

1 RELIGION, TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT.

2

3 **Abstract:**

4 *The paper endeavors to explain the association between religion, tourism and development by*
5 *presenting eleven case studies of religious sites in India and around the world which showed*
6 *the facts of increasing number of tourists in all religious places and the religious*
7 *authorities, local government, state government and the national tourism ministry have done*
8 *enough investment expenditure on religious place centric development which are sustainable*
9 *in context of community development, preservation of socio-cultural heritage, increasing*
10 *communications, infrastructure, business and employment including regional development.*
11 *Growth-led religious tourism spread the religious education, spiritual upliftment,*
12 *international cooperation and national integrity and increased government revenues.*

13 **KeyWords:** religion, religious tourism, development, religious sites, temple centric
14 development expenditure

15 **Introduction**

16 It can be hypothesized that as religious tourism increases economic development gets faster
17 while if development enhanced religious tourism will expand but not always. If religious
18 activities through several institutions or organizations rise, tourism increase but it is not
19 always happened because religious activities depend on the nature of religion in the
20 society. But if tourism increases religious activities may not rise but it may happen on some
21 determinants like objectives of tourism. Thus, religion, tourism and development are not
22 causally associated. On the other hand, tourism, religion and development are not causally
23 related and mutually exclusive. If religion and tourism is causally related then development is
24 cointegrated with the causal relation. In general, in poor economies, religious development is
25 high which depends on social religious status while more tourism in poor economies may not
26 true or less tourism is not always true. On the contrary, developed economies led to higher
27 religious development which depend on status of religion although there are many exceptions
28 because there is question about which is dominant, religious tourism or non-religious tourism.

29 Religious tourism has superficial effect on community development in various dimensions of
30 infrastructure development and investment opportunities (Nargotra, 2026). Religious tourism
31 enhances economic growth through some indicators (Srivastava et al., 2024).

32 In Nigeria, tourism and religion is mutually exclusive since religious sites such as Osun
33 Osogbo, Ogun, Sango festival, Inde Oba festival, Udju festival, Iriji festival have contributed
34 largely to the development of the country. Billions of tourists came here annually and enough
35 government revenue from it have been expensed for development (ResearchClue.com, n.d.).

36 As per ministry of Tourism, religious tourism in India increased to 1439 million US\$ in 2022
37 from 677 million US\$ in 2021. Government revenue rose to 16.2 billion US\$ in 2022 from 7.9
38 billion US\$ in 2021. It is expected that it will increase upto 59 billion US\$ by
39 2028 (IBEF, n.d.). In this paper, how much the religious tourism affects the economic
40 development under what circumstances will be discussed.

41 **Literature Review**

42 There are enough research findings on religious tourism and its implications, even the
43 impacts of religious tourism on economic development and investment opportunities have
44 been examined in many economic literatures. Some of the important researches are included
45 here.

46 Religious tourism offers a new knowledge map of religion and tourism, helped future research
47 on the need for holistic conceptualization on the politicization of religion and the rise of
48 identity politics through tourism (Noga Collins-Kreiner, 2020).

49 Religious tourism has spiritual significance, offers unique blend of worship, cultural
50 exploration, and employment generation and it is a catalyst for national development, cultural
51 preservation, and foster peace and harmony (Kuntay, 2024).

52 Religious tourism can improve community security, cultural resources, develop industries,
53 stabilize price level, improve environment towards achievement of sustainable development
54 (Linet al., 2021).

55 Religious and spiritual tourism promotes sustainable development and impacted on
56 environment creating socio-economic and ecological balance (Gambhir et al., 2021).

57 Religious tourism has a significant positive correlation with various dimensions of local
58 development such as local employment opportunities, local economies, the social and cultural
59 well-being of host communities. Also, religious tourism improves in essential public
60 infrastructure, and enhance the overall standard of living (Srivastava et al., 2024).

61 Religious tourism in India has influenced to increase local livelihood income, development of
62 infrastructure, and preservation of cultural heritage so that government policy should support
63 to promote tourism especially in religious places of interest (Rakshit & Koley, 2024).

