

Gist of

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Rural Tourism

Rural
Tourism in India

Eco & Agri
Tourism

Rural Tourism in
the North East

Economic impacts and
Branding of **Rural Tourism**

Socio-Cultural Impacts of
Rural Tourism

CSE 2018 Results

11 Ranks in Top 50

28 Ranks in Top 100

183 Ranks in the Final List



Rank 11
Puja Priyadarshni



Rank 16
Dhodmise Trupti Ankush



Rank 21
Rahul Jain



Rank 24
Anuraj Jain



RANK 31
Mainak Ghosh



RANK 32
Sameer Saurabh



RANK 33
Awhale Manisha
Manikrao



RANK 36
Deepesh Kedia



RANK 39
Patil Hemanta Keshav



RANK 41
Alok Kumar



RANK 43
Akshay Agrawal



RANK 52
Prateek Singh



RANK 53
Sumit Kumar



RANK 56
Dileep Mishra



RANK 59
Chahat Bajpai



RANK 60
Anya Das



RANK 61
Girdhar



RANK 63
Vishal Sah



RANK 65
Preeti



RANK 70
Suraj Patel



RANK 72
Dilip Pratap Singh
Shekhawat



RANK 76
Akash Bansal



RANK 77
Shivansh Awasthi



RANK 80
Khushboo Gupta



RANK 81
Jay Shivani



RANK 85
Smit Santosh Lodha



RANK 89
Sawan Kumar



RANK 94
Jivani Kartik
Nagjibhai



RANK 106
Sushil Kumar

Incredible Results Since 2013

CSE 2017

5 Ranks
in top 50

34 Ranks
in top 100

236 Ranks
in the final list



Rank 3
Sachin
Gupta



Rank 6
Koya Sree
Harsha



Rank 8
Anubhav
Singh



Rank 9
Soumya
Sharma



Rank 10
Abhishek
Surana

CSE 2016

8 Ranks
in top 50

18 Ranks
in top 100

215 Ranks
in the final list



Rank 2
Anmol Sher
Singh Bedi



Rank 5
Abhilash
Mishra



Rank 12
Tejaswi
Rana



Rank 30
Prabhakar
Kumar



Rank 32
Avdhesh
Meena

CSE 2015

5 Ranks
in top 50

14 Ranks
in top 100

162 Ranks
in the final list



Rank 20
Vipin Garg



Rank 24
Khumanthem
Diana Devi



Rank 25
Chandra
Mohan Garg



Rank 27
Pulkit Garg



Rank 47
Anshul
Agarwal

CSE 2014

6 Ranks
in top 50

12 Ranks
in top 100

83 Ranks
overall selections



Rank 4
Vandana Rao



Rank 5
Suharsha Bhagat



Rank 16
Ananya Das



Rank 23
Anil Dhameliya



Rank 28
Kushaal Yadav



Rank 39
Vivekanand T.S

CSE 2013

5 Ranks
in top 50

62 Ranks
in the final list



Rank 9
Divyanshu Jha



Rank 12
Neha Jain



Rank 23
Prabhav Joshi



Rank 40
Gaurang Rathi



Rank 46
Udit Singh

Kurukshetra April 2019 Issue: Rural Tourism

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"To other countries, I may go as a tourist. But to India, I come as a pilgrim"

-Martin Luther King Jr.

India has seven million villages in which 69% of the population lives. Every Indian has roots in the villages and they often keep returning to their roots. Among the urban population there is a growing desire to take a break and relax in the pristine surroundings of the village. In addition, international travelers visiting India no longer confine their visit to established tourist destinations. Stunning landscapes, the virgin beauty of nature and the captivating culture of rural areas compel travelers to head for Indian villages.

Tourism in India has grown manifold with its contribution to the national Gross Domestic Product being 6.3%. The industry employs 8.3% of the working population. The tourism industry is making strong moves to promote Rural Tourism in the country by offering Rural Tourism packages. It offers tourists an opportunity to get first-hand experience of farmland activities such as sowing and harvesting. They also contribute to the rural economy by purchasing locally manufactured products, effectively diminishing the need of migration to urban landscapes in search of job. They also show enthusiasm towards the different ethnic and indigenous practices in the rural areas.

