



# Tourism in Bihar post COVID-19 Pandemic: Resilience and Recovery Plans

Abinash Kumar Jha\*, Divya Bhanot\*\*, Anu Chandran R. C.\*\*\*

**Abstract** *In the 21st century, tourism has arisen as the heart and soul of societies, communities and nations across the globe, for the plethora of benefits it carries for the host societies and markets. It has thus, established itself as an endeavor of immense importance facilitating enriched connections, interactions, and transactions at global as well as local levels. However, the coin of tourism has a flip side to it as well, for it has also proved to be a potential catalyst in facilitating the undue spread of coronavirus through the people carrying it, knowingly or unknowingly. Such incidences have led to the generation of stigmatising attitudes towards those who are considered to be the potential carriers of it to varied geographical regions. Stigma is the practice of derogation, exclusion, and avoidance of people deemed dangerous to the affective dynamics of public health and well-being and/or social interactions.*

*Engrossing with the view of social vis-à-vis spatial stigmatisation at tourist destinations. This paper aimed to explore and discuss the notion and consequences of apparent stigma, based on secondary evidence collected from various sources, the perceived condition of tourism in Bihar after the homecoming of people (who are apprehended to be the fomicides of COVID-19). It also seeks to explore the likely consequential effects the tourism industry of Bihar might have to bear in the present state of pestilence, and the challenges that the region would have to overcome in order to re-establish its position in the tourism sector.*

**Keywords:** *Tourism, Stigmatisation, Bihar, COVID-19, Resilience and Recovery Plans*

## INTRODUCTION

Globally, the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has been acknowledged as one of the most deleterious events of the 21st century (Chakraborty & Maity, 2020), which has brought severe consequences to human living all across the globe. Nevertheless, the recent outbreak is instrumental in ‘homogenising the polarised world’ under one roof of intense fear, threat, anxiety, and dismay experienced by humanity—a precondition that helps the global community to prepare and respond collectively to the public “health emergency”, later declared as a pandemic (WHO, 2020). In the absence of a vaccine to eradicate the outbreak, insufficient knowledge and unavailability of medical interventions to cure the disease, the world has been left with little alternative (Tiwari, Gaurav, & Abraham, 2020). So, most countries are focused on their previous experiences and lessons learned from

similar outbreaks viz. SARS, MERS-Cov, Ebola responded to the emergency with different types of non-pharmaceutical intervention (NPI) and preventive initiatives recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO), comprising lockdown, social distancing, closure of academic institutions, non-essential businesses activities /workplaces, cancelling or postponing events and bans on gatherings of people over specific numbers (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2020). Besides, several public health measures were adopted to deliver a possible remedy by scanning, identification, home isolation, voluntary/ required quarantine for infected peoples.

Moreover, because of unbelievable increases in the number and continuing spreads of the virus to almost 148 countries, travel advisories were issued, and restrictions were imposed on international, as well as internal movement of people. Majority of economies were put on standalone as a preventive measure to respond and combat the pandemic

\* Assistant Professor, School of Hospitality & Tourism Studies, SRM University Sikkim, Gangtok, Sikkim, India.  
Email: avinash2dts@outlook.com

\*\* Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Psychology, Ramanujan College, University of Delhi, New Delhi, India.  
Email: divyabhanot137@gmail.com

\*\*\* Associate Professor, Dept. of Tourism Studies, Pondicherry University, Puducherry, India. Email: anoos\_ind@yahoo.co.in

effectively. The pandemic has affected people's physical and psychological well-being. Government policies and preventive initiatives have been effective in restricting the mobility of people, whether from home to the market, one to another city or area, by tight regulation of the modes of transport. Restrictions on air, rail, cruise and road transport have a severe impact and sweeping implications for travel and leisure experiences around the globe (World Tourism Organisation, 2020).

As a consequence, amid continuous developments, impressive contributions and prospects, tourism is seen as one of the flops and adversely affected by the changing complexities of the COVID-19 pandemic. Maybe due to a high degree of resource dependency including natural and developed capitals (Jha, 2020), environment and market-forces, which in the sense of sustainability, are often classified in terms of vulnerability (Barbhuiya & Chatterjee, 2020; Becken, Mahon, Rennie, & Shakeela, 2014; Calgaro, Lloyd, & Dominey-Howes, 2014; Nair & Dileep, 2020) and insecurity (C. Chen & Chiou-wei, 2009; Ghosh, 2020; UNEP, 2005). It makes tourism predisposed to disasters, as well as a significant change in tourism-centric motivations, choices, and decisions taken by tourists affecting their overall travel efforts. (Šimková & Holzner, 2014). While global response and numerous initiatives have been seen as useful and essential strategies to curb the spread of the virus by restricting people's travel across borders, they have also had a profound negative effect on tourism activities across the world as a result of a substantial reduction in the demand for tourism—a crucial “tourist-related dimension” (Tribe, 1997).

For instance, in 2019, with approx. 4% annual rate of growth, global tourism accounts for 1.5 billion arrivals and US \$ 1480 billion receipts (UNWTO, 2020a). Besides, direct, indirect and induced impacts of the industry mutually account for US\$ 8.9 trillion contributions (10.3%) to global GDP, US\$ 1.7 trillion visitor exports (28.3% of global service exports), US\$ 48 billion capital investment (4.3% of total investment) and 330 million jobs (1 for every 10th jobs) around the globe (WTTC, 2020). The number of international tourists around the world up to last year has reached at least positive and sustainable growth over the past decade and has become a robust global industry (Mason, 2003) or “big-business” (Sharpley & Telfer, 2008). However, with the era of globalisation, the risks and problems associated with diseases, mainly virus-borne infections, are the population is always on the move, and the number will increase further. The scenario demands immediate action or response (Jamal & Budke, 2020). Moreover, including the consequential impacts of the global reaction to the outbreak of COVID-19 and the rise in instability, global leadership of tourism has become the hardest hit and most impacted by all major economic sectors. (World Tourism Organisation,

2020). Subsequently, the prospects for travel and tourism have continually reduced and in the scenario, for the year 2020-21; estimated to show 58-78 % of the decline in international tourist arrivals, 62-79 % of travel receipts and 100-120 millions of jobs at risk amidst COVID-19 pandemic (UNWTO, 2020b).

