

Success &

ABILITY

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Travel
without
boundaries



Inside



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The Movie Maker



INCLUSIVE TOURISM

- The Way to Go!



As India takes centre-stage in world affairs and more and more people want to discover its past and present, travel to and in India assumes the kind of importance not seen in recent years (and happily, visitors with disabilities are increasingly recognised as part of this scenario.) Tourism per se is a revenue-generating industry for any country whether the visitor is disabled or not. Catering to the needs of ALL and making travel comfortable should be the prime focus of a hospitality industry. What is being done, what can be done,

to receive this welcome trend? One must bear in mind however, that tourism is not confined to tourist spots. This feature thus explores the underlying principle, the essential prerequisites that should govern all aspects of travel: Universal Design.

“Inclusive Tourism is a global movement to ensure the full social participation of all persons with disabilities in travel, citizenships, and cultural contribution – and in the process, to assure the same for everyone else,” writes DR. SCOTT RAINS, an active promoter of inclusive tourism. With this disclaimer, *“As a person with a disability who researches, writes, and lectures on Inclusive Tourism as an industry practice and a framework for tourism policy, I do so with a bias toward illustrating its potential by using travel with a disability as an example. As human-centred design, I naturally apply Universal Design according to the measure of my own body and its capacities,”* he explains the strategy for aligning tourism to be in compliance with Article 30 of UNCRPD (United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities).

A frisky goldfish follows my pen across the page from inside a fishbowl that sits on my desk.

A pair of caged finches exchanges pecks and carefully chosen bird words as they converse, over in the corner. Each has access to my home – each within their strictly defined range - but mere access is much less than inclusion. None will ever participate in our family life in the way that our pet dog takes as her birthright. Access might be sufficient

for survival. Only inclusion allows the joy of participation.

Inclusion in tourism is lacking. Article 30 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) makes it clear that this must not remain so. Fishbowl observation from a distance or commentary from outside the spaces and activities that non-disabled visitors enjoy is for pets, not people. Inclusive Tourism is the systematic application of Universal

Design by the travel and hospitality industry at every stage of its product, service, and policy life cycle. It starts by looking at real people as they exist in all their diversity of abilities. It looks at them at all stages of the human life cycle: children, adults, and seniors. It looks at them whether they walk with a cane in a school, or high fashion boots in a mall, or with a water pot on their head, returning from the village well.

Of course, such a terse definition

Scott Rains



just raises more questions like, “Why not ‘accessible’ instead of ‘inclusive?’” and “What is Universal Design?”

When people hear the word “accessible” attached to tourism they think they have a pretty good idea what that means. And there is the problem.

Almost everybody thinks they know what it means but, since it has never been fully defined, almost everybody has invented their own personal definition. That is a recipe for disaster. If travellers and the industry have no common language, then imagine how frequent disappointment and disputes will become? If hotel owners and construction teams have no way to describe the solutions they want designed and built, then how likely is either side to be satisfied with the result?

Inclusive Tourism, and the related concept, Inclusive Destination Development have been defined in lectures and in academic journals to avoid just those mistakes.

The word ‘inclusive’ refers to the concept “social inclusion” – the opposite of the exclusion found in stereotyping, pity as a substitute for justice, and outright discrimination.

It is possible for a place to be accessible while the activities taking place there or the attitudes of those employed there remain grossly exclusionary. It is even possible for a location to be made accessible for a wheelchair user in such a way that it impedes the access for a blind user or someone who is 2.5 metres tall.

Inclusion refers to the active acceptance of one person or group by another. It involves communication at the level of values and traditions. It is a cultural transformation process where all participants receive appropriate value. Cultural identities may remain intact but quality of interaction expands the capacity for tolerance and understanding on all sides.

In a manner of speaking, Inclusive Tourism, as an approach, models the best of what one would hope for in one’s personal experience of travel and as the social impact of travel as an industry.

