

Social Inclusion through Rural Tourism in Rajasthan

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Abstract

Rural tourism is relatively a new form of tourism which takes place in the rural environment. Rural tourism has become an important tool for social inclusion in Rajasthan. We can find varied ethnic composition and cultural patterns of tribes in our states like Bhil, Damor, Meena, Kathodi, Garasia (Bhargava, 2011). These tribes are found mainly in the areas of Banswara, Dungarpur, Udaipur, Pratapgarh, Sirohi, Baran. Development of these tribes are of utmost importance as they are socially cut off from the society and are away from city living. Rural tourism can boost up their life both socially as well as economically. It is through rural tourism that they come in contact with different kinds of people and get exposure. Rural way of living, organic food, handicrafts, festivals etc are few things which are now a days attracting tourists from all over the world. The local people can thus get involved in various kinds of tourism related activities which would benefit them. The government, NGO's can take the responsibilities of introducing the concept of rural tourism within the community and provide them education for the same so that they can prepare themselves and benefit from such activities thus improving their way of life. Women education should be given special importance because the literacy rate of tribal women is very low. The state government is working towards the overall growth and development of handicrafts by imparting training, marketing their local products and encouraging them to participate in fairs and exhibitions. The State Government has adopted a multi-pronged approach for socio-economic development of scheduled tribes in the state (Eleventh five year plan). Key initiations for social empowerment through educational development, economic empowerment through income and employment enhancing avenues have been taken (Rajasthan Rural Livelihood Project). These efforts by the government have benefited tribal artisans. An attempt should be made to reach in the rural areas and villages and update the villagers about the concept of Tourism as most of them are unaware of this. In this paper, the problem of boosting rural tourism in Rajasthan for social inclusion is discussed. The study is based on the secondary data available in books, journals, various websites. This study concludes that rural tourism can really help in the upliftment of the society. Proper education and training programmes regarding the same can help the community to understand the concept of rural tourism in the better way and improve their living conditions.

Keywords: Rural Tourism, Ethnic Composition, Diversification, Upliftment, Socio-Economic Development

Introduction

The World Bank defines social inclusion as “the process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society. Social inclusion aims to empower poor and marginalized people to take advantage of burgeoning global opportunities.” It ensures that people have a voice in decisions which affect their lives and that they enjoy equal access to markets, services and political, social and physical spaces. Rural tourism has become an important tool for social inclusion. Rural tourism is relatively a new concept in the field of tourism which can bring great economic and social benefits to the local people. Rural tourism is “a form of tourism which is located in rural areas is rural in its function and represents a complex pattern of rural environment, economy and history” (Lane, 1994). It is a suitable way to enhance economic advantage and employment. There are a number of benefits frequently associated with rural tourism development. These include creating employment opportunities, increase in incomes, improving infrastructure facilities, diversifying the economy providing a stable base for the local community, to foster pride in the local community and to discourage the outmigration of youth. Rural tourism will bring people of different cultures, faiths, languages and life-styles close to one another and it will provide a broader outlook of life. It will not only generate employment opportunities for the people but it can also develop social, cultural and educational values. The host community is of central concern when we talk about relating rural tourism with social inclusion. Social inclusion involves a movement towards creating equal opportunities for all citizens.

Objectives

- To analyze the challenges currently being faced by the tribal communities for social inclusion in Rajasthan.
- To find out the ways and means how rural tourism can be an important instrument of socio-economic development and help in the upliftment of the society.
- To examine the ways through which awareness among the community can be raised regarding the role of rural tourism.

Methodology

The study is based on the secondary data and information available in various journals, websites, data and reports published by Department of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism, Art & Culture – Government of India, Rajasthan Micro finance report, UNICEF India Report.

Rural Tourism in Rajasthan

Tourism in Rajasthan has been one of the major sectors for sustaining livelihoods in the state. Rajasthan is known for its heritage, rich culture, handicrafts and

cuisine, which has been attracting international and domestic tourists every year. There are various famous destinations in the state. As the economic scenario in the country and abroad is changing due to various factors like increase in income and expenditure, it gives an opportunity for the state to attract more tourists. However, apart from the well known destinations existing in the state, there are other sites that can attract tourists that are situated at proximity to these major tourist destinations. The tourism scenario in the country is undergoing change, with such change there is a need for the state to promote lesser known destinations that offer rural, cultural and adventure experience.

Rajasthan's age old forts, havelis, monuments, hotels have always attracted the tourists. Now tourism is no longer confined to the historical monuments or shopping in big cities, instead niche tourism is in demand now a days. Department of Tourism, Govt. of Rajasthan with its shift of focus on rural tourism has decided to provide the tourist a glimpse into everyday lives of villagers who carry a unique flavour of Rajasthan and make it a once-in-a-life-time experience.

Since most societies have developed in villages, there is a strong link with these small communities where the way of life, more often than not, has remained unchanged. Fortunately, tourism has taken cognizance of this fact around the world, and the development of rural tourism, as a result, has ensured a more equitable distribution of tourism income, and provided a fillip to the sustenance or ethnic cultures and lifestyles. Nowhere else can be found the true village life depicting colourful way of living. These not only helps to sustain local ways of living, art, dance, music and culture, but also allows the local community to take pride in such practices. The tour operator / travel agents can combine these with camping tours or heritage tours with a feel of rural environment with the means of local transport, camel rides, campsite stay, local cuisine, participating in dance, music, festivals.

There are various small villages and rural towns all over Rajasthan which depict rural life in its true sense. Efforts are being made to develop rural tourism in an organized way in the areas around Udaipur, Jodhpur and in Shekhawati region.