Tourism often had a complicated relationship with natural disasters (Chan, Nozu, & Cheung, 2020), probably due to vulnerability and susceptibility to crises (Nair & Dileep, 2020) and changing perspectives (Jamal & Budke, 2020). This time, the global industry is at serious risk due to the consequences of the “health crisis” and the enormous impact on life (World Tourism Organisation, 2020). Increased risk of infection can contribute to tourist stigma (Moufakkir, 2015) or stigmatisation of tourist destinations (Wang, Xu, & Huang, 2020). Therefore, the attitude of the visitor and the attitude toward the destination can also change with the growing risk of stigma (Cossens & Gin, 1995). In this context, an interdisciplinary approach to tourism, such as psychology, has been useful in understanding the risks and impacts of natural disasters on people or regions (Barbhuiya & Chatterjee, 2020; Bec, McLennan, & Moyle, 2016). As a result, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has led to severe instability and reduced tourism activities around the world, particularly in destinations with current vulnerabilities or severe disasters, leading to other more natural disasters (Fernandes, 2020).

Much research has been done on natural disasters around the world, and relatively less in the Indian context, mainly in disaster management or planning (B. Ritchie, 2008), in different contexts and perspectives within tourism studies. In general, to study the impact the socio-economic or environmental aspects of the threat were well addressed, and the main focus was on the perception of tourists or managers' and their attitudes toward risk (Scott, 2014). Overall, the research focuses on destination choices or travel behaviours about climate/emergency/risk/disaster risk (Sharifpour, Walters, & Ritchie, 2014), with relatively little attention on host associations. There are many studies on the risk of biological diseases and the spread of the virus, including the disease, human immunodeficiency virus (AIDS/HIV) (Cossens & Gin, 1995; Scott, 2014), Severe acute respiratory system or Coronavirus syndrome 2 (SARS-Cov-2) (Correa-Martínez et al., 2020) and COVID-19 (Karl, Muskat, & Ritchie, 2020; Lew, Cheer, Haywood, Brouder, & Salazar, 2020). In addition, the studies cover topics related to the chronic and exacerbating effects of secondary impacts of disasters, COVID-19 on tourism in terms of vulnerability (Acharya & Porwal, 2020; Calgaro et al., 2014; Cioccio & Michael, 2007; Tsao & Ni, 2016), immigration (Shi & Liu, 2020; Williams & Hall, 2000) and various stigma concepts (Colocousis, 2012; Moufakkir, 2015; Neal, 2018; Wang et al., 2020). While most studies have focused primarily on

examining the link and impact of COVID-19 on tourism in an international context, independently or between the two, even a single study was found which investigated the relationship between tourism, COVID-19 and stigma concerning disaster management and planning.

Previous research has focused primarily on international destinations and has rarely explored COVID-19 tourism and other related impacts. “perceptual disaster” with respect to the concept of vulnerability, internal migration and the secondary impact of natural disasters- stigma or stigmatisation. In addition, several studies have attempted to propose resilience and recovery plans for the tourism industry (Jordan, Javernick-Will, & Tierney, 2016; Mukherji, 2018) and tourist destinations (Nair & Dileep, 2020; Stahura, Henthorne, George, & Soraghan, 2012). However, none of them addresses the issue of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially geographic stigma in the context of India. Evaluating the current scenario for frequent natural disasters, cumulative effects, and risks can take many necessary steps toward sustainability. The study integrates the secondary effects of natural disasters: vulnerability and stigma to promote the need for resilience and action plans or strategic actions to prepare destinations and environments to increase threats to public health, economics and social welfare. Thus, the present study sought attention to these gaps, attempted to investigate and submit implications for the State of Bihar; the status may be extended to include others or advanced studies in the future.

## Rationale

The focal drive of this paper is to highlight ‘secondary impacts’ of disasters, here COVID-19 and provide a theoretical perspective on the process and impacts of ‘stigmatisation’ on environment and society, often termed as: ‘reputational disasters’ (Ichinosawa, 2006), and an attempt has been made to understand the apparent decline of the tourism industry in Bihar. This failure can be understood as secondary impacts of the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, due to considerably good number of inbound migrants to the state. Thus, the paper integrated the notion of stigma with tourism and discussed strategies for minimising the risk factors to a proactive response to examine potential deficiencies and future directions for research in tourism destination risk management. Furthermore, this paper is proposed to highlight the need for attention to proactive disaster management planning in general and particular for a tourist destination and suggests strategies for resilience and recovery plans amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Besides, it attempts to suggest policy implications specific to the state of Bihar in India.

The paper argues that an understanding of resilience and recovery plan for a tourist destination is possible through

thoughtful consideration of literature from fields of natural disaster, risk of ‘perception disasters’, stigmatisation, destination vulnerability and sustainability concerning the outbreak of novel coronavirus ‘COVID-19’ alongside an evaluation and analysis of efforts or responses, in the specific context of the study area. There are obvious limitations to consider in order to clarify and understand findings. For example, this work does not provide a comprehensive review of the literature, but rather a relevant discussion to clarify and synergy within the context of the study and does not use quantitative data and analysis. Therefore, the work is considered a primary document on the context or pilot study for further study.