Infrastructure development and employment opportunities are the byproducts of Rural Tourism which help the holistic development of the rural society. Rural Tourism activities also promote conservation of biodiversity and preservation of regional heritage. Therefore, it infuses a sense of pride among the rural people.

India is a nation of diversity and has a lot to offer to the tourists. Every region, state and the village of our country has its own culture, tradition, customs, costumes and cuisines. Rural Tourism in India is still in the developing stage but once tapped to its full potential, it can open great vistas of mutual benefit for both the tourists as well as the rural people alike.

Chapter 2: Rural Tourism in India

"India lives in its villages"

-Mahatma Gandhi

The National Tourism Policy of India defines 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**'.

Favorable Factors for Rural Tourism in India:

- Faster and cheaper modes of travelling.
- Rise in purchasing power of the urban populace.
- Enthusiasm towards experiencing unexplored lifestyles and cultures.
- Tourism being transformed to 'Responsible Traveling' in which the visitors contribute back to the host community.
- India's rich and diverse cultural heritage.
- A shift of interest from visiting monuments and natural sites to 'Intangible Tourism' or 'Living Tourism'.
- Increasing level of awareness and marketing by tourism service providers.
- Increasing consciousness on environment.
- A shift from mass tourism to 'Special Interest Tourism' that lays focus on individual's taste.

Government Initiatives in the Rural Tourism sector:

- The National Tourism Policy of India recognizes and imparts special thrust to Rural Tourism and tourism in small settlements.
- Swadesh Darshan Scheme identifies 'Rural Circuit' as one of the 13 thematic circuits. Ex.: Bhitiharwa, Chandrahia and Turkaulia (Bihar) and Malanad Malabar Cruise Tourism Project (Kerala)
- Rural Tourism Scheme (2002; in partnership with the UNDP) aligned Rural Tourism with the UN Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to eradicate poverty and hunger by 2015.
- Village Tourism Development Committees formed at selected sites lay focus on showcasing local heritage and indigenous traditions, improving accommodation, vernacular architecture and skill development.
- Apart from the Govt., Non Govt. Organizations (NGOs) also operate in areas like capacity building, project management, tour operations, accounting, waste management, etc.

Benefits of Rural Tourism:

1. Benefits to the Local Community:

The vagaries of weather and the seasonal nature of employment disturbs the income level of rural households which depend on rain fed agriculture. Rural Tourism benefits the local community in the following ways:

- Opportunities for alternate and novel employment opportunities within the village, particularly for the women. Ex.: Hospitality sector, handicrafts etc.
- Weakening of the rural-urban divide.
- Restoration of a feeling of pride in their way of life.
- Revival of various local crafts and arts such as folk music, dance, drama, handlooms, pottery, wood carvings, etc.
- Additional revenue to villages through entry fee, parking charges, etc.
- Improvement in the standard of living which may discourage migration to cities.

2. Benefits to the Tourism Industry:

The development of new tourism products in India is inadequate. It results in overcrowding of the conventional tourism destinations. Rural Tourism as a new product benefits the industry in the following ways:

- Pressure on conventional tourism destinations will be brought down.
- Low budget tourists will be benefited as the options get diversified.
- Revenue of tourism service providers will be increased as arranging personalized experience is much more expensive.
- There will be an emergence of Rural Tourism hubs as the facilitators and service providers in the villages come into contact with the tour operators located in the urban places.
- Tourists will benefit from the opportunity to buy traditional handloom and handicrafts products directly from the local people.

3. Benefits to the Society at Large:

- Rural Tourism has the potential to mitigate the unrest prevalent in most of the rural areas due to unemployment, low incomes and deprivation of even the basic amenities.
- It can bridge the psychological and emotional gap between the urban and rural populace.
- Funding for conservation activities associated with the environment and heritage can be sourced from the tourism revenue.
- The holistic development of the society will be backed by activities like 'Voluntourism' which involves tourists volunteering in activities like teaching at local schools, helping out in farming activities, etc.
- Rural planning and development will be positively impacted with an enhanced focus on environment, community participation, etc.
- There will be an improvement in infrastructure in terms of connectivity of roads, public transport, etc.

