Conflict in Tourism: Parasnath

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Abstract: Land is precious, scarce and limited. It represents territoriality or the extents of anyone's power. The conflict among individuals and among neighboring nations is because of the land dispute. Parasnath hills are in Giridih district of Jharkhand state in India. The Jain community had built temples and tonks on the hills and is among the most pious pilgrimage sites for them. The hills are Wildlife Sanctuaries', and a tourism development proposal was in pipeline. The Jain community opposed the move citing the reason of their religious reservations. Jain community refrain from liquor and are pure vegetarian for their food choice. Meanwhile the aboriginal community (Adivasis) too claimed over the hills of Parasnath. This paper examines the triangular conflict on the hills of Parasnath and suggests the measures for conflict resolution.

Keywords: Religious Tourism, Leisure Tourism, Conflicts, Hill Tourism, Jain Sites, Adivasis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sense of attachment, sacralization and emotional connection with a place, makes it a sacred place. It could be a home or a religious place of worship (Das et al., 2023). Sacred places are often associated with religious fervor. Birthplace, places of attainment and places related to death are pious for the followers of a particular faith. Conflict occurs when two faith clashes at one point in a spaceframe. The dominance and the supremacy are often visible at several locations. Jerusalem, Hagia Sophia (Turkey), Ayodhya (India) and recently at Parasnath (Jharkhand, India) are examples of conflict at religious places.

Some studies proclaim that religion facilitates peacebuilding, reconciliation, and healing, others argue that religion exacerbates hostility, instigates vengeance-seeking behaviors, and

heightens conflict(Lundy et al., 2018). Conflict occurs when people believe they are different from others (Asmara & Noho, 2022) and their religious affiliation does not allow perseverance for tolerance. While every religion teaches peace and harmony with religious tolerance is at lowest in every society. Militancy and regrettable blood violence has penetrated every faith in the name of protection of Religion (Oko, 2021).

Parasnath hills are in the district of Giridih in Jharkhand, India. These hills are a part of Eastern Section of Chhota Nagpur plateau. There is a larger variation of relief along Parasnath hills as compared to adjoining areas. On these hills, there are several Tonks dedicated to Tirthankaras and a few Jain Temples. Tonks are small structures in Jain religion associated with Tirthankaras who attained moksha (salvation) at that place. It is one of the holiest places for the Jains. It is believed that 20 of the 26 Tirthankaras (Jain Monks) attained Moksha (Salvation) on these Parasnath hills(Amarnath Tewary, 2023). Around these hills are several tribal villages.
The hills consist of 49.33 Sq. Km of wildlife sanctuary consisting of mixed deciduous forest. The Central Government has notified Parasnath hills as eco sensitive zone in August 2019. This gave a mandate to the State Government to prepare a Tourism Development Plan. State

Government of Jharkhand wanted to establish a religious tourism Centre. Jain community protested the move all over India. The State government maintained the sanctity of the place as Jain Religious place and directed the authority not to serve liquor and non-vegetarian food around the Parasnath hills. Jain communities are highly selective in food choices and way of life.

1.1. The Jains
Jain is among the earliest religion in India with Lord Risabh as first Tirthankaras Lord Mahavira as 24th Tirthankara. Some of the holiest places of the Jain religion are Vaishali,

Pawapuri, Mount Abu, Ellora Caves and Parasnath in Jharkhand. Sammed Shikharjee is the whole site on and around, Parasnath hills where several tonks, Temples, and Jal Mandirs exist. On the highest peak of Parasnath hills (1365 m) is the Jain Temple 'Parsvanatha Temple.' The Jain structures like Buddhist is non mysterious. It does not proclaim it to be nearness to God(Kumar & Das, 2018). The religious rational of Jainism has nine truths which are listed below.

1. Soul (jiva)
2. Non-Soul (ajiva)
3. Legitimate (punya)
4. Sin
5. Surge of karma
6. Stoppage of Karmic Matter
7. Oppression
8. Shedding of Karmic Matter
9. Moksha (opportunity)

