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Rural
Tourism

Prime Minister Launches UMANG App



Taking another major step towards efficient service delivery through digital technology, the Prime Minister has launched the **UMANG App** (Unified Mobile App for New-age Governance) that aims to bring 162 government services on a single mobile app.

Launched with a larger goal to make the government accessible on the mobile phone of our citizens, UMANG App has following features-

- Uniform User Friendly Interface across Government services
- 162 services of 33 department/ applications and 4 State
- Supports 13 Indian languages and caters to on-demand scalability
- Will soon support feature phones without internet connectivity through USSD
- Seamless integration with popular customer centric services like Aadhaar and Digilocker
- Available on multiple channels such as Smartphone, Desktop and Tablets
- UMANG has a dedicated Customer Support for user convenience from 8 am to 8 pm for all days of the week

The UMANG App was launched on 23rd November, 2017 at the Global Conference on Cyberspace (GCCS) 2017 in New Delhi in the presence of Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, who was the guest of Honour at the event.

Themed on **Cyber4All : A Secure and Inclusive Cyberspace for Sustainable Development**, this was the fifth edition of GCCS. The Conference saw the worldwide participation of leaders, policymakers, industry experts, think tanks and cyber experts who gathered to deliberate on issues and challenges for optimally using cyber space.

The Prime Minister also felicitated the winners of the **Global Cyber Challenge** called **Peace-a-thon**. The winners were declared following a 36-hour challenge in the Grand Finale of the Hackathon, wherein hundreds of teams from throughout India and from countries like USA, Canada, France, Argentina, Australia and Algeria turned up to showcase their talent and compete in the challenge.



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Kurukshetra seeks to carry the message of Rural Development to all people. It serves as a forum for free, frank and serious discussion on the problems of Rural Development with special focus on Rural Uplift.

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Editorial

India with all its geographical and cultural diversity has always been an attraction for tourists. The mighty Himalayas, vast deserts, lush green forests and beautiful beaches intertwined with ancient temples and the majestic forts of Rajasthan make India truly an 'Incredible' destination.

However, India has much more to offer than just being the 'land of tigers and temples'. Spread across its lakhs of villages lie untold venues in all their myriad colours and hues. If explored and developed as rural tourism sites, these venues could be instrumental in bringing out the much needed turnaround of rural communities and at the same time providing a visitor wholesome tourism experience.

Rural tourism holds immense promise for India. When developed to its fullest potential, it could provide jobs to many young men and women in villages who otherwise are increasingly migrating to cities. Rural tourism can revive many of the arts and crafts traditionally being practiced in the rural communities but dying a slow death. Socially, it can open rural mindset to new thoughts and ideas from the outside world. On the other hand, for the urban citizen, a few days spent amidst traditional rural lifestyle may prove to be a great stress reliever.

Conscious of the potential gains, the Prime Minister has been laying a lot of emphasis on developing tourism sector in India. With a keen focus on rural India, a Rural Circuit has been included among the thirteen thematic circuits identified for development under Swadesh Darshan programme. This will be crucial in developing tourism infrastructure and improving connectivity to rural sites.

Similarly, efforts are being made for capacity building at village level and skilling the rural youth for tourism activities. Traditionally Indian society is known for its hospitality; however some basic training on soft skills to engage the tourists will certainly be helpful. Also, the education and awareness at community level will be very crucial for developing sustainable tourism practices in villages. Panchayats, NGOs and community organisations have an important role to play here by way of engaging both communities and tourists to promote responsible tourism.

In this whole process a weak link is the marketing of rural tourism products. For rural tourism to become a success, outside world need to be made aware of such tourist places at first. Public-Private Partnership may be of immense help in this regard. Various companies under their CSR commitments could join hands with academia and local institutions to create awareness and market rural tourism in an effective manner. Most Indian villages have one or more traditional entities/crafts that make them unique. This can be leveraged effectively to attract the tourists. Further, rural artisans and their crafts need to be promoted through other innovative methods such as – Dilli Haat.

The government agencies at national and state level have been doing their bit to promote rural tourism in India. However, a holistic approach through the convergence of number schemes under various ministries like rural development, culture, environment and tribal welfare may be more rewarding. Draft National Tourism Policy -2015 is a right step in this direction and when finalised, it would go a long way in holistic development of tourism sector in India.

In the end, we just need to remind ourselves that more than fifty per cent of the world's population already lives in urban areas and this proportion is expected to increase to 66 per cent by 2050. This huge number of city dwellers would always be looking for a small break in their mundane life, and a small trip to a village would surely be a great mood lifter. Future of rural tourism is bright!

RURAL TOURISM IN INDIA: SCOPE AND POTENTIAL

Rashmi Verma

The great monuments ranging from the symbol of eternal love, the Taj Mahal to the great temples of South India, the majestic forts of Rajasthan as well as the wide and varied landscape of snow capped mountains, the golden beaches, rich forests and verdant deserts all make India an 'Incredible' destination. India also has many products to offer to the tourists who travel keeping a special interest in mind, be it Medical and Wellness Tourism, be it Golf courses or be it Adventure Sports, India has it all.

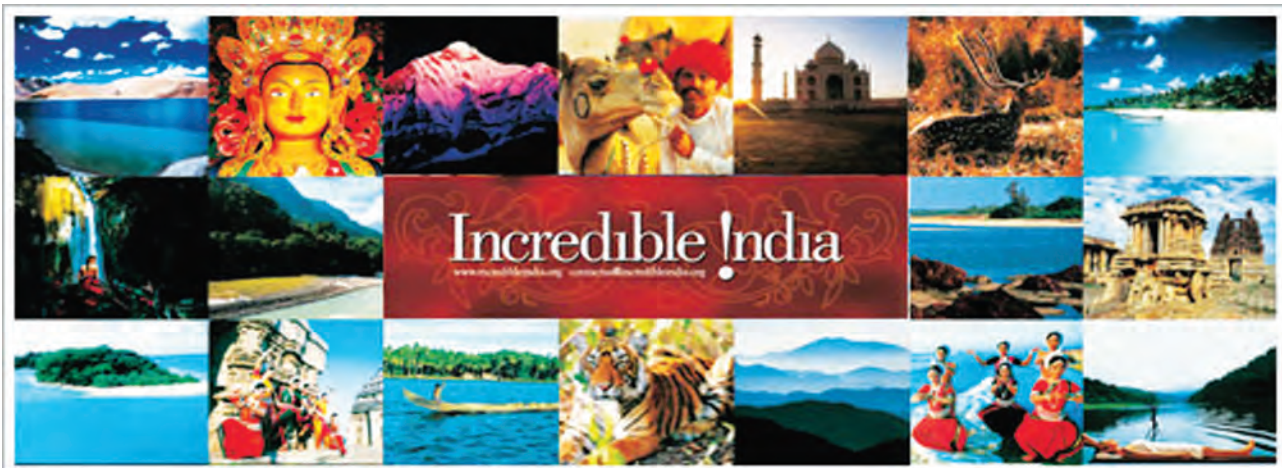
The tourism industry world over is going through a great shift in ideas and beliefs. Today, fuelled by a massive increase in purchasing power and development of faster and cheaper modes of travel, more and more people are travelling across the world. The purpose of travels now tend to be more of leisure, and increasingly so, for getting to know new things and experiencing cultures, cuisine, traditions, etc. This kind of travel is called '**experiential travel**'. Today, the discerning traveller is prepared to go greater distances and to previously unknown places to get the unique experiences and also to cater to her own special interests. The tourist is also looking at being a responsible traveller, about giving back to the community and interacting with the host community so that he has a visible stake in the whole development of the region.

India's tourism attractions, as we know, are large and varied. Our culture, which is both syncretic and dates back to ancient times, is our most visible attraction. The great monuments ranging from the symbol of eternal love, the Taj Mahal to the great temples of South India, the majestic forts of Rajasthan as well as the wide and varied landscape of snow capped mountains, the golden beaches, rich forests and verdant deserts all make India an 'Incredible' destination. India also has many products to offer to the tourists who travel

keeping a special interest in mind, be it Medical and Wellness Tourism, be it Golf courses or be it Adventure Sports, India has it all.

Mahatma Gandhi had once said that "India lives in its villages". The village life in India is where you meet the 'Real India'. The villages are also repositories of the country's culture and tradition. The slow pace of life in the village, far away from the hustle and bustle of the big city, is an experience that can rejuvenate one. The villages and the rural economies also have practitioners of unique arts and crafts in their original forms that are hard to come by in the cities. However, one knows that inhabitants of rural areas are mostly farming communities and in many cases the incomes are not as good as they are in cities. In many cases, there are not enough jobs available in villages and many young men and women are increasingly migrating to cities looking for better opportunities. This has also led to some of the arts and crafts traditionally being practiced in the rural communities dying a slow death.

Rural Tourism is one of the solutions which can cater to all the above questions. This form of tourism focuses on the visitor actively participating in a rural lifestyle. The tourist travels to a rural location and experiences the life while taking part in the daily activities of the village. The tourist also gets a chance to imbibe the traditions and



culture of the area. Rural tourism may also include overnight stay in which the visitor also gets to know the unique lifestyle of the village at much closer quarters. The local community also benefits as this is a way of supplanting their incomes which are mostly dependent on agriculture or low skill jobs. They can also imbibe the cultures of the visitors and thus expand their knowledge and horizons. Many cases of rural tourism also include **voluntourism** in which the tourists spend some time in volunteering and giving back to the community they visit in the form of teaching at local schools, helping out in the farming activities, etc.

The Ministry of Tourism recognized Rural Tourism as a very effective way of providing experiential travel and diversifying the tourism product as well as helping rural communities by increasing their income levels and in preserving the dying art forms. The **Endogenous Tourism Project** was launched with the help of the United Nations Development Programme with a pilot project of 31 villages spread across the country way back in 203-2004. The locations were selected on the basis of their proximity to well established tourist circuits and presence of unique art/craft or culture that could be marketed as a USP. Even after UNDP withdrew from the project, the Ministry of Tourism has continued to fund such projects through various schemes including the earlier scheme for **Product Infrastructure Development** and now through the **Swadesh Darshan** scheme.

There have now been many success stories of the Rural Tourism model and many of the projects have achieved financial viability; notable among them is the **Shaam-e-Sarhad** project in the village of Hodka in Gujarat. Shaam-e-Sarhad is a tourist camp, built, owned, and managed by the Hodka community. Tourism could enable the communities in improving the quality of their life by creating more livelihood options while also enabling them to conserve and develop further their unique cultures.

The concept has now been taken forward by many states as well. Kerala has been in the forefront of developing the Rural Tourism model and evolving it under the greater ambit of 'Responsible Tourism'. The award winning Kerala Responsible Tourism projects in Kumarakom, Wyanad and other locations combine a unique model of involving the local community and getting the visitor experience village life with the local stakeholders as story tellers. This instills a great pride in the villagers who would otherwise have abandoned their traditional way of life for the city.

Another success story is in Sikkim which has empowered many village communities to develop tourism experiences including homestays thus spreading the tourism products evenly and away from the traditional destinations. This also helps in increasing the carrying capacity of the tourism products. Sikkim is also leveraging its rural tourism products with its distinction of being India's first organic state. Such a development model has the communities' involvement at the grass roots level and everyone gets an equal stake in the whole process.

Following the success of the Government initiatives, there have been some notable initiatives coming up from the private sector. The projects in Rajasthan including in Samode and Mandawa have come up on a public private model. A noteworthy mention is of the **Govardhan Eco-Village** in Maharashtra which won the UNWTO Ulysses Award for Innovation last year. The institution has developed the village into a community that has a symbiotic relationship with the visitors and has increased community participation as well as helped in raising the income and education levels in this once backward area.

There is, therefore, immense scope for development of the concept of Rural Tourism and Village Life Experiences across the country. However, some challenges still remain. Chief amongst the challenges is that of the marketing. The communities by their very nature have very little avenues for marketing of the products both nationally and internationally. Therefore, with the lack of sufficient marketing infrastructure, those projects which are not very well linked with the traditional tourism circuits have not been able to do well. The Ministry of Tourism has contributed to the marketing efforts by displaying the rural tourism sites on the main website of the Ministry quite prominently. The Rural Tourism Kerala Mission is also another example of a successful marketing effort by the State Government of Kerala. These sites have to be ultimately patronized by the tour operators and included in their itinerary to be financially viable. Therefore, more such efforts are required both at domestic and international levels.

To quote Mahatma Gandhi again, "India perishes if her villages perish". Therefore, it is imperative on our part to nurture the villages and preserve that simple way of life for our future generations. Rural and Responsible Tourism goes a long way in keeping that tradition alive.

(The author is Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. Email: sectour@nic.in)

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM

Madhura Roy

With increased number of tourists visiting the countryside, there will be a boost in the income level of the people due to increased level of trade among the people. This will also generate jobs among the youths.

A small break in the mundane life always acts as a great mood lifter. Generally, people like to take this break by travelling and exploring new places. However, time and affordability play an important role in selecting the destination. Traditional tourist spots are often quite congested during the peak tourist seasons. Countryside has always been a stress reliever for the urban people. Since majority of the society has now been urbanised, rural tourism is increasingly becoming popular among the urban population.

More than fifty per cent of the world's population lives in urban areas, a proportion that is expected to increase to 66 per cent by 2050. According to the World Urbanization Prospects by UN DESA's Population Division (2014), the largest urban growth will take place in India, China and Nigeria. These three countries will account for 37 per cent of the projected growth of the world's urban population between 2014 and 2050. By

2050, India is projected to add 404 million urban dwellers, China 292 million and Nigeria 212 million.

Concept of Rural Tourism:

Government of India explains Rural Tourism as "Any form of tourism that showcases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefitting the local community, economically and socially, as well as enabling interaction between the tourists and the locals for a more enriching tourism experience can be termed as rural tourism. Rural tourism is essentially an activity that takes place in the countryside. It is multi-faceted and may entail farm/ agricultural tourism, cultural tourism, nature tourism, adventure tourism and eco-tourism. As against conventional tourism, rural tourism has certain typical characteristics like-it is experience oriented, the locations are sparsely populated, it is pre-dominantly in natural environment, it meshes



Majuli Island, Assam



with seasonality and local events and is based on preservation of culture, heritage and tradition.”

Ministry of Tourism in India has laid a great deal of emphasis on the development of such rural tourism sites which boast of rich **art, culture, handloom, heritage and crafts**. These villages are affluent in both natural beauty and **cultural splendour**. Rural tourism is supposed to generate increasing benefits to rural areas in terms of rural productivity, conservation of rural environment and culture, local people’s involvement and a suitable way of adapting traditional beliefs and values to modern times.

Major types of Rural Tourism in India:

- **Agricultural Tourism:** To explore more about the agricultural industry and how farmers work with crops.
- **Cultural Tourism:** To allow tourists to be immersed in local culture related activities, like rituals and festivals.
- **Nature Tourism:** Responsible travel to natural areas, which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people.
- **Adventure Tourism:** Any constructive activity which tests the endurance of both a person and his equipment to its extreme limit is termed as Adventure.
- **Food Routes:** Where wanderlust meets the variety that persists in our cuisine. This tourism is all about food and knowing more about different staples of different places.
- **Community Eco-tourism:** Where tourism is for a purpose. It is a rather responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment

and improves the well-being of local people.

- **Ethno-tourism:** To expand the horizons to view different cultures. It is essentially to know more about various ethnic and cultural lifestyles and beliefs.

Increasing Interest in Rural Tourism:

- Rural tourism helps to garner knowledge on agriculture, farming, local governance, etc.
- Rural tourism helps to remove myths about rural lifestyle that may exist in urban minds like villages are unhygienic, rural life is unsafe, etc.
- Rural tourism will help a person to explore the vast diversity that breathe in the interiors of India.

Different Schemes of the Government of India:

Ministry of Tourism has identified many spots which are being developed as tourist destinations in rural areas. These sites are still unexplored. To help in the holistic development of such tourist places, the Ministry has introduced certain schemes, which are detailed below:-

Swadesh Darshan- Scheme Guidelines for Integrated Development of Theme Based Circuits:

India’s rich cultural, historical, religious and natural heritage provide a huge potential for development of tourism and job creation. In due recognition of this potential, the Union Government, in the Budget Speech of 2014-15 decided to create tourist circuits around specific themes.

PRASAD- Pilgrimage Rejuvenation for Spiritual Augmentation Drive:

Pilgrimage tourism is a form of tourism motivated partly or wholly by religious sentiments. India is a land of many religions like Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism, Christianity, Jainism and Sufism, having their major pilgrimage centres in different parts of the country. Religion and spirituality are common motivations for travel, with major tourist destinations having developed largely as a result of their connections to sacred places, persons and events.