## Method and Procedure

In order to surface the crucial connections between the risks of disasters, the vulnerability of tourist destinations, tourists and stigmatisation amidst Covid-19 pandemic, this paper delineates a careful review of the relevant literature concerning the state of concern during pandemics. Thematic analysis of the available news reports was carried out in order to highlight the negative impact Covid-19 is expected to pose to the tourism industry of Bihar. An attempt is also made to propose resilience and recovery plans. The information is expected to benefit the local and the central authorities to understand the possible decline in the industry from a psycho-social perspective of stigmatisation, and thus, outcomes would equip them to make informed decisions in order to work for the upliftment of tourism in Bihar.

The remaining sections of this paper are arranged as follows: section-2 begins by defining natural disasters and delineates the need for embracing tourism disaster planning; because of the nature and complexity of tourism system, often predisposed of natural disasters and various post-disaster consequences such as propagation of stigma or stigmatisation. It then attempts to summarise significant literature from the arena of tourism quickly, COVID-19 and stigma to deliberate upon possible ways that both issue and consequences of stigmatisation may be addressed, effects would be condensed or mitigated effectively, and destinations were prepared for. As there is an ongoing debate on tourism; Tribe (1997) described tourism as a ‘field of study’, and Coles, Hall and Duval (2006) explained ‘beyond discipline’ and referred as a ‘Post-Discipline’ outlook (Coles, Hall, & Duval, 2006), often benefited from various disciplines or approaches, therefore, suggested to the synthesis of different discipline areas is essential to explore and to understand the phenomenon of tourism. A synthesis of the literature suggests that an understanding of the level of community vulnerability and risk are essential in order to develop appropriate responses and mitigation measures. Section-3 deals with the background and emergence of a novel coronavirus, responses, preventing measures,

materials and methods used by the Government of India. Adopted strategies and trends of recovery, including a discussion on initiatives, activities and prevention measures amidst COVID-19 considered by the Government of Bihar, followed by an account of emerging challenges and risks associated with stigmatisation concerning the State of Bihar. The Section-4 attempts to offer resilience and a recovery plan by considering emerging challenges and the growing consequences of stigma at a tourist destination. The post-disciplinary approach (Coles et al., 2006) is considered, as commended for having the potential to understand contemporary tourism themes and helps in dealing with complex problems from different disciplinary perspectives and levels of knowledge, such as tourism, COVID-19 and sigma. Finally, section-5 concludes with some possible implication of the study.

## **An Overview on Natural Disaster, Risk of Vulnerability and Stigma concerning Tourism**

Since times immemorial, humankind has been exposed to the risk of uncertainty or many forms of misfortunes, gradually inherent to our life and environment (B. W. Ritchie & Jiang, 2019). In order to respond and mitigate questions of uncertainties, crisis or risk (Cossens & Gin, 1995; Khanna & Khajuria, 2015; Neuburger & Egger, 2020), the notion of disaster as well as disaster management has arisen as a vital topic of discussion among tourism practitioners (B. W. Ritchie & Jiang, 2019).

Consequently, studies on the threat of disasters, in particular, 'natural disasters' have increased, mostly highlighting its negative implications on the tourism business, tourist destinations and tourists themselves (B. Ritchie, 2008). Significantly affecting and disrupting the everyday life of societies, its phenomenon and environment, for instance, 'tourism', and 'the industry'. Here, both the phenomenon and various components of this industry reported to expose with and experience severity of disasters such as natural calamities, risk of biosecurity diseases, pandemics, climate change, geopolitical issues, economic downturns, and terrorism (Neef & Grayman, 2018). These social constructs or physical occurrences, in literature, termed as 'disaster' (See: Quarantelli, 2005), is an ambiguous concept, mostly understood and defined in different perspectives and context, however, generally classified as a natural and human-made disaster (Cioccio & Michael, 2007; Neef & Grayman, 2018). Natural disasters are one among the two; adversely affect tourism activities, even to the entire industry, because it depends on various components and businesses (Murphy & Bayley, 1989). Natural disasters refer to the incidence of physical and natural hazards (Bhati, Upadhayaya, & Sharma, 2016; Cioccio & Michael, 2007), which often enact

high threat, short decision time and an element of surprise and urgency to challenge the existing structure (Chan et al., 2020), operations or survival of an environment, could be a person, place or an organisation.

Especially in the 21st century, the magnitudes of these crises influence the national, regional, and global tourism activities. The theoretical foundation of crisis management in the field of tourism is still in its infancy, though there were some efforts to apprise crisis management efforts in the sector. In order to explore implications of natural disaster, much attention is paid either on socio-economic or environmental aspects of threat (Scott, 2014) and mostly focus on tourists or managers' perception and their attitude about risks. In particular, studies have focused on tourist destination choice or travel behaviour in terms of risk/ crisis (Sharifpour et al., 2014) in general, or specific to the risk of virus infection (Cossens & Gin, 1995), including that of COVID-19 (Neuburger & Egger, 2020; Zheng, Goh, & Wen, 2020) and disaster planning or response strategies (B. Ritchie, 2008).

## **Natural Disasters, Tourism and Responses for Disaster Management**

Natural disasters may cause changes or threats to the tourism system (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009). Given the inevitable and ambiguous existence of natural disasters, the development of a successful disaster recovery plan is one of the few alternatives for tourism destinations to thrive (Moe & Pathranarakul, 2006). Disaster management is an indispensable area in disaster recovery study, referred to as a strategy of building resilience. Cross-disciplinary theoretical development is suggested as an essential element of disaster management research (Chan et al., 2020), as natural disasters have comprehensive coverage of impact on different areas of places, person and resources across periods commencing with pre-disaster, advanced with disaster and ends with post-disaster effects (Haigh & Amaratunga, 2010). However, such a comprehensive and informative study to facilitate adequate preparation and planning for responses to disasters is still not available (Blakely, Birch, & Anglin, 2011). Studies investigated the role of tourism as a strategy in disaster management (See: Chan et al., 2020). The conceptual and theoretical development of crisis management in the field of tourism is still minimal although there were some attempts to inform how the tourism industry should tackle disasters and their associated crises (Faulkner, 2001; Miller & Ritchie, 2003; Ritchie, 2004; Xu & Grunewald, 2009).

