer from a truck driver to take her from a small village to her guesthouse and was raped by the driver and two others after she boarded the truck. All three accused men were Nepalese citizens who had been working in Manali. They were arrested early Thursday morning after police traced the vehicle in which the alleged rape and robbery took place. (<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/india-arrests-3-in-alleged-rape-of-american-woman/>)

'India - the story you never wanted to hear': US student Michaela Cross calls India a traveler's heaven, a woman's hell' In an article to CNN International, wrote on her Back from a three-month study trip to India in 2013, a Chicago university recalls it as a visit full of adventures and beauty but also relentless sexual harassment, groping and worse. Her article has gone viral, ranging from shame to anger. WASHINGTON, AUGUST 22, 2013. Michaela Cross is an American student at The University of Chicago who came to India on a study abroad program. While in India, she struggled with the blatant staring and sexual harassment that she experienced and after two rape attempts by Indian men to women on her course, begged for help. She has since apparently been diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. In 2022 a British woman was raped in front of her husband in Goa. An Indian American woman was raped in a hotel in New Delhi. A Spanish woman was gang raped in Jharkhand along with her partner who were moving to Nepal and three men were arrested in this connection by Jharkhand police on March 4th, 2024. The Jharkhand high court echoed the view. Ordering financial compensation. court said it would have 'serious national and international repercussions including impacting the tourism economy'. "A sex-related crime against a foreign woman is likely to bring adverse publicity against the country and thereby tarnishing the image of India across the globe," the court noted. The police took the victims to hospital and rape was confirmed. This issue attracted international attention. All these incidents have no doubt greatly affected the tourism industry in India. The situation has been further aggravated by the advisory issued by various countries to their citizens visiting India to be cautious and avoid India. That has raised worries in India about the possible impact on tourism. Australian Govt. Advise new information under Safety and security -to exercise a high degree of caution in India at this time. US State Dept. asks female travelers to "observe stringent security precautions" and "avoid traveling alone in hired taxis, especially at night.

In a new survey of 1200 tour operations across India, the Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industries in India found that the number of inbound tourists has dropped 25% since December. The influx of female travelers is down 35%, particularly from the USA, Canada, Australia, and Britain, local businesses told the group. Many operators said tourists had sent them emails wondering whether traveling in India was still safe, and "those who are determined to visit India are taking extra precautions and avoiding affected areas," they reported. Travel advisories by the US and other foreign embassies warn women not to travel alone in India, saying they are "at risk and should exercise vigilance". (www.ndtv.com) Indian officials frequently suggest that tourists don't do enough to keep themselves safe from attacks, and should simply stop putting themselves in danger. But India won't be a safe place either for foreign visitors or for the women who live there full-time until that attitude shifts away from encouraging women to keep themselves safe, and toward encouraging everyone to stand up to sexual violence. (<http://breakthrough.tv/explore/campaign/bell-bajan/>) The grey area of security of the tourists needs to considerable attention if tourism has to be promoted in a big way in our country. What is seen is whenever there is some hue and cry in the media the situation improves for a while, but its business as usual, after some time.

Violence against women is a worldwide problem. However, some nations take it more seriously than others. Rape cases in India not only damaged tourism industry but also the Indian image abroad. The safety and security of tourists, particularly the foreign women travelers are one of the biggest challenges that the Indian tourism industry is facing today. Foreigners have allegedly been sexually assaulted by resort staff, taxi drivers, other guests, and security personnel at resorts at popular tourist destinations. The incidents of harassment and violence have been reported which have led to the decline of tourism. Inadequate security and lack of a robust law enforcement system are serious concerns. A useful Report by Indian Institute of Tourism & Travel Management, September 2010, helps in "analyzing the factors of slow-down in Tourist arrivals in India" which highlights the various problems faced by tourists while travelling in different locations in India. Subash (2015) states that "Safety and security of tourists is of paramount importance in any country as it majorly impacts the inflow of foreign tourists in the country. Domestic tourist movements are impacted in states and tourist locations where tourists consider a threat to their safety and security. It holds special significance for India which has been

ranked at a low level of 74 amongst 140 global economies on safety and security parameters as per the World Economic Forum's Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2013".

The solution lies in robust responses, including investment in prevention. However, alarmingly, data on how much nations are committing to counteract violence against women and girls remains glaringly sparse. A luxury hotel in Delhi has set aside a whole floor for single females, with security cameras focused on their doors and female-only staff to service their needs—even the airport pick-up contact is female. The Ministry for Tourism has set up a toll-free multilingual helpline. Thomas Cook India has begun specialty tours for women only; those travelers are provided with free cell phones and an array of emergency contact numbers. Some states have started special police forces, marked with special armbands, to attend to the needs of tourists. For instance, just 5% of government aid is focused on tackling violence against women and girls, and less than 0.2% is directed to its prevention. The UN says that we need more investment in women's organizations, better legislation, prosecution of perpetrators, more services for survivors, and training for law enforcement officials. This 2023 campaign Invest to Prevent Violence against Women & Girls will call on citizens to show how much they care about ending violence against women and girls and call on governments worldwide to share how they are investing in gender-based violence prevention. Based on the data from 161 countries, the UN says that gender violence has improved substantially. A major Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report for the year 2017, ranked India 40th out of 136 countries overall. The report ranked the price competitiveness of India's tourism sector 10th out of a total of 136 countries. According to the data, the ratio of female travelers flying from developed countries to India has been on a consistent rise. On a year-on-year basis(y-o-y), the first quarter of 2023 saw the proportion of female international flyers rise to 49 per cent of all travelers. The data is based on the study of the behavior of travelers from nine countries, including the US, UK, Australia, Canada, Japan, Malaysia, Russia, Germany, and France.

India's tourism industry has immense potential but it has to take care of the safety and security of the foreign female tourists. Many organizations like EQUATIONS, SANLAAP, STOP INDIA, CINI, etc. working on finding solutions for tourism issues in India. People suggest that death should be the punishment for rapers but the death penalty is not the solution, solution is prevention and justice. Education, awareness, and strict enforcement law along with Public Private Participation (PPP) is the only way to solve the problem of sexual assault on women in general and foreign tourists in particular.

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