That is why Inclusive Tourism can never be separated from the seven principles of Universal Design. An approach to tourism that is to serve all people with disabilities in a manner that does not further stigmatise



and isolate them as objects of pity requires Universal Design which is defined in this way: *Universal Design is a framework for the design of places, things, information, communication and policy to be usable by the widest range of people operating in the widest range of situations without special or separate design. Most simply, Universal Design is human-centered design of everything with everyone in mind.*

Universal Design is also called Inclusive Design, Design-for-All and Lifespan Design. It is not a design style but an orientation to any design process that starts with a responsibility to the experience of the user.
(Source: Adaptive Environments)

Inclusive Tourism involves a circle of communication between travellers, industry professionals, policy makers, designers, and builders to become stakeholders in the best possible outcome for all. That outcome is a product and quality of customer service that is predictable and understandable.

Where industry may be hesitant to meet needs in a way that eliminates exclusion, it may be necessary to enact protective policy. However, it is preferable to discover – or invent – means that are sustainable through the regular mechanisms of the market.

A transformation in attitude, practice, and design takes place when travellers with disabilities are recognised



for their potential as profitable customers. Even the most reluctant or disabled traveller can enjoy a successful trip if due consideration is given by the industry to inclusion at every step because they can know exactly how they must supplement what is offered through their own ingenuity and personal resources.

Once industry seriously begins to consider the variability in capabilities of the individuals they serve practical questions arise related to creating products, spaces, or policies that honor individuals of differing abilities. The need for principles that guide design and construction decision is another reason why Inclusive Tourism is inseparable from Universal Design. In this case it is the Seven Principles of Universal Design that provide the coherent vision for excellence to the industry. These are:

1. **Equitable Use:** The design does not disadvantage or stigmatize any group of users.
2. **Flexibility in Use:** The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
3. **Simple, Intuitive Use:** Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.
4. **Perceptible Information:** The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.
5. **Tolerance for Error:** The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
6. **Low Physical Effort:** The design can be used efficiently and comfortably, and with a minimum of fatigue.
7. **Size and Space for Approach & Use:** Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use, regardless of the user's body size, posture, or mobility.

Two significant custom applications of Universal Design have evolved since the emergence of the idea in the early 1970's and the formulation of these principles in 1997.

The first takes principle number 4 to much greater depth. This approach is known as Universal Design for Learning (UDL). It is most appropriate to the industry when designing staff training or customer education/product promotion materials. The world's foremost promoter of UDL is the Trace Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The second approach has only recently been formulated. They address a specific aspect of Inclusive

Tourism – water travel. Significantly, it has been leadership on the part of the Indian tourism ministry and the Indian travel industry that accelerated formalisation of this approach known as the Waypoint-Backstrom Principles.

These principles, published first in the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi journal Design for All India, also begin with an unshakeable affirmation of the Seven Principles of Universal Design. They go on to specify areas of particular emphasis when designing inclusion in a marine environment.

Soni Samarajan is an Indian travel product developer and vice-president of an Indian Destination Management Company. He has written an article entitled, "Creating an Inclusive Travel Product: Challenges in India." In it he notes that medical advances may make some disabilities disappear while new technologies such as keyboard and joystick overuse in youth may make certain uncommon disabilities much more commonplace. He calls for the flexible user-centered guidance of Universal Design as the way forward.

In that way Samarajan parallels what is referred to as the "evolving definition of disability" in which disability is understood as an interaction between human variability of capabilities and socially constructed responses to those differences in capability.

We hope there are enough pointers here for the industry, government departments and all those associated with travel to make the guests feel at home. But all this is advice for the hosts. What about the targets of these efforts, people with disabilities? To them this is what we would like to say:

"Make those trips you always wanted to. Be the people who prefer to bypass barriers rather than wait for them to disappear. Be tourists who face the hurdles of travel with a sense of humour and a spirit of adventure."

Bon voyage!





INCLUSIVE TOURISM - The India Connection

The demand for inclusive tourism is growing. As per the UN 10% of the world population is disabled.