Special Tourism Zones:

The Union Budget of 2017-18 has announced that Five Special Tourism Zones, anchored on SPVs, will be set up in partnership with the States. This would help in introducing Incredible India's second global campaign to strengthen India's position as an attractive tourist destination.

e-Tourist Visa Facility:

To facilitate arrival of international tourists, Ministry of Tourism has been working very closely with Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of External Affairs for easing of the Visa Regime in the country over a period of time. In order to make rural tourism attractive, Ministry of Tourism is promoting Farm Tourism as niche products. Ministry is also encouraging Home Stay Facilities in rural areas.

Impact of Rural Tourism:

➤ *Positive Impact*

The most important impact of increasing rural tourism is the impact on economy. With increased number of tourists visiting the countryside, there will be a boost in the income level of the people due to increased level of trade among the people. This will also generate jobs among the youths.

The traditional handloom and handicrafts of any place is matter of pride for the local people. Through tourism, the visitor can have the benefit of directly buying the finished products from the local people. This in turn will have a positive impact on the overall economy.

Exchange of ideas with the tourists will create a new idea among the villagers. This entails increasing interest in education, preventive health care, modern gadgets, etc. That will help in universal literacy.

With more tourists visiting the villages, there will be improvement in the connectivity by means of roads, increase in public transports, etc.

Villages which are close to sanctuaries and reserve parks can teach the idea of preserving the nature to their urban counterparts. Living by the side of nature for centuries, they will have more knowledge about how to preserve nature. Tourists may develop an interest in the local religion and traditional rituals that act as catalyst for social harmony.

➤ *Negative Impact:*

However, rural tourism may have certain negative impacts. To facilitate tourism, there would be an increase in the infrastructure development of the countryside. This may lead to concretisation of rural area and may distort the natural beauty. Besides, influx of tourists may lead to exploitation of natural resources.

Tourism may have an adverse effect on the traditional livelihood of people. The village people may shift from agriculture and other traditional livelihoods to lucrative livelihoods related to tourism. This may, in turn have a negative impact on rural tourism.

Scope for Improvement:

Every aspect of life has both positive as well as negative views. For sustainable development, it is essential to optimise the positive impacts and minimise the negative impacts. The same is true for popularising rural tourism also.

In order to make tourists feel comfortable while visiting any place, they may be provided detailed information regarding their place of visit in advance. They may also be informed about any particular custom prevalent in that region so that the tourists may prepare themselves accordingly.

There is a necessity for having good infrastructure and logistic support in villages. Roads connecting to the nearest railway station or highways would improve accessibility to the villages. That would benefit both the tourists as well as the villagers. However, instead of having more hotels or guest houses in rural areas, it is better to encourage homestay. The tourist can have a taste of the traditional practices along with local recipes prevalent in rural India. This would help the tourists to connect to the villagers in less time.

The exotic flora and fauna of rural India can be a huge source of learning for students. Student excursions can be allowed with proper permission from competent authorities. The students will learn to value nature in this way.

Language may be an important issue when it comes to tourism. Hence, tourists may be given the option of interpreters in case they face any difficulty. There is a need to have trained and qualified interpreters for this purpose.

Most villages of India have a traditional entity that makes them unique. Many such traditional products are recognised by conferring the Geographical Indicators or GI tags. These may be agricultural products, handicrafts, textile products, sweets, natural goods, manufactured goods, holy goods etc. All these GI tagged products are always showcased on the national as well as international platforms and have a huge market demand. The Government may take steps to ensure that tourists get a first-hand experience in seeing how these products are being made, packed and showcased. That may lead to increased interest among the tourists and eventually rise in the number of tourists in these rural regions.

Many states of India are blessed with medicinal herbs and other *ayurvedic* products which have strong medicinal values. The Government can develop suitable infrastructure to capture such tourists who can avail medicinal facilities in such villages of India.

The role of State Governments is very important when it comes to rural tourism. Each State has a different potential to attract tourists. Hence, it is necessary that State Governments identify this potential and work in close coordination with the Union Government to promote rural tourism. That will benefit the tourism sector of the country on the whole.

Tourists may be advised well in advance not to get involved into any local issues which may lead to law and order problems. The Government may conduct a survey among the tourists and get to know about their feelings regarding the place of their visit. Based on their feedbacks, measures may be adopted to improve tourism.

Some Popular Rural Tourism Destinations:

- Kutch Adventures India: Community Tourism in Kutch: Forays into Rann of Kutch of Gujarat to visit artisans' villages as well as the salt desert.
- Itmennan Lodges Punjabiyat: Farming in Rural Punjab: Gives the tourist a taste of various farming activities
- Ecosphere Spiti: High altitude rural tourism: Visits to Buddhist monasteries, yak safaris, treks to villages, village homestays, and

cultural performances are some of the possible activities.

- Lachen, Sikkim: It is located at 8500 feet against the backdrop of snow-capped peaks, glaciers and rock cliffs, amidst mixed conifer and Rhododendron forests. Made accessible to tourists only a few years back, it retains an unspoilt freshness.
- Ballabhpur Danga, West Bengal: Ballavpur Danga, 3 km from Shantiniketan, is a Santhal Adivasi tribal community in the pastoral beauty of rural Bengal. The Sonajhuri forest lies to the east and the Ballavpur Avayaranya forest area and bird sanctuary is to its south. Santhali art, craft and culture is closely knit into the community's life.
- Sunderbans Village Life: The UNESCO World Heritage Site with the largest mangrove vegetation in the world is a great attraction for tourists.
- Majuli in Assam: The largest river island on the Brahmaputra river in Assam is a popular tourist destination
- Pochampally, Telengana: Tourists can have a look at weaving of the famous silk sarees known by the same name.

There are more to the list, which still remain unexplored by the tourists.

Conclusion:

"To other country, I may go as a tourist. But to India, I come as a pilgrim", the words of Martin Luther King Jr. have their resonance in the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "We are inheritors of a rural civilization. The vastness of our country, the vastness of the population, the situation and the climate of the country have, in my opinion, destined it for a rural civilization." Rural India has a lot to offer to people. It would need concerted effort from both the Union Government and State Governments to identify these areas and explore tourism potential in this sector. That is of utmost importance to promote rural tourism in the country. Then only rural tourism can develop and flourish.

(The author is currently Senior Research Officer in NITI Ayog, New Delhi. Email: madhuraroy@gmail.com)

NATIONAL TOURISM POLICY: THE POTENTIAL GAME CHANGER

Abhishek Mukherjee

To sustain India's remarkable performance in tourism sector, necessary improvement in India's service and hospitality industry is essential. The implementation of proposed National Tourism Policy will go a long way in removing the impediments associated with this particular sector and will provide a sustainable and conducive environment for the overall development of the tourism sector.

India is a vast country with varied culture, traditions, languages, festivals and rituals. The country sets up a perfect example in the world when it comes to unity in diversity. History in its ancient, medieval or modern form has provided evidence to the fact that India has been a country which has attracted global attention right from the days of Alexander the Great to the British raj. Some of the dynasties that have ruled our country have left indelible impression in art, culture, architecture and most importantly, has left us with a legacy that is still very much a part of India's day to day life. All of these have made India a hugely attractive tourist destination. A country which can offer mystic Himalayas, serene seas, enchanting wildlife, holy shrines and above all a very dynamic way of life in the same platter. Tourism has also been one of the major driving force of India's remarkable growth in recent past. As per the Report of World Travel & Tourism Council, India is the world's seventh largest tourism economy in terms of its total contribution to the country's GDP. According to the latest data available, Travel & Tourism generated INR14.1 trillion (USD208.9 billion) in 2016, which is the world's 7th largest in terms of absolute size, the sum is equivalent to 9.6% of the country's GDP.

Further, this sector is particularly important for employment generation. As per the latest data, travel and tourism sector has supported 40.3 million jobs in 2016, thus, making India global second in terms of total

employment supported by travel and tourism. This particular sector accounts for 9.3 per cent of the total jobs in the country. It is estimated that in 2017, there will be a growth of 6.7 per cent in travel and tourism sector in India. However, this remarkable growth of India's travel and tourism sector is being driven by domestic tourism which accounted for 88 per cent of the sector's contribution to GDP in 2016. Thus, there lies significant potential in India's tourism sector.

This paper will try to identify the bottlenecks that exist in Indian tourism industry in the light of the tourism policy and would also attempt to identify the potential areas where India can work on to increase its foreign tourist influx.

Tourism Trends in recent years:

The following table highlights India's tourism statistics in recent years:



Table I: Foreign Tourists Arrival in India:

Year	Number of Foreign Tourists Arrival (in Millions)	Annual Growth Rate (%)
2014	7.68	10.2
2015	8.03	4.5
2016	8.80	9.7
2017(P) Jan-Jun 2017	4.89	17.2*(growth rate over same period in 2016)

(Source: India Tourism Statistics At a Glance, 2017)

The figures above clearly indicate India's rising demand in global tourism, thanks to conducive environment and pro tourist policy undertaken by the Government in recent years. If we look at the foreign exchange earnings from tourism in the same period (Table II below), we will see a steady increase.

Table II: Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE) from tourism in India:

Year	FEE from Tourism in India (in US \$ Million)	Annual Growth Rate (%)
2014	20236	9.7
2015	21071	4.1
2016	22923	8.8
2017(P) Jan-Jun 2017	13230	22.3*(growth rate over same period in 2016)

(Source: India Tourism Statistics At a Glance, 2017)

What is really encouraging is that not only tourists from abroad but number of domestic tourists have also increased in the same time period. As it has already been stated earlier, domestic tourism constitutes about 88% of the total earnings from tourism in India. The following table shows the domestic tourism scenario of the country:

Table III: Number of Domestic Tourist Visits

Year	Domestic Tourist Visits (in Million)	Annual Growth Rate (%)
2014	1282.80	12.3
2015	1431.97	11.6
2016	1613.55	12.7

(Source: India Tourism Statistics At a Glance, 2017)

Need for a tourism policy:

As is evident from the figures above, Indian tourism industry is doing remarkably well but the major challenge lies in providing adequate infrastructural and logistic support to sustain this growth momentum. Tourism has evolved with time and presently it can be broadly classified into the following:

- Medical Tourism: Persons coming particularly to avail medical facilities. A large chunk of population from South Asian countries come to India to avail medical facilities here.
- Education Tourism: Prospective Students and their families coming for pursuing higher studies in Institutes of repute such as: IITs, IIMs, JNU etc.
- Golf Tourism: India boasts of world class golf courses to promote golf tourism in the country. Jammu and Kashmir, Chandigarh, New Delhi, Kochi, Bengaluru have excellent facilities and infrastructure which attract golf connoisseurs worldwide.
- Eco-Tourism: Ecotourism as defined by the International Ecotourism Society is "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of local people, and involves interpretation and education". Eco tourism is ecologically sustainable. The concept of ecological sustainability subsumes the environmental carrying capacity of a given area. Western Ghats, Indo-Burma border and Eastern Himalayas and Nicobar islands are bio-diversity hot spots eco region.

Apart from the above mentioned classifications, other forms of tourism that are gaining popularity are wedding; sports tourism; tea tourism and rural tourism.

Therefore, it is essential to provide adequate infrastructural and other supports to sustain and expand the tourism industry in the country, right from making provision for medical infrastructure to educational infrastructure; from communication infrastructure to ensuring safety and security of tourists; providing world class sports facilities; creating knowledge and awareness of Indian culture and traditions among the foreigners which may include promotion of yoga, Ayurveda; protection of monuments and shrines from environmental pollution etc. These are some of

the challenges faced by India in the tourism sector. But, most importantly, it is essential to ease the paper works that are required for obtaining Indian visa for foreign tourists.

Thus, there are several issues that need to be looked into. To address this need, a national tourism policy is essential. A policy that will highlight each issue and will lay down structured guidelines to address the issues individually for overall development of tourism sector.

National Tourism Policy:

National Tourism Policy was formulated in 1982 in a closed economy with stringent licensing procedures. The policy however did not recognize the role of private sector and due to its formulation in the closed economy, foreign investment in tourism sector was not encouraged. Further, the policy did not adequately address the domestic tourism. To lay emphasis on tourism and address the loopholes in the previous policy, Government of India formulated National Tourism Development Policy in 2002. The main objectives of the policy were:

- To position tourism as a major engine of economic growth;
- To harness the direct and multiplier effects for employment and poverty eradication in an environmentally sustainable manner.
- To focus on domestic tourism as a major driver of tourism growth.
- To position India as one of the global brand to reap off benefits from the global tourism trade and to promote the untapped potential of India as a destination.
- To create and develop integrated tourism circuits based on cultural and socio economic aspects along with States, private sector and other agencies.
- To recognize the importance of private sector and private investment in tourism industry, with Government acting as a catalyst to boost up tourism earnings.

Considering the recent developments and advancements in the tourism sector across the World, a new draft tourism policy has been formulated by Government of India, which is yet to be approved. Some of the salient features of the new draft tourism policy are:

- Focus of the policy on employment generation and community participation in tourism development.
- Stress on development of tourism in sustainable and responsible manner.
- An all-compassing policy involving linkages with various Ministries, Departments, States/UTs and stakeholders.
- The Policy enshrines the vision of developing and positioning India as a “MUST EXPERIENCE” and “MUST RE-VISIT” destination for global travellers, while encouraging Indians to explore their own country.
- Development and promotion of varied tourism products including the rich Culture and Heritage of the country, as well as niche products such as Medical & Wellness, Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE), Adventure, Wildlife, etc.
- Development of core infrastructure (airways, railways, roadways, waterways, etc.) and Tourism Infrastructure.
- Developing quality human resources in the tourism and hospitality sectors across the spectrum of vocational to professional skills development and opportunity creation.
- Creating an enabling environment for investment in tourism and tourism-related infrastructure.
- Emphasis on technology enabled development in tourism.
- Focus on domestic tourism as a major driver of tourism growth.
- Focus on promotions in established source markets and potential markets, which are contributing significantly to global tourist traffic, with targeted and country specific campaigns.
- Emphasis on Tourism as the fulcrum of multi-sectoral activities and dovetailing of activities of the Ministry with important/flagship schemes of the Government of India.

The Draft Tourism Policy is fairly exhaustive. It has addressed all the important issues in tourism sector. The policy has also laid emphasis on the ‘repeat value’ of India-by incorporating “MUST RE-VISIT” destination for global travellers,

as one of its salient features. Targeted and country specific campaign is expected to boost up Indian tourism as it is a welcome departure from “one-size fits all” approach. The draft policy has also recognized the role of State and UT and is expected to establish linkages between State/UT, various ministries/ departments of Central Government and other concerned stakeholders. Cooperative federalism has been strongly encouraged by the policy. Tourism is one of the largest employment creators and generators in the country. Focus on employment generation and community participation will further enhance the possibility of creating employment in this particular sector.

Rural Tourism

One of the main focus area of Ministry of Tourism is rural tourism. Rural tourism or village tourism provides a welcome relief from the mundane life of metro cities and other big cities. Growing interest in India’s heritage and culture, improved connectivity of rural areas and the urge to live a rural way of life have provided the necessary impetus for the development of rural tourism. Major types of rural tourism in India are:

- Agriculture Tourism: where agriculture as a way of life is explored.
- Food Routes: It’s tourism relating to food and knowing more about different staples of different places.
- Community Tourism: This type of tourism comes with a social cause, where, the main aim is to conserve the environment and improve the well-being of the local people.
- Ethno-tourism: Ethno-tourism is travel focusing on exploration of indigenous populations and their respective culture and traditions. Ethno-tourists usually seek to learn more about native peoples and their livelihoods.

In rural tourism, the primary interest is on understanding the rural culture. It interconnects with seasonality and local events and is based on preservation of culture, heritage and traditions. Under the SwadeshDarshan scheme of Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, theme based circuits are promoted. Rural circuit is one of the theme based circuit which emphasizes on revitalizing the rural economy through tourism and it also provides the opportunity to the foreign and domestic tourists to get a glance of rural India. Rural tourism also

encourages handlooms, art and craft and textiles industry by creating positive linkages with them. So far, 153 rural tourism projects in 28 States/Union Territories have been sanctioned by the Ministry of Tourism including 36 rural sites where UNDP has supported for capacity building. Ministry of Tourism’s Explore rural India sub brand supported by globally recognized Incredible India brand is strengthening the visitor’s attraction towards India in general and towards India’s countryside in particular.

