

A Study of Dark Tourism Sites in Rajasthan

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Abstract: The study of this paper aims to study the various sites of dark tourism in Rajasthan. Tourism means the act and process of spending time away from home in pursuit of recreation, relaxation, and pleasure while making use of the commercial provision. There are many forms of tourism based on the purpose of visit. Dark Tourism or Black Tourism is a type of travel which involves traveling to some places which is historically associated with death or any kind of tragedy. Dark Tourism is an increasingly popular form of tourism over the last few years. Every year, millions of tourists from around the world go to the world worst places. Visitors make the worst part the history a part of their vacation. The main attraction to dark locations is their historical value rather than associations with death and suffering. Holocaust tourism contains aspects of both dark and heritage tourism. There are a lot of places in Rajasthan. This research paper includes references to the promotion of dark tourism in Rajasthan. Dark tourism attractions demonstrate demand but also consist of commemoration, historical references, narrative legacies, and populist heritage tourism sites in some cases become one of few remaining elements of victims and tier testimonies. There is a lot of scope for developing dark tourism in Rajasthan but taking some efforts and specific solutions to developed dark tourism in Rajasthan. For this paper used secondary research methodology has been used for research for data collection, secondary data collected from the literature review also government agency data; online tourism news has been collected. Although the presence of black tourism in Rajasthan is seldom acknowledged, there are several places in Rajasthan that fall under this category. Because dark tourism impacts on a number of scientific areas and their consolidation creates a unique product market, the importance and role of dark tourism in current society is indeed a critical issue.

Key Words: Dark Tourism, Morbid landmarks, Destination, Historical sites, Death and Tragedy, Narrative legacies, Holocaust tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Dark tourism, also known as black tourism or mourning tourism, is defined as tourism that involves visits to historically significant sites connected with death and misery. Glasgow, Scotland, was the birthplace of academic interest in the subject. In 1996, Lennon and Foley, two professors at Glasgow Caledonian University's Department of Hospitality, Tourism & Leisure Management, invented the phrase "dark tourism". The Religious travel industry, Wild life travel industry, Cultural travel industry, Recreational travel industry, Instructive travel industry, and other types of travel industries are the most well-known. Because of the diversity of cultures, festivals, religions, and other factors, India offers almost every sort of tourism. Although India has made significant headway in promoting specialty tourism, one market remains untapped: "Dark Tourism". It has become extremely popular all across the world in the twenty-first century. Changing tourist tastes and inclinations, as well as the evolution of the notion of special interest tourism, have compelled tourism policymakers around the world to include this segment in their goal and vision. Following several wars, poor countries who were unable to attract tourists due to a lack of tourism enablers have begun to welcome guests for dark tourism in order to gain a competitive advantage.

1.1 Definition of Dark Tourism:

Dark tourism involves tourist who visits the site of previous wars and battles, which are revived at the scene of previous violence, and their tour guides cite the examples of heroism, tragedy and personal suffering (Genova, 2008)

The term dark tourism was first mentioned by Foley Lennon (1996) in a special article of the international journal of the science of cultural and historical heritage. Dark tourism, with its main product death, is a prominent feature in the popular social panorama.

The history of Rajasthan has been full of civilizations, War and battles.. these historical sites have been popular tourist destinations for a longtime. But there are historical destinations which have been associated with death, tragedy associated with them. There are sites which can be labeled as dark tourism destinations because of some recent human interventions such as war or some Haunted Forts and Havelis in Rajasthan, several locations are identified, which could serve the purpose of dark tourism.

2. Objectives of the study:

The paper titled 'Dark Tourism in Rajasthan, seeks to address the following objectives-

- 1.To understand the concept of dark tourism and its prospects in Rajasthan, India.
- 2.To highlight different places of Rajasthan as “dark spots” and discuss about their scope to become potential tourist spots for promoting dark tourism.
- 3.To suggest some measures that would help in development of dark tourism in Rajasthan.

3. Research Methodology:

This study is based on descriptive and exploratory research. For this research paper, data has been collected from secondary sources. It includes online websites, Wikipedia, world travel, and journals, and articles online also published. After collection of the required information relevant to the concerned study, findings have been interpreted and the conclusions arrived therefrom have been structured as required. Several working papers and reports of renowned authors and institutions on tourism in India and articles published in reputed journals and by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and Rajasthan have been referred to for this purpose.