Jain temples are very often located on hill tops. Jal Mandir is the characteristic feature of many Jain temples. The temple is located in the centre of the water body and a pathway lead to the temple. Pawapuri Jain temple is such an example.
Jains are peace loving business community with a large concentration in Gujarat and Rajasthan. Temples have intricate carvings and are made of white marble stone.
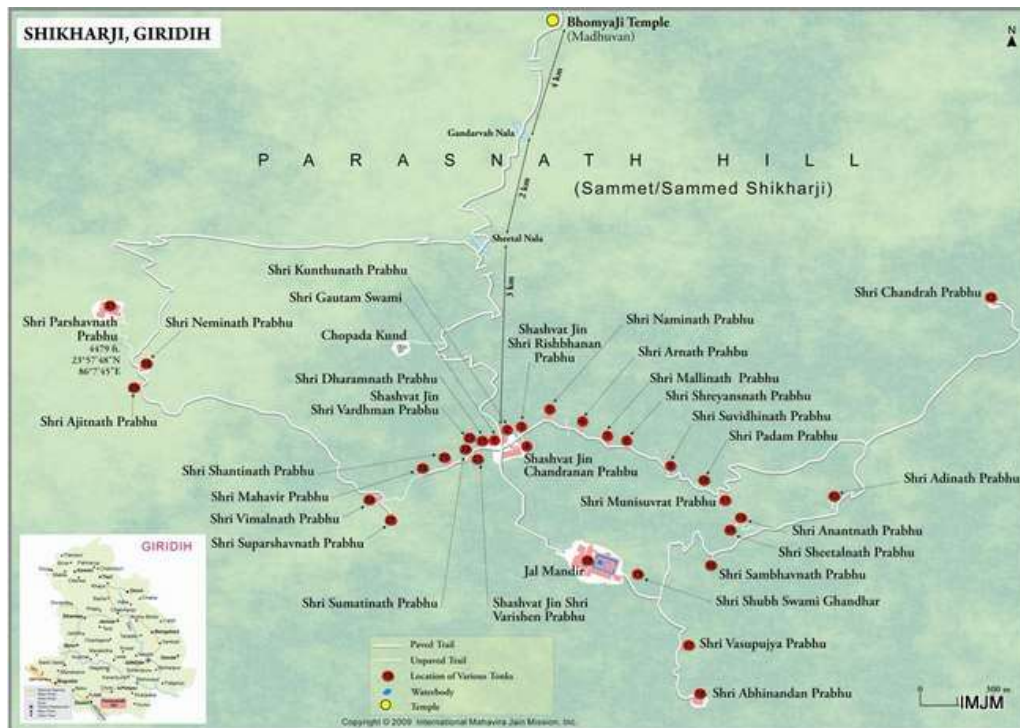

Figure 1 Location of Tonks, Temple and Jal Mandir on Parasnath Hills, Giridih, Jharkhand
Source: shikharji.org

1.2 The Adivasis

Adivasis are the aboriginal communities living in India. They have a distinct culture and traditional practices. The state of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh has been carved because of popular demands by the Adivasi community. The Santhals of Jharkhand claim Parasnath hills as Marang Buru (hill deity). They argue that the Jains illegally grabbed the hills of Parasnath and made temples and Tonks. Of late a conflict has started between the Adivasi community and the Jains for the claim over the hills.

Figure 2 A signboard put by Adivasi community claiming the Parasnath hills.
Source: Author

1.3 Built Environment on Parasnath Hills

Minimal disturbance is done to the natural environment. Trekking routes are made with concrete which are 4-5 feet wide with occasional steps. A separate motorable route is made up to heli-pad near Shikharjee. Temporary food stalls are made with all-natural material in vernacular style. A few hamlets exist on the hills. Built environment must respond to the natural setting for sustainable development(Nijas V. P. et al., 2023). Parasnath hill is epitome of natural built environment. The permanent structures exist in form of Temples, Tonks and toilet blocks. Some of the structures that has come on the hills of Parasnath are listed below.

1.   Temples- Chandranan Prabhu, Jal Mandir, Sri Parsvnath Prabhu,
2.   Tonks- a small structures

3.   Barracks- CRPF for security
4.   Telecom Tower- near main Temple of Parsvnath Prabhu
5.   Helipad
6.   Toilet Block- on trekking route

Several Vernacular structure merchandise, temporary shops exist on the trekking route. They sell tea, pakoras, maggi, sugarcane juices, chips, biscuits and other edible items. Vernacular architecture very neatly blends the hill scape of Parasnath hills which create a symbiosis between the built and natural environment(A. Srivastav & Das, 2023). Plastic and beverages water bottles which are single use can be utilized to make walls for these sustainable built forms which have a high thermal resistivity which will keep the structures cool in summers(P. Srivastav, 2023).

Recently all the electric light poles have been removed from the forest trekking route for benefit of birds and other animals on the hills. Trekkers use torches and cell phone lights during night-time.

