

## VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT WITH REFERENCE TO AGRO TOURISM IN MAHARASHTRA

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### ABSTRACT

*Agro-tourism is the latest concept in the Indian tourism industry, which normally occurs on farms. It gives you the opportunity to experience the real enchanting and authentic contact with the rural life, taste the local genuine food and get familiar with the various farming tasks during the visit. Agricultural Tourism is the Holidays concept of Visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural, or agribusiness operations for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation. Agro-tourism is a way of sustainable tourist development and multi-activity in rural areas through which the visitor has the opportunity to get aware with agricultural areas, agricultural occupations, local products, traditional food and the daily life of the rural people, as well as the cultural elements and traditions. Paper explains the challenges and opportunities before the farmers as a entrepreneurs in agro-tourism industry in India. Agro-Tourism has helpful to the both farmers and urban peoples. It has provided an additional income source to the farmers and employment opportunity to the family members and rural youth. But, there are some problems in the process of the development of such center. The agro-tourism may become a cash crop for the farmers in the India and also an instrument of the rural employment generation. Rural tourism showcases rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations and interactions with the tourists benefit the local community economically and socially. Some of the major tourist destinations in India are Maharashtra, Darjeeling, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Delhi, Assam, Himalaya, etc. The India has a great potential of agro-tourism due to the beautiful natural site and basic infrastructures.*

**Keywords:** *Agro-tourism, Basic Motives, Key Techniques, Challenges and Opportunities.*

### INTRODUCTION

Agro-tourism is defined as travel, which combines, agriculture and rural setting with product of agriculture operation all within a tourism experience Agriculture is a most important occupation in the India, about 58per cent peoples engaged in agriculture occupation. But, today it has becomes unprofitable due the irregular monsoon, prices fluctuations of Agro-products and some internal weakness of the agriculture sector. Hence, there is need to do some innovative activities in the agriculture, which will help to farmers, rural people. Today, urban children's world is restricted in the closed doors of a school, home and centre around television, video game, computer, fast food and internet. Living in urban area, they have not enjoyed the beauty of Mother Nature. Agro-tourism Development Corporation, did the research in 2004, and found that 43per cent of urban population did not have any relative left in the village. 97 per cent of urban population wants to experience the rustic beauty of village life. This gives an opportunity to develop tourism centre in the village based on agriculture activities.

Healthy economic growth recorded in past few years, especially in the services industry, has led to increase in business travel. Higher disposable income and affordability have increased domestic leisure travel in India. Foreign tourist arrivals in India have also grown. The industry's performance was hit in 2009 due to the global economic slowdown, terror attacks in Mumbai (November 2008) and H1N1 virus. However, the industry has shown



signs of recovery in the first half of 2010. This is a clear indicator that the long-term prospects for the Indian travel and tourism industry are bright. India is expected to witness increased tourist activity both in the business and leisure segments in the coming years. International inbound traffic is expected to grow rapidly with increasing investment and trade activity. India has been identified as one of the fastest-growing countries in terms of tourism demand. The travel and tourism demand is expected to reach US\$ 266.1 bn (? 14,601.7 bn) by 2019. During 2004-2009 travel and tourism demand in India increased at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 16.4per cent to US\$ 91.7 bn (? 4,412.7 bn) and foreign exchange earnings from tourism increased 13per cent to US\$ 11.39 bn.

Rural tourism showcases rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations and interactions with the tourists benefit the local community economically and socially. The existing scheme for destination development supports the development of infrastructure in rural areas. Under this scheme, the thrust is on promotion of village tourism as a primary product to spread tourism and its socio-economic benefits to rural and new geographic regions. The Ministry of Tourism has joined hands with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for capacity building. Around 153 rural tourism projects have been sanctioned in 28 states/union territories including 36 rural sites where UNDP offers support in capacity building. During the "Visit India 2009" scheme, around 15 rural tourism sites were selected as rural eco-holiday sites.