4. Dark Tourism Sites in Rajasthan:

almost every type of tourism exists in Rajasthan. The existence of dark tourism in Rajasthan not much aware, but many sites fit in the dark tourism category. Rajasthan is considered a famous tourist destination for its ancient buildings and stories of royal houses. tourists are attracted to them. But Rajasthan is also famous for the most haunted places. The stories of ghosts here will scare you. Scary sounds and screams are heard even today from the forts and mansions here. so let's know about these horror places.

Bhangarh Fort, Alwar:

Bhangarh Fort is considered to be one of the most haunted places in India and is said to be cursed. There are several legends associated with the fort but there are two which are rather popular with the local population. The first legend is that of a sadhu named Baba Balau Nath. Long before the king Madho Singh decided to construct a fort in Bhangarh, the area was a meditating spot for Baba Balau Nath. The sadhu gave his permission for the construction of the fort on the condition that the fort or any building within shouldn't be taller than his house and if the shadow of any structure fell upon his house, it would result in the annihilation of the fort town. Ajab Singh, the grandson of Madho Singh, is said to have ignored this warning and greatly raised the height of the fort, the resulting shadow falling on the sadhu's home, leading to destruction of the town. The other legend is associated.



Bhangarh Fort, Alwar

with princess Ratnavati, who was very beautiful and had a number of suitors from the royal families of the country. A wizard, adept in black magic, fell in love with the princess. As the princess went shopping with her friends one day, the wizard saw her buying ittar (scent) and replaced the ittar with a love potion. The princess, however, came to know of the wizard's trickery and threw the potion onto a boulder nearby. This resulted in the boulder rolling towards the wizard and crushing him to death. But before being crushed to death, he cursed the city, stating that it would be destroyed soon and no would be able to live within its precincts. The kingdom was later sacked by the invading Mughal forces, killing all the inhabitants of the fort along with princess Ratnavati. As it is considered a haunted place the Bhangarh fort remains out of bound for visitors before sunrise and after sunset.

The Bhangarh fort in Rajasthan, although in ruins, still looks beautiful as it sits at the base of a hill amidst the serene and lusciously green surroundings. Visit the fort to see the ruins of a once magnificent kingdom.

Ajabgarh, Alwar:

About 100 years ago, the jinxed village of Ajabgarh had its honest share of spooky experiences. Due to its proximity to one of the most haunted places in India, the castle of Bhangarh, Ajabgarh village became deserted. Furthermore, sorcerers and black magic practitioners cursed the village, thereby, forcing the residents to abandon their dwellings out of sheer fear. For their incapacity to feed their hearth with fire, cattle with fodder, and the fields with water, the villagers left the villages in search of livelihood in the metropolitan areas.



Ajabgarh, Alwar:

Kuldhara Village, Jaisalmer:

Kuldhara Village, located around 18kms Jaisalmer is one of the top 7 haunted places in Rajasthan. It is a place that is steeped in mystery and tales of the paranormal. Abandoned and desolate, this village has gained a reputation as one of the most haunted places of Rajasthan. The village is nestled amidst a barren landscape, surrounded by desert sands and remnants of the once-thriving community. The silence and the sense of abandonment create an atmospheric setting that adds to the mystique of the place. Visitors to Kuldhara can explore the abandoned houses, temples, and narrow streets that are frozen in time. The village provides a glimpse into the architectural style and way of life of the Paliwal Brahmins. The dilapidated structures and the silence that engulfs the village evoke a sense of mystery and intrigue. While exploring Kuldhara, it is important to be respectful of the surroundings and adhere to any guidelines provided by the local authorities. The village holds historical and cultural significance, and it is essential to treat the site with reverence.

The Stories of Kuldhara Village: Kuldhara Village is known for its haunting legends and stories that have been passed down through generations. According to popular folklore, the village was once inhabited by Paliwal Brahmins, a prosperous community. The village thrived due to its flourishing agriculture and trade, until one night when it was mysteriously abandoned.