Globally there is a steady increase in the 65+ age group which benefits from accessible tourism. A disabled or elderly person rarely travels alone and will generally be accompanied by at least one companion. Therefore making tourism accessible to the disabled and the elderly must be seen as an opportunity rather than an obligation. Accessible tourism benefits everyone. More the individuals enjoy the opportunity to travel, more the tourism industry gets visitors. This only means better economy and greater job opportunities.

Travellers with disabilities face many barriers ranging from non-availability of access information on accommodation to problems of getting around. A disabled or an elderly traveller requires a greater amount of pre-planning for travel.

The usual concerns of disabled tourists when booking a holiday include:

- Accessible airport and station transfers.
- Accessibility of various venues and sites that they want to visit. This can be provided through city access guides.
- Knowledge of the local transport systems and their accessibility. Also information regarding any adapted accessible transport service that may be available.
- Information about accessibility features of the

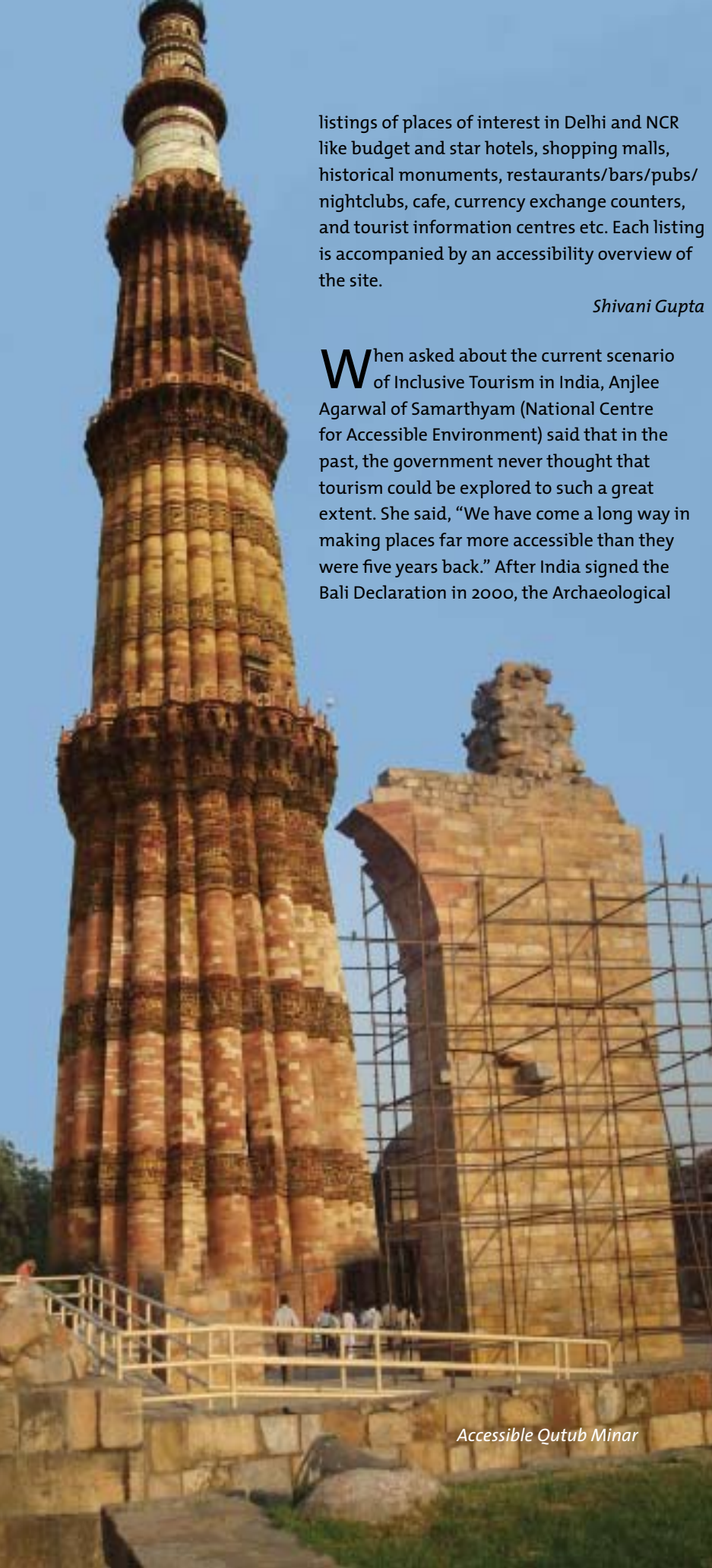
hotel/motel/youth hostel they plan to stay in is crucial for bookings.