Conclusion:

India with its robust GDP growth and stable socio political environment provides the perfect platform for the growth of tourism sector. In the recently published World Bank Ranking on Ease of Doing Business, India has jumped 30 points to secure itself in top 100 nations, which is the result of several ongoing reforms that have taken place in the last one year. Reforms such as lesser paper work, extending the visa-on-arrival facility to other countries are expected to further boost up India’s tourism sector. To sustain India’s remarkable performance in tourism sector, necessary improvement in India’s service and hospitality industry is essential. The implementation of proposed National Tourism Policy will go a long way in removing the impediments associated with this particular sector and will provide a sustainable and conducive environment for the overall development of the tourism sector.

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RURAL TOURISM: INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Dr Suyash Yadav

In order to develop a village as a tourist destination, first step should be to identify the core strength of the village around which the theme of Rural Tourism can be developed. Key factors which drive growth of tourism, namely, location, proximity to prominent tourist destinations must also be considered. Rural Tourism is an area where a strong public-private partnership is of prime importance. Convergence of number schemes under various ministries like rural development, culture, environment and tribal welfare must be considered for a holistic approach. Participation of village panchayat and Rural Innovation Fund under NABARD may also be leveraged.

Macro economic growth is no guarantee of human development. In the backdrop of increasing rural crisis in developing countries, providing social and economic justice to the vast segments of the masses who have been persistently deprived of livelihood, basic services like health and education, remains the greatest challenge. Rural Tourism cannot be a one stop solution for ensuring goals such as equity and empowerment. However, it can be valuable and critical if one were to aim at people centred tourism. The development of a strong platform around the concept of Rural Tourism is definitely useful for a country like India, where almost 74 per cent of the population resides in its 7 million villages.

Falling income levels in agriculture has led to an urbanization syndrome in the rural areas. Alongside, the stresses of urban lifestyle have lead to a “counter-urbanization” syndrome. Rural Tourism is one of the few activities which can provide a solution to these problems. Tourism on its own will not be able to provide 100 per cent employment throughout the year, but it does provide another opportunity, it does diversify portfolio apart from current engagements of farming, animal husbandry etc.



The mega event on Rural tourism held in Pollachi

Under this scheme, the thrust is to promote village tourism as the primary tourism product to spread tourism and its socio-economic benefits to rural regions thereby stopping the exodus from rural to urban areas. Village entertainment groups unveil local history and culture, natural and oral treasures. Tourist, therefore ‘experiences’ India’s rural traditions. Today tourism is all about experiences, people no longer just want to go see a site or a monument and come back. They need to feel that they have interacted, have been enriched and come to learn something more about the society.

Rural Tourism in India:

Any form of tourism that showcases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefiting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling interaction between the tourists and the locals for a more enriching tourism experience can be termed as rural tourism. India’s National Tourism Policy 2002 identified Rural Tourism as one of its focus areas. The Endogenous Tourism Project- Rural Tourism Scheme (ETP-RTS) is a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (MoT) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) initiated in 2003.

UNDP contributes Rs 20 lakh per site towards ‘software’ i.e. awareness creation between locals and outside agencies. The MoT contributes Rs 50 lakh per site as Central Financial Assistance (CFA) towards ‘hardware’ i.e. development of infrastructure, which includes improvement of roads, hygiene, surroundings of the village etc. Tie ups are done with hotel management institutes to train villagers in cuisine, cleanliness and sanitation. Institutions like IRMA (Institute of Rural Management, Anand) and heritage architects are roped in as consultants. Efforts are made to retain vernacular architecture,

perhaps with a little landscaping that's in tune with the surroundings.

As against conventional tourism, rural tourism has certain typical characteristics like it is experience oriented, the locations are thinly populated, it is predominantly in natural environment, engages local events and is based on preservation of culture, heritage and traditions. The implementation is done through a *Paryatan Samiti* headed by the District Collector of the concerned rural tourism site. The MoT has sanctioned Rural Tourism projects at 185 sites to various States/Union Territory Administrations upto 31st March 2012. As per the present data available from the website of MoT, 52 rural sites have been commissioned across India. Each of these sites has a speciality.

In the year 2014, MoT introduced *Swadesh Darshan*, a Central Government scheme for Integrated Development of Theme-Based Tourist Circuits. A Tourist Circuit is a route on which at least three major tourist destinations are located such that none of them are in the same town, village or city. Tourist circuit with a consistent theme such as religion, culture, ethnicity and niche is known as Theme Based Tourist Circuit. **Rural Circuit** is one of the thirteen thematic circuits have been identified for development.

Capacity Building of the Community:

Rural Tourism is unique in the sense that it banks upon the ownership and involvement of the community. Before construction at the rural tourism site, community needs to be prepared and a consensus on what has to be done in the village has to be drawn out. Government alone is not ideally equipped for this task; therefore NGOs (non-government organisations) were roped for the execution. NGO which understands the dynamics of that village becomes very important. Capacity building programme for the community is implemented with the help of NGOs operating in rural areas at the grass root level. The MoT cannot do things on its own, the focal point of implementation is the Collector assisted by Village Tourism Committee (*Paryatan Samiti*). Effective communication between the District authorities and the NGO involved is required. In projects of this nature, software (capacity building takes 18 months to 24 months) component execution is time taking. Firstly software i.e. community discusses among themselves and arrives at what they

want to do with the tourism component and from that hardware component must emerge. Hardware component should not be the sole function of what the state tourism department decides.

Two step approach for these projects includes community mobilization & building capacities in the communities. The challenge is to create tourism products because they cannot be imposed from outside, they have to be generated from within the village. One of the project's aims is poverty reduction. It is not about enabling the already well off in the village to become richer, but it is about providing livelihoods to those who are not doing well - who can participate in tourism, whether in hospitality or in craft or in any other allied services that a tourist requires. The underlying idea of the projects was that a part of the revenue generated from tourism should be utilized for the general welfare of the community as a whole, even to those who are not participating in the tourism businesses in the village, as the moment we say community based tourism, the mere presence of villagers in the village contributes to tourism.

Infrastructure for Rural Tourism Projects:

The ETP-RTS in many ways has been a total shift from the standard tourism projects implemented by the MoT in the past that were infrastructure-centric. The objective and the challenge of the project was to create an environment that will help the tourist experience rural settings and not rush to create urban comforts in a rural setting. Under ETP-RTS scheme, *Hodka Village Resort* in *Rann of Kutch, Gujarat* is an example where infrastructure has been created successfully. Popularly known as *Shaam –e- Sarhad Village Resort*, it is owned and operated by the Village Tourism Committee (*Paryatan Samiti*) of Hodka.

Architects empanelled aim at retaining the vernacular architecture and traditional customs during infrastructure creation. Style of architecture depends on the situation and availability of material. More community involvement in construction and maintenance is focussed upon. In the Bhuj earthquake, it was all the square structures that had broken and not the circular hut structures (*Bhunga*) for which *Hodka* is famous. Villagers had a sense of pride in their history, their construction knowledge and practices, that they have developed a form which had kept them safe in an earthquake prone region,



Traditional Bhunga Structure

therefore, in order to save cost, architects advised the concept of earth and mud in constructing the infrastructure which helped in preserving the social and aesthetic features of architecture of the region instead of making concrete infrastructure as mud is a material which insulates both the cold and the heat unlike concrete structures. Artisans in the village were employed who were comfortable building in mud, craftsman available in the community were utilised as much as possible as it instils a sense of ownership and money also stays in the community. It gives pride to the artists who otherwise go out of their city in search of the job.

Supply Chain for Tourists and Major Organisations (Service Providers) in India

Tourism is linked to a larger private sector network. Requirement of travel trade include sanitation and hygiene, safety of tourists at the rural tourism sites. Enterprises and NGOs acting as service providers have been working towards fostering rural tourism in the country and they are the most essential component in the supply chain for tourists. Such initiatives include **Grassroutes, Rural Tourism Network Enterprise, DHAN Foundation, Travel Another India** etc.



Facilities at Shaam –e- Sarhad Village Resort

Government Schemes:

Apart from the support of Rs 50 lakh per site, MoT also supports the ETP-RTS project by providing assistance through its various marketing initiatives in foreign countries (tourist generating areas). At the India@60 promotional event in Singapore, as a first-time highlight, eight skilled artisans from four of the MoT's UNDP-partnered rural tourism locations showcased their site attraction through impressive on-site art and craft demonstration. Participating artisans, many of those who travelled overseas for the first time, gained first-hand exposure to international competitive, merchandising and promotional practices. This enabled their extensive direct interface with the tourism trade, consumers, corporate organizations and media. The artisans from five rural tourism sites participated in Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Travel Mart held in September 2008 to showcase their arts and crafts.

Accessibility and Improvement:

Rural Tourism projects have been carried out at several places across the country. However, only a handful of projects have been successful and have resulted in increased tourist inflow as well as enhanced livelihood for the locals. The Impact and Evaluation Study of Rural Tourism Projects cited the low tourist flow to project areas and difficult access as the key factors for the failure of approximately 31 per cent of the projects evaluated. Therefore, in order to develop a village as a tourist destination, first step should be to identify the core strength of the village around which the theme of Rural Tourism can be developed. Key factors which drive growth of tourism, namely, location, proximity to prominent tourist destinations must also be considered. Rural Tourism is an area where a strong public-private partnership is of prime importance. Convergence of number schemes under various ministries like rural development, culture, environment and tribal welfare must be considered for a holistic approach. Participation of village panchayat and Rural Innovation Fund under NABARD may also be leveraged.

The complex part of marketing Rural Tourism sites in developing countries is that it is not just about being happy or grateful about any tourist coming in, but about communicating what the experience of that site could potentially be and attracting those tourists who are looking for that. Thus, positioning and promotion should be people centric and not

only market centric. Various responsible tourism enterprises are flourishing worldwide. They regard actively engaging with and contributing to local developmental processes as intrinsic to their tourist experience. The design, implementation and promotion of the Rural Tourism projects should encourage potential tourists to “see” more than just the product or the wonderful view but actually be willing to experience, be impacted, and even a little changed by the experience of engaging with the rural community. Rural Tourism projects need to be designed so that the community participates in the entire process from the very outset, and be made aware of the pros and cons involved – well before the project is initiated.

Conclusion:

Given the geographical and cultural diversity

of India, the country has a plethora of opportunities to harness Rural Tourism. If implemented and promoted properly, projects can become a driver of economic growth and will address issues such as poverty, empowerment of women and strengthening the economic status of the rural people. Success stories are those where there has been a good selection of village, where there has been a good interplay of dynamics between the NGO and the district collector. The success of a Rural Tourism project should not be judged by the economic gains alone but by the level of improvement of the social justice and growth of social capital as well.

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Adequate funds released to States for Rural Development

The Government in the year 2017-18 provided the highest ever allocation of Rs. 48,000 crores at BE stage for MGNREGA. In the year, the allocation to the Department also crossed more than One lakh crores for all programmes put together at Rs. 1,05,442 crores. The Ministry of Rural Development has been able to ensure payment of wages to the workers within 15 days in 85 per cent of the cases as compared to only 37 per cent in 2015-16 and 42 per cent in 2016-17 on account of increased allocation for MGNREGA at BE Stage.

The second phase of releases to the states, which starts in September of every year depends on States fulfilling conditions specified in General Financial Rules, which relate to complete financial scrutiny including submission of audited report for the previous financial year. This was reiterated by the Government to the States repeatedly in the past few months. The Ministry of Rural Development has already released second installment for MGNREGA wage payment and material payment to the States which have submitted their audited statements on account for year 2016-17. The funds have been released to Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Sikkim and Tamil Nadu. The Government is committed to maintaining high level of timely payment and additional funding, if required, would be provided for MGNREGA at the time of supplementary budgets.

In the overall development strategy for rural areas, Central Government has also significantly increased its allocation under DAY-NRLM, PMGSY, PMAY(G) and all other initiatives. A record number of one crore new houses under PMAY(G) are to be completed by December, 2018. By March 2018, 51 lakh such houses will be completed. Already nearly eight lakh houses are complete and work is going on in the remaining 43 lakh houses at an advanced stage. PMGSY now spends nearly Rs. 29,000 crore a year including State share. Through significant speeding up of implementation, nearly 85 per cent of the eligible habitations (population of 500 in plain areas and 250 in hill areas) have already been connected by all weather road. This was at 57 per cent three and a half years ago. The target of 100 per cent connectivity by March, 2019 is being rigorously followed and is likely to be nearly achieved. Under DAY-NRLM, thrust has been on livelihood diversification and current level of SHG bank linkage is over Rs. 47 thousand crore, which is more than double the amount where it stood two and half years ago. Other rural development initiatives are also generating employment in rural areas and it is for this reason that real wage rates in Rural India have registered a significant increase. Resources under Swachh Bharat Mission, Fourteenth Finance Commission and many other initiatives for rural areas are also contributing to higher availability of wage employment in rural areas.



Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

125 Crore Indians Fought A Decisive Battle Against Black Money and Corruption.. And Won!

Demonetisation-A Historic and Multi-Dimensional Success

India's highest ever unearthing of black money

0.00011% of India's population deposited almost 33% of total cash in the country!

17.73 lakh cases where cash transactions did not match tax profile

Cash deposits of Rs 3.68 lakh crore in 23.22 lakh accounts under suspicion

High denomination notes brought down by about Rs 6 lakh crore

Decisive blow to terrorism and naxalism

Stone-pelting incidents in Kashmir reduced by 75%

Incidents of Left Wing Extremism down by more than 20%

7.62 lakh counterfeit notes detected

Massive cleansing of India's financial system

Maze of shell companies dealing in black money and hawala transactions uncovered

In a surgical strike on shell companies, 2.24 lakh companies struck off

58,000 bank accounts belonging to 35,000 companies caught transacting Rs. 17,000 Crore after demonetisation

Big push towards formalisation, better jobs for the poor

Direct transfer of salary into bank accounts of workers

1.01 crore employees enrolled with EPFO

1.3 crore workers registered with ESIC thus bringing social security and health benefits to them

Unprecedented increase in tax compliance due to demonetization

- New tax payers increased by 26.6% from 66.53 Lakh in 2015-16 to 84.21 Lakh in 2016-17.
- Number of e-returns filed increased by 27.95% from 2.35 crore in 2016-17 to 3.01 crore in 2017-18.

Cleaner economy for the nation through 'Less Cash' behavioural shift

- In August 2017, number of digital transactions stands at 138 Crore against 87 Crore in August 2016, an increase of 58%
- From having a total of 15.11 lakh POS machines till demonetisation, more than 13 lakh POS machines were added just in 1 year.

People have got multiple benefits from demonetisation like reduced rate of interest for loans, decrease in real estate prices, increased income of urban local bodies, etc



What did you gain from demonetisation ?

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EMPLOYMENT POTENTIAL IN RURAL TOURISM

G. Anjaneya Swamy

The focus all these years revolved around existing tourism products, be it pilgrimage centres, monuments, beaches and other heritage sites leading to issues related to sustainability of tourism. Therefore, it is high time that the resources which are hitherto unexplored and unexploited are examined and brought into the tourism map of India. There is a social obligation also to make tourism an all inclusive platform for the overall development of the nation. Thus, there is a need to broad base tourism such that it is no longer perceived as a product/ industry purely of the urban elite, for the elite and by the elite!

The fact that tourism industry has emerged as a major sector which contributes for the faster development of any region/ nation needs no emphasis. By virtue of tourism industry's ability to create jobs with minimum capital outlays, through exploiting natural endowment of resources is widely acknowledged. Therefore, it is no surprise that policy makers have turned their attention towards promotion of tourism of all hues. However, unfortunately the focus all these years revolved around existing tourism products, be it pilgrimage centres, monuments, beaches and other heritage sites leading to issues related to sustainability of tourism. Therefore, it is high time that the resources which are hitherto unexplored and unexploited are examined and brought into the tourism map of India. There is a social obligation also to make tourism an **all inclusive platform** for the overall development of the nation. Thus, there is a need to broad base tourism such that it is no longer perceived as a product/ industry purely of the urban elite, for the elite and by the elite! The present paper, therefore, addresses some of the issues related to making tourism an all inclusive concept through an entrepreneurial approach to the human resources

development. More particularly, by bringing the innumerable natural resources of rural India through creation of right awareness among the rural folks about the potential of tourism industry and how tourism could contribute for the uplift of rural India. The issue calls for a multi pronged approach, viz., identification of the region specific natural resources of rural India, creation of awareness and preparation of rural youth for an active involvement in tourism related activities.

Need for an Entrepreneurial Approach:

Entrepreneurship as a concept and practice encompasses all human endeavours. It is region, sector and gender neutral. Yet, it is a pity that entrepreneurship is largely construed as an activity relevant to manufacturing sector, leaving aside several other human endeavors where entrepreneurship spirit is dormant. Human curiosity, imagination, spirit of enterprise, the urge to excel and the desire to achieve - all along have brought the mankind from the nomad status to what it is today where the human race is now all set to conquer even other planets. Needless to say, it is entrepreneurship which drives people towards action leading to the overall development.