64 Religious tourism has positive significant impact on local development which is sustainable
65 in nature (Konstantinos & Maria, n.d.).

66 Sustainable regional development has three principal determinants such as tourism, heritage
67 and culture in which religious tourism enables to preserve values, art, monuments, temples,
68 holy heritages from which revenues of government increased and religious education
69 improved (Singh & Supina, 2023).

70 In ancient times, pilgrimage travel was popular in religious tourism, but now, people make tour
71 in religious places throughout the world for peace and blessings keeping with faith and
72 spiritual beliefs (Choe, 2025).

73 Religious tourism in Ayodhya promoted socio-economic development and regional cultural
74 development (Dhal & Singh, 2025).

75 In 6 European countries namely Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Spain, Greece, and Italy by
76 applying interviews (FGI) and expert interviews (IDI) method, the survey found that religious
77 tourism expands tourism market, improves local sustainable development and preserves
78 regional cultural heritage and religious assets (Nieżgoda, Markiewicz, & Kędzia, 2025).

79 The religious tourism has positive impact on income, employment and traditional settlement
80 which was empirically verified in Russia using regression analysis which showed that

81 religious tourism is influenced by 0.77 on income,0.66 on employment and 0.72 on
82 traditional settlement in the economy significantly (Budovich,2023).

83 Religion and tourism in Mount E'mei(China) have influenced stakeholders significantly and
84 Buddhist considered it positively on the development of sustainable tourism (Huang & Hu,
85 2019).

86 Pilgrimage travel and religious tourism drive sustainable development through social and
87 economic growth of the religious sites in social sectors' cooperative and collaboration of
88 community development programme improving organizational and managerial capabilities of
89 stakeholders through value creation processes. The case study of The Camino de Santiago
90 and Via Francigena proved the strategic approach of local development (Romanelli et
91 al.,2021).

92 The econometric model on the relationship between impact of cultural and religious tourism
93 policies on local regional places taking data during 2001-2021 was built in which the result
94 showed that the believer-led model of religious development is superior to the temple-led
95 model because tourism policies have positive impact on Taoist temples and believers while
96 Buddhism did not show similar result. This study was based on using Taiwan's Mazu Cultural
97 Tourism Festival Policies in June 2010 (Liu & Lee, 2024).

98

99 **Objectives of the paper**

100 The paper tries to find out the relation between religion, tourism and economic development
101 in the sense that religion has determining factors of promoting tourism which has many
102 impacts on the social and economic development especially local development which is
103 sustainable. The paper will focus on religious tourism which has direct impact on
104 development which is verified by the help of some case studies in India and abroad.

105 **Methodology and data**

106 The eleven case studies in India and international economies including some local areas in
107 India on religious tourism have enlisted to clarify the association showing tourists inflows,
108 nature of growth and development and the type of importance of religious sites, investment
109 expenditure on religious site centric development with economic data which were collected
110 from various sites and google searches.

111 **Observations and results**

112 **Case study-1:St.Peter Church(Vatican City,Italy)**

113 St.Peter Basilica was established in 1626 having dimensions of 220mx150mx136.6m and its
114 dome covers 0.34 acres of land.Michelangelo was the main architecture of the church.It is a
115 catholic church in tradition.Its adjoining area is St.Peter Square beside west of the river
116 Tiber.It is a holiest site where Peter is the head of the 12 Apostles of Jesus and St.Peter is
117 ranked second after St.John.Pope holds the chair of St.Peter.It is a UNESCO heritage site.It is
118 the spiritual and administrative heart of the Christianity and a global heritage.Anyone can
119 visit here with a dress code without entry fee but can pay donation.Daily 40000-80000
120 visitors or pilgrimages came here or yearly 10 million tourists visited there.In 2025,33.4
121 million tourists visited here in which 45-55% are Christian and 1.3-1.5% global Christians

