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### 3. The Brahmaputra River Tourism Development In Guwahati Metro

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#### **Abstract**

*River tourism is significant natural resources and becomes a popular and an important development area now days. This paper explores the concept of river tourism and how it applies to urban destinations such as Guwahati Metro. It gives an overview of the different types of river tourism usage in Guwahati Metro and can make rivers as a source of water tourism destination. This research was conducted at Brahmaputra River, Guwahati Metro, Assam. The research carried out qualitative study and data was analyzed descriptively. The study found out some problems and suggests further measures for the development of river tourism.*

**Key Words:** *River Tourism, Brahmaputra River, Guwahati Metro & Brahmaputra Tourism.*

#### **Introduction**

Assam, throbbing with the life –force of the mighty Brahmaputra River that runs through the state also a mysterious blue of its extensive hilly tracts and red rivers has emerged as popular tourist destinations gradually. The mighty river Brahmaputra makes Guwahati a major riverine port city as well as major hub for river tourism seekers. Guwahati is the district headquarters of Kamrup Metro District as well as the capital city of Assam. Guwahati is situated on the southern bank of river Brahmaputra with its cardinal points as 26<sup>0</sup>11' North latitude and 91<sup>0</sup>44' East longitude. It is located towards the south-eastern side of Kamrup district surrounded by Kamrup district in the North, Darrang and Marigaon districts in the East, Meghalaya State in the south and Goalpara & Barpeta districts in the West. The drainage system of Assam consists of innumerable rivers and its tributaries. The entire state is drained by dense networks of two river systems viz. The Brahmaputra River & The Barak River systems. Assam as a whole and the city of Guwahati is an embodiment of natural beauty. The immense

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blessings of nature have made tourism of Assam essentially 'nature centric', despite the fact that there are cultural, historical and religious places of tourist attractions.

In Assam the concept of river tourism is synonymous with Brahmaputra Tourism like two sides of one coin. In fact, River Brahmaputra has been called lifeline of Assam. The Brahmaputra River and its tributaries vast riverfront have the great potential for developing a major river tourism hub in Assam.

The present research is going to be a modest endeavor to explore the concept of River Tourism and its development in the river Brahmaputra especially in Guwahati Metro.

### **Significance of the Study**

With the rapid growth of tourism as an industry all over the world, many states have taken keen interest in promoting tourism in India and have gained some sort of successes. We can take the example of 'The Gods Own Country' Kerala, 'The Haven of Earth' Jammu & Kashmir and Goa. This naturally confronts us with the question about the status of tourism in Assam and the North Eastern Regions. Very little has been done in respect of tourism in the North Eastern Regions especially in River Tourism. The mighty river Brahmaputra is endowed with great potentiality in river tourism. After showcasing wildlife and culture, Assam tourism is all set to focus on river tourism.

This study is expected to be a medium to find out river tourism development of the river Brahmaputra in the Guwahati Metro.

### **Objectives of the study**

- a) To elucidate the relationship between river and tourism.
- b) To study the tourism scenario of river Brahmaputra.
- c) To layout the related issues and suggestions for the further development of river tourism

### **Methodology**

This study is primarily depended on data/information from the secondary sources. To fulfillment of the objectives would have to rely much on the inputs from the historical and geographical background

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and adoption of descriptive methods. The methodology used in the study is qualitative in nature. It includes study and consultation of reference book and journals, websites about the subject. Besides the different libraries, internet and other sources of print media was also took opinion of people who are directly and/or indirectly related to this industry in the state such as tourism related organization's owner and tourist's opinion to get their feedback about overall river tourism scenario in Guwahati city.

### **River Tourism**

In tourism study the water-based tourism occupied a prominent place amongst the other forms of tourism. Its emergence goes back to the development of vehicles suitable for water transport, as well as man's various activities done in the proximity of a water surface. In water-based tourism: sports, leisure and recreation experiences, sailing, fishing, and surfing are probably the oldest. The activity of sailing dates back to Egyptian times (4000 BCE).

In the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, particularly in Western and industrial nations, there has been a significant growth in the pursuit of water-based experiences as forms of sport, leisure, recreation, and tourism (Miller 1993; Orams 1999; Jennings 2003). In the modern concept of water-based tourism relates to any touristic activity undertaken in or in relation to water resources, such as lakes, dams, creeks, streams, rivers, canals, waterways, marine coastal zones, seas, oceans, and ice-associated areas. The areas, which are suitable for water tourism, including rivers, lakes, and ponds are considered of exceptional importance in tourism. Different types of bodies of water can sustain several, diverse forms of tourism, such as beach tourism, river tourism, tourism of reservoirs, lakes, and natural pools, and tourism of thermal waters. Amongst this various form of tourism, a new chapter of tourism has rapidly gained ground worldwide. It is "RIVER TOURISM". Thus, it is clear that water-based tourism is responsible for the creation of the concept of 'River Tourism'.

The main feature of river is water. Even the main feature of river tourism is also water, one of the most popular natural settings for rest and recreation. River have been always a crucial part of human life from time immemorial and it is once associated with pleasure, adventure and recreations. River

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can create aesthetic and recreational values while at the same time they pose a variety of opportunities for tourism resources and community development.

Because of the popularity of tourism worldwide, coastal, lake, and river tourism development has dramatically increased in recent decades. In this respect the concept of river tourism gains importance day by day.

### **Brahmaputra River Tourism Prespective in Guwahati Metro**

The most significant tourist attraction along the banks of the river Brahmaputra is historic city Guwahati itself is a major urban city and important tourist destination with its developing waterfront. The Brahmaputra River and its tributaries provides bountiful opportunities for river-based tourism ranging from religious tourism, adventure tourism to river bank fairs and festivals and many more in and around of Guwahati City. The Brahmaputra River is considered as God and even worshipped among the Hindu people. The mighty River Brahmaputra is providing tourist a wonderful insight into the historical, cultural, and religious tourism. The Brahmaputra flows through the northern banks of the famous Shakti Peeth Kamakhya temple, whereas Umananda Temple is located middle of the Brahmaputra which is the smallest inhabited riverine island in the world and another one Sukreswar temple is located in the southern banks of the Brahmaputra and picturesque view of the mighty river flowing alongside its banks. The Brahmaputra River is the prime natural element in Guwahati and its environs and is one of the most salient recreation sources. The Brahmaputra River and its numerous tributaries are major tourism resources exhibiting natural charms and offer opportunities for angling, boating, kayaking, and other form of water-centered recreational activities. It also provides river cruising and ferrying facilities. In the case of Guwahati Metro, the River Brahmaputra ply short and long-distance river cruises on its body. A river cruise exploring the mighty Brahmaputra is a wonderful opportunity for getting a feel of its legendary river. River Cruises in Guwahati are like Alfresco Grand River Cruise, ABN Charaideo River Cruise, MV Mahabahu River Cruise (The biggest and most modern cruise liner), the most adventurous cruise CNN international etc.

The number of river ferry passengers increased day by day on the river Brahmaputra whether they are local people or tourists. The tourists can hire small ferry or boat to visit the places of nearby

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attractions such as the famous “Peacock Island” (Umanada Temple) and North Guwahati. The scenic beauty of the setting sun of in the Brahmaputra itself beckons hundreds of watchers in the evening. The Brahmaputra Beach festivals, the introduction of Brahmaputra Carnival, the river banks parks and especially the Guwahati Ropeway between North and South banks of Brahmaputra river connecting Guwahati city and North Guwahati in the midst of the river for commuting public, tourist and pilgrims has been opened and become popular tourist attractions. The purpose of the ropeway is to boost tourism and reduce the travel time between the North and South Bank of the Brahmaputra. The ropeway ride offers excellent scope of aerial view of the river the landscape. Besides these attractions Guwahati and its environs possess many attractive natural features and with recreational activities apart from the Brahmaputra River.

#### **River Tourism Related Issues & Recommendations**

In recent years as interest in river tourism grown in the river Brahmaputra, significant investment has been made by the Government and private entrepreneurs especially in river ferries, boats and river cruises infrastructure resulting a great opportunity for economic and social development of the region. But due to dissemination of information, affordable and reliable communication network river cruising is not that much developed in Assam in comparison to national and international river cruising scenario. The Brahmaputra Beach Festival is held on the white sandy beaches of Brahmaputra during the spring season. As well as modern adventure sports like Surfing, Beach Volleyball, Cricket etc. Aero sports like ballooning, paragliding and hang gliding are also organized here. This festival can be a large tourist puller. But it appears that a stable source of revenue is not matched by proper policy and strategy. Moreover, that at present Assam virtually has less trained tourist guides in important places of tourist attraction. Consequently, as the tourists arrive at such a place there is hardly anyone to satisfy the inquisitiveness of the tourists. The Tourism Ministry of Assam should take more initiative to produce more trained tourist guides. Besides that, introducing Hoover Craft, Water Skating, and Speed Boat Services in Brahmaputra can be initiated by both public and private organization. This will surely make it more attractive those tourists who are keen on adventure sports and also it will help linking some of the major tourist spots by river ways. Apart from this initiative should be taken to develop Camping Sites around the banks of the river. These sites can cater as

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accommodation facility for 'anglers. Camping sites with adventure activities has a huge potential to develop tourism on the river front. In addition, introducing House Boat facilities on the river Brahmaputra to enjoy the beautiful natural environment is a bit different from the norm. On the other hand, the state tourism department can run more lavishly vessels between Sukrehwar Ghat and North Guwahati where tourist can experience scenic beauty being amidst the mighty river Brahmaputra.

By encouraging river tourism in the city, we are certainly emulating the western countries. There is no harm in doing so. But it is the right time that before encouraging further river tourism activities the government should develop a proper planning strategy to maintain the religious, environmental and social sanctity of the area. They can impose some strict rules and regulations on both tourist and host community.

### **Conclusion**

In the case of Guwahati Metro most of the water-based activities whether it may be adventurous water sports or leisure-based water activities are organized on the river Brahmaputra and its tributaries. Lot of river cruises, floating restaurants cum cruise ships welcomes tourist at Guwahati. The fairs & festivals as well as water-based adventure sports are great strength of river tourism in the river Brahmaputra.

The river Brahmaputra has immense potentialities for development of river tourism in Guwahati including its environs but there are some strong discouraging factors, which works against a strong inflow of tourist as well as all these problems put a bar to develop and grow river tourism in Guwahati Metro. Serious and combined efforts are immediately needed from both government and private organizations tap to complement the existing tourist resources and make the upcoming theme popular in the country and world over. Then no wonder it would definitely take place at global platform.

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