From the above description, it is evident that entrepreneurship is the key for economic development of any sector. Tourism is no exception! Nothing happens in the economic system unless someone takes the initiative and uses the resources judiciously. **To quote Peter Drucker, "Every mineral is another rock and every plant is another weed until someone finds a use."** In simple words, entrepreneurship involves shifting of resources from **'low productivity'** areas to **'high productivity'** areas. As such, it is appropriate to capture the hitherto unexploited rural resources and develop them as innovative new tourism products.



Natural Resources of Rural India:

As the saying goes, **India lives in villages** - the scenic beauty, pollution free weather, coupled with innocence of the people living close to the nature, the native wisdom and practices, artifacts and lifestyles constitute a huge treasure waiting to be explored by the urban elite living in concrete jungles. Despite the huge exodus of rural population to urban areas over the last few decades, still rural India has its own charm. More particularly, in a context where many urban kids assume rice, vegetables, etc., are produced in factories similar to soft drinks, ice-creams and many other personal accessories.

Various agricultural practices season-wise, right from sowing to harvesting, cattle rearing, milking of the cattle, food grain storage, farm equipment, lush green fields with natural flora and fauna, the rivulets and rivers, village tanks and lakes, the landscape, rich folklore, social bonds and relationships, community involvement in organising festivals and social/ religious events of the village - each one by itself offers exciting experience to many a tourist. Interestingly, of late, there is a perceptible change in the orientation of many conventional tourists to explore the beauty of rural India, largely triggered by urban monotony, fatigue, job stress, pollution, traffic snarls. Rural tourism incidentally provides an excellent alternative with a wide range of benefits to the tourists as well as the service providers in the rural areas.

Thrust Areas for Action:

In order to promote rural tourism, the following issues need to be addressed in an organized fashion. Otherwise, despite the importance and need for development of rural tourism, it will become

another fad or rhetoric. An entrepreneurial approach is the need of the hour. Involvement of tourism professionals, extension officers of government at taluk/ district level, opinion leaders from the villages and the rural youth is essential to make any headway in rural tourism. Following aspects need to be addressed on priority basis:

Rural Tourism Resources Mapping:

As mentioned earlier, there is no dearth of resources in rural areas which make awe inspiring tourism products. The folklore, dance and drama, artifacts, handicrafts, trades like pottery, weaving, brick making, poultry farming and cattle rearing, farm management practices, besides the unpolluted landscape of the villages offer irresistible temptation to visit and explore. Region specific social rituals, festivals and community participation in organizing these events make visit of the village a memorable experience. Each place has its own specialty/unique characteristic. A systematic survey to identify such distinct products/ practices/ processes may be initiated in order to showcase the attractions. Resources **mapping** brings to the fore what rural India has to offer to tourists. Some villages are known for their rich folklore, some are known for better farm practices, some are known for scenic beauty, some are known for traditional martial arts while some for floriculture and the other for fish ponds and prawn culture. Rural India thus offers mind blowing diversity. What is required is effective product design and communication. In the absence of systematic resource mapping, any attempt to promote rural tourism is akin to a blind man throwing the stone. The several distinct rural resources may apparently look very humble and mundane. But the experience and novelty they offer to the discernable tourists are priceless.



Awareness Creation:

Many of the practices, rituals and the elements of nature may be the integral part of villagers' day to day life. They may appear to be so routine. They may not be aware of the value of all these resources, leave alone exploiting them for economic good. Therefore, developmental agencies need to educate the rural folks about the value and strength of what they possess. Video clippings, documentaries, short films, exhibits, etc., come in handy in portraying how rural tourism is beneficial and possible. Short films of rural tourism products of Maharashtra, Kerala and Meghalaya where rural tourism yielded rich dividends may communicate the message more loudly. Such an exercise obviously tickles villagers and enables them to relate themselves to tourism effectively. Successful rural entrepreneurs engaged in rural tourism may be invited to address and educate villagers about the positive economic impact of tourism on the villages.

Identification of the Service Providers at the Village Level:

The services required for the tourists who visit the village are varied in nature ranging from arranging accommodation, food, sightseeing to entertainment and engaging the guests. Opportunities may be created to experience the different facets of rural life. Some of the enterprising tourists may prefer to try their hand in many activities. In other words, tourists need to be taken onboard. This obviously requires smart individuals/volunteers from the local community. At the village level, though all the people share in common many things, they significantly vary in terms of knowledge levels, backgrounds, cultural affiliation, religious faiths, understanding,

appreciation, interpersonal skills. Therefore, identification of people with the right mindset is crucial. Now that many schemes of the government are executed/ delivered through different village level bodies, existing channels/bodies may be roped in to take up tourism as well. The self help groups (SHGs) called by different names in Indian states, village Panchayats, voluntary groups of village youth, philanthropic associations, opinion leaders, Taluk level extension officers, etc., may be relied upon. Rural Tourism Promotion and development initially may piggy back on these village level local groups till it finds it's own wherewithal. Individuals active in these bodies may be identified and imparted basic skills with respect to importance of tourism promotion at the village level, the benefits that accrue to the villagers and the basic skills in handling the tourists.

Skilling the Unskilled:

In spite of the developments in technology, telecommunication and transport facilities, still a substantial portion of rural India retain the rural ambience, exuberance and pride. By and large, they are far from hypocrisy and down to earth in their disposition. Most of them are good at traditional trades or occupations. A little effort in terms of imparting nuances of social etiquette, courtesy, interpersonal relationships, techniques of engaging tourists, will undoubtedly equip the villagers with the nitty-gritty of handling tourists.

It may be noted that traditionally Indian society is known for its hospitality. The adage '**Athithi Devo Bhava**' is more than true in the Indian context. One could find the manifestation of this philosophy in



every aspect of the rural India cutting cultural and linguistic barriers. For that matter, village life is embedded strongly on the dictum, '**One for all and all for one**'. This spirit pervades the entire spectrum of rural India.

Hospitality and accommodative spirit being the core values of rural India, a little orientation/ training with respect to operational aspects of tourism is enough to make villagers embrace tourism/ tourists. Educated youth in the villages may be imparted basic computer skills such that they can connect with the tourists before and after the visits and also with the various service providers in the supply chain. Basic skills in using the technology will make wonders given the present penetration of smart phones and access to internet. Now that there are many user friendly apps, the target group in the villages could be familiarized with the use of apps so that dependence on intermediaries may be minimized. Participants at the village level in various tourism operations may know the preferences of the tourists, how they wish to spend time in the village, what they want to see and experience, the kind of food they like to taste and souvenir items to take home.

Optimum Utilization of Human Resources:

Most of the agricultural operations are seasonal. As such, villagers have long spells of free time at their disposal. Some of the rural youth may find alternative income generating sources by engaging themselves in tourism and allied activities. Once people are convinced of how tourism transforms their lives with additional income, the attitude of the villagers in turn could change and in the process they become more receptive to tourists. Engagement of willing individuals or families in tourism activities resolves many a problem faced by the rural India. Household incomes will increase, consumption patterns will modify for the better, confidence levels boost up, better understanding of the world around and the people become a reality. Interactions with the tourists who are from different places and cultures will broaden their perspective of the world around. A right platform is created which ensures cross fertilization of ideas and fraternity feeling/ universal brotherhood.

Ecosystem for Rural Tourism:

Accessibility, Accommodation, Attractions and Amenities – popularly known as 4 As in the Tourism parlance constitute the four important pillars of Tourism. Mere possession of various

tourism attractions does not guarantee tourism promotion automatically. Adequate infrastructural facilities such as seamless transport facilities to reach the rural tourism destinations, facilities for the stay, a receptive local community to host tourists, health care centers with basic facilities, ATMs and telecommunication facilities, internet connectivity are essential for promotion of tourism in rural areas. Such an ecosystem needs to be created and sustained. Information about specific rural tourism centers, availability of facilities and the key people to contact may be put up in the websites of rural tourism portals. Further, given the cultural diversity of India, place specific cultural ethos, values, do's and don'ts in the village also need to be pronounced clearly. Connoisseurs of rural tourism regardless of their orientations/cultural backgrounds can acquaint themselves with the profile of the village, cultural nuances and practices. This would help the modern tech savvy tourists to gain a clear view of the village they wish to visit and minimizes the chances of any misgivings/conflicts during their stay at the village. Prices of various services also may be indicated in the websites. Profiles of earlier visitors/groups and their testimonials would further reinforce the value of the place. Presentation of information with all these inputs helps the tourists plan the visit and enjoys the stay with least inconvenience to the host community. Eventually, it would be a **win-win** situation to both the tourists and the host community.

Conclusion:

Given the importance of Tourism promotion in the National context and the need to broad base tourism, it is high time that adequate attention is paid to Rural Tourism. Abundant physical as well as human resources available for tourism promotion in rural India offer enormous core for rural tourism. Creation of awareness among the rural folks and with minimum intervention in terms of imparting basic skills would certainly keep rural tourism on a high pedestal which in turn would reduce the gap between urban and rural India. Balanced regional development which is an avowed national objective can be achieved with minimum investment. Rural tourism thus provides an alternative model for the overall development of rural areas of India. Gandhiji's dream of '**Gram Swaraj**' may be realized for the prosperity of the Nation.

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PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS: PROMOTING VILLAGE TOURISM

Dr Mahi Pal

People in general and villagers in particular are not aware about the concept, process and benefits of the village tourism. There are a number of villages where village tourism may be developed with the collaboration of Panchayats. Hence, there is a need to make Panchayats' functionaries aware particularly the chairpersons of all tiers of the Panchayats about the concept and benefits of the village tourism. In this context, State Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj with the collaboration of the Tourism Department of State Governments may organize workshop of selected personnel of Panchayats. Such workshops may be organised at district level.

Tourism has emerged as one of the fastest growing industries in the world. This Sector not only provides more jobs per million rupees of investment than any other sector of the economy, but is also capable of providing employment opportunities for the unskilled and specialized alike even in the farthest parts of the country side. It also has the potential to promote pro-poor growth than many other sectors because tourism converge a number of activities like transportation, accommodation, eating and drinking establishment, retail shops, entertainment businesses and other hospitality services provided to individual or group traveling away from their residences for leisure, business and entertainment. Village tourism could be as one of the strategies for rural development. Hence, development of village tourism for generating employment and supplement villagers incomes deserves serious consideration.

Conceptual Framework of Panchayats and Village Tourism :

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are peoples' institutions at grassroots levels. These institutions are



expected to prepare plans for economic development and social justice including 29 subjects listed in the 11th Schedule of the Constitution. Among others, following activities have also been included in the list of 29 subjects of the Schedule, which are relevant in the context of village tourism.

1. Rural housing.
2. Drinking water.
3. Roads, culverts, bridges, ferries, waterways and other means of communication.
4. Rural electrification.
5. Technical training and vocational education.
6. Cultural activities.
7. Markets and fairs.
8. Health and sanitation, including hospitals.
9. Maintenance of community assets.

Since, Panchayats would prepare plans for economic development and social justice, they can include other activities, which are relevant for promotion of tourism under their jurisdiction in the plan. A particular activity which is to be done properly and efficiently at particular level of the Panchayat should be done by that level of Panchayat only and not by any other level of Panchayat. For example, drinking water activity may be maintained by the Gram Panchayat, its supervision may be done by the Panchayat Samiti and technical assistance may be provided by the District Panchayat. In this way, activities which are to be developed in the village for promotion of village tourism may be done by involving all levels of Panchayats.

The concept of village tourism is now-a-days a household name in the sense as it has already been discussed at various forums and attracted the

imagination of many across the world. It promises to offer a unique experience to the visitor who is tired of the five star culture and is looking for something different in terms of local flavors and ethnic experiences. What the Tenth Plan Document had said in this regard is worth mentioning here. "The experienced traveller wants authentic, off-the-beaten-track vacations in remote and less well-known places as against luxurious five -star vacations, leading to an interest in rural and ethnic tourism". India has an untold wealth of such experiences to offer in terms of a variety of cuisines, handicrafts, handlooms, folk art, music, dance and topography. Village Tourism covers all those aspects of travel whereby people come to know about each other in terms of their customs and traditions and thought. The concept of village tourism is definitely useful for a country like India, where 69 per cent of its population resides in villages and governed by Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) numbering 254044 in the country..

Strategy for the Development of Village Tourism:

There are seven Ss sutra capsule to be addressed for the promotion of tourism in any area. These are 1.Swagat 2. Swachhta 3. Soochana 4. Suvidha 5. Suraksha 6. Sahyog 7. Samrachana. Swagat means welcome. There must be such an environment in the villages where tourists are warmly welcomed by the village communities. There must be community feeling in the villages. In other words, there should be social cohesion in the village. Obviously, if tourists are not welcomed by village community ,why they would go to villages for tourism. Swachhta means sanitation or cleanliness. If villages are not neat and clean ,why would the tourists go to that place. Keeping this in view, the Government of India has been giving stress on sanitation making it as a way of life. Soochana means communication/information. It means villages should be well connected and have access to internet because if a place devoid from this facility, tourists would not visit there. Suraksha means security. Obviously, security is must for tourists because that is how they would enjoy their visits. Sahyog means cooperation and coordination. The cooperation of different stakeholders is very important for the promotion of tourism. If different agencies dealing with seven Ss are not cooperating with each other then tourism would not be promoted. And last is samrachana. It means infrastructure.

If proper facilities like way side facilities, adequate tourist products are not available then also tourists would rarely visit there. It means involvement and participation of various stakeholders are required to develop tourism in right perspective and for that, PRIs can play an important role at their level in facilitating these activities at village, Block and district levels.

Promoting Rural Tourism:

Following suggestions are being given for the promotion of village tourism in the country.

People in general and villagers in particular are not aware about the concept, process and benefits of the village tourism. There are a number of villages where village tourism may be developed with the collaboration of Panchayats. Hence, there is a need to make Panchayats' functionaries aware particularly the chairpersons of all tiers of the Panchayats about the concept and benefits of the village tourism. In this context, State Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj with the collaboration of the Tourism Department of State Governments may organize workshop of selected personnel of Panchayats. Such workshops may be organised at district level.

Seven components of the strategy for the development of tourism need to be developed and they are equally relevant for village tourism also. It means involvement and participation of various stakeholders are required to develop tourism in right perspective. For this purpose, coordination among various Departments/Agencies is needed particularly activities related to seven Ss to sort out problems among various stakeholders at any level. In view of this, it is suggested that a Coordination Committee at State and district levels may be constituted for the





facilitation of the process of village tourism in the State. This sort of body is required for both promotion as well as monitoring the process of development of village tourism.

There are a number of buildings/Haveli laying vacant in the vicinity of tourist places. Examples are umpteen in every state of the country. For example, there are number of building/Haveli of NRIs which are lying vacant in Phewa Tehsil of Kurukshtra district in Haryana. Since, these NRIs have contacts abroad and this tehsil is also close to Kurukshetra which is well known tourist place in the world, there are chances of visiting more foreign tourists in the area. Similarly, there are old wooden classical buildings laying vacant in various villages of Uttarakhand as their owners are settled elsewhere. Some of the houses also have two stories. These buildings could be used for tourists coming this place and in this way tourists will get accommodation at cheaper rates and villagers also get additional income from village tourism. Such type of accommodations may also be explored in the vicinity of major tourist places like Nainital etc.

There is a need to develop tourist products for the benefits of tourists. Panchayats with the help of Tourism Department of the State may do this task. Products may be innovative in nature which attracts tourists. Following are some examples in this regard.

There are number of villages in Jind district of Haryana and its vicinity which are known for their peculiarity in terms of history and culture. It

is interesting to note that a number of villages are named in the name of *Raags*. Such villages may be identified and should be developed tourist products for tourists. There may be such peculiarity in other states also.

There is need to promote Panchayat tourism because of its uniqueness in term of people's participation through the institutions of Panchayats, Gram Sabha and various Subject Committees. There are more than 11 lakh women elected representatives in Panchayats. It is unparalleled perhaps across the world. Tourists particularly foreign tourists may like to see their participation in rural governance, planning and development. They may also like to observe functioning of Gram Sabha where each voter is expected to participate in the development of the village.

Farm tourism may be another tourist products. Tourists may like to eat fruits by taking it from the tree itself and enjoy then and there only. They may like to enjoy sugarcane by taking it from the field. There may be many such products which could be developed locally by the Panchayats with the involvement of community.

Panchayats may entertain school children of nearby cities who want to know and experience village life and also know various vegetations.

Above mentioned activities or of similar nature may also be taken up in those village tourism places where accommodations are available. For example, a accommodation complex has been developed in Himuifang village in Mizoram. It is one of the

beautiful spots of State. Tourist products like farm tourism, functioning of village council, cultural life of people may be developed for tourists.