122 visited here.The Vatican City is transformed into pilgrimage and demonstrated the temporal
123 power of the Papacy.It was seen in 16th century under Pope Sixtus V.It is a catalyst for
124 neighborhood growth.St.Peter Square is now highly developed.Private residential sites
125 around the Church developed speedily and the Church supported millions of visitors and
126 made religious monuments.The Church established hospitals,schools,hotels,cooperatives
127 credits,and many others.In 2025,Jubilee project is running.Vatican City earned 300-
128 700million Euros yearly in which 150million euros from the Museum whileEuropean Fund
129 spends 3.7billion euros for investment for the Jubilee project.In 2025,government earned 60.4
130 billion euros from VAT where 237.4 billion euros was spent for the project in development
131 including tourism and travel.Italy's tax payers pay 0.8% of their income to the Catholic
132 Churches(11.6 million tax payer in 2021).St. Peter Church is the pivotal force in the growth
133 and consolidation of Christianity through spirituality.

134 **Case study-2:Mecca(Saudi Arabia)**

135 Mecca is the birth place of Mahammad.Muslims generally visited Mecca to perform
136 Hajj,Umrah,Tawaf etc.The other holy places are Mecca gate,Kaaba,Black stone,Masjid-Al-
137 Haram clock tower,Ajyad Fortress respectively in Mecca.In Mecca,the great mosque was
138 visited by 10.8 million tourists in 2023.In Mecca,100% Muslim population live here in which
139 44.5% are local and the rest 55.5% are foreigners.No visitors except Muslim can entry into
140 the Mosque.In 2023,10.8million international tourists visited in which 1.8 million performed
141 Hajj.All visitors were Muslims.In 2026,11.9million Muslim performed Umrah and 57.5
142 million worshipped for prayer at Masjid.Mecca generates 12 billion dollar per year or 7% of
143 GDP as tourists' income which will increase to 150 billion dollars by 2030.In 2024,tourism
144 revenue of Saudi Arabia was 41 billion dollar.Average spending of visitors was
145 approximately 135 dollar per day per person.In 2023,936000 jobs were created which will
146 increase to 1.6million in 2030 and infrastructure investment was 50 billion dollars.Mecca has
147 the capacity of 770000 to 2.5 million worshippers and there are 16726 rest rooms,90000tons
148 cooling system,increased hotel facilities,rail connected in Mecca since 2018,3.65 km
149 pedestrian has improved.Now,8 billion dollars project has launched with a new policy for
150 visitors.New development expenditure of 26.6 billion dollar for Mosque expansion was
151 planned with additional 24000 hotels,13000 residential units,high speed railway,16 billion
152 dollars metro project,new visa rule,with a new commercial city center.

153 It was noticed that [i] Mecca promotes Islam,and the Mecca charter was created in 2019,[ii]
154 to encounter extremism and security was planned,[iii]to combat radical group was
155 permitted,[iv]Saudi Arabia emphasized on Salafi/Wahhabi ideas worldwide,[v]impact of Hajj
156 is to increase tolerance,[vi]new religious policy was introduced in Mecca charter.

157 Other religionsare not permitted to enter Mecca while permitted in Medina.So,development
158 policy is absolutely related with Islamic motivation which is religious duty.Government uses
159 Islamic faith and religious principles.

160 **Case study-3:Janakpur Dham(Nepal)**

161 Janakpur Dham is a place of religious interest where Ramayan relating to Palace of Raja
162 Janak of Mithila where Sita was born and wedded with Ram,the king of Ajodhya where
163 Bibaha Panchami is celebrated.Other religious places in Janakpur are Ram mandir,Rajdevi
164 Mandir,Jaleswar Temple,Ganga Sagar,Dhanush Sagar,Dhanush Dham,Ratna Sagar