The biosecurity and disease either for the 'old world disease' or 'new infection diseases or pandemic', for instance, disease an emphasis on the foot and mouth disaster to an emphasis on SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) or recent outbreak of COVID-19. During the COVID19 outbreak, we learnt that due to proximity with infected subjects and the nature of the job they perform, groups of professionals

such as hospital staff and security personnel are found to be most vulnerable and at high risk of novel coronavirus infection. Although the coronavirus pandemic is unique and at first instant appears relevant to research, in general, it was argued that not all effects are worth researching or novel to us (Zenker & Kock, 2020). Zenker & Kock (2020). Studies attempted to examine the relationship between psychological distress and possible causes during the COVID19 epidemic. Previous research on crises and disasters do show similar patterns, and existing theories can often very well explain the current phenomena.

### **Tourism and Natural Disasters: Risks and Implications**

Tourism is one of the few industries having a typical twofold relationship with natural disasters. On the one hand, tourism itself is most vulnerable and susceptible to a crisis, which often demands special attention, on another, it has potential to work as a tool or strategy for resilience and recovery plans of the destination (Nair & Dileep, 2020). Where, the occurrence of natural disasters could brutally affect various aspects of tourism operations and development, for instance, causing enduring destruction to tourist attractions or even an entire destination, as well as time-based disruption of the tourism industry (Tourismembassy, 2014). On the other hand, tourism is concerned as critical drivers or essential facilitators for recovery from a disaster (Nair & Dileep, 2020), focusing on benefits and economic return of tourism activities, mainly in terms of tourist arrivals and revenues (Chan et al., 2020). Further, tourism is reflected as to recovery, at least, during the crisis and argued that tourism infrastructures, facilities and revenue generated from its activities could be used “to support the rescue management of the destination (Nair & Dileep, 2020, p. 1497). For instance, superstructures and various facilities developed for the industry, in normal circumstances, which is mostly used by tourists, during the crises may be used as a material to facilitate and manage emergencies.

The UNISDR (2013) deliberated tourism as “one of the key industries that play a role in shaping and potentially reducing disaster risks” (Cited In: Chan et al., 2020, p. 2). However, the implementation and success of tourism to recovery often depends on the extent of impact as well as the efficiency of participation of various stakeholders such as community and governance (Chan et al., 2020). Concerning the current scenario and in order to investigate the consequences of a natural disaster such as stigma, which adversely affects tourism and suggest resilience and recovery plans for effective operation and development of tourist destinations, the first approach was considered. In the context, researchers have been focusing on topics connected to either ‘risks’ such as risk assessment, risk management, or mitigation and recovery of the impact of disasters such as mitigation

and assessment, and recovery circumstances. Besides, some studies explicitly focussed on the perception of the tourism industry and stakeholder groups.

### **Factors that will Affect Tourism Destination Recovery Amidst COVID-19 Pandemic**

During this global pandemic, appeared that regardless of the country’s level of development in general and tourism development in particular; COVID-19 has quickly spread worldwide and badly affected global public health. In general, the nature of ‘tourism environment’ (Cioccio & Michael, 2007), unsustainable business practices, lack of collaboration and inappropriate policy response (Tosun, 1998) are observed as prime factors to disrupt the physical base for tourism (Cioccio & Michael, 2007). Besides, traditional factors such as tourism vulnerability to natural disasters and later secondary impacts to earlier, for instance, the notion of stigma and stigmatisation of tourist destinations vis-à-vis tourists are relevant to understand overall impacts of COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Questions of Vulnerability and Tourism**

In this connection, studies were conducted to explore and understand the effects of COVID-19 on various aspects of human life or society. Qiu, Park, Li & Song (2020) in their study on three cities of China found there are no much differences between the cities concerning their residents’ perception about the social cost of the COVID-19 and specifies that the response plans of tourism destinations for the pandemic crisis can be conducted within the broader global framework of the destination system (Qiu, Park, Li, & Song, 2020). They claimed that “tourism may generate great social costs to the local community during the COVID-19 pandemic, and residents’ involvement in tourism recovery strategies is therefore critical” (Qiu et al., 2020).

An Indian study even developed a vulnerability index with specific application to COVID-19 (See: Acharya & Porwal, 2020). In the study, a COVID-19 vulnerability index was computed for districts of India to identify susceptible regions to help formulate local-level responses and risk qualification strategies.

### **Tourism, Stigma and Stigmatization**

A review of recent literature showed that the notion of stigma from psychology to tourism studies is a relatively new advent. Stigmatisation is the practice of derogation, exclusion and avoidance of those contemplated as dangerous to the overall health and well-being, and/or to the effective interactional dynamics of the society (Phelan et al., 2008). Gradually lead to the process of stigmatisation of tourist

destinations. The concept of stigma in the field of tourism studies is frequently applied concerning activities related with 'sex' or sex tourism (Neal, 2018), wellness tourism (Wang et al., 2020). There are several causes around such stigma that include misinformation, a feeling of insecurity, fear of responsibility, administrative malfunction, and a lack of trust in treatment. These causes of stigma have many forms such as humour-prone stigma, residential stigma, organisational stigma, community-stigma, and apathetic stigma.