There is a need to develop tourist circuit along with major tourist spots. For example, in the vicinity of Kurukshetra, there are number of places which have connection with Pandavas and Kauravas or battle which was fought between them like Asand town, Anjana Temple etc. Developing such sorts of circuits would not only link these tourist products with well known tourist product, but also create employment opportunities in the villages by taking various activities relating to accommodation, eating, entertainments. Panchayats may create requisite way side facilities for tourists at such places.

Human Resource development is necessary for the promotion of village tourism. Local people are to be trained to handle tourists in hospitable manner and in off seasons, they could be employed in either, primary or secondary or tertiary sector locally. The list of such potential persons may be prepared in collaboration with PRIs and such persons may be trained by Catering and Hospitality Institutions. In places where village tourism has already been promoted, there also, people engaged in various activities may be trained in catering, hospitality and soft skills. Such activities may be taken up under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana- National Rural Livelihood Mission and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushal Yojana and similar schemes of the state governments.

Cleanliness and Village Tourism:

Swachhta is one of the important planks of strategy to promote tourism in the country. This plank is even more important in rural areas where a case for promoting village tourism is made in this article. In fact, this is a major issue to be tackled if village tourism is to be made as a reality. If tourists have to cover their noses and mouth with cloth and

they could not enjoy even fresh air in the village. How one can imagine of visiting the countryside? Hence, there is need to adopt cleanliness as a way of life by the people. How is it possible in a country which divided on class and caste lines? It would be possible if cultural aspects of people could be addressed by way of making attitudinal changes in their behaviour.

In view of the significance of Swachhta, the Government of India has launched Swachhta Hi Seva nationwide campaign on 15th September 2017 to accelerate people movement for sanitation. It would have been better if love would also have been added with service because these are two important ingredients of Divinity. Cleanliness has been a way of life in India. For example, people offer puja(worship) after taking bath. Persons take bath and wear fresh clothes before visiting their relations. A person does not like to visit a particular area which is dirty and fitly. The collective action for clean rural India has to be initiated by people themselves and this is only possible if love and service for humanity have been made as a way life by all of us.

Conclusion:

Village tourism has potential for employment generation and poverty alleviation in the country. The seven Ss as a strategy for the development of village tourism has to be adopted making PRIs as coordination bodies to converge activities of different sectors at local level. New tourist products have to be developed to attract more tourists in rural areas. The Tourism Department, different departments pertaining to seven Ss and PRIs have to think out of box. If so happens, then village tourism would be turn out to be in great favour for the overall rural economy and development.

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Kurukshetra

FORTHCOMING ISSUE

January 2018 : Empowering Rural Women

CIRCUIT TOURISM: A UNIQUE MODEL FOR INDIAN TOURISM

M V R Krishna Teja

When a tourist from another country visits a highly popular tourist spot in India, her sightseeing is limited to a maximum of two days. This is because other good sites around the place are not fully developed or promoted equally. The most popular tourist spots have been milked to the point of overkill and it is high time a model is developed which promotes a vibrant industry not around a single site of attraction but around an entire region.

Have you ever been to the Taj ... or ever thought of visiting this 'Monument of Love'? Most likely – yes!

So if you are planning to visit the Taj, what else you would like to see in Agra? ... Agra Fort ... Itimad-ud-daullah ... Fatehpur Sikriand may be a guided 'Heritage Walk through the Old City of Agra'.

But do you know that on the other side of the Taj, across the river Yamuna, lies is an ancient village Kachhpura? A walk through this village may be an unforgettable experience - various Mughal era monuments amidst rural setting intertwined with the communities and a stunning view of the Taj!

Kachhpura, with sanjhi art painted at its walls, provides an insight into the local culture and rural life of the region. Tourists can catch the glimpses of traditional lifestyle here. Similarly, just off the Fatehpur Sikri Highway, there is a village Korai whose inhabitants were (not anymore!) the keepers of dancing sloth bears.

What I mean to say is - that even around hugely popular tourist places, there lie a number of attractive, but less known places in rural hinterland. If these places are adequately developed into attractive tourist destinations, it can, at one hand, provide

wholesome tourism experience to the visitors and on the other, solve the livelihood issues of communities around these places. For example, tourism can be a boon to the struggling Korai inhabitants, whose main source of income- dancing bears, were taken away by animal rights activists.

It has been seen, when a tourist from another country visits a highly popular tourist spot in India, her sightseeing is limited to a maximum of two days. This is because other good sites around the place are not fully developed or promoted equally. The most popular tourist spots have been milked to the point of overkill and it is high time a model is developed which promotes a vibrant industry not around a single site of attraction but around an entire region.

This model is named as "Circuit Tourism" and the author in this article shows through the example of a single district Thrissur, how this model can create new tourist spots of attraction in hitherto unexplored regions. This can spawn fresh entrepreneurship and employment opportunities leading to investment and economic growth. As the example taken here shows, this model of tourism has the potential to light up the lives of the Other India- be it the rural India with poor incomes or the India of the perennially under-served tribals.

Experiences in Thrissur :

A brief idea of the thought process which germinated in the mind of the author needs to be elucidated to gain clarity on the model's vision.

This author was posted as Assistant Collector, Thrissur in mid-2016. Coming from the neighbouring state of Andhra Pradesh, the exposure to Kerala till then had been of bare minimum level- coconuts, Onam, literacy, beaches and Mohanlal. Attempts were made to understand the culture of Kerala by watching Malayalam films. The images of Thrissur as depicted in those Malayalam films were that of the annual temple festival named "Thrissur Pooram",



the piety of the temple of Guruvayur, caparisoned elephants and the perennial flow of the Athirapilly waterfalls.

During the field trips across Thrissur in the initial days of getting posted, realisation set in that the tourism potential of Thrissur is hugely untapped. The typical tourist to Thrissur does the following : Check in at Kochi and soak in the colours and sounds of the metropolis, hire a cab to Thrissur for the next day, visit Guruvayoor and Athirapilly falls, upload "God's own country- Thrissur" pictures on social media and go back to Kochi that very evening. Thrissur is an afterthought for these tourists. This is sheer injustice meted out to the cultural capital of Kerala which has more potential as a tourist hub than what a waterfalls and a temple can provide.

The project implemented in Thrissur aims to help tourists who visit Thrissur explore places beyond the conventional ones. This project also helps the tourist to choose one among different circuits of places based on his/her interest. Thus, six circuits are proposed based on what this author has observed and identified as Thrissur's USPs. These circuits are identified based on colours to attract the tourists' immediate attention.

1. Blue Circuit (Water Circuit):

When the words “Water” and “Kerala” are used in the same sentence, the images of Kovalam sands and Alleppey backwaters come to one’s mind. This circuit shows that Thrissur is no less endowed with beautiful water-associated tourist hotspots. The “Blue Circuit” plan envisages a 7 AM



start in Thrissur to arrive in Vazhachal, a pristine waterfall spot , by 8.30am. After spending an hour in Vazhachal, one can move on to Charppa, a seasonal misty waterfall, which is five kilometers away.

The next stop is at Athirapilly falls by 11 AM. Recently, this falls has been immortalized in the blockbuster film “Baahubali”. A minimum of two hours can be spent wondering as to how Mother Nature has chosen to bestow all it’s love on this place. Lunch will be at Thumpoormuzhi, a river diversion project, around 1.30pm. From there, the circuit moves to Munakkal beach where one can reach at around 4:30 PM. This beach is noteworthy for the reason that one can spot dolphins here. Once these new spots (other than the usual suspects) gain more tourist footfall, it can lead to blooming of employment in these areas. Since almost all these areas are in the tribal belt, the aim is to kickstart entrepreneurship and enterprise among tribal youth through tourism.

2. Brown Circuit (Dam Circuit):

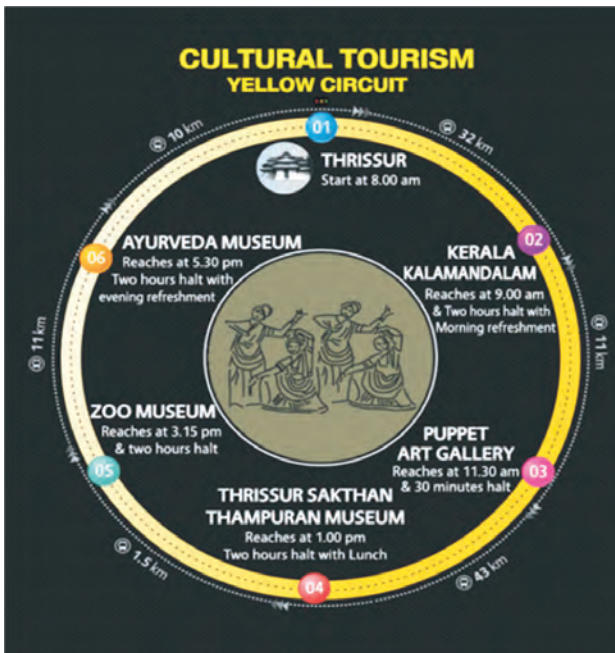
Thrissur is home to the maximum number of dams in Kerala. Dams- the temples of modern India- serve the vital purposes of drinking water and irrigation. Considering the breathtaking views one can get atop these dams and hence the tourism potential, this project proposes an entire Dam circuit across Thrissur. In this circuit, one leaves Thrissur by 8 in the morning to reach Chimmony dam by 9.30am, Peechi dam by 11.30,



Vazhani dam at 1.30pm. After lunch at Vazhani dam, one can go to Poomala dam. After a 16-kilometer journey from there, the tourists can reach Vilangankunnu, A beautiful hillock. The USP of Vilangankunnu is the views one can get to see from there -verdant paddy fields in one direction, a rapidly urbanizing city in another direction and the seawaters paying obeisance to the setting sun in the third.

3. Yellow Circuit (Cultural Circuit):

Outlook's traveller's guide for Kerala provides a tagline for every town and tourist place of Kerala. For Thrissur, the tagline aptly kept is "Kerala's cultural capital". The Yellow Circuit takes one across the cultural hubs of the district One heads for Kerala Kalamandalam, 32 kilometers away from Thrissur town, by 8 in the morning. Kalamandalam is a major centre for learning the great Performing Arts of India - from



Kathakali to Mohiniyattam to Bharatanatyam. Here, training is also imparted in traditional musical instruments (like Chenda). Thus, a visit to Kalamandalam sensitizes one to kaleidoscopic sights and sounds.

After spending two hours there, the visitors are taken to Puppet Art Gallery by 11.30 am. From there, one moves to Thrissur Shakhthan Thampuran Museum, a palace constructed in a hybrid fashion mixing Kerala and Dutch styles and

is situated 43 kilometers away. The afternoon schedule includes the Zoo Museum and the Ayurveda Museum which caps a day well spent in exploring the diverse cultural riches Thrissur has to offer.

4. Orange Circuit (Heritage Circuit):

This circuit helps a tourist grasp the rich heritage Thrissur has in store. It starts from Thrissur at 8am and one reaches Paravoor. This is home to a famous synagogue thus showing how Kerala is home to a cosmopolitan tradition of accommodating multiple religions. Kottapuram Fort, Paliyam Palace, Pattanam Excavation Centre and Museum are also covered in this circuit. The Paliyam Palace is a good example of Nalukettu type wherein four halls are joined together with a courtyard at the centre open to the sky.



5. Green Circuit (Back water Circuit)

The Green Circuit is designed to promote backwater tourism in Thrissur with Chimmony, Enamavu and Snehatheeram beach in focus. Enamavu will be host to a house boat trip providing exquisite local food. The boat will reach Snehatheeram at around 5.30pm before the sunset. The poetically named "Snehatheeram" which means the shore of love is one of the best beach tourist destinations in India ensures that the end to a day well-spent leaves one yearning for more for Thrissur and nature.



6. Red Circuit (Assorted Circuit):

The red circuit is designed keeping in mind that a tourist may want to experience Thrissur in it's diverse colors on a single day. There are many such custom-made red circuits. The one shown



here is an assorted circuit which consists of one place from each theme. The journey begins from Thrissur at 8.30am. Vilangankunnu, Vazhani Dam and Zoo/Museum are covered, ending the journey at Snehatheeram beach in the evening in time to soak in the sight of a tired Sun bidding adieu to the day.

The working of Circuit Tourism :

Each circuit comprises five to six tourist hotspots and it can be completed in one day. A single brochure enlists all the circuits in a compact manner. Whenever a tourist visits Thrissur and enquires for sightseeing plans in a hotel, he will be provided with these brochures thus allowing him to choose a circuit based upon his taste. This circuit-based tourism is interlinked with hotels, travels' offices and cab drivers associations, among others.

Within six months of this project's launch, the tourists to Thrissur are already enquiring at hotel receptions/travel desks/ cab drivers to take them to one of the circuits instead of a specific place. Almost all hotels in Thrissur now welcomes a tourist with the Circuit Tourism brochures. Tourist operators now have begun to include the circuits in their packages. One minute teasers on each circuit have been developed. A tourist can scan the QR code and watch the teaser before selecting the circuit to experience .A security app is being developed to track the movement of the tourist and compares it with the actual path of the circuit and issue an SOS alert in case of any deviation from the specified circuit path automatically.

The Economics of Circuit Tourism :

One important thread which runs through all these tourist spots is that most of them are located in either rural or tribal belts. Thus, the aims of the project are not only in a tourism perspective but also to promote alternative modes of livelihood for the unemployed youth in the rural areas of Thrissur.



In most of the tourist destinations identified in the circuit ,efforts are in place to include canteen run by a Self Help Group comprising women from the neighborhood. The cleaning and maintenance contracts are given to these Self Help Groups. The local youth have been given priority for any employment opportunities in these destinations.

It has been observed that the number of tourist vehicles coming to these circuits has taken a huge leap in the past few months. This has ,in turn, led to the establishment of new fuel filling stations, repair sheds and service stations in these areas thus resulting in employment of local youth. One important side-effect has been that tourists have begun to stay back in Thrissur rather than travel from Kochi for a day's visit. This has boosted the hospitality sector big time. Domino effect has ensured that there is positive impact on the business of local restaurants, handicrafts and textile stores. Spurt in handicrafts' sales has led to a blossoming of local artisans.

What the Model means for Kerala (and India) :

Kerala provides an unique development model to the entire country. It is sustained by a strong welfare state, remittances from Malayalis abroad and the services sector. The mini- Industrial revolution which transformed Garden Cities to Silicon Valleys in neighbouring states bypassed God's own state. Kerala needs high revenues to finance it's welfare needs - from pensions to healthcare to education.

Since these revenues are not going to be generated from rapid industrialisation, tourism gains huge importance in the Kerala story. Thus, this project outwardly seeks to promote tourism in hitherto unexplored corners of Thrissur but behind it is the vision of running the welfare machinery of the Kerala state itself.

Kerala is the only state in the country which can call itself "God's own country" and escape without much criticism. This is because of how nature has been kind to Kerala and Keralites have been kind to nature. This bountiful potential should not be restricted to the usual spots but should diversify itself so that the world outside can partake more of the state's visual and aural pleasures. This project strives to set a benchmark which can be emulated by districts across the state resulting in a circuit conglomeration catering to tourists from the global community. This model can easily be scaled across the entire nation based on local potential and demand. In addition to all these larger aims, this project also wants to ensure that if at all another Bahubali movie is made, it should feature the hitherto unknown falls of Thrissur rather than the usual Athirapilly falls.

(The author is an IAS officer of Kerala cadre. He is doing pioneering work to promote tourism in Thrissur. His model of Circuit Tourism is being replicated in many other states. Email: mvrkteja@gmail.com)

Smart India Hackathon 2018

Working towards the PM's vision of a Digital India, MHRD, All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), Inter Institutional Inclusive Innovation Center (i4C), and Persistent Systems had organized Smart India Hackathon 2017, a unique initiative to identify new and disruptive digital technology innovations for solving the challenges faced by our country. The initiative was a huge success.

To reiterate the efforts, now the second edition of this initiative - Smart India Hackathon 2018 is proposed.

Smart India Hackathon 2018 will have 2 sub-editions – Software as well as Hardware:

- **Software Edition** will be 36 hour software product development competition, similar in concept to Smart India Hackathon 2017
- The new **Hardware Edition** will be a hackathon where teams will be work for 5 straight days and build their hardware solutions. This competition would be limited to only 5 nodal centers with 20-25 teams each.

Participate here- <https://innovate.mygov.in/sih2018/>

Last date of submission is 15th December, 2017



COMMUNITY BASED ECO-TOURISM FOR NORTH-EAST

Reny Wilfred

North East is a land of diverse cultures, loaded with hidden potentials for Tourism that would bring inclusive development in rural communities. Each rural village in North East would be offering a unique experience to the visitor, with the rejuvenating freshness of nature, richness of culture and traditions, cuisine and various aspects of rural life, which are way distinct from modern urban life.