### **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this paper are follows:

- To study the importance of agro-tourism development in India.
- To define basic principles and important factors contributing to the success of agro-tourism.
- To identify the challenges and opportunities before the agro-tourism operations in India

### **SCOPE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY**

The scope of the study is to examine the benefits and applicability of agro-tourism business in India. The study includes their benefits and problems. And define the basic principles and important factors contributing to the success of Agro-tourism operations in India.

Population of India reached near about 121 crore, which is the second highest population in world. Today the urban people's world is restricted in the closed door flats, offices, clubs, television, video games, spicy fast food, computer, internet, and so on. They can see nature only on television or screen of the computers. More over some people living in the cities do not have relatives in villages and they never visited or stayed in village. These peoples want enjoy rural life but there is problem of such type of facilities. Hence, it is opportunity to the farmers for development of the agro-tourism centers with a view to generate employment and create additional income source.

Some of the important advantages of Agro-tourism are:

1. It will become helpful for converting the major primary agriculture sector into major service sector in tourism form. This convergence is expected to create win-win situation for both the sectors.
2. Nowadays service sector contributing more in India's GDP. So, tourism sector has potential to expand.
3. Agriculture sector has the capacity to absorb expansion in tourism Sector and convert it into high economic value.

### **METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

The present study was conducted on the agro-tourism is based on secondary data. The data has been collected from the related articles, research papers, and reports. Some data has furnished from the websites of the government of India like ministry of tourism of India and

some state websites. Some ideas have been taken from the Tourism Development Corporation of Maharashtra.

### **CONCEPT OF AGRO-TOURISM**

Agro-tourism is the latest concept in the Indian tourism industry, which normally occurs on farms. It gives you the opportunity to experience the real enchanting and authentic contact with the rural life, taste the local genuine food and get familiar with the various farming tasks during the visit. It provides you the welcome escape from the daily hectic life in the peaceful rural environment. It gives you the chance to relax and revitalize in the in the pure natural environment, surrounded by magnificent setting. See the real India and have the experience of the lifetime on the farm stay holidays. Some of the major tourist destinations in India are Himalayas, Jaipur, Goa, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Orissa and Maharashtra. Agricultural Tourism is the Holidays concept of Visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural, or agribusiness operations for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation. In general Agro-Tourism is the practice of attracting travelers or visitors to an area or areas used primarily for agricultural purposes.

Agro- tourism is defined as "Travel that combines agricultural or rural settings with products of agricultural operations - all within a tourism experience". According to Mr. Pandurang Taware (ATDC, Pune) - "Agro-Tourism is that Agri-Business activity, when a native farmers or person of the area offers tours to their agriculture farm to allow a person to view them growing, harvesting, and processing locally grown foods, such as coconuts, pineapple, sugar cane, corn, or any agriculture produce the person would not encounter in their city or home country. Often the farmers would provide a home-stay opportunity and education". Agro-Tourism and Eco-Tourism are closely related to each other. Eco-Tourism provides by the tour companies but, in the agro-tourism farmers offer tours to their agriculture farm and providing entertainment, education and fun-filled experiences for the urban peoples. Agro-tourism is a way of sustainable tourist development and multi-activity in rural areas through which the visitor has the opportunity to get aware with agricultural areas, agricultural occupations, local products, traditional food and the daily life of the rural people, as well as the cultural elements and traditions. Moreover, this activity brings visitors closer to nature and rural activities in which they can participate, be entertained and feel the pleasure of touring.

### **SCOPE OF AGRO-TOURISM**

Agro-tourism has great scope in the present context for the following reasons:

- 1. Curiosity About the Farming Industry and Life Style:** The urban population having roots in villages always have had the curiosity to learn about sources of food, plants, animals, raw materials like wood, handicrafts, languages, culture, tradition, dresses and rural lifestyle. Agro-tourism which revolves around farmers, villages and agriculture has the capacity to satisfy the curiosity of this segment of population.
- 2. Strong Demand for Wholesome Family Oriented Recreational Activities:** Villages provide recreational opportunities to all age groups, i.e., children young, middle and old age, male, female, in total, to the whole family at a cheaper cost. Rural games, festivals, food, dress and the nature provides variety of entertainment to the entire family.
- 3. Health Consciousness of Urban Population and Finding Solace with Nature Friendly Means:** Modern lifestyle has made life stressful and average lifespan has come down. Hence, people are in constant search of pro-nature means to make life, more peaceful. Ayurveda which is a pro-nature medical approach has roots in villages. Indigenous medical knowledge of villagers is respected. Organic foods are in greater demand in urban areas and foreign countries. In total, health conscious urban population is looking towards pro-nature villages for solutions.
- 4. Interest in Natural Environment:** Busy urban population is leaning towards nature, because, natural environment is always away from busy life. Birds, animals, crops,



mountains, water bodies, villages provide totally different atmosphere to urban population in which they can forget their busy urban life.

5. **Freedom from with Overcrowded Resorts and Cities:** In resorts and cities, overcrowded peace seekers disturb each other's peace. Hence, peace is beyond cities and resorts. Even though efforts are made to create village atmosphere in the sub urban areas through resorts, farm houses, it looks like a distant replica of the original.
6. Educational value of Agro-tourism could create awareness about rural life and knowledge about agriculture science among urban school children. It provides a best alternative for school picnics which are urban based. It provides opportunity for hands on experience for urban college students in agriculture. It is a means for providing training to future farmers. It would be effectively used as educational and training tool to train agriculture and line department officers. This provides unique opportunity for education through recreation where learning is fun effective and easy. Seeing believes and Learning by doing.
7. **Rural Recreation:** Villages provide variety of recreation to urbanites through festivals and handicrafts: Villagers' (farmers') lifestyle, dressing, languages, culture/traditions always add value to the entertainment. Agricultural environment around farmers and the entire production process could create curiosity among urban taught. Places of agricultural importance like highest crop yielding farm, highest animal yielding farm, processing units, farms where innovations tried add attraction to the tourists.

#### **BASIC PRINCIPLE MOTIVES OF AGRO-TOURISM**

Agro-tourism should ensure the something for visitors to see, to do, and to buy.

- Something for visitors to see
- Something for visitors to do
- Something for visitors to buy

#### **FACTORS RELATING TO THE SUCCESS OF AGRO-TOURISM**

For to run the agro-tourism very successively, following factors should be taking into consideration.

1. **Agriculture:** Rich resources in agriculture such as land, water and plants are unique from place to place bringing diversity and creating curiosity. Each field is unique which adds to the attraction of tourists. The way of cultivation and the products are great attraction to the urban population.
2. **Village:** Villages, located far from the city lack urban facilities, but are blessed with natural resources. Investments are made by nature in the form of water bodies, fields, forest, mountains, deserts and islands. The community structure is more homogenous and treating guests is part of the culture rather than a professional activity leading to natural environment required for such form of tourism.
3. **Farmer:** For a farmer, any outsider is a guest and is treated whole heartedly without any commercial motive. Treating guests is pleasure for the villagers than pain. The farmer entertains the guest while entertaining himself in the process. He is not like an exploitative natured businessman which itself facilitate a clean tourism atmosphere

#### **REQUIERMENTS TO AGRO-TOURISM CENTRES**

To develop an agro-tourism in their farm, the farmers must have basic infrastructure and facilities in their farm as follows:

##### **Infrastructure**

- Accommodation facilities at same place or alliance with nearest hotels.
- Farmhouse, which has the rural look and feel comfortable along with all minimum required facilities.
- Rich resources in agriculture namely water and plants at the place.
- Cooking equipments for cooking food, if tourist have interested.
- Emergency medical cares with first aid box.

- The well or lake or swimming tank for fishing, swimming.
- Bullock cart, cattle shade, telephone facilities etc.
- Goat farm, Emu (Ostrich bird) farm, sericulture farm, green house.