Challenges faced by Rural Tourism in India:

- Rural communities have inadequate knowledge, education and exposure to the outside world and little avenues for marketing themselves.
- Villages lack adequate infrastructure such as accessible roads, accommodation facilities, etc.
- There is a lack of adequate financial support to rural entrepreneurs.
- Projects in rural locations are not very well linked with traditional tourist destinations.
- Number of trained and qualified persons who can handle multiple languages is less.
- Dividends from Rural Tourism less accessible to women because of domestic objections, myths about gender roles, etc.

Case Studies of Rural Tourism in India:

- Shaam-e-Sarhad Project (Gujarat): The Endogenous Tourism Project of UNDP selected this village for Rural Tourism in 2004.
 - The Hodka community, named after a prehistoric jheel (lake), offers camping facility.
 - Major attractions: Embroidery units, mud houses decorated with local artwork and the Rann festival.
 - Economic impact: The annual income has increased from 1 Lakh per year to 45 Lakhs per year.
 - Another local community, Banni, has popularized the Banni buffalo as the 11th buffalo breed of India.
- Naggur, Himachal Pradesh: The Endogenous Tourism Project of UNDP selected the village as a heritage site.

- Major attractions: The heritage villa of famous Russian painter Nicholas Roerich, weaving centers and the proximity to Kulu and Manali.
- Kumarakom, Wayanad etc. (Kerala): The award winning model of 'Responsible Tourism' identifies local stakeholders as storytellers.
- Samode and Mandawa (Rajasthan): The project is operated as a public-private partnership.
- Govardhan Eco-village (Maharashtra): Community participation activities made it win the UNWTO Ulysses Award for Innovation.
- Kutch Adventures India, Gujarat: The salt desert offers 'Community Tourism' involving village artisans.
- Itmenaan Lodge, Uttarakhand: The lodge introduces various farming activities to tourists.
- Spiti Ecosphere, Himachal Pradesh: High altitude Rural Tourism is offered along with visits to Buddhist monasteries, yak safaris, village homestays and cultural performances.
- Lachen, Sikkim: Located at 8500 feet, the site offers scenic beauty of snow-capped peaks amidst conifer and Rhododendron forests.
- Ballabhpur Danga, West Bengal: Managed by the Santhal community, the project is situated near Shantiniketan and Sonajhuri forest.
- Sunder bans Village Life, West Bengal: It is A UNESCO World Heritage Site with the largest mangrove vegetation in the world.
- Majuli, Assam: Surrounded by the Brahmaputra, it is the largest river island in the world.
- Chitrakoot, Chhattisgarh: Major attraction is the widest waterfall in India located in the Indravati River.
- Odisha: Beaches where Olive Ridley turtles come to lay eggs attracts tourists.
- Banavasi (Karnataka): Main attractions are the workshops of wood carving, artifacts making, stone cutting, etc.
- Raghurajpur, Odisha: Pattachitra painters, Gotipua (the precursor to the Indian classical dance form of Odissi) dance troupes, tussar paintings, palm leaf engravings, stone and wood carvings, cow dung and papier mache toys, etc. are the main attractions.
- Pochampally, Telangana: The village finds a place the UNESCO tentative list of World Heritage Sites as part of the 'Iconic sari weaving clusters of India'.

How to boost Rural Tourism in India?

- Destinations should be specific and proximate to the conventional tourist spots.
- There should be an improvement in the accessibility, proper marketing and periodic maintenance of the destinations.
- Homestays need to follow the traditional style of construction and lifestyle.
- Infrastructure must be environment friendly.
- A concerted effort from both the Union Government and State Governments based on a proactive approach.
- Government authorities have to provide models for villagers to adopt.

Conclusion:

Rural Tourism establishes a balance between rural needs and rural resources. It empowers the villages in many ways. We have to realize the potential of community ownership and management as alternative models of endogenous tourism.

Chapter 3: Socio-Cultural Impacts of Rural Tourism

Rural Tourism has become a business opportunity to the service providers in the tourism industry. It also help the tourists in gaining a sense of relaxation and leisure. However, it challenges the third party, the rural community, with a potential threat to their socio-cultural structure.