165 respectively. Ram had broken the bow at Dhanush Dham.All the places are related to
166 Ramayan and its epic events where mythological interest of devotees are of great interest of
167 tourism.In 2024,1.147 million international tourists visited here which is 37.5% of total
168 tourists.In festival 5-6 lakhs pilgrimages visited here.In Janaki Mahaotsav,18-20 lakhs
169 devotees came here to participate the occasion.Janakpur centric development is significant for
170 Joy Nagar-Nepal link rail,IRCTC started Ramayan circuit train,Bus service between Ajodhya
171 and Janakpur.In 2025-26,46.58 billion Nepalese Rupee was placed for development of
172 Janakpur and 30.26 billion NPR was decided for capital projects.3.38 billion NPR will spend
173 for railway project,29.88 billion NPR for road expansion,2.53 billion NPR for luxury
174 tourism.Janakpur city development authority expensed 1.6 billion NPR for infrastructure
175 development.Municipal income in 2023-24 was 4.47 billion NPR as tax revenue,custom
176 revenue income was 509.4 million NPR in 2023-24 from tourism.Nepal earned 88.66 billion
177 foreign exchanges in 2024-25.From the traffic,government earned 220 millionNPR.Many
178 religious interests are primary attractions for tourism at Janakpur.Dharmashala and hotels
179 have increased quickly.There are around 200 hotels(60 luxury) where Nepal will build hotels
180 by expensing 2.53 billion NPR urgently.

181 **Case study -4: Pyramid(Egypt)**

182 Pharaohs' mummification was based on the belief that physical body will ensure the survival
183 of the soul.In 3000BC,Pharaohs' mommy was protected for possessions for the next life to
184 rise and join the Sun god and Ra in the heaven.Ancient Egyptian religion was a system of 70
185 days processes for mummification of polytheistic belief(which had 2000 gods and goddesses
186 in which Ra,Aman Osiris,Iris are the key).After 30BC,Egypt began in converting Christianity
187 in Roman empire.Noë,in Egypt,Sunni Islam consist 90%,Christianity 10%.Constitution
188 recognized Islam,Christianity and Judaism.Generally, tourists came here for historical and
189 architectural significance and also for religious or spiritual consciousness where Mommy is a
190 symbol of integration of self and soul and pyramid calls for rebirth where God is the
191 preserver and transformer.Annually 14.7 million tourists visited pyramid in which in
192 2024,15.3 billion dollars were earned from tourism which set goal for earning 40.5 billion
193 dollars in 2030.

194 **Case study-5:Buddha Gaya(Bihar,India)**

195 Buddha Gaya is a place where Siddhartha Gautam attained enlightenment as Buddha in 2500
196 years ago in Maurya period.It is a holy Buddhist pilgrimage site in the world and a UNESCO
197 heritage.Monasteries of 12 countries are situated in Buddha Gaya in the Mahabodhi temple
198 complex.But,there only 30883 persons live there in which 90.23% are Hindu,8.85% are
199 Muslim ,0.41% are Buddhists and 0.22 % are Christians.Nearly,2-4 million tourists came
200 here yearly where 58985 are international tourists.In 2025,1.1million domestic tourists and
201 0.25 million foreign tourists visited Buddha Gaya.In Buddha Purnima,at least 15000 visitors
202 came from Thailand,SriLanka,Myanmar,Japan,Korea,Vietnam,Bhutan respectively.During
203 2013-2020,atleast 225% increase of tourists were recorded.Religious led development
204 expenditure of the Bihar government is estimated as 65.5 crore to 275 crore rupees to
205 enhance hospitality,macro entrepreneurship,job creation,removal of disparity and
206 improvement of local handicrafts.Government approved Rs 166.44 crore for development of
207 temple corridor,intercity connectivity,footfall increase from 40lakh and international tourists
208 to 2.5 lakhs including world class hotel facilities in the temple complex and monasteries'

209 guest houses.Government will spend 98.73 crore to improve artisans,MSME,job creation,and
210 Swadesh Darshan government scheme.The government planned to improve Pan Buddhist
211 unity,identity revival,improvement in globalclassrooms,revamp in Pali Cannon and
212 text,meditation center,engaged Buddhism projects for education and health.It is claimed that
213 improved tourism with noise has disturbed or diluted spirituality but temple centric
214 development is huge including development of Buddhism.From the temple
215 tourism,government earned 100 crores of rupees as tax in which temple earns from
216 donations,entry fees,government grants etc.This Mahabodhi temple society tried to involve in
217 meditation,chanting,circumambulation,offerings,annual events,prayer,festivals,Kalachakra
218 initiative,rituals activities,monastic education,(Buddhists led education),socially engaged
219 schools,universal education,ethics,and in university education,Buddhists study and
220 Pali,international Buddhists conference were executed.It has 16 schools,one IIM,and Magath
221 University.It runs PHC,critical hubs in monasteries,specialized camps,para-medical colleges
222 and hospitals.