Conflict between Religious Tourism and Adventure Tourism
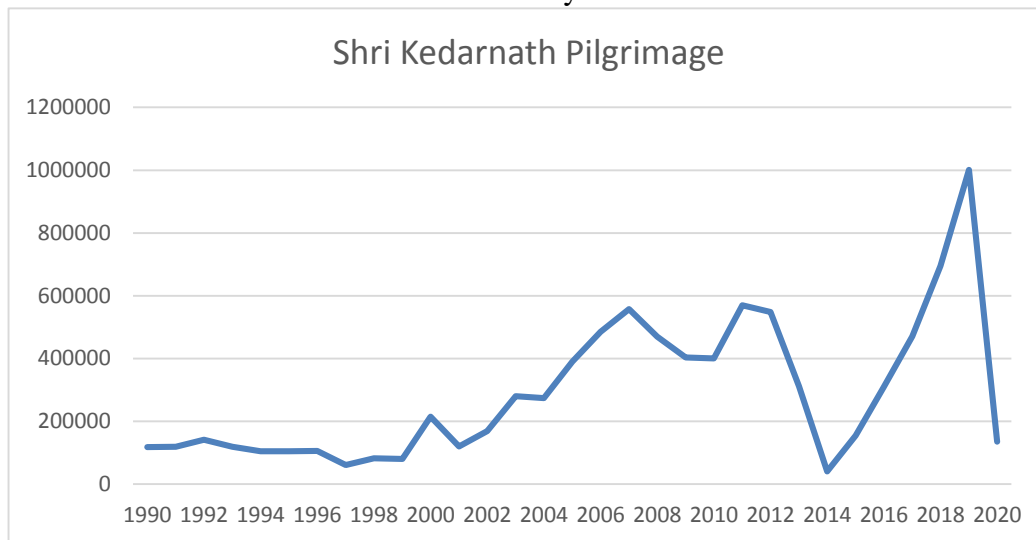**Religious Tourism**
Religious tourism in India is practiced since a long ago. Hindus have four Dhams, Twelve Jyotirlingas, and 52 Shaktipeeths scattered throughout the country. The sites of Kailash Manas-Sarovar (currently in Tibet Controlled China), Kedarnath, Badrinath, Gangotri, Yamunotri, Amarnath, Mata Vaishno Devi are in Himalayas. Of late they have got a tag of Adventure tourism. The State Government has put a ceiling on the limits of tourist visiting per day which is shown in Table below. This has been done to ensure the preparation of agencies during the disaster as these areas are prone to flash flood and landslides. The tragedy of 16th and 17th June 2013 due to cloudburst in Kedarnath had caused a massive destruction causing an official death toll of 5748.

Table 1 Limits on no. of Tourist visiting per day.

Religious Place	No of visitors allowed per day
1. Kedarnath	12,000
2. Badrinath	15,000
3. Yamunotri	4,000
4. Gangotri	7,000

Table 2 Effect of Disaster on tourist flow at Kedarnath
Source: sacredyatra.com

There are five most sacred Jain sites in India where the Jain community go for pilgrimage.
They are listed below.
(i) Pawapuri, Nalanda, Bihar
(ii) Shikharjee, Parasnath, Giridih, Jharkhand
(iii) Palitana temples, Shatrunjay hills in Kathiawar, Gujarat
(iv) Girnar Temples, Junagadh, Gujarat
(v) Dilwara temples, Mount Abu, Rajasthan

Apart from this there are several other Jain pilgrimage sites like Khandgiri, Udaigiri on Orissa, Nathnagar in Bhagalpur, in the state of Bihar, Shantinath temple complex in Deogarh, Lalitpur district in Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh, Ranakpur Temple in Pali district of Rajasthan.

Adventure Tourism
Ropeway, bungee jumping, hill climbing, trekking, bicycling is some of the hill-based adventure sports(Choudhury et al., 2023). These adventure sports attract the tourist, and they spend more time at tourist destinations. In the case of Parasnath because of religious nature, such activities are opposed by Jain communities. At present only the trekking route exists although the tourists are using motorcycles to reach Shikharjee, which is just one spot. All other spots are accessible only through the trekking route and through palanquins. From tranquility, divine peace and mundane pleasure, the hills of Parasnath have a tremendous potentiality(Singh & Pathak, n.d.). But the other aspect is that, the development of Parasnath hills as tourism spot will diminish the religious values of the Jain community. The other alternative could be the parikrama of entire Parasnath hills at Tahalti (Base of hills) which comes out to be 54 km (Kumar et al., 2017). Seeing the wide diversity of the region (Jharkhand) in terms of hills, dams, waterfall, National Parks, Wildlife sanctuaries and religious connections a sustainable

tourism could enhance the economy of the state(PRASAD, 2008). Eco tourism could be an alternative method to attract the nature lovers in the land rich with forest diversity(Saw, 2018).

Figure 3 Lush Green Hills of Parasnath
Source: Author

Figure 4 Author on trekking trip to Parasnath (2021)
Source: Author

Conflict Resolution

Conflict at Parasnath is between a Religious and an ethnic community. Both communities are compatible with each other. Interestingly the three stake holders that are in picture are the Jain Community, the Adivasi Community and the forest department of Jharkhand. The forest department will play a major role in conflict resolution acting as bridge between both the

community and preserving the ecology of the region. Restriction on built environment on the hills, abstinence from liquor and non-vegetarian around the Parasnath region including the Tehalti at Madhuban. and a joint committee for the establishment of peace may be formed. Parasnath hills should not be utilized for adventure and sports tourism. It should be restricted to religious tourism.

2. CONCLUSION

The harmonical co-existence is the characteristic of Indian Culture which was distracted by Western invasion from Persia. Peace must be established with respect and religious tolerance among similar faiths. Religious places must not be clubbed with adventure tourism and limited permits may be allotted for eco-tourism which is in harmony with existing faith. Adivasis should consider Jain as their own brothers and sisters with same inheritance and should feel proud of hills launching Temples and Tonks.
Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest associated with this paper.

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