Socio-Cultural Significance of Rural Tourism:

- It improves cultural exchange between the guests and the hosts. Thus it acts as a platform for building tolerance and mutual respect among different cultures.
- It helps in the revitalization of local customs, crafts and culture.
- Village community assumes a sense of pride linked to their heritage and traditions.
- It acts as a soft power in international relations and supports the entertainment industry indirectly.
- It also brings in social benefits in terms of improved standard of living and hygienic public spaces.
- Job opportunities provided by Rural Tourism prevents the youth from migrating to cities.
- Participation by women help them gain financial stability and social significance.

Challenges to Socio-cultural framework of rural areas:

- Acculturation: Village communities often adapt and follow values and attitudes of tourists in a process of adaptation and adjustment. The village youth is more vulnerable in this aspect.
- Demonstration effect: Rural communities and cultures tend to mimic western style and behavior such as gestures, posture, lifestyle, consumption pattern, etc.
- Standardization: In spite of tourism shifting to rural landscape, hospitality is often standardized to meet tourist expectations which kills the diversity which existed originally.
- Cultural commodification: Value systems of village communities is prone to artificial additions in order to make it attractive, but at the cost of transforming it from sacred to profane and from real to inauthentic.
 - Ex: Actual and sacred significance of religious rituals, traditions and festivals are ignored in order to fulfill the tourists' needs.
 - In Indonesia, the local people agreed to stage dance and music but disagreed to stage rituals in front of tourists, because they didn't want to transform their values into commodity.
- Staged Authenticity: Tourism modifies traditions to a commercial role. Mere duplication, fake or staged practices demeans the sacred nature of the traditional practices.
- Cultural Erosion: Local craftsmen tend to modify their products to make it more appealing to tourists. It kills the authenticity of the products.
- Cultural Clashes: Anti-tourist attitudes may begin to manifest from the rural population who feel threatened due to the changing patterns of their world.
- Ethical issues: Tourism brings in localized inflation, increased crime rates, child employment, flesh trade, etc. to the rural landscape.
- Gender Specific Challenges: Women in Rural Tourism are still underpaid, underutilized, under educated and under-represented. It dilutes their opportunity for financial independence and social acceptance. Women are also compelled to continue doing their household chores along with the job in the tourism industry.
- Environmental Impacts: The agricultural lands of villages are fragile resources. Degradation of such places means the loss of the very characteristics that attract tourists.

Conclusion:

“India perishes if her villages perish”

-Mahatma Gandhi

Socio-cultural impacts of Rural Tourism are often overlooked when compared with the economic and environmental impacts. It slowly damages the very nature of rural areas and the local produce that attract the tourists. Human factors including the attitudes and behavior of tourists and hosts determine positive and negative outcomes of tourism. A profit and accountability oriented approach must be undertaken with due consideration of the local biodiversity, ecosystem, sustainable development and lifestyle of the rural community.

Chapter 4: Economic Impacts of Rural Tourism

Mahatma Gandhi wanted independent India's economy to be based on villages in contrast to the view that economic prosperity is determined by the level of urbanization. His dream of 'Gram Swaraj' can be realized through Rural Tourism.

Definition of rural areas (Census 2011):

- An area which has a population of less than 10000 is defined as a rural area.
- There are around seven lakh villages in India.
- Around 69 % of the population resides in the villages.
- 62 % of the total population depends on agriculture for their livelihood.

Five Year Plans and Rural Tourism:

- 10th Five Year Plan: National Tourism Policy was introduced and 103 projects were sanctioned by the government.
- 11th Five Year Plan: Rural Tourism became one of the primary tourist products and 69 Rural Tourism projects were sanctioned.
- 12th Five Year Plan: 70 Rural Tourism Clusters were proposed with a total investment of Rs. 770 Cr. Rajasthan and Kerala were the early birds to take advantage of this scheme.