The North East is truly diverse in socio cultural aspects and there can not be a single model of tourism development. In North Eastern states where community life is prominent, the community based ecotourism model can be given a consideration. The purpose of this article is to introduce the successful community based eco tourism model to enable learning and adoption by communities with similar socio cultural standing.

North East is a land of diverse cultures, loaded with hidden potentials for Tourism that would bring inclusive development in rural communities. Each rural village in North East would be offering a unique experience to the visitor, with the rejuvenating freshness of nature, richness of culture and traditions, cuisine and various aspects of rural life, which are way distinct from modern urban life.

There are general apprehensions that the development of tourism might affect the culture and value system of the people, damage the environment irreparably and that the infrastructure facilities existing in North East doesn't cater to the tastes of tourists. On the

other hand, the authentic life experience in rural villages includes colourful traditions along with the lack of hotels and road networks. This wholesome experience when projected positively would attract the socially and environmentally conscious tourists.

The question is that for an environmentally conscious backpacker what shall North-East offer, an opportunity to trek and trail through pristine natural beauty, camping spots resounding the music flowing water, mesmerising sight of nesting of thousands of migratory Amur Falcons, cherry blossoms, stone pulling ceremonies, tribal festivals etc .or a package deal of these where the tourists stay in high-end hotels built in environmentally sensitive areas, creating another urban sub culture within this natural beauty, often destroying that beauty. Wouldn't it be more appropriate to have a number of homestays with in traditional houses or a back packer's hostel with in a wooden Morung with a clean bedding and good toilet facility, the two aspects that are most important for a visitor? A wooden or bamboo structure offering the best of accommodation while suiting the climatic conditions



Figure 1 : Traditional House converted to Homestay with clean Bedding, Dzuleke

are far soothing to a visitor who is in search of a rejuvenating experience.

‘Cleanliness Accountability’ is generally lacking in Indian tourism in the sense that the most sought after tourist destinations are littered with plastics and packaged food containers, often clogging the drinking water streams. In north eastern tribes where land is revered, such littering might not be taken lightly as it might be seen in other parts of the country. It has the potential to become more of an insult to the society to which the land belongs. The tourism development in North East shall maintain a litter free environment and focus on socially and environmentally conscious tourists.

The tourists often are apprehensive of two aspects of North East:

- Availing Inner Line Permits(ILP).
- Security.

The ILP application systems are more or less online in most of the North Eastern States where ILP is applicable. This may be further simplified as ‘ILP on Arrival’ for tourists(at Airports and Railway Stations), in lines of ‘Visa on Arrival’. Adhaar offer the best potential solution to effectively implement ‘ILP on Arrival’. The concerns of personal security are mostly notional. Concrete efforts are needed to generate awareness regarding this notional insecurity and to bring out the safe and pleasant travel experience for tourists in North Eastern states. A cadre of certified tourism guides are to be developed across North Eastern states, who are conversant in both local languages as well as in English/Hindi to make the stay and travel more comfortable for the visitors.

The development of an inclusive tourism model for North East is unthinkable without involving the local communities. The unique potentials of local community shall be identified and brought before the potential tourist at appropriate platforms. **One such successful Community based eco tourism experiment from North East in Dzuleke Village is documented below, through the words of implementing agency NEIDA.** Though, the unique potential of one village and its tourism development is depicted, the model is replicable in most of the rural villages of North East where community cohesiveness is strong.

Bringing out the Uniqueness of the Village: Dzuleke USP

Dzuleke is a picturesque village situated relatively close to Kohima, the capital of Nagaland but yet untouched by the rigors of modern civilization including mobile communication network. The total number of households in the village is about 33 and the total population stands at 200. Dzuleke with its small population of Angami Naga tribe presents an ideal location for visitors to get a feel of rural life in Nagaland. With its quaint houses and beautifully laid out stone walkways and surrounded by forests and rice fields, Dzuleke provides an opportunity to experience village life and also enjoy nature in its relatively pristine form. The semi evergreen forests offer opportunities for bird and butterfly watching; nature walks and trekking. The forests also offer the possibility of seeing several species of orchids and rhododendrons. Dzuleke also has the rare snow trout that is found nowhere else in the vicinity. A walk to river provides a chance to see this fish being caught in traditional Angami style. A walk to the home gardens introduces one to a



Figure 2: Dzuleke Across Seasons

range of organically produced vegetables. It is also interesting to see the special kind wet rice cultivation that is practiced here. There is also tremendous scope for walks to see important medicinal plants and learn from the local community the use of these. Traditionally a hunting community, Dzuleke is also special because the elders decided to ban all hunting here in the year 1999 to ensure that the wildlife in the area is conserved for generations to come. Fishing is also regulated and can be done only for a few select months of the year. The community has also decided to set aside some of the forest as a Community Conserved Area (CCA) where collection of all forest produce will be restricted.

Project Initiation of Eco Tourism in Dauleke: The Process

The feasibility of Dzuleke village as an ecotourism pilot initiative was determined based on the field visits, discussions with local community members and representatives from the travel industry. Additionally, a detailed feasibility analysis was undertaken by an independent Consultant.

The Dzuleke's Village Council had set up the Dzuleke Eco-Tourism Board (DETB) to manage tourism-related activities. However, the lack of resources and capacities resulted in it being largely inactive. Around this time, the North East Initiative Development Agency (NEIDA), an associate organisation of the Tata Trust, was looking at various options to promote sustainable conservation initiatives in Nagaland.

Initial discussions between DETB and the North East Initiative Development Agency (NEIDA) staff started in 2012 and during one of the meetings, the community revealed that eco-tourism was the preferred choice of alternate livelihood options. NEIDA conducted a Focused Group Discussion with different sections of the community and during the discussion, the community members showed a genuine interest in promoting Dzuleke as an ecotourism destination and were willing to work towards it. The youth were particularly interested in getting involved and the women also wanted to play a significant role.

The idea to develop Dzuleke as an ecotourism destination came from the community and that in itself is very significant in ensuring that the community takes the ownership and responsibility of achieving the goals set for the initiative.



Sunset at Kaziranga, Assam

Hence, with funding support from the Tata Trust and commitment by the Dzuleke Village Council and the Dzuleke Eco-tourism Board, NEIDA initiated a community-based eco-tourism project in Dzuleke village in 2014.

The Goal of the project is “to support the conservation effort of the village by involving local communities and promoting economic activities for preserving nature and local culture through the introduction of community based eco-tourism at Dzuleke village”. The project's aim was two-fold:

- The local community would be able to reap the economic benefits of tourism .
- It would enhance the community's pride in their rich natural and cultural heritage, which would motivate them to conserve these resources.

The project also identified the following direct and indirect objectives :

1. Building capacity of Dzuleke community to take leadership role in the activities of ecotourism as providers and managers of services and turn Dzuleke into a prime eco-cultural destination.
2. Development of facilities for tourists in and around the village and the Conserved areas.
3. Serve as a model for the development of other similar existing and community based eco-tourism projects in Nagaland in particular and the North eastern region in particular.

Project Activities:

The first year of the project focused on building capacities and perspective on sustainable eco-tourism as a business activity. A five-member team

from DETB went on an exposure visit to Yuksam Village in Sikkim, where a similar community-based eco-tourism project was being successfully implemented. NEIDA also engaged with the village youth courting their participation in one of the activities – a grassroots workshop with ‘Eco-tourism in Dzuleke’ as the theme.

Tourist Products:

The list of tourism products that DETB could offer tourists visiting Dzuleke was finalized during a consultative workshop with the community. It was made clear that the Tata Trust’s support to this initiative would be restricted to building the community’s capacities and initially partial funds support for developing products and that community had to invest its own funds in tourism-related products.

The following products were identified which could be used for packaging Dzukele as an eco-destination.

1. Establishment of Home Stay facilities.



2. Eco Camping facilities.



3. Development of eco trails for hiking, trekking, bird watching and butterfly watching :



4. Development of Picnic spots especially for local visitors.
5. Agro-tourism.
6. Promotion of local arts and crafts.

Of paramount importance was building the **Capacity of local stakeholders** to be able to offer both local, international and national visitors a quality visitor experience on par with other international mountain destinations – while still adhering to conservation and other development goals. The following training programmes are conducted at various stages of the development of the village:

1. Training on Hospitality.
2. Training on Housekeeping.
3. Training on Cooking and Catering.
4. Training on Accounting.
5. Training on First Aid.
6. Exposure visit to best practice.
7. Training for Service Providers (guides, porters etc.,).

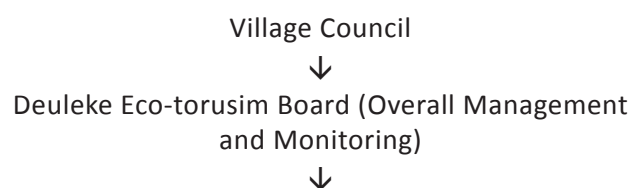
Linkages were created with local hotels in Kohima to assist with training home-stay owners from the village and provided in-house training on hospitality management and housekeeping. NEIDA also organized training in spoken English, cooking and presentation. Selected youth were sent to the Kaziranga Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam to be trained as guides; workshops on sanitation and basic accounting were held so community members would be better prepared to manage tourism activities.

Tourist Information Centre:

An **Information cum Reception Centre** was also set up as the entry point for any tourist approaching Dzuleke as it was mandatory for any tourist to first stop here and register. The Centre was initially set up in a room which one of the community member donated for use for DETB. However in 2017, DETB has completed construction of the Tourist Information Centre. This centre is also expected to be the point where crafts and souvenir items can be displayed and sold.

Community Ownership and Management:

Any community initiative must be supported by stable community institutions. Dzuleke already has strong village level institutions in the form of a Village Council, Village Development Board. Dzuleke has also established an Ecotourism Board with 22 member representative from all other community institutions. This Board plays a significant role in the management and monitoring of all ecotourism related activities. Currently, the eco-tourism activities management structure is under DETB.



Outdoor Sub-committee	Home Stay Sub-Committee
Identifying trails	Managing the Homestay
Maintenance of Trails, Picnic site, Outdoor Camping management	Allocation, rotation, monitoring homestay quality standard
Selecting guides and managing their performance	Selection of guides/porters

Principle of Shared Benefit: Pricing and Community Development Fund:

For the various products being offered at the village, a fee structure for a variety of activities and services are finalized by DETB. The project follows the principle of shared benefits, with a rotational system to ensure that each participating family under the homestay programme benefits equally. Accordingly, a Dzuleke Development Fund was set

up wherein 10 per cent of all individual/household level income from tourism-related activities are deposited in the fund. Accordingly, the income from such service fees etc., a percentage are pooled under the Dzuleke Development Fund to be used for developing the village. This fund will be managed by the Duleke Eco-tourism Board.

Progress so far:

With a regular influx of visitors, the local community was soon engaged in hosting tourists. Zevino, a homestay owner, is happy that by renting out one room to tourists, she earned an additional income of Rs. 3,500 per month on an average. Her primary source of income is from agriculture, which sometimes fell short of meeting her family's needs. This additional income has been a huge relief. Mr. Avi Khate, the Chairman of DETB says that for Dzuleke village with limited option for employment for the youth in Nagaland they are viewing tourism as a viable livelihood opportunity and an option for their children and that they will try their best to invest in promoting their village as a tourist destination. Tourism currently being a seasonal activity, agriculture remains the villagers' mainstay.

The goal of the community-based eco-tourism project in Dzuleke is to sustain the community's conservation efforts by offering guests an opportunity to experience true Naga rural life, while at the same time, enabling the community to supplement their income.

Year	Nos of Homestay Families	Total No. rooms	Total Income (Rs)
2015	4	5	81780
2016	5	8	146980
2017	5	8	105100
Grand Total			3,33,860

In addition to the income generated through homestays, DETB has also managed to earn an income of Rs. 1.2 lakhs through outdoors activities like picnic, camping, trekking etc.

With minimal investment of marketing Dzuleke as an eco-destination, in the last three years, about 1500 visitors have visited Dzuleke. What is encouraging is the high volume of local

visitors to the village which implies that for a regular inflow of visitors to the village, specific products aimed at local residents can be developed which in turn can ensure a steady business for the community.

Tourist Profile:

Year	Local tourists	National Tourists	International Tourists
2015	56	24	27
2016	784	41	12
2017	507	43	15
Grand Total	1347	108	54

This year, NEIDA and DETB intends to experiment with agro-tourism. Dzuleke farmers will open their farms to local families and tourists, giving guests the opportunity to spend a day on the farm and harvest their own vegetables. Educational nature walks for school children is also in the pipeline.

Taking the lessons from this pilot project, NEIDA is in the process of promoting two additional villages in Kiphire district in the state namely Thanamir and Fakim. With a basket of options for potential tourists, marketing these three villages as an eco-tourism destination can now be taken up in a bigger way targeting more number of visitors.

Way Forward:

North East shall focus on low foot fall high value tourism than high footfall highly littering models of tourism. Awareness generation and product packaging is where the North Eastern states are lacking even while having extraordinary potentials. Carving out Niche Tourism Markets would be a way forward.

(The author is IAS officer of Nagaland Cadre. 'Dzuleke Community Based Eco Tourism' details are reproduced from content provided by NEIDA, Kohima, Nagaland. Email:renywilfred@gmail.com)

National Mission for Clean Ganga Organises 'Ek Shaam Ganga Ke Naam'

National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) organised a cultural evening – “Ek Shaam Ganga ke Naam” in New Delhi. On 4th November, 2008, Ganga was declared as the National River of India. The main attraction of the event was an enthralling dance drama – *Namami Gange* – produced by Padma Bhushan Dr. Saroja Vaidyanathan. The performance, a Bharatnatyam recital, depicted river Ganga’s story



with the contemporary relevance. The dance drama while illustrating the endurance the river observes, called for urgency to restore this flowing lifeline to its pristinity. The act beautifully captured the necessity of public participation in clean Ganga campaign, which under Namami Gange programme, has picked up pace. The audience witnessed in awe as the story of Ganga was told in a beautiful way.

River Ganga has been an unceasing source of livelihood for more than 40 per cent of India’s population. The event was attended by hundreds of people from all walks of life including bureaucrats, academicians, researchers, artists, students, teachers, water and river experts, engineers, media, and other stakeholders. The purpose of the evening was to bring all stakeholders together for a wonderful cause of Ganga rejuvenation and forge ahead in unison. Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation Shri Amarjit Singh also graced the occasion.

DEVELOPING RURAL TOURISM RESOURCES IN INDIA

Dr Arvind Kumar Dubey

India is branded for its inheritance, civilization and charming exquisiteness in travel and tourism sphere. As per Ministry of Tourism statistics (2016), India have received 8.80 Million foreign tourist with annual growth rate of 9.7% and earned 1, 54,146 crore rupees from travel and tourism segment. However in spite of having all variety of resources, its share in International Tourist Arrivals is 1.18% and rank in International Tourist Arrivals is 25th.

Tourism is a socioeconomic activity with competence of creating large scale employment without compromising with environment and ecology of destination. India is branded for its inheritance, civilization and charming exquisiteness in travel and tourism sphere. As per Ministry of Tourism statistics (2016), India have received 8.80 Million foreign tourist with annual growth rate of 9.7% and earned 1, 54,146 crore rupees from travel and tourism segment. However in spite of having all variety of resources, its share in International Tourist Arrivals is 1.18% and rank in International Tourist Arrivals is 25th.

Rural Area of India is the paramount place to understand India's true tradition, heritage, culture, fair and festivals, way of life, etiquettes, generosity, gastronomy, pattern and manners. Rural areas of India are competent to provide destination and sites for all forms of tourism.

Thought and Research:

The 18th century industrialization has fashioned impromptu urban centric syndrome resulted in smog, anxiety, crime, unhygienic surroundings, overpopulation, one way flow of people and lopsided development. Expansion of Rural Tourism



has been considered one of the solutions of above mentioned evils. Due to this raison d'être, a lot of study has been undertaken in China, Australia, Spain, Germany, USA, Europe, South East Asia and South Africa. In China, research has been undertaken to evaluate the eminence of rural tourism experiences which shows that tourist are exceptionally contented with rural area environmental state of affairs, local attitudes and service quality management. Tourist have low satisfaction level on food and lodging conditions, charges, condition of infrastructure and leisure facilities. In Australia, the role of trendy media and films in promotion of rural metaphors has been studied.

Government Initiatives in Rural Tourism:

The Government of India has already visualized that development of travel and tourism is the best approach to proliferate the income of rural population where almost 68.8 per cent of the population resides in nearly 6 lakh villages.