#### **Facilities Should Provide**

- Offer authentic rural Indian /particular state food for breakfast, lunch and dinner.
- Farmers should offer to see and participate in the agricultural activities.
- Offer an opportunity to participate in the rural games to the tourist
- Provide information them about the culture, dress, arts, crafts, festivals, rural traditions and also give possible demonstration of some arts.
- Offer bullock cart for riding and horse riding, buffalo ride in the water, fishing facility in your pounds or nearest lake.
- Offer fruits, corns, groundnuts, sugarcane and other agro-products as per availability.
- Show local birds, animals and waterfalls etc and give authentic information about them.
- Must provide safety to tourists' with the support of alliance hospitals.
- Arrange folk dance programme, Shekoti folk songs bhajan, kirtana, lezim dance, dhangari gaja, etc. (which may vary from region to region)
- Available some agro-product to purchase to the tourist.

#### **LOCATION FOR THE AGRO-TOURISM CENTRE**

Urban tourists are interested into enjoying the nature and rural life. So, farmers should develop their centre in the rural areas only which have a beautiful natural background to attract urban tourist in your farm. The place of agro-tourism centre must need easy accessible by roads and railways. Tourists want to enjoy some historical, -and natural tourist places along with the agro-tourism. Hence, the centre should be developed near of these tourist places. It is more beneficial to both tourist and farmers. The places which are already tourist centers like Konkan (MH), gujrat,maharashtra, Kerala, dargiling (WB), Hariayana, Uttarakhand etc. These are the better places for the development of agro-tourism.

#### **AGRO-TOURISM POTENTIAL IN INDIA**

Agriculture business is becoming more unsecured in the India due to the irregular monsoon, unsecured product prices. Many farmers cannot afford it and have a problem of indebtedness. Due to the agricultural problems some farmers are committed to suicide in various states of the India. Hence, there is need of start any of allied agri-business to support their farming and create allied income source from farm. In order to encourage farmers for establish small and viable agro-business activity, such as agro-tourism. It offers several potential benefits to farm operators. It can help supplement income generation activity while providing an opportunity to more fully employ assets, including farm household members. The India has a great potential of agro-tourism due to the beautiful natural site and basic infrastructures than other countries. As per the tourism ministry comparative report, the foxeign tourist arrivals growth changes takes place from 11.08 per cent in 2009-2010 and 8.9 per cent 2010-11. Foreign Exchange Earnings growth change takes place in percentage 18.1per cent and 19.6 per cent, in year 2009-10 and 2011 respectively. The Competitiveness Report notes that India has key strengths, linked mainly to cultural endowments. For instance India ranks 7th in terms of number of World Heritage sites. India is the second largest country in India, in population. India having area 328.7 m.ha with a 15000 km long coastline along the green Konkan, Kerala region. Nestled in the Western Ghats, the Sahyadri mountain rangs, nilgiri mountain, and world famous Himalaya. Darjeeling like hill stations and water reservoirs with semi-evergreen and deciduous forest. Area under agriculture is 141.23 million hectares and Principal crops growing in India include rice, Jowar, Bajra, wheat, pulses, turmeric, onions, cotton, sugarcane, and several oil seeds including groundnut, sunflower and soybean. The country has huge areas, under fruit cultivation of which mangoes, bananas, grapes, and orange, spices, tea etc. India is blessed with a rich and diversified cultural heritage. The country



has several communities belonging to different religions, and a number of festivities color the culture of India with the spirit of exuberance. Some of the popular festivals that are celebrated in India such as Diwali, Ganesh Chaturthi, Gudhi Padwa, Dasara, Nag Panchami, Gokul Ashtmi, Narali Pournima, Pola, Makar Sankranti, Banganga Festival, Pongal, Lodi, Holi etc. According to 2011, census near about 37.7 crore populations is living the urban areas of the India, which will can becomes a customers' of the agro-tourist centers are located in the rural areas. Other than nature and culture there is an enough road and rail connectivity in urban rural areas to travel in rural India. India abounds in numerous tourist attractions ranging from ancient cave temples, unspoiled beaches, ancient forts and monuments, forests and wildlife, unique hill stations, pilgrimage, centers, and a rich tradition of festivals, art and culture. Thus all the states of India have a tourism potential. India has diverse Agro-climatic conditions, diverse crops, people, deserts, mountains, which provide scope for promotion of all season, multi-location agro-tourism. Some of the popular folk dances in rural India are Lavni, adivasi nrutya (Tribal Dances), bhangda, rajsthani dance, dandiya, garba, yaksha ganam, burrakathas, Koli nrutya are, the religious folk dances and folk arts. Culture of India is very glorious with a great variety. It gives a unique identity to the rural India.