- Access to pedestrian environment and availability of equipment on rent (wheelchairs, shower chairs, toilet raisers, electric wheelchairs etc.) accessible toilets, accessible restaurants/bars.
- Having access to experiences of other disabled/ elderly travellers.

To achieve the goal of inclusive tourism, persons with disabilities should recommend to their governments, and those who are responsible for tourism promotion, that accessibility should be a criterion for validating/ accrediting the agency/hotel/transport service - in short the hospitality and travel industry. The government can also consider providing incentives to promote accessible tourism. To gear for and tap business from travellers with special needs, there should be an action plan at the national level. At the state level and regionally, inclusive tourism should be encouraged. At an individual level too, individual service providers (such as individual restaurant or theatre owners) should ensure that their facility is accessible.

Free2Wheel (A unit of AccessAbility) , a first of its kind information service in India, offered by Shivani Gupta of New Delhi endeavours to encourage people using wheelchairs in getting out and about. This web site (www.accessability.co.in) has over 1800





listings of places of interest in Delhi and NCR like budget and star hotels, shopping malls, historical monuments, restaurants/bars/pubs/nightclubs, cafe, currency exchange counters, and tourist information centres etc. Each listing is accompanied by an accessibility overview of the site.

Shivani Gupta

When asked about the current scenario of Inclusive Tourism in India, Anjlee Agarwal of Samarthyam (National Centre for Accessible Environment) said that in the past, the government never thought that tourism could be explored to such a great extent. She said, “We have come a long way in making places far more accessible than they were five years back.” After India signed the Bali Declaration in 2000, the Archaeological

Survey of India (ASI) had issued an order in 2001, that all ASI sites be made accessible to persons with disabilities. Samarthyam Trust was consulted on Universal Design to make the sites barrier-free. Anjlee and Sanjeev helped to create a

 prototype of a railway compartment

and presented it to the Indian Railways, which was open to suggestions. Samarthyam conducts awareness campaigns educating not only the Ministry of Tourism and the Delhi Tourism Board but also tour operators about the need to tap the “untouched” segment of the travelling crowd – Baby Boomers and people with disabilities, a growing group of consumers of tourism services.

Said Anjlee, “When you miss out on one segment it equals to losing out on a great amount of market share. Today, disposable income lies with senior citizens. They travel and visit the Far Eastern countries like Singapore, Malaysia or Bangkok as these places offer more accessibility than others.” Samarthyam organises tours for persons with severe disabilities to places of historical, cultural, religious and tourist interest.

When asked about how successful the tours are, she said, “The impact of a tour lies in having barrier-free access from start to finish. Creating an accessible environment doesn’t mean merely making one heritage site completely accessible, there is more to it. It should take in the entire itinerary – hotels, mode of transport, shopping areas - the list is endless. Not one single link can be overlooked.”

The tourism industry should provide the same choices for all consumers to ensure full participation of

Accessible Qutub Minar

persons with disabilities. Travelling with dignity is an individual's right.