223 **Case study -6:Jain temple hub at Madhuban(Jharkhand,India)**

224 Madhuban is a hub of Jain temples and is the gateway of Jainism,threshold of salvation,a
225 symbol of community unity.It is a temple city.Madhuban preserves the heritage of
226 knowledge,revitalize spiritualism,religious right and global awareness.The Twenty
227 Tirthankaras attained Moksha here and Digambara and Shwetambar have united in this place.
228 The Twentythird Tirthankar in 8th century preached here.It is a place of moksha which has
229 historical significance for the 20-24 Tirthankara where Digambar Jain temple is 2000 years
230 old.Jain religious culture is the base of Shikharji Meditation center where preaching of
231 Ahingsha is the central idea.Local Jain scholars and institutions preserve Jain religious
232 culture.Ancient scripture,manuscript,curved statue of Jain tradition,Jain cosmology in
233 Madhuban and Parasnath are the attractions of tourism where 30 Jain temples and 31 sacred
234 tanks are the attractions in which Parasnath temple,Bhomiyaji temple,Digambar Jain
235 temple,Jain Museum,Taleti Tirth Jain temple,Shikharji temple are the main attractions.

236 Some tourists came here to learn about Jainism,some for personal spiritual devotion,some
237 learn religious ancient teachings,manuscripts,and contributions to Indian culture.

238 In Madhuban,35.24% are SC,2.52% are ST in which 75.9% are Hindu,and 0.50% are Jain,all
239 of which are dependent on agriculture but poor people here depend on tourism.In 2014,3.36
240 million tourists visited here which increased to 35 million in 2023 where 95% tourists are
241 Jain.Tourism centric development can be mentioned as hospitality and
242 transport,railways,ropeway project,facility of palanquin bearers,solid waste management,job
243 creation,artisan support,self-sufficient eco-system,eco-sensitive zone, community
244 concern,environmental sustainability and eco-tourism regulations.There are many community
245 services such as room facility,pilgrim-specific dinning,basic comfort,CCTV surveillance,free
246 parking,wheel chair entry,spiritual resort,Dharmashala and many others.

247 Jain religious trust invested 500-800 crores of rupees each year for development and
248 Jharkhand government allocated 500 crores for tourism in 2024 and 361.67 crore for tourism
249 infrastructure.Ministry of Minority Affairs sanctioned 25 crores in 2024 to revitalize the
250 temple complex hub and to facilitate tourism including removal of wide disparity in
251 Madhuban.

252 **Case study-7:TaraPith(RampurHat,West Bengal,India)**

253 TaraPith is a global center of Tantra.Tantric Bamakhepa worshipped Kali there in the funeral
254 spot.Vashista Muni worshiped there.It was believed that the third eye of Goddess Sati fell
255 after Lord Vishnu used Sudarshan chakra.It is also a samadhi place of Bamakhepa.

256 Every year more than 7 million tourists or devotees came to worship ma Tara or 12000
257 devotees per day came for worshipping here for spiritual attraction.TaraPith Rampur Hat
258 Development Authority during 15 years expensed over 150crores of rupees for infrastructure
259 development such as roads,transport,electricity,sanitation,renovated river front,modernize
260 tourist centers,recycling waste,parking,accommodation,and temple management.Taramata
261 Sebayat Sangha led by IAS,look over the development works.Government sanctioned 5.16
262 crores for cottage project,2 crores for building replicas of 51 Satipith.Government earned as
263 GST from the place which has increased by 35%.On the other hand,temple authority earned
264 from entry fees,ritual fees,donations.Recently, Government spent 350 crores for Temple
265 centric development.

266 **Case study-8:Ajmer(Rajasthan,India)**

267 Ajmer is a historical and spiritual city in which Islamic religion is of great interest because
268 Ajmer Sharif Darga,Akbari Mosque,Taragarh Fort,Akbar fort and Museum,Anna Sagar,Foy
269 Sagar,Jhoupra Mosque,Puskar and Jain temple are the places of religious interest.It is a
270 pilgrimage circuit.