The Curse of Salim Singh: The most popular story associated with Kuldhara Village revolves around the tyrant Salim Singh, who was the minister of the Jaisalmer state. It is said that Salim Singh fell in love with a girl from the village and demanded her hand in marriage. Fearing for the honor and safety of their community, the Paliwal Brahmins decided to abandon the village and invoked a curse upon it. It is believed that anyone who tried to inhabit the village after their departure would face misfortune and paranormal activities.



Kuldhara Village, Jaisalmer

The Vanished Village: Another intriguing aspect of Kuldhara is the complete abandonment and disappearance of its inhabitants. According to local legends, on the night the villagers left, the entire village vanished into thin air. To this day, the exact reasons for their mass exodus and the mysterious disappearance of the village remain unknown, adding to the village's haunted aura.

Nahargarh Fort, Jaipur:

Nahargarh implies 'abode of tigers'. Legend says that the castle used to be named as Nahargarh after the spirit of a Rathore, Nahar Singh. When the development of the fort started out atypical phenomenon occurred. Every morning the workers would find the previous day's work destroyed. On finding the land haunted, then Maharaja, Jai Singh

developed a shrine and named it Nahargarh. The castle was constructed by Sawai Raja Man Singh along with Amer Fort and Jaigarh Fort. The king was obsessed about this fort that he had constructed for his queens and even after his death, it is said he resides in the same.



Nahargarh Fort, Jaipur

Rana kumbha palace, Chittorgarh:

Rana Kumbha Palace, located within the formidable Chittorgarh Fort. The palace stands as a witness to the turbulent history of Rajasthan. The palace's association with Queen Padmini and the tragic events that unfolded within its walls have contributed to its haunting allure. However, it remains a captivating destination for those interested in history and architecture, offering a glimpse into Rajasthan's rich heritage. Rana Kumbha Palace was built during the 15th century by Rana Kumbha, a revered ruler of the Mewar dynasty. It served as the residence of the royal family and a symbol of their power and grandeur. However, the palace was witness to several tragic events and brutal battles, leading to its association with ghostly tales.



Rana kumbha palace, Chittorgarh

One of the most popular stories associated with Rana Kumbha Palace is the story of Queen Padmini. According to legend, Alauddin Khilji, the Sultan of Delhi, was captivated by Queen Padmini's beauty and desired to possess her. The queen, along with the women of the palace, performed "Jauhar" (self-immolation) to protect their honour and dignity. It is believed that the spirits of Queen Padmini and the women who performed Jauhar still linger within the palace, creating a haunting presence. Visitors to Rana Kumbha Palace have reported witnessing inexplicable phenomena, such as strange sounds, whispers, and apparitions. Many claims to have felt a heavy presence and experienced a sense of unease while exploring the palace's dark corridors and rooms. The palace's dilapidated state, with crumbling walls and remnants of the past, further adds to its uncanny atmosphere. While the palace is considered haunted, it remains a significant historical site that attracts tourists, history enthusiasts, and architecture lovers. Its imposing structure and intricate architecture showcase the grandeur of the bygone era. Visitors can explore the various rooms, galleries, and balconies within the palace, getting a glimpse into the lives of the Rajput rulers.

Brijraj Bhawan Palace, Kota:

Brijraj Bhawan Palace Hotel, located in Kota, is reputed to be one of the haunted places in Rajasthan. This heritage hotel, which was once the residence of a British major, is known for its ghostly tales and paranormal experiences, particularly linked to the spirit of Major Charles Burton. Despite its paranormal associations, the hotel offers a unique experience for guests interested in history, heritage, and the thrill of staying at a reputedly haunted location. According to local legends, Major Charles Burton, the former resident of Brijraj Bhawan Palace, tragically died during the Indian Rebellion of 1857. It is believed that his spirit still wanders the premises, making the palace a haunt for supernatural encounters. Guests and staff members have reported eerie incidents, including strange sounds, unexplained movements, and sightings of a ghostly figure believed to be Major Burton. One popular story associated with the palace tells of a British couple who checked into Brijraj Bhawan for a night. During their stay, the wife woke up in the middle of the night to find a man dressed in military attire standing at the foot of their bed. Shocked and terrified, the couple immediately fled the room. It is said that the ghostly presence of Major Burton often appears to guests, especially in Room 327, which is considered to be the most haunted room in the hotel. Despite its haunted reputation, Brijraj Bhawan Palace Hotel continues to operate as a heritage hotel and welcomes guests from around the world. The hotel offers comfortable accommodations with a touch of colonial charm, providing a unique experience for visitors seeking a blend of history and paranormal intrigue.



Brijraj Bhawan Palace, Kota

Mehandipur Balaji Temple, Dausa:

Mehandipur Balaji Temple, located in the Dausa district, is renowned for its exorcism activities and is considered one of the most haunted places in Rajasthan to visit. The temple is dedicated to Lord Hanuman and is known for its unique rituals and practices associated with the expulsion of evil spirits and supernatural afflictions. It offers a unique

opportunity for dark tourism, allowing visitors to witness the rituals and practices performed to combat supernatural afflictions. It is important to note that while Mehandipur Balaji Temple is considered a haunted place due to its association with exorcism and paranormal activities, it is also a revered religious site for devotees seeking spiritual healing. Visitors should approach the temple with respect and sensitivity towards the beliefs and practices of the people who come here seeking solace from supernatural disturbances.

The temple attracts people from all over India who believe in the power of exorcism and seek solace from various paranormal disturbances. It is believed that the temple is frequented by spirits and those possessed by them. Devotees come to Mehandipur Balaji Temple seeking relief from black magic, witchcraft, and other supernatural afflictions. One of the significant rituals performed at the temple is the 'Bhoot Nivaran Puja,' where individuals possessed by spirits are brought to the temple for exorcism. The possessed individuals are subjected to intense rituals and prayers to liberate them from the influence of evil forces. These rituals involve the chanting of mantras, holy water sprinkling, and the use of various herbs and holy ashes. The atmosphere in and around the temple during these rituals is often described as intense and charged with spiritual energy. Visiting Mehandipur Balaji Temple offers a unique and immersive experience for those interested in dark tourism. The temple provides a glimpse into the mystical world of exorcism and the belief in supernatural powers. It allows visitors to witness the rituals and ceremonies performed to combat spiritual afflictions, providing a rare opportunity to explore the intersection of faith, healing, and the occult. The temple is open to devotees and visitors throughout the year. The timings may vary, but generally, the temple opens early in the morning and closes in the evening. It is advisable to check the specific timings before planning a visit.



Mehandipur Balaji Temple, Dausa

Chand Baori, Dausa:

Chand Baori, located in the village of Abhaneri in the Dausa district of Rajasthan, is a stepwell that is often associated with haunting tales and a sense of mystery. While there is no concrete scientific proof of it being haunted, the unique architectural features, historical significance, and ambiance of the place contribute to its reputation as a haunted site. The haunting reputation of Chand Baori stems from its desolate appearance, the echoes of footsteps in the empty well, and the sense of isolation that pervades the area. The stillness and darkness within the stepwell can create an eerie atmosphere, especially during evenings or cloudy days when the light casts shadows on the ancient structure.

Local legends and beliefs suggest that the stepwell may be haunted by spirits or jinns, adding to its mysterious allure. It is said that the well has an energy that attracts supernatural entities, and some people claim to have experienced paranormal activities or strange occurrences in the vicinity.

Chand Baori is open to visitors throughout the year. The timings for visiting are generally from sunrise to sunset. There is no entry fee to explore the stepwell, and visitors can freely wander around the site. However, it is advisable to exercise caution while descending the steps due to their steep and uneven nature.

Beyond its haunted reputation, Chand Baori holds immense architectural and historical significance. It was primarily used as a water reservoir, providing a reliable source of water during dry seasons. The stepwell's design also served as a community gathering place and provided relief from the scorching heat of Rajasthan.



Chand Baori, Dausa

Sudhabay, Pushkar:

Sudhabay Kund in Pushkar is a place shrouded in mystery, making it one of the top haunted places in Rajasthan. Its association with Lord Brahma and the mythological stories surrounding it make it a place of religious importance and intrigue. Visiting Sudhabay Kund provides an opportunity to immerse oneself in the spiritual essence of Pushkar and witness the customs and rituals that have been practiced for centuries. Sudhabay Kund is a sacred water reservoir located near the Brahma Temple in Pushkar. It is believed to be a holy spot where Lord Brahma himself performed a yagna (sacred ritual) in ancient times. According to legend, it is believed that Sudhabay Kund was created when Lord Brahma struck the ground with his weapon, resulting in the formation of a sacred water body.

This place is one of the must-visit haunted places in Rajasthan 2023 because of its unique annual “Ghost Fair”, which is believed to offer liberation from ghosts and spirits. The area remains relatively unexplored, but during the Ghost Fair, people from all over visit Sudhabay to seek relief from spiritual afflictions.

The fair showcases unusual rituals, including exorcisms, creating an eerie and haunted ambiance that can send shivers down one's spine. The holy lake in Sudhabay is considered sacred, and locals bathe in its waters to protect themselves from negative energies. Taking a dip in the lake after witnessing the ghostly rituals is said to be a transformative experience.

Today, the Ghost Fair at Sudhabay Kund attracts crowds of devotees who seek happiness and peace through ancestral rituals and offerings. The fair coincides with specific astrological alignments, often on the fourth day of the waxing moon and Tuesday. The fair becomes a focal point for people to perform Pind Dan, and Tarpan, and seek solace for their ancestors.



Sudhabay, Pushkar

10.NH 79 Ajmer-Udaipur highway:

Described as the ‘highway that asks for blood’, the NH-79 near Dudu Village is one of the most haunted sites in Rajasthan. The haunted story dates back to the time when child marriage was practiced in the country. In Dudu village, a five-day-old girl was made to marry a three-year old boy. However, the mother of the infant girl was against this wedding, and ran towards the highway to seek help, where she and her baby got hit by a vehicle. They both died on the spot and ever since, stories about their spirits haunting the road have remained.

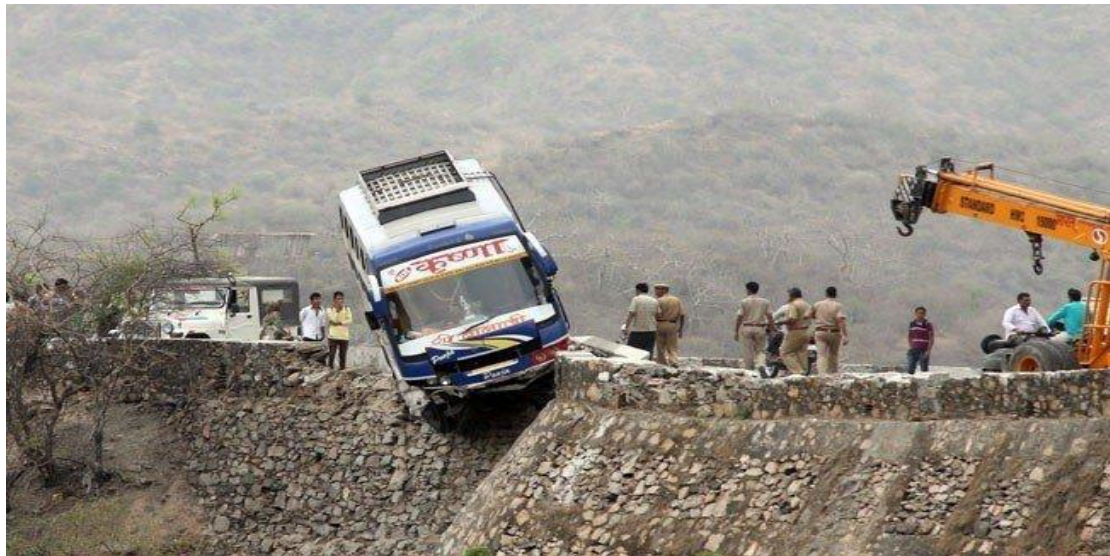


NH 79 Ajmer-Udaipur highway

Chirwa Ghati, Udaipur:

This Ghati has now transformed into Chirwa Tunnel and it is considered to be one of the most accident-prone areas. It is said that before the tunnel was built, everyone who wanted to cross Chirwa road had to stop at a Temple nearby and

take the blessings of God for safety. People who didn't visit the temple were prey to dangerous accidents. This area still remains an accident-prone zone and it is believed that some dark energy is responsible for these unfortunate accidents.



Chirwa Ghati

Natni Ka Bara, Alwar

Place where a Natni (Female artist) said to have been danced on a yarn, tied on two hills. Oneday she realized that she is walking too high and died out of fear.



Natni Ka Bara, Alwar

Jagatpura, Jaipur:

Jagatpura is a residential area in Jaipur believed to be haunted by the soul of the villagers who died here. This land was once ruled by a king, who was egocentric and greedy. And, under his rule, the villagers died out of starvation. Normally a serene and peaceful place, it turns spooky when the moon comes up.



Jagatpura fort, Jaipur

People who have walked alone at night through the streets of Jagatpura have heard bodiless voices whispering and cackling, and apparitions have also been reported, including a lady in a white dress. Best avoid it at night!

Haldighati-Mountain Pass:

Maan Singha's treacherous plot against Rana Pratap took shape in the war of Haldighati, Rajputs fought against Mughals.



Haldighati-Mountain Pass

Kiradu Temple, Badmer

The temple is also known as the Khajuraho of Rajasthan and known for its haunting stories all over the state. There are very few people know that the place or the temple is a much-loved place for the lovers and they love the place as the temple is kept as a lonely one and they can have their own time but the people who so ever visit this temple after learning about the stories do not dare to stay here after sunset. It is said that the people who ever stay here after sunset will **'Turn into Stone figures**. Now, this sounds really bizarre as the people scare from going to this temple as they have a doubt that the mystery behind the temple will turn them into stones. It is also believed that either the stayer of the temple turns into stone figures or they sleep to death. And this is the reason that the people who are staying near the temple will never be there after the sunset and they are doing this for years. It is believed that a stone figure of a woman which is located at a nearby village called Sihadi witnesses the truth of the stories about the temple.



Kiradu Temple, Badmer

5. Suggestions:

Following are a few suggestions which the authorities may consider for development of Dark Tourism in Rajasthan-
Destination development-To promote dark tourism, spurious destinations have to be built from the scratch. If calamities or time has ruined the destination authorities must artificially organize the destination so that the tourists can have the same feeling as if they are time travelling. Unexplored locations have to be recognized by the policy makers and developed into dark tourism destinations.

Marketing destination- The destinations should be market ready. Quality service and facility should be provided in all these locations. Honoring the thoughts that are associated with the place infrastructure has to be developed. Local people having knowledge of the place must be educated, trained and employed as guide. In this way problem of unemployment will also be answered to some extent. Markets must reflect the tragedy of the place; artefacts, images, paintings must illustrate the same. This will help to attract the emotions of the tourists.

Popularizing dark tourism among tourists- Thoughts play a big role in dark tourism. Authorities can promote dark tourism among those communities or local people whose ancestors were part of the tragedy. Infrastructural development is necessary to promote the destination among domestic and international tourists.

Efficient use of destination branding- Marketing death is not easy. It is the biggest challenge in case of dark tourism. Company positioning and branding can help in solving this problem. A photo of the destination has to be created and communicated among preferred audiences. Commercials should be fascinating. Commercials should be able to attract one's emotions. But advertisement must not be emotionally exploitative. They should not promote trauma.

- The first step to promote dark tourists in India with the help of audio-video as well as print media.
- For the development of dark tourism, organizations develop a proper circle of providing services to tourists like accommodation, food, providing them a guide, etc.

- Three people living near the dark tourism sites must have proper knowledge of places, and also, they must be protective and supportive toward tourists of the nearby places.
- The level of reaching and exploring the spot can be done when a circle is created for the tourists visiting the places, so there must be created proper circuits to get access to all the spots they want to.
- The citizens, travel organizations relating tourism activities must approach the government to change the existing policies and create new ones.

6. CONCLUSION:

As far as tourism is concerned, Rajasthan has always been in the limelight. Many travel agencies and groups offer packages on Rajasthan. But most of the Indian tourists are not aware of the concept of dark tourism. It is so because authorities have not taken the due steps for popularizing the same. But again, India has both destinations and infrastructure to support the concept of dark tourism. A long-term plan will have to be made to introduce tourist to the concept of dark tourism in the tourism market. To increase publicity, awareness has to be created among the domestic tourists first. Authorities have to maintain dark tourism websites where all can have easy access. In the near future, supportive governmental insurance policies and co-operation from local people can help further to develop Rajasthan as a popular “dark tourism destination” for the vacationers. This can prove to be a superb method for revival of the tourism industry.

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