Tribal / Local communities in Rajasthan

According to 2011 census, Rajasthan has a total tribal population of 9,238, 534, out of which 8,693,123 constitutes of Rural population and 545,411 of Urban. The majority of the tribals are found in the districts of Banswara, Udaipur and Dungarpur. In other districts like Sawai Madhopur, Sirohi, Chittorgarh, Bundi tribal population is there but they constitute less than 25 percent of the their district population. Various studies states that Rajasthan is home to various tribes with interesting history, culture, traditions, customs and social practices. Even today they are far distinct from the modernised society around them (SEEDS, May 2006). Among the tribes, 90 percent of the tribals belong to Bhil and Mina communities. The other tribals are Damor, Garasia, Saharia and Kathodi. "Southern Rajasthan is the tribal dominated area and comes under Tribal Sub Plan area. The TSP is consisted of 23 blocks of five districts namely Banswara,

Dungapur, Udaipur, Sirohi and Chittogarh" (SEEDS, May 2006). The Bhils are mostly found in the hilly areas of Udaipur, Dungarpur and Banswara and the Mina community can be found in the districts of Sawai Madhopur, Sirohi, parts of Jaipur and Udaipur.

Table 1. Schedule Tribe population and decadal change

District	Schedule Tribe population (2011)		Decadal Change (2001-2011)	
	Total	Rural	Total	Rural
Banswara	1,372,999	1,358,208	35.4	35.5
Dungarpur	983,437	967,086	36.3	37.4
Udaipur	1,525,289	1,483,035	33.4	33.0
Sirohi	292,470	272,916	38.8	38.4

(Source: Primary Census Abstract – Data Highlights)

Table 2. Schedule Tribe population by Gender and Residence

District	Schedule Tribe population (Males)		Schedule Tribe population (Females)	
	Total	Rural	Total	Rural
Banswara	690,476	683,104	682,523	675,104
Dungarpur	491,631	483,335	491,806	483,751
Udaipur	773,213	751,109	752,076	731,926
Sirohi	148,966	138,714	143,504	134,202

(Source: Primary Census Abstract – Data Highlights)

Table 3. Sex Ratio (number of females per 1000 males) among scheduled tribes by residence

District	Sex Ratio (2001)		Sex Ratio (2011)	
	Total	Rural	Total	Rural
Banswara	984	984	988	988
Dungarpur	1,028	1,031	1,000	1,001
Udaipur	983	987	973	974
Sirohi	953	959	963	967

(Source: Primary Census Abstract – Data Highlights)

Table 4. Percentage of Scheduled Tribes to total population

District	Percentage of scheduled tribes (2001)		Percentage of scheduled tribes (2011)	
	Total	Rural	Total	Rural
Banswara	71.4	76.3	76.4	81.3
Dungarpur	65.1	68.6	70.8	74.4
Udaipur	46.1	55.7	49.7	60.3
Sirohi	24.8	28.2	28.2	33.0

(Source: Primary Census Abstract – Data Highlights)

Rural Tourism in few of the selected destinations of Rajasthan

Banswara

The district of Banswara is situated among the valleys of Aravalis representing the tribal culture in its original form. Most of the area is covered by bamboo clumps in the past because of which it was named as Banswara. In this area, the tribals are mostly Bhils but Mina, Damor, Charpotas tribals can also be seen in the district. There are various temples and historical places in Banswara to visit. The best time to take a tour to Banswara is during the Baneshwar Fair. This colourful tribal fair is celebrated at Baneshwar. Here one can get a chance to learn about tribal customs and lifestyle. Anand Sagar Lake and Dialab Lake are other two shimmering lakes of the place. "The tribals here are involved in various activities like making bamboo baskets, lamp shades, bamboo shelves, trays, and also marble carvings like deities, agarbatti stands. Some of the tribals are employed by the business community on marble carvings like decorative pieces, deities, and artistic items like thoranams" (SEEDS May 2006). One can see the bhils dressed in their traditional attire carrying swords and sticks, and performing the tribal dance of the region. A tour to Banswara would provide an in depth knowledge of tribal culture and history.

Dungarpur

Located 120 kms from Udaipur, Dungarpur is also known as the city of hills. The tribals are mostly Bhils and there are some sub tribes in the district. Tribes are here found in almost all the villages. Dungarpur village attractions are the best to see the raw beauty of Rajasthan. Various places of attraction are Gaib Sagar Lake, Juna Mahal Palace, Shrinathji Shrine. Here one can try the rural flavour by trying a plate of fresh bread, baked on wood fire along with the traditional 'gattekisabzi', savour the taste of fresh butter churned out in front of you, and cherish the taste and the memories throughout your life. One can experience the Gair dance performed by the bhil tribes during the fair after holi in Bhuvaneshwar situated 9 kms from Dungarpur.

Udaipur

Udaipur, city of lakes is situated in the south of Rajasthan has tribal population. Most of the tribals belong to the Bhils and their sub tribes. Shilpgram was set up to encourage handicrafts in the area to attract tourists at a distance of 3 kms from Udaipur on the banks of Fateh Sagarlake. It is a museum depicting the varieties of handi crafts and handlooms prepared in the district and also in other parts of the district. There are various huts in the museum representing various states. Among these, 2 huts represent the tribal farmer communities of the Bhils and Sehariyas. Jhalonkaguda is a village near Udaipur with scenic beauty and filled with temples and places of religious importance. The tourists can interact with the villagers and get to know the way of living of wheel potter, blacksmiths, farmers and dairymen. One can also experience the craft created by the porters and blacksmiths.

Sirohi

There are mainly two types of tribes found in the Sirohi District: Bhils & Grasiya. The life of the tribal people are full of traditions and social customs from birth to death. The source of entertainment and amusement for the people of Sirohi are their folk dance and folk music. The Gacchi Ghodi dance is very attractive dance performