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Tourism in the course of History: Critical Appraisal

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Travelling by the nomads of ancient times has now transformed into an organized activity, now called Tourism. Tourism in its present form is of recent origin, but man has been engaged in travel one way or the other from the very beginning of history. As dwelling at one place makes any one irritable, the tourism originated naturally. It is a natural desire shared by all beings to move from one place to another for a purpose, be it social, political cultural, religious or commercial. Tourism has a multi-pronged history throughout its entire course of development and therefore the shape, form, mode content and objectives of travelling have always been changing.¹

Ancient Period :- Man has always been a wanderer and explorer in search of something new and which suits to his pursuits. In the ancient period the nomadic people were on the move from one place to another primarily for their livelihood. Gradually and gradually man recognized the resourcefulness of land and water and began to spend sedentary life especially in river valleys.² This is why all great civilizations of the world have flourished in the river valleys. During the early part of human history, man would have travelled under compulsion primarily to satisfy his biological needs and in the later period, the emergence of empires gave impetus to travel for political, business and religious purposes.³ The activity was not a thing of pleasure as it is reflected in present times. Trade and Commerce were however the strongest motivators in ancient times. It was primarily the traders, who blazed the trail by establishing national trade routes and communication which later extended throughout the region and finally to other continents.⁴

The invention of money by the Sumerians and development of trade and commerce beginning about 4000 B.C. perhaps marks the beginning of the modern era of travel.⁵ The result was that many traders paid for their transportation costs as well as

their accommodation in terms of money. Travel along the trade routes was full of difficulties and dangers. Adding to this, facilities for accommodation, catering and health were almost negligible. Although, Shulgi, the ruler of ancient Babylonia had protected many roads and constructed rest houses for respectable way-farers.⁶ The cultural and commercial contacts between people of different countries, however, improved the living conditions and the quality of life.

The people were also guided by the desire to explore the surroundings, discover the unknown and seek new experiences. This was reflected in the tours undertaken by the people in ancient Greece. Homer's 'Odyssey' records the wanderlust of the ancient Greece.⁷ Herodotus visited Egypt, Phoenicia, Cyrenacia and the Black sea and recorded the history and culture of the people of these lands in his 'Travels'.⁸ The chief aim of his travel was to collect materials for writing history. The Greek philosophers Pythagoras and Plato travelled to Egypt and Aristotle travelled to Asia Minor. Generally Greeks engaged in travels for worshipping Gods and Goddesses, to participate in games and to witness the fairs and festivals.⁹ With the rise of Christianity and Buddhism, a movement for education and culture began. It reached its zenith when great centers of learning developed both in the east and west, which attracted people from distant lands.¹⁰ The pursuit of knowledge and wisdom in a distant land, was coupled with a desire to visit places of religious interest. Men travelled to Kashi from all over Central Asia and the Far East. Christian missionaries and Buddhist monks travelled far and wide carrying religious messages.¹¹

The concept of pleasure travel started with Romans. Wherever the Romans went they constructed a fine network of roads and developed good communication system. The quest for pleasure and recreation, coupled with prosperity