

Greetings from Team SA.

When giving money to the amputated, you must put it directly in to their pockets ...Greg Campbell.



What would be Jamal Malik's reaction to this hoarding? Would it be that, he had betrayed his neighbour's dignity, by showcasing their poverty to the filthy rich tourists' desire to spend their extra green paper? Would it be that, he had done a great service to his fellow society by making the visiting tourists feel for the misfortunes of being born on the other side of the planet? Would it be that, he had facilitated a bridge between the philanthropic minds and the deserving lot? Or would it be a celebration manifest of the diamond jubilee of the Slumdog Millionaire, the movie where he donned the hero role? Whatever it be to him, to me, this hoarding has created a ripple that i was not able to resist myself in having this topic in this editorial page ahead of my usual taxation issues.

Oscar winning movie 'Slumdog Millionaire' has catapulted not only AR Rahman to international fame but is slowly transforming 'Incredible India' as favourite destination for prospective 'Slum tourism'. Post Slumdog millionaire, after Rio De Janeiro, Soweto and Johannesburg, 'Dharavi' has become the most favourite holiday spot under the category of reality tourism. A renowned portal has opened 'oscar destination package' out of which Mumbai tour package is the major best seller. An esteemed travel portel

sells incredible India packages with taglines as **'Don't miss a chance to visit slum and know what it makes to be happy, definitely not money'**

While media has slowly started debating as to whether the trend is tourism or voyeurism the issue is much more critical from economic, psychological and social implications. While for the visiting tourists slum hopping remains just a matter of curiosity, passive observation of poverty and break away from stereotype destinations- for the inhabitants of slums it is an insult to their dignity. How it feels when every day a curious tourist is barging to your street and gaping at your door step with an open camera to catch a glimpse of your poverty. While the adventurous tourist returns with an elated expression of disbelief and sympathy and the tour operator pockets his share,- how are the poor victims of this compulsory voyeurism compensated? There are some tour operators who are collecting entry fees and contributing same to empowerment of street children. This although to a certain extent can be seen as a compensatory measure, what social change is brought about by such asymmetrical interactions? Is the government really bothered or even aware of the ethos of this unscrupulous way of fund raising (if at all it is fund raising)? Before trading their poverty to the adventure starving tourists were the hapless victims ever asked whether their privacy and dignity can be intruded and sold for few dollars which may not even reach them. Of what value are fundamental rights which guarantees freedom of speech and expression and right to privacy to them.

Is this in line with the marketing ethos of the current competitive world or is this a creative thinking in the tourism industry, or is it a trading of BPL victims to negotiate their dignity against currency? On a search through the web, i could not see such a novel kind of tourism package, in the well developed nations? Is it because there are no slums in Europe or is it because anything can be done in our Incredible India? Since there is a justification for every predator who hunts and an inherent incapability on every prey which is being hunt, it would be better to leave it to the readers to decide!!!