State of Tourism in India:

- In 2017, the direct and total contribution of the tourism sector to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was 3.7 % and 9.4 % respectively.
- For 2018, the forecast is an increase by 7.6 % and 7.5 % respectively.
- By the year 2028, the expected level of contribution will be 3.9 % and 6.9 % respectively.
- In 2017, the total employment generated by the sector was 5 % which is expected to rise by 2.8 % in 2018 and by 2.1 % in 2028.
- In 2017, 10.8 million foreign travelers visited India which was 15.6 % more than the 2016 level.
- In 2016, the number of domestic tourists was 1613.6 million.
- In 2017, the total foreign exchange earned from tourism is Rs.180379 Cr., a 17 % growth from 2016.

Economic Benefits from Rural Tourism:

- Rural Tourism provides additional income to farmers, women and other backward communities dependent on unskilled and seasonal jobs.
- It also provides an opportunity to showcase our culture, heritage, handicrafts, etc. at the global level, attracting money even during the off season.
- Infrastructure such as power, connectivity, sanitation and health also develops with the expansion of Rural Tourism.
- A huge infusion of investment in the core and periphery of the villages improves the overall economic health of the villages.

Negative Impacts of Rural Tourism on Rural Economy:

- Local resources may become inaccessible to the local people as they get earmarked to draw more tourists.
- The part time nature of employment does not provide sustained income to villagers.
- The technology and lifestyle brought in by the urban mass damages the rural consumption pattern.
- Pollution caused by the increasing footfalls harms the health of the local people and thus increase the out of pocket expenditure for medical treatment.

- The comparative priority given to tourism may become detrimental for village economy that is fundamentally agriculture based.
- The increase in demand caused by tourists may bring about localized price inflation.
- The women, who does most of the lowly jobs, are often left uncouned and underpaid.

Conclusion:

"The character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed."

-Mahatma Gandhi

Government and other stakeholders focus on making rural communities self-sustaining. Rural Tourism makes the villages self-reliant by promoting related activities that generate employment. However, care must be taken to ensure that the economic dividends from Rural Tourism are distributed fairly.

Chapter 5: Branding Rural Tourism

Rural Tourism has extended beyond farm based tourism. But many such destinations had to face rejections in recent past, from tourists or from hosts. Hence, branding of Rural Tourism is inevitable for its sustenance.

Importance of Branding Rural Tourism:

- Branding assures the authenticity of the tourism products being offered.
- It introduces newer vistas of Rural Tourism beyond the boundaries of farm lands.
- It helps demonstrate the rural background, pro-poor approach and community participation involved.
- Once the place gains popularity tourists will repeat their visits and word of mouth will attract more tourists.
- Branding can look into other holistic approaches such as sustainable tourism, community based tourism, volunteer tourism and responsible tourism.

Who constitute the rural tourists?

- One day picnic: The urban mass who usually prefers outings on the weekends. This large segment consists mostly of families or friends. Usually they camp an entire day at a temple, river bank or orchards, making their own transport arrangements and carrying food with them.
- Short vacations: Tourists of this category are quality conscious and usually belong to higher income strata. They prefer better transport, telecommunication and health care facilities too.
- Senior citizens: Those who have sufficiently explored major tourist destinations prefer calm and quiet places away from the urban hustle and bustle.
- Urban youth: The urban youth living in concrete jungles devoid of natural light and pure air show interest in ideally using their energy, economic power and the curiosity to explore the countryside.

How to Profile Rural Tourists?

- Based on age groups and their expectations.
- Based on the rural background and products which can be offered.
- Based on events such as fairs and festivals.

Products of Rural Tourism:

I) Generic Products

- Green walks through meadows and orchards
- Bullock cart ride
- Farming based activities
- Fishing
- Bird watching
- Indigenous games

II) Region Specific Products

The diverse geographical and climatic conditions in India is reflected in the diversity of Rural Tourism Products as well:

- Desert area: camel ride, fairs and festivals, tented accommodation, local cuisines, etc.
- Himalayan belt: trekking to remote villages, eco-tourism, bird watching, adventure activities, boating, angling, etc.
- Coastal areas: fishing, angling, water sports, etc.

- Villages located near metropolitan cities: camping, trekking, etc.