271 10million tourists visited here everyyear or 15000-20000 tourists visited per day.In
272 2024,232.1 million tourists visited here in which 20.72 lakhs are international.Peak season is
273 Urs festival.Among the visitors,83.53% are Hindu,11.58% are Muslim, and 2.5% are
274 Jain.There is great impact of religious tourism in Ajmer in
275 infrastructure,employment,business,heritage restoration,cultural renovation,improvement in
276 environment respectively.

277 The developmental expenditure is associated with religious interest.Government spends 310
278 crores for modernization of Ajmer station,50 crore for bus stand,215 crores for fly over,34.95
279 crores for water projects.In 2022-23,Ajmer Municipality tax revenue was 159.29 crores in
280 which 96.9% are non-tax revenue. Recently,110.69 crore was allocated for improvement in
281 Anna Sagar and Foy Sagar lakes.To build innovation hub and Planetarium, Ajmer Smart City
282 allocated 4.04 crores including Akbari fort and Museum.There is a plan to build seven
283 wonders park,6 lanes road,smart parking,and allocated 85 crores for sewerages,smart lighting
284 and sound in Akbari fort.

285 **Case study-9:Kumayun region (Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand ,India)**

286 The actual tourist range of Kumaon region is very vast which contains numerous temples and
287 mountains,falls,lakes and historical interests.Let us know about the tourist spots below.

288 [1] Vim Tal,Naukuchia Tal,Kamal Tal,Sat Tal, and so on which are related with the epic
289 Mahabharat,Draupadi's thrust,[2] Mukteshwar Mahadeb temple,(Pancha Chulli
290 temple),Veterinary Research Institute,[3] Katarmal SunTemple (13th
291 century),[4]Almora,Ramkrishna Mission,Dhanushwar temple,Chandika temple,Kuber
292 temple(19-20th century),Dudh Ganga and Jate ganga Sangam.,[5] Jageshwar temple(7-14
293 century) and other temples,[6] Binsar,Baneshwar Mahadev temple,Duck Banglow,[7]

294 Choukarvi, Ma Anandamayi Ashram, Sereghat, Sarayu river, Nandadevi Pahar, Birthi Falls, [8]
295 Alpine resort, Pancha Chulli, Mahaprasthan of Pandav, [9] Kausani, Nandadevi
296 temple, Bageshwar Shib temple, Baijnath temple, Haraparbati temple, Ganesh temple, Baijnath
297 Barrage, Anashakti Ashram and Museum. [10] Ranikhet, Kalika temple, Kumaon Museum
298 , Valu dam, Jhoola Devi temple, [11] Nainital, Naini lake and Naini temple.

299 Around 1.5 crores-2.5 crores visitors came to visit Kumaon region annually. There are
300 significant tourists from Hindu religion visited here for spiritual attraction. Government of
301 Uttarakhand expensed 1000-2000 crores of rupees for tourism development. Nainital covers
302 the maximum tourists.

303 **Case study-10: The Golden temple (Amritsar, Punjab, India)**

304 Amritsar Golden temple is the spiritual and cultural heart of Sikhism and the house of
305 worship i.e., Harmandir Sahib or Temple of God. It is the headquarters of the Shiromani Akali
306 Dal or Gateway of Akal Takht. The Guru Granth Sahib is placed here. Temple is open to all
307 with some disciplines. In Amritsar, 49.36% Hindu, 48.0% Sikh, 1.23% Christian and 0.51%
308 Muslim lived here. Generally, 1-1.5 million tourists visit here in which 1 million visitors take
309 free meals in the Langar arranged by the temple authority. Most of the visitors came here for
310 spiritualism and 31% came for only tourism purpose. It was estimated that 26-30 million
311 Sikhs around the world visit Golden temple annually. The temple is operated by Shiromani
312 Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and its budget for 2026-27 is 1487.41 crores of rupees in
313 which 1127.34 crore are allocated for management of Gurdwara. Generally, Sikh people
314 donate 10% of their earnings to the temple. It expensed Rs 66 crore for education. Ministry of
315 tourism spent 1726.74 crores of rupees for Prasad scheme in 28 states. 3295.76 crores for
316 capital investment in tourists' centers in 2025-26. In 2024, tourism development expenditure
317 was 2450 crores. For Golden temple, in 2026-27, SGPC will spend 1487.41 crore for
318 management and 6.41 crore for Prasad. Its development expenditure in surroundings'
319 amenities include sanitation, water supply, lighting, interpretation centers
320 respectively. Municipality will spend 995 crores for smart city mission and 460.0 crores for
321 infrastructure development in 2025-26, Government of Punjab will spend 346.57 crores for
322 infrastructure development around the temple and 460.0 crores for heritage management
323 respectively. Thus, the development of temple centric religious motivation is clear and it is no
324 doubt that the Golden temple has direct impact on the expansion of spirituality and Sikhism
325 in India and abroad.