Especially closely related to the urban centres of Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, the densely populated Bihar, with a population of 124 million together with a massive entry of inbound migrants, tends to transmit the novel coronavirus in the state, and the secondary consequences of this are stigma or stigmatisation of tourist destination.

## **Response to and Recovery from COVID-19: Learnings from Bihar**

Bihar is one of the few Indian states to actively respond to the global crisis and support the union governments to initiate a series of preventive and public health measures, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the absence of vaccines or specific treatments, the Bihar government began responding to the crisis with known alternative measures, before March 22, 2020; when the first COVID-19 case of state was reported in Mungar (Kumar & Kumar, 2020). Since then, the state has the following guidelines, SOPs issued by the authorities to address the risks of the global health crisis (WHO, 2020). The state's rapid response to the novel coronavirus is due to relative preparedness and comparative response framework developed through long-term cooperation and experience in crisis and disaster management. There are also factors such as a large population, a relatively poor public health system (Kumar & Kumar, 2020), higher vulnerabilities (Acharya & Porwal, 2020), and of course, the state's aversion to tackling the potential threat of the COVID-19 outbreak. Later, on March 25, the union government called for a nation-wide lockdown to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus beyond epicentres. Henceforth, national vis-à-vis states boundaries were closed, movement of public and vehicles including public and private transport was suspended, and the nation was under complete lockdown from March 25 to May 30, 2020. During the period, except minute exceptions and relaxations, a nation-wide and total lockdown was implemented through a complete hindrance on air, rail, road transportation, a shutdown of workplaces, institutions and social activities, as well as the internal movement of people (Tiwari et al., 2020), only people and vehicles engaged in specify or emergency services were exempted from the lockdown. These preventing strategies or strict

measures were undertaken to keep number under control through breaking chain or restrict the transmission of the virus, anticipated to delay the process of community transfer of novel coronavirus (Tiwari et al., 2020) and interval for building essential healthcare infrastructure.

Along with these preventing measures, it was necessary to identify and isolate persons with recent travel history (through/ from epicentres or overseas) several responses viz. compulsory scanning, isolation and need-based testing at major ports of entry, restriction of entry for individuals who had travelled through/ from the epicentres in the preceding 2-3 weeks or facilitating with quarantine for inbound travellers (Tiwari et al., 2020). Besides, rigorous contact-tracing of individuals linked to confirmed COVID-19 cases and model of home to home surveillance was initiated and implemented by the Government of Bihar to prevent an outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic (Kumar & Kumar, 2020).

## **Issues and Implications of Migrants Workers Returning to their Home**

It appears that the approach worked fine and initially showed encouraging results for India (ranked 56th among 200 countries) (Deep Knowledge Group, 2020); somehow slow down the transmission of the virus restricted either to major ports of entry or urban epicentres, for instance, Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmadabad, Jaipur, Noida and parts of Kerala. However, this strategy did not work well for states with largest out-migrant workers; prolonged periods of lockdown caused panic and frustration among millions of migrant workers has been stuck within industrial centres or big cities of India amidst nation-wide lockdown (Sengupta & Jha, 2020) India faces a humanitarian disaster of unprecedented proportions. Ninety per cent of the Indian workforce is employed in the unorganised sector; uncounted millions work in urban areas at great distances from rural homes. When the Government of India (GOI. Moreover, due to restrictions imposed during the lockdown, the majority of migrant workers left without work/ job, in the absence of a source of earning, insufficient means to feed and survive with their dependents, majority of migrants workers exposed to vulnerability and willing to return to their native states (Sengupta & Jha, 2020).

On a fine day, suddenly panic-stricken, workers came out from their shelters and started gathering near bus stands, railway stations and highways hoping to get some conveyance to reach their distant homes (Maji, Choudhari, & Sushma, 2020) this paper investigates the potential surge in confirmed and active cases of COVID-19 infection and assesses the train and bus fleet size required for the repatriating migrant workers. The expected to repatriate migrant worker population was obtained by forecasting the 2011 census data and comparing it with the information reported in the news media. A modified susceptible-exposed-infected-removed (SEIR. Unfortunately, their

efforts were unattended from respective governments or authorities and perhaps, concerning their possible exposure to the insecurity, uncertainty and precarity of their life, as well as circumstances, many of them revealed their determination. They decided to reach their homes by foot, or alternative modes of transportation, the outrage by workers may explain as “the choice between virus and starvation” (H. Chen, Huang, & Li, 2020). Out of an estimated 400 millions of workers in the informal economy of the country, it was mentioned that second-highest numbers of workers after Uttar Pradesh, t. e. approx. 1.2-2.8 million in number were willing to return to their homes in Bihar (Cited in: Sengupta & Jha, 2020). According to a reported figure of the Government of India, with 23.6 lacks returnees (migrant workers) to the State, Bihar tops the list and undoubtedly one among the worst affected states in the country (Anuja & Varma, 2020) amidst the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite continuous efforts and strict preventing measures, however, the state has reported a sudden increase in the number of coronavirus cases. As, on September 25, more than 64,00,000 test conducted, only 2.72%, which corresponds to more than 1,74,000 corona cases were reported ‘test positive’ in the state, out of positive cases till date more than 1,60,000 recovered (91.8%) and 878 numbers of deaths were reported (0.5%) in the State (COVIDIndia, 2020; GoI, 2020). Besides, ensuring a high rate of recovery in the state, however, cases have been reported in all 38 districts, and Bihar is reported to be second-most vulnerable regarding vulnerability index prepared for the Indian States, even 9 out of top 30 vulnerable districts (Acharya & Porwal, 2020). A sudden increase in number and spreads of infection in the state may explain and understand concerning the massive inflow of migrant workers, as well as students from major urban or institutional centres of the country to their native places, mostly in the State of Bihar or Uttar Pradesh. Subsequently, these centres were reported as epicentres of the outbreak and often associated with social and spatial stigma regarding the level of risk of infection associated amidst COVID-19 pandemic. Together with the risk of COVID-19 pandemic and historical roots of vulnerability, the presence of migrant workers, as well as students’ made lots of challenges and ended picture with a complicated picture for the state.

### **How Does Bihar Emerge as an Area of Concern Among Indian States?**

Although, in relative terms, the whole of India is found vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic and predisposed to various types and degree of risk, for instance, stigma or ‘stigmatisation’; thanks to the condition of the healthcare system, indigenous issues and specific challenges, often varies from one place to another. Given its specific background and ever-mounting challenges, however, Bihar as a singular case faces the threat of a severe COVID-19 outbreak that would have sweeping consequences due to its

large population but also for several reasons, often linked with socio-economic, cultural, remedial and psychological traits of the people of the state.

Studies reveal an erection of mostly negative representations of the state and its inhabitants (Rorabacher, 2016) on their modest style of living, traditional practices and simple behaviour; the labour class “Majdoor” or “Bihari” or “Bimaru” emerged as marks affixed to the inhabitants of the state by outsiders. Gradually, the residents of the States develop a ‘negative self-image’ at the community level, often link with their ‘identity’ and use to the relationship between the residents of the state and others; such adverse effects are consistent with those elaborated in the community and stigma in tourism studies literature (Moufakkir, 2015, 2020; Rivera, 2008). However, problematic dimensions of Bihar’s place character do not merely branch from the perseverance of an earlier, negative image of the state or community, but from a set of continuing quantifiable dynamics. Besides, specific attributes pose challenges for the state in practising social distancing, isolation, quarantine and provision for health care facilities in case of emergency. The size of the population, poverty, problem of livelihood and flawed health care system are significant areas of concern, which leads to several challenges within the state.

So, why is the number of novel coronavirus cases mounting in the state science March, 22? When the first case of COVID-19 reported in Bihar. There could be several possible explanations. First, the circumstances are different, and the public health scenario is even worse within the state. As similar to India, Bihar is one among the most populous among its counterparts with a population of more than 124 million; a recent study suggested that “it is at risk of having the largest share of these potential infections and deaths” (Acharya & Porwal, 2020). A considerably large population is the single most significant issue which intensifies several others and already poses numerous challenges. When multiple and categorical elements of the state’s links with a contrary situation such as severe pandemic viz. novel coronavirus (COVID-19), make the scenario even more complex and challenging to understand. Significantly, when a question comes to facilitate a vast and reasonably illiterate population with an ad-hoc mechanism or relatively low health care facilities. For instance, inadequate health care systems, the scale of concerns and unpreparedness to handle pandemic like situations are one among the possible factors that make control of COVID-19 even more challenging and left the state stigmatised. However, the number of diseased and death chases shows that irrespective of levels of development or wealth, the entire world was unprepared to deal with the stress of COVID-19 pandemic.

Second, both the connectivity within the state and density of the urban population has grown significantly, at least during the past few decades. Higher population density, along with

increasing connectivity, has positively increased proximity between people concerning their housing, travel and work environment. Leads to increasing person-to-person contact across activities or regions makes things adverse, and transmission of the virus becomes evident within the State amidst COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, inbound traffic from global, as well as national epicentres, for instance, urban conglomerations, industrial or agricultural hubs, followed by an internal movement of people within the state towards their destinations, often towards their native places, makes efforts of redressal even more challenging. In general, these inbound migrants to the state were considered to be the potential carriers of coronavirus, perhaps, due to the origin of their travel or their probable nature of interaction with infected cases. According to estimates of the Indian Government, more than 80% of confirmed cases in India are asymptomatic, making the population vulnerable to community spread of the virus. However, the States, such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, including many others, seem to be more vulnerable and inclined to risk stigma amidst the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic.

Bihar, given their unique natural features and socio-political environment vulnerable to diverse kinds of natural hazards and often predisposed to natural or human-made disasters viz. earthquake, flood, droughts, or infectious diseases such as a recent outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Altogether, it not only damages prosperities, the cost for business and harm or risks millions of lives but also builds a negative image for the land vis-a-vis its inhabitants. Recurrent experiences and places' long association with consequences of such undesirable instances or disasters, often echoes in the form of stigma and gradually stigmatised communities in proximity, causes severe damages to people and industries (Huang, Tseng, & Petrick, 2007), particularly susceptible to such dysfunctions, here, Tourism industry and its activities in the state of Bihar.

The impacts of the recent outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic is indeed terrible but reasonably time transient, particularly medical impacts, which could be handled with effective implementation of preventing measures with the help of smart technologies and innovations for the 'new normal' (Choi, Lee, & Jamal, 2020) or through medical interventions such as antidote, vaccine or drugs. The most significant issue after the pandemic would be the widespread downfall of economic activities predominantly travel and tourism, due to various restrictions imposed during the lockdown, as well as an apparent collapse in mandate among travellers due to their shifting preferences, drives and unpretentious presentation of prominent destinations, as well as travel and trade sectors of Bihar, for instance, inconsequential nature of attractions, lack of innovation and synergy in offerings, and of course, the image of travel destination. Along with, ever-growing and apparent risk of 'stigmatisation' of prominent

tourist centres vis-à-vis Bihar as a destination, concerning the surprising inflow of inbound migrants, the highest degree of vulnerability (2nd in the country) and numbers of infected cases reported in the state. Also, the growing concept of "reputation disaster" (Ichinosawa, 2006) can be attributed to the term "secondary risk" or the secondary effects of disasters such as 'stigma risk', often associated with various tourism activities, tourists or tourist destination, probably due to high vulnerabilities and dependencies of the phenomena on its settings. Stigma or stigmatisation of destinations generates lots of issues and challenges for the destination and the economy viz. loss of business opportunities, employment, reputation and under-utilisation of tourist structures vis-à-vis socio-cultural values. Tourists under a negative impression or stigma, avoid tourist offerings of a destination; product or service, primarily due to risks and consequences linked with stigmatisation rather than the direct effects of disasters such as COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, qualifying the argument that tourism inflow is expected to decline in the future, leading to a significant slowdown in the state's economic activity.