### **CHALLENGES BEFORE AGRO-TOURISM IN INDIA**

The India has a greater potential of the development of the agro-tourism centers due to the good natural and climatic conditions. But there are some problems in the process of agro-tourism development in the state. Major challenges and problems are follows;

- Lack of perfect knowledge about the agro-tourism
- Weak communication skill and lack of commercial approach of the small farmers
- Lack of capital to develop basic infrastructure for the agro-tourism
- Ignorance of the farmers regarding to the such type of activities
- Presence of unorganized sector in the Agri-Tourism industry.
- Ensuring hygiene and basic requirements considering urban visitors

### **KEY TECHNIQUES FOR SUCCESS IN AGRO-TOURISM**

Agro-Tourism is a one of the business activity. So, farmers have must of commercial mind and some marketing techniques for the success. For the better success in the agro-tourism you should follow the following things;

- Give a wide publicity of your tourism centre by new papers, television etc Use all possible advertisement means.
- Develop contacts with the schools, colleges, NGOs, clubs, unions, organizations etc.
- Train your staff or family members for reception and hospitality
- Understand about the customers wants and their expectations and serve
- Charge optimum rent and charges for the facilities/services on the commercial base
- Do the artificially use local resources for the entertain/serve to tourist
- Develop your website and update time to time for attract foreign tourist
- Take their feedback and comments about the service and suggestions to more development and modification.
- Develop a good relationship with the tourist for future business and chain publicity
- Develop different agro-tour packages of for different type of tourist and their expectations.
- Preserve an address book and comments of the visited tourists for future tourism business
- Behave sincerely with the tourists and participate with them/him
- Small farmers can develop their agro-tourism centers on the basis of cooperative society.

### **AGRI-TOURISM PROSPECTUS IN INDIA**

1. **Indian tourism industry is growing @10.1 per cent** - The World Tourism organization has estimated that the tourism industry is growing at the rate of 4 per cent a year and that by the year 2010 there will be more than one billion tourists visiting

various parts of the world. But the Indian tourism industry is growing at the rate of 10 per cent which is 2<sup>1/2</sup> times more than the growth rate at global level.

2. **India has diverse culture and geography** which provides ample and unlimited scope for the growth of this business. India has diverse Agro-climatic conditions, diverse crops, people, culture, deserts, mountains, coastal systems and islands which provides scope for promotion of all season, multi-location tourism products.
3. **Increasing number of tourists** preferring non-urban tourist spots. Hence, there is scope for promotion of non-urban tourist spots in interior villages by establishing Agro-tourism centers. But, adequate facilities and publicity are must to promote such centers.
4. **Government initiatives and policies** in X five year plan allocation has been increased from 525 crore to 2900 crores. Increased financial allocation reaffirms the government commitment. The increased financial allocation by six times could be used for capacity building of service providers, creation of infrastructure and publicity.

### **CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

India has a great potential to the development of agro-tourism, because of natural condition and different types of agro products as well as variety of rural traditions, festivals. The government should try to provide optimum financial aids to the agro-tourism activities in the India by the grants and institutional finance. Bank should provide optimum financial help for the agro-tourism activities in the India. 37.7 crore of population is living in the urban areas and they want to enjoy rural life and to know about the rural life. It is a good opportunity to develop an agro-tourism business in India. Hence, the agriculture departments of the districts, Agriculture Universities should try to give orientation about it and provide some innovative ideas regarding to the Agro-tourism. Union of the agro-tourism service providers is also another need of these farmers which helps to the agricultural tourism network in the India.

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