326 **Case study-11: Rural religious tourism in Nadia (West Bengal, India)**

327 In Nadia, Mayapur and Nabadwip are famous for historical, educational, spiritual places where
328 Chaitanya Dev was born. In Nabadwip, there are numerous temples belonging to
329 Radhakrishna, and Chaitanya respectively. It is an ancient Sanskrit educational center and birth
330 place of Chaitanya. Baisnab religion dominates here. ISKCON temple, Gour-Nitai
331 temple, many Maths, Satsang Ashram, and birth place of Chaitanya are famous for
332 tourism. Hindu and Vaishnav religions are the principal culture. In Mayapur, 72.15% are
333 Hindu, 26.76% are Muslim, and 0.65% are Christian respectively. Here 50% are international
334 residents.

335 Over one million visitors came to Mayapur for spiritual interests including international
336 tourists. About 16,000 to 20,000 foreigners visit for religious festivals each year. Nearly 90%

337 visitors are Hindu.ISKCON provides enough hotel facilities and free meal,it runs
338 schools,hospitals,gurukul ashram,Vedanta society which teaches the Vedas and Vedanta.It
339 covers prayers,kirtan,Arati,festivals and rituals ceremony.It spreads Krishna consciousness
340 and Hindu philosophy.

341 It has 700 acres of land,(value 300 million USDollar).In 2022,it spent 90.21crores, Temple of
342 the Vedic Planetarium planned to expense 60-70million USDollar,and spend 5 million US
343 dollar for monthly construction,The Government of India sanctioned ₹15.5 crore for ghat
344 construction. Congregational Development Ministry will spend \$15,000 USD for outreach
345 and training.West Bengal government exempted 50crore stamp duty,waived registration fees
346 about 6 million USDollar.In 2019, the state announced to sanction 10-15 crores for the
347 Mayapur-Nabadwip area development.

348 In Nabadwip, about 1 million visitors came here to visit Sonar Gouranga temple,Dwadash
349 Shib Mandir,Poramatala,Rash Yatra,Manipur Rajbari,and so on.Seventy percent Visitors are
350 local in which 95% are Hindu pilgrimages. The visitors of Mayapur generally visit at
351 Nabadwip where many Sanskrit tolls educated ancient Sanskrit literature and philosophy and
352 the writings of Sri Chaitanya. Rupees100 crores investment plan was sanctioned to boost
353 tourism on the 232 km stretch from Nabadwip to Ganga Sagar, renovating 60 ghats and 24
354 jetties.Acruise services connecting Belur Math to Mayapur/Nabadwip was initiated.A
355 dedicated tourist circuit covering Plassey, Nabadwip Dham, and Fulia was sanctioned with an
356 initial budget of approximately Rupees 2.38 crores.

357 Therefore, religious tourism has been promoting numerous development projects initiated by
358 government as well as temples' trust bodies to enhance interest of spiritualism that are the
359 indicators of sustainable development.

360

361 **Discussions**

362 After research investigations, it was found that religion is not separated from African
363 development(Golo &Novieto,2022),although it was noticed that the participation of religion
364 in development created inter and intra religious conflicts(Omona & Kiriaghe ,2020).Pew
365 Research Center(2006) reviewed and remarked that the World Bank assumed that there are
366 many links between religion and development where communities may play significant
367 roles.Religion is an input in dynamics of growth and development (Aldashev, &
368 Platteau,2014) and religion is a factor of cohesion and development(Por Carlos Cerdan
369 Infantera,2011).Faith-based religion through the agendas of Churches and Temples and other
370 organizations showed clear ideas about the relationship.Sen(1999) has negative vision about
371 religious development from the part of the government since he remarked that government
372 promotion of religion as a positive social influence could mask larger social problems that
373 constitute to poverty such as lack of access of education.Sen's approach of development and
374 human freedom raises complex and debatable issues of religious freedom relating to
375 poverty.Moreover,religion served the interests of ruling class bolstering the stability of the
376 capitalist order(Emeka,2024).

377 The direct relation between religion and tourism is complex because tour in religious sites or
378 faith based religious tour or pilgrimages relating to tourism can be termed as religious
379 tourism which directly affects development positively (Buter &Suntikul,2018).Tour attracts

380 natural sites, historical sites, scientific areas as well as motivate religious places in which
381 government allocates expenditure on religious centric development including eco-tourism
382 development. Therefore, religion, tourism and development are inter-related. Sri Lanka has
383 been successful in boosting the relation between spiritual tourism and sustainable
384 development (Samarathunga, Schänzel & Perera, 2024).

385 My case studies about the nexus between religious tourism and economic development have
386 no confusion about the link between religion and development whether it is religious or non-
387 religious tourism in India and around the world.

388 **Policy considerations**

389 In the strategic sense, local authority, state government, central government as well as trust
390 body of temples should frame such policies which are related to sustainable development that
391 may obtain from the development expenditure on temple or religious promotion for tourism
392 expansion where infrastructure investment plays key role followed by investment on
393 communication and social security. Spiritual devotion of the visitors must be safe and free
394 since maintaining religious freedom is the responsibility of the nation. The laws must be kept
395 with honesty to pay taxes to government from the temple committee who should maintain
396 audit cleanly per year. Religious tourism expansion in India is the key policy issue to attain
397 sustainable development goals and even non-religious tourism is also primary determinant of
398 sustainable development. Government should waive some rules and regulations for
399 international tourists and maintain quick clearance for international monetary transactions
400 and passport/visa facilities. Separate laws and regulations should be framed for spreading
401 religious education and Indian culture. Policy transparency on behalf of temple committee in
402 maintaining income-expenditure, religious customs and traditions in practice, devotees' roles
403 must be properly maintained so that cultural deviation and corruptions may not be arisen.
404 Finally, spectators' security is the ultimate goal that must be preserved by the authority of
405 temple and by the government. Religious sites must be healthier, environment friendly, socially
406 protected and accommodative to encourage pilgrimages and to enhance government
407 revenues (Sharma, 2019).

408

409 **Conclusions**

410 India is a land of temples' cities in which
411 Varanasi, Ajothya, Haridwar, Hrishikesh, Mathura, Vrindaban, Madurai, Rameswaram, Kanyakumari,
412 Puducherry, Mahabalipuram, Kanchipuram, Khajuraho, Kurukshetra are of great
413 importance to the Hindus. India's religious spirituality has been enhanced through the roles of
414 these temples. On the other hand, Goa is the city of Churches and sea-shores where Christians
415 pay devote to Jesus. Lucknow, Agra, Delhi are the cities of
416 tombs, palaces, forts, Mosques, Samadhis of historical kings which have Islamic spirit to the
417 Muslims till today in India. India contains mixed cultural heritages of many religions which
418 have historical importances and therefore, tourism of such sites intended to develop cultural
419 education, spiritual upliftment, and progress and socio-economic development from the Vedic
420 period to till today. India's rich religious cultural heritage has global impacts of integrity, non-
421 violence, equity, peace, social justice and global development where India's leadership role is
422 undebatable and praiseworthy.

423 The paper earnestly verified the causality between religious tourism and development by
424 examining the several case studies of religious sites of India and abroad and justified that
425 tourism whether religious or non-religious enhance development if there are temple centric
426 development expenditure happened. Thus, tourism development outlays should be the
427 cornerstone of policy framework towards sustainable development.

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