## **Disasters' Resilience and Recovery Strategies for Tourism Industry**

After a global outbreak of pandemic such as the COVID-19, resilience and recovery predisposed to an assessment of risks and effective implementation of preventing measures or strategies to the emergency through response, recovery and mitigation - require sufficient time, resources, effort, and adequate planning to implement plans for disaster risk management. A disaster has an unforeseen impact on a destination's image, market, well-beings of the host community and their resources, including infrastructure (Nair & Dileep, 2020). For a comparatively vulnerable state such as Bihar, it may take a longer time than anticipated to recover and mitigate the direct impacts, as well as to address the second or higher degree of risks amidst COVID-19 pandemic.

In the absence of prior information or experience of natural disasters viz. an outbreak of COVID-19, it is extremely difficult for health systems or communities around the world to prepare for such an emergency and respond quickly. The question of preparedness becomes even more complicated when dealing with a sector highly dependent on resources and one among the most vulnerable to disasters such as tourism (Nair & Dileep, 2020). Once disasters occur, need to focus on quick response, recovery and mitigation of impacts as well as severe consequences.

However, it is worth exploring the likely impacts of reputational disasters concerning "enduring mental perceptions, images and attitude" (Kasperson et al., 1988,



p. 182) of tourists' vis-à-vis residents due to far-reaching consequences of stigmatisation and strategy for quicker recovery of the tourism industry in Bihar. Indeed, tourism has a twofold role to play, where tourism resources and infrastructure including revenue generated from its activities could be used to support the overall resilience of the state, on another end, also helps to mitigate severe impacts of disaster, consequences and risk of stigmatisation, and marketing of destination in a post-disaster scenario by the Directorate of Tourism, Government of Bihar. Moreover, outcomes of the study are ambiguous about the role of tourism but argued that residents' involvement in tourism as critical to any recovery strategies at the destination (Qiu et al., 2020).

### Resilience and Recovery Plans

Considering above conferred scenario and apparent risk of stigmatisation of Bihar- as a tourist destination, study appeals to integrate the notion of 'reputational disaster' (Ichinosawa, 2006) within the traditional process of risk assessment and responses to risk-oriented tourism decline from a balanced approach of social amplification of risk framework (SARF) (Kasperson et al., 1988). The integration of risk of reputational disaster or secondary impacts of disasters such as stigma will be influential towards mitigation of long-term risk and consequences rather than merely focusing on direct or deceptive risks of a disaster, and help to match states' responses to resilience and recovery plans for tourism amidst COVID-19 pandemic or any such situation in future. There were several strategies to mitigate impacts and project Bihar as an all-time destination for tourist in a post-disaster scenario to domestic, as well as international platforms.

The study also highlights the need for a disaster management framework for the tourism industry to protect the interests of stakeholders, respond effectively, restore and mitigate the negative impacts and consequences of frequent disasters across the state. Which can be achieved through proactive planning and management of disasters risks, including primary and secondary or short- and long-term risks, and, the following action plans can be considered within the framework:

- The recent hashtag advertisement campaign on various social media platforms - #VocalforLocalExpedition by the Tourism Association of Bihar and somewhat backdated digital campaign ##biharsunnonahidekho by the Bihar bytes to burst myths around tourism in Bihar and "Making Bihar Accessible" (ET BrandEquity, 2019) - reveals everything about the significance of tourism is mainly showcasing shifting trends from international to domestic tourism in the resilience of Bihar. Thus, it is worth it to analyse the significance and scope of domestic tourism in the first stages of recovery and sustainability of tourism in the state.
- As 'one-size-fit-all' strategies were questioned and 'local-level planning' based on an assessment of the same vulnerabilities of communities or regions was suggested appropriate to prepare local-level responses and risk mitigation strategies (Acharya & Porwal, 2020). Particularly valid in the case of a problematic situation, but challenging to understand and work on, often oversimplified regions or states such as Bihar.
- Innovative and integrated approaches must be incorporated while preparing resilience and recovery plans for crisis management within the 'integrated crisis management framework' (Huang et al., 2007), prerequisite to respond, recover and mitigate consequences of disasters, as well as restore the tourism industry. Such a framework helps in not only fast-track recovery but also enhancement of competitiveness through crisis management practice and 'securing image' of destination for tourists, to various destinations or centres in Bihar.
- Tourism stakeholders must be integrated, motivated to participate and incorporated in the mechanism developed to response and recovery from natural disasters (Qiu, Park, Li, & Song, 2020). It is crucial, because, studies suggested that the implementation and success of tourism to recovery often depends on the extent of impact as well as the efficiency of participation of various stakeholders such as community and governance (Chan et al., 2020).
- Identification of the relevant factors; for identification and resolution of the root causes of problems, proactive and integrated planning and investment are top priorities for related organisations working in this field, and departmental authorities should monitor and implement relevant activities effectively.
- The stimulus or elements of tourist demand were referred to as the most significant factors for destination authorities to define forms of communication, offer product/ services and provide the necessary support to tourists/ visitors.
- The question of preparation arises when there is first information, understanding or experience of a natural or artificial crisis such as the current outbreak of COVID-19. Often, preliminary information is less reliable; even there is no time to act and prepare for, t. e. no question of preparedness instead, one needs to focus on what to do later (response, recovery, and relief).
- In such a scenario, less visible "structural measures" to reduce vulnerabilities should be considered and a focus on "precautionary measures" rather than crisis or crisis management (Chaudhury, 2017).

