Ten Measures to Support Spiritual Tourism in India

India is the land where civilization first flourished. It is rich in traditions and places of spiritual significance. It is in India, where everything in nature is worshipped. Be it rivers, trees, mountains, forests; anything is claimed to be sacred. As a result, where ever these exist, that place becomes a sacred place with high spiritual significance. Everyone who has faith longs to visit all these places at least once in his life time. As a result, a large number of people from all over the world visit these places, and hence there is a need to develop these places and provide facilities to visitors. I found the following ten steps to be taken care of for Indian Spiritual Tourism to flourish:

1. **Safety of Pilgrims:** Whenever we say spiritual tourism, some places come to the minds of people. The foremost being the Chardham places (Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri). As we know, there were huge floods last year in these places and thousands of people lost their lives. Because of this, people who were exited to visit these places before the floods are now hesitating to visit. So the first and foremost thing to be taken care of is the “Safety of Pilgrims”. All possible safety measures to save people during such natural calamities have to be arranged so that the people go on pilgrimages with “tension free” minds. Proper measures have to be implemented to foresee such disasters so that people can be evacuated well in advance to safer places.

2. **Transportation Facilities:** Most of the times, people speak negative of the roads to such places. The journey becomes more tiring because of these roads. So, steps must be taken to improve the road transport facilities. Sometimes, people say trains and roads consume lots of time and days get wasted, so it would be netter to travel by air, but it is too expensive. The cost is another obstacle people are facing in planning pilgrimage trips.

3. **Medical Facilities:** Proper medical facilities have to be provided to the pilgrims.

4. **Visitor-Friendly Atmosphere:** At some places, Government employees and localites behave harshly with the visitors, thus spoiling the spiritual atmosphere. All employees and localites have to be educated to treat them in a friendly manner.

5. **Cleanliness:** Maintaining the places neat and clean is of at most importance. Measures have to be taken to keep such places clean. Project of cleaning Ganga launched by our Honorable Prime Minister is an example for such a step. Many more projects like this have to come up.

6. **Lodging Facilities:** Government guest houses and lodges have to come up in more numbers at affordable rates to the pilgrims.

7. **Information Centers:** There are no proper information centers in such places. Information centers have to be opened to provide visitors all the Info regarding the significance of the place, nearby places to visit, hotels and lodges available, temple timings, tickets and costs for various sevas that can be offered at temples, nearby hospitals, nearby police stations etc. Site maps can also be distributed to the visitors.

8. **Prevention of Visitor Exploitation:** Many people in such places exploit the visitors for money. For example, in one of such places where I visited, in ticket counter I was asked to pay some amount for the seva. But when I neared the sanctum, I was told I will not be allowed to perform the particular seva for the ticket I had bought outside. But I was told I will be allowed to perform in the ticket counter. So, strict measures have to be taken to prevent exploitation of the visitors.

9. **Restaurants:** Enough number of restaurants has to be there. Many people suffer without anything to eat during their journeys. For example, we did not find good, clean places to eat anything when we travelled from Kashi to Ayodhya about 5 years back. There are many such places like this.

10. **Creation of Awareness:** Also, awareness about all such place, facilities present there, spiritual significance of such places has to be created among the people. For example: short videos can be telecasted, an online website may be created with all the information etc.

Thank you

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