Way Ahead:

- Branding can be accomplished in many ways such as exhibitions, media and social media campaigns, endorsements, collaborative efforts, etc.
- Key Result Areas (KRA): Branding of Rural Tourism needs to identify strengths and opportunities related to the KRAs such as handicrafts, folk culture, organic farming, eco parks, herbal parks, meditation centers, etc.
- Apart from branding, there must be improved accessibility to the locations by upgrading the condition of roads.
- Appropriate route maps for Public-Private Participation, Sustainable Tourism, etc. in Rural Tourism need to be introduced.
- Proper development of the '4 Ps' strategy in marketing (Product, Place, Price and Promotion).

Conclusion:

In India Rural Tourism as a product is a recent phenomenon which has unidentified potential to cater to the economic needs of rural areas. Expansion of attractions and branding is necessary to determine its future scope and resource-use pattern.

Chapter 6: ECO TOURISM

Eco Tourism is defined as *“a responsible travel to undisturbed natural areas that conserve the natural environment and enhance the wellbeing of the local people”*. It gives special attention to the conservation and preservation of natural resources.

Kerala model, a Case Study:

- Being a top consumer state, it depends heavily on Eco Tourism as a livelihood to local community.
- There are 55 Eco Tourism destinations functioning in the State.
- Western Ghats, an abode of endemic and endangered species, is also a major Eco Tourism spot.
- Leading Eco Tourism destinations of the state such as Munnar, Thekkady and Wayanad has captured a lot of international attention through sustainable livelihood practices using Eco Tourism.
- There exists a systematic approach based on imparting regular training to the local community on making Eco Tourism as a tool for sustainable development.
- The approach is based on three important functions:
 - Financial support to strengthen conservation.
 - Economic benefits to the local and aboriginal people.
 - Enriching experience of the visitors.
- Self Help Groups (SHGs), members of the marginalized and economically backward communities and women are given due preference in the projects.
- Eco-Development and Tribal Welfare Wing (Department of Forest) data (as on 31.12.2008):
 - Total number of people employed in Eco Tourism: 39557
 - Scheduled Castes: 8164 (20.64%)
 - Scheduled Tribes: 6063 (15.33%)
 - Other communities: 23330 (64.03%)

Institutional Setup of the Kerala Model

- **Directorate of Eco Tourism** organizes regional workshops.
- **Kerala Institute of Tourism and Travel Studies (KITTS)** in association with the Directorate of Eco Tourism organizes the Naturalist or Interpreters course where aspirants learn guiding skills, first aid practices, visitor management, hospitality and knowledge on endemic and endangered species.
- **Forest Development Agencies** implement Eco Tourism in the forest area.
- **India's first planned Eco Tourism destination, Thenmala Eco Tourism** operates adventure zone, boating, butterfly safari, children's park, deer rehabilitation center, leisure zone, musical dancing fountain and the 'Nakshatra Vanam'. It also offers a barrier free access to the hearing and visually challenged.
- **Participatory Forest Management** is a strategy followed since 1998 for the conservation of biodiversity along with the improvement of livelihood of forest dependent people by forming partnerships institutions at the grass root level.
- **Vana Samrakshana Samithies (VSS)** are the institutions based on territorial forest divisions.
 - There are 400 VSSs in Kerala with a Scheduled Tribe (ST) representation of 25.76%.
- **Eco-Development Committees (EDC)** are similar institutions in the Wild Life Sanctuaries and National Parks.
 - There are 190 EDCs across the state with a Scheduled Tribe (ST) representation of 31.14%.
- **Vanasree Eco shops** are run by the Forest Development Agencies (FDA) to sell processed and semi processed non timber forest products collected by the tribal community from the forest. - The profits from these outlets are given back to the collectors of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through the VSS.

- **Community Development Fund (CDF)** is formed to assist the employees involved in Eco Tourism. A particular portion of the employee's salary is retained as contribution towards the fund and will be utilized for the members in the form of loans, etc.

