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TOUR GUIDES IN
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Tour Guides In Agra & Fatehpur Sikri

DISCOVER INDIA PROGRAM

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Certificate

This is to certify that the work incorporated in the report titled “Tour Guides in Agra and Fatehpur Sikri” submitted by the undersigned research team was carried out under my supervision. Such material as has been obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged.

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Abstract

Tourism in India is one of the most rapidly growing industries and a tour guide has a substantial role to play in helping its economy grow. Agra and Fatehpur Sikri are home to multiple World Heritage Sites and tour guiding has become markedly popular in these cities. Despite being one of the oldest professions in the world, research on the life and work of tour guides is surprisingly limited, especially in the case of India.

The report contextualizes the work of tour guides in Agra and Fatehpur Sikri and proceeds to explore their livelihood by understanding the evolution of the profession, the impact of numerous changes in governmental policies, the countless challenges that tour guides have to face in their line of work, and the varying roles that they interpret and assume. Moreover, there is added attention given to exploring the experiences of women who work as tour guides and the influence of various political, cultural and religious factors on the narratives surrounding the Taj Mahal and Fatehpur Sikri.

The report establishes the significance of tourism in Agra and Fatehpur Sikri by providing a historical and geographical context of the region, followed by an understanding of what defines a quintessential tour guide. Due to the lack of scholarly work on tour guides in the Indian context, most of the existing literature gave a non-native perspective on what the job of a tour guide entails. The nature of the profession makes tour guiding region-specific because of which it is imperative to understand it in an Indian context. Primary data for the study was collected on-field from a representative sample of individuals of the tourism industry in Agra, Fatehpur Sikri and Delhi through observations, interviews and focus-group discussions.

The report explores and analyses the evolution of the profession, the multiple roles that a tour guide assumes, the different types of licensed and unlicensed guides, and the factors that shape an individual's choice to enter this dynamic profession. The variation in narratives of the Taj Mahal and Fatehpur Sikri are explored and the causes for the same are analysed. Additionally, the assortment of challenges that a guide faces due to legislative, executive and judiciary bodies at a regional and a country level, and other social structures are also investigated. The joys as well as challenges faced by a female who choose to enter a male dominated profession are explored as well.

The report attempts to address the necessity of research on the unexplored domain of tour guiding in Agra and Fatehpur Sikri and presents a detailed account of the work and the lives of tour guides.

INTRODUCTION





CHAPTER 1.0: INTRODUCTION

The cities of Agra and Fatehpur Sikri are steeped in history and are custodians of Mughal architecture. Marble-tops inlaid with semi-precious stones that create intricate floral and geometric patterns known as *pietra dura* are representative of Agra and its association with Mughal artwork. And, of course, Agra is home to the Taj Mahal, one of the seven wonders of the world. Approximately sixty-two lakh tourists make their way to the Taj every year¹. The city is also home to several lesser known heritage sites such as Sikandra, Humayun's Mosque, and Kanch Mahal. Fatehpur Sikri, Akbar's capital, lies at a distance of a mere 16 kilometres from the city. While several sectors such as the accommodation sector, transport sector and the souvenir sector are major contributors to the maintenance and encouragement of tourism (Srivastava, 2011), the role of tour guides as carriers and communicators of culture and history emerges as exceptionally important (McDonnell, 2001).

So, who is a tour guide? According to the report by Sankaranarayanan and Bandekar in World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (2014), a tour guide is "a person who guides visitors in the language of their choice and interprets the cultural and natural heritage of an area. S/he is a person who usually possesses an area-specific qualification issued and/or recognised by the appropriate authority."

Works by Cohen (1985), a sociologist and an anthropologist, describe a modern tour guide to be a combination of two figures: that of a pathfinder and a mentor. The former figure entails the responsibility of the guide to find and navigate through unfamiliar surroundings for the travellers, and the latter assigns the guide the responsibility of an advisor or tutor. This combination of these functions further enables the guide to assume the role of a leader, with his/her ability to direct the group to the correct path, along with duties of group-managing and defusing potential tension that may arise in the course of a tour. S/he additionally keeps the tour group entertained and provides constant animation while narrating the history and culture of the place. The guide also acts as the middleman between the group he/she is showing around and the resident population of the locality, ensuring an accepting attitude from both sides.

There are many factors affecting the work of a tour guide-these include the economic, political and social influences at play at any given point of time. Economic factors such as how high or low the cost of travelling is, what benefits the destination place has to offer, distance

¹ Data sourced from U.P. Tourism Office in Agra.



that must be covered and how worthy the potential tourist perceives the place to be, etc. all have the capability to make or break a tourist's decision to embark on a particular journey. Furthermore, controls at the border, issues regarding security and level of difficulty encountered whilst applying for visa may further hamper the size of the influx of tourists. Instability in these fields make the tour guide's job extremely volatile and their livelihood vulnerable to forces beyond their control (Ivanovic, Khunou, Reynish, Pawson, Tseane & Wassung, 2009).

Social factors such as cultural norms, the safety and crime rates and religious sentiments are taken into consideration by tourists (Dicevska & Simonceska, 2012). These factors shape the gender ratio of working individuals, the narratives that surround a monument and the significance and regard that society ascribes to the profession of tour guiding.

The above factors are influenced by shifting political landscapes. Therefore, instability in the political state of the region to be visited impacts the demand for the services of a tour guide. Lack of trust in the political scenario and the likelihood of sudden significant changes in the political climate of the said region affects the number of tourists approaching tour guides. The profession, being largely dependent on these factors, is filled with uncertainty, the impact of which should be considered (Ivanovic, Khunou, Reynish, Pawson, Tseane & Wassung, 2009).



1.1 Geographical Information-

1.1.1. Location



Fig. 1. Map of Uttar Pradesh, highlighting Agra

Source: commons.wikimedia.org

Agra is a district and a city located in western Uttar Pradesh, in North India. Most of Agra comprises level plains but the southwest periphery is guarded by hills. Mathura District adjoins it at the north, while the south is bounded by the Dhaulpur District. It is circumscribed by Firozabad District on the east and Bharatpur on the west. It is situated on the right bank of the Yamuna river and is 200 km and 40 km away from New Delhi and Fatehpur Sikri respectively (“Agra”, n.d.).

1.1.2 Climate

Agra endures long, hot summers from April to September when temperatures rise to 45°C (113°F). During summers, dry winds blow through the city. The monsoon months of July, August and September witness approximately 67 cm (27 inches) of rainfall per annum. June is the hottest month with an average temperature of 35.0 °C. The lowest mean temperatures in the year occur in January, and are around 14.6 °C. It rains more in the winter than in the summer (“Climate Agra”, n.d.).



1.2. Economy and Education:

Agra came to the economic forefront during the reign of the Afghan King Sikandar Lodhi - who had made it the capital of his empire. It is known for its handicrafts made of marble and sandstone inlay work. Agra's major handicrafts products besides inlay work are leatherware, brassware, carpets, jewellery and embroidery work. Agra is also well known for its sweets *petha* and *ghazak* and the savoury snack *dalmouth*. About 40% of the total economy of Agra is directly or indirectly dependent on the industrial sector. Over 7200 small scale industrial units are located across the district (“Economy”, n.d.). There is only one large-scale industry in Agra – Ultra Urban Infratech, which is a distributor of electricity. Micro and small-scale industries mostly include marble handicrafts, shoes and carpets. An area called the Taj Trapezium Zone was demarcated to check pollution levels around the Taj and only pollution-free industries can be set up here (Ashfaq & Ahmad, 2014).

There are two Universities in Agra. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University (formerly known as Agra University) was founded in the year 1927 in Agra. Dayalbagh Educational Institute is the other University there. Hindi and Urdu are the most commonly spoken languages (“About District”, n.d.).

The main shopping areas of the city are Sadar Bazar, Kinari Bazar, Raja-ki-Mandi, Sanjay Place and the Taj Complex. The Taj Mahal facilitates the inflow of foreign exchange which benefits the economy of the city as well as the nation (“Economy”, n.d.).



Fig. 2. Streets of Agra || Source: Discover India Program (2017-2018)



1.3. Historical Overview

A study of Medieval North India is not complete without examining the Mughal empire which began in 1526 and ended in 1857. However, Agra emerged as an important site of historic relevance when Sikandar Lodi of the Lodi dynasty made it his kingdom. His son, Ibrahim Lodi was defeated by the first of the ‘Great Mughals’, Babur. The city of Agra as we know today was founded by Akbar in 1558. However, he moved his capital to Fatehpur Sikri because its construction was finished first. Jahangir’s ascent to power took place in Agra, but he spent most of his time in Kashmir and Kabul. Shah Jahan, just like his father ascended to power in Agra, but soon moved to Shahjahanabad in Delhi. The construction of Taj Mahal in 1632 was a memoir to his deceased wife Mumtaz. He was later kept under house arrest at Agra Palace for the last 7 years of his life. (Hasan, 2008).

The focal point of the tourism industry at Agra is the Taj Mahal. The Taj Mahal was built in the memory of Shah Jahan’s favorite wife, Mumtaz. She was the daughter of Itimad-ud-Daulah, Jahangir’s prime minister. To honour her memory, Shah Jahan decided to build one of the grandest displays of love and grief- the Taj. The architects and builders came from all over the globe – from Baghdad and Delhi, dome builders from Turkey and Samarkand, mosaic workers from Baghdad and Kanauji, and the chief calligraphist from Iran. Raw materials were sourced from all parts of India and central Asia. A grand total of over twenty thousand workers were committed to working on the Taj (Havell, 1904).

The Taj is not the only source of historical relevance in the region. Agra was an important trading centre during the Mughal Era for two reasons: for being the capital city and the presence of the river Yamuna. Agra is thus characterized as one of the most important centres of commercial exchange in seventeenth century North India. Goods coming from all over the country, be it Gujarat, Deccan or Sindh, passed through Agra, making it a buzzing commercial hub (Kaushik, 2013). Yamuna acted as an important route of water transport for all types of goods and commodities. Of these, one of the most important goods was cotton. Several types of cotton were available- Sahan, Calico, Bafta. Carpet trade also became important during this period. (Kaushik, 2013)

Fatehpur Sikri, or the “city of victory” got its auspicious name after the conquest of Gujarat. It was built by Akbar, who held his capital there for 17 years. It is an ideal spot with battlement walls made of sandstone covering it on three sides and an artificial lake on the fourth side. The fort consists of a *Naubat Khana* (Music hall), the money mint as well as a *Daftar Khana* (record chamber; now used as a tourist rest house!).



Fatehpur Sikri is an interesting architectural study because of the political connotations it bears. For instance, the lack of a separation between the imperial complex and the public space is one of its defining characteristics. The integration of public places into the emperor's life is a testament to Akbar's commitment to Public will. Comparing this to Shahjahanabad in Delhi, characterized by high levels of separation between the king and his subjects not only shows their contrasting nature, but also points to Shah Jahan's slightly tyrannical nature (Jutla, 2012).

The integration of Hindu and Jain temple art into a larger 'Islamic' scheme of design throughout Fatehpur Sikri is fascinating. Even the existence of various monuments inside the city, like the Hanuman temple or the Chinese art is representative of the plurality Akbar preached and practiced. Fatehpur Sikri is, therefore an important example for urban planning today (Jutla, 2012).

1.4. Research Statement:

To understand the social-cultural, political and economic factors that shape the work and lives of tour guides in the cities of Agra and Fatehpur Sikri.

Thus, our **research question** is: How has the socio-political and economic context of the region shaped the work of tour guides in Agra and Fatehpur Sikri?

1.5. Research Aims and Objectives:

- To explore the various roles that tour guides assume in their everyday work
- To investigate the advantages and challenges that licensed and unlicensed tour guides face in their everyday work
- To understand the training process of the tour guides and its relationship with the roles they perform
- To investigate the ways in which tour guides interact with other stakeholders in the tourism industry
- To analyse the impact of government policies and infrastructure on the profession of the tour guides
- To capture a pool of multiple narratives about the monuments in the two cities
- To understand the ways in which the context of Agra shapes the work and lives of the female tour guides



1.6. Research Methodology:

Our research questions led us to adopt a qualitative methodology for this study. Our primary tools of data collection were in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and observation. We developed separate interview schedules for tour guides, tour agents, stakeholders, academics, and tourists. The interview schedules were semi-structured, and thus they only served the purpose of a guideline rather than a rigid rulebook. The interviewees had the freedom to go beyond the mentioned questions as long as the topic at hand remained relevant and useful to the purpose of the study. In total, we had six focus group discussions and twenty-two interviews.

The interviewees and focus group discussion participants themselves were contacted either beforehand or on-field. Before going to Agra, the team scanned through multiple tour guide databases online and scheduled some interviews and discussions. On-field, the team used the method of snowball sampling and met more people that could potentially help this research. In the duration of our work on-field, we obtained information from 24 tour guides, 6 government officials from the U.P. Tourism office, 5 stakeholders in the tourism industry (shopkeepers, accommodation providers, cab drivers and police officers), 2 scholars, 1 journalist, and 1 tour agent. In addition to these 39 interactions, 10 shorter interviews with tourists were also conducted.

Finally, all team members were part of one or multiple group tours led by tour guides of the monuments in Agra as well as Fatehpur Sikri. While the ongoing process of asking them interview questions continued throughout the 11 tours, the tool of observation was immensely useful. The tour participants not only obtained information through the answers of the tour guides, but also through additional observations regarding the behaviour of a guide with the tourists, the alternative stories about the monument he/she offers, the interaction with police officers, the way in which they were directed to shops/restaurants by the guides where they might gain commission from, and more. With all these combined, we adopted a holistic approach towards our research.

Additionally, the team conducted a pilot interview with a tour guide in Mumbai a week before leaving for Agra. We interviewed Rama Khandwala, the oldest tour guide in India who was recently awarded 'Best Tour Guide' by the President at the National Tourism Awards. The interview gave us a framework on the basis of which we could modify our interview guides. The anecdotes she shared helped us predict potential themes that could emerge during the course of our on-field data collection.



Although there are children who sell souvenirs at Fatehpur Sikri and offer to guide you through the monuments, we refrained from interviewing them due to ethical concerns. Interviewees were assured that the information they gave out would be used strictly for academic purposes. It was ensured that they consented and were comfortable with audio and video recording of the interviews and focus group discussions.

Stakeholder	Number of interviewees	Methodology
Male Tour Guides	17	Observations, In-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions
Tourist	10	Semi-structured interviews
Female tour guides	7	In-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions, Observation
Government officials (including police officers)	6	In- depth interviews, observation
Journalist	1	In-depth interviews
Scholar	2	In-depth interview
Tour Agent	1	In-depth interviews
Shopkeeper	4	Observation, semi-structured interviews

Table 1: Research Methodology used for various stakeholders

Source: Discover India Program (2017-2018)



1.7. Limitations of the Study:

Although we did gather a lot of useful data on our subject, we had to deal with a few limitations.

The main disadvantage we faced while collecting data was that the duration of time on-field was short. Additionally, unforeseen circumstances and the volatile political climate of the region offset our schedule. We were unable to interview a professor at Agra University because of on-going student election campaigns in the campus. There were large mobs of students shouting slogans, police vehicles and armed police personnel around the University. We had an interview scheduled with the Superintending Archaeologist at the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) of the Agra branch but it got cancelled as he got caught up in other work. Due to the limited time on field, we were unable to reschedule these interviews. The opportunity to be on-field across seasons (i.e. peak season as well as off-season) would have enabled us to collect more data.

Another challenge we faced was talking to tourists who had hired tour guides. During the day, the two types of tourists we came across were: backpackers without tour guides and tourists with guides. The problem was that we could not find time to interview the tourists who had hired guides, as they were busy touring during the day. Further, apart from the ethical issues regarding disrupting the plans of the tourists and intruding on them in their leisure time, the unsafe nature of Agra and our daily schedules did not permit us to seek them out at their hotels and residences during late evenings.

LITERATURE REVIEWS





CHAPTER 2.0: LITERATURE REVIEWS

2.1 Evaluation of Secondary Sources

2.1.1. Roles of a Tour Guide:

The tour guide is, primarily, a dispenser of information and knowledge. The guide shows the tourist to famous monuments and describes the history behind it. Hence, it can be said that the first and foremost role of a guide is that of a communicator.

Dr. Erik Cohen (1985) suggested that there are four primary roles of a tour guide: instrumental, social, interactional, and communicative. However, this is not the case in reality. A tour guide is expected to not only have a thorough understanding of the history of a monument and the local culture, but to also understand the background of their tourist so as to establish a strong bond between the tourist and the designated area. To make this part of their job easier, tour guides have been known to distinguish tourists on the basis of their nationality (Salazar, 2008).

Another paper titled “Tour Guides in Contemporary Tourism” references studies conducted by Zhang, Chow, Black and Weiler which states that the following roles of a tour guide have been identified: information provider, social facilitator, cultural host, motivator of conservation values, interpreter of the natural and cultural environment, and people mover (Rabotić, 2010). The other roles also mentioned by the author of this paper are that of an “instructor, safety officer, ambassador of the country, public relations representative or company representative, entertainer, problem solver, confidant and counsellor (Rabotić, 2010, p. 353).”

The author also mentions the expectations a tourist may have of a guide. According to him, “Tourists generally do not expect much from the guided tour and guides, but only to spend several hours or days with minimum discomfort, some information and entertainment (Rabotić, 2010, p. 355).”

The author talks about the roles that the guides are expected to play but doubts whether or not the guide may actually be up to the task of playing each role. He also mentions the importance of “presentation and communication skills” (Rabotić, 2010). He fails to explain what kind of training should be given to the guides to make sure they are up to the tasks provided to them.

A paper titled, “The Changing Face of the Tour Guide: One-Way Communicator to Choreographer to Co-creator of the Tourist Experience” by Betty Weiler and Rosemary Black, states that the role of tour guides is that of brokers (Weiler & Black, 2015).



They also talk about the different trends and the implications for tour guiding and as to how the internet and the change in the profiles of the tourists and their expectations have led to the change in the role of tour guides and as to how they have to adapt to the changing environment (Weiler & Black, 2015).

2.1.2. Types of Tour Guides:

The Regional Level Guides come under four categories:

The general guides must be graduates from a recognized university. They need to have a three-year degree in tourism or hospitality, or a diploma in Archaeology. They need to be fluent in the English language, which they need to have compulsorily studied during their senior years in high school. These guides are allowed to work in their respective regions on a full-time basis (Government of India, Ministry of Tourism, 2011).

The criteria for a tour guide to fall under the General Linguistic category remains almost the same as the previous one. However, they need to be fluent in foreign languages, and they must write an exam in the foreign language of their choice. For example, a tour guide who wants to be a French linguistic guide would have to take a French examination (Government of India, Ministry of Tourism, 2011).

'Expert' is a separate category of the Regional Level Tourist Guides. This was created to encourage scholars and academics to become a part of the tourist guiding field. These guides need to have acquired a Doctorate in Tourism, Indian History/Architecture/Culture/Archaeology/Wildlife or other related fields (Government of India, Ministry of Tourism, 2011).

Along with the requirements mentioned above, the candidates in the field of Expert Linguistic must be completely fluent in a foreign language apart from English. They have to take an examination in the language of their choosing (Government of India, Ministry of Tourism, 2011).

The tour guides must also be above 20 years of age, and must be residents of their area of operation (Government of India, Ministry of Tourism, 2011).

Once every two years, applications for becoming a tour guide are invited through an open advertisement which specifies the number of seats available for training. There is an entrance test conducted for the candidates. They will be tested on the following subjects: knowledge of monuments/ tourist destinations in their region, Indian history and culture and general knowledge (Government of India, Ministry of Tourism, 2011).



2.1.3. Training

Once the training of the candidates is complete, they need to submit a report detailing what they have learnt before the viva-voce (their oral examination) (Government of India, Ministry of Tourism, 2011). Upon successful completion of their training, they will be issued a Regional Level Tourist Guide Licence by the Regional India Tourism Office, Government of India. Their license would need to be renewed every three years (Government of India, Ministry of Tourism, 2011).

The tour guides have a minimum work requirement of 90 days a year. Their area of operation falls under the following regions (Government of India, Ministry of Tourism, 2011):

- ❖ Northern Region
- ❖ Southern Region
- ❖ Western and Central Regions
- ❖ Eastern Region
- ❖ North-Eastern Region

The guides do not have an official age of retirement. However, they need to undergo a physical-cum- mental fitness test and produce a Medical Fitness Certificate from a Registered Medical Practitioner before their licenses are renewed after they turn 65 years old (Government of India, Ministry of Tourism, 2011).

As of 2016, a new policy issued by the Archaeological Survey of India will change the training and operation of tour guides all over India. This policy abolishes all the different types of guides in the country and replaces them with only one category of guides: ASI Monument Guides, who will operate at all the 3687 ancient monuments and archaeological sites which are under the guidance of the ASI (Archaeological Survey of India, 2016).

According to this new policy the minimum education requirement is to hold a bachelor's degree in Ancient, Medieval or Modern history along with sufficient knowledge on art and architecture, along with fluency in one or more languages (Archaeological Survey of India, 2016).

The new policy states that all the current guides will be allowed to operate and will be eligible for the ASI monument guide (Archaeological Survey of India, 2016). They will get the license by appearing for the written test. One guide will not be able to obtain licenses for more than 15 monuments or 5 groups of monuments as mandated by the ASI (Archaeological Survey of India, 2016). The minimum age of application has been kept at 21 years and the maximum



age of renewal of license is kept at 60 years. One can be issued a licence over the age of 60 depending on the person's medical fitness (Archaeological Survey of India, 2016).

The selection process for the new guides will include written tests and interview. The interview will be conducted by a panel of two experts from the ASI and one from the Union Ministry of Tourism. The license given to every candidate will be valid for 5 years after which the licenses will have to be renewed after an interview with a panel. Once the person clears the initial round, he/she will be given 6 weeks of training; 4 weeks of classroom training and 2 weeks of field training (Archaeological Survey of India, 2016).

2.1.4. Conduct:

Licensed tour guides have a set of rules to which they must abide. They should constantly have on their laminated guide license issued by the Ministry of Tourism, along with a name tag while guiding tourists. Lending of the license is strictly forbidden. If they lose or damage their license, they need to immediately report it to the tourist office and file an FIR with the nearest police station. Guides have to be professionally dressed at all times. They cannot charge any extra amounts than prescribed by the Tourist Guides Federation of India in consultation with representatives of the Indian Association of Tour Operators (Government of India, Ministry of Tourism, 2011).

A guide cannot make a side-deal with any business houses, travel agents, places of accommodation, shopkeepers, transportation operators, etc. The guide cannot accept any monetary commissions from them, nor can he/she indulge in any other unethical practices. Any guide caught engaging in any of these practices will have their license confiscated. The guides also cannot be employed by the Travel and Hospitality Industry (Government of India, Ministry of Tourism, 2011).

Guides cannot refuse an assignment handed to them by the Ministry of Tourism, without a valid reason. They must submit an annual statement with the number of assignments taken on by them. The rules concerned with the presentation and the code of conduct of the guides are particularly strict. The guides need to pay annual fee for the entrance to the precincts of protected monuments. This fee will be decided by consulting with the ASI (Government of India, Ministry of Tourism, 2011).

If the guides are absent from work for more than a month, then they need to submit a written excuse to the Tourist Office. They also need to submit a written notice to the India Tourism Office if they are planning on taking a vacation which will exceed three weeks. If a guide has been absent for over a period of two years, the ministry will consider that guide to



have left the profession. Should this happen, the guide will have to go for a refresher course in IITTM or its other chapters in order to regain his/her license (Chowdhary & Prakash, 2011).

Tour guides are reminded of the fact that they are the cultural ambassadors of the country and that foreign tourists will form their opinion on India based on how their guide is. Guides are reminded to follow the old Indian policy of '*Atithi Devo Bhava*', and should consider himself/herself to be a friend of the tourists. They know that factors such as word-of-mouth and publicity can affect the tourism industry in India more than any advertisement can, and should compose themselves keeping this in mind. They should always give correct and updated information on monuments to their tourists and "...be well versed with matters relating to local customs, habits and traditions to ensure that both the tourists and the local people respect each other." (Chowdhary & Prakash, 2011).

2.1.5 Challenges to the Guides and the Industry:

The tourism industry faces no shortage of challenges. Due to the fact that it deals with the handling and educating of people, there are issues that arise which require a unique sense of patience and skill to handle.

A survey taken of tour guides in the North shed some light on the several problems that plagued them and prevented them from carrying out their jobs in the most efficient manner. One of the major problems listed by them is the poor management of monuments. Lack of adequate maintenance not only of, but also around, the monuments and heritage sites deter tourists from visiting the country. An example can be given of the Taj Mahal, and how only half of the monument has been cleaned, with the distinction between the clean and the unclean halves very evident up close. Additionally, the poorly regulated presence of hawkers and obstinate rickshaw-drivers serves as an unnerving disincentive for more tourists to come (Koshti & Sharma, 2014).

Another problem with a tour guide's profession is the issue of it being devoid of job security or medical benefits. This entails that in the event of an emergency s/he cannot earn a living and will not be provided for. Moreover, their job paints a unique target on their back for criminals and law enforcement alike (Chowdhary & Prakash, 2011).

A major problem that the tour guides face is their vulnerability to touts, predatory locals and peddlers. They frequent popular monuments with the goal of taking as much money as they can from the tourists, and they frequently resort to harassment. The burden of making sure that the tourists are protected from them should fall on the shoulders of the local law enforcement, but instead, it is placed on those of the tour guide.



Most of the guides are even harassed by the local police in Agra, making their job much more difficult than it needs to be (Chowdhary & Prakash, 2011).

2.1.5.1. Interpretative Role of the Tour Guide

According to Dr Amitabh Mishra (2013) in his *A study of the factors influencing cultural tourists' perception and its measurement with reference to Agra*, factors like age, education level and family income play a large role in what kind of information a tourist receives, while other demographic indicators like gender, occupation and marital status have no effect on the same. The author also discusses the disparity in the treatment of tourists by the stakeholders of the tourism industry, in particular tour guides, based on gender, nationality, race and caste. This study thoroughly examines the demographic disparities of tour guides and tourists in Agra through quantitative analysis. However, there are some problems that might affect the reliability of the study. For instance, in his survey of tourists, the author has not considered the effect of external factors like religion, caste and the geographical location where the respondent hails from.

The mediative purpose of a tour guide, according to Erik Cohen (1985), is to explain the culture of a country to a foreigner in ways that the foreigner understands. There is a very significant interpretative element to a tour guide's duty as a representative of the host country- they have the freedom to explicate any historical fact or concept the way they want it to. This might include systemic and personal biases. These biases shape the flow of knowledge from the tour guide to the tourists (1985). This process is further complicated by the presence of "difficult memories". The polarization of Hindus and Muslims and their subsequent versions of history has created a mediative role for the tour guide, wherein s/he has the power to select and interpret narratives, thus acting as gatekeepers of oral history. The Shakespearean analogy of "All the world's a stage; all the men and women merely players" fits aptly into this context because of the role of the tourist as a 'stage director' who 'choreographs the tourist's movements'. (Edensor, 2001). Therefore, tour guides are highly effective 'instruments of control' who control the interaction between the tourists and the host societies.

Another challenge that the tourism industry in Agra faces is inadequate infrastructure (Koshti & Sharma, 2014). The authors claim that Agra will reach its true potential for tourism if it builds "...new standardized hotels, restaurants, buses, coaches, low cost air carrier, rest rooms, and spa resort in order to provide high class facilities and amenities to the tourist who came from far off land to get some enjoyment (Koshti & Sharma, 2014, p. 39)."



Tourists have complained that there are few hygienic restaurants and cafes in the city which provide different cuisines from around the world. They also stated that there are no good-quality toilets set up around popular tourist destinations. Many tourists were not pleased with the infrastructure in Agra, specifically the roads and the various transportation services (Chowdhary & Prakash, 2011).

2.1.6. Gender

The Tourism Industry has been considered “male stream” (Pritchard and Morgan, 2007) with very little space to accommodate women in there. According to United Nations report on Women in tourism, women make up a large portion of the tourism industry. Of the seven continents, Asia has the least number of women in tourism, clocking in at 35.8%. This does not mean that there are many women tour guides. The hospitality industry hosts a large number of female professionals, and this significantly influences the numbers provided in the UN gender report (“Global Report on Women in Tourism”, 2010).

According to an article in the Times of India, Avinash Mehra, deputy director of UP Tourism states that female tour guides are high in demand, often preferred over male guides, but are scarce in number. This preference is only amplified in tourist groups that are composed completely of women, and yet the tour guide industry continues to be male-dominated (Chandra, 2012).

There is, however, a small but noteworthy emergence in the number of female tour guides conducting tours in Agra. While they are less in number, many of them flourish in their field, and have shared their personal accounts in multiple articles.

An article by The Better India on women tour guides in India highlights their contribution to paving the path to gender equality by challenging the notion of tour guiding being only a male’s domain. It speaks of female guides who have been in the field since the 1970s, efficiently fulfilling their duties despite long hours, the harsh outdoors, and the heavy responsibility of handling tourists coming from diverse cultures and varying temperaments. It speaks of the fulfilment that comes with traveling, but also mentions misconceptions that come attached specifically to being a female tour guide. These include societal pressures, judgement upon returning home at late hours, and for some others, hesitation in allowing a woman to work after getting married (“Women Tour Guides in India Are Showing the Route to Gender Equality”, 2016).



Further advancing this idea, an article by the Guardian mentions how in India, showing tourists around for several days in a row is often considered an ill-fitting job for a female. This view often makes it difficult to recruit women into the industry. The article does, however, predominantly speak of female guides making a breakthrough and slowly making their way up in the field. It goes on to describe the work of Sana Jinah and her progress as a female tour guide (Dunford, 2017). Sana Jinah and a handful of other women are, unfortunately, the only ones that crop up when one attempts to search more on female tour guides in India.

As can be observed, most of the data that can be found on female guides comes from newspaper and online articles. The lack of academic sources available makes room for two possibilities: Either there are too few female tour guides to study, or they are undermined to such an extent that no dedicated attempt to explore their work has been made. This proves to be an important gap in the literature, for in a country like India where perceptions of females traveling freely could bewilder or even threaten people, the role of gender in determining the nature of a female guide is essential to look into.

2.1.7. Religion

The Muslim population Agra has witnessed an upward trend since the Mughal era but the corresponding increase in the numbers of the Hindus and other individual communities has ensured the maintenance of a relatively stable ratio. However, according to the most recent religion-based census data, there has been a decline in the Hindu population in the city for the first time. Between 2001 and 2011, there was a 0.85 per cent drop in the Hindu population while the Muslim population in Agra has seen growth by 0.3 per cent (Directorate of Census Operations, 2011)

Interestingly, only the Muslim population has displayed an upward trend in Agra, while the rest of the religious communities have shown a marked decline in numbers. According to the data made available by the District Census Department, the total population of Agra was 36,20,436 in 2001 of which Hindus were 89.62 per cent, a figure now at 88.77 per cent, indicating a decrease of 0.85 per cent in the past 10 years. On the other hand, the Muslims, who were 8.94 percent of the population in 2001, rose to 9.30 per cent in 2011 - an increase of 0.36 per cent (Directorate of Census Operations, 2011).

As per the data, of the total urban population of Agra, the maximum population of Muslims (3,23,564) is concentrated in the old city area and makes a sizeable proportion of the population compared to Hindus (16,30,190).



In the rural areas of Agra, Muslim population is a mere 87,749 while Hindus are 22,92,528, making Hindus a dominant majority there. There is just one Muslim family living in the Dayalbagh area on the outskirts of the city and 35 live in the adjoining Swamibagh area (Qureshi, 2015).

Description	Total	Percentage
Hindu	3,922,718	88.77 %
Muslims	411,313	9.31 %
Christian	10,076	0.23 %
Sikh	12,057	0.27 %
Buddhist	4,049	0.09 %
Jain	21,508	0.49 %
Others	384	0.01 %
Not Stated	36,692	0.83 %

Table 2: Religious denominations in Agra

Source: Directorate of Census Operations (2011)

2.1.8 Economy

Tourism is an essential part of any country's economy. Every place in the world has its own cultural significance and natural human curiosity has driven people to visit these places. According to a paper called "Economic Potential of Tourism: A Case Study of Agra", the economic impact of tourism is felt more in a developing country than in a developed country. There are many developing countries that depend very heavily on Tourism.



For example, the Tourism sector in the Caribbean Islands is a major contributor to its GDP (Srivastava, 2011). In India, included in the Tourism sector's contribution to the economy is the following: Money earned by heritage sites (including ticket sales, fees paid to tour guides etc., transport facilities such as airlines, trains, buses, cabs etc., accommodation costs, including cost of staying in a hotel room, amount spent in restaurants and other eateries, etc., the earnings of the Souvenir Industry (Srivastava, 2011).

Tourism is also an important source of foreign exchange. In 2005, UP earned 5,034.45 crores in foreign exchange from tourism alone. It also creates a lot of employment opportunities due to the various career options present in the sector (Srivastava, 2011).

According to an article called "Role of Tourism in Economic Development", the government's 12th Plan Document states that "Tourism has the potential to help achieve the objectives of the 12th Plan for faster, more inclusive and sustainable growth. More importantly, it is a powerful antidote to poverty. It eliminates the disadvantage of market inaccessibility suffered by the poor in respect of their goods and services by bringing the consumer to their doorstep. This reduces the need for inter-mediation, thereby improving recovery. However, the potential can fully be realised only if the international competitiveness of the Indian tourism sector improves significantly by removing both supply and demand constraints (Subramaniam, 2015, p. 31)." What this means is that the Tourism sector is an untapped metaphorical gold mine for the country to utilise.

2.1.9. Demonetization

On the 8th of November 2016 most of the cash in India had lost its value. During a television address, India's Prime Minister Modi called for the immediate cancellation of all 500 and 1,000 denomination notes — 86% of currency in circulation — and gave his country's 1.3 billion people a 50-day widow to either deposit them into bank accounts or exchange them for newly designed and minted notes (Shepard, 2017).

The execution was poor – there weren't adequate new banknotes to replace the old, ATMs were not equipped to calibrate the new sized bills, and people were compelled to deposit their cash into bank accounts (which a large portion of the population did not have) to be able to be economically dynamic. Millions of people had to rush banks, foreign-exchange counters, jewellery shops and ATMs to stand for hours in long lines which frequently stretched for entire streets merely to re-validate their currency (Shepard, 2017).



Domestic tourists also faced problems. They did not possess a lot of hundred or ten-rupee notes because of safety concerns. Most of their currency consisted of 500 and 1000-rupee notes which were now held no value. (ANI, 2016).

2.10. Narratives:

History and its interpretation and narration is a function of its source and context. For a monument like Taj Mahal that is steeped in complex histories, there are multiple narratives that seek to define and understand it. The most obvious factors that influence the narratives are the temporal and geographical context in which they are constructed and narrated.

Literature on the Taj Mahal varies from eloquent, almost oleaginous court records, to accounts written in 19th and 20th century travel writers, moulded by the contemporary rational and liberal discourse, emerging socio-political thought and democratization (Baig & Mehrotra, 2017).

Common legends include the existence of the Black Taj at the Mehtab Bagh and Shah Jahan cutting off the arms of the workers who built the Taj. Legends of the Black Taj stem from the fascination about the fact that Shah Jahan did not seem to have planned his mortality. There is much debate over whether they were made to sign a contract preventing them from taking up further work or if their arms were cut off. Shah Jahan did live a life of excess at the expense of the people who enabled that lifestyle. There is no data regarding the economic welfare of the workforce. However, the former statement is substantiated by the fact that there was a famine in 1632 and the Mughals fought multiple wars which drained their land and economic resources (Baig & Mehrotra, 2017).

The preservation narrative today focuses on its protection from within as well as the outside. From within, it seeks to protect its material components from the texture of the marble to the gardens as one cumulative experience. Externally, it attempts to protect the Taj from the shifting socio-political and economic landscapes and the threats that accompany it ranging from terrorism and pollution to the decaying economies that plague the context of the Taj. The representation of the Taj in imaginations and its reading situated within its changing context is critical is essential to safeguarding it (Baig & Mehrotra, 2017).



Themes	Sources
Roles of a Tour Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Tourist Guide</i>, Erik Cohen • <i>Tour Guides in Contemporary Tourism</i>, Brainslav Rabotic • <i>The Changing Face of the Tour Guide: One-Way Communicator to Choreographer to Co-creator of the Tourist Experience</i>, Betty Weiler and Rosemary Black
Types of Tour Guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Guidelines for Grant of Licenses by Dept- 2011</i>, Ministry of Tourism
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Guidelines for Grant of Licenses by Dept- 2011</i>, Ministry of Tourism • <i>The Policy for Archaeological Survey of India Guides to perform within Centrally Protected Monuments</i>, The Archeological Survey of India
Conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Guidelines for Grant of Licenses by Dept- 2011</i>, Ministry of Tourism • <i>Tour Guide Training in India: A Comparison of Approach and Content with Other Programs</i> - Nimit Chowdhary and Monika Prakash
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hospitality Industry: Issues and Challenges. (A study with special reference to Agra)</i>- Suryakant Koshti, Sonal Sharma
Interpretative Role of the tour guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A study of the factors influencing cultural tourists' perception and its measurement with reference-</i> Amitabh Mishra • <i>Tour Guide Training in India: A Comparison of Approach and Content with Other Programs</i> - Nimit Chowdhary and Monika Prakash • <i>Hospitality Industry: Issues and Challenges. (A study with special reference to Agra)</i>- Suryakant Koshti, Sonal Sharma
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tourism Promotion and Power: Creating Images, Creating Identities</i>: Nigel Morgan and Annette Pritchard • <i>Global Report on Women in Tourism: Preliminary findings</i>, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment • <i>Women Tourist Guides Storm Male Bastion</i>, TOI, Swati Chandra • <i>Women Tour Guides in India Are Showing the Route to Gender Equality</i>- The Better India



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Women Lead the Way on a Tour in Northern India</i>- Jane Dunford, The Guardian
Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Census data, 2011 • <i>Hindu population declined, Muslims increased: 2011 census</i>- India Today
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Economic Potential of Tourism: A Case Study of Agra</i>- S Shrivastava • <i>Role of Tourism in Economic Development</i>- Prem Subramaniam
Demonetisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“It Is White Modi Versus Black People”</i>: Kancha Ilaiah Shepard <i>On The Government’s Demonetisation Policy</i> - Kancha Ilaiah Shepard, Caravan Magazine • <i>Demonetisation Anniversary: Where the Shoe Pinches</i>- ANI
Narratives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Taj Mahal: Multiple Narratives</i>- Amitabh Baig and Rahul Mehrotra • <i>Performing tourism, staging tourism: (Re)producing tourist space and practice</i>- Tim Edensor

Table 3: Literature Review Matrix

2.2. Gaps in Literature

Despite finding academic work covering topics that are relevant to this subject, there were still some noticeable gaps in the literature. We did not find any papers on the different types of tour guides apart from the Regional Level Guides. There are monument guides, UPT guides, and of course, stay-order guides, but we could not find any secondary research on the challenges that are unique to each type of tour guide or their mode of operation. We also could not find any secondary data on the other types of tour guides apart from the different boundaries in which they were permitted to operate. The research papers on which the literature review was done all used the term ‘guide’ to cover all the different types of tour guides in India, turning them into one big group with the same challenges.

The authors of the papers on challenges to the tourism industry, sadly, failed to take into account the biggest problem that almost every tour guide in the industry faces: The angry tourist. As mentioned earlier, the main role of a tour guide is to facilitate a good experience for the tourist. As they also represent the country and region to these tourists, they are usually the



ones put on the stand when something goes wrong in a tourist's experience. A lot of the times, when something that is not in the control of the guide goes wrong, the tourist tends to take it out on the guide for the simple reason that the guide is their only link to the region they are in. Unfortunately, there is nothing a guide can actually do to dispel the tourists of this notion and make their own lives easier, as their code of conduct requires them to not argue with a tourist and that the customer is always right. This means that guides are mostly doomed to be the sounding board and on the receiving end of all the complaints and problems a tourist has. If the tourist has a bad experience, even if it is not the guide's fault, the blame is usually put on the guide.

Another challenge which plagues the tourism industry is the commission system. There was no research or academic work done on the challenges this poses to the industry. There also was no research done on the relationship that exists between the shopkeepers in Agra, the tour guides, and the tour agencies that they work for.

Although the papers we went through for gender state that there are very few female tour guides in Agra, we could not find any secondary data to corroborate this claim, nor could we find anything that explains the reason for this. There was little to no literature on the challenges that the female guides in India face due to their gender. We also did not find any research done on what motivated female guides to join such a male-dominated industry.

There was also no research done on how the advent of technology or digitization affects the tourism industry. As information on the Taj Mahal and other monuments in Agra can now easily be accessed on the internet, and guides now have their own websites through which people can book their services, the impact of these on the tour guides and the tourism industry at large has not been researched.

With regard to narratives, we were able to find books that elaborated on the various versions of history by scholars. However, there was no information about the various narratives presented by the tour guides, how they varied based on the tour guide's socio-economic and political background and the way these narratives shaped the perception of the monument and the region at large.

Although we found articles and journals which detail demonetization and its impact across the country and India's economy, we could not find any secondary data on how this policy affected the tourists, both domestic and international, who were visiting Agra when it was put into effect. We also did not find any secondary data on how this policy affected the tourism industry as a whole, as it is a largely cash-based economy.



2.3. Conclusion:

There are various relatively unexplored aspects of tour guiding that are worth investigating further. As mentioned above, showing tourists around different monuments and sites is only one facet of the job of a tour guide. The multiple duties the tourists may expect to be fulfilled by the tour guide may become exceedingly challenging. In other regards as well, such as disparity in the gender ratio amongst guides, how the profession is perceived by society, the involvement and assistance on behalf of the government, as well as external factors such as the political climate and advent of technology, all influence tour guides' livelihoods to some extent. It is of great interest to this paper to gain a deeper understanding of the same, especially those aspects of the guides' lives that tend to get overlooked and, often, completely neglected.

FIELD FINDINGS & ANALYSIS





CHAPTER 3.0.: TOUR GUIDES IN AGRA AND FATEHPUR SIKRI THEIR WORK AND LIVES

In Agra and Fatehpur Sikri, the tourism sector and the cities sustain each other. Tour guides are an indispensable part of the tourism industry. The context of the city frames their profession. Socio-economic factors such as unemployment in Agra, its causes, and political factors such as the policies that government bodies formulate, affect the training as well as the work of the guides. Tour guides in these cities come from the upper-most classes to the lowest strata of society. Further, there is variation in terms of their qualifications as well as their licenses. An understanding of the reasons that led them to take up this profession and the reasons that make them stay in the profession are also integral to our understanding of their work and lives.

3.1 Tour Guides: Ambassadors, Performers and Interpreters

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru referred to tour guides as “cultural ambassadors of the nation”. They aim to facilitate the interaction between the tourists and the culture and history of these illustrious cities. Culture manifests itself in various forms such as food, clothing, language and norms. Tour guides ensure tourists come into contact with these facets that are a part of the daily life of the local people in Agra.

The tour guide also takes on the role of protector and promoter of local art and culture. Pietra dura, or inlaid work, is a common art form in Agra. Rajeev Sikarwar, who has been working as a guide for a decade, mentioned that the families/people engaged in creating pietra dura belong to the lower socio-economic strata and their forefathers had been involved in building the Taj Mahal. He insisted that tour guides need to promote this artwork but quickly added that they never force tourists to buy it.

A tour guide is also a performer and narrator. Most tour guides reiterate that they are not history professors and tourists do not come to Agra and Fatehpur Sikri for a history lesson. Kapil Juneja, a tour guide approved by the Department of Tourism (DoT) emphasised that a tour guide must attempt to bring a monument to life. Their role is to narrate history and perform it in a manner that is entertaining and memorable. Imran, a tour guide described this role aptly: “We're explaining a mango to someone, what a mango is- how sweet it is. So rather than explaining it, put a piece of mango in their mouth. So, this is what our duty is, this is what we do.” Tourists must be transported to an era when queens roamed the palaces of Fatehpur Sikri and grapes hung in abundance from creepers in the *Angoori bagh* of Agra fort. Further, the tour guides assess the interests of tourists and narrate history accordingly.



For example, Sikarwar - an experienced tour guide in Agra- explained that a doctor from America, would be more interested in understanding the medical situation in India, the state of tuberculosis in India, the misuse of antibiotics, and the genetic problems that Indians inherit. Thus, a tour guide must have a vast repository of information.



Fig. 4. A tour guide conducting a tour

Source: Discover India Program (2017-2018)

When tourists first arrive at their destination, it is a foreign space for them. Even in the case that they have acquired information about the destination, they lack a sense of familiarity with it. A tour guide's function is to help the tourist navigate and interpret this space. To this end, s/he performs several roles.

The primary role of a tour guide is to disseminate information. The guide constructs narratives around the monuments to effectively engage the tourist. They also have to be well-informed about areas ranging from economics to medicine so as to be able to effectively answer questions that the tourists might have. Tourists who come to Agra and Fatehpur Sikri are often curious about life in India. The tour guides talk to them about the city, about the living conditions and what it means to live in the shadows of the Taj. Female tour guides are often asked questions about their place in society, marriage and social customs and more.



Since a tour guide facilitates a tourist's understanding of the place, he/she also shapes the perception of the tourists of not just the monuments but also of the people and their way of life.

A tour guide is the primary point of contact between the tourist and the tourist destination. They spend the maximum amount of time with the tourists. The tour guides are aware of this and a majority of them believe that it is one of their implicit duties to protect and promote the image of their country. Monika Sharma, a tour guide in Agra, said, "When we visit the monuments, we introduce the history and culture of the country to them. When they ask questions about the division of Pakistan, we explain to them that when we were divided, Pakistan was created especially for the Muslims, but India was for everyone. Whoever wants to go can go and whoever wants to be here can be here." So, we just tell the tourist about the history, culture, tourism in the country. The tour guide is the face of the country, you can say, because we are the representatives. We are representing everything so whatever is bad or whatever is good, we present all those things in a nice way... That's my job."

Guides also assess the needs of tourists and ensure that they are comfortable in an unfamiliar environment. They put a lot of thought in taking care of their guest's needs and wishes. They narrate the history while walking or sitting on a bench as per the client's preference. They volunteer to take care of the clients' children if required. They ensure that they do not take up more time than the tourists are willing to devote to a particular monument. Some tourists are more interested in clicking pictures while others are more interested in history. Some wish to merely walk around at their own pace. A tour guide assesses what the tourists' preference is and modifies his/her services accordingly.

3.2 Tour Guiding: From the Colonial Era to the Present Day

When India was under colonial rule, there was a British archaeologist who was posted in Fatehpur Sikri by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). There was restoration and excavation work in progress and the children of the labourers who crushed limestone and bricks played around the site. The wife of the British archaeologist decided to establish a school for these children. The labourers working around this school gathered snippets of information about history and culture. Once their project with the ASI was over, these labourers became the tour guides. India acquired independence in 1947 and these labourers acquired certificates that legitimised them as guides. This profession then became an inheritance; if an old guide passed away, his son became employable as a tour guide. These are the monument guides and they can work only in monuments protected by the ASI.



A few years later, the ASI set up an institution in Gwalior to train tour guides. It hoped that graduates and post-graduates in history and related fields would apply to this institute and gain relevant skills such as speaking different languages. The monument guides did not take this well. Sohail Hashmi, an author, historian and film-maker said, “The moment that institute was set up, all these guides in all these protected monuments went ballistic. They said we don’t get enough to keep our families alive, now these fellows will come and all of us will starve to death.” This was in the 1950s, when the ASI was the only organisation responsible for training the guides.

In the 1960s, the Ministry of Tourism was formed. A gazetted contract was signed which delegated the powers of training to the Ministry of Tourism. However, it was not until 2007 that a landmark judgement was passed by the Allahabad High court. For the first time, the need to classify the guides was felt.

The tour guides were categorised into three types: regional level tour guides, state level tour guides and, monument guides. The licenses for the regional level tour guides are issued by the Department of Tourism (DoT) in Delhi. They are permitted to work in five to six North Indian states. The state level guides can work within the boundaries of their state only and are granted their license by the State Tourism Department which is the Uttar Pradesh Tourism (UPT) office in this case. The third category consists of monument level guides and stay-order guides. The monument guides are issued their license by the ASI while the stay-order guides are permitted to practice their profession on the basis of a court-order from the High Court. The monument guides and some stay-order guides are the descendants of guides who pleaded to the court to continue working as a guide as it was their only means of livelihood. Stay-order guides can also get the affidavit if they state the reason that they live in the vicinity of the Taj. They are not required to hold any qualifications or be proficient in English.

The boundary between the stay-order guides who are legitimised by a court order from a court of law, the monument guides who acquire a license from the ASI and the unlicensed guides can get blurry. In response to a question about unlicensed guides, Mr. Sanjay Sharma, the president of the Tour Guides Federation of India (TGFI) said, “So, the court, hither and thither, they started giving them stay orders. And they started working in a lot of these monuments. I mean for some reason or the other, I don’t know what kind of grounds they had put/presented, but they were given a kind of a stay-order to work in the protected monuments also. Why I say “also”, because - the regulations are only applied to the ASI monuments; other places you don’t. So that’s where these people started working. And they are the ones whom we refer to as unlicensed or unauthorised persons or touts working as guides.



And the biggest pain is it's this category of people who bring a bad name to tour guides because of the vested interest they have. And that is where the image of tourism is tarnished.”

Other licensed tour guides share the opinion that these unlicensed guides tarnish the image of tour guides and tourism in India. Imran, a DoT guide, presented the commonly held notion of an unlicensed guide, “The guide is probably chewing tobacco. He speaks to foreigners and spits while doing so. He might be chewing *paan*, or he is not well-dressed. He has probably not even shaved, and stinks.” However, the unlicensed guides are present in large numbers at all the monuments. According to Aditya Dev, a journalist working for the Times of India, the number of unlicensed guides is far greater than the number of licensed guides.

The enormous number of the unlicensed guides can be attributed to three major factors. One is related to a high level of unemployment due to the lack of industrial development in and around Agra. Agra was once the seat of the foundry industry and a manufacturing hub of ceramic pots, footwear and bangles. In 1998, the Supreme Court passed a judgement dictating those industries to be closed down to protect the Taj Mahal from pollution. Bajaj automobiles intended to set up a factory in Agra to manufacture two-wheelers, but they ultimately set it up in Mathura in order to prevent pollution around the Taj.

In the 90s, all the factories were shut down and moved away from Agra. While informing us of this, Rajeev Sikarwar said, “...they say that Agra city died with the Mughals. What psychologists say is that people in Agra are suffering a hangover from the Mughal times, but what they don't see is that people are actually suffering from joblessness.” The tourism industry is hence the only major industry in Agra and the people of the city, particularly the unemployed youth, seek their source of livelihood within it. Approaching foreigners and offering to show them around is an attractive avenue for them as Deepak Dan, head of the Uttar Pradesh Tourist Guide Association, explained. He added that it is not difficult to obtain a stay-order from the court and thus they employ themselves.



Fig .5. Young man selling us his souvenirs.

Fig.6. A local vendor trying to sell his souvenirs.

Source: Discover India Program (2017-2018)



While explaining the work of unlicensed guides or touts or *lapkas*, Gopal Verma, a professor of tourism and tourism management and a tour guide, said, “They are unemployed people and if they go to a shop, they won’t get more than 5000 rupees. So, it’s easy to get into guiding since they will get higher income like 20000 rupees or so, while education-wise they are very weak.” There are no educational requirements to get a stay-order or acquire a license from ASI to be a monument guide. They need not be proficient in English either. When asked a question about whether unlicensed guides pose competition to the licensed guides, Sanjay Sharma, a DoT guide, gave a negative response. He said, “Their education level is no match to ours. Because they’re not educated – forget about a graduate-level education, they are not even educated at a high school level. Just because there is an easy method of getting a stay or whatever, and they’re involved with all these officials, it gives them an easy access. Otherwise there’s no comparison. I mean, people among us, they have PhDs – they are scholars. They are ornithologists, botanists, historians, lawyers, and doctors.” Here, he is alluding to the widespread corruption in the tourism industry where touts can continue working as guides because they bribe police officials.

Another factor that contributes to the increase in the number of unlicensed guides is the difficulty in procuring a license. The exams that allow an individual to qualify as a guide are infrequent and irregular. The exams could be conducted once in 10 years or once in 5 years depending on the footfall of tourists- and the footfall has been reducing. The frequency of the exams is decided by the apex body called Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO). Deepak Dan attributes the growing number of unlicensed guides to a demand-supply gap. He explained, “They have only 200 vacant seats. Out of the 200 vacant seats, I would say 60 vacant seats are for North East, maybe 15 again are for South. So, what you have for North India, is maximum as far as tourism is concerned, roughly about 100 - 125 of them... sometimes they are not even, competition is so fierce that people don’t even clear that examination. So, therefore, there is an acute shortage and the government must look at this, must look into this and make it more and more, you call it use friendly I would call it easy, so that the youth can easily come into this and the gap between the supplier and demand can be met.”

Thus, the difficulty in procuring a license and low education levels in a city plagued by unemployment has resulted in a large number of touts and unlicensed guides.

Further, there exists a hierarchy amongst the licensed guides. The DoT guides were the first category of guides to be accorded legitimacy by the government. There were few guides then. However, with the advent of the Internet, the characterization of India as a cheap tourist



destination attracted a large, new wave of tourists. Deepak Dan explained, “So when the influx started, and people started talking about it, there was an acute shortage of trained guides. Trained means trained by the government, given a license by the government so that you can go around... there was an acute shortage and that was the time, the tour operators found it very difficult to cope with it.”

This shortage was met with a sizeable intake of tour guides. According to data from the Uttar Pradesh Tourism office, 390 guides were added in Agra alone between 2003 to 2009. Disgruntlement at the constant and large additions to the workforce of tour guides still exists. Kapil Jain, Chief Officer of Expert Tours and Travels, explained, “Amongst the guides they have [a hierarchy]. They say that I’m a red card holder he’s a yellow card holder...Because the DoT guides think they are superior. The reason is that they were the only ones initially and they still think that the State Tourism Authority does not have any right to produce any more licenses. So, this fight will always be there.” The DoT guides constitute the decision-making body- the TGF (Tour Guide Federation of India). Rajeev Sikarwar, being a DoT guide himself, said, “...the DoT are always on the higher pedestal, because companies in Delhi think that they are higher educated and well behaved. And then they put them on the panel, so they get to work on the panel.” The state-level guides do not have their own umbrella organisation, but they are in the process of forming one, according to Deepak Dan, who is a UPT guide.

3.3 Tour Guiding: The Training Process

The training process to become a tour guide lasts for a duration of a year. Six months are devoted to classroom training while they undergo on-field training for another six months. The classroom training covers a comprehensive assortment of subjects ranging from history, economics, culture to computers and ornithology. The procedure to obtain a license consists of a two-step process. Applicants must first write an examination and then short-listed candidates are invited for an interview. The selected candidates get a license. Foreign languages are not a component of their training. Tour guides learn it from external sources. Anil Sharma, a tour guide who has been working for twenty-five years said, “When we apply to be a tour guide, there is a written exam in which we need to write that I am French language graduate from Alliance France or German language graduate from Max Mueller. So, they know the language then they apply.” However, they are tested on their proficiency in the language. Iqbal, a guide licensed by the Department of Tourism, said, “...if you are an English tour guide then you are tested in English, and if you are a French tour guide, like I am a French tour guide, then there are certain French teachers who ask about your knowledge of French and then your knowledge



of the country. So, they can ask you anything from what you have learned in your courses.” The classroom training also involves interaction with several historians and professors from a range of fields. Monika Sharma gave a positive review of her classroom training: “... During our six months of training, they invited lots of people - lots of historians, lots of senior guides, lots of senior escorts. If we liked them, I asked them to do that again in the training process and they invited the same people again and again for us, so the training was nice.”

Training is primarily conducted in Gwalior and Delhi. Nimit Chowdhary, a professor at Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi, said that the Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (IITTM) in Gwalior was the sole training institution for tour guides, but that the training is now conducted by private institutions and other universities as well.

The incidence of the exams is infrequent and this increases the competition to acquire a license. Pallavi, who completed her training ten years ago, commented on the acquisition of a license being an accomplishment: “At that time it [the examination] used to be conducted once in 10 years and it was a big deal to pass those exams. It is a big deal today as well, but at that time it was an even bigger deal because the exam happened once in ten years.”



Fig. 3. Department of tourism in Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi

Source: Discover India Program (2017-2018)

There are differences in the training programmes and minimum requirements for the Department of Tourism (DoT) guides and the state-level guides. Sanjay Sharma elucidated, “Ours is 18 weeks. Rigorous training program, and then a practical training program. Yeah.



But for the state-level guides, where the area of operation is only a state, it is 6 weeks. For the state guides, the qualification is 10+2 intermediate. For us, it's minimum graduate, with a history background.”

In 2016, the ASI had recommended a policy for a training programme consisting of six weeks of classroom training and three weeks of on-field training. Shahnawaz Khan, an experienced guide of Taj tour guide, informed, “So actually yes, it was controversial. So, some universities, private institutes, are providing and offering this six-month course or one-year course and then you can be a tour guide. But legally it is not possible.” This is because the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) had delegated its power of appointing guides to the Department of Tourism years ago. This policy seeks to abolish all forms of guides and retain only monument guides in the country. According to this policy, all the guides will have to appear for the test after which they would be given licenses according to the monuments they will operate in. The policy has been challenged for review in the Supreme Court. As per Dinesh Kumar, Head of Uttar Pradesh Tourism, the policy is regressive and will push the tourism industry at least twenty years back.

Thus, this is a current issue with regard to the training of tour guides which is unresolved.

3.4 Tour Guiding: Incentives

Anjali, a tour leader at Intrepid Travel- which is the world's largest small-group travel company and has offices in Delhi, said, “Guiding is fun, guiding is passion, guiding is enthusiasm, guiding is knowledge, guiding is love, it is giving what you want and telling stories is guiding.”

Gopal Verma compared his profession to a “walking library”. The privilege of constantly exchanging ideas, cultures and stories is what most tour guides love about their profession. They learn lessons every day on language, inspiration, customs and rituals, and how cultures are different and are similar across continents.

Similarly, Komal from Intrepid Travel shared, “So yesterday, I was in Kochi and I was sitting with people eating biryani. They were eating with a knife and fork and I couldn't eat like that because I don't feel full till I don't eat with my own hands so I started eating with my hands. That's when they came to me and said "Can we learn how to do that?" so I taught them how to eat with their hands...I'm proud of my culture. I'll sit on the floor and I'll eat - that is my level of respect towards my food. Maybe you don't talk while you eat, I love talking while I eat! Why? Because we have a culture of sitting at the table, talking about our day; we cannot be quiet, you know?”



Tour guides also deeply value the opportunity to meet new people every day. It is a profession that does not require them to sit at a desk for 8 hours a day. Instead, they can constantly travel and not be restricted to office timings, spaces and regulations. Sheela (a tour guide in Agra) concurred, “If you're working at an MNC, you have to work for long hours. But here, you have to work for half a day and then the rest of the day is yours to enjoy in any way you want. This is a very flexible job.”

Additionally, tour guides find inspiration and life-lessons all around them in the multitude of people and stories they interact with. Pallavi shared some experiences that taught her resilience and determination. She described a young African girl who had come to visit the Taj Mahal. She was alone there, in a beautiful blue sleeveless dress. It was then that Pallavi noticed her amputated leg and was struck by how people live and enjoy their lives undaunted by obstacles. She also shared her encounter with a seventy-four-year-old woman who was paralytic but had travelled across the world because she was determined to see the Taj in her lifetime. While speaking about another source of inspiration, she said, “But these ladies who really fight to make a stand in this society.... I once took an American spy - she was 68, she came with her granddaughters and her house was uphill. So, she said that for every little thing she has to come downhill and she runs 7-8 miles every day.”

Tour guides notice cultural and linguistic novelties that amuse and intrigue them. For them, those are components of a continuous learning process. Monika Sharma spoke about her middle-class upbringing. She was educated in a Hindi-medium school and she never had the privilege of learning English. However, her profession now allows her to learn English every day. She narrated, “I learnt a phrase yesterday, what was that... "Chop chop chop!" It means “let's go, let's go, let's go!”. So, we keep learning lots of things. English is not our mother tongue, right? We make lots of errors so when you are with them, you learn to correct the errors...’ So, what I do if I'm on the long tours like 12 days, 13 days: I talk to them. And the tourists, they keep teaching me. I had lots of tourists who were English teachers so I asked them "How to pronounce this, how to say this, how to say that?" Tour guides also learn and take on different ways of conducting themselves. Sharma added, “[There is] lots of improvement in your nature, in your dressing sense, in the way you talk, and the way you sit. There are lots of changes that change your whole personality.” Their profession also helps them reshape their ideas about their understanding of Western culture. Kavita, a guide in Agra, spoke of how foreign tourists are perceived to be very liberal- particularly with regard to clothing. However, now she knows that there are people with more conservative mindsets in the West as well.



While tour guides gain information about world events directly from people around the globe, they give insights to the tourists on a myriad of questions. Deepak Dan lists the questions he answers: “...like why are there so many cows on the road? Why do you see pigs? He has multiple questions: why is he putting tilak when they welcome you, why do they sprinkle water, what is the reason?”

They have the opportunity to represent the culture that they belong to and allows them to build friendships around the world. Anil Sharma shared, “You know, I have worked with many tourists and now they have become my friends. Many-a-times, people from the US have become like my family members. And they have invited me to the U.S for their children’s wedding...They [tourists] enjoy, they become friends, they respect our profession, they become like our family members, and it depends on the guide: if you provide them good services, if you are fair to them, if you take personal care, then you become important to them.”

Tour guiding is a lucrative profession. It attracts people across strata of society ranging from ex-servicemen, graduates, professors to *rickshawallahs*. According to Shahnawaz Khan, an experienced tour guide in Agra, over 50,000 tourists visit the Taj Mahal every day during peak season. It allows them to stay in different hotels, try new cuisines and explore new places without additional expenditure, thus making it an especially attractive field for young people. Anuradha Parashar, who started working as a tour guide when she was a mere twenty years of age, narrated an incident when she showed three girls from Germany around Agra from the first time and received a note of appreciation. This motivated her to think of tour guiding as a career path. Apart from wages, there are other perks as well. Deepak Dan said, “...often somebody gives you a gift- maybe a t-shirt. You feel very nice and at the end of the day, you are paid. You are paid let’s say in dollars - you don’t earn one rupee, you earn 65 rupees.” The foreign exchange adds to the economic benefits that this profession has to offer.

Komal summarises the benefits of working as a tour guide when she says, “We travel, we eat, we talk, we tell people about what we know the most. We teach them Hindi and we teach them our culture and we earn. Is there anything better than this?”



3.5. Conclusion

During the course of multiple tours of the Taj, Agra fort and Fatehpur Sikri, as well as in the interviews we drew patterns regarding the roles that the tour guides believe are integral to the performance of their profession. Some of these roles were directly linked to their primary responsibility as a disseminator of information while others such as a protector and promoter of culture stemmed from them linking their identities to the role of “cultural ambassadors”. An analysis of the training process of the tour guides and the prevalent issues regarding it aids our understanding of the way in which it influences their work.

Tour guiding has grown immensely as a profession in the post-independence era and this growth has been aided by a variety of socio-economic and political factors. These factors continue to shape the profession even today. Apart from these factors, the tour guides see several incentives of their profession. While women see the profession as a facilitator of personal liberty, men primarily see it as lucrative. However, all tour guides emphasised its appeal as an opportunity to interact with and learn new ways of life.



CHAPTER 4: TOURISM INDUSTRY IN AGRA

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

“Living in the shadows of the Taj is not easy.”, said Mr. Sikarwar, a tour guide in Agra. While the tourism industry is a major contributor to the economy of Agra (“Agra”, n.d.), it is plagued by multiple issues that define it and consequently shape the lives and the work of the tour guides. The Taj demands a pollution-free circumference, which implies that a lot of industries cannot be set up. The wide-spread struggle to fit into the employment avenues offered by this industry is a major factor that has resulted in the rise of several challenges that the industry and consequently, tour guides face. In this chapter we analyse the intricacies of the commission system, how it has its roots in corruption, and the challenges guides face in terms of poor infrastructure, lack of job security, poor regulation of unlicensed guides, impact of technology, and the seasonal nature of this profession.

4.1 The Commission System

Shamsuddin Khan, a senior DoT guide who has worked with the Presidents of over 48 countries, said that the commission system has turned the job of a tour guide into that of a “bonded labourer”. When he had first started working, the only aim of the tour guide was to please the tourist and ensure that they enjoyed their stay in Agra. However, the tour guide’s main job has changed from taking the tourist around different monuments to preparing them to shop in these emporiums. He said that it is viewed as their responsibility and that the tour guide is blamed if the tourist does not buy anything from the shops. To quote him:

“If the client is not willing to go to that particular shop, we have to take prior permission from the travel agent. What is this? Are we bonded labourers? Why should we obey your orders? Your rules? We have rules imposed by the Department of Tourism and they want clauses there that the guide is not supposed to take any clients to any shop. Then why should we break our own rules made by the Department? They never ask. So, at the moment, the guide has become a bonded labourer. Now we're forced if... suppose I have four assignments from a particular company and the client doesn't want to go to a shop. And if I didn't take them all to particular shop, next day I'm not getting the assignments. What is this? It is a kind of punishment. In the name of shopping you [the tour agencies] are ruining the industry. We are forced to take the tourists to the shops. If I am not taking them, I am not getting the job.”



The commission system essentially involves a business owner paying a small cut of whatever a tourist spends in their shop to the person who brought the tourist there. If the tourist buys anything from these shops, the shopkeeper takes a portion out of the amount the tourist spends and pays the tour guide. Many tour guides in Agra take their tourists to various shops and emporiums after their tours

The aforementioned commission is often referred to as '*chabbi*' by the stakeholders of the industry, as stated by Dr. Nimit Chowdhary, a former professor at Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (IITTM). He went on to explain the origins of the word, which comes from the old commission rate, which was around 26%. Furthermore, the number 26 in Hindi is '*chabbis*': thus, the commission was popularly known as '*chabbi*'. Tour guides simply had to present themselves before the owners of various establishments in order to earn their commissions. The transaction itself constituted the simple handover of commission, without much negotiation or conversation in general. Stakeholders in the tourism industry, ranging from tourists, restaurant owners, and cab drivers are involved in this system. The tourists are taken to multiple shops and hassled by shopkeepers to buy their products. Aditya Dev, a journalist working for the *Times of India*, said that tourists are overcharged in the hotels they stay in, and the restaurants they eat at, due to the commission system. According to Dev, the shopkeepers charge the tourists four to five times the price of the products they are trying to unload on the tourist, and the tour guide can earn as high as 50% of what is spent. In his words, "You know when a foreigner comes up to buy a table—a marble table or something—whose cost was, suppose—around 50 thousand rupees. They're told that it is around 1 lakh or 1.25 lakh rupees,. And in each such bargain there is—a what-you-call-it—a huge commission involved." Several shop owners now directly approach the travel agents in Delhi and offer to connect them to tour guides who essentially work for free, apart from the regular commissions. In exchange, there is an understanding that the tour guide would take the travel agent's guests only to designated shops.

The recent wave of commodification of tourists has been detrimental for the industry, according to Kapil Jain, CEO of Expert Tours & Travels. He stated that the tour guides working with him only picked clients that had high purchasing power. Since they had the ability to choose their assignments through the travel agents, they filtered their clients based on criteria such as their nationality and the hotel in which they were staying at. The tour guides also used terminology like '*taaza*' (fresh), '*pakka*' (ripe) and '*thakka*' (tired) while referring to the tourists, since the duration that the tourist had spent travelling around the country prior to the given tour determined their buying power and hence the tour guide's willingness to choose that particular assignment. When



Shamsuddin Khan was asked if he could help us get a DoT licensed guide for a full day tour of the Taj Mahal, he chuckled and exclaimed that no established tour guide would want to take us for a tour, even if we were able to pay the full fee, because the fee was only a small part of the guide's income. The real money lay in the commissions from shops. The tour guide's license was no longer symbolic of quality training and knowledge. The license was now simply an entry pass into the monuments so that the guide could get access to tourists and take them to shops after brief tours.

Jain had additionally heard of many stories in which tour guides took tourists to the monuments for a short amount of time, and then spent the rest of the time shopping. This is the crucial problem that tour guides have with the commission system – if there is time, the tourist is taken to different shops instead of other monuments in Agra. This is also probably a major reason why a lot of tourists are not aware of the other tourist spots in Agra apart from the Taj. In many cases, this is not the guide's choice, but the choice of the agency that the guide works for, as a lot of these shops have tie-ups with various travel and tourism agencies. Aditya Dev confirmed this as well. The situation has reached an extent where tour guides are not given any additional assignments if they have tourists visiting monuments instead of going shopping. Kapil Jain gave an example of a tour guide he knew called Mr. Tripathi, a senior and well-respected guide in Agra. His clients often said that he was an excellent guide and they would like to hire his services for a second time if they visited the city again. However, his agency did not give him any more assignments as he spent all his time touring with the tourists instead of taking them to shops. He called this the 'shopping mafia' and added that this system makes more people in Agra want to become tour guides, as the potential for profit is huge. In his words, "the commission system has gone so much in our blood that we all need to go on the ventilator, to be very honest. All the blood has to be taken out."

Ultimately, the guide has no other option but to comply or risk losing his job. The guide does not get paid directly - be it commission, the fee or the tip. The priority has shifted from making the tourist's stay in Agra as pleasant as possible to extracting as much money from the tourists as they can. This ruins the reputation of Agra as a tourist destination. To quote Dr. Nimit Chowdhary, a former professor at Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management, "Our tourism slogan is Incredible India but our biggest problem is, in fact, credibility."

They will also not be assigned any more big assignments by tour agencies if their previous customers did not spend enough in shops. They are, naturally, very resentful of this as they are supposed to be full-time tour guides, but do not get enough work in order to sustain themselves.



According to Imran “We (the tour guides) are simply like the farmers. So we have a season. We cultivate, we grow the crop, and then somebody else eats the grain.”



Fig. 7. Yellow triangle highlights the golden triangle of tourism in north India

Source: commons.wikimedia.org

4.2 Corruption

The tourism sector shows immense promise in Agra, especially as it houses one of the wonders of the world. Despite this, the city is ineffectual in keeping up with its neighbouring regions of Delhi and Rajasthan in this domain. The rampant corruption plaguing the industry cuts progress short before it gets the chance to grow. Corrupt officials in all three branches of the government - the legislative, executive and judiciary - prohibit the development of the sector.

Shahnawaz Khan, a DoT guide, revealed that the parking lots present before entering the monuments have contractors that accept bribes from *lapkas*, in exchange for allowing them to operate without licenses. According to Kapil Jain, “[For] the last tender, the contractor paid four crores a year...The contractor is giving the government four crores...From where is it coming? It’s the Shilpgram parking. In the city, Taj Mahal has 3 entrances: Shilpgram parking, western gate parking, and Purani mandi parking. These are the spots for the guides- ‘*Thekas*’, that a set of guides will pay a certain [amount of] money to the respective contractor and now only those guides will be allowed to work from there.”

Abdul, a stay-order guide from Fatehpur Sikri, disclosed that this kind of exploitation occurs at Fatehpur Sikri’s parking lots as well. He said that the BJP-led state government allow guides to have *thekas* in the parking lot to make money (upto three crores). He accused the new



BJP government of supporting this system. He said, “The Minister of Parliament’s son takes this *theka*. He knows the entire system...so he allowed everything as he has police and administration backing him up. If you don't have a license, it is not a problem. Supreme court didn't allow anything [like these illegal activities] before. Now, everything is allowed. He allowed hawkers, illegal people, everything because they give 100 rupees per day for being allowed to work.”

Shahnawaz Khan also accused the police officials of taking bribes from guides with fake IDs in the parking lots. Aditya Dev, a journalist working with the *Times of India*, stated that even if one of these guides are caught and taken to the police station, they are let off easily. Sometimes, they are barred out of Taj but after a few weeks, things go back to normal. Dev said, “They [*lapkas*] harass tourists and they are being harassed by the police because police take, *hafta*. Weekly *hafta* could be a daily thing. They might be charged some 100-200 rupees per day; whoever works at Taj and Agra fort. Only the unlicensed guides pay for the police.”



Fig.8. Shahnawaz Khan proudly showing us his license

Source: Discover India Program (2017-2018)

Anil Sharma, a DoT guide, said, “Approved guides are never harassed by police.” Dharmendra Kumar, a stay-order guide working at Taj Mahal, agreed that the police harassment was directed only towards unlicensed guides. However, Kapil Jain revealed that even licenses



could be bought off. “If you want licences, you can get them within four hours. Do you want to send an application to the court? There are selected lawyers...[who] do only this thing. They only take fees for getting you the guide license. They are in the Allahabad High Court and in the Supreme Court... As soon as you get the status quo, you get the license, you are in the profession for the next seventy years. This is the easiest.” Moreover, he divulged that guides paid three lakh rupees to the government officials as a way to obtain real licenses. He stated that these guides had poor English literacy and profusely lacked training.

Interactions with these professionals uncovered the poor state of affairs. The ease of obtaining licenses eliminates the screening process and allows unskilled tour guides to work at the same level as other skilled guides. Practices such as these reduces the quality of the trade and maligns the profession as a whole. These corrupt exercises could explain why tourism in Agra is not reaching its potential.

4.3 The Advent of Technology

The role of digitization is a contentious issue within the guiding community. Some guides claimed that the advent of the internet made their jobs easier as they were easier to contact. This also popularized Taj Mahal as a ‘symbol of love’ and increased tourist footfall to Agra. Most of the guides we interviewed created social media accounts for themselves online, primarily on platforms like TripAdvisor, which increased their business.

According to most tour guides, audio guides were not available at the Taj Mahal and Agra Fort. However, this came as quite a shock to Dinesh Kumar, head of UP Tourism, who said that the audio guide facility was very much continued. It is thus not correct to say that audio guides are not a success, for their lack of demand could be attributed to the fact that tourists are not aware that they are still being offered. Tour guides really emphasised that audio guides may never replace them on account of their lack of quality human interaction and unidirectional communication. However, few tourists indicated a preference for audio guides when asked about it. They often even refuse to hire a guide because they are discouraged by their tendency to charge too much, exploit foreigners, and chase after them relentlessly. Many of the tourists were seen carrying travel guides and handbooks like the *Lonely Planet*. They claimed that they felt rushed when they explored monuments with tour guides and alternatives like *Lonely Planet* and audio guides (if they had access to them) would allow them to explore the place at their own pace. Since these alternatives are evidently used by multiple tourists,



the significance guides attach to human interaction and two-way communication can be questioned.

Similarly, tour guides seem confident that the internet and other sources of information will not replace the role of a tour guide as a tourist can interact with them and ask all sorts of questions. However, there are some who claim the opposite. Many tour guides fear that with technology slowly taking over every aspect of human life, one day, tour guides, as a community will be rendered obsolete. In Imran's words, "You see we have faced a lot of problems in the last 10 years. Especially digitization and electronics. Everything, for example when they come to India, the tourists especially, they read everything, and they go through everything and then they just prepare their own work before arriving in India. So, they can ask anything, you know."

Further, quite a few tour guides praised the idea of online social media websites like Tripadvisor. Social media has made tour guides more accessible - now, tourists can contact them directly via Facebook pages, LinkedIn Profiles and niche, commercial services like Viator. These social media pages also helped tourist verify the credibility of the tour guide depending on the feedback they received from their past tours. These developments in technology have therefore aided the industry.

4.4 Poor Infrastructure in the City

Another problem faced by the industry is the lack of infrastructure at Agra. Agra has massive potential for tourism, but the poor infrastructure in the city restricts its scope. Imran, a DoT tour guide blamed the government for this problem: "(...) tourism has never been a priority of the government. Nobody talks about it. This is the misery of the city. The city lost its grandeur the moment Shah Jahan moved the capital from Agra." He continued, "Agra is being neglected by every government, no matter which government. It doesn't matter who's in power, no one pays attention." This is another reason for the decreasing influx of foreign tourists over the years. Apart from visiting the monuments in Agra, there is nothing else to see or do. Anuradha Parashar, a tour guide we interviewed, emphasized the point by saying that a tourist only comes to Agra to see the Taj, buy a few trinkets and go back home. Kavita, a DoT tour guide, explains "There's nothing as such that would really motivate the tourist to stay overnight. It's us who have to develop such kind of things, but particularly the people from this particular trade; we have to really come up with certain ideas which would definitely inspire the tourist to stay overnight. They should have some attractions such as highlights for the evening. We don't have anything for the evenings. There are no markets to hang around in the evening either. So that way, what would a tourist do?" She also



claims, along with other guides, that the Government of India does not do enough to promote Agra as a tourist destination. Tourists spend days in places like Delhi or Rajasthan, but hardly a few hours in Agra.

The state government's apathy towards the tourism industry in Agra has caused resentment among the locals. The removal of the Taj Mahal from the U.P Tourism booklet and the lack of investment in Agra has fuelled this even more. A press release released by the department of tourism claims that projects worth Rs. 156 crores is in the tracks for Taj Mahal and the surrounding areas- however, these projects were approved by the previous government.

Imran also mentioned that there are not enough steps taken to ensure that a tourist has a comfortable visit to the Taj. Agra, even in the winter months, is extremely hot. According to him, "... the guests who come from the western part of the world are used to lower temperatures so even with 25 degrees they start sweating - so that's a big problem for them. So they have to wait 15-20 minutes and the distance till the monument is more than a kilometre. And within the monument also you have to walk and there is no shade. There is no dispenser where you could purchase packaged water. People faint there. At least there should be a temporary air-conditioned shade where people who faint can be taken for a while, where they can take rest and can then continue the tour. There is not a single facility like that. So visiting the Taj Mahal is like going to war."

The biggest complaint with regard to the infrastructure is the difficulty in travelling to Agra from other places. There is an airport in Agra, but there are very few flights that actually come to Agra. Tourists from faraway places have to take a flight to Delhi and then take a train to Agra, which is a shame since Agra houses some of the most famous monuments in India. Agra should not be reduced to a tourism hub- it is a two-tiered city with a large population as well. Developing infrastructure should not be seen as a luxury to appease the foreign tourists visiting the city, but as a basic necessity to the 1.5 million residents living in the city. Many tour guides pointed this out as a reason for the decrease in the number of tourists visiting Agra.

The government did construct the Yamuna Expressway, which made travelling by road to Agra from places like Delhi much more convenient. However, this made it easier for tourists to head home after only a few hours of visiting the Taj. The six-lane concrete expressway reduced the travelling time between the two cities from a minimum of five hours to a total of two hours. Due to the lack of a functional international airport in Agra, tourists are often left with no other alternative but to stay in Delhi and make Agra a day trip. Thus, if the goal of the tour agents and guides is to maximise the amount of time and money tourists spend in the city, the construction of the Yamuna Expressway has taken the industry further away from its objective.



Kapil Jain claimed that a project to improve the airport has been underway for ages, but would probably never be put into effect. Dinesh Kumar, head of UPT in Agra, confirmed that there would not be an improvement in the air connectivity in Agra. He blamed the central government for its ineffectiveness; an international airport in the city would increase connectivity, and more importantly, improve the morale of many stakeholders.

Another reason for Agra having bad air connectivity is because of the influential travel agent lobbies in Delhi and Jaipur. These agencies want to manipulate the tourist's schedule in such a way that they spend most of their time in Delhi and Jaipur - and in consequence, very little time in Agra. If Agra had better air connectivity, these lobbies would be significantly challenged.



Fig. 9. ASI sign board

Source: Discover India Program (2017-2018)

The difficulty in getting to Agra aerially, combined with the lack of infrastructure in the city, gives it a bad reputation. Many tour guides agreed that if the government prioritized tourism in Uttar Pradesh and promoted Agra better, there would be an increase in the influx of international tourists. If the city's infrastructure was improved and other entertainment options were added, then tourists would be more likely to spend a longer time in Agra. However, we received contradicting claims from Government officials. Dinesh Kumar head of UPT, Agra, claimed that the following projects were underway:

- ❖ Fitting lights near the East Gate of the Taj, building toilets and installing CCTV cameras.
- ❖ Clearing all the peddlers from the road leading to the Taj to make it more spacious.
- ❖ Developing a 'Mughal Museum' to incentivize tourists to spend more time in Agra and to promote the other monuments in the city.
- ❖ Improve the parking space in Agra and expand it so that it can fit 500 cars instead of 200.



- ❖ Establishing a walkway between Agra Fort and Taj Mahal, with funding from the World Bank. This walkway would make commute easier for tourists and would help them avoid shopkeepers and auto drivers.
- ❖ Developing Riverfront property at Yamuna River.
- ❖ Improving flight connectivity in Agra for certain nearby cities such as Lucknow, Varanasi and Allahabad.

Some of these projects have already been executed- and most are showing positive results. For instance, the improved lighting near the East gate entrance of Taj mahal has boosted tourist footfall in the evening time. This has enabled tourists to lounge around the Taj longer after sundown, which was unsafe earlier due to the dark and dingy roads. With the proposed improvements being put into effect by the local government, the infrastructure in Agra will improve, and hopefully tourists will spend more than one night in the city. However, unless air - connectivity is established , travel to and from Agra will be difficult for tourists, which will disincentivize them from spending time in Agra.

4.5 Unlicensed guides and *Lapk*s

There is an overwhelming presence of unlicensed tour guides, hawkers and street vendors in Agra and Fatehpur Sikri. The locals in Agra often refer to them as *lapkas*, which is a colloquial term used to describe touts in a derogatory manner. These unlicensed guides and hawkers stand outside the Taj and offer their services to the tourists. Because there are so many of them, the tourists often find themselves swarmed with people repeatedly asking them if they would like a tour around the Taj or buy their wares. The licensed guides claim that the *lapkas* are dishonest and unprincipled. The unlicensed tour guides take the tourists to the local emporiums and force them to buy paraphernalia and frequently overcharge the tourists and ask for a bigger tip or fee. Many guides complained that there is no regulation of these *lapkas* and that their actions have tarnished the reputation of tour guides in Agra.



Fig. 10. Tourist receiving a souvenir



Fig. 11. Vendor trying to convince a tourist to purchase



4.5.1 Types of Unlicensed Tour Guides

Unlicensed tour guides are those guides who have not been issued any license of practice from any official tourism body. These guides operate despite the fact that operating in these circumstances is against the law. Shahnawaz Khan and several others mentioned that they do this either by carrying forged licenses or by getting a stay order from the government. In Shahnawaz Khan's words:

“They have a stay order. They have a court order and they are telling that they are living in the vicinity of the Taj Mahal and they want to do this job. So they have the court order- and hence they are doing this job.”

Many unlicensed guides have demanded that they be allowed to continue working as tour guides on the grounds that their ancestors had been working as tour guides for generations, and this was their only source of income. In reaction to this, the court has given stay orders to several of these guides, thus allowing them to legally continue their practice. Some others, however, resort to forging licenses in order to appear legitimate. These guides break the law in order to continue operating.

4.5.2 Contrasting perspectives

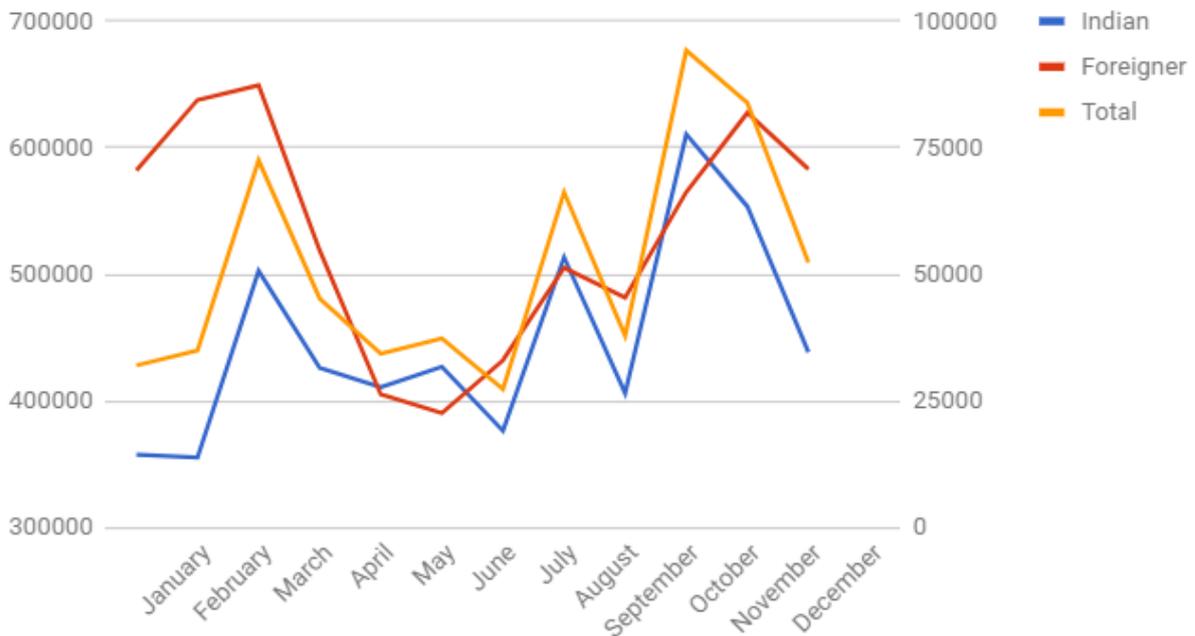
Both Shamsuddin Khan and Shahnawaz Khan said that unlicensed tour guides, as opposed to licensed guides, charge whatever amount that they want from the tourists. The unlicensed guides can charge high fees from the tourists and take advantage of them, or charge heavily discounted fees and take away customers from the licensed guides, who have a fixed rate which is regulated by the government. Tour agencies sometimes hire unlicensed guides over licensed guides, since they don't have to pay the unlicensed guides as much.

Contrastingly, not all licensed tour guides shared the opinion that unlicensed tour guides are harmful to the industry. Anuradha Parashar, a tour guide with a UPT license was supportive of the presence of unlicensed guides, having been one herself in the beginning. She says that it was okay for unlicensed guides to operate as, at the end of the day, they want to earn money to sustain themselves, in an economy tormented by unemployment.



4.5.3 Seasonality

Seasonality Among Tourists, Indian vs Foreign- 2014



Graph.1 - Seasonality in tourist arrivals

Tour guides, as has been established, do not have the most secure job. Skilled as they may be with their knowledge and ability to entertain an audience, the number of tourists they receive depends heavily on factors that are, most often, beyond their control. It has already been mentioned that the social, economic and political factors are major factors determining influx of tourists per annum. Tour guides are thus vulnerable to these forces, and their livelihoods always seem to be accompanied with uncertainty.

In addition to this uncertainty, however, is the added burden of having a six month long 'off-season', during which, as most tour guides claim, tourism is at a more or less consistent low. This spell of borderline unemployment extends from April till October, despite them being 'full-time guides'. Tour guides claim that this severely hampers the likelihood of obtaining any potential clients and, thus, any prospects of earning in that time period. This seasonal nature of their job is why tour guides are particularly outraged about the lack of security that comes with their profession, leaving them dependent on nothing but hope for the influx of tourists to miraculously increase.



Most unlicensed guides have the option of retreating to a temporary alternative job for the time being. However, we discovered during a focus group discussion with guides from MAK Quick Solutions, that the government prohibits licensed guides from taking up another job. Disobeying this law puts their license at stake. Muzallim, an employee of the tour agency, said, “That’s like an unemployment situation for us.” These dry spells may not be as bad for all tour guides, especially well-established ones like Deepak Dan, who enjoys the position of head of the State Department of Tourism, and claims that he uses this free time to relax and write a novel. However, most guides are not so fortunate and cannot afford to have a six-month drought in their professional life. Imran from MAK Quick Solutions said, “We are simply like farmers. So, we have a season. We cultivate, we grow the crop, and then somebody else eats the harvest. And then we wonder, “Oh! Where is our grain?” It simply happens.”

The listlessness of tour guides between the months of April and October was also expressed by Pallavi, who, when asked how she spent her time during off-season, said, “We do household work, we gain weight. We work for only six months, and we earn. Are you familiar with that cartoon about the squirrel who saves nuts in the barks of trees and uses them during snowfall? We [tour guides] are all like that! Since we do not have a regular income, we save whatever we earn and on our rainy days, we use that slowly.” All of these statements demonstrate the disappointment guides find themselves consumed by.

Interestingly, the government official at the UP Tourism Department had contradicting information to offer. Dinesh Kumar, the head of the office claimed that there is no ‘off-season’ as such. He supported this argument by showing the team official statistics of monthly influx of tourists. This table distinguished between foreign and Indian tourists. The months that were considered ‘off-season’ had an almost negligible decrease in overall tourist visits. Thus, one cannot conclude that off-season is indeed due to less tourism in Agra.

4.6 Policy Measures

Dinesh Kumar, the head of UP Tourism in Agra, stated that measures had been taken against the *lapkas* and that they were not protected either by the police or by the government. According to him, unlicensed tour guides were often forcibly removed from these sites by the police and fined to prevent them from working near the monuments. In addition, some unlicensed guides were even jailed. There were cases filed against them and as a result, the number of fake licenses in circulation have gone down.



Many recent government policies attracted negative responses from the tour guiding community. The ASI has suggested measures to abolish different types of tour guides in the country. This policy aims to convert all the operating tour guides in Agra into monument guides. These guides will now operate in the 3687 ancient monuments and archaeological sites which are under the guidance of the ASI. Each tour guide will be able to operate in a maximum of 15 monuments or 5 groups of monuments as mandated by the ASI. This policy is currently under review at the High Courts of Allahabad and Delhi.

The Government's antagonistic attitude about the Taj Mahal and the history surrounding it has been unfortunate for the tour guides. The Taj Mahal was not included in the recent U.P tourism handbook issued by the Chief Minister. Many tour guides feel that this was an unfair move as they still tax the Taj and the tour guides. However, most of the guides do not feel that this will influence the number of tourists visiting the Taj Mahal. In Shamsuddin Khan's words,

“Our Chief Minister just removed the Taj Mahal from the tourism booklet. What does it mean? What does it mean? Taj Mahal is the gateway to the Indian tourism. Hundreds of thousands books written about the Taj Mahal. But what happened? what changed today? If Taj is so bad, why are you taking the money from the Taj Mahal? It's one thousand rupees ticket of the Taj and 50% of that money is going to the stomach of the state. If Taj is so dirty why are you taking that money? Stop taking money, if you really want to do something. You're not selling the Taj, the Taj sells itself because every tourist has a dream to visit Agra.”

Another policy measure which affected the tourism industry in Agra was demonetisation or '*note-bandhi*', as it is colloquially known. This refers to the prohibition of the usage and circulation of 500 and 1000 rupee notes by the government on the eve on November 8th, 2016. The tourism industry is largely cash based. Although money could be changed at banks, the massive queues made it extremely inconvenient for tourists, both foreign and domestic, who were now trapped in an unfamiliar place, leaving left them in a lurch.

While most tour guides claimed that demonetization negatively impacted their job, the government officials claimed that the transition from old currency to the new was a smooth one. Dinesh Kumar claimed that multiple counters were opened at banks and ATMs enabled easy transactions through plastic money. One of the tour guides even said that the new policy served to be beneficial for him because the tourists were willing to get rid of old money and insisted on spending more.



Over time, the emphasis of the industry has shifted from maximising tourist satisfaction to maximising profits and commissions. There are many problems haunting the city- ranging from bad infrastructure to the corrupt government officials. The challenges facing the industry are many, but the future of the industry looks bright, with proposed policy changes which could positively impact the city and its tourism industry.



CHAPTER 5

WOMEN TOUR GUIDES IN A MALE-DOMINATED INDUSTRY

Traditional associations between gender and occupation persist in modern day Agra. For instance, in the hospitality industry, bartending is seen as a man's job while housekeeping is seen as a woman's job. Likewise, tour guiding is seen as a man's profession. Anuradha Parashar, an Uttar Pradesh Tourism (UPT) tour guide working in Agra claimed that often, if a man is seen cooking in the kitchen, he is asked about the whereabouts of his wife. This only goes to show how unfathomable it is for the people to have a woman outside the confines of her house and for a man to be within it.

According to Aditya Dev, a journalist from the Times of India, women are not comfortable travelling in big groups, and this is why there are fewer women tour guides in Agra. He estimated that out of the 2500 tour guides among the Department of Tourism guides in Agra, only 15 are female. On a similar note, there are 15 female tour guides among the 600 UPT tour guides. According to the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), there are 66 female tour guides (out of 1200) in the North, 31 female tour guides (out of 90) in the south, 23 female tour guides (out of 60) in the east, and one female tour guide out of 60 in the west. ^[1]

5.1. A Gendered Profession

Women working as guides face a wide array of challenges from the time they choose to take their first steps into the industry. The obstacles they face are a result of the biases surrounding the work of a tour guide as well as the discrimination faced by a working woman in India. A distorted image of the female guide thus created tends to manifest itself in the form of comments and judgements made by the old and the young, men and women alike.

The constraints of patriarchy make it difficult for women to enter the profession of guiding in Agra. Usually, places with a large tourist footfall tend to be more progressive and cosmopolitan in nature. The more developed it is, the more progressive are the attitudes towards working women. However, this is not the case with Agra, a city yet to become modern and progressive in its attitude towards working women. Women tour guides face a plethora of challenges as they attempt to enter a profession traditionally dominated by men. According to Anuradha Parashar, men feel threatened by women breaking the status quo by entering the profession. They feel that a profession previously reserved just for them now has to be shared with women. Men tour guides often tend to assume that women get assignments only by virtue of their gender, completely disregarding her skills, personal qualities, professional abilities and work ethic.



Fig. 12. Female tour guide (first from the right) conducting a tour.

Source: Discover India Program (2017-2018)

Most dimensions of the profession are associated with things men are ‘supposed’ to and allowed to do and women aren’t- like moving around freely at night, interacting with foreigners, etc. These activities, when done by a woman stand out like a sore thumb in a small, conservative town like Agra. The stigma associated with these few women doing their job in a territory monopolised by men presents itself as a challenge for working women.

Increasing competition among tour guides have made work harder for female tour guides. Agra is the only city in the world with three heritage sites, but tourists only visit the city for one day. Larger number of tour guides, both male and female means that there are lesser jobs available for each person. This has created a hostile environment for female tour guides to work in.

5.2.Role of family

When a woman decides to pursue her career as a tour guide, she often faces questions about her ability to fulfil her traditional duty as a wife, mother and daughter in law. Most families expect women to prioritize housework over everything else and this expectation comes in the way of professional work. In interviews, women tour guides discussed the challenges of balancing familial responsibilities along with professional duties.



Some women believed their profession was complementary to their traditional role as homemaker and caregiver. Since their agencies inform them about their schedules beforehand, they plan the time they can spend with their families. They do not see women's assigned role as the only caretaker of the family to be unjust, but rather see it as a 'second job'.

Many successful women tour guides remarked that they had been able to work in this profession because of the help and support they received from their husbands. Monika Sharma, a guide working in Agra commented that she finds it easy to balance her work and her personal life because her husband is a tour guide as well. There are many parents and husbands who were apprehensive at first, and then went on to support their female relative to a large extent. Anuradha Parashar, a UPT guide discusses the support she has received from her mother, "Having a career is difficult in that way because when you're married and have kids – you want to make sure they're going to school and when you're staying with your in-laws – that support is somewhere lacking. My mom, she's always there to take care – so in that way, [in the absence of support from the family] for many girls it's a big challenge. Today I was at the hotel at 5:30 [am], which means I had to get up at 4:30 [am] – if you don't have help, how will you manage to send your child to school?"

At the initial stages of their career, most women tour guides deal with strong resistance. Many parents prefer their daughters to be teachers, doctors or engineers- almost no one hopes that their daughters will grow up to be tour guides. There are several reasons behind this perception. Firstly, guiding is neither a stay-at-home profession, nor is it something which has fixed timings or destinations. Secondly, a tour guide's schedule is challenging and uncertain. On many days, she has to begin work at 5 am to go on a sunrise tour of the Taj. On other days, she will have to work till late at night, after ensuring that her guests are back in their hotels. The absence of a 9-5 work schedule prevents a woman from performing her 'womanly' duties- like serving breakfast to her husband and children and cleaning up after the in-laws early in the morning. In fact, even after the woman tour guides enter this profession, they are still expected to carry on with their duties at home.

Single women in the profession who wish to get married face difficulties in finding a groom. Pallavi explains that there are many factors that cause this. The first problem comes with the respect and stature associated with the profession. Most tour guides don't have an MBA or a degree in engineering or banking, and this makes them look undesirable in the marriage market. Secondly, irregular timings are an inseparable part of the profession. The inability of a woman tour guide to provide their husbands with 'regular breakfast, lunch or



dinner on time' and her reduced capability to look after the house becomes a problem. Finally, the unwillingness of the female tour guide to leave her career in order to look after the family is not appreciated- and hence they find it difficult to find a life partner. As Pallavi puts it, "Indian men aren't very comfortable with an intelligent wife, but they love to work with an intelligent woman."

Pallavi explained the factors responsible for the regressive attitudes towards working women in north India. She explained how the advent of Islam led to women adopting the *ghunghat* (veil) in northern India. The culture of veiling implied that women were supposed to remain indoors. However, she believes that with inflation and prices shooting up, working women stop being a symbol of progressive thinking and start becoming an inevitability to afford smartphones, convent schools and the interior-decorated houses.

However, women often need to 'convince' their family members about the importance of entering the profession. The onus is on the women to prove to their families as to why they are working and how they are doing it, unlike their male counterparts. There is often an ideal of the '*adarsh bahu*' which the woman is supposed to meet, and this ideal comes between her relationship and her career. According to Monika Sharma, many families are worried about the effect that the 'cigarette-smoking, gin-drinking foreigner' might have on the 'virtuous daughter.' "[The] Guide goes away with a group of unknown people. For 4-5-6 days, who will allow?" says Nimit Chowdhary, a professor at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, when asked about the small number of female tour guides in Agra. The idea of a female guide accompanying strange foreign men to faraway places is an uncomfortable concept for many people. This shows that for female tour guides, their profession is based on getting permissions from their families, but for male guides, it is based on their capabilities.

5.3.Safety and reputation

Agra is a small conservative city in the state with one of the highest crime rates, especially with regard to crimes against women ^[2]. An article in the Hindustan Times lists several crimes against foreign female tourists that have increased in Agra, including instances of snatching, cheating, and molestation. The 2007 gangrape of two Japanese tourists which took place in September led to the introduction of a special police station dedicated solely to tourists and tourist related issues. The situation, however, appears not to have improved as is evident by the most recent case of a Russian woman being shot to death on the Kamayani Express train lying on the Agra-Jhansi stretch (Indo Asian News Service, 2008).



Similarly, an article by the Telegraph states that eve teasing is a frequently practiced form of sexual harassment, making circumstances unsafe for both local and foreign women (Nelson, 2013).

Crimes against women are extremely rampant in India. For instance, it is estimated that a woman gets raped every 15 minutes in India. The Nirbhaya Rape case in Delhi had many implications on the tourism industry and the livelihood of tour guides in Agra (“Crime Against Women”, n.d.). This was mainly because of two reasons, one, because of its geographical proximity to Delhi, and two, the significant impact it had on reducing the number of tourists who come to India.

Safety is the largest constraint female guides face in their line of work, according to Sohail Hashmi, a historian associated with Delhi Heritage Walks. He says, “there are fairly good chances that the guide herself will be molested by the kind of people who go to see Khajuraho. But even in other places, whether you go to Agra or you go to Lucknow or Jodhpur, Jaipur or Gwalior, you don’t find women female guides because it is unsafe.” This raises the apparent issues regarding women’s safety in Agra. “Girls are not safe here. This is UP.”, says Dharmendra, a stay order guide working at the Taj Mahal. The implicit or open threat of violence is especially a concern in the tour guiding profession because it involves uncertain timings.

Many enthusiastic tourists wish to go on a sunrise tour of the Taj. On such tours, the female guide may need to step out of her house alone as early as 4am while it is still dark. Working at such odd hours not only makes the female guide vulnerable to physical threat, but also seems to invite plenty of questions about her moral character.

Working odd hours with no certainty as to when she will return is seen as a reflection of the tour guide’s poor sense of responsibility towards her family. It is especially a violation of the norm wherein the woman is expected to, without fail, serve meals for the husband. Her absence seems to tarnish her reputation amongst members of the family and peers alike, as well as raises doubts regarding her wifely and motherly abilities. A lot of them are forced to choose between marriage and their job, having many female guides opt out of their profession after marriage as a result. Anuradha Parashar says, “The timings are not certain – it’s really unstable. Sometimes you do longer days. Sometimes you go to Fatehpur Sikri, come back late – nothing is certain. That’s one challenge girls always face. One old lady who lives in the neighbourhood always talks – where do you get up and go so early in the morning? – they don’t understand what the hell I’m doing! – getting up early and reaching a hotel – so they feel that this is not for girls. A girl can be a teacher, a doctor, an engineer. I realized that even my friends are



surprised – how do you get this work? There are so many questions about how I know them [the tourists].”

Female tour guides face a lot of difficulty and prejudice as they commute around the city. They are often not taken seriously by rickshaw drivers and small vendors by the virtue of their gender, their profession and its intersection. Intrepid, an Australian based travel company operating in Delhi has come up with an innovative solution- they hire female drivers. Not only does this make the female tour guide and the tourist feel safer, this also fights sexist stereotypes associated with women not being able to drive.

Locals are usually curious as to when a tour guide is getting married, when she is having children and why she hasn't retired yet. Everyone expects her to leave her job and fulfil the conventional role of a housewife. This degree of questioning is rarely faced by a male tour guide. This is because in places like Agra, a woman's primary and sometimes only job, is seen as taking care of the family.

Stemming from the same mindset arises the problem with female guides sharing accommodation with her tour group. When helping her group settle into a hotel or hostel and choosing to stay in the same accommodation as them, she is believed to be offering 'other services' ^[3] as well. Anuradha adds, "One day a friend's husband called me and said, "You go up to the hotel lobby, who knows, you might be going to their rooms as well. You will corrupt my wife also." So, their mentality is that. So, this is what makes a difference actually. Their mindset is such. "You went up to the hotel, how much time will it take to get to the room?" So, they look at you from top to bottom." Her familiarity and proximity with tourists seem to raise questions regarding how she knows so many strangers, especially if her tour group mainly comprises foreign men. The female guide is constantly under scrutiny and at the receiving end of snide comments from peers who claim to be progressive in their thinking. Several female guides have emphasized the need for a change in the mindset of the people.

Tour guides interact with many foreigners during the course of their profession. There is a fear among families of women becoming more 'westernized' because they interact with many tourists from the West (Gandhi, 2002). Constant and prolonged interactions with foreigners are often equated to losing one's native cultural identity. There is a sense of shame with being westernized- especially for women. This is because the 'westernization' process is often associated with some degree of sexual promiscuity. This is also observable in how the average Indian man treats the female white tourist. Every interaction is seen as a prospect for sexual favours, according to several tour guides we interviewed. The fear of their own women-



be it wives, sisters or daughters placed in this situation motivates them to stop their female relatives from entering this profession.

Another common grievance stated by the female tour guides is that the average Indian's perception of pregnancy tends to render the woman as sick and incapable of carrying out duties. From the moment of conception to the time her child is no longer an infant, women are expected to let go of their professional duties and stop working, lest it should prove to be 'detrimental to their health'. The harsh weather and prolonged hours spent walking long distances at and around monuments are special concerns people hold for a pregnant tour guide. If they resume their work, they are often termed 'bad mothers' and, consequently, 'bad women', because they are believed to have put their child's life and health at risk. Should they make their work a priority, they are considered materialistic. Along the same lines, the guides also spoke about how no provisions are made for pregnant female guides, as compared to other workplaces such as banks, offices and even schools, which provide maternity leaves for their female workers. This leads to many female tour guides leaving their careers post-pregnancy.

5.4.Relationship with male tour guides

The stakeholders treat female tour guides differently from the male tour guides. The incapability of the female tour guide to do her job properly is often assumed, although wrongly. Anjali, a tour leader from Intrepid travel, recalls instances in which the battery car drivers ignored her tour group, even though they were on luxury packages because she was a woman. They are often faced with hostilities from shopkeepers. There have been instances when angry shopkeepers have bad mouthed about the tour guide to the client if they refused to accept commission, by yelling profanities in multiple languages.

Some male tour guides believe that the reason there aren't as many female guides in Agra is because women lack stamina. According to Pradeep Sharma , a DoT guide, "The ladies can wake up early. The trouble is that you have to deal with crowds. And you have stand on the road the whole day at Fatehpur Sikri for the bus and when the bus comes from Jaipur towards Agra you are still standing in the bus and there is so much crowd in the bus". Another accusation made towards female tour guides is how they leave their professions after they get their licenses. According to them, many women tour guides get married, or they move on to more stable professions, like teaching. Interestingly, there were many male tour guides who suggested that tour guiding is not appropriate for women because of the cut-throat competition in the profession. The lack of job security and the long hours spent under the hot Agra sun are



discouraging factors which stop women from entering the field, according to many male tour guides.

Sanjay Sharma compares the female tour guides in the Western region to the female tour guides in Agra. He says, "...the profile of some of those women guides in Mumbai: the grace, the elegance, the knowledge that they have is just impeccable. One of our presidents over there, Uma Goyal ji, was the wife of the Mumbai Income Tax Commissioner. There are people who are working officers in Nehru's forces, their wives are doing this as a hobby." Tour guiding has never been described as a hobby for any of the male tour guides.

Female tour guides often face "Mansplaining".^[4] While explaining something to tourists, men would come and try and talk over them, even if they have no knowledge about the subject. The point of this interaction is to embarrass the woman and show the foreign tourists that they know better. This sometimes results in the tourist losing trust or respect for the female guide.

According to Abhijeet, a monument guide at Agra Fort, women face a multitude of challenges after starting a family. He said that leading trips in particular is something a woman tour guide with a family won't be able to do. Travelling to another city with a large group of foreigners is looked down upon. However, a man's ability to lead a trip even after starting a family has not been questioned. There is no difference in the duties of a male trip leader and a female trip leader, but only the female guide has been considered handicapped after she is married.

5.5. Empowering profession

Tour guiding has become emblematic of a woman's independence. At least in the South Asian context, women are almost always accompanied by men while travelling. The fact that a woman tour guide is taking care of an entire group of people, some of them foreign, gives her a liberated air of self-sufficiency.

The identity and role of a female tour guide in Agra is closely tied to her gender. When there is a requirement for a tour guide, companies usually assign the job to a male tour guide. Female tour guides get preference only when there is a specific requirement for a female regardless of their aptitude. However, the female tour guide is rarely seen as a simple disseminator of information, but an entryway into the much unexplored lives of mothers, daughters and wives in South Asia. Tourists often want to learn about much more than the buildings they are visiting- they want to learn about the food, culture, arranged marriages etc. and women are better equipped at answering these questions compared to men at most times. Komal, a tour leader with Intrepid Travels, said, "You don't need to change for them, because



they are here to learn new things.” There is also an interesting element of cultural exchange that takes place. For example, the British tourist often teaches the tour guide about tea timings and etiquette while the tour guide can teach them about eating biryani with their hands.

The female tour guides themselves see multiple benefits of working as tour guides. There are several opportunities that present themselves to the female tour guides which they would otherwise have been deprived of in a context as conservative as Agra. It allows them to interact with people across continents and cultures and to learn every day. Kavita, a female tour guide in Agra, says that tour guiding has helped her learn things which she never would have if not for her job. If she doesn't have an answer to something her guest asked, she could simply search the question on google and answer that. This not only answers the question, but helps her career as well. Learning new things is definitely a perk of being a tour guide.

Many-a times, when foreign tourists arrive at Agra, they prefer to listen to a female tour guide because they've been listening to men throughout their time in India. The female tour guides often spoke about how females were better suited for the profession because they are sometimes instinctually equipped to handle the responsibilities better than the males. Even when it comes to “*Atithi Devo Bhava*”, it is the women of the house of cook, clean and serve food for the guest. This is even more evident when it comes to taking care of the elderly or children. Women are much better equipped at assisting them put on shoe covers or helping them climb stairs as opposed to men. This often goes unnoticed because, as a society, most people assume that it is a woman's duty to hospitable, while it is a man's choice.

Men are often raised to come home after work and have water and food served to them. If they cook or help around the house, they are asked about the whereabouts of their wives. On the other hand, girls are taught to be considerate and resourceful. They are asked and often taught, to give up- be it toys, food or freedom. They receive the short end of the stick when it comes to household duties, and this starts from a very young age. Daughters help around the house more than the sons- and as these sons grow up, they do so with a sense of entitlement. They feel as if they are above helping people putting shoe covers on. As a result, many clients, especially families, actually prefer women over men. Komal says “Because a male cannot explain to you a wedding in the way that women do. See, they get emotional with you. They cry with you, they laugh with you, they feel with you. So, when I tell my passengers, that I'm not getting into an arranged marriage, they laugh, that say that you're crazy, you're changing things over here. So, this is how it is. They need to see the new world, the new India. Now I can take them to see a village, and we do show them the village to see the cultural India. But now, we make them see the young part of India and we can help them see that through female



guides. And that's why we are bringing in new female guides. So, that people could understand what difference it makes for a female. A girl can be a storyteller; she can make you experience different things. We teach them how to say no how to say yes and how to do different things. The best part of guiding is that you can show India through your eyes". It allows them to understand a woman's take on subjects ranging from the institution of arranged marriages to clothing and relationships. The concept of arranged marriages in particular fascinates foreign tourists and they feel more comfortable asking women more personal questions.

5.6. Conclusion

Financial independence is often the first step for women to negotiate a higher amount of personal freedom and liberty. By earning money, women can often get a higher bargaining power to get married much later. As Agra develops, the chances of female emancipation also increase. As of now, Agra cannot be compared to larger cities like Mumbai, Delhi or Bangalore because of their incomparable population, infrastructure, economy and education levels. As a result, women's sexuality is monitored, at rates much higher than at a bigger city like Mumbai. The latter finds it acceptable in its culture for a woman to leave her house post-midnight. On the other hand, it is rare for a woman in Agra to do the same after 8pm. Correspondingly, the limits to a woman's liberty are much wider in these cities, compared to Agra. A simple example to illustrate this point would be the culturally imposed 'curfews' on women. In Mumbai, it is common for women to stay out after 11 PM. Compare this to Agra, when women are supposed to be home by 8PM. The difference of 3 hours is indicative of a much larger cultural gulf between the two cities.

They also believe that they are breaking stereotypes by choosing this profession. It gives them the liberty to eat, talk and travel with different people. It lets them travel 'alone', that is, without a male family member and this is liberating by virtue of the rarity of this act in their context. They are making a statement through this. For them, it is an act of rebellion.



CHAPTER 6:

NARRATING FACTS AND LEGENDS OF AGRA AND FATEHPUR SIKRI

Through the interviews and observations collected on field, it was revealed that tour guides often modify the narrative about a monument based on their interpretation of the story, or the kind of tourists they have to show around. This chapter dwells upon the various reasons for these deviances to occur, with special emphasis on the narratives surrounding the Taj Mahal and Fatehpur Sikri. It also discusses the performance aspect of the tour guide's job, wherein he/she must ensure constant entertainment for the tourists by adopting certain techniques of narration. This has been illustrated with voices of both tour guides and academics.

6.1. Multiple versions of history

Often, the nationality of the tourists shapes the narrative being told to them by tour guides. Interacting with foreign tourists and engaging with their culture helps the tour guides learn the differences between different customs. For instance, a guide can talk extensively about how the British plundered immense amounts of gold from the Agra Fort, or how they 'stole' the Kohinoor. However, the same cannot be said to British tourists. They will most likely receive a more diluted version of it, one that does not risk them feeling attacked. One such example of slight tailoring of the facts can be seen in the form of omission. According to an interview with an experienced tour guide named Rajeev Sikarwar, there is a considerable number of guides who will hesitate to mention, with British tour groups especially, that the brass pinnacle of the Taj Mahal was originally made of gold. They might simply propagate the narrative that the pinnacle was made of brass ever since its construction, or leave it out from their speech altogether. This is to avoid the inevitable question about why the pinnacle is now comprised completely of brass, to which the answer is that the gold was stolen by a British officer in the early 1800s.

In order to create and maintain a good rapport with the tourists, it becomes essential for the tour guide to tone down or alter certain kind of information. Tour guides use certain techniques of filtering their information if they still wish to convey all the facts. For instance, they might replace a word like "stole" and replace it with an alternative word such as "captured" if they are interacting with a British tourist.

Religion is a sensitive topic for many people in the country, and the tour guide must be careful about the religious sentiments of tourists in a city like Agra. Some tour guides like to portray the Taj Mahal as an Islamic monument while others downplay the religious aspect of it. As Rajeev Sikarwar explained, "I don't say that [Taj is an Islamic monument]."



I say, Taj Mahal is an Indian building, a Mughal building. Suppose, a person comes from Arabia, I need to hide some things. Mughals were quite liberal in their approach initially. So, at Agra fort, you see the parakeets on the wall, the parrots, elephant trunks, ducks as well ...this is idolatry in Islam. Now if you tell these things to them, they don't like it." The liberal attitudes of Mughal rulers were evident in the architecture which incorporated images of animals. Sikarwar is conscious about omitting this information when he is interacting with certain Arab tourists who are strictly against the worship of any sort of idols.

Tour guides often tailor the narratives based on the interest of the tourists. Multiple tour guides agreed that in order to keep the audience engaged, they must be able to gauge what is most appealing to them. For instance, if a tourist is more interested in folklore, then that is what should be given most importance. If someone is invested in the type of architecture the monument has adopted, then the guide must elaborate more on how well planned the architecture is for the time it was constructed in, the optical illusions, the purpose of the tilted minarets, the types of semi-precious stones used, or even why the ruler chose the material for the building that he did. Additionally, interests vary with age groups. A group of young school-children cannot be told narratives about the king and his concubines, but will perhaps enjoy the tales of Akbar and Birbal.

The background the tour guides come from also plays an important role in the differences in stories told. This background is an amalgamation of their upbringing, the religion they grew up following, and the training process. The way the guide obtains knowledge might differ, be it through religious reading of historical texts or an official training program by the government. Even approved and verifiable sources tend to have mild variations in terms of their content, giving the guide the freedom to choose the variation that suits him/her best and which "facts" s/he wants to use to represent a certain monument. Many tour guides only have access to information that has been passed on to them by their family members and ancestors. A lack of training is especially responsible for false narratives because the stories that arise out of this are completely devoid of facts.

Myth-making for the sake of an entertaining tour is not an unpopular practice, and, surprisingly, can even help the guide earn a commission if s/he manages to make it sound believable enough. For instance, during one of the tours, the guide showing the team around mentioned how Shah Jahan liked honey 'pethas', and how one of the shops nearby sells just the kind he used to devour. Thus, under the guise of giving the tourists an authentic experience, one wherein they can "live" the culture, narratives are altered to benefit the guide financially by earning him/her tips or commissions.



6.2. Tour guides as entertainers and performers

Most tour guides agree that keeping the guests entertained with only historical facts at their disposal is a form of art. They are encouraged in their training to learn about the monuments as well as the local food and cultural practices. They can speak, especially with foreign tourists, about past and present Indian culture, history and politics. One of the guides claimed to also speak about women's safety in India with her female guides, who are very keen on knowing more on the subject.

The guide must also be able to accurately perceive what the guest is visiting the place for. For instance, if a tourist comes to enrich his/her academic understanding of the place, then the guide might want to stick to fact-telling. S/he may talk about certain myths and folklore, but must mention that they are precisely that. Some scholars, such as Nimit Chowdhary, do believe that specifying that a story is just a myth does not necessarily reduce its charm. In fact, a good tour is most often comprises a blend of both facts and folklore, while distinguishing between the two as well. Abdul, a tour guide in Fatehpur Sikri, mentioned how it is unacceptable to engage in myth-making simply for the sake of entertainment and profit. A few interviews with licensed guides revealed their sense of sincerity when they insisted that they do not spread false stories about the heritage sites.

Explaining the historical context of the site helps the stories come to life. For instance, narrating Mughal history from the time of Babur, the first Mughal ruler, sets the tone for the tour and is far more memorable than directly diving into the facts surrounding the monument. Some tour guides also tend to shape the narrative in a way that is engaging to tourists. Nimit Chowdhary gave an example wherein, for a tourist from England, instead of saying that the Taj Mahal is 400 years old, one could say that it was completed the year famous Prime Minister Oliver Cromwell ended his term. Creating the setting, suggesting parallel world events that were going on during the same time, preferably in the country where the tourist comes from, helps the tourist to connect better and makes for a remarkable tour. Drawing other kinds of connections may aid the tour as well. For example, if multiple monuments are built by the same person, the guide can mention it. This gives the tourist the feel of the grandeur and power of the era, its wealth and magnificence. It also brings out the sense of power held by the rulers and their passion for art and beauty. If the tourist comes to Agra after seeing Jama Masjid, Red Fort, etc., the guide may point out how the monument in Agra is built by the same ruler, how the purpose for its construction differed, and proceed along those lines of description.



The tour guide must ensure that his/her tour is interactive, and involves participation of the tourists. A good narrator is not there to lecture- the tourist must be encouraged to ask questions and engage with what is being said. This is important so that the tourists do not get bored while feeling like the guide is rambling incessantly. One of the guides did this by asking her guests to pay attention, for she might hold a short pop quiz toward the end of the tour. This way she would get her listeners to remember interesting trivia, few important dates, and also making the tour fun.

Anuradha Parashar, a UPT guide, emphasised the importance of humour in making the tour interesting. Giving the team a demonstration of how she incorporates a few jokes in her speech, she said, “I start like, ‘Shah Jahan built the Taj in 1631 because this was a wish of a lady, one of his favourite wives. So, the moral of the story is that please girls, keep on demanding! The other two didn’t ask, so they didn’t get anything!’” She also spoke about how a little bit of imagination helps enhance the tour immensely. Guides often ask the tourists to visualise the place as if they were back in that era, giving detailed descriptions and recreating the feeling of grandeur. “Imagine this door – why is it big? Because back in the day there were no Ferraris; they used to sit on a beautiful decorated elephant. Imagine the ladies standing, throwing flowers. Musicians are playing music.”

6.3. Stories about the Taj Mahal

There are various narratives surrounding the Taj Mahal, be it regarding its architecture, its origin story, about the labourers who constructed it, or the ruler who ordered for it to be built. One is bound to encounter multiple versions of the same stories, some absurd and some more believable. Irrespective, both the believable and the bizarre continue to be circulated to the masses.

A popular myth propagated by tour guides was about the labourers’ hands being cut off upon the completion of the Taj Mahal. The story goes that this was done to ensure that they cannot build any other monument as grand and magnificent as the Taj. When we probed about this myth, we got several different answers. Some believed it was not the hands of the labourers, but only the thumbs. Others, like Rajpal (a tour guide at the Taj), were more shocked at this accusation.



Fig. 13. Listening to stories of Fatehpur Sikri tour guide



Fig. 14. Listening to stories of Taj Mahal tour guide

They believed the myth was wrong and grotesque, but most importantly, false. Their version of history denied the hand-cutting, and instead offered an alternative explanation for the same. This explanation said that the labourers only had to comply to a written agreement. This agreement was a written promise which prevented the labourers from participating in the construction of monuments in the future. In return, they were also graciously provided with a huge amount of money, for their sustenance. Sohail Hashmi countered the hand-cutting myth



by questioning its practicality at the time the Taj Mahal was built. “Now, Shah Jahan was the richest king in the world at that time, there is no question about it. The Mughal empire was the largest empire in the world. At that time no empire had this kind of resources, this kind of territory and this kind of resource base of creative people that Shah Jahan's India had. It took him 21 years to build the Taj. Will he seriously worry about anybody else trying to replicate it? He took 20,000 people and 21 years to build that place. Somebody who set out on such a large project would also think of keeping the place in good shape, so you would need people who knew the skills and those who had to work out a method of perpetuating those skills.” One can thus see how variations in narratives can alter one’s perspective on the ruler. The story regarding the ruler’s behaviour towards labourers has the power to significantly shape the tourist’s perception of him as either kind or cruel. When history gets distorted in this manner, it has the potential to polarize the masses on the basis of religion.

The emerging myth about Tejo Mahalaya

Finally, one of the most popular recent myths the team stumbled upon was about the existence of a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Shiva in the area where Taj Mahal was built. This temple was supposedly known as ‘Tejo Mahalaya’. According to Hashmi, the origins of this myth can be traced back to another historian, P. N. Oak. Hashmi said, “All these historians are just lining up behind the RSS, BJP bandwagon. They don’t quote any sources. They give any historical evidence to justify their evident bias in history. They make statements which are taken as the last words.” Hashmi proceeded to talk about other bizarre claims made by P. N. Oak to illustrate the absurdity of his narratives, and how ridiculous it was that so many people would willingly adopt them.

Tejo Mahalaya was frequently mentioned in our interviews and informal conversations with tour guides and other stakeholders. Political leaders in the state of Uttar Pradesh have also recently made statements claiming that Tejo Mahalaya existed in the spot where the Taj Mahal was later built. It is an evidently pro-Hindu attempt at lessening the value of Islamic contributions to India, and is accompanied by other government actions such as erasing Mughal history from updated textbooks and students’ syllabi, as well as not mentioning the Taj Mahal in the U.P. Tourism handbook this year.

It is possible that such statements by elected leaders could have affected the narratives propagated by tour guides in the city. When we were on the field, we met a few tour guides who staunchly believed in this story. However, there were other tour guides who emphatically



stated that the temple story was not backed by any historical or archaeological evidence. They also believed that the popularity of such narratives should not deter guides from conveying the actual facts about the monument. When asked about the Tejo Mahalaya narrative, Sanjay Sharma firmly said, “I am a devout Hindu. That is fine, but this is not appropriate. You cannot change history.”

In our discussions with tour guides and other stakeholders (local people, shopkeepers, etc.), this narrative was either embraced, disregarded or not considered worth discussing. Pallavi expressed strong opinions on this: “India was a Hindu country. Islam came to India in 1200 AD and obviously ruined everything, plundered everything. Wherever they wanted to create a thing, they brought a building down and created their own building. Taj Mahal belonged to Raja Man Singh who was a Hindu man. He was a minister in the court of Akbar. His son was Jai Singh. Now Jai Singh was a worshipper of lord Shiva. So, he erected a temple in what used to be his farmhouse. Now, when Shah Jahan wanted to purchase this building, he gave a token of money in the form of a gold coin, and took it like that, as a friend. So, obviously his temple was brought down.” She shared the belief that a Hindu temple had existed prior to the Taj Mahal, but did not assume that it was broken down by force. She also held the firm belief that the controversy did not deserve the attention it had received. She considered battles over religion-based controversies futile, and wished to improve the tourism in Agra by directing attention to increasing education facilities, employment creation, etc.

Quite a few interviewees shared similar beliefs regarding the futility of this kind of a discussion. They believed that the Taj Mahal is an icon of India, and an asset to the country. Many foreigners are unaware of India, and only discover it when they look for the place the Taj is located in. It is one of the main tourist attractions and a UNESCO heritage site, which is why any story that might reduce its value, or is debatable, does not need to be brought to light for an unnecessary demonstration of power play. Any narrative that does not enhance its value in the eyes of a tourist was deemed irrelevant by most tour guides.

Sohail Hashmi had a very strong opinion on the issue, and expressed his distaste for the fact that such a narrative can be circulated despite the absence of any historical evidence. “So, now, Tejo Mahalaya is just one of those stories. It's a totally cat and bull story, there is absolutely no shred of evidence. For example, the claim that this was land snatched from the *Maharaja* of Jaipur by Shah Jahan. The rulers of Ajmer, of Jaipur, originally ruled from Amer, and Akbar's Rajput wife came from Amer. At that time, Jaipur and the rulers of Jaipur were *mansabdaars* in the Mughal court, right till the end. They were associated with the Mughal court, and when the British took over, they went to the British.



Now, can a *mansabdar* capture land in the capital city of the king? No? It is possible that one of the later Mughals gave the grant to them. There is a possibility that some land grants in Agra were given to Jaipur by a later Mughal. But they couldn't have given away the Taj. Even if one agrees this is possible, that including the Taj that land was given to them, why don't the Jaipur fellows claim it? The Mughal kings are gone. They will have the land grant, they can show that this is our land, give it to us. Now that Rajasthan is being ruled by BJP, why don't they file the claim? There is no history to it." With this, he conveyed how the land of the Taj Mahal is not too difficult to reclaim, if it indeed belonged to the Hindu rulers of Jaipur. The fact that no action is being taken shows that there is no evidence on the basis of which one can demand the reclamation of this land.

He added, 'The guide says that it was originally *Tejo Mahalaya*. Now, I would like to know one temple that is called '*Mahalaya*'. All their stories are playing with language, and saying actually 'it was this' and 'it has become this'. Now he says there are so many *Shivakrities* inside the temple. Where are the photographs? And what you are giving as photographs? What is the evidence that they are taken inside the Taj Mahal? Who took them? When?" Through his questions he encouraged the use of critical thinking over blind faith and questioned the passive acceptance of false narratives.

Kapil Jain believed that this debate was useless, because India was the land of the 'Aryans', and naturally, there were bound to be temples located everywhere. He even said that wherever any new building is erected, it has most likely replaced something that stood there previously. The point, in his opinion, was how much one can blow the same concept out of proportion when it comes to the Taj Mahal. He offered a choice between enjoying what stands now or dwelling in the past.

Finally, Shahnawaz Khan spoke of how he had encountered individuals who even said that the Taj Mahal was originally a church. He, however, did not seem too disturbed by the thought and said that the guide may allow the tourists to accept the monument in whichever way they prefer: be it in the form of a temple, a church or a mosque. However, he believed that the guide must mention that the Taj Mahal is a UNESCO heritage site, backed up with plenty of archaeological proof that includes royal seals which differentiate between the architecture of a temple and a mausoleum. The guide must therefore clarify that it is neither a temple, nor a church, but further discussions on the same was considered a waste of time by him.

An interview with a taxi driver revealed his undeterred faith in the myth of Tejo Mahalaya, and he even claimed to have seen the remnant of the shrine underground, when visitors were once allowed to view the actual graves of Mumtaz Mahal and Shah Jahan rather



than the replicas. Moreover, souvenir shops have begun selling ‘*Shivlings*’ to the customers. More shockingly, they even sell miniature Taj Mahals with a trident as the pinnacle instead of the crescent moon that the Taj really has.

Sohail Hashmi criticised the conformist attitude of the Indian society. He blamed the tourists’ passive attitude for being one of the main reasons for leaving room for false narratives to not only be born, but also continue to thrive. Unquestioning faith in a supposedly “true” tale saves no regard for evidence such as archaeological findings and information from authentic, academic sources. Therefore, the lack of critical thinking in the society paves the path for tourists to be willing victims of propaganda.

6.4. Narratives surrounding Fatehpur Sikri

In the half-day trip made to Fatehpur Sikri, the team came across many stories about the palaces, Akbar, and his three queens. There were not as many deviances amongst tour guides as there were in stories about the Taj.

There was a common narrative about the architecture in Fatehpur Sikri. For example, all three guides we interviewed agreed that there were both Hindu and Muslim influences that were incorporated in the architecture. They all pointed out which ones were Hindu (the animal paintings), and which Muslim (the grape and pomegranate carvings). Another fascinating and unchanging narrative being circulated was that of Akbar’s favourite elephant, Hiran. One of the tour guides, Tehzeen Qureshi, even mentioned that the elephant was often used as a means of punishment to criminals and sinners, who would be tied to the ground and be stepped on by the elephant. One can find a tower dedicated to the elephant upon his death, named ‘Hiran Minar’.

The group came across interesting information about the palaces in Fatehpur Sikri during the interview with Sohail Hashmi in New Delhi. He not only busted several stories that we had heard on our tours, but also questioned the naiveté of Indian tourists. He was particularly outraged with the blind faith placed in the words of the tour guide. He explained how some of the information they give out can be easily identified as false if one pays just the slightest bit of attention. He first attacked the story about a two-storied structure that is supposed to be Birbal’s place of residence. “The two-storied structure? There is a sign board outside which says this is the residence of the two senior queens of Akbar. Nobody reads that. Nobody asks the what Birbal is doing inside the palace.” He wondered why tourists do not identify obvious loopholes in narratives.



In the interview, he blamed both licensed and unlicensed guides for spreading false information about Fatehpur Sikri. “It is the maids who lives there (the monument that was supposedly Birbal’s residence). Behind one of the long rooms, there is a large covered hall where all the clothes the robes and all that of the various queens were kept. It is known as the *Tosha Khana*. *Tosha Khana* is where you keep clothes, robes and garments. So, this is the level of disinformation that is going on in Fatehpur Sikri, and these are all certified guides. All of them have Government of India approved licenses and all that.”

Sohail Hashmi also refuted the popular notion regarding Akbar’s departure from Fatehpur Sikri due to water shortage. He said, “There is this overarching myth that Fatehpur Sikri was deserted because of shortage of water. Firstly, there was no shortage of water in Fatehpur Sikri and secondly, Fatehpur Sikri was never deserted. The court moved. Akbar had to move with his major courtiers because there was rebellion in Punjab and then he had to stay put in that area for a couple of years or maybe more. His senior queen, the mother of Jahangir, continued living in Fatehpur Sikri. Moreover, the sixth anniversary of his becoming king was celebrated in Fatehpur Sikri.”

The myth about Jodha Bai’s palace was also one tourists came across frequently in Fatehpur Sikri. It was once again met with counter-narratives from Sohail Hashmi. “They (the tour guides) would have also pointed the palace of Jodha Bai. Now Jodha Bai never lived in Fatehpur Sikri because Jodha Bai was not Akbar’s wife, she was Jahangir’s wife. Yes! Akbar’s Rajput wife was Harka Bai, younger sister of Bhagwan Das, after whom you have this road named in Delhi. Jodha Bai was Jahangir’s wife and Jodha Bai was a name that Jahangir had given her. Her given name was Jagat Gosain. She was the younger sister of Jodh Singh, the founder of Jodhpur. Jahangir used to pull her leg by calling her Jodha Bai, because she was Jodh Singh’s sister. Now this entire thing of Jodha Akbar, this that, this is just imagination and there is no shred of evidence in this. You are marrying the daughter-in-law to the father-in-law by making Jodha Bai the wife of Akbar.”

Having taken the above into consideration, one can observe the different forces at play in determining the version of history being propagated. They are primarily political influences fuelled by religious motives of those in power. The techniques used by the guide in narrating these decide the impact of the story on the tourists, thereby shaping their view of the historical event and forming polarised opinions. The tour guide possesses the power to thus plant ideas within tourists that have the potential to enhance or damage the image of the nation. Indeed, they are the cultural ambassadors of the country.

CONCLUSION





CHAPTER 7.0: CONCLUSION

7.1. Overview

In our research study we studied the socio-political and economic context in which the tour guides function, we attempted to understand the various roles that the tour guides take on and the process through which they became tour guides. Further, we explored what it means to be a female tour guide working in a male-dominated industry in a conservative city. We also probed the variations in the narratives surrounding the Taj Mahal and Fatehpur Sikri.

We took several tours with tour guides during the course of our field work in Agra. It made us realise the explicit as well as implicit duties that they perform as a part of their profession. In the process of providing information and narrating the histories of a place, they ensure that they present a favourable image of India. Tour guides in Agra are motivated by a variety of factors ranging from the lucrativeness of the job to the opportunity to learn new things everyday, to take up their profession and to continue working as a tour guide. Further, their work continues to be affected by the socio-political and economic context of the region. For instance, the large-scale unemployment due to the closing down of industries (e.g.: the foundry in Agra) or their relocation due to pollution problems is a major contributor in increasing the appeal of tour guiding as a profession in Agra. We also discovered several intricacies that underlie the different types of licenses held by guides. A system of hierarchies became evident among the tour guides, with the guides licensed by the Department of Tourism (DoT) at the top of the hierarchy. UPT guides are considered inferior to the

We were able to trace the evolution of the profession as a whole and analyse the reasons for the surge in the number of guides in recent decades.

We gained an insight into the many challenges that tour guides and the tourism industry in Agra face. One of the biggest challenges is the commission system on which the entire industry operates. Because of this system, tour guiding has become more about taking tourists to shops than actually taking them to different monuments, and tour agencies have started putting pressure on tour guides to make sure the tourists spend as much money in various shops as they can.



The lack of infrastructure in Agra is another massive problem that the industry faces. There are very few tourists who plan on spending more than one night in Agra because of its lack of infrastructure and evening activities. There are also few connecting flights to Agra, making it difficult for tourists to travel there.

Unlicensed guides also pose a major problem to the guides. These guides create an unfavourable image of tour guides in general. Although this is illegal, the licensed guides claim that the unlicensed guides are protected by the police by paying bribes. The unlicensed guides claim that they are harassed by the police.

When it comes to digitization, the guides had mixed opinions on whether it was a challenge or a benefit. Almost all the guides had accounts online through which they could be reached, and believed that electronics could not take away the human element of tour guiding. Others claimed that the internet gave India a bad reputation and was slowly making their job obsolete.

A few government policies have also been creating problems for the guides. A policy which is being debated plans on turning all the different tour guides in Agra into monument guides, which will make their job much more difficult. The Government has also taken a negative attitude towards the Taj and other monuments due to them being built by Islamic rulers. Demonetization also hit the industry hard as the tourism industry is largely cash based, and the tourists carried large amounts of cash in order to pay for tickets and the tour guides. This policy left them stuck and turned India into a joke in their eyes.

Our understanding of the lives of female tour guides revealed the hardships of being such a minority in a male-dominated industry. The challenges they face every day apart from being under constant scrutiny of society were not a surprise; issues relating to safety and high crime rates against women. The extent to which they are haunted by societal pressures, however, revealed itself to be extremely intrusive. People, even close associates and friends, do not shy away from shaming female guides for working at odd hours, underestimating their capabilities, and distorting the purpose of their tour by attacking their moral character. These judgements penetrate into their everyday lives, confine them to their “primary job” of being a homemaker, a mother, a wife, and undermine their “optional job” of being a tour guide. Moreover, polarised views between male guides and female guides regarding discrimination of women in the industry show the blissful ignorance male tour guides are able to enjoy.



Despite the flak female tour guides face for simply doing their job, it is inspiring to see how their perseverance leads them to not only effectively guide tourists, but also go on to become excellent tour leaders. Every day is a new challenge as they combat regressive social norms and ignore constant negative comments and judgements from their peers. They emphasise the importance of family support in their job. They appreciate their ability to travel and the independence that it connotes. Sometimes, in fact, female tour guides are preferred over male tour guides because they are believed to be more caring and better storytellers.

The observations made with regard to the narratives of history shared by the tour guides revealed the numerous techniques they use in their story-telling, showing the importance of their role as not only the cultural ambassadors of the country, but also as entertainers. The way they tell a story depends on many factors, the most important one being catering to the audience and being sensitive to their cultures. Tour guides must always determine correctly the purpose and interests of the tourists and emphasise different aspects of the story accordingly. They must also have the sense and judgement capabilities to determine what aspects of their narration are appropriate to share and which of them might be offensive.

Another interesting discovery about the narratives was about the growing popularity of the Tejo Mahalaya myth, which states that the Taj Mahal used to be a temple of the Hindu god, lord Shiva. This temple was supposedly broken down by Shah Jahan and replaced by the mausoleum for his beloved queen, Mumtaz. The multiple variations of this theme itself point to the fact that many tour guides really capitalise on the lack of evidence and tailor the story as per their preference. However, the myth was supported not only by some guides, but also stakeholders such as cab drivers, and shopkeepers who sold souvenirs of miniature models of the Taj with the trident on top of the dome instead of the original crescent moon. A clear link was established between the propagation of this myth and the political influence it was born out of, given how recent its development is. Actions made on behalf of the government such as excluding the Taj from the U.P. Tourism booklet and erasing Mughal history from students' syllabi reveal that the government's policies are clearly driven by religious motives, those motives being pro-Hindu and anti-Islamic. So far, the blow of the negative impact made by these policies have not been felt, on account of the Taj Mahal being a world heritage site, as well as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. However, the potential harm due to gross distortion of history, especially a distortion encouraged by the people in power, is one of great magnitude and must not be overlooked.



7.1. Relevance and Utility of Research

1. *Tour Guide Associations:* Several tour guides talked about the hierarchy among the tour guides. Tour guides spoke about the underrepresentation of guides with licenses apart from the DoT licenses in tour guide associations such as TGFI (Tour Guide Federation of India), and AGA (Approved Guides Association) of Agra. Further, there was consensus on the presence of cut-throat competition in the industry and its negative impacts. Tour guide associations could utilise this data to understand the issues at hand and thereby resolve them.

2. *Tour Companies and Tour Operators:* Tour companies as well as associations of tour companies such as IATO (Indian Association of Tour Operators) will find our research useful. Tour guides highlighted the challenges they face in terms of being allotted assignments and the commission system. Tour guides also spoke about the different incentives that their profession provides. This information might help tour companies to formulate work-place policies. Further, the perspectives of female tour guides on working in a male-dominated sector and the challenges they face have been explored. This will equip them to create a better space for women working as tour guides.

3. *Training Institutes:* The tour guides underlined the differences in the training process and minimum qualifications for DoT guides and UPT guides. The monument guides and stay-order guides are mostly untrained. The study shows the implications of this lack of uniformity. This will help the training institutes understand the magnitude of the issue.

4. *Government and policy makers:* The effects of the changes in the policy on the work as well as lives of tour guides have been explored. Further, the challenges they face with regard to police officials as well as ASI officials have been described. Some tour guides also provided potential solutions for problems such as tourists not staying overnight in Agra. This data could help the organisations frame policies more favourable for the tour guides and formulate plans for promotion of tourism in Agra.

5. *Academics and future researchers:* The study captures a range of narratives surrounding the Taj Mahal and Fatehpur Sikri. Academics could do in-depth studies on the socio-political and economic factors that could have led to these variations. There is no literature regarding female tour guides. Their experiences of working in male-dominated profession and the challenges they encounter have been explored in this study. Academics could benefit from data with regard to the same.

Glimpses



Guiding is fun, guiding is passion, guiding is enthusiasm, guiding is knowledge, guiding is love, it is giving what you want and telling stories is guiding.

- Komal, Anjali & Ritika



Hindustan mein aadmi intelligent woman toh pasand karta hai lekin usse shaadi karna pasand nahi karta hain...

Oh, the best part is that, being a girl I can travel all around the world now! (laughs)
-Monika Sharma

In India, men like intelligent women, but they don't like to marry one.
- Neha Agarwal

Everyone knows about it,
corruption is everywhere. It's
not a secret
- Aditya Dev

You know the entire system that we
have built is totally conformist. So,
you believe anything, everything
thing that you are told.
- Sohail Hashmi



You cannot imagine. It is a
very big industry we can't call
them a mafia but it is like a
mafia. They are like
Big Boss.
- Shahnawaz Khan

Do anything, but do not
come into
this profession.
- Kapil Jain

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Appendix

Transcripts

Interview of Shamsuddin Khan

(Senior Guide with the Department of Tourism, clientele includes Presidents from over 48 countries)

13th October 2017

Moin Ahmed Khan - DoT guide since 1996 Earlier ASI or you can say Archaeological survey of India, they had a power to recruit new guides and issue a license because all these monuments, whatever is here in this country is going under the ASI. later in uhh 19 uhh 72 they handed over their power to (inaudible) They told to the department of tourism that you recruit the guide you do the training for them and then you issue a license or I card for the guide then we also come to sign it. Since 1972, Department of tourism they are issuing guide uhh they are recruiting the guides.

(Afzal and Shamsuddin Khan join)

Shamsuddin Khan- Kaisa question kar diya (laughs) (Translation- what kind of a question have you asked)

Afzal- (to Shamsuddin Khan)- Matlab positive dena hai (laughs) (Translation- So we'll have to say positive stuff)

Shamsuddin Khan- Na Na, why positive?

Interviewer- No not necessarily positive, positive negative anything

Shamsuddin Khan- We are facing a lot of problems! Why should I give? What the department is doing with us?

Moin Ahmed Khan- Inka maksat bas ye hai ki jo problems hai wo batai jayein. (Translation- Their purpose is to know all about the problems) Kya problems hum log face kar rahe hai?

Shamsuddin Khan- The guides are known as the cultural ambassadors of the country, right?

Interviewer- Yes sir

Afzal (points at the camera)- It's working?

Interviewer- Yes sir

Shamsuddin Khan- You go to the department, everybody they say the guides are the cultural ambassadors of this country and.. But at this point, today, I'm talking about today, what is a guide?

Guide has become a bonded labour. Played with the hands of shopkeepers, travel agents, excursionists, whatsoever. None of the single fellows is looking after the guide. Neither our departments, nor the state departments and there's one more concern, this is all over we made a TGFI- Tourist Guide Federation of India. They don't have any program for the welfare of the guides. They are fighting with their own people, for nothing. Actually, not that there's... when I become a guide, we were

[00:01:28.15](inaudible)

...the whole trade and we were doing what we're doing because our main focus was to please the tourists who are coming to Agra and give them a better image of the.. not only of the country, also of the city and also of the professional guides. Ke what is a guide actually. But in slow process, shopkeepers are getting stronger. They're forcing the people to take their clients to their own shops, right? In the beginning, we were free.

If the tourist wanted to go to the shop, we were taking them. If the tourist don't want to go, we are not taking them. Because our motive was to please the tourist. We don't want to adverse, any tourist, we don't want to adverse image either of the country, or the society or the guide. like that. but sooner or later. anyhow. either me or my colleagues or whosoever they bow down before the agents because there is a concept called IATO an association where all the travel agents are member of that association and they connect it with our national federation. and there's a deed and there were clauses there that the guides who are approved by the department of tourism, they will take their clients to certain shops. If the client is not willing to go that particular shops, you have to take a prior permission from us.

(with a slight increase in volume) What is this? Are we a bonded labour? Why we should obey your order, your rules? We have rules imposed by department of tourism. and they want clauses there that the guide is not supposed to take any clients to any shop. Then why should we break our own rules made by the department? And department never asked that why this IATO is doing this kind of things. They never ask so at the moment the guide has become a bonded labour. Now we're forced if... suppose I have four assignments from a particular company and the client doesn't want to go to a shop. And if I take.. not.. Didn't take them all to particular shop, next day I'm not getting the assignments. What is this? It is a kind of punishment.

(With a stern face and higher volume) In the name of shopping you are spoiling the tourism. There should be certain parameters for the shopping also. Everywhere there is a project, the tourist, take them to shops, in every country there certain commissions are also there, but there should be certain parameter for the commission. What should be the commission? Every part, every time the guide is punished that you take the client to the shop. Our the guides are

responsible? No we are not responsible, we are forced to take the tourists to the shops. If I am not taking them, I am not getting the job.

So ultimately, the guide has to bow down his head, either before the shopkeeper or before the travel agent. How? Why are you calling him the cultural ambassador of the country? He's the cultural ambassador of the shops. Just to get 10% of commission. And agent is getting 30% commission. Why is so? That local guide who is sitting in Agra is getting 10% right? If the same guide is coming from Delhi he is getting 25% why there is a discrimination? He's having the same license that I'm having. Why should.. He's getting better commission from us?

In Agra for example, there are about 400+ guides who are approved by the department of tourism. 700+ guides who are approved by the state government. 176 guides are recognised by the Archaeological survey of India. Apart from that there are almost 2000 guides i mean touts who are working as a guide today. Nobody is asking them whether you have a license or not. Neither ASI, nor department of tourism, nor the state department. Neither police nor the administration. What a guide should do?

Ultimately, he has to bow down his head before the travel agent that I am agree for this commission, I am agree for your terms and conditions, I am agree for everything. What's the guide? A poor creature, nothing else. There's six months training, I mean trade, october to march there is travel trade. Now the guides who are stationed at agra is sitting at home. And the guides who are coming from Delhi, guides who are coming from Rajasthan, unauthorized guides coming sending by travel agents. What is this? Who will take care them? If we go to stop them, the department is supporting them not to us. You don't have any policy, neither any department of tourism or state or the guides themselves or the IATO or the TGFI are having any policy that there's no policy with the stationed guide who are sitting here at the monument or at Agra. If all the people are coming from abroad, what the guides who are sitting in Agra will do?

(Decreases volume) Ultimately they have to bow down. So guide has become a bonded labour at the moment. This is the actual situation of the guide.

In our wages the travel agent deducting the money from our wages. Why? 25% deduction is there if I'm working for certain company. He is taking 25% from my wages. We are getting wage, wage means... daily wages. Dihari mazdoor (Translation- daily wage workers) this is. and you're cutting our wages. Look at the MNREGA. There's a guarantee for 90 days, right? Is there any guarantee that department that we're giving 90 days employment?

Why the department giving us license? Why they asking statements at the time of renewal? They give a [00:08:18.25] (inaudible) for 3 years. How they will go? Apart from there is a bondation that we are succeed 90 assignments in a year then we are going to renew the license. You are

asking for 90 days. YOU GIVE US GUARANTEE TO GIVE US ASSIGNMENTS FOR 90 DAYS. Then we will give you statement otherwise.. they are not ready to any assignments. any any statement. This is a license if you want to endorse it then ok otherwise we'll knock the door of the court.

This is all rubbish I mean mockery! You are spending a lot of money on tourism but position of actual tourism you never ask the practical people who are doing everything. The CISF they are ignoring the guides, the local police they ignore the guide, the department ignoring the guide, why?

we are making the image of your country. Image of your city. Image of your profession. Image of the tourism. and how you are dealing with us? it's the ridiculous.

Shame on all the travel agents and the shopkeepers, IATO, and shame on TGFI also. They're never looking after the people. They're looking for themselves. The people that are managing the TGFI, they're getting the best assignments from Delhi, they're doing all escorting. Not a single from the TGFI sitting at the station. So they're thinking for themselves. If the person getting work he's happy. I'm not getting work I'm not happy. So this is the duty, suppose I'm having an association here I have to look after own people. If my president is looking after myself what the use of that president? Whosoever, either me or somewhere else. This is the moral duty of the president of local units to look after own people who is getting job, who's not getting job. But if the executive committee is getting job only, then what's the use of that association. This is what happening. Everywhere, I'm not talking sitting at Agra, I'm talking about Agra but this is the situation everywhere.

Every unit is divided now. And the agents, the travel agents, they are enjoying like anything. The shopkeepers giving money advance IN BULK. They're snatching that money from the pocket of the guides. Either in the way of commission, in the way of.. wages. Even now days what's happening? If I please my tourist, he's very happy, he's giving little tip to me. AND THE PEOPLE SITTING IN DELHI SAYING DON'T GIVE THE TIP TO THE GUIDE. He's a drunkard man. You deposit the money here I will send it to his home.

We are making your image and you are doing this kind of activities with the guides. Nobody is looking after.

Now my request is the department should take care of this otherwise these are the guides who are making your image. If the guide will do adverse, they will burst your image like anything. Clients are listening us. He's with us for hours and hours. What we're saying he's... considering that thing. If I say this is Taj Mahal he will accept Taj Mahal, if I say this is Tejo Mahalay he

will accept Tejo Mahalay. Our.. Our Chief Minister just vanished the Taj Mahal from the tourism booklet. What does it mean? What does it mean?

Taj Mahal is the gateway to the Indian tourism. Hundreds of thousands books written about the Taj Mahal. But what happened? what changed today? If Taj is so bad, why are you taking the money from the Taj Mahal? It's one thousand rupees ticket of the Taj and 50% of that money is going to the stomach of the state. If Taj is so dirty why are you taking that money? Stop taking money, if you really want to do something. You're not selling the Taj, Taj itself selling it. Because every tourist having the dream, all the head of the states are coming to Agra. Almost, I've been with almost 48 head of the states and every person who is coming to India he's having a will or a dream to see the Taj and the governments making them happy by showing the Taj in Agra. And this is the position of the guides in Agra? who are making your image. So my dear, if you.. do in everything, I can give you in writing, I'm not a coward man. What's facing I'm.... What I'm facing, I'm giving the right explanation maybe there are some other colleagues who will say government doing best thing and this.. No, nothing.

There's no office for the guides. They're standing on the.. the head of the.. outside the monuments. Even they don't have the shelter. Why? There's no difference between the touts and the guides at the moment. Is any department making any office? Either state or the centre or ASI? There's no office

Moin Ahmed Khan in background- there is there is a difference. Touts have a place at the monuments but not for the guides. Touts they are standing by the gate of the monuments

Shamsuddin Khan- And they're sheltered by the police! guides are not able to stand there

Moin Ahmed Khan- They're sheltered by the police and the administration as well. and the guides, if they're going to the monuments without guests and the guests are coming directly to the monument he cannot receive his guests at the monument. So, not at any monument we have the place for the guides where we can wait for our guest. We have to arrange a place for ourselves. For example in Fatehpur Sikri we have the office. Whenever we go to receive the guest in Fatehpur Sikri we we wait in our own office over there.

Shamsuddin Khan- These travel agents are so greedy. Suppose a person is taking a group and going to Jaipur, from Agra to Jaipur, there's a midway restaurant where we stop the car for use of washroom and all. THEY HAVE CONTACT WITH THAT MIDWAY RESTAURANTS ALSO. What the hell? You're asking money for water, you're asking money for the food even. Then you're sitting in air conditioned office, sitting in a tie and a coat and al.. You're asking for money from from the bread and butter. Roti to kha raha hai yaar woh, uspe bhi paise le rahe ho tum? (Translation- He's eating a roti and you're making money off that too).

Interviewer- Sir how large is this entire commission cycle exactly?

Shamsuddin Khan- 50%. A coaster set is hardly 500 to 700 rupees, maximum a thousand rupees. That same coaster set they're selling 15,000 rupees. Jab har cheez pe price tag hai, iss product pe price tag kyun nahi hai bhai? (Translation- When everything has a price tag, why doesn't this product have a price tag too?) Is the state government doing something? The centre.. There should be tag on it. The tourist are going, he's watching tourist- He's american, ok 10,000 dollars. He's a britisher, 8,000 dollars. If a Canadian, 7,000 dollars. They're just charging like that.

Interviewer- Sir you'd mentioned that the touts have a place outside the Taj Mahal and outside these sites and the police.. in fact they're protecting them, why are they doing that?

Shamsuddin Khan- MONEY

Moin Ahmed Khan- Because they're giving money to the police everyday. Everyday and the monthly. That's why they give the safety to them, they give the security to them

Interviewer- We also heard accounts that the police often take bribes and harass the touts inside.. I mean standing outside the Taj.

Them- Pardon

Interviewer- The police, uh, we interviewed a couple of

Shamsuddin Khan- People

Interviewer- Tour guides in Taj Mahal and they said that the police frequently harass them for money and otherwise if they don't pay then they harass them even more, does that happen?

Shamsuddin Khan- They said so, what then. Why are police permit them? Everybody.. It is a travel trade. They say every gora is a crorepati, multimillionaire. If somebody, suppose a gora is with me to I become multi millionaire. Cause there is a temptation there. Cause after film industry, this is the most tempting industry in the world, the travel trade. Pata nahi jaata hai aadmi toh bahut acche kapde pahenke, tie shy lagake jata hai, samajhte hai ki ye bahut bada aadmi hai (Translation- When a man goes well dressed with his tie, people believe that he is a big shot). Toh woh image hai (Translation- That is the image). Ki sahab jo hazaar rupay ka ticket le raha hai, woh to definitely, he will definitely spend more money (Translation- If a person is buying a ticket worth 1000, he will definitely spend more money). I have seen that in 35 years of my life, a person who was sitting in a room 10x10 carrying a little shop, today he is the typhoon of this city. In 35 years.

Interviewer- Do you think there's a lack of regulation of this industry..

Shamsuddin Khan- We are making a regulation on the papers my dear. But they never ask the people who are facing all these problems everyday. When the ministers are coming, when the (inaudible) are coming we are requesting them a lot of things. But nothing happen. Nothing happened so far.

Interviewer- All these touts

Shamsuddin Khan- Last 35 years look at, do you believe that the department who is giving us license they are not supposed to consider wages? Do you ever see? Ki main iss department ka kaam karta hu aur wages mera dusra department decide karega (Translation- That I'm working for this department but my wages will be decided by the other department). This is my department. Humare wages kaun decide karega- IATO (Translation- Who will decide our wages- IATO). License kaun grant karega- Department of Tourism (Translation- Who will grant us the license- Department of tourism). What does this mean?

Moin Ahmed Khan- And IATO is private body. We are the people from the government. From Department of Tourism. Department of tourism is issuing the license to us and IATO is going to fix our wages.

Shamsuddin Khan- Is it not a mockery?

Moin Ahmed Khan- Second thing is job guarantee. After receiving license from Department of Tourism you have to find out your job yourself.

Shamsuddin Khan- They're just giving us a bowl. Go and beg. It's this simple.

Moin Ahmed Khan- No job guarantee.

Interviewer- Is there a major problem with job security in..

Shamsuddin Khan- of course. Who will take care?

Moin Ahmed Khan- Major problem

Shamsuddin Khan- If I, If I have a cut in the wages, If I give a cut in the commission I will get the job. If I'm rigid, I say this is my money, I'm not going to give you this, no cut, I'm not getting a job. This is truth.

Interviewer: So travel agents..

Shamsuddin Khan- Travel agents, excursions, shopkeepers. Now another trade came home. Guides are going to Delhi. No sorry, shopkeepers are going to Delhi, meeting different travel agents. And they said why you are giving money to the guides? Just give it, the jobs, with us a contract, we'll provide you the guides. And today the guides are going free .. services.

Moin Ahmed Khan- Shopkeeper they provide their complementary guide

Shamsuddin Khan- Free services. They are bound to do this because they don't have a work. Look at struggle. A question of survival.

Moin Ahmed Khan- And the guides, you know who they use, they use only the touts, they use only the unauthorised people

Shamsuddin Khan- Even the approved are doing all that. They are bound to that.

Moin Ahmed Khan- Because the main thing is that when you are accompanying a guest, you go to a monument, nobody is going to check you if you are the licensed guide or unapproved or a tout. Because everyday they are giving the money to them, to the police, to the ASI department. Whenever they do the check, they take the license, they check the license only of the original guides, real tourist guide. Like us. We have the license. We are working we always carry the license with us (takes out his license from his shirt pocket) like that. So whenever they see us over there at the monument they ask do you have the license or not. But they are never going to check the license of a person who don't have the license.

Interviewer- Sir do you think, last few years since you have come into the industry has the competition got much worse?

Shamsuddin Khan- That's not a question. Tourism also increasing not only the competition. In our days when we came, that is 30 years back, there was no domestic tourism like this. Now there is a boom. The tourists anyhow increasing. Look at.. If the tourist is happy in this particular segment, here for example in Agra, definitely he will come again. If he annoyed, next time he will go south of India. In the beginning, I've been 35 years, the tourist was willing to come to Uttar Pradesh first. Now they are going either to south of India or doing the whole Rajasthan tour and in the end they are coming for a half day tour. So Agra is decreasing. And this not only by the government, government is coming in yesterday. This is the travel agent. He is making a cut of one night. If the tourists landing in Delhi tonight, they will do just local tour and they said on your way back I'll do the rest of the tour. Go to Agra, see the Taj and the fort and drive to Jaipur. So there's a night in Jaipur. So we cut short one night in Agra who were staying previously. So this is what.. Who is making a program? the travel agent is making program. If there is 7 days, 7 nights, so he always try to cut one night.

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Shamsuddin Khan- This is what's happening. We are not honest with the tourist in fact, neither the agents, nor the shopkeepers, nor the guides. Neither departments. We are not honest with the clients. It's a very straightforward. Problem is this, if I, first of all if there's tourist with me, I normally take 3 hours just to show the Taj. But I know the people who are showing Taj in 45 minutes. Cause they want to show them shop. And I cannot do that. That's why I'm not a good

guide. Only the good guide is that the person who is showing 2-3 shops. He is the best guide. I know there was a time, I know a couple of years back there was one client who came to certain company and one of my colleague, he was assigned that assignment. He take them to Taj. And after Taj he take them to the marble shop.

[00:01:08.12] (inaudible)

Then took them to lunch and after lunch he showed one more shop, a carpet shop. Then he take the client to the fort. And from the fort the client was.. The local agent he informed Delhi people that the client was this and this and this much he spent at the marble shop and this much he spent on the carpet shop and the guide showed them the fort and they gone.. What the travel agent say in Delhi? He said don't use that guide once again. Local agent asked why? He said why he take them to show to the fort? HE SHOULD TAKE TO ANOTHER SHOP. This is what happen my dear. Main fact bata raha hu aapko (Translation- I'm stating the facts). Mujhe batai puri kahani, uske agent ne hi batai mujhko (Translation- I know the entire story, his agent told me). I was shocked. Woh Dilli wala kehta hai usne fort kyun dikhaya uske ek dukan aur dikhani chahiye thi. Kya sochta hai tourist ke baare mein? (Translation- The man from Delhi said that he should not have shown him the fort but should have taken him to another shop instead. What does think about the tourist?) He is not a human being? Siddha se, wo ganne ki machine dekhte hai na aap, ek baar lagao, dubara lagao- this is the duty of the guide today (It's straightforward, have you seen the sugarcane juice machines? You put it in once, then you put in again).

Interviewer- This is happening since your time or is it very recent..

Shamsuddin Khan- No it is happening since last 15 years. Uff in the beginning when I came in 1980, 82, there was very pleasant weather, the client was happy, the travel agent was happy, the shopkeeper was happy. Because our moral duty.. our first duty to assess the client, what exactly he want. Some of the client group they want more photograph. Some of the client they want to listen local history. Some of the client who are really, like Britisher they want to go deep into the history. And some of the clients who just want to real listen 'ok, it's ok' and take a round. So we assess what exactly he want. So if the client we have to assess the client if I take the client to the shop we have to assess that what exactly he want. Suppose he want to see some textile. So we are unable to take him to textile. We are forced to take the client to the marble. Sthithi ye hai ki kaccha khareedna hai to we are bound to not to take that client to that kaccha shop, we take them to the marble shop. This is what happening today. And the agents, who are moving onto the road, if the car is standing before the kaccha shop they will click the camera and take the photograph and send to Delhi and they said no, don't give the job this one. This. There is no freedom. We are unable to make a good image for the country today. This is what.

Interviewer- Sir how do you think society perceives...

Shamsuddin Khan- Society what will they do? It's the question of survival. It's the question of survival my dear. In the beginning what we thinking? Struggle and survival. It's the two sides of the coin. If I struggle I'll get survival. But now time has changed. There is not a question of the struggle. Now struggling means to bow down the head. Struggle has changed today. If you bow down the head before agent, if you bow down the head before shopkeeper you'll get job. So the question is survival. We are bound to do that. Ultimately we have to obey the orders of the shopkeepers or the travel agent. Because nobody listening us. Neither from department, nor from ourself. I asked, there's a, the Delhi people who are sitting in Delhi, I asked the people who are sitting in Jaipur, the TGFI people. I said you have any program for the stationed guide? They don't have answer. What we'll do?

Interviewer- Sir now they also changed the policy that now they will only have monument guides...

Shamsuddin Khan- Policy. When you're making policy there should be men from us also. If you're making policy for agra then there should be person from Agra. Nahi they are the people who represent. But suppose secretary kept hand on my, that you're my friend, he kept mum.

Moin Ahmed Khan- No one thing I'd like to tell you that whenever they make policy, the department, they never ask to uh guide or any office bearer from the guide association or federation of the guide association or federation of the guides to come and join them to give the more suggestions whatever we can do for the betterment of tourism they never ask that. Never. They make the policy themselves. Whether it is a good for tourism or not. In this regard I'd like to talk about the new policy of the ASI. What they done? They didn't ask from us.

Shamsuddin Khan- Look at it, look at it. You're asking about the comprehensive policy that recently came by ASI. Why this policy came through? Imposed upon us. There are certain reasons behind this. This was the mistake which was done by the department of tourism. That's why this policy came into existence. ASI is the owner of these monuments, right? Because they are having the law. Department of tourism is ad hoc department. It doesn't have any law in the parliament right? There's no rules and regulations. So time to time they're changing their. In 1960, ASI given, When the department came into existence there was no tourism department in 1960 this department came into existence. So what they will do? So we'll talk to the ASI and ASI was agree and the minutes between the department of ASI and department of tourism that was first time it has happened that they said that the people who are giving our examination they will called as a guide of the department of tourism otherwise the rest will be known as the monument guide. So this was the first time that the power of that was delegated to the department of tourism,

right? and department of tourism making guides. time to time taking examinations, taking training, everything was.. that was ok. Thereafter, the department also giving a different wave. The department in 1960... 1969 sorry 1989, In the policy of department of tourism one more guide was introduced. It was state level guides. Nobody objected at that point. Neither TGFI nor the department nobody. There were three categories, state level guides, the administrative guides and the local guides. Apart from those approved guide. Why there was a need for.. do you think need for such a more guide. You make your own guides. Why you giving this guide? And for five years, there are not making any guide of their kind of categories then department of state of DoT they organised their guide training course for their state level guides. Because in your policy there was a concept of this state level guides. Then a new fighting was started. Due to the state level guides and Department of Tourism guides. So this was the problem and people gone to the court and they take 100 or 1000 people they take stay orders. Working regularly. And in the court the DoT never come before the court only the arguments are between ASI and the people who are. The problem of Archaeological just fighting, fighting all years and years for nothing the mistake was made by the department of tourism. Why should they take care of that? That's why one day they decided to withdraw the power, and they already withdrawn the power from Department of Tourism. At the moment there is no power the Department of tourism to make guides. They've withdrawn already withdrawn the power. Before imposing this new policy first they withdrawn the power and then they imposed the policy.

In that policy they said that there should be one category of tour guide. What is the harm in it? for eg.

Interviewer- What sir?

Shamsuddin Khan- If there is one category of the guides what is the harm in it? The Archeological said that there should be one category of the guides, known as ASI guides.

Interviewer- Monument guides right?

Shamsuddin Khan- All over country. This policy is not only for Agra. This is for all over country, they said that there should be one category of guides. and the guides who are previously having different licences, they will not. Now the.. why we go to courts is because there is little.. there was not clarification. That if I'm working for 35 years. What do you.. I need to get my license back. And then one clause was there, people are not reading that policy sincerely that's why they move to the court and all and the court state the policy like that blah blah. In that policy, they said that you can get the license for one monuments, for three monuments, for fifteen monuments. I gave the suggestion that why you're giving that license? Give the license for whole circle. There's the Agra circle, there's the Rajasthan circle, there's a Jaipur circle, there is a

Banaras circle. If the person is capable to do the guiding in the whole circle, we'll have same position. but now matter become [00:11:35.20] (inaudible)

Now one more, they said that we will decide your wages, we'll give you the offices, this this. Now we are the regional guides. Now who are the regional guides? Is there any concept of regional guides in the department of tourism. I was licensed, I get the training here in Agra. First license which I received from the department was area of operation was Agra and Fatehpur Sikri. Without any further training, without any giving extra lectures to us not giving practical training to other people why you make my area so broad and become a circle guide? Why? and how? you said that I can work in Kashmir, is any guide from the North India gone to Kashmir? He can work in Chandigarh, the department didn't give him any training for Chandigarh. No. So this is the kind of mockery. And why this change? In the beginning we try to stop the guides from Delhi or other people, we are stationed guides and we are having more right. We know more matter about our own city compared to the people who are coming from other city. Right? So there was something. But to facilitate the Delhi guides IATO and the Department of Tourism just make a jugglery and their area of operation was increased like that. It was totally against the law. There is no any kind of notification to us. That we are going to increase the area of operation. Just to facilitate the Delhi guides they increased our area of operation. And now we are fighting for that? why? If I'm working in Agra, I should think about only Agra. If I go to the other cities I will take your services and you're coming my city, my services. What the harm in it? Person who is sitting in Agra for hours for years and the person who is coming yesterday in Delhi is working like anything here. What does this mean? why should we? We don't want to leave our bread and butter, it is very fact, otherwise we go to the courts again for the betterment of the guides. Because we cannot sit just doing nothing, we have to fight for this. It's ridiculous.

Interviewer- Sir we realised that when we came to Agra that there were very few female tour guides

Shamsuddin Khan- Ya hardly I think 3-4 female guides are in Agra. You cannot compare with Bombay. Mumbai there is all, mostly female. Why there are female? because their husbands are either working in Navy or working in Air Force. Those, there also. Two ladies who are working in Agra their husbands are in Army.

Interviewer- So why are there such few female guides in Agra exactly?

Shamsuddin Khan- It's open course, come. Whenever the department organises.. Our culture is different. Uttar Pradesh, cannot compare with Pune. You cannot compare with Maharashtra, Mumbai. You cannot compare with Hyderabad. Here thinking is something different. Because they are working with the stranger, you know and people don't very much... So there's some girls

they are coming, they are moving ahead. A time was when no female guide in Agra and now there is 5-6 female guides in Agra it's good.

Interviewer- Ok sir the role of the internet how has that impacted the life of the tour guide or the industry..

Shamsuddin Khan- No that has impact is very good. Because now, there was a client with me 10 years back when there was no internet. Now when the internet came and I put my image on the net, they checked and then they called me.

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Shamsuddin Khan- Dekh ab to har cheez net ke upar hai to guides bhi uska fayda utha rahe hai aur achi hi baat hai na. Koi client mujhse khush hai aur woh dobara aana chata hai, uska friend aana chata hai (Translation- See now that everything is on the internet, guides are also taking advantage of it and it's a good thing. If a client is happy with me and wants to come again, If his friend wants to come). Aaj hai humara ki direct intimation mil jata hai hume net ke through. Woh comments bhi karta hai. Agar hum galat kare to woh comments karta hai. Tweet karta hai. bahut si cheeze achhai bhi hai, burai to phir cum hai. sawal ye hai ki ek tourist aaya aur uske saath koi bhi xyz lag gaya. Uski nazaro mein toh woh guide hota hai (Translation- Today we're able to get direct intimation through the net. They can comment, they can tweet. There are alot of good things. Few bad things too. The question is that if a tourist is with a random xyz, in his eyes that person is a guide. Whether he is approved by the department or not, uski nazaro mein woh guide hota hai (Translation- In his eyes that person is a guide). Woh jo explain karta hai, uss image ko woh bech deta hai. Ab woh image guides kii image ko tarnish karti hai sometime, kabhi woh taarif karta hai. To ye toh... (Translation- The image created is based on what he explains. Sometimes he tarnishes the image of guides, sometimes they compliment it. So this...)

Interviewer- Do you think sometimes the actions due to unlicensed guides often tarnishes your name? so how do prevent that? how do you regulate that?

Shamsuddin Khan- We just request to the government. That we can do only. We cannot fight with them. We're requesting time to time to government and the government knows it. When this our, new chief minister came to Agra, first line of his speech was there should be no lapkas in Agra. Lapkas mean touts. For couple of days police was taking them, putting them behind bars etc. Now things are ok today. So there should... government.. appoint a program for this ki suppose somebody want to be.. There was, I mean 4 years back, there was judgement by the Allahabad high court and by that judgement they organised a guide training course for all these people who were working as lapkas, and after giving them licenses, there should be on lapka in

all the monument. Four years back this judgement was imposed and there was a time for 6 months. nothing has happened so far.

Interviewer- But sir how do you differentiate between a lapka and a licensed guide, cause when we had gone to the monument we always had people come and show us

Shamsuddin Khan- Never. Actually, there is no proper office at the monument. Which should be by the government. So that people should know that this is the government guides office here. Where the parking or where the ticket window is there. 6 years back there was the two governments meeting was here in JP hotel and I requested them for office and they accepted and there was a minutes. We get in writing that we're getting a guide office in Shilpgram. I got the, having those minutes with me. But nothing happened. What you'll do?

Interviewer- License wise also, I've had people who have shown me three licenses.

Shamsuddin Khan- Look at, you've seen our licenses. Go to the fort. You'll find the same license with lapka. who'll take care? He's having the same red ribbon, better license than me, standing outside, and the police is sitting right there

Shenawaz Khan (in the background)- They charge more than our wages also. They charge in dollars. They say 100.

Shamsuddin Khan- Suppose in the beginning they say 100. 100 rupees or 100 euro, 100 dollar. If there is a 10 people, for eg. they'll come back. How much? sir 100. When he'll get the 100 rupee note he will say no sir 100 dollars. Each. What to do? Because there is a man behind him telling how much money he is getting from the tourist.

Interviewer- There is proper scamming.

Shamsuddin Khan- Of course. Itni achhi trade hai, uska satyanash kar rakha hai (Translation- It has been ruined). And we are responsible for that. Humara ye moral duty hoti hai, hum usse open nahi karte (Translation- We have a moral duty, we do not open this). Humare apne colleagues hai. Jab aapko ek type ki training di gayi hai, sabko, to phir ek ka explanation x, ek ka y aur ek ka z kyun? This is what. Kai to koi kami hai. Humare training mein kami hai? Humare education mein kami hai? Humare culture mein kami hai? (Translation- They are our own colleagues. When we have all been trained the same way, then why does one have explanation x, one have explanation y and one z. There is definitely something lacking. Is there something lacking in our training? something lacking in our education? something lacking in our culture?) Ye jitne segments hai all the segments sit together and think only about Agra. Because every tourist coming to India comes to Agra to see the Taj. And first impression is the last impression.

If he is annoyed in the city of Taj, known as the city of love, he will go to other destination and say no agra people are rubbish.

Interviewer- Even the city is not developed because we were expecting something very different. This is very rural.

Shamsuddin Khan- What the money we are spending for the city you don't know. The money we spent for making this road to Taj through Shilpgram, in that money we could today have escalator from here to Taj. That kind of money. Problem is the man who is sitting on chair, what is his mentality? Has he come to make money or he came to serve the people.

Interviewer- In tour guides in general is there different treats towards Indian tourists and foreign tourists?

Shamsuddin Khan- No see, problem is this. For example after wages he has 1700 rupees. Normally any tourist cannot afford that money. For that very purpose there should be some guides who are domestic tourism guides. Government could do that. And they are the people. Suppose a person is an asshole, give them the license for the domestic tourism. So the tourist can afford 200, 300, 400 rupees. He can do that. But you don't have the policy. Proper policy. Every tourist is not a rich man, I mean, sometimes we feel that there is 30 foreigners in a group they say 1000 rupees per person and poor are sitting outside, they cannot afford. Every tourist is not a rich man. So many things are there.

Interviewer- Sir when demonetisation happened, how did that affect the industry

Shamsuddin Khan- They think this is all ridiculous. Suppose I am a tourist, for eg. I am on a train, going to Jaipur from some other destination and you have stopped my money. What I will do? I don't know anything. What tourists face the problem you won't believe. They beg like anything.

Interviewer- Cause this largely a cash based economy, right?

Shamsuddin Khan- Exactly. What we think, there is big difference, humare pradhan mantri going to other developed nations and see they are doing like that. And he tries to impose the same thing on India. But so many things are there in India. There are two different cultures. Why do you think about what they're doing, think about what we're doing. Our culture and their culture is very different. It can never be the same. Their families, husband, wife and child. This is the family there. In India, there's husband, wife, mother, father, mama, phuphi, bhai, this. We are having joint family system, majority of the people even today. People who came into the city, they're having a flat system. But in the rural, maximum people they are utilizing the same joint family system. In joint family system you look after each and every person. My brother's daughter is getting married there to, dowry, this and that. What is there? they don't have the

system. That's why the ladies at home are collecting small money from their pockets, keeping them, hide them. They will help at the time of marriage, it will help at the time of marriage, at the time of other ceremonies. You want to break the culture of this country? You stopped the money. Every woman is crying like anything. They've become habitual. GST to aaj aagaya usse pehle itna tourist, jo bhi aata tha all asking about how to get this money? Even your local officers from the department of tourism or state department, kiraye ke paise unhone jama karke tourist ko diye. Paper mein bhi aaya (Translation- they borrowed money and gave it to the tourists. It came in the paper as well). This kind of problem faced by the tourist. He's having money in his pocket but he cannot eat. What does it mean? (irrelevant rant on the government and failure of demonetisation and GST).

Interviewer: Sir do you think the changing government has also affected your industry?

Shamsuddin Khan: Of course. The people they're laughing about these kind of activities. What is the government doing? One law, one country, one tax. Where is the one tax? What is the GST? They should be one type of tax- 10%, 5%, 8%, one type of tax. But there's a 12%, a 15%, a 8% what does this mean is it not a mockery? Post 1 tax on each item.

Interviewer: Sir we also spoke to a lot of the tourists at different monuments and a lot of them do not take tour guides instead they prefer taking guide books or audio guides...

Shamsuddin Khan: Ok Audio guides, they imposed audio guides here, in gwalior, everywhere. Now suppose he's having an audio guide and one question is coming to his head. Who will give an answer? It's one way. And there's so many questions by the tourists which only the tour guide can answer. By books also, you can go to that place, certain history is there, that brochures are giving a little history, but whenever there are questions raised, who will answer them. There's certain knowledge in the book, certain knowledge in the.. But if you go deeply in the books, he doesn't find practical. So we have to analyse, we have to assess the tourist that what exactly he want. If there is a certain historians are coming, they know more than us. If archaeologists are coming. they know more than us. So we keep ourselves ready for that. What kind of tourist is that? We have to go answer to them.

Interviewer: Sir does your training help a lot because we were told that the process of getting a license is very difficult, especially with the kind of competition there is today and you have to know everything about everything to get a license.

Shamsuddin Khan: Every competition is a hard competition. Now, you're taking examination, prior to the selection. In our time, there was selection, there was examination, there was training,

there was examination, there was viva voce, and after we were able to get the license. Now a little change is there, now there's a selection, there's examination, there's viva voce and they're getting license. One part was missing. Now recently in this last course, they did examination, there's a training, there's an examination, and they're getting license. No viva voce. Is it not a mockery? Our job is to speak. A deaf and dumb could pass that course. They're writing.

Interviewer: They removed the viva from the tour guide training...

Shamsuddin Khan: They removed the viva from the tour guide. Is it not a mockery? If a deaf and dumb join that course he will pass all the examinations. What you will do? The most essential part of our job is to speak. And we remove the viva voce.

Interviewer: Sir is there a massive gaps in the incomes of the license and unlicensed guides or are they similar?

Shamsuddin Khan: They are enjoying more than us. Because if I am taking a tourist I will go on the that place which was recommended by our travel agent. For eg, shop. But he is free to take to any shop. So every shopkeeper is pleasing him. I have been ordered to take tourist to one shop, there there is no order. Take them to four shops. So he is getting more money. He is getting more respect. He is doing more than everyone. If you count all the approved guides, more than hardly 30% have a car. But touts? Having more than 80% cars with them. Approved guide driving a scooter, they're coming in a car. It is change. Because he is getting 30% commission. But that commission which is going to Delhi, is also in his pocket. The commission is the same. So if you really want to run in a good manner, decrease that. I talked to shopkeeper and said that make a proper 30% out of 50% and 10% to the guides, 10% to the [00:18:30.00] (inaudible) and 10% to the travel agent. And wash off 60% of the price of the item, you'll get double the sales. They don't understand because the money which you're asking from the travel agent is ridiculous. 5 crores. There was a company called Sita. Sold out in 5 crore rupees. Shopkeeper in Agra. 5 crores.

Interviewer: Sir the unlicensed guides actually complained to us that how the licensed people are the ones with cars and

Shamsuddin Khan: They are enjoying more. Because approved guides ke 30% ke paas car honghi aur unlicense sab ke paas car hai, 80% se zyaada (30% of the approved guides would have a license as compared to unlicense in which it's more than 80%).

Interviewer: By unlicensed do you mean the stay order guides?

Shamsuddin Khan: They are getting stay order from the court. Nobody is going to fight that stay order. Department?

Shenawaz Khan in the background- Actually if company gave tour assignment to unauthorised guides then they not giving them wages. If they give to the approved guide, we ask wages. This is the main reason. They prefer to give wages to the unapproved guide. Because if they have 10 assignment, they have to give more than 20,000 rupees as wages to the guides. But they have option. They give only the guest, they are providing only to the prominent guests an approved guide and then more than 80% assignment they give to the unapproved guide. So they are taking money from the agent but they're keeping in own pockets. And then they are providing the unauthorised guide. They force their guest to you know, look particular shops and shopkeeper also they are paying because they are lakhs and crores of rupees to the agent.

Shamsuddin Khan: Crores of rupees business value. We're talking about that shopkeeper 35 years back was just a small shop. 35 years, 5 crore rupees. I know. If I will not go to his shop, he will just make a phone call to the agent tomorrow, "I don't want to see his face". They don't even respect the guides at the moment. In the beginning when I become guide, Diwali festival each and every shopkeeper giving me sweets. Now no one is giving. Because we are bound to go to their shops, they need the travel agent because they're giving money to the travel agent. Why should we obey that order?

Interviewer: Sir where do see the future of this industry and the future of tour guides?

Shamsuddin Khan: If things will not change, there's not a good future for this trade. Neither for the guides. My son want to be guide. I stopped him. I said don't come. We do not have a respect in the profession. Suppose if in the eye of that shopkeeper what my personality is there? Maybe I'm the Prime Minister of certain country, He's putting his hand on my shoulder, I'm very happy. But in front of shopkeeper I don't have any value.

Shenawaz Khan in background- If tourist has limited time and I give more time to Taj Mahal, this is good for tourist. He didn't know about the shopping game. But shopkeeper calling me. You should come here. And if I wait over there guests will get irritated. Why you pushing me? And he will complain about guide.

Interviewer: So let's say a tour guide takes a tourist to a shop. Supposing the tourist doesn't buy anything, is the guide still blamed for it by the agent?

Shamsuddin Khan: Of course. This is the duty of the guide to prepare him to buy something.

Shenawaz Khan in background: Also they have team of salesman taking 50,000 to 1 lakh per month and they are trained to sell

Shamsuddin Khan: Listen to the salary of the salesman of the shops.

Interviewer: But what they're selling is useless.

Shamsuddin Khan: They are the people who are able to sell. 1.5 lakh rupees. per month. Apart from which there is a commission also.

Shenawaz Khan in background: They are masters with words and make sales of 10 L rupees, 20L rupees. So they have such qualities. So huge salaries plus 1% commission.

Shamsuddin Khan: It's a racket. I'm honestly saying it's a racket. Guide taking them to the shop, right? If the tourist make a complaint, who's complaint will be made? The guide take us to the certain place where I was cheated like anything.

Shenawaz Khan in background: Everyone targets guides only. Not the Travel agent, shopkeeper, department, only the guides.

Shamsuddin Khan: Every agency gives a comment sheet. At the end of the tour you have to sign that did you do some shopping?

Shenawaz Khan in background: Kiske kehne pe shop gaye? (Translation- On the basis of who's recommendation did you go?) I've explained the truth. This is the reason I stopped my children from becoming guides. Izzat nahi hai isme. Koi rapo, koi status nahi hai, mat aao. Halat poochni hai, chaprasi hota hai no jo mar jaata to uss din condolace ho jati hai, lekin ye trade hai jisme koi mar jaata hai to log khush hote hai. Hum bade izzat se dekhe jaate the, log izzat karte the humari. Humko bulaya jaata tha, ki ye client hai, ye group aa raha hai.

Samjhe, Incredible India, understood? This is called Incredible India.

Interview of Kapil Jain

(CEO of 'Expert Tours & Travels)

13th October 2017

Kapil Jain: Alright, uh.. my name is Kapil Jain, I run a travel company called Expert Tours and travels. Into this travel industry of Agra for about thirty years. I started my career in nineteen eighty eight. With one of the biggest travel agencies of india - called Travel Corporation of India and then started my own company later on, uh, way back in ninety ninety one. uh... to me guides are the most important segment of my industry. We are the people who bring the tourist from any part of the world, first to India, then to Agra. Most of the time travel agents like us, we never even get to meet with the clients, with the tourists, hardly , hardly. The tourists drive, they come, it is the guide who spends maximum time in any place with the tourist so they are the most, most important segment of our industry. Uh, you all might be knowing that how they are being trained, how they are being given licenses, we have different kinds of tour guides. We have the tour guides who are appointed by the Department of Tourism, Government of India. then you have the tour guides who have been appointed by the local state tourism authority - UP Tourism, and then you have the guides who are appointed by the Archaeological Survey of India and they were only at the monuments. and then we have guides uh.. so called guides who, uh I will honour them because they're working as tour guide by the orders of any competent authority or justice or court of this country. See the.. mr. Nehru said that the tour guides are the best ambassador of India, I hundred percent agree. Nineteen eighty eight, when I came to this industry, we had about forty eight guides. Only about forty eight or fifty guides. uh... today we have five thousand. The question comes, do we need five thousand? or what have been the reasons, people started coming into this profession. Why people started coming into this profession? Was it something that they were uh keen in meeting with the people from different other [arts of the world? Were they keen to uh.. to exchange their views with the others. Were they keen to know the others, the culture of any other country or the people? Was this the only reason or was this also going to be the bread and butter for the,? From nineteen eighty eight, fifty to five thousand. There must have been some reasons. Well the unfortunate part is that the way the money started flowing into this profession. I know many people who were the hawkers, rickshaw pullers, thanga walas - they all are tourist guides now. I do not know how many of you know this side of the story.

Amalina: We've actually experienced that, we met some rickshaw walas who were....

Kapil Jain: The responsibility of those, why this is happening today is first on the most respected people who are my colleagues today. I work with them on everyday basis, is the guides of the tourism department - Government of India. nineteen forty eight, it was the scarcity, nineteen eighty eight it was the scarcity of the guides. Travel agents were asking the Archaeological Survey of India to please give us more guides, we have more tourists and they were really really very good quality people. Very good quality people. I still have some images in my mind. We used to have a guide called Mr. Asthana and we also used to call him as Rana Pratap, Maharana Pratap. You know he used to come on his small Hero Puk kind of a vehicle. and then he used to shake hands first with the client. Client used to stand, to stand to say "hello sir, I am happy that you're my tour guide." So we have seen those profile. We have seen the profile of the tourist guides like Kuldeep Narayan, no more with us now in this world. I've seen that after giving the explanation of Taj Mahal or Agra Fort at Taj Mahal or at the respective monument, Kuldeep ji used to sit and client used to ask questions standing that "Mr. Narayan would you tell us what was this."

We have a uh.. I have another colleague, I never forget him Mr. Rajeev Saxena, he also runs a travel company today. The way he used to explain Kohinoor, the famous diamond - which is, a part of it is in Berl Museum in London or in Crown of the Queen. The way he used to explain this he was prac.. practically people used to visualize that the peacock throne was right here. All historical facts. No built in stories. Historical facts in the direction that people understand, people take this back with them. So we have seen those time. Slowly slowly, more people started coming in. I think the situation started getting worse from nineteen ninety two. When some more people came in and then they caused blasting situation in nineteen ninety seven or two thousand, I don't remember the year exactly when this Agra industry got another three hundred guides. So now, the competition has started. And it was the question of survival of the fittest. And this is where exactly at this time, this is where the definition of the survival of the fittest changed. This is where the other, instrument of this tourism industry started coming into their lives. And started dominating it slowly slowly slowly. For them, shopping became the first aspect. First, shopping. I've seen in many a situation once upon a time when we used to hire a guide services for a half day city tour of Agra, we used to have Taj Mahal, Agra Fort and I'timād-ud-Daulah. As a part of this half day package. Today this I'timād-ud-Daulah we have forgotten completely. Completely. While I can understand that city has grown, more traffic conditions. Definitely

Juhi Ma'am: I saw the place this morning, It's beautiful.

Kapil Jain: Right. Beautiful place. It's a jewel in the box. The jewellery box. I hundred percent agree. I hundred percent agree that now the guides also have their limitations because earlier, going from this area to I'timād-ud-Daulah used to take five minutes. I sent you the message because I will be delayed because I was stuck up in traffic. So, I understand that this city has grown, traffic has, has increased, fine. Question is the same. You don't want to show it to the tourist because of the scarcity of the time or you don't want to show it to the tourist because of any other reason. That is where the problem started. The travel agents are also equally responsible. The Government of India is also equally responsible. The increased fee for a, foreign tourist to two hundred and ten rupees, were reduce the timings. We make such a beautiful expressways. People now come in the morning and go back in the evening. and they have limited time - one hour. So slowly slowly we started focusing ourselves also. Everybody as a, as, as a unit started focusing only on Taj Mahal. But when there is a time, I've listened to many many tourist guide, after showing the Taj Mahal in forty five minutes, the tourist have got one and a half hour, but since they need to still take client to a shop to earn commission. Forty five minutes, and then Shop. Let's say tourist has more time, well there is a saying which we, we make joke - that after seeing the Taj Mahal, if the client has the potential of shopping and has scarcity of time, why should I show him Agra Fort? Let's take a drive around. And if client or a tourist does not have the potential of shopping, why should I waste my time? By showing him the Taj Mahal & Agra Fort. Let's take a drive around. So at the end the poor tourist, is not seeing Agra Fort. You see more - you talk more, you remember more, you learn more. You go back to your country, you talk to five people and you.. one of those five come back to, to this, to country. We all are responsible. Primarily, primarily when we started, I am hoping to say, I will be happy if this video goes to any important people. It's we, we started taking commissions from the shops. I still remember that once a travel company of Delhi called me, we assigned a guide, clients, the tourists were so happy, so happy, he had a fantastic tour report from them at the end. The tour company from Delhi called me and said that "Who was the guide?" I still remember his name, Mr.Tripathi, very senior guide. Mr.Tripathi. He's a excellent reports. Clients are extremely happy. They said that they would like to come back to see some more places with Mr.Tripathi, not only of Agra but of the nearby places also, but... (12:17:00, indistinguishable) do not assign him assign never for our tourists. I said Why? Yeah, he couldn't take the client to the shop. So we started that. Followed by the guides. And today, it is so worst part of it, I feel uh.. I feel shame that I am part of this dirty industry. I do not know how many people will talk to you in this way. We all are a part of, not of the tourism industry, we are now a part of bloody shopping rackets. It's a shopping

mafia. Unfortunately, I also have two kids. My daughter is, is studying. I am also a part of it. But if, if, if young people like you can do something, can motivate somebody, please come. Don't... stop it. I guarantee. The day the shopping commission business is stopped, the number of this five thousand tour guides will reduce to five hundred and then only the quality will sustain. We will come to our original place. The survival of the fittest. The definition of the survival of the fittest will be how good you are, how good language you speak, how much knowledge you have, how much you are (13:46:00 indistinguishable) part with your tourist. If you work honestly, in any industry, whether you are in tourism, in hoteliering or in any manufacturing industry. If you work honestly, the money will come on it's own. Money will find a way to come to you. But unfortunately we forgot that. Unfortunately. Come with me, I will show you the facts of the industry. I will show you that how does it work. And if you people have courage, this is the reason I write you, in my email - that you should be ready to know the facts of it. Mr. Ashtana used to come on a Hero Puk. Today all five thousand guides have a, have a car. All five thousand. They have big buildings. Big buildings. Billionaires. one thousand three hundred and fifty rupees is the fee for the half day. One thousand six hundred and fifty rupees is the fee for the full day. Where from the money is coming?

Amalina: So, as you said, the commission system needs to be broken, how do you think.. how do you think that will happen?

Kapil Jain: The commission system has gone so much in our.. our blood. That we all need to go on the ventilator, to be very honest. All the blood has to be taken out. Or somebody has to do something, otherwise the tourism is dying. If you see our rate of increase of the tourism, we are increasing by about four to five percent and then we feel very happy oh wow, we are increasing by four to five percent. Look at Dubai. Twenty twenty, two thousand twenty - they will be having the maximum number of tourists visiting Dubai. Forget about the tourists transiting through Dubai. Because Dubai is also the.. A very big hub for big hub for for.. connecting umm US or Europe with Asia. Forget about those numbers. There is no commission. In Dubai you have the big shopping malls and very interesting - average tourist spend more money in Dubai, in shopping, then in India. Still. Many a times, the guides thinks that they are, they're not paid well. They're paid one thousand three hundred and fifty rupees for a half day and one thousand six hundred and fifty for a full day. While the guide in London, showing you the London side, is being paid hundred and ten pounds. And then immediately we convert this hundred and ten pound is approximately about ten thousand rupees so why are we not, why are we paid only

fifteen hundred rupees with the same tourist of, from London. Very simple. Our life's style is different. Our expenses are low. Renting a home in London may cost you two thousand pounds, here in two thousand pounds, the whole family lives for.. six months. I may ask the guides, many many times I mean you know the selection process and everything. How these guides are being selected.

Amalina: If you could give us a little clarity on that....

Kapil Jain: Okay uh.. The Department of Tourism will look for the need of the number of guides required. Keeping in mind the increase of the tourism. This data they collect from the various segments or various stakeholders of the industry. Everybody gives their feedback and then they will conduct a course. Um.. It's a written examination. Followed by an interview. And then they are being trained for about three months, they practical classes where they'll be taught history, and then they are taken on a tour. To show, or to learn it practically. Classes, and after that they all be given the license to work as a tour guide. Since department is the license giving authority, so it's department only which decides about the fee. That what should be the fee, because they are, they are the governing authority for it. This fees is being decided in uh.. consultation with the different stakeholders of the industry, the travel agents as well as the guides. So they sit together and we fight, you know we make two thousand, if practically you would see it once sometime. It's not easy to buy potatoes and tomatoes you know. Wahan par hum log bet khar ke, Aloo tamatar ke thara mol-bhav kare tho (*Translation-* There we used to sit and negotiate like we were buying potatoes and tomatoes) - nahi-nahi arey ek kaam karte hai, satra rupay bada dethe hain. Nahin saab 17 rupay bada detey hain. Samaj main nahin aata wahan kya bol raha hain (*Translation-* No no let's let's increase it by 17 rupees. No sir let's increase it by 70 instead. You can't understand what's going on). So this is how it will be done and then, problem started the central agency did not calculate correct numbers. I can understand, it's not possible to collect, to have correct numbers but - it's that vague. For five minutes, acute crises of the guides and then after five minutes - okay give them three hundred. and then forget about another seven years. So the state authorities started coming in. And Then the money coming started coming in. Full corruption. Three lakhs rupees to the guide. Pay bribe three lakhs - take the license. Hundred percent commission. I can challenge. Select five, five hundred good guides. Five hundred good guides of Agra. Give them an english newspaper. Ask them to read any paragraph by looking into the, by seeing the, the newspaper. Only, only read - they can't. This is the quality. Ultimate target is the same. Problem became that this guide license became a license to get into the

building. Now you have a license and now nobody will stop you to, to use this beautiful building, for commercial purpose. Here is the problem. For them it was not a... For many of them it is not a license to earn bread and butter. Honestly. It is a license for them to get into the building. I ask you a question. You studied many.... You, you know a lot about history and tomorrow you come with a friend and you show him or her or with your family to Taj Mahal, and you start explaining it, should you be stopped? You will be stopped. Because now you will be taken as you are working as a tour guide. And you will have to give five hundred papers "No no, it's my aunty, it's my uncle, she's my sister, my friend. They've come from Pune." No no you need to have a guide. The first perception of the guide, I was talking yesterday to somebody from Pune only, uh.. she works, she's heading the HR department of a very big um, chemical company, which is headquartered in Pune. And it's called Sudarshan Chemicals. So she is visiting along with her young daughter and she said "Kapil ji I've got a fantastic history. I like to know history. Will you please give us a guide?" I said "yes." You know what was the first question? Which kind of guide? Guide guide guide, or hello ma'am I am so and so but ma'am I need to go at three, because she's an Indian. She's not going to go back to these big shopping emporiums, she's not going to buy-spend that much of money. Okay fine, Mr. Jain will pay him, pay me one thousand three hundred and fifty rupees, that's pay that much of money to him, our work only this much. Bloody Indian. Unfortunately we started calling it. I feel so ashamed of it. You assign, you call a guide "Hello Mr. Sharma, how are you doing? Fine. Sir, are you free tomorrow?" You know what comes the first question? "How many clients?" Number two, "which hotel?" if he's staying in Crimson - "Yaar I am thinking that I have to take my son to a school." If it is Amarvilas - "Yeah I am free, what time?" Staying at big hotel, has more spending capacity. Third question - "Kahan se hain?" which country? Abhi woh Napali nikla, toh samasya hoga. Abhi woh American hain, toh theek hai (*Translation*- Now if ends up being Nepali that's a problem. If he's american then it is ok). (indistinguishable 24:27:00) Spending powers more hain. Aur hum log un haalathon sain nikalthe hain (*Translation*- And we come out from these situations). Now when I am selling a tour package, shall I ask a client "No no no, you're from Nepal so... uh.." aapne ek sawal pucha tha ki kya isko broke karne ki ek solution hain? Nahin (*Translation*- You asked me if there is a need to break this. No). Mujhko lagta hain ki humko,uh.. agar humne ek balance bithaya. Demand and Supply main, toh cheez apne aap badal jayege. ab question hoga ki (*Translation*-- We need to have a balance. If the demand and supply change, everything else will change on its own.) There were lot of people those who used to work as tour guide, they were, they were taking it as a part time profession because they were so keen to.... to meet with the people. State Bank ke ek manage rehte the, unka Sunday ki dhin free hothi thi, kyunki unko chuti thi. Toh

Sunday ko kaam karte the. University mei professor the, unke bhi Sunday chuti hoti thi, ya Diwali vacations hothi thi. Toh aankhe keh deta the, Bhaiya mere Diwali vacation hain, I will be available. (*Translation-* In the State Bank, they would get sundays Off so they were free on sundays and would work on Sundays. There university professors would also have an off on sundays or would have Diwali Vacations, so he would come and say that “bhaiya have diwali vacations and hence will be available) Aaj Agra sheher main, kam se kam pachaas guides aisan hain jinki apni badi shopping emporiums hain. Kam se kam pachas. Hamari problem hothi hain, jab hum tourist ko bohot kuch kehke sale kathe hain. Woh kabhi tourist aatha hain, toh bohot saari expectations ke saath aata hai. In majority of the cases, uske expectation yahan pe toot gaya. And that's the time when a person like me feel bad. Agra sheher mein paanch hazaar tourist guide, aap ke Kochi main ek. I don't if, if you guys are only concentrating on Agra but in general agar aap dekhein na? In entire South India between three states, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka, aap kho pata hain, kitne guides hain? Jho French bol sakte hain aur kitne guides hain jho Spanish bol sakte hain? Chaar guides is able, pure in these three states. Kerala the god's own country receives more more number of tourists than UP and the Rajasthan. Wahan par Spanish bolne wale guide, kewal chaar. yaha pe pathar hataye, ek Spanish bolne wala guide milega (*Translation-* In Agra today, there are at least 50 tour guides who have their own shopping emporiums. At least 50. Our problem arises when the tourist comes and has high expectations, in majority of the cases, all their expectations breaks here. That's when someone like me feels bad. In The city of Agra there are 5000 guides, and in your Kochi there's one. Have Ya'll seen in general? In south India, between three states, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka, do you know how many guides are there ? who know how to speak in French? And who know how to speak in Spanish? Only four guides are able to. Kerala the god's own country receives more more number of tourists than UP and the Rajasthan.)

(People from the group laugh)

Kapil Jain: Sachay hain yeh. inko hum yahan pe wahan ke liye kyu nahi train karte.? Kyun nahin balance karte hain? Dhono jhagde mein bhi problem solve ho jayengi. Hum overloaded hain. Wahan par scarcity hain. Kyun nahin karte? Yeh wahan se jayenge nahin woh wahan se ghusne nahi denge unko. Department itself. Bahut badha uske problem hain. Humne Hindustan ko char zones main banarake hain. Aap north ke guide hain, aap west ke guide hain, abh ayega ek din. Yahan Vijay Nagar Colony ke guide hain, yahan Fatehabad Road ke guide hain. Kya kar rahe hain? I understand. (*Translation-* it is true! Why don't we train them to take tours here?)

Why can't we maintain a balance? The problem will be solved in both the places. We are over overloaded. There's scarcity there. Why don't we? they don't leave from there and those from there don't let them in. The department itself. They have a big problem. We have divided hindustan into four zones. You're a guide for the North, you're a guide for the west, you're a guide for the east and now there will come a day when there will be a guide for Vijay nagar colony , a guide for Fatehabad Road, what are they doing?? I Understand.) For me working with tour guides in South India may be difficult because of many reasons. I've been born and brought up in this environment, in this circumstances. My local language. First, main ye buildings kho dekh dekh ke bade hue hoon.(*Translation-* I have grown up looking at these buildings, for me.....) mere liye Rajasthan ke histroy ko samajhna is much more easier than understanding the history of Dravidians. (*Translation-* I can understand the history of Rajasthan better than the history of Dravidians). Abhi uh.. Pune jate hain Agar main Lonavla mein tha kuch din pehle(*Translation-* Now let's go to Pune and lets say if I'm in Lonavala) . There's a beautiful place, unexplored for foreign tourists. Such a beautiful place I was at a place called Machaan. Main wahan par ek uh.. Lonavla ke as paas ek recky kar raha tha. I was making some programmes for that and I realised that itself - Bhaja caves and uh.. What do you call it? Uh.. Lohagarh Fort which is in Lonavala , what a sight it is. You know what was the problem there? Why we are not promoting this? We don't have tour guides there. Now you understand. How important, a tour guide is. Pune mai mera paas ek bhi tour guide nahi hain.Yahan paanch hazaar hain. Le jao bhai yahan se thode. Dono ki samasya humari khatam ho jayegi. Quality yahan rukeghi. Gwalior Fort dedh so kilometer, aaj bhi Fort ke gate ke bahar eet pe bethe hua hai bichare ye. (*Translation-* In Pune I don't even have one tour guide. And here there are 5000 of them. Take some from here bhai. Our both's problem will get solved. Gwalior Fort 150 kilometres, even today outside the gate poor things are seated on bricks.)

So bad situation. Hum unhe working atmosphere nahi de paa rahe hai (*Translation-* We are not able to give them a good working environment). Kyon? Yaha pe cars aa rahi hai aur woh waha pe beet pe baitha hai. Kyunki humne balance nahi kiya. Humne paisa le karke guide bana diye. Tangewala, rickshawala- main yeh nahi kehta ki tage wala can not be a guide(*Translation-* Why? Because we have not maintained a balance. We took money from them and made them guides richshaw drivers, tanga drivers, all of them, im not saying that they cannot be tour guides). If I say this, I'm the biggest fool. Our last President, Mr. Abdul Kalam kya the or President bane? Toh main yeh nahi keh sakta ki rickshawalla guide nahi ban sakta. No! Achcha hai. Train karo usko. Aur ek problem hui ke humne distinguish karna shuru kiya ki you are guide for foreign tourists,

you are guide for domestic tourists. I agree that this is also a very good concept. Woh humne nah kiya, woh hota gaya. Ab problem yeh ayi ki domestic guide kehta hai, Agra Fort mein, Sheesh Mahal mein, ki sahab yaha pe Anarkali nachti thi. Aur Archaeological Survey ka ek aadmi wahi khada hua hai. Woh pachas rupaye le ke uss sheesh mahal ke darwaze khol raha hai. Woh bhi sun raha hai ki guide sahab kya bol rahe hai. Woh ek baar bhi nahi keh raha hai ki guide sahab Anarkali a toh zikr hi nahi hai Mughal history mein. Par humko, achcha humari bhi galto hai. Humko bhi woh spicy stories achchi lagti hai. Abhi fort ghumake Anarkali ka dance nahi dekha to kya fort ghuma? Yeh humari bhi problem hai. (*Translation-* Our last president, Mrs Abdul Kalam, who was he? And he still became the president. So I can't say that rickshaw drivers cannot be the president. No!, its good, we should train them. Another problem has arised where we are trying to distinguish that guides on basis of the tourists the cater to, like oh you are a tour guide for foreign tourists or you are a guide for domestic tourists. I agree that this is a good concept but we didn't consciously do it, it just happened on its own. Now the problem arises when the domestic tour guide tells his tourists that in the Agra Fort, Sheesh Mahal, Anarkali would dance in her days. But a guide trained by the Archaeological Survey of India is going to stand in his way. Now the guide from the Archaeological survey of India is going to take 50 rupees and probably open the door to sheesh mahal for his client. Even he is listening to this other tour guide talk, but he not even once mentions that the character of Anarkali is not even once mentioned in the entire Mughal History. But s for us, it's our fault too in a way. Who does not like the spicy stories and gossip? Now after the entire tour of the fort, if you are not told about Anarkali, then what's the point of the tour?) But for me it's very difficult to change the entire mass of this country but it is easy to change a certain fraternity- a handful of people only by giving proper training. Aur jis din humne unse aisi feelings daal di ki you are the real ambassadors (*Translation-*And the day we make incorporate feelings in them, they are the real ambassadors). We need them badly, the industry needs them badly. Survival of this industry is not possible without the tour guides because they are the most important segment of the industry. They are the people who stay with the client for maximum number of hours. Maximum number of time. Our job finishes when they say, "Hello Mr. Sharma, your client Mr. William will meet you at 9am at the lobby of hotel Mughal Paradise. After that 9-6, is their job. Aur hum khana nahi kha pata hai. Humko dar lagta hai ki shaam ko che baje hum client se milne jayenge toh woh hume kya kahenge. Ek tourist ko yaha tak lane mein -since I have my office in Spain also, I know how much time it takes - ek tourist ko yaha tak lane mein jo normally kaam karta hoon, sixty to eighty emails exchange hote hai. 10-12 different kinds of presentation exchange hote hai. Agar hum hours mein calculate kare toh it's a huge number - 500-600 ghante tourist ko yaha

tak lane mein lagta hai. Aur teen ghante mein 9-12 ya toh excellent ho jata hai ya khatam ho jata hai. Humara aise bohot circumstances dekhe hai. 9 and we don't get to eat or drink much. (*Translation-* We are always scared that if we go to meet a client at around 6 o'clock, what will he think? I have an office in Spain as well so I know how tough it is to get a client even till here, normally we exchange at least 60 to 80 emails before they confirm. About 10-12 presentations are exchanged. If we calculate using hours, then about 500-600 hours are used only to get a tourist till here. And within three hours from 9-12 either it goes excellent or it goes horrible and everything is finished. We have seen many such circumstances.) Taj Mahal dekhne ke baad tourist kehta hai ke "No, no I don't need any guide in the city, I will be happy to visit myself." But we've seen situation like this also where the tour guide says, excellent guide the best ever guide I met. I've been visiting Kenya, I've been visiting South Africa, I've been visiting France but he's the best. Where is our problem? Hum selectivity kyun nahi decide kar pa rahe hai? (*Translation-* Why can't we choose selectively? Why aren't we talking about sustainability?) Hum quality sustainability ki baat kyu nahi kar rahe hai? (*Translation-* Why aren't we talking about quality sustainability?) Yeh toh seedhe history professor bana rahe unko- Mr. Tripathi jaise log. Taj Mahal ki baat unhe pata hai- yeh wali baat kaha pe lagvayi hai, khade hoke banvaya the lgon ne. Yaha hum Anarkali ko naach rahe hai. Humaari problem yeh hai ki hum quality sustain nahi kar pa rahe. Koi mujhse puche ki if I would like my son to be a tour guide, I would say not in this circumstance. Main kahi baar guide se poochta hoon Che saath aath lakh mahine mein kamate ho, officially. Tumhare paas akhir hai kaunsi aisi quality? Puchta hoon...pehle plus two kate hai fir teen saal Kota jake engineering ki tayari karte hai phir chaar saal tak engineering padhte hai fir Infosys mein apne ghar se 2200 km door 17000 ki salary mil jati hai. Kya hai ? Kuch toh hoga na. My daughter- mein aapko apna example deta hoon- she's an MBA from Vanasthali. 2 saal uske baad internship vaigra karte rahe and now she's working at a bank in Kulgaon drawing a salary of 21000 rupees. I'm very happy, very happy. Yahan agar aaj ek guide kaam imandari se kare, toh 2000 rupaiya kahi bhi mil jayenge. Bilkul imandari se kare, matlab seedha seedha sochke kare, tobhi utna guaranteed hai.

(*Translation-* Sometimes I ask the tour guides that in a month you earn about 6-7 lakhs officially, what kind of quality do you actually have? Without sustainability and wrong information of anarkali dancing and all? I ask first two years you take, then you go to kota for three years for engineering then they study engineering for four years and after that work at infosys which is situated 2200 km from your house and you are paid 17000. What is this? There must be something right? I'll give you my example, my daughter is an MBA from Vansathai. She did her

internships etc. for two years after which and now she works at a bank in kulgaon w a salary of 21000 rupees. Im very happy. Out here if one guide works faithfully and genuinely then he can be lucky enough to earn 2000 rupees, in fact then too it's not guaranteed.)

I'll give you an example. I told some tour guides that I'm looking for some staff for the office. And you're the best people. Why don't you come work with me in my office? I will give you minimum guaranteed 50,000 rupees as your salary. None of them agreed. I said that when there are tourists, you can do the tours but your wages will not be paid because you'll be on the salary kind of thing. But whatever tipping you get, don't take them to shops because I personally don't like it. I hate this...to be left behind. Shayad mera frustration bol raha ho ki mein industry mein peeche reh gaya. But theek hai, hum theek karte hai. Maybe my frustration spoke for me that I was left behind in the industry. But it's okay, I'm doing what's right. We're the highest foreign exchange earner in entire UP in terms of this particular tourism sector is concerned for the country, in UP in tourism sector as in travel agency sector. But humko abh bhi lagta hai hum bohut peeche chhoot gaye, commision nahi le paye.(*Translation-* But we still feel like we have been left behind, we couldn't take the commision). They refuse..it's been 50 years. Ask the association guides why? You think ki by way of working it earns this much money? They say our guides license and conditions do not allow us. Ab humne unko bandh bhi diya. Theek. Unhe kaam bhi nahi dena chahte. Hum unse kaam karne bhi nahi chahte. Unki bhi apni samasya hai. (*Translation-* Now we don't even let them work, we've kind of tied them down nor do we give them any work. This is a problem in itself). Mere saath bethte hai, mere colleagues hai, share karte hai. Abhi (unclear: 39.10.01) GST ne kar diya. 18% tax hai guide services pe. They come into the category of professional so they come into the category of 18% of GST. A white lie has been said. I hope Mr. Jaitley listens to this that if income is upto 20000 rupees you don't need to go for registration of GST blah blah blah. Then dhire se kaha gaya ki whoever will take your services we will take tax from him.

Toh aaj kal humara aur guide log ka bada lagda chal raha hai. Hum kehte hai hum 18% tax kam karke denge because we are paying for your tax. (*Translation-* So nowadays, we guides have been arguing a lot, we say that we will reduce 18% tax because we are paying for your tax).They say no no no no charge it from the clients. We're charging and charging from the clients and tour guides are getting very expensive. Let me tell you we are the most expensive tourist destination in Asia except Singapore. Humne Taj Mahal ki ticket toh ek hazaar rupaye kar di bahut achcha kiya par behes jaane se nahi ruki(*Translation-* We increased the ticket rates of Taj to 1000, which

is a good thing but the argument still did not resolve, it will never get resolved, during my father's time also it had not.) Woh kabhi nahi rukhengi, mere baba ke time pe bhi nahi rukhi thi. Tab bhi jati thi. Ab bhi nahi rukhengi woh. I go with the guides sometimes because I like to share ki bechare unki problem kya hai. our concerned authorities ko time pe mithai-vithai diwali holi sab nahi gayi na toh collar pakad ke bitha dete hai ek sipai waha pe. Aa jao. Uske paas license nahi hai thike bhai. Bithaoge tab bhi dikhaega na. Tab tak tourist is thinking I think I am with the wrong person if the police has caught him. Satyanash kar diya. Waha par kya, unki bhi apni side hai. Main unse bhi kehta hoon ki we should be on a platform where together we should work. Kyunki mujhe bhi shopping ki commission chahiye, unhe bhi chahiye. Bandar baat ki ladhai mein lage hue hai.

(Translation- I go with guides sometimes, I like sharing their problems and hearing about them. If we don't please our concerned authorities in time by sending them sweets for Diwali and holi, they straighten and collar and make us sit like some soldier in the corner. Please come. He does not have a license, toh it's okay bhai. Even if you make him sit it's going to show na. Till then the tourist is thinking that I am with the wrong person if the police has caught him. Ruins everything. The thing about there is that even they have their side. Even I tell them that we should be on a platform where we can work together. Because even I want to earn the shopping commission and so do they.)

Isliye saakth mein kaam nahi kar pate. Aap log kuch achcha sa kariye, kuch achcha sa likhiye kuch achche se baat kijiye. Samjhayiye, hume bhi samjhayiye, unko bhi samjhayiye, achche log aaye industry mein. Bohot zarurat hai. Extremely, extreme need, we require as many people as possible in this industry. Naye nahi chahiye, replacement chahiye. Humko sirf itna antar hai. Aap hi log jao mein aapko achcha batata hoon. Let me send a guide to you. Phir aap purani mandi pe khade ho jana, Shivgram parking hain waha pe. Use same Taj Mahal ko dekhne jaana woh guide ke saath. He is also a guide. Either he has a license or a stay order from the court ki my pardada used to work here in Taj Mahal so I should also be given a license and court gives them a license or a stay order which keeps them working for 200 years. Shah Jahan nahi hain yaha par, ro deta tha ki kaise kaise lot meri minaret dekh rahe aur kaise kaise log dikha rahe hai. Sachai hai.

(Translation- That is why we aren't able to work together. You guys do something good or write something good or talk nicely. Make us understand, make us also understand and make them also understand that we need to good people to come into this industry. We are in extreme need

of them. We require as many people as possible in this industry. We don't need new ones, we need people who can be replacements. Let me send a guide to you. Then you go to the old mandi, there's Shivgram parking there. Then go to see the Taj Mahal with a guide with that same guide. Either he has a licence or a stay order from court that my great grandfather used to work here in Taj so I should be given given a license and court gives them a license or a stay order which keeps them working for 200 years. Today Shah Jahan is not alive, if he was, he would cry seeing the kind of people coming to see his minaret and the kind of people showing it to others. It's the truth.)

Amalina: Sir you mentioned there are different types of licences so is there any sort of hierarchy among the people who own these licenses?

Kapil Jain: For me?

Juhi: No, she is asking about the general perspective. Is there a hierarchy amongst them?

Kapil Jain: Amongst the guides they have. They say that I'm a red card holder he's a yellow card holder. Maine kaha na abhi yeh ASI ka guide hai.(i just said right now that he is an ASI guide) Yeh hai or yeh rahega. Because the DOT guides think they are superior. The reason is that they were the only ones initially and they still think that the State Tourism Authority does not has any right to produce any more licenses. So this fight will always be there. So Agra Development Authority bol rahi hai ki hum bhi apne guides bana denge.(so Agra Development Authority is saying that even they will make or raise their own guides.) Arrey jo sadak se aap ja rahe hai woh Agra Development Authority ki hi hai na (arre the road you are walking on is Agra Development authority's na). So there is definitely. As a user if I speak for myself, anyone who has the permission to work as a guide from any source is a tour guide as long as he is legally allowed to work by virtue of the orders of the court, by virtue of state tourism, by virtue of central agency, he is a tour guide. For me, it is the quality. Whosoever will produce good quality I will be happy to work for him. Because if I'm going to pay 1350 to anybody...aap bazaar jaoge aur do t-shirt 100 rupaiye ke hai toh you would definitely like to choose the better quality (if yo go to the bazaar and there are two t-shirts worth 100 rupees then you would definitely choose the one with the better quality). Guides kehte hai ke agents paise nahi dete, agents kehte hai guides kaam nahi karte(*Translation*-The guides say that the agents do not give money and the agents say that the guides do not work). Ek forum mein maine keh diya tha (i had mentioned in one of the forms) and that's my biggest mistake (chuckles) if I like to wear a white shirt and if I know that this is the brand I like I would prefer to the shirt from whichever shop is selling it to me for less. What is wrong in this/ Then guides started coming to us and to get more and more work started spoiling our staff in the offices. Commission dete hai, mujhe pata hai yeh baat. Aapko

ashcharya hoga. Aap ayiye mere saath office mein ek din. Yeh holi mithai-mithai dete hai, commission dete hai usko. Kyon dete hai pata hai? Achcha wala assignment chahiye(they give commission,I know this for sure. You will be shocked. Ya'll come with me to my office one day. They give you the holi sweets, the commission. Do you know why they give though? Because they want a good assignment.) Humare office mein ek ladka hai Dinesh(T- there's a boy in our office called Dinesh) He's responsible for assigning guides. So now among the panel also there is competition. Dinesh bhai mujhe achcha wala assignment dena (Dinesh brother, give me a good assignment). Yeh achcha wala assignment kaunsa hai?(*Translation*-Now who is a good tourist?) Amarvilas se hai, Delhi se direct aa raha hai, yeh bhi problem hai(if he is from Amarvilas, coming directly from delhi then thats a problem). Tourist Rajasthan se ghoom ke aa raha hai ya Delhi se direct aa raha hai? Agar Rajasthan se ghoom ke aa raha hoga toh sara paisa kharcha kiya hoga na shopping mein. Ab yaha pe kya bacha uske paas? Agra aa raha hai to "fresh" hai, "fresh". Usko hum kehte hai "fresh". Tourist fresh hai bilkul. Kabhi sunni hai (laughs) " Taja taja aa raha hai, fresh bilkul." (laughs) Pata nahi kya karoge usko, katoge usko? Anyway so there is a discrimination among themselves and there is discrimination among the people who are taking their services.(*Translation*-If the tourist has already been to rajasthan and is coming after a trip there then he would have already spent most of his money in shopping there. Now what will he spend here? If he is coming to Agra, then he is "fresh". We call them "fresh". The tourist is fresh (chuckles). God knows what will you do of him, will you cut him?Anyway so there is a discrimination among themselves and there is discrimination among the people who are taking their services.)

Juhi: When you say you take them on the basis of quality, how do you define quality?

Kapil Jain: For me anybody who can read one page of Times of India in English.
(everybody laughs)

Kapil Jain: This was a matter of a joke. Tripathi ji ko sunie, Rajiv Saxenaji ko suniye, Brijesh ko suniye.(ko suniye- listen to them) For me quality is I myself can argue with a guide for five hours on Taj Mahal. If a guide can satisfy me for me that's a quality. Shah Jahan yaad rahega chaar ghante tak, year of construction yaad rahega che ghante tak. Achcha wala guide malum hai kaun hai? Jabhi chidiya udti hai na Taj Mahal ke gades ke upar se, woh kehta hai this is not parrot this is parakeet and yeh Agra ke iss region mein paya jaata hai. Woh achcha guide. Achcha guide...mera tourist yaha pe history ka professor banne nahi aaya hai. Woh ek achcha experience lene aaya hai. Ek achcha guide woh hai jo yeh explain karta hai that the minarets are leaning slightly outward because to remove the optical illusion. There is a scientific fact about it. You

drive on the street. Dono taraf ped lage hote hai. Far end of the street aapko aisa narrow lagta hai. Ek achcha guide woh hai jo yeh explain karta hai that the minarets are leaning slightly outward because to remove the optical illusion. There is a scientific fact about it. You drive on the street. Dono taraf ped lage hote hai. Far end of the sadak aapko aisa narrow lagta hai. Agar aap uss wale end ko todha chauda kar denge, toh aapko bilkul straight dikhega. Aise jaate hain makes sound so here was the peacock throne. Chalo museum, Kohinoor, Queen necklace. So baut acha guide woh hai jo mujhko lagta hai ki todhi si aur research karta hai uspe. Woh kehta hai ki Ahmed Shah Abdali usko loot ke le gaya toh uske baad uska kya hua. Acha guide woh hai joh kehta hai ki aaj woh--historical hai, it's a written fact ki aaj woh Bank of Tehran ke basement mein hai. Last time Palavi Shah Khomeni (?) was seen sitting on this chair. It is the molded form of that peacock throne. Acha guide woh hai joh roj subah akbaar padhta hai. Joh uski baat karta hai ki humara inflation kya hai. Common life humari kya ho rahi hai. Rituals kya hai mere desh mein. Acha guide woh hai. Uskeliye ache guide ke liye sabze pehli cheez jo zarurui hai, sabze pehli cheez- a command on the language. Agar aapke paas woh command hi nahi hoga language pe, toh aap bologe kya. This is how I select. Aur baataiye? Any questions?

(Translation- You can remember who Shah Jahan was for about four hour and the date of construction of Taj Mahal for about six hours. But do you know who a good guide is or what constitutes in being a good guide? When bird flies near the dome of the taj he points it out and says that that's a parakeet and not a parrot, s a bird specie common to agra. The tourists have not come here to become professors in history but has come to have a good experience. A good guide states the fact that the minarets are tilted slightly outwards to remove the optical illusion. There is a scientific fact about it. You drive on the street. There are trees planted on either side of the road. You will find the far end of the street relatively narrower. A good guide will explain that the minarets are hence tilted slightly outwards to reak the optical illusion. If you make that end a little broader, you will see it to be straight. The know where the peacock throne is. Then in the case of museum, Kohinoor, queen's necklace. So an extremely good guide is one who does some more research on these things than required on his own. They say that ahmed shah abdali stole it and went and then what happened. A good guide will tell you that it is historical, it's a written fact that it lies in the basement of the bank of Tehran. Last time Palavi Shah Khomeni (?) was seen sitting on this chair. It is the molded form of that peacock throne.)

Juhi: These people that you named: Vrijesh and the others. Are they still working?

Kapil Jain: They are. They are working.

Advait: Would it be actually possible to have a tour with one of them, either today or tomorrow?

Kapil Jain: I can check, what is their availability.

Advait: Yeah if tomorrow or day after is--

Kapil Jain: Ask--ask. You know, did you happen to meet with Sanjay Sharma?

Everyone: Yeah

Kapil Jain: He is one of the best guides of the city. He is the one of the best guides of the city. Request him if he can take you around. He's--he's excellent. Ek hota hai na, at par, ek hota hai above par, yeh above par waale log hai. (*Translation-* -there are 2 kind of people, people who are at par and people who are above par. He falls in the above par category.) Excellent. Request him if he can take you. Though he will not have time, I know it. Aap log dukaan mein jaoge na, shop me, Taj Mahal bhi khareedo ge na baad mein, for many of our guides, taking you around--koi ache log ho sakte hai. Aisa nahi kahunga, maine kaha many. Kya Kapil bhai kahaan fasa diya yaar, bacho ke saath Taj Mahal ghuma rahe ho. (*Translation-* If you got to a shop, if you buy taj mahal also, for many of our guides, taking you around..... There can be some nice people too you know? I won't say that I said many. What Kapil bhai, where did you trap me with these kids, it's true!) Sachai ye hai laughs But I will--I will see that you happen to meet with some good guides and then--which will help in your project. And then aap log khud decide karo, 3-4 baar Taj MAhal jao, 3-4 alag alag logo ke saath jao. Fort jao, Fatehpur Sikri jao, dekho wahan par kya ho raha hai. Aapko car chahiye ho, tell me, I will be very happy to help. Ek ache se project pe aap kaam kar rahe ho, acha sa project kariye aap, acha kariye. Iss profession mein mat aaiye. (*Translation--* and then ya'll decide for yourselves, go to Taj Mahal 3-4 times, go with different different people 3-4 times. Got to the Fort, go to Fatehpur Sikri, see what is happening there. If you need a car tell me, I will be extremely happy to help. Ya'll are working on a very nice project, do it well. Do not come in this profession but)

Advait: Aisa kyu sir, profession mein mat aaiye? (*Translation-* Why sir? Why shouldn't we come in this professions?)

Kapil Jain: Hai nahi. Ab ismein uh paisa bhi khatam hote aa raha hai dheere dheere aur how much are the rates? Aapko iss profession mein aana hai? Main aapko jagah batata hu. Aaplog wahaan jaa kar kaam kijiye. Aap south india mein jaiye. Aap apne Bombay mein jaiye. Bombay has got only 76 guides. Aap mein se koi Bombay pe kaam kar raha hai? Discover India pe? (*Translation*-There is nothing. Now the money has all drained out of this profession slowly slowly, how much are the rates? You want to get into this profession? I will tell you a place. Ya'll go there and work. Go to South India. Go to your Bombay. Bombay has got only 76 guides. Why doesn't one of you work in bombay? On Discover India?)

Deepta: Hum char Bombay se hai (*Translation*- Four of us are from bombay)

Kapil Jain: Acha Bombay se hai? Chaaro? Aapko badi interesting batata hu Bombay ke guides ki. Bombay is the only city in entire country where a guide works for one day but officially receives wages for two days. (*Translation*- Oh from bombay? All four? I'll tell you some interesting things about the bombay tour guides. Bombay is the only city in entire country where a guide works for one day but officially receives wages for two days.)

Advait: Why?

Everyone: Laughs

Kapil Jain: That you ask to Chandana Akbari or (Joshi Saab ?? at 54:49)

Deepta: Also we found that in the Western region there are a lot more female guides and it's not-

Kapil Jain: Right and so we always have the crisis of the guides on weekends. Because they don't work. On weekends they prefer to be with their family. So we always have the crisis.

Deepta: Even in Agra?

Kapil Jain: In Agra we have few female guides uh but I think it comes--because of the education level. I accept that the education level, way of thinking is different in Mumbai or Delhi or in

Gurgaon or in Chennai. Much much different than Agra so you have more female guides there but here also we have some very good female guides. Pallavi Agrawal, (Juhi Ma'am: Yes, we met her) You met her? (Advait: Yeah) Aap usko sunoge, jab woh bolti hai aisa lagta hai ki phool gir rahe hai. Trust me. Jis din baut ache mood mein Taj Mahal dikhati hai, we are history. Client ko ghumati hai na. Excellent. Aap Pallavi ko sun lijiye, dusro ke naam nahi lunga. Female guides mein, aap dusro ko sun lijiye. Woh 3 lakh de kar aai hai, Pallavi ne raat bhar padhai karke pass kiya hai. Kitna andaz. Meri ladai yeh hai ki Pallavi mujhko commission nahi deti so she gets less work. Aur Pallavi ko full weightage chahiye so she gets less work. Other one jo yeh kehte hai ki hum toh investment karke aaye hai 3 lakh rupaiya toh we have to recover this money very fast before U.P. Tourism or any other authority produces another 5000. (*Translation-* If you hear her closely when she talks you'll feel as if there are flowers falling all around you. Trust me. The day she's in an extremely good mood and she she shows you around Taj, we are history. She is excellent at it. You listen to Pallavi ji, I won't take the name of others. She has given 3 lakhs and come, she studied the entire night and passed. What attitude. My only problem is that she does not give me commission so she gets less work. Pallavi wants full weightage so she gets less work. Another that she says that she has invested 3 lakhs which she needs to recover asap before Up tourism or any other authority produces 5000)

Deepta: We also heard about ASI's policy of monumental guides

Kapil Jain: They've just been there in existence for many years. (Deepta: Okay) But now there, I believe they are changing it something.

Advait: They are contesting it right? Because something on the lines of because they only want monument level guides in our country and Supreme Court's been contested.

Kapil Jain: Right, it's a very simple thing--it's a--it's a--it's a, right--it's a war of power. For me it's war of power. ASI ko ab samajh mein aaya ki ye toh guide banane mein baut paisa hai. laughs. Hum bekar mein Department of Tourism ko humne authority delegate ki hui ye. Woh bichare paisa kama rahe hai, humko kuch nahi mil raha laughs. Unhone kaha, monument humara. See this is the problem. Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Tourism are two different. Taj Mahal ASI ka, wahaan tak laayga Ministry of Tourism. Aapko pata hai, U.P. ke andar.. U. P. nai, Hindustan ke andar, the most visited monument kaunsa hai?

(Translation- ASI has now understood that making tour guides is profitable. Making the Department of tourism an authority was all a waste. They are just making money and we are not getting anything. They said that the monument is theirs. Taj Mahal is of ASI, till there the ministry of tourism will get the tourists, do you know which is the most visited monument in UP? No in India ?)

Deepta: Taj Mahal?

Kapil Jain: No. It's not.

Juhi Ma'am: Is it Mahabalipuram?

Kapil Jain: No. Golden Temple, Amritsar. Most visited monument hai woh. Ek bhi sipai nahi hota andar. Security ke threats unko bhi hai, security ke threats hum ko bhi hai. They say how we manage. Kyuki Amritsar mein shopping commission nahi hota. Wahaan pilgrim tourism hai. Yahaan leisure tourism hai. Lekin jab hum foreign tourists ko Gurudwara ki kitchen dikhate hai, toh uski keval ek hi cheez nikalti hai, woh hai wow. Jab ye unko dikhate hai ki raat ko 2 baje, ek book keeping ceremony hoti hai, jahaan par Gurugrant saheb ko akaal tak lekar jaaya jata hai, hum bhi unko ye dikhate hai ki kitab hai woh jisko humare desh mein bhagwan ki tarah puja jata hai aur hum kis tareeke se sir par rak ke jate hai toh woh puri raat jaagta hai is cheez ke liye. Jis din humare guides, jis din humare jaise travel agents, jis din saare agencies mil kar ke uss disha mein sochna shuru kar de, cheeze badal jaaigi. Aur boliye?

(Translation- no its golden temple, amritsar. It's the most visited monument. There is not even one soldier there. There are security threats to them as well as us. Because there is no commission on shopping in amritsar. There is pilgrim tourism there, and there is leisure tourism here, but when the foreign tourists are shown the kitchen, they only say one thing, wow. When they are shown the bookkeeping ceremony at 2 am, where Guru Granth Sahib is taken to the centre, we also show them how a book is worshipped in our country and how its its kept on our head , and he too stays up the entire night for it. The day our guides, the day travel agents like us, the day all agencies together start thinking in one direction, everything will change. And say?)

Amalina: Nowadays, there's a lot of involvement of the internet in this internet. Like you can book tour guides online and PayTM is also used a lot. So how do you think all of this has impacted the tourism industry?

Kapil Jain: Correct. Well for me it's not. Uh awareness and availability of anything increases the business. For me. If internet will talk more about this glass, people will buy this glass more. So for me it's a positive side of it. If the business of the guides is going away or if people are booking guides directly, correct? laughs. None of the guides has their website. Zarurat nahi hai. Kyuki jaise hi website banegi, the selection of the guide will be based on the user. Abhi toh humare guide ke paas selection of client, bhai. Right uske paas hai. "Kahan ka hai? Kitne hai? Kaunsa hotel hai? Pakka hai? Fresh hai? Thakka hai?" toh abhi guide has the right to choose. But agar internet ke basis pe jaayenge, toh client will have the right to choose. Toh ho sakta hai ki wo thaka hua nikle yahaan par aane ke baad. Aur woh shayad Crimson mein ya Taj Ganj ke kisi lodge mein tehra hua. So uh mere liye bahut achi baat hai. I book guides. (*Translation-* They don't need it. Because as soon as the website is created, the selection of the guides will be based on the user. Now the guide has the choice of selecting his client. He has the right. Where is he from? How many are they? Which hotel are they staying in? Is it ripe? Is it fresh? Is it tired? So right now the guide can choose but with the internet the client gets to choose. So it's possible that the tourist is tired by the time they get here. And they might stay in Crimson Palace or some lodge in Taj Ganj. So it's great for me. I book guides.) Uh.. there is a website I use because, as I said that I work for a Spanish company and I'm responsible for the product development and operations in entire South East Asia so many times, jab mein uss product ko parkha hu, toh mein bhi internet se guides lata hu. Aapko Japan mein hi guide chahiye ho, aap kya karenge? Baut interesting hai. Mein dekh raha tha ek baar. Hum log ek naya product develop kar rahe the Japan ke liye. But ye saare guides ke fans aa rahe hai, naam aa rahe hai, meine und mein se kaheen sare logo ko emails bheje (*Translation-* When I see their product, I also use the internet. If you need a guide in Japan, what will you do? But it's interesting. I was looking at it once. We were developing a new product for Japan. But I was getting all the fans of these guides, all their names, and we sent emails to a lot of these people). I was very happy, they said that "I'm copying this email to the President of my association or the secretary of my association. We request you to please route your requirement, either through the local travel agency with whom you work or through the association." Ethics. Commission nahi hai. 300 dollar fees hai, 300 dollar hai. Thailand mein, ek guide ki fees approximately somewhere 300 dollars a day. Singapore is 450. four and 50 dollars. Singapore mein guide ki fees 450 dollars hai, humare yahaan par 20 dollars hai. With--still with this, Singapore attracts more tourism than us. Why? Hum apna product sasta bhi bech rahe hai. Usko bawjud bhi hum bech nahi pa rahe. Toh problem kahaan hai? Problem product mein hai na. Bas (*Translation-* There is no commission. 300 dollars

is the fee, it is 300 dollars. In Thailand the guide fee is around 300 dollars. Singapore is 450. In our country it is 20 dollars. Yet Singapore attracts more tourism than us. Why? We are selling our products cheaper as well. Then what's the issue? The problem is in the product.).

Juhi Ma'ami: What do you think are the factors you know there are less tourists coming here? Infrastructure, would you say that is lacking--

Kapil Jain: It's altogether. It's altogether. As I said, Agra Cantt jana subah aap log yahan par. You must go to Agra Cantt Station sometime. Dupe (?? : 1:03:42) naam ki ek shatabdi express aur ek gatimaan. Thoda distance se dekhiye ga. Kya ho raha hai. Neela wala mera, laal wala mera, peela wala mera. Abhi tourist ki khopdi bhi bahaar nahi nikli. Tab toh uska sauda ho jaata hai bahaar. Ye neela wala mera hai, laal wala mera, peela wala mera hai (*Translation-* There is one shatabdi express and one gatimaan. Look at it from a distance. What is happening? The blue one is mine, the red one is mine, the yellow one is mine. The deal has been made before outside. The blue one is mine, the red one is mine, the yellow one is mine).

Fir itne mein pata chalta hai ki ek travel agency ka representative aata hai, uska placard leke khada hua hai. Woh nila wala uske saath chala aata hai. Kehta hai peela wala hi le leta. Yeh sab, yeh sab, railway police ki rishwat se hota hai. Khade hue udhar hi khadi hai. Paisa le rahe hai wahaan. Infrastructure kya aapko, aapko bada hi--ek aur bada hi interesting fact batata hu. Ye guarantee merko kahin nahi milega. Ey bacho please haan, aap log wapas jaa ke ye mat kehna ki--Taj Mahal ki ek parking hai. Aapke hotel se nikalte hi, Shilpgram parking. Iski maintenance aur iski tendering ka zimmedari U.P. Tourism ki hai. (*Translation-* A travel agency representative comes with his placard and stands. The blue one leaves with him. This all happens because the cops have been bribed. They stand right there. The cops have been given. Forget infrastructure, I'll tell you something more interesting. You will definitely not get this from anyone else. Guys please don't go out and say this- Taj Mahal has a parking area. Near your hotel, the Shilpgram parking. U.P. Tourism is responsible for its maintenance and tendering.)

Tik hai? Toh last iska jo tender tha, parking tha toh contractor has to pay 4 crores of rupees per year. Government hai woh, official hai. 4 crore rupees per year. Kabhi bhi, kisine bhi, kadhe ho kar ke, na meine na aapne, na gov-U.P. tourism ne calculate kiya ki pure ek saal mein vehicle kitne aaye wahaan par. Ek average nikala ja sakta hai, aap usko pura ek saal tak study kar sakte hai, aap--I understand young ko hire nahi kar sakte toh kya hua, agar university ke jo tourism ke

bacha hai, unko aap 4 din ke project de sakte hai. Kahan se aata hai woh paisa? 4 crore rupaiya. 4 crore bhi contractor government ko de raha hai. Khud bhi 4 logo ka staff lagega, saaf safai bhi hogi, management bhi hoga, 4 paise woh bhi apne ghar lekar jaayga. Kahaan se aa raha hai? Shilpgram ki parking ka--sheher ke andar Taj Mahal ki teen parmin hai. Shilpgram parking, western gate parking, Purani mandi parking. In teeno parking ka guides ka theka hota hai. That a set of guides will pay a certain money to the respective contractor and now only those guides will be allowed to work from there. (*Translation- Correct? So the last tender, the contractor had to pay 4 crores a year. It's a govt. Thing, it is official. 4 crores per year. Has anyone ever, stood up, not me, not you, not even the UP tourism, calculated how many vehicles come there? An average? Study it for a year. Give university students a 4 day project. From where does this money come? 4 crores. The contractor is giving the government 4 crores. He will also have a 4 member staff team, there will be cleaning. There will be management. He will need to make 4 paise of his own. From where is it coming? It's the Shilpgram parking. In the city, Taj Mahal has 3 entrances. Shilpgram parking, western gate parking, Purani mandi parking. These are the spots for the guides 'Thekas'. That a set of guides will pay a certain money to the respective contractor and now only those guides will be allowed to work from there*)

Aap ne infrastructure ki kaha tha toh maine kaha, woh facilitate kar deta hu unko. Infrastructure ki haalat yeh hai na, bhais toh rok nahi pa rahe ab. Na rok paaye, na rok paayenge. Infrastructure ki hum baat karte hai, kal I was seeing the message, such a lovely message. Woh Agra ko hum kis tarike se hum kill kar rahe hai, baut interesting hai mein aap ko batata hu fact. North India mein jo sabse zyaada visited destination, woh popular destination hai woh Agra hai, Varanasi hai U.P. mein aur Jaipur hai. Ek 300 km west main aur ek 300 km east mein--600 km east mein. Baut interesting kya hai ki flight shuru ho gai direct Jaipur to Varanasi. It has started since yesterday. Isse kehte hai tourism infrastructure. But iska sab-effect dekhiye. Humne Agra ko.... Humare paas flight hi nahi hai koi. My great grandfather used to say to me that one day there will be an airport in Agra and I wish that I can also say this to my great grandsons that one day there will be an airport in Agra. Hum bhale numbers ke liye, infrastructure ke liye, humara flights hi nahi hai. Hum laaye hain kaise? Against it. Khajuraho... two flights. Everyday. Hum ek bhi nahi laa paa rahe. Is Khajuraho more visited than Agra? Kyu nahi laa paa rahe? Meri bhi galti hai is mein. I'm as equally responsible ki defend forums pe shayad utna jawaab nahi paa raha. Possible. Bahut saare matlab--it's--it's a..collective thing. (*Translation- The infrastructure is in such a state. They can't stop a buffalo from entering. And they won't be able to. We are killing agra, I'll tell you an interesting fact. The most popular destinations in North India are Agra,*

Varanasi in UP, and then there is Jaipur. The interesting thing is that there is now a direct flight from Jaipur to Varanasi. It started yesterday. This is tourism infrastructure. But now look at the sub-effect of this. We don't have any flights. My great grandfather used to say to me that one day there will be an airport in Agra and I wish that I can also say this to my great grandsons that one day there will be an airport in Agra. We don't have flights. How do we get it? Against it. Khajuraho... two flights. Everyday. We can't get one. Why? It's partly my fault as well. I'm equally responsible because I might not be able to get answers as easily on forums. Possible. It's a collective thing.)

Juhi Ma'am: Do you think it's a failure of successive governments of this state which has been responsible?

Kapil Jain: No first it is the failure of me. Everything starts from me. Modi saab kehte hai ki saaf safai rakhni hai toh pehle woh mere ghar se shuru hogi. Jis din meine apne ghar ka kuda padosi ki gate pe dalna bandh kar diya, uss din cheezein sudharni shuru ho jaaygi. Government ki uh failure, mein usko failure nahi kahunga. Priority ki upar kahunda. How seriously you take. Mein yeh kahunga usko. Aap ko..aap ko ek define karna hoga ki aap tourism ko kahaan lekar jaana chahte hai. Two years before, giving the example, two years before, I started looking Sri Lanka as a destination for my tourists from south America and from Europe but since I had this South East Asia so Sri Lanka also comes in my portfolio so I went there, I visited Sri Lanka 2-3 times. There's also an acute crisis of guides. Acute crisis, worst situation of tourist guides there but there--whosoever are there, they are doing good work. They are doing honest work. Sri Lanka is a place--Sri Lanka is a country which is not becoming the destination for 12 months. But geographically it is such a beautiful contrast that when it is raining, it is a coastal area, it's an island. And when it's raining in the west or Western coast, it is sunny in the Eastern coast. So that is the time when we send our tourist to Trincomalee or this area or jab yahan baarish east mein shuru hoti hai toh hum inko Kento Tower, Hubunto tower wali belt pe le aata hai. Unke paas mountains hai, humare paas bhi hai. (*Translation-* Modi says that cleanliness starts at home. When I stop putting my trash outside the neighbors gate, things will improve. I won't call the govt. A failure. It's about a priority. How seriously do you take it. You have to decide where do you want to take tourism. Example, two years ago I started looking Sri Lanka as a destination for my tourists from south America and from Europe but since I had this South East Asia so Sri Lanka also comes in my portfolio so I went there, I visited Sri Lanka 2-3 times. There's also an acute crisis of guides. Acute crisis, worst situation of tourist guides there but there--whosoever

are there, they are doing good work. They are doing honest work. Sri Lanka is a place--Sri Lanka is a country which is not becoming the destination for 12 months. But geographically it is such a beautiful contrast that when it is raining, it is a coastal area, it's an island. And when it's raining in the west or Western coast, it is sunny in the Eastern coast. So that is the time when we send our tourist to Trincomalee. They have mountains, so do we)

Unke paas tea plantation hai, humare paas bhi hai, unke paas elephants hai, humare paas tigers bhi hai. I happen to meet with the Tourism minister of Sri Lanka. Meine usko pucha ki where do you want to take the tourism of your country? (*Translation-* They have tea plantations, so do we. They have elephants, we have tigers. I happen to meet with the Tourism minister of Sri Lanka. I asked him, where do you want to take the tourism of your country?)

First thing he said that we are a baby. We still need to learn a lot from countries like you: india, sri lanka or India or Singapore because they are just 30 years old. After the civil war, they are just 30 years old so there, the tourism is still in the childhood stage. But very nicely he said that this is the time where I can craft and I can give direction to my tourism because it is the child which can be molded easily in any direction so he said, I said would you like to have tourism like in India?

He said no, my tourism will be like Maldives. Maldives is one of the most expensive destinations in the world. He said no, I need less numbers of tourists but more revenues. Fine, it's a mindset. I agree. At Least they have a policy. They say ki mujhko 30 dollar ka tourist nahi chahiye. Why should I put my infrastructure, my resources to earn 30 dollars. While I can put the same infrastructure and same resources to earn 300 dollars. To ek woh humare, hum aimless hai. Aur ye wahi ka nahi hai, sab ki haalat hai. Mein postgraduate hu Physics mein, aaj aap logo ko tourism padha raha hu. Teacher banna chahta tha, master banna, scientist banna chahta tha, tourism mein aa gaya. Aimless (*Translation-* I don't want 30 dollar tourists. Why should I put my infrastructure, my resources to earn 30 dollars. While I can put the same infrastructure and same resources to earn 300 dollars. We are aimless. And this isn't only the state here, it is everywhere. I'm a postgraduate in physics and I'm giving you a talk on tourism. Wanted to be a teacher, wanted to be a scientist, came to tourism. Aimless)

Deepta: So do you think changes in the State government has affected the tourists coming in because Taj Mahal was removed from the budget of the State

Juhi Ma'am: U.P. Tourism booklet did not mention Taj Mahal

Kapil Jain: Correct

Amalina: Also in history books, they have like--

Juhi Ma'am: Yeah the history books in Rajasthan, Maharashtra, they are removing Mughal history.

Kapil Jain: Dekho baba do cheez hoti hai. Har cheez mein toh kehta hu apne ghar se hi shuru hoti hai. If you--your parents does not agree with something aapko survival karna hai toh aapko apne liye khudh se ladna padega. Woh Taj Mahal se yahaan se hata de, hum toh kehte--mein kehta hu kabhi kabhi. If Taj Mahal would have been in any other city of any other country, that city would have been so beautiful that people would have been going to see the--this city. (Juhi Ma'am: Yes) Uh. Paris mein ek museum hai, Museum de Louvre. Mein wahaan gaya. Mein padhta rehta hu, ghumta rehta. Mein jab wahaan gaya. 4 gante meine wahaan par bitaye aur mujhko ye nahi pata chala ki mein kab kahaan se ghumkar waapis aa gaya hu. Mera shoulder kisi se touch nahi hua, Taj Mahal se zyaada log wahaan visit kar rahe the. They are attracting approximately 300000 tourist everyday. Keval 4 sipahi. Keval 4. Kya Mona Lisa ko threat nahi hai? Hai na? Woh dikhte nahi hai. Woh bina dekhe kaam kar rahe hai apna. State tourism, jaisa bhi jahaan usko leke jaana chahe, achi baat hai. Pehli ladai mujho--pet mere hai, bhuk bhi mujhe hi lag rahi hai toh khaane ke liye mehnat, khaane ki talaash keval mujhko hi karni padegi. Mein aapke upar depend ho kar ke nahi reh sakta ki aap aisa kar doge toh mein kha lunga. So yeh humari ladai hai. Humko apne survival ke liye, hum ko hi apne aap kaam karna hoga. Aaj ek yeh State ye Government hai jo kehti hai Taj Mahal humari priority mein nahi hona chahiye. Koi dusri aaigi ye kahegi humari priority mein yeh nahi hona chahiye. Koi teesri kahegi jahaaz bandh karo. Chauti kahegi rail bandh karo. Kya farak padhta hai? Kaam toh humko karna hai na? Mera--yeh meri personal opinion hai.

Juhi Ma'am: Aapne initially yeh bahut interesting baat ki thi. The explosion in the number of tour guides recently. Would you like to comment something about the unemployment in the state overall which gives rise to this condition ki bhai this is the only source of employment. Kuch bhi

karke, corruption karke humein karna hi hai ye. (Kapil Jain: Lucrative) Aur koi source of employment nahi hai.

Amalina: Sir you mentioned that the minarets are leaning outwards because of an optical--to produce an optical illusion (Kapil Jain: Correct) but we've been on tours and they told us that they're leaning outwards to so that--

Kapil Jain: Because so that earthquake. Meine kaha na, bas ye hi antar hai. Anarkali. Yehi antar hai bas. Aur kuch nahi. (*Translation-* This is the difference. That's all). What is history? History is the interpretation of the things written in the book. I go there. Now somebody can interpret it that I do not go there. It's the interpretation. So that is also a fact that perhaps somebody might have thought that incase if it leans, if it falls, it will fall apart. But then did anybody told you that we are in the no-earthquake zone?

Everybody: laughs

Kapil Jain: Humare yahan par Agra mein, earthquake kabhi nahi aaya. Hum earthquake zone mein hi nahi hai. Hum sach mein zone se bahaar hai. So jisne ek din ek beautiful building bana di, kya usne usko calculate nahi kiya tha? Tik? (*Translation-* There has never been and earthquake in Agra. We aren't in and earthquake zone. We are really not in the earthquake zone. Whoever made the Taj, didn't they know that? Right?) Second thing, did anybody told you that the foundation of the Taj is on the planks floating in the water? Yeh toh wohi baat ho gai. (*Translation-* This is the same thing.) Well for me, so it's the interpretation. How you interpret the things.

Juhi Ma'am: We went to Fatehpur Sikri yesterday, do you want to share some of the guides said?

Deepta: We heard a version about Anarkali as well. How she was buried alive by Akbar because Jahangir like started liking--

Kapil Jain: Kitne paise diye the guide ko? (*Translation-* How much did you pay the guide?)

Everyone: laughs

Kapil Jain: Saaf puchta hu. (Clearly asking)

Advait: 500

Kapil Jain: 500 mein aise hi milega na. (*Translation-* In 500, these are the kinds of guides you will get)

Everyone: laughs

Kapil Jain: 1350 rupaiy kharch karo, dekho abhi kal bhejta hu. Laughs (*Translation-* Spend 1350, and see the guide I send tomorrow)

Juhi Ma'am: Wahaan par toh monument guides the. (*Translation-* There were monument guides in Fatehpur Sikri) Their fees were really cheap, no?

Advait: ASI, yeah

Kapil Jain: Correct. Correct. Question is the same. Question is the same. Is ASI teaching them the historical fact? Is ASI somewhere feels the responsibility? Is ASI serious about the history and the grand cultural richness of its own monuments? That is the question

Advait: Sir where do you see the future of this industry going?

Kapil Jain: Well I--my turnover is increasing by 17% and I'm happy with that.

Everyone: Laughs

Kapil Jain: And I know that day by day it's getting difficult for me to promote India so I started -promoting Thailand, Bhutan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Maldives. Very happy as an individual. As an individual. But as a responsible citizen of this city first and then the country, I feel bad. And so was the reason that I wrote, when Vishwambhar wrote me the email I said that, "You have time? You want to know the fact? Tab baat karte hai baba. (*Translation-* Then we'll talk.)

Warna din bhar office mein bait kar chai par charcha yehi hoti hai." Students ho aap log, ache projects mein kar rahe ho, mujhe dil se baut khushi hoti hai ki mein kahi support kar saku. Acha sa likho, acha sa karo. Guide banne ki mat socho. Travel agent ban jao. Fact bata raha hu. Kyuki jis mindset se aap log ye banna chahte ho, usko adopt aise apne career mein karna chahte ho. Woh mindset aap 3 saal mein ya toh aap khudh kill kar loge nahi toh hum kill kar denge. Sachai ye hai. Ya toh aap khudh kill kar loge isko kyuki survival of the fittest ki definition badal gayi. Guide baut acha hai, dubara assignment mat karna, dukaan mein--shop nahi jaata hai yaar. Survival of the fittest ki definition.

(*Translation*-In office, we talk about these topics only. You all are students, you're doing a good project, I'm really happy that I can support you. Write it well. But don't become a guide. Become a travel agent. I'm telling you a fact. Because whatever mindset you have when you become a guide, you will either kill it yourself or it will be killed by the industry. This is survival of the fittest.)

Deepta: Kya aapko lagta hai ki future mein firse quality ke basis pe ho paayga ya aapko nahi lagta? (*Translation*- In the future, will guides be chosen on the basis of quality?)

Kapil Jain: Well mein toh yeh toh nahi kahunga ki bada disappointed hu. Sapne dekhne ka hak sabko hai. Jis din mein--jis din shaanti se so paya iss haalat mein, uss din shayad ye wala sapna bhi dekhu. Near future mein humko khuch nahi dikh raha kyuki humein black ?? (01:27:12) humari problem wohi hai. Humko sasta wala guide bhi nai chahiye, fir humko Anarkali bhi nahi chahiye. Humari problem ho gayi hai.

(*Translation*- Our problem is that we want cheap guides, and yet we don't want stories like Anarkali.)

Humne ek..mujhko--acha aap log baat bataiye, ye tourist, Indian tourist, can he afford paying 500 rupees to have a guide at Fatehpur Sikri? Average income kitni hai humare yahaan par? Socha hai kabhi kisine uss baare mein? Toh kya hoga? Wahaan par kitne saare aise tourists the jinhe without guide visit kar rahe the? Kya department facilitate nahi kar sakta? Kya humko aapke ticket ka ek hissa nahi bana sakte? Kya department, 10-10, 20-20 ke groups mein guides nahi bhej sakta? Kyu nahi kar sakta? Kyu nahi possible hai? Mujhe bataiye? Aap toh 6 log the, your university must be taking care of it or you might be contributing. Aap 10 logon ne 50-50

rupaiy share kar liye? But ek husband aur wife jo hai, apni 3 saal ki beti ke saath, tab kya hoga? Can they afford 500 rupees? 500 wahaan par jaaynge, 500 Agra fort pe rahenge, 500 Taj Mahal par rahenge. Aa kyu rahe hai? Kya ek middle class Indian afford kar sakta hai usko? Aap log khud soch kar bataiye. Nai kar sakta na? Taj Mahal dekh lega, bina guide dekh lega. Kyu nahi hum usko uss tareeke se facilitate kar sakte hai? Hazaar 100 rupaiy ki ticket le rahe hai, 55 kar do na baba. Group bana do na. Somebody has to come forward. Dekhiye jis din ye ho gaya, woh din saare guides unrest ho jaaynge because now it's the question of their bread and butter. Now it's the question of their survival. The people going in the groups.

Juhi Ma'am: Can you ask about what some people have been saying about the temple and Tejo Mahalaya

Amalina: So um we were on tours we heard this thing about Tejo Mahalaya. Tejo Mahalaya ke baare mein suna humne

Kapil Jain: Arey why are you getting into the controversial of--I'm just saying. For me badi seedhi se baat hai. Baut seedhi si baat hai. Jahaan mein rehta hu, wahaan par kabhi toh, kuch toh raha hoga na? Kabhi toh kuch toh raha hoga na. Sawaal sirf itna hai ki mujhko apne past ke pakad ke latka rehna hai ya muhko apne past se seekh kar apna future banana hai. Sirf itna antar hai. Tejo Mehal hai, yejo Taj Mahal tha, mandir tha. Arey pure hindustan ke andar mandir the, it was the land of Aryans. What was wrong in that. What else you expect? Ye jo hotel banna hai, yahaan bhi kuch toh raha hi hoga na? Toh todho usko bhi. (*Translation-* Why are you getting controversial? For me, it's a straightforward thing. Where I live, there was obviously something built there before, right? Should I hold on to that? India was full of temples, it was the land of Aryans. What was wrong with that? What else do you expect? There must've been something built here before this hotel was built here. Why don't we break this too?)

Everyone: laughs

Kapil Jain: Bajaj iske, hum ye dekhe ki how well we can maintain this hotel now. How we can reduce the tariffs so that it can be full all the time. How we can make this hotel as a source of generating more employment. Hum apni energy yahaan kyu nahi lagate hai. Khodna sabse aasaan hota hai. Unnecessary. Aur usko hamare jaise, aapke jaise log, in saari forums pe baitkar baat karte hai aur hawa udti hai. Arey kisi cheez ki baat hi mat kariye, cheezein (*Translation-*

Why don't we put our energy into this? Criticising is the easiest. It's unnecessary. People like you and me discuss these things in forums and it's pointless. We don't need to discuss everything) --things will die. On it's own.

Advait: Okay

Kapil Jain: Done? Good. Thank you very much.

Rest of the audio: saying byes and thank you.

Interview of Sohail Hashmi

(Historian, Author and Tour Leader of Delhi Heritage Walks)

17th October 2017

Sohail Hashmi: one of the parents were in NDTV so they did a walk with me, then uhh this uhhh timeout Delhi started featuring my walks. So, I continued to work with a whole lot of education intuitions, schools, colleges, universities umm but uh.. and also, now I started doing it professionally as well. anyways, that is neither here nor there.

Sohail Hashmi: so uhh will you ask me questions or will I shoot?

Maitreyi: you can go ahead

Sohail Hashmi: so uhh one needs to understand how this whole guide business began. because uhhh we had these large number of ruins and people had their own tales about all of them but no historical study, etc etc had been done, and partly because between the collapse of the Mughal empire and whatever other regional powers were and the formation of the ARCHEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA there is a long period in whatever the other methods of documentation, record etc that we have were over two or three generations were lost. Then came the English. now I will can tell you a couple of things that will illustrate the point that I am making.

Sohail Hashmi: there was this British officer who was posted, an archaeologist, who was posted in Fatehpur Sikri. his wife was also there and excavation and restoration was going on. and this lady was hanging around and there was all this construction labour, you know ARCHEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA staff and all that, and many of them are people who make this mixture of crushed brick and limestone for repairs and all that, those were carving stone slabs to be fixed to replace the damaged slabs. and they had their kids and their kids would be running around. so, this English lady started the school for them. for these kids. and you've been to Fatehpur Sikri...

Maitreyi: Yeah, we have

Sohail Hashmi: Now you have this place which is the sleeping chambers of Akbar, then you have this so called Anup Talab, then you have a longish corridor and beyond that are the covered corridor with the pillars and then you have the administrative area which has the Treasury which is known as Akme choli (can't make out what this is) and the place where the jyotishree used to sit but that is where the coins were measured and that building with that iconic pillar and nine rooms on the top. nine doors on the top. now this covered corridor is the place where when the food was cooked was placed here before being served to the king. on the first floor was the place where fruits used to be stored this covered corridor was the site where this English woman started running the school for the kids. now if you go there the guides tell you, this was the site where the uhhh maids', children of the maids of Akbar were taught.

Aditya: yeah, yeah yeah yeah yeah

Sohail Hashmi: this is what you would have been told

Maitreyi: yeah this is what we were told.

Sohail Hashmi: okay? now nobody has in all these decades been told, ask them why would the daughters and sons of the maid be studying in the middle of the court? this is the royal palace. then they take you to a place and they tell you that this is the residence of Birbal...

Aditya and Maitreyi: yeah

Sohail Hashmi: yeah? the two-storied structure? there is a sign board outside which says this is the residence of the two senior queens of Akbar. nobody reads that nobody reads that. and nobody asks them what would what is Birbal doing inside the palace, no he was very close to Akbar an all that but he wouldn't be living inside the haram Sara. this is the haram Sara area. then to this so-called palace of Birbal, there are these two long corridors, you would have been told that these are the stables. yeah? now imagine. I don't know, none of these guides has ever lived close to a horse. nobody has thought what happens if you live close to a horse. the horse shit stinks to high heavens. who is going to allow horse in the palace? if the king wanted to go out somewhere he

would go out of the palace and that is where the horses would be kept in the stables. you don't build stables inside a palace. those rooms were reserved for the maids. it is the maids who live there. and behind one of the long rooms, there is a very large covered hall where all the clothes the robes and all that of the various queens were kept it is known as the Tosha khana. Tosha khana is where you keep clothes, robes and garments. so, this is the level of disinformation that is going on in Fatehpur Sikri and these are all certified guides. all of them have Government of India approved guides and all that.

Sohail Hashmi: there is this overarching myth that Fatehpur Sikri was deserted because of shortage of water. A) there was no shortage of water in FATEHPUR SIKRI. B) FATEHPUR SIKRI was never deserted. the court moved. Akbar had to move with his major courtiers because there was rebellion in Punjab and then he had to stay put in that area for a couple of years or maybe more. his senior queen the mother of Jahangir continued in Fatehpur Sikri. when Jahangir was crowned king, six years after his being crowned king, the sixth anniversary of his becoming king was celebrated in FATEHPUR SIKRI. almost ten years after, or ten or twelve I forget the period, after Akbar shifted from FATEHPUR SIKRI, the court moved, there was a flood in Fatehpur Sikri. that has been described, it is documented. there is a place known as the, I'm sure you haven't seen it, called Hakim-ka-hammam. this was two very senior nobles they lived right outside Fatehpur Sikri, outside the palace area, and they had a very elaborate Turkish bath. that Turkish bath has a huge well outside which is filled with water today. okay? so these are, these are, there is absolutely no shred of evidence to support this. they would have also pointed the palace of Jodha Bai, now Jodha bai never lived in Fatehpur Sikri because jodha bai was not Akbar's wife, she was Jahangir's wife. yes! Akbar's Rajput wife was Harka bai. younger sister of Bhawan das after which you have this road named in Delhi. and jodha bai was Jahangir's wife and jodha bai was a name that Jahangir had given her. her given name was jagat gosaiyn she was the younger sister of jodh Singh the founder of jodhpur. and Jahangir used to pull her leg by calling her jodha bai. because she was Jodh Singh's sister. now this entire thing of jodha Akbar this that, this is just imagination and there is no shred of evidence in this. you are marrying the daughter-in-law to the father-in-law by making jodha bai the wife of Akbar.

Maitreyi: we also heard another interesting thing, about Fatehpur Sikri they show us a room and told us this is where anarkali was buried alive, we told them, we told our guide that we heard that it's just a story and not a fact the guide got offended.

Sohail Hashmi: now if she was buried there, why is her grave in Lahore? there is a grave in Lahore which is ascribed to anarkali.

Sohail Hashmi: now, what I'm trying to get across is that what began to happen when that nursery school for the Archaeological Survey of India labourers was set up. these kids who were studying in that school, and the labourer who was working there by the time this project ended these fellows had picked up little little bits of information here and there, and they became the guides. when India became independent, they were given certificates, and now the procedure is, and that you can check up, when an old guide dies his son is employed. they Archaeological Survey of India set up an institute to train people into becoming guides, they set it up in Gwalior. the moment that institute was set up, all these guides in the all these protected monuments went ballistic. they said we don't get enough to keep our families alive, now these fellows will come and all of us will starve to death and they said that we will not allow any new recruits. that institute has not functioned at all. it was a full-fledged institute, the idea was that people, who have done graduation and post-graduation in history would be trained as guides and they would also be taught different languages, so that then you have a set of professional guides who know their history who can also communicate, because heritage walks and guides all over the world, this is a respected profession they don't haggle with you you know we'll do this red fort with you for 500/- you say you don't have 500, 400? 300? alright give me 50/-. you know?? and they surround you, and each one of them has their own pet stories that they've heard from their father and grandfather and all that. we don't have trained guides at all. and that is the problem. and there is a, obviously, there is a a western interest that has developed, because these people are operating, they are the local people, and many of them are giving you all kinds of non-sense. whole lot of communal discourses that are being (banded?) about that people learn travel from all over and they hear this and they carry them back as stories, for example, I don't know if you heard that but this is a common story, that after the Taj mahal was completed Akbar got all the hands chopped, of all the...

Maitreyi: yeah Shah Jahan yeah

Sohail Hashmi: ...because he did not want anybody to replicate the Taj. now Shah Jahan was the richest king in the world at that time. there is no question about it. the Mughal empire was

the largest empire in the world at that time no empire had this kind of resources, this kind of territory and this kind of resource base of creative people that shah Jahan's India had. it took him 21 years to build the Taj, will he seriously worry about anybody else trying to replicate it? but he took 20,000 people 21 years to build that place, somebody who set out on such a large project would also think of keeping the place in good shape, so you would need people who knew the skills and those you had to work out a method of perpetuating those skills. so that whenever required you had master craftsmen who could do that. now when you go to the Taj, there is uhh, you enter the Taj through the south gate, and the river is to the north, you enter either from the east or the west, the east gate is it think reserved for Asians, Indians and the west gate is, or the other way around, west gate is for the uhh, there are two gates no? high value tickets and for Indians and you know. so, these are the two gates through which you enter, east and west and then you come fact-to-face with the south gate and then you enter. and then you come out and you go out the way you had come in. nobody explores the south gate of the boundary. behind south gate is Taj Ganj. where the descendants of the people who built the Taj live. and they're doing exactly the same thing as their ancestors did 18 generations before. three of them are president's gold medal winners. you go to UP emporium anywhere in the country, you get that Petra-dura dishes and all that, and marble and all that. who's doing that work? it is the descendants of those people.

Maitreyi: we had found these gem cutters, he did not have fingerprints, because he was doing it for so long

Shreya: and he's been doing it since he was 10 because and his grandfather and his father did the same thing, so ever since he was a child he went into this profession, his immediate interest, and he showed us his fingerprints

Maitreyi: and gave us these stones, but now this, I don't know if it's good news or bad news, but his children they don't want to get into this profession because they want to be more educated and now his craft is ending. that's what the translator said.

Sohail Hashmi: some of these people I met, at one point I was planning to make a film on this craft, I met the president gold medal winner, an old man, who he is one of those people who has made it, because he has the president's gold medal etc, people keep coming to him so he's making

really large pieces for the villas of the super-rich in Europe. so, they, Italian marble comes to him, the design comes to him, he carves those semi-precious stones fits them into those slabs, packs them and sends them back. so that is the work he is doing, that is what gets bread on his table every day. but he continues to do this very fine work. that is his pleasure. so, but, gradually, they are just a few who have been able to get these large orders, which doesn't require too many skills it's just not very fine work. you can execute those orders quickly. so that is keeping them alive. and it is because that they are not starving that they, he and his children and his grandchildren are still in the business. but they're not too many of them left.

Vishwambhar: okay sir? going back to the multiple narratives, okay you said that one reason is because they just got the certificates because their fathers were guides, but when they give the multiple narratives do you think the stories they tell, sometimes it's their background that might slightly define, for example, suppose, there's a topic let's say the Shiva temple right? tejo mahalaya. do you think that the chances of a Hindu saying it are higher than a Muslim saying it? so do their backgrounds?

Sohail Hashmi: Absolutely, not only that, the kind of mythologies, these spins that are being done, now if there are Sufis, Mohiuddin Chisti was a Sufi, Salim Chisti is a Sufi, Ram Uddin is a Sufi. so, a sobriquet is used for them, Rehmadulla-ae-leh which means my god shower his blessings on him. this is used primarily for Sufis and very pious people. but they started using it for Shah Jahan. Now Shah Jahan's grave is treated as a grave of a Sufi. you go to the grave of Aurangzeb's wife in Aurangabad, or Aurangzeb's grave, people throw money. the grave is all covered with currency notes, so much money is being thrown. so, at one level you are trying to raise them to the level of great pious people and Sufis, on the other level they are being presented as looters and savages and so on so forth. and both these discourses will be thrown at you depending on who is your guide. so now tejo mahalaya, is just one of those stories, it's a totally cat and bull story, there is absolutely no shred of evidence. for example, the claim that this was land snatched from the Maharaj of Jaipur by Shah Jahan. now this is a matter of fact, that the rulers of Ajmer, of Jaipur, originally ruled from Amer. and Akbar's Rajput wife came from amer. from that time, Jaipur and the rulers of Jaipur were mansabdaar's in the Mughal court, right till the end. they were associated with the Mughal court and when the British took over they went to the British. now, can a mansabdaar capture land in the capital city of the king? no? it is possible that one of the later Mughals gave the grant to them, like a Shahalam had given a grant to Jaipur, the rulers of Jaipur and to jodhpur in new Delhi. Connaught place and this entire area was given

in a land grant to maharaja of Jaipur, sawai jaisingh, that's why he built jantar mantar there and he built the hanuman mandir there. and the raisena hill where the rashtrapati bhavan is, that was given as a land grant to jodhpur, by the late Mughal kings. and it is jodhpur and Jaipur who then gave this land to the British to build the capital. so, there is a possibility, that the land around, it is possible that some land grants in Agra were given to Jaipur by a later Mughal. but they couldn't have given away the Taj. even if one agrees this is even possible that including the Taj that land was given to them. why don't the Jaipur fellows claim it? the Mughal kings are gone. they will have the land grant, they can show that this is our land give it to us now that Rajasthan is being ruled by BJP, why don't they file the claim? there is no history to it. and this is what the guides are doing. they pick up all kinds of cock and bull stories and they narrate them and one of the reasons why they never challenged is because we are primarily an oral society. even the most educated among us don't ask questions, for example, did the guide tell you this is jodha Bai's palace? did he tell you this is jodha Bai's rasoi? did you ask him why was jodha bai cooking separately? this is the question to ask. she, even if you know, first of all there was no jodha bai there, but he is talking about Akbar's Rajput queen. so, whether her name is jodha bai or Harka bai, he is talking about Akbar's Rajput queen. why did she have a separate kitchen? I asked him. I asked the guide. I was there and he had crowd of people and he was giving them this nonsense. so, I asked him why did she have a separate kitchen? she was a vegetarian. I said who tells you that? where is the historical evidence that she was a vegetarian? overwhelming majority of Rajput's are non-vegetarian. nahi ji woh vegetarian thi. I said chalo yeh bhi maan liya. Akbar ki rani thi? hanji. salim ki ma thi? hanji. why couldn't Akbar hire a maid for her? he is the most powerful king at that time in the world. he couldn't keep a maid for his vegetarian wife? she would cook her own food? this is born out of a very small imagination. whether she is my wife or she is the wife of the president of India, she has to cook because the duty of the wife is to cook for the husband. it forms this idiotic frame of reference that you get this, sita ki rasoi. sita ji ki rasoi hai Ayodhya mein. yes. when, the place that they demolished, the mosque, their claim was this is sita's rasoi, woh abhi hai wahan par. they've marked the place they said sita ki rasoi. similarly, yeh, jodha bai ki rasoi.

Maitreyi: one interesting perspective we heard was that Mughals used to admire holy places, this is regarding the tejo mahalaya thing, so whenever they you know, that's the reason there are so many Mughal monuments, next to or close to temples. and this is one possible reason why, this is one of those diplomatic answers...

Sohail Hashmi: all the temples, now that you go back to you, all the temples have been built deliberately on the side of Mughal structures. all of them. you look at their architecture. you see one thing that you have to understand is that large temples are a much later development and construction of large scales temples would have happened as a result of imitating what the Muslims were doing. primarily because worship in the Brahmanical order is an individual thing. everybody has their own ish devtas. you had small temples in your own houses. Brahmanical are not congregational worship, even if you build a massive temple like puri, what happens? or guru Vayu or wherever? you might have queue five kilometres long, but worship is individual. there is one idol, one priest, one worshiper or at best one family. that is why no matter how large the temple, the garb griha is always very small. Brahminism did not allow congregational worship. because in congregational worship, the fear of the being sullied by the touch of a low caste, that is why entry has to be very clearly regulated. you can't just get up and go inside a temple. so, these large temples, for example, I know for a fact that Delhi, Shajahanabad, did not have any large temple before the 18th century. according to Prof. R.S. Sharma, there are no ram temples in all of north India before the 18th century. because the legend of ram becomes popular only in the time of Akbar. before that it is in Sanskrit. it is only goswami tulsidas who is a contemporary of Akbar who translates it in avdhi. that is when it becomes popular. hanuman is worshiped. but ram is not a major deity in north India before the 18th century. so, this whole thing is you know, the entire discourse is very recent. that's why you don't find any large temples that look old.

Vishwambhar: sir you mentioned the bjp in the middle, so look at the government right now, the government in up, took out Taj from the tourism booklet. do you think that the politics in the area, do you think the tour guides they maybe change their history, their versions of history according to the political climate, let's say there's a Hindu government there, a Hindutva government there and then they maybe the Shiva temple is a you know, more people start talking about it or something like that is there a connection?

Sohail Hashmi: yes, this will happen, this will happen. I don't know if you went to a souvenir shop,

All: we did, we did

Maitreyi: and we found something very scary, these narratives about tejo mahalaya, was spreading into the craft of these artisans. two things we noticed were, you know the shops near Taj? they started selling shiv-lings. and they're not even hidden away at the back like they're at the front. which means it's become canon this story and the other thing is we started seeing Taj mahals with trishul and snakes on top, instead of the...

Sohail Hashmi: it has the trishul

Maitreyi: or the snake, Shiva's snake.

Sohail Hashmi: so originally, the Taj had a crescent, so that is being modified into a... (trishul). you know so that'll happen. but what I'm saying is this myth making has been going on for a long time. so, the ground has already been prepared. so, when you talk about a separated kitchen for jodha bai, you are already creating this, that you know, and that place that is pointed out to us and you are told look at this building it looks like a temple and all that they tell you. jodha bai never stayed in that building. Akbar's Rajput wife never stayed in that building. that is the place where all the minor queens stayed. her palace, if you stand with the, so called jodha Bai's palace on your left, and you walk straight, this is where the kitchen is, and you walk straight, the first large building that comes to your right, is where Harka bai stayed. Akbar's' Rajput wife. beyond that is the two-storied building which is given to you as Birbal's palace. where rokaya sultan and the other, the widow of baihram khan, who Akbar had married, she stayed there. Akbar married the widow of baihram khan. and that is the mother of Abdul Raheem khan khana, Akbar had married her later. and the other senior queen, rokaya sultan stayed there. so, before that the large building, and I don't know whether they showed you, in the orning, there is an image of hanuman on the, carved into the parapet. and inside there is a faded painting of Krishna. that is where Harka bai used to stay. so that building is given to you as jodha Bai's palace, that was the haram Sara, all the 15, 20, 40 whatever minor queens, because many of them were marriages of convenience, you know the minor rulers would come to the Mughal kings and say accept my daughter as your wife, to strengthen their relationship, whole lot of these marriages took place.

Maitreyi: sir regarding this mythmaking you're talking about, yesterday we were talking to prof. nimit chaudhary and you know when we went to, I took I think at least six tours of the Taj mahal. and each time I went I heard new things, different things. and most of them were certified dot

guides and upt guides. so, we asked him why is there such a huge variation in what tour guide tells us? and he responded that we encourage deviations because it makes it more interesting. do you think that is healthy for?...

Sohail Hashmi: no, no it is not. for example. did you go to the Agra fort? in Agra fort? in the diwan-e-khaas area, there is a large grey stone bench. yeah? which is cracked in the middle. what is the story you were told about that bench?

All: the British... the canon hit the, yeah through a canon on the stone bench and the stone bench was so strong that it deflected towards the building, yeah there was a hole on the side of the wall and the crack on the bench

Sohail Hashmi: now that bench has Persian text running all around. when Akbar died, Jahangir was not in Agra. the death of the king could not be announced before the new king had taken over, because you could have a revolt etc etc, so Akbar's death was kept a secret Jahangir was engaged in some Prussian rebellion or something. so, messengers were rushed to him, he was given the information, and wherever he was, a stone bench was carved overnight and he sat on that bench for his coronation. and that is the text in Persian on the base of that stone. that is the single largest piece of kasauti (onyx) stone. you know what kasauti is? kasauti is the stone that the jewellers use, you rub on it to make out whether the gold has impurities or not. that, the throne was made of, that bench was made of that kasauti stone. when he, so he was sworn in as king then one announcement was made then he moved to Agra and then his second proper public coronation took place. after he had taken over as king, then he asked that bench to be brought over to Agra and placed next to the diwan-e-khaas because that was the bench on which he had become the king. nobody tells you this story, this is a far more fascinating story than, but, what will the guy tell you? Jahangir used to sit here, and Noor Jahan used to sit here and they used to look at the river. so, I caught a guide on this while he was telling me this story, and I tapped him on the shoulder and he had a bunch of foreign tourists and he was telling them this, so I tapped him on the shoulder and I said no you're wrong, Jahangir did not sit there and he sat here. so, he said how do you know? I said how do you know? what non-sense are you talking about? as if the king, Jahangir had nothing to do in his life than to sit there and watch the river flow by? in Fatehpur Sikri there is this place, outside of which it says, popularly known as the achme cholie, this however was the treasury. the guide stands in front of that sign board and tells you that Akbar

used to play hide and seek with his queen here. Akbar has nothing else to do, he was playing hide and seek. was he infantile? was he demented? he ruled this country for 49 years. you're saying he's playing hide and seek.

Shreya: so, what is that entire cross thing?

Sohail Hashmi: no that is the parchisi, that is the parchisi. and it is said that he used to make these maids stand there and they would play a game of dice. but that is possible. but the king himself playing hide and seek with queens in a building that is the treasury. then they have this projection where they say this is where the court astrologer used to sit. that was the place where the tax that's been collected was weighed in before being taken away. then they must have told you about Anup talab, tan Sen sang there, tan Sen never sat and sang there. Akbar was trying to build a cubical structure, which was surrounded by water on all sides because they couldn't take the summer heat, the Mughals couldn't take the summer heat at all. so, he was trying to build that structure, and it had an opening. so, it would have water on all four sides and on top and it was resting on four pillars and there was water beneath. there was just one opening through which he could go inside and sit there at the hottest part of the day. except they could never control seepage so water was dripping from all over. it was never used for anything else. except that when the beginning of the sixth year of Jahangir's coronation took place, that tent was filled with gold, silver and copper coins which was distributed. they kept on pouring coins in it till it filled up. but tan Sen sitting on it and singing and all that is just... then there is another place they must've told you Turkish sultan's... that was the library.

Vishwambhar: sir so, now you're taking groups of tours here in Delhi. comparatively there are many more female tour guides here but you've been to Agra time and again, you've noticed that there's barely any female tour guides. why do you think that is?

Sohail Hashmi: no, you see the female tour guides that you have in Delhi, they are also not the Archaeological Survey of India certified guides, most of them are not Archaeological Survey of India certified guides. now what is happening is that whole lot of travel agencies have they have their own guides. so, they don't engage these local guides and these local guides were filled with all kinds of idiosyncrasies. there was one man at the red fort, I haven't seen him in the last couple of years he was quite old maybe he's passed on, he used to keep a folded copy in tatters of a

magazine, small magazine, published in some county in the us. a counsellor from the county had come visiting India and that gentleman had taken him on a guided tour of red fort, and he had taken his photograph and when he went back he wrote about this guide. and he sent him a copy of that mail, he used to carry that, you know people talk about me in America. that piece was saying that he doesn't know any history, he talks about, talks through his head and all that and he would keep on showing that as a great certificate. even the travel agencies the ones who are in you know seriously into travel, they have their own guides and quite a few of them, not too many but a few of women guides there who do that. there are a couple of people, academicians, who do these you know serious people who have seriously studied. you know there is this PhD in history who studied and done, prof. nrayani gupta. she does heritage walks, she's actually written a book on heritage walks also. so, there are people like that. but not too many. and outside of Delhi obviously you will not you know, Khajuraho then kunar you know or or you know there are fairly good chances that the guide itself will be molested by the kind of people who go to see Khajuraho. but even other places, whether you go to Agra or you go to Lucknow or you go to many of these places jodhpur, Jaipur, Gwalior, you don't find women female guides, very few.

Vishwambhar: unlike in Bombay, Bombay there are actually a majority of female guides,

Maitreyi: no not a majority a few of them compared to

Sohail Hashmi: but you're talking of these heritage walks kind of guides no? because Bombay doesn't have too many monumental buildings like that, of great antiquity, because Bombay is just 300 years old. so, Bombay was nothing before the British came and the myths about Bombay you know, there's nothing called Mumba Devi. Mumba Devi is a creation of the last 100 years or less. the islands were uninhabited, they were settled by Muslim traders from Surat after the British bought these islands in dowry which was originally with the Portuguese. and Bombay was made into a city by the parses and by the industrial labour that went from east UP, when the textile mills were set up, the Marathas were actually the last to reach Bombay. and they claim it to be their city now. Marathas have very little to do with Bombay. their centre was Pune. even at the time of tilak, tilaks entire operation is centred in pune and not in Bombay. so, it is post tilak that Bombay actually flourishes. so, you have all this myth, Sivaji and all that that is, now everything is named after Sivaji, this is happening more and more you know

Maitreyi: what interesting have you heard, myths have you heard about Taj mahal?

Sohail Hashmi: no Taj mahal that, the story of... spread by this joker, called P.N Oak, you know I really wonder what he writes, I'll tell you one story, and it is in P. N. oak,

P. N. oak doesn't end and you all the historians who are lying up behind the rss bjp, bandwagon, they don't have to quote any sources. they don't have to give any historical you know any evidence that what I am saying has a bias in history, they make statements which are the last words. so, p n oak says that in ancient times, our sages had discovered the secret of atomic energy. full stop. our sages had made icbm's. full stop. these missiles were capable of carrying nuclear warhead. full stop. our sage realised that these nuclear weapons lead to radiation. so, the nuclear weapons had to be stored in a place which is unpopulated. so, they selected an uninhabited island and kept all their nuclear weapons stored in that place. that place came to be known as the home of weapons. astralay. which the English corrupted into Australia. full stop. and that is how tajo mahalya comes into existence. Taj mahal se tejo mahalya. he says it is originally, tejo mahalya. now I would like to know one temple that is called mahalaya. and he has, all their stories are like that, which are playing with language, and saying actually it was this and it has become this. now he says there are so many shivakrities inside the temple. where are the photographs? and what you are giving as photographs what is the historical, what is the evidence that they are taken inside the red fort? who took them? when?

Vishwambhar: I think one of the shopkeepers, he told her that as a child he actually saw a tejo mahalya

Maitreyi: he actually saw a shivling in shah jahan original grave, they opened the grave or something and he went in there and he used to pray and shah jahan and mumtaaz were worshipers of Shiva.

Vishwambhar: they say it with conviction, these are not even the tour guides, these are the shopkeepers, the people who are showing you things all over. and lot of things like this? you now? where do you think this stems from? why would they day something like that which such conviction? what reason could they have?

Sohail Hashmi: this is, you see, you have to first understand that we are an extremely superstitious people. and this entire anti-muslim discourse, that is the dissenter of this was actively encouraged by the British, and a whole lot of people within the so called nationalist discourse believed all this. for example, tilak writes a book called the frozen home of the Asians. tilak says the aryaans were born in the arctic and from there they spread out and civilised the whole world. now the bjp has a problem with this, the rss has a problem with this because they are trying to plug the line that the aryaans are Indians and they have gone out from India to civilise the whole world, now tilak is their idol, how do you contradict tilak? and how do you reconcile this? he's saying they started from the arctic, you're saying he started from Benares. how do you reconcile? they then came, and accidentally one of these fellows, happened to chance on this paper which is a geological study, which talks about the wandering poles and it says that in geological times the poles were not where they are, they wandered because the earth was in a flux constantly so the magnetic poles were also shifting, and there was a time when the magnetic poles were placed on the equator and they have migrated. they jumped at it immediately. when the aryaans originated, the north pole was located in Benares. now these jokers do not know that we are talking of geological times, 1500, 2000 maybe 15,000 million years ago. we are not talking of 50,000 years ago. they used that and they say yes, tilak is right. at that time the pole was in India, the north pole was in India. now this kind of idiocy that people believe. because, honestly, this is probably the only place in the world and Saudi Arabia where people actually believe that the prophet had flown to mecca and came back in one night, and in India we believe that the stones that were thrown to make the bridge connecting India to Lanka. these stones were floating and the army could walk across, they were floating stones. people who can believe this, they can believe anything. and especially when you have people who you have already deified, when tilak is talking about things like that when Gopal kishan ghokale is talking about things like that when samaprasad mukherjee and sampoorana nand these are the people, these are the, lala rajpat rai, these are people who are leading your national movement. these people actually irrigated and fertilised the soil in which all this nonsense can grow. you know so the rot begins right there. and people who have been ruling this country, and majority of that time has been congress, they have not counted this, they are only paying lip service to scientific temper. but they allowed all this nonsense to continue. this is fertile soil in country which has even today more than 50%-40% illiterate people, and anybody who sounds educated and can put down his, say things forcefully, people keep quiet, they would believe anything. because this practice, the, which is the essence of knowledge, to question. in our society, questioning is seriously crushed. children are not supposed to talk back to their parent's children are not supposed to ask questions,

students are not supposed to ask questions, you don't argue with your elders, woman are not supposed to raise their voice, they are supposed to be, if the husband beats them up they are supposed to quietly get beaten up. she walks out of her house her parents will not accept her. you know the entire system that we have built is totally conformist. so, you believe anything, anything that you are told. you tell me educated girls who have done their graduation, post-graduation, doctorates are working women why do they fast? why do they do karva chaut? why? why do you need a good husband? and if you need a good husband can't you find it? find a good husband and judge the , you know not eating once a year is going to get you a good husband? so they wait for a good husband, a good husband is selected by their parents and then asked for dowry and the parents give dowry, they put up with all kinds of nonsense and despite that every karva chaut they fast. so, you know when we put up with all this, then this is a small change.

Maitreyi: throughout the past week I think we've all been very surprised to see what kind of, how powerful these stories can be? back in pune you read one or two articles and you think that it's just this small minority that believes in these obviously false facts. and then you go there and we started talking to these rickshaw drivers and hotel owners and they believe these things with such conviction that the government is out to get them to believe in these false stories and through these are the things that we discovered. thank you so much for talking to us sir

Sohail Hashmi: my pleasure, my pleasure.

Glossary

1. *'Atithi Devo Bhava'*: The Indian saying of reverence towards a guest, equating him/her to a God
2. AGA: Approved Guides Association (of Agra)
3. *Anghoori bagh*: Courtyard in front of Khas Mahal, Agra Fort
4. ASI: Archaeological Survey of India
5. *Chabbi*: Word used by stakeholders of the tourism industry to describe commission
6. *Daftar Khana*: Record Chamber, now used as a tourist guest house
7. DoT guides: tour guides who have been granted licenses by the Department of Tourism.
8. DoT: Department of Tourism.
9. *Hafta*: bribe demanded by police officers from the unlicensed guides on a periodic (perhaps weekly) basis
10. IATO: Indian Association of Tour Operators
11. *Lapka*: A tour guide who hasn't received any formal training.
12. Monument guides: Guides that are allowed only to give tours for specific monuments, unlike those who are authorised to give tours throughout a specific region (national/state)
13. *Naubat Khana*: Music Hall in Fatehpur Sikri
14. *Note-bandhi*: demonetization
15. *Pakka*: Ripe
16. *Pietra dura*: mosaic made of semi-precious stones, used mainly for furniture
17. Regional-level/regional guides: DoT guides
18. State-level guides: UPT guides
19. Stay-order guides: Guides that do not have a license, but government-approved affidavits that allow them to give tours
20. *Taaza, Pakka, and Thakka*: terms used by tour guides to refer to the purchasing power of a tourist on the basis of how long the tourist had been travelling in the country. This determined the tour guide's willingness to take on a particular assignment
21. *Taaza*: Fresh
22. TGFI: Tourist Guide Federation of India
23. *Thakka*: Tired
24. *Thekas*: locations where a set of guides pay the contractor to ensure that only the paying guides are allowed to work there

25. UPT guides: tour guides who have been granted licenses by the Uttar Pradesh Tourism office.
26. UPT: Uttar Pradesh Tourism.

This team embraced an eye-opening adventure that led to exciting revelations about the life and the works of tour guides in Agra and Fatehpur Sikri. The uniqueness of this research was felt by both the interviewers and the interviewees. To hear their stories and put ourselves in the shoes of others was a one in a million experience.