Ministry of Tourism has defined Rural Tourism as "Any form of tourism that showcases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefiting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling interaction between the tourists and the locals for a more enriching tourism experience can be termed as rural tourism" (MOT Rural Tourism Scheme Guidelines, Revised as on 09.12.11). Ministry of Tourism, Government of India has published guidelines related to "Rural Tourism Scheme for Infrastructure Development" on 9th December, 2011. As per Scheme Guidelines:-

- 1) Village Tourism will be promoted and specific tourism product will be formed whose base will be rural heritage, culture, lifestyle, environment, geography, agriculture and other related activities.

- 2) Rural tourism development must be in synchronization with different schemes of Department of Rural development, State Governments and other related Department.
- 3) Each state/UT Government will submit one proposal for promotion of rural tourism. After selection State/UT Government will prepare detailed plan of action. A maximum of Rs. 50 lakh would be sanctioned.
- 4) **Scheme Activity includes:**
 - a) Improvement of village environment/surroundings (landscaping, parks development, fencing, compound wall etc), roads improvements (within panchayati limit), solid waste management, sewerage management and hygiene infrastructure.
 - b) Village illumination and construction of wayside amenities:
 - c) Monuments conservation, signage's, reception and accommodation, construction,
 - d) Tourism related equipments procurements like Eco-friendly Transport, Water and Adventure sports.
- 5) Convergence Committee will be constituted under the Chairmanship of Managing Director-State Tourism Development Corporation/Tourism Commissioner and headed by District Collector
- 6) All works will be executed by central government/state government agency by following scheduled rates prescribed by CPWD or the state PWD. The created infrastructure and assets would be managed by State /UT governments or their agencies.
- 4) A tourist shopping centre can be opened so that tourist can purchase local products like food, tea, honey, fruits, herbs, minor crop, handicraft, painted pottery, carpets, hand-sewn clothes, traditional embroideries, toys etc.
- 5) Locally available traditional transportation is used like Tractor, Bi-cycle, Bullock- cart, Horse and Camel Riding, Tonga etc.
- 6) Tour to production centre like Fruit gardens (Mango, Grapes, Bird Raise Centre, Poultry, Dairy Farm, Cattle – Goats Area and visit to local facilities like Gram Panchayat, school, Village Fairs, Village Hat (market), Sugar factory, Milk collection centre, Ponds, Wells, Pokhar, River, Tube well, Ceremony, different types of Tress, old Religious Places and Museums.
- 7) Rural tourist itinerary must be busy and activity oriented like participation in plantation, cattle caring, nature education, tree climbing, painting natural scenes, clay molding, watching domestic animals-birds, rural games, silk making, honey making, making of milk products, making of household instruments, musical instruments, handicrafts and cooking .
- 8) Family and village games like (Gilli Danda, Gotti, Marbles, Kabaddi, Kushti, High Jump, Long Jump in farm soil, Chiloher Pati, Khaillar, Tree climbing and Jumping etc.) is organized and evening entertainment is provided like campfire, rural folk dance, local songs(Kajari, Biraha, Alaha, Quallies, etc).
- 9) Rural Tourism Focus must be on (i) Something to see (ii) Something to Do and (iii) Something to Buy.

Main Characteristics and Feature of Rural Tourism:

- 1) The tourism activity took place in the country side and community participation/initiative is prerequisite.
- 2) It is multi-faceted and incorporates different forms of tourism
- 3) Locally available accommodation (Village Architecture) and Food should be served. Accommodation must be clean, pest controlled and hygienic.
- 10) Prime Beneficiary are local people who are trained professionally to provide complete package to Rural Tourist. Local and district administration's support is pre-requisite.
- 11) Rural tourist should be educated to act "Responsibly" and should respect human and natural heritage of host community. Tourist should be sensitized towards cultural values, social norms and traditions. There must be clearly defined and communicated Do and Don'ts.

Indian Rural Tourism Resources:

Indian rural sites are full of resources but in travel and tourism resources cannot be consumed till it is transformed into tourism product. For transforming resources into tourism product, we have to integrate resources with accommodation, transportation, guiding / escorting services, shopping, security and communication and promotional networks. Indian rural sites are full of resources like

- a) Nature Reserve, Nature trail, Rare Breed Centre, Parks, Butterfly Parks, Cliffs, Waterfalls,
- b) Prehistoric sites, Displays (Domestic house, Museums Costumes) historic sites related with Epics, way of living, way of behaving, story (Grand Parents)
- c) Palaces, Havellies.
- d) Temples, Samadhi, Mosque, Tombs, Dargah, Gurudwara, Churches, Wells, Ponds, Gramdevata, Religious Practices.
- e) Attractions based on primary production (Agricultural attractions, Farmer, Fishery Mining, Water Reservoirs)
- f) Craft centre/workshops, water and windmills, potters, wood carvers, glass makers.
- g) Mass production Goods like- Pottery, Brassware, Bangles, Carpets, Tea Gardens,
- h) Transport Attraction:- Transport Museums, Canals, old vehicles.
- i) Sites/ area/ house of writers, politicians, social workers, freedom fighters, kings, queens, army men, sport person, film personality.
- j) Theaters, street based performing arts, circus, musical groups, Quallies, Dance, Drama.
- k) Historical Fairs (Mela), Gatherings, Seasonal Fasting, Processions, Tajiya, Village level competitions, celebrations of Kajari-Teej-Patola.
- l) Tress/ Herbs (Tulashi, Pipal), Black deer, Cow, Buffalo etc.

Conversion of Rural Resources to Tourism Product: Infrastructure Building:

Above mentioned resources can be used/ consumed by rural tourist when the same is



transformed into tourism product. For that purpose, we have to create different category of infrastructure/facilities and execute diverse schemes like:-

- 1) Incredible India Bed and Breakfast/Home stay Scheme: It gives an opportunity to tourist to stay with an Indian family and experience life style, culture, tradition, hospitality, pattern, taste, colour and cuisine. The place of stay is clean, pest controlled, hygienic and affordable.
- 2) Transportation Infrastructure: Interstate Bus, Taxi, Cab, Charter/Sight seeing Buses, Passengers ships, Sight Seeing Boats, locally available animals.
- 3) Travel Services Network Like: Travel Agency/ Tour Operators / Travelers Aid Centres, Tourist Information Counter, Tourism Promotional/ Development programmes, Human Resource Development Programmes.
- 4) Food Services (Locally available cuisine).
- 5) Recreation facilities, Cultural and Entertainment programme facilities.
- 6) Museums and Galleries, gift and souvenir shops, sporting Goods, Luggage shops, Laundry shops, General shops.
- 7) Telecommunication Network, Security, Guiding/ Escorting services.
- 8) Promotional Programmes.

Rural Tourism Sites:

Recently, Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned Rs. 44.65 crores for the development of Rural Circuit in Bihar comprising Bhitiharwa – Chandrahia-

Table 1: Government's Proposed Plans, Schemes and Tourism

Government's Initiatives, Schemes and Policies	Benefitted Sectors and Forms of Tourism and related Features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skill Development Programme - Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gramin Kaushal Yojana - IT based Student Financial Aid Authority - Pradhan Mantri Vidya Lakshmi Karya Kram - MUDRA Bank, SETU, Nai Manzil 	<p>Employment (Disposable income), Human Resource Development, Entrepreneurship, Change of Mind Set, Education Tourism and Creative Tourism, All forms of tourism will be benefitted</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) 	<p>Innovation in Amenities, Super-infrastructure, Speed, effective Telecommunication, Management of destination, services etc. All forms of tourism can get benefit</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) - Tax Free infrastructure bonds - Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana, Atal Pension Yojana - Pradhan Manti Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana - Senior Citizen Welfare Fund 	<p>Tourism infrastructure i.e. Rail, Road. Multiplier effect on development. Security, Safety. Domestic Tourism will be benefitted, Religious Tourism, Wellness Tourism, Yoga Tourism, Ayurvedic Tourism, Social Tourism etc. Indirect push to travel and tourism industry at micro level.</p>
<p>Swachh Bharat Abhiyan</p>	<p>Image building, Marketing. Promotion, Desire of travel, cleanliness, Safety, Awareness, Hygiene, Change of mindset, Boost to International Tourism, Mouth to mouth publicity. All forms of tourism will be benefitted</p>
<p>Clean Ganga Mission</p>	<p>Image building, Cleanliness, Hygiene, Safety, Change of mind set, Water Transportation, Promotion, Cruise Tourism, Cultural Tourism, Heritage Tourism, Religious Tourism, Wellness Tourism, Wildlife Tourism, Environmental Tourism, Recreational Tourism, Yoga Tourism, Ayurvedic Tourism, Eco Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Health Tourism</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD) - National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY) 	<p>Infrastructure Development, Image Building, Heritage and Cultural Circuit Development, Conservation, Preservation and Maintenance of Resources, Promotion and Marketing, Cultural Tourism, Heritage Tourism, Religious Tourism, Ethnic Tourism, Historical Tourism, Spiritual Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Educational Tourism, Social Tourism and Other forms of Tourism will be indirectly benefitted.</p>
<p>Make in India Programme</p>	<p>Manufacturing Hub, Employment (Disposable Income), Transportation (air, road, water, rail), Accommodation, Culinary Tourism, Business Tourism, Recreation Tourism, Infrastructure Development, Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Expositions, Seminars, Workshops, Resorts development, Shopping. Other form of tourism will also get benefit.</p>
<p>Digital India</p>	<p>Information, Awareness, Desire, Image Building, Promotion, Management of destination and resources, Infrastructure, Security, Information Technology, Innovation, Telecommunication, Resource identification and documentation. All forms of tourism can get benefit.</p>
<p>Smart City</p>	<p>Image Building, Infrastructure development, Accommodation. Business Tourism, Medical Tourism. All forms of tourism can be benefitted.</p>

Turkaulia. The project was sanctioned on 28th June, 2017 and to be completed in 18 Months time. (Retrieved from www.swadeshdarshan.gov.in/Theme.html). The number of proposed Rural Tourism sites (172) and corresponding form of tourism which can be developed is given in Table no.1. (Ministry of Tourism Guidelines)

Capacity Building:

Travel and tourism is a service industry and services are provided by being. In case of rural tourism, local youths must be professionally skilled. Government of India has launched many schemes/ programmes for training and capacity building. One of the most prominent programme is Skill Development Programme. Under skill development programme, rural youth can get training/ education at different qualification level in order to get job of different stream.

Ministry of Tourism and Travel Industry has the responsibility to raise a skilled work force of 50 lakh personnel by the year 2022. For hotels it is mandatory to train a specified number of workforces under "Hunar Se Rozgar Scheme." For capacity building, Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (IITTM) is running regional level tourist guides (RLG) training programme of 26 week duration.

Rural area represents true culture of India and is the moral fiber of Indian economy. Due to uneven development between rural and urban areas, rural sector faces numerous problems like unemployment, non availability of capital and technology, uncertain climatic conditions etc. At present, worldwide farms and practices of farming operations have changed and the young generation is not fascinated in staying at rural areas due to lack of opportunities. Farmers are looking supplementary means of income generation and Government of India is very much inclined towards bridging the infrastructural and economical gap existing between urban and rural sector by formulating and promoting different special schemes.

Benefits of Rural Tourism:

Development of travel and tourism sector in the form of Rural Tourism has the potential of transforming villages into economically sustainable zone as:

- 1) Rural Tourism can create long term employment and provides skilled/unskilled training and career development opportunities.
- 2) Rural Tourism will boost women's empowerment and provides young/ agriculturist livelihood diversification.
- 3) Rural Tourism has the potential of establishing medium and small enterprises.
- 4) Rural tourism will promote local production, education, art and architecture, community self esteem and pride, heritage and nature conservation.
- 5) Rural Tourism will create new infrastructure/ superstructure, helps to maintain local services and facilities and improves quality of life.
- 6) Development of Rural Tourism is the passport of poverty alleviation and can double the farmer's income without creating negative impacts on environment and ecology.
- 7) Rural Tourism has the potential of developing new professional profiles in the form of local tour guides/escorts, Manager of Accommodation, Transportation, Shopping Centre, Travel circuits, Production House, Food Joints, Souvenir shops and Services.

Challenges:

There are certain troubles of Rural Tourism owing to its essential character as its pedestal is local people and farmers. Rural people and farmers have inadequate knowledge, education and exposure which construct problems in understanding and management of travel and tourism sector which is most dynamic and vibrant. They have modest business proficiency and deficient in business and market opportunities. Inadequate infrastructures, lack of financial support, unsatisfactory training and education opportunities are other problems. In spite of these if local rural people are proficient in presenting rural site specific thematic story to tourist, rural tourism can be developed and managed. Here local communities relationship with nature should be exposed to tourist and rural tourist must experience authentic reflection of rural life pattern.

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MARKETING NEEDS FOR RURAL TOURISM IN INDIA

Sanjeev Reddy C K

Travel industry largely relies on marketing experiences. It's because, experiences are at the core of the entire industry and everything else revolves around experiences. Those experiences could be of visual appreciation, cultural immersion and spiritual elevation. By and large tourists pay for experiences.

A country with a nearly 70 per cent of the population lives in villages (68.84 per cent as per 2011, Census India) got to have immense reservoir of products and experiences to offer to the world. Of the 638 thousand plus villages in India, there would be thousands of them with the potential of unique experiential environments. Endogenous Tourism Project (ETP) and Rural Tourism Scheme with the collective efforts of UNDP and Ministry of Tourism, Government of India was launched in India in 2002. This project provided a window of opportunities for a number of villages to showcase themselves before the world. "Probably, the history of Indian Tourism would have been very different, radically different, if we had started tourism by looking at core competency that India enjoyed in its villages rather than starting from five star hotels in the form of Ashok hotels" (Amitabh Kant, Interview to Equations, 2008). This actually necessitated for the marketing strategies as rural tourism destinations started to equip themselves to the external environments.

Let's begin with the basic question, 'How do we create a rural tourism experience?'



Frescoed Havelis in Shekhawati, the ornate residences of Rajasthan, tell stories as striking as their interiors.

A rural tourism experience can be created through the natural, cultural, human or capital resources indigenous to the rural areas would have to be attractive to tourists (Redefining Tourism, UNDP2008).

The process of creating that differentiated experience involves a number of components attached to a rural destination. The components are *attractions* (which should be unadulterated and authentic), *accessibility* (has to be quickly reachable from cities or any other primary tourist destination with an excitement for a rustic feel ahead), *pricing* (often perceived as value for money) and *quality of service supported by basic infrastructure* (also enabling for an extended stay). Competitive advantage of a place depends on how these components are managed individually and as well as combined.

Decoding 'The Host' and 'The Guest' in the Context:

Rural community is 'The Host'. The host is to be educated about the *new practice*, trained accordingly to deliver and equipped skillfully to manage. Rural tourism projects should be conceived in such a way that they encourage the community participation all along the entire process of planning, organizing, implementation, controlling and evaluation. Since they will be hosting their village, they must be made aware of the *pros* and *cons* involved well in advance. They are at the core of delivery mechanism and should never be sidelined or overlooked.

It is vital for any composite planning of rural tourism to encourage 'The Host' or community participation. Sense of belongingness is though natural to the host, sense of pride in delivering the unique propositions to the guests needs to be injected. For obtaining visible positive impacts in the lives of the rural people, it is important that

they have equal stake in everything and at every level of management. Because they can, on their own, monitor, control and counter the negative impacts of tourism (Kapur. Shika, 2016).

A review report submitted by *Equations* in 2008 (Sustainability in Tourism, A Rural Tourism Model) details on 'What are the expectations of the community?' At the early stage of planning itself, community expectations should be understood and clarified. Pinning too many or too high expectations will only yield negative results. Hope for the greater prosperity in terms of economic benefits is a commonly found expectation of the communities. Hence, constant dialogue in listening to their concerns is the only way out.

As part of capacity building, the government scheme for rural tourism destinations categorically insists on systematic public awareness, enhancing of skills needed such as handling tourists, managing resources, communicating, showcasing crafts and artifacts etc and managing are given greater importance in training. This is mainly done through NGOs attached to each site. Thus, the host becomes ready to receive the guest.

On the other hand, the role played by 'The Guest' or the tourists is equally relevant in the context. As the host have his expectations, the tourists also have a bagful of them. Visitors' inflow necessitates for addressing the needs and demands. Objectives of visitors to rural destinations are quite different from one type of tourist to the other type of tourist. The guest would expect to savour an authentic experience in a rustic, serene and natural setting with an opportunity for experiential learning.

In the process of designing a promotion strategy, a detailed understanding of *the guest* is a must to do task. We should be addressing some of the concerns such as, who is our guest? What are his expectations? Where does he come from? How would we engage him etc.