Accessible tourism is an ongoing endeavour by Saroma Holidays to ensure that tourist destinations, products and services are accessible to all visitors. Popularly considered to be of



interest only to people with permanent disabilities, accessible tourism

actually benefits all sectors of society, from those in wheelchairs to parents pushing buggies, elderly travellers, and people with temporary injuries as well as their relatives, friends and other companions. At Saroma, accessibility is strongly related to universal design when the approach involves "direct access." This is about making things accessible to all people (whether they have a disability or not).

Saroma understood the specific problems found by the disabled tourists when booking a holiday -

- Inaccessible, or only partly accessible, web sites
- Lack of accessible airport transfer
- Lack of wheelchair accessible vehicles
- Lack of well-adapted hotel rooms
- Lack of professional staff capable of informing and advising about accessibility issues
- Lack of reliable information about a specific attraction's level of accessibility (church, castle, exhibition, etc.)
- Lack of accessible restaurants, bars, etc
- Lack of adapted toilets in restaurants and public places
- Lack of disability equipment (wheelchairs, bath chairs, toilet raisers, electric scooters)

To counter these issues Saroma has decided to transform its up-coming luxury resort in the pristine area of Wynad into a fully accessible one. Guests (using wheelchairs) checking in at this resort can choose any available rooms unlike at other places where the standard "one room" is allotted to them. This has been done to ensure that people with disabilities get the feeling of being at par with other guests.

The second in this line was to construct a houseboat which is accessible. To get this done, the team had to work hard to finalise a design which matches the IDA set guidelines. This luxury craft was launched and displayed at the recently concluded KTM (Kerala Travel Mart) and was very well



Wheeling to the Taj



Joyride by the fields



Boating away to glory



appreciated by the trade across the world.

The third product to serve “accessible tourism” is a fleet of vehicles to facilitate easy movement. This is being developed and designed by Saroma in consultation with prominent persons working in the respective fields. The Saroma management has mandated that each property - existing or planned - has accessibility solutions incorporated in their plan.

In addition to the obvious social benefits, its market dynamic represents a huge opportunity with new investment opportunities and new service requirements, rarely provided by the regular travel agencies, transport providers and other key players in the tourism sector. With this Saroma Holidays strives to be a “Class Apart”

Svayam, an initiative of Sminu Jindal Charitable Trust, conducts sensitisation workshops organised by the Ministry of Tourism for their engineers from different states of India. Over 60 engineers and other officials involved with the work of maintaining various tourist sites and other related infrastructure attended a recent workshop. Svayam’s accessibility experts team trained by UNESCAP at APCD, Bangkok conducted the workshop.

The deliberations were followed by a site visit to Qutab Minar. Mr. S. Banerjee, Secretary-Tourism and



Ms. Sminu Jindal, Founder - Svayam, & MD - Jindal SAW Ltd. were also present at the workshop. The

agenda was to sensitise the participants about how best

they could incorporate features that enhance accessibility as per international standards while making structural changes. It included understanding of international best practices for barrier-free and inclusive environment.

Representatives of the ASI and the Delhi Transport Corporation who are working closely with Svayam shared their experiences through presentations.

Mr. S. Banerjee, Secretary-Tourism, Government of India, said, “The Ministry of Tourism is proud to be associated with Svayam. We stand committed to extend our full support and cooperation.” He stressed that making tourist sites accessible makes good economic sense. He also announced the Ministry of Tourism-instituted Accessibility Award which will be given to the most accessible tourist sites/hotel or any such facility.

Ms. Sminu Jindal said, “We are delighted that the government authorities are getting sensitised towards the needs of the people with reduced mobility. The workshop will help sensitise the implementer workforce towards the needs of people with any kind of disability. We welcome this initiative and hope that the efforts will make our heritage and culture accessible to all.”

Svayam has been closely working with ASI to make heritage sites accessible. It has conducted an access audit of Qutab Minar, the most frequented monument in the country after the Taj Mahal. Its recommendations were implemented in toto by the ASI. ASI has invited Svayam to help them make some of the world heritage sites like Red Fort in Delhi, Taj Mahal Agra and world heritage sites of Goa barrier-free.