Eco Tourism in Other States:

- Leh Nutrition Project: Ladakh Ecological Development and Environment Group, an NGO, works for providing sustainable livelihood to the local community. They focus on solving the specific issues of the difficult terrain, such as child care, education, watershed development, etc.
- Himachal Pradesh Forest Department: State Forest Development Agencies (SFDAs) implements participatory forest management.
- Eco Tourism Society of India, New Delhi: Chhawla-Kanganheri near Najafgarh drain offers boating, camping, paintball, obstacle course, etc. Farm tourism in the city outskirts, JNU caves, Yamuna Biodiversity Park (Wazirabad), etc. also provide Eco Tourism services.
- Uttarakhand: Known as the, 'Nature lover's Paradise', the snow capped mountains, rolling meadows, high altitude lakes, dense forests, exotic wildlife and wetlands in the Garhwal and Kumaon regions along with the British era forest rest houses offers sustainable Eco Tourism.
- North Eastern States: Despite being the late entrants, the unique identity in terms of lifestyle and biodiversity enhances the states' opportunities as Eco Tourism spots.
- Eco Tourism Development Board, Karnataka: The institution lays focus on both conservation and livelihood activities in destinations like Bandipur, Ranganathittu, Madikeri, Agumbe, Coorg and Shimoga.

The Eco Development Project (EDP):

- The India Eco Development Project with the support of the World Bank (W.B) and the Global Environment Facility (G.E.F) supports 580 Eco Development Committees (EDCs) in India involving 75000 households.
- The project aims at reducing local community's dependency on forest products and conserve it.
- Periyar Tiger Reserve in Kerala, an EDP established in 1996, works based on collaboration with local people.

Sustainable Tourism:

Sustainable tourism is defined by the World Tourism Organization as *"tourism which leads to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems."* - The first mention of environment friendly tourism can be traced back to the Sargent Committee report (1946), which said that Indian culture promotes sustainable way of living.

- Since it was first mentioned in the Brundtland Report (1987), Sustainable Development has been the core of developmental policies across the world.
- Non-intrusive tourism: The concept says that the stakeholders should not hurt cultural, religious and societal ethos of the locals.

Advantages of Eco Tourism:

- It prevents further degradation of forests and provides protection to the wildlife.
- It provides learning opportunity to the tourists on conservation of water, natural cooling of homes and minimizing food wastage.
- It is a means to achieve the goal of a circular economy.

Challenges to Eco Tourism:

- Hard core conservationists believe that even Eco Tourism has the potential to destroy the environment.
- If the carrying capacity of eco destinations is breached, it may lead to irreversible destruction.

- Eco Tourism destinations remain closed during the breeding season of endangered species, draught, etc. and hence disturbs the financial stability of the service providers.
- Encroachment to the forest areas may lead to man-animal conflicts.
- Many Eco Tourism spots face acute water shortage during summer because of exploitation by the tourism activity.
- Global warming and sea-level rise along with changes in the frequency and intensity of natural calamities threaten the viability of Eco Tourism destinations, particularly in the low lying coastal areas and small islands.
- There is a lack of a legislative backing to the sustainable management of tourism.

Conclusion:

Protected areas network around the world have an estimated conservation cost of \$50 billion per year. The top 25 World Biodiversity Hotspots alone would require \$500 million per year. Eco Tourism as a tool can contribute as a source for funding, apart from conserving natural resources as a tourism product.

Chapter 7: Agri Tourism

Agri tourism is based on agriculture based operations that brings visitors to the farms. It is a very recent concept which helps the urban visitors understand and appreciate the work done by the farmer.

Products of Agri Tourism:

- **Farmers' market** for the direct sale of fresh produce and processed food.
- **Pick your own products** allows tourists to enter the farms and pick up the seasonal products directly.
- **Local flavor** such as Kanda Poha (Maharashtra) and meals served on banana leaves (South Indian states).
- **Participation** of tourists in cooking in a 'choolah', bullock cart race, etc.
- **Knowledge sharing** by experienced farmers.

Benefits of Agri Tourism to the Rural Community:

- Additional revenue for local businesses and services.
- Upgraded and revitalized community facilities.
- Preservation of local tradition.
- Women empowerment.

Challenges to Agri Tourism:

- A dedicated and motivated set of entrepreneurs who have a skill in presentation of their products a prerequisite for the survival of Agri-tourism.
- It is also necessary to provide facilities like entertainment services, swimming pool, gymnasium etc.
- Lack of cooperation between the tour operators and farmers.
- Lack of public awareness and branding.

Way ahead for Agri Tourism:

- Proper recognition of the Agri Tourism industry and diversification of agricultural business into Agri Tourism.
- Government supported policy structure involving a strategy at both the national as well as the state level to create innovative products.
- Leveraging the fascination of the urban population towards organic food.
- Development of entrepreneurial skills amongst the farmers.
- Creation of a community level cooperative for the implementation of Agri-tourism at the village level.
- Financial assistance through interest free loans.
- Formulation of a proper public private partnership development model.

Conclusion:

Agri-tourism is a supportive system complementary to the agricultural activities. The development of Agri-tourism can perhaps help a great deal in socio economic empowerment of the farming community.

Chapter 8: Rural Tourism in the North East

The region has eight States consisting of 7.98 % of the country's landmass and 3.76 % of its population. More than 81 % of the region's population are rural inhabitants. A strong and integrated development strategy around the concept of Rural Tourism will help harness the natural and cultural potential of the region.

Tourism in the North Eastern States:

- The eastern range of the Himalayas and many other hill ranges makes the North Eastern states of India a treasure house of natural beauty.
- The region is characterized by glaciers, lakes, passes, dense forests, river systems and a unique set of flora and fauna.
- A diverse set of cultural practices and customs adds to the charm of these states.
- The states which share 96 % international boundaries with Nepal, Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh can attract tourists from those countries.
- States in the North Eastern states also have many sanctuaries and parks.
- However, North Eastern states doesn't appear in either the top 5 destination states for domestic tourists (Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka) or the top 5 destinations for international tourists (Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and West Bengal) of the year 2016.

State Level Tourism Policies:

- All the eight states of this region have formulated the State Tourism Policy with due consideration given to Rural Tourism.
- The policies are essentially based on Rural Tourism because it would be very difficult to draw a line between rural and urban areas in all the states.
- States have chosen some villages with core competence in art, craft, handloom, textiles and a natural asset base.
- The thrust of the policies is to promote village tourism as the primary product to expand tourism and its socio-economic benefits to rural inhabitants.
- The main pillars of the state level policy documents are:

1. The Arunachal Pradesh

- Direct and multiplier effects of tourism for employment generation and economic development.
- Community managed model for strengthening livelihoods of the local communities along with the preservation and development of local heritage.
- Tackling the problem of migration of village artisans.
- Providing women with avenues for independent income generation.

2. Assam

- Utilizing the plentiful natural and cultural resources.
- Creation of employment in urban as well as rural areas.

3. Meghalaya

- Leveraging the rich cultural heritage and rural beauty
- Dispersal of tourists from the city to the villages.
- Promoting Rural Tourism to benefit the rural communities.

4. Manipur

- Maintaining monuments and archaeological remains.
- Promoting Eco Tourism in mountain peaks and forests.
- Diversification of the tourism product to make the state a unique multi-attraction tourism destination.

5. Mizoram

- Demonstrating the state's unique natural and cultural heritage to the visitors.
- Producing handicrafts and other souvenirs with minimum impact on the ecosystem.
- Offering different target groups (Ex.: adults, children, family, students, etc.) with different tourism packages.

6. Nagaland

- Promotion of rural, ethnic, cultural, eco and adventure tourism by leveraging local resources and socio-economic factors.
- Ex.: Dzulha Village at an altitude of about 2000 Meters lies on the border between Phek and Zunheboto districts. The site is particularly promoted for Rural Tourism centered on its own community Wildlife Sanctuary, community participation and ethnicity.

7. Sikkim

- Promotion of Rural Tourism to showcase the state's vibrant and diverse culture.
- Diversification of tourists from urban pockets.
- Expanding the benefits accrued from the sector to more people.
- Realization of a 'Poverty-free' state with enhanced opportunities for women and disadvantaged groups such as school dropouts.

8. Tripura

- Identification of Eco-tourism in rural areas as a sustainable, equitable, community-based endeavor.
- Conversion of traditional houses in the tribal hamlets into guesthouses.

Conclusion:

North Eastern states of India are treasure troves of natural beauty and cultural practices. The region, a 'Paradise Unexplored', has a huge potential that can be tapped through Rural Tourism, in the interest of its inhabitants.

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