While expectations of individuals may vary, it is also true that this may broadly be differentiated amongst the domestic and foreign tourists. What they expect? How they behave? And how they involve? These things may vary in general. Domestic tourist for example may visit to get away from stress, connect with the forgotten roots whereas a foreign tourist may visit with the purpose of education, to



(Source: www.tourdefarm.in, retrieved on 17.11.2017)

understand rural lifestyle of India, to learn about cultural heritage. A foreign tourist further may want to have experiential learning through participation such as in festivals, agricultural practices, interaction with artisans etc.

The interaction between the host and the guest in the given context results in rural tourism of mutual benefits. As envisaged in the draft of Rural Tourism Scheme, Ministry of Tourism, government of India and ETP-UNDP 2002-03, 'The intention is to benefit the local community economically and socially as well as enable interaction between tourists and local population for mutually enriching experience.

Marketing the Rural Richness: A Strategic Approach:

Travel industry largely relies on marketing experiences. It's because, experiences are at the core of the entire industry and everything else revolves around experiences. Those experiences could be of visual appreciation, cultural immersion and spiritual elevation. By and large tourists pay for experiences.

Rural India has an ocean of experiences to offer. But unless these prospective and potential products and experiences of rural richness are promoted, an opportunity is lost. Be it the Ikkat handloom weaving of Pochampally in Andhra Pradesh, Tusser silk weaving of Nepura in Bihar, Mirror work and embroidery of Hodka in Gujarat, Trekking delight of Surinsar of Jammu, Banana

fibre craft of Anegundi in Karnataka, Pattachitra of Raghurajpur in Odisha, Boat carpentry of Kumbalangi in Kerala, Ethnic tribal culture of Deke village of Arunachal Pradesh or Bamboo craft of Durgapur in Assam; all of them need to be marketed. How do we take them to the global audiences is the big question. Promotion is the answer to many questions; promotion in a manner that gives positive and sustainable results.

Marketing Initiatives by Ministry of Tourism, Govt

1. Structural involvement of site artisans in Dilli Haat, Mega craft melas in different cities across the country.
2. India@60 roadshow in Singapore where artisans participated and demonstrated the art of making and crafts displayed were highly appreciated.
3. Volvo Ocean Rove in Cochin to create awareness of rural tourism.
4. Wide media coverage through promotions at World Tourism Mart (WTM), Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) and International Tourism Borse (ITB) and similar trade fairs and shows.
5. 15 rural tourism sites were chosen and listed as eco-holiday sites for foreign tourists during Visit India 2009.
6. Sub brand Explore Rural India was given ample space alongside the globally recognized brand Incredible India. (Though the website www.explorerruralindia.org was late decommissioned in 2010).
7. Rural tourism site committees were encouraged to launch their own websites as part of decentralized marketing strategy.

(Source: <http://tourism.gov.in/rural-tourism>, Retrieved on 19.11.2017)

The plan of promoting rural tourism as a primary tourism product by the Ministry of Tourism (National Tourism Policy, 2002) was supplemented by UNDP in the spirit of Millennium Development Goals of sustainable human development and elimination of poverty and inequalities (Project Document, UNDP-G I, 2003). A cohesive marketing plan for rural tourism sites should incorporate four basic components of Unique Selling Proposition (USP), Competitive advantage, Imaging and Tourist profiling.

Unique Selling Proposition (USP) is something unique to a destination as Chitrakote in Madhya



Art on the walls of a village in Odisha

Pradesh or Mural painting is to Aranmula in Kerala. In the backdrop of a strong USP, the natural, cultural and human resources of a village should be indigenous to the rural set up. What gives a competitive advantage is the quality of service, the attraction with authenticity, very basic facilities, accessibility and reasonable and viable pricing. Backed by the dual combination of USP and competitive advantage market need to be explored.

Imaging forms another important aspect of promotion design. It is what exists between marketing and aesthetics. Imaging helps in building the bridge between what is there to offer and what is actually being offered. It involves the process of standardizing, categories and deciding on the right set of communication tools. This should be supported by a detailed profiling of tourists. An analysis of such a data with an emphasis on demographic, economic, cultural and social profiling enables in a much effective marketing impact.

Ministry of Tourism carried out an evaluation cum impact study in 2012 and the report submitted by the research agency AC Nielson ORG-MARG on 107 rural tourism sites gives the much needed insights into the performance of the sites. The report says, out of 107 projects, 41 have been successful, 33 have performed average and the rest have been unsuccessful in attaining the objectives.

Out of the parameters drawn for assessment on the hardware and software components, one of the crucial component has been promotion of

sites. Some of the sites have failed mainly due to poor promotional measures.

How HODKA Got its Marketing Strategy Right

Hodka | Gujarat attempted a range of strategies. They followed a three level approach of marketing the concept of rural tourism, marketing Kuchch district and marketing Shaam-e-Sarhad resort. Shooting email strategy at first gave a positive result through its network of the partnering NGO KMVS. The next season the hired a digital experts to design and develop an attractive and informative website, brochures and posters. Posters were displayed at nearby airports and brochures were distributed through the local travel agents. Some of the flight carriers also got Hodka in their inflight magazines. The villagers, VMC and the Panchayat organised Folk Music festival to give a fillip to the entire marketing process. Word of mouth feedback later did the rest of the magic.

(Source: www.hodka.in Retrieved on 17.11.2017)

The success stories of Hodka, Pochampally, Karaikudi, Banavasi and many others in getting their marketing strategies right at the right time and to a right scale leave us with possible leads into what exactly fits in as marketing strategy for rural tourism sites. Some of the easily adoptable, cost effective and viable strategies are listed below:

- i. The community (Including the local residents, Village Tourism Committee and Panchayat)
 - The community should sit together and decide on a promotion plan.
 - Decide on workable and viable medium/ platform to reach out to markets.
 - Identify different segments, study them and collect information.
 - Work out a promotion budget.
 - Develop a network of communication systems and co-ordinate with all the stakeholders in the market including the government agencies, media and travel businesses.
 - Local folk lore, music festival and craft mela could be organised.
- ii. The stakeholders in between or the Intermediaries (The travel agents, tour

operators, tourist guides, transport companies)

- They should bridge the gap between the host and the guest.
 - Incorporate the sites into itineraries.
 - Add rural tourist destinations to package tours.
 - Give enough space on all possible promotional materials such as catalogues, magazines and brochures.
 - Develop channels to collect and disseminate information.
- iii. The tourists
 - The tourist can play a vital role through feedback.
 - Word of mouth amongst friends and relatives.
 - Share on social media and other digital platforms.
 - Refer destination to others.
 - iv. Tourism organizations, Administrative bodies and Policy makers:
 - They can minimize promotion costs of the village committees by providing free PR support for the destination.
 - Co-operate using the existing networks.
 - Promotions can be done through government magazines, weekly news letters, television, government portals and e- mails.
 - Organise mega craft melas, folklore and other festivals and build spaces for showcasing the artisan crafts and skills.
 - Fund artisans to travel to international markets to promote.
 - v. Media (print, electronic and virtual):
 - Travel writers, bloggers associated with media houses can extent support.
 - Conduct shows, interviews and give enough publicity of the rural destinations, get away opportunities, artisans etc.
 - With the range of extensive use of digital medium to get connected with different market segments especially on social media almost instantaneously, the new age approaches have great leverage.

Dilli Haat : The Right Place to Tap Global Audience



Delhi Haat is one such platform from where artisans, craftsmen from rural India get splendid opportunity to showcase not only their crafts, but also the richness of rural India, augmenting the marketing of rural tourism in India. The unique Dilli Haat is an upgraded version of the traditional weekly market, offering a delightful amalgam of craft, food and cultural activities. However, while the village Haat is a mobile, flexible arrangement, at Dilli Haat, a permanent Haat, it is the craftsmen who are mobile and ever- changing thereby offering a kaleidoscopic view of the richness and diversity of Indian handicrafts and artifacts.

Spread over a spacious six acre area, imaginative landscaping, creative planning, and the traditional village architectural style have combined to produce the perfect ambience for a Haat or market place.

A wide variety of skillfully crafted handicrafts, intrinsic to each part of the country are available in this exotic bazaar. These range from intricate rosewood and sandalwood carvings, embellished camel hide footwear, to sophisticated fabric and drapery. The handicraft stalls are allotted on a rotational basis to craftsmen from all corners of the vast and varied land of India, usually for fifteen days. Shows promoting handicrafts and handlooms are held at the exhibition hall in the complex. Delhi Haat is now at three locations in Delhi at INA, Pitampura and Janakpuri.

(Source: Delhi Tourism Development Corporation Ltd. Retrieved on 18.11.2017 from <https://www.delhitourism.com/dttcd/dilli-haat.html>)

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'Paryatan Parv' Concludes

Ministry of Tourism launched the 'Paryatan Parv' (tourism festival) celebrations country wide on 5th October 2017. 'Paryatan Parv' activities began with the flagging of the cycle rally by Smt. Rashmi Verma, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism from India Gate, New Delhi to Qutab Minar. Approximately 80 cyclists from across Delhi including members of tourism Industry Stakeholders, officials from central Ministries, doctors, teachers and students participated this rally.

Each day of the Paryatan Parv organised by the Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with other Central ministries, State governments and Stakeholders from 5th to 25th October 2017 was full of activities. Paryatan Parv received a very enthusiastic response from other Central Ministries and State Governments, who had come forward in organizing various activities and events. The event which spread to all regions of the country has been received very well and has attracted participation in large numbers.

Tourism awareness Walk & Run were organised in various cities across the countries. Hundreds of students from Institute of Hotel Management in the said cities and local stakeholders enthusiastically participated in the Tourism walk and Run.

There were 'Yoga Demonstrations' organized by India Tourism, Mumbai and Kaivalyadham (Yoga Institute) at the Priyadarshni Park, Nepean Sea Road, Mumbai there were over 30 Yoga Demonstrators who demonstrated the Common Yoga Practice to over 300 early morning joggers. Ministry of Culture as a part of 'Paryatan Parv' also organised 'Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav' under the Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat matrix in Gujarat.

The Ministry of Rural Development under the National RURBAN Mission launched Tourism Projects in Spituk Rurban Cluster for development of Tourism Infrastructure, Tourist Information Centre, Amusement / Theme Park and Parking Facilities at Spituk Gompa, Leh. The Ministry has launched Tourism Projects in Moorang Rurban Cluster for development of Pilgrim & Spiritual Tourism and Adventure Tourism at Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh.

Similarly, the programmes were organised by other ministries such as - the Ministry of DONER, in collaboration with the State Governments of Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram at which showcased local cuisine, handicraft & handlooms. Seminars/workshops were organised on Homestays and Sustainable Tourism.

The State Government of Madhya Pradesh as part of Paryatan Parv organized Narmada Utsav, a Cultural Event showcasing folk heritage at various heritage destinations of Madhya Pradesh.

There was a colourful and unique programme organised on the Rural Tourism theme at Pollachi, Tamil Nadu showcasing the life of rural India and how the rural sites can be promoted as tourist destination. Other state governments also, in the same spirit, organised a large number of programmes which saw participation from the people belonging to all walks of life.

As a grand finale to the 21 day Paryatan Parv, a three-day event was also organised at the Rajpath Lawns, New Delhi from the **23rd to 25th October 2017**. Shri Rajnath Singh, Union Minister for Home Affairs concluded the "Paryatan Parv-Grand Finale" at the Rajpath Lawns, New Delhi. Shri Arun Jaitley, Union Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister was the Chief Guest at the "Official Closing Ceremony of Paryatan Parv" at the Rajpath Lawns.



The Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Shri Arun Jaitley at the Official Closing Ceremony of 'Paryatan Parv – Grand Finale' in New Delhi on October 25, 2017. The Minister of State for Tourism (I/C) and Electronics & Information Technology, Shri Alphons Kannanthanam, the Secretary, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Smt. Rashmi Verma and other dignitaries are also seen

World Toilet Day celebrated on November 19, 2017

On the occasion of World Toilet Day, large number of behaviour change and toilet usage activities were undertaken by the States and districts around the country as part of Swachh Bharat Mission. Processions were taken out, discussions were held, and school children joined in large numbers in several innovative activities to highlight the importance of toilet access and usage. Leading this initiative, a senior central level team from the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation performed shramdaan by assisting villagers in building twin-pit toilets in Turkauliya village in East Champaran district of Bihar.

The senior officers, led by Secretary, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Shri Parameswaran Iyer, had arrived in the village on November 17, 2017, as part of a village immersion exercise. One of the aims of the exercise was to give the officials an opportunity to stay in the village for an extended period of time, interact with villagers directly, join in trigger behavior change and discuss their challenges and aspirations over the course of three days, in one of the lowest sanitation coverage districts in the country.

The team chose Champaran as the district to visit for this exercise as part of the Champaran centenary year, "Satyagrah se Swachhagrah tak" celebrations. The team encouraged villagers to build and use twin pit toilets in their homes. A screening of the movie, Toilet Ek Prem Katha, was also organized for the villagers at a ratri chaupal after the first day of shramdaan.

The joint team of the Ministry and the State of Bihar, joined the villagers to dig twin pits for the toilets in the village including brick laying inside the pits and building of toilet. The village was declared ODF on World Toilet Day. The team also paid homage at various memorials to Gandhiji at Champaran. A team led by Secretary Shri Parameswaran Iyer began morning vigil exercise in the villages together with local Nigrani Samities to assess the extent of open defecation. An intense interpersonal communication exercise was undertaken with the people who had come out to defecate in open. The team also visited households to motivate people to build their own toilets. Village women and children enthusiastically participated in the interaction. A special session with girl students of the area was organised at Turkauliya school.

The World Toilet Day initiative in Champaran is expected to give an impetus to the Swachh Bharat programme in Bihar which is making special efforts to accelerate its sanitation programme. In their interaction with the villagers, Secretary and his team emphasized the need to community's behaviour change and usage of toilet. The call was enthusiastically supported by the villagers who promised to make their villages ODF soon.

Data at a Glance:

- Household Toilets Build since Oct 2014-54328358 until today 23.11.2017at 1 pm
- Open Defection free Villages- 276956
- Open Defection free Villages-in Namami Gange-4464
- Open Defection free Districts-236
- Open defecation free States-7



Chetna Yatra being organised, on the occasion of "World Toilet Day", at Turkauliya Village, East Champaran, Bihar on November 19, 2017.

One Year of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin): Government set to achieve Rural Housing Targets

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin) was launched by the Prime Minister one year ago on 20th November, 2016 from Agra. A target of completing one crore new houses after beneficiary registration, geo-tagging and account verification by 31st March, 2019 was set. Of these, 51 lakh houses had to be completed by 31st March, 2018.

After the launch, it took a few months to complete the process of beneficiary registration, geo-tagging, account verification etc. 55.85 lakh houses have already been sanctioned and work is



under progress. Nearly 30 lakh of these houses have reached roof level of construction and 15 lakh of these houses are at finalization level. As on 20th November, 2017, 9.03 lakh houses have already been completed. It is expected that 10 lakh PMAY(G) homes will be completed by 30th November, 2017, 15 lakh houses by 31st December 2017, 25 lakh houses by 31st January, 2018, 35 lakh houses by 28th February, 2018 and 51 lakh houses by 31st March, 2018. States like Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan and West Bengal have completed a large number of houses.

New designs, local construction material, use of technology through rural mason training, geo-tagging of assets and payment directly into the account of beneficiary through IT-DBT platform have ensured transparent, hassle-free and quality programme implementation. All States and UTs are trying very hard to facilitate beneficiaries to complete their homes on time. The use of Socio Economic Census (SECC 2011), validation by *Gram Sabha* and use of Space Technology for geo-tagging has ensured that there are least inclusion errors and it is only the homeless and those living in one *kuccha* room with *kuccha* roof or two *kuccha* rooms with *kuccha* roof are the beneficiaries of this pro-poor programme. Technology has been used to empower the poor. The homes are designed by the best of institutions after studying the existing local design typologies and are constructed by beneficiaries as per their need. These homes are not only changing the rural landscape, but also bringing about a social transformation in villages across the country. The poor are getting safe homes and can live with dignity with facilities like toilet, LPG connection, electricity connection, drinking water facility etc. The governance reforms under PMAY(G) and the impact of higher demand of steel and cement on growth is being studied by the National Institute of Public Finance & Policy, New Delhi. The Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee will undertake a study on actual use of new designs, impact of rural mason training, local materials and new technologies under PMAY(G). A study on social transformation is being commissioned separately to understand the impact of a good housing programme. The progress of PMAY(G) can be seen by any person on Awaassoft.nic.in platform with geo-tagged photographs and complete details of beneficiaries and payments made to them.



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