

Chapter 21

Jagannath Temple, Puri: An Epitome of Sustainable Practices in Religious Gastronomy Tourism

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ABSTRACT

The venerable Jagannath temple, Puri is an embodiment of religious gastronomy tourism interwoven with sustainability. At the heart of the study is the sanctified Mahaprashada, whose entire life cycle was mindfully scrutinized to reveal its eco-conscious preparation, service and distribution, resulting in minimal environmental food print. Additionally, it elucidates the economic reverberations of Mahaprashada within the local community and its profound role in 'safeguarding the cultural heritage, fortifying communal identity and continuing the spiritual lineage'. Finally, in response to dynamic challenges like increasing tourism and modernisation, the research proposes avant-garde strategies to improve the sustainability of gastronomy tourism at the temple. Hence by positioning the Jagannath temple as a global exemplar of sustainable gastronomy tourism, the research can act as a blueprint for other religious sites trying to amalgam ancient gastronomic traditions with sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

One of the earliest definitions by Long (2004) described “culinary tourism as the intentional exploratory participation in the foodways of another culture, that involved preparation, presentation and consumption of food items which is not of their own”. Though culinary tourism was a part of the bigger segment of cultural tourism but in the last two decades it has shown tremendous growth and created a special niche for itself. According to the Market Research Report, the global culinary tourism market stands at \$ 1.1 Trillion in 2023. It is expected to grow at a rate of 18.9% in the coming 10 years and reach \$ 6.2 Trillion by 2033 (TBI, 2024). Culinary tourism (alternatively pronounced as gastronomy/food tourism) basically

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consists of several activities such as 'tasting regional cuisine', 'visiting vineyards and breweries', 'attending food and wine festivals', 'participating in cookery competitions', 'tour of food manufacturing plants' etc. (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Kivela & Crofts, 2006). This provides a great opportunity for culinary tourists to participate, learn and experience the unique food culture of a particular geographical area.

As per the report of UN Tourism, visitors tend to spend 33.3% of their spending on food and beverages during their travel and moreover, it is a key factor while finalising the travelling destination. (World Tourism Organization, 2012; 2017). Further Corigliano (2002) argued that while selecting a destination the tourists also give a lot of significance to the “Eno-gastronomic” resources of the place, which literally refers to the 'Indigenous food products and resources' of a region that is shaped by its culture, history and tradition. She further stated that these resources have huge potential as gastronomy tourism products, hence playing an important role in the development of 'various forms of food and beverage tourism' across the globe. Other researchers have also stressed upon the importance of such unique gastronomic resources in attracting tourists to a particular place as they work as travel motivators (Fields, 2002; Kivela & Crott, 2005; Kururatchaikul, 2014) and also help in shaping the overall experience of the tourists (Nield, Kozak & Le Grays, 2000; Quan & Wang, 2004; Chen & Huang, 2016). Hence Eno-gastronomic products are used these days as marketing tools for branding the destination (Richards, 2001; Okumus et al., 2007; Lin et al., 2011) as well as for creating national identity (Cook & Crang, 1996; Bessiere, 1998; Riley, 2000; Frochot, 2003; Chuang, 2009). Moving a step ahead Henderson (2004) studied the unique phenomenon between 'food and tourism' and highlighted its role in the economic and sustainable development of the community. Similarly, Au & Law (2002) stated that food tourism contributes significantly in terms of foreign exchange earnings to the nation and also supports local economic growth (Williams & Williams, 2015). Among the other benefits of gastronomy tourism are preservation of the unique culinary heritages in terms of ingredients, utensils, cooking practices and serving methods etc.

The above researches clearly elucidate the potential of culinary tourism hence several nations in Europe, Asia, Africa and America have already devised unique “food tourism strategies” as a part of their 'Tourism Action Plan' and allocated specific budgets for the same. (World Tourism Organization, 2017). Their primary focus is not only to promote and develop the food tourism segment but also to create a sustainable “Gastronomic Tourism Production System which will ensure optimal utilisation of the culinary resources from tourism perspective”.

As far as various forms of gastronomy tourism are concerned, based upon the resources they could be divided into food tourism, wine tourism, oleo (olive oil) tourism, beer tourism, whiskey tourism, *tapas* tourism, ethnic food tourism and religious gastronomy tourism etc. Though religious gastronomy tourism seems to be a new concept but its origin is deeply rooted in the religious beliefs of every human being. This is the reason why tourists look for food items prepared in a specific way during their travels. It has resulted in the development of more specific forms of religious gastronomy tourism i.e. *Halal* Tourism and *Kosher* Tourism. While the earlier refers to the catering practices of Muslim tourists (Dawidar, 2016; Bilim & Ozer, 2017), the latter exhibits the food habits of the Jews (Moira et al., 2017).

Besides the above, each religion has its own dietary restrictions and people tend to follow them at any cost. Hence during pilgrimage the importance of such religious food is heightened and the 'Places of Worships' (PoW) play a great role in providing these unique food preparations. The victuals provided here are initially offered to the deities and later distributed among the devotees who partake it with gratitude, as it is considered to have the divine blessings of the god (Sahoo, 2020). The above 'religious gastronomic practices' have been going on for ages, at several pilgrimage sites across the globe and most of them have tried their best to preserve the culinary heritage and its Eno-gastronomic elements. One

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