- Irrespective of origin and legal status, provisions should be made to provide social security net to offer all-inclusive health insurance, medical services and benefit schemes for every person in disasters affected area. Synergy among various components and inclusion of every relevant person within the response and recovery framework have potentials to condense risks of stigma for most vulnerable groups of people vis-à-vis destination (B. W. Ritchie & Jiang, 2019).

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Through this paper, an attempt to understand the consequences of high inflow of inbound migrants and subsequent effects of stigmatisation amidst the outbreak of the COVID-19 and growing concerns about the way tourism industry of Bihar. A natural disaster has a widespread impact and implication for humankind vis-à-vis tourism, as tourism and its environment highly depend on nature and are often exposed to natural disasters (Nair & Dileep, 2020; B. W. Ritchie & Jiang, 2019). For instance, the recent outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has consequences beyond its direct and observed impacts or harms viz. health issues and socio-economic declines, and further extended to indirect impacts (second or higher degree of impacts) concerning time, space and social groups (Kasperson et al., 1988). Moreover, due to over more than two and half centuries of decline in local household industries, erosion of indigenous knowledge system, cultural values and continuous environmental degradation, once historically rich and advanced State of Bihar, gradually transforms as a poorest and miserable among the Indian States.

The state of Bihar vis-à-vis its tourism industry is exceptionally predisposed to risks of disasters, considered the state as one among the most vulnerable, reasonably exposed to risks of COVID-19 and expected progression of stigmatisation. Moreover, due to its heavy dependency on the environment and its exposure to fragile elements makes tourism defenceless sector to crises (Nair & Dileep, 2020). Since “the tourism industry is not immune to crises” (Ritchie & Walters, 2017, p.2). The study concludes that the effects of increasing stigmatisation amidst novel coronavirus outbreak can be seen as long term socio-economic impressions and implications for the vulnerable and customarily disaster-hit state of Bihar as outcomes of the growing risk-persuaded stigmatisation and an apparent reduction in the number of tourists within the state might bring a slowdown in tourist activities, as well as a severe stagnation in the economy.

The study reveals sudden and massive invasion by inbound migrants to the State of Bihar, due to lockdown imposed by centre amidst the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic,

lead to an intensification of numbers of diseased, which adversely affects life and well-being of millions of people within the state. Moreover, those inward people perceived as a potential carrier of the virus; therefore, disruption not only confined to specific vulnerable groups viz. diseased, medical professionals, sanitation and security personals, often experienced to be socially stigmatised but gradually extended to the entire host region. Given the size of incoming migrants and likely outburst of a novel coronavirus, actual and perception for adverse effects were aggregating in the state. Gradually, transformed as a matter of embarrassment for the state and its inhabitants initially reflected for the whole-state in the form of spatial stigma, subsequently leads to social stigma within most vulnerable communities and regions, which brought multiple issues and significant challenges to the state. The scenario, which was initially evident among residents regarding hesitant experiences and feelings about returning migrants, with increasing evidence of spatial stigma suddenly going to shift to potential visitors/ tourists to the region- significantly influence tourist motivation, choice and their decision-making process. These arrangements of activity are consistent with a local social defined in large part by the presence of the inbound migrants and its consequences on tourism decline is a complex process encompassing risk-persuaded stigmatisation and conventionally embedded vulnerabilities in the local society (Ichinosawa, 2006).

Concerning the apprehensions, in order to protect against attacks of the novel coronavirus or other diseases, tourists can deliberately derail or delay travel to stigmatised destinations to control and avoid the effects of spatial stigma (Ichinosawa, 2006). If the growing stigma problem is not addressed promptly, it can affect the significant number of tourists, income and well-being of various stakeholders, which could be a significant source of frustration for policy-makers and various actors - depends on the state’s tourist activities. Despite the increased risk of stigma and negative consequences to the economy and the public, policy-makers and practitioner are often concerned about the response and prevention considering direct impacts of disasters, here COVID-19, not long-term and secondary consequences of stigma amidst COVID-19 pandemic.

Regardless of the degree of vulnerability, the medium level of the healthcare system and minimal opportunities for large populations about incoming immigrants; often increases concern about the state and its relatively poor population. With its exceptional speed for recovery and mitigation of COVID-19, Bihar has undoubtedly succeeded in giving direction to other states or regions. Nevertheless, this is not the end, and much more work is needed for the sustainable and robust Bihar, especially for the travel and tourism industry.

## Implications of the Study

The study provides practical implications for policy-makers and decision-makers working in disaster-prone environments. First, these organisations should have a sufficient number of dedicated individuals or disaster management teams to respond to crises quickly, perform recovery operations, and mitigate the impact and impact of disasters. Second, institutions must provide appropriate disaster response training to members on disaster preparedness, risk assessment, potential implementation, and risk management strategies. This will increase the readiness of the industry and improve its ability to respond, protect and mitigate the impact of natural disasters on tourists and host communities. Third, the CSR policy should be reviewed to encourage stakeholder engagement and be considered an essential part of the disaster response mechanism for mutual response, recovery and crisis mitigation so that tourism stakeholders can become inclusive and responsible. Fourth, decision-makers must take into account the significant interaction between the various components of the tourism industry and groups of stakeholders, the conditions for making informed decisions, comprehensive decision making, and knowledge transfer within the system. Effective stakeholder engagement and communication between different parts of the tourism system is critical to sharing information, responding to each other, and achieving rapid recovery by mitigating the negative impacts of natural disasters as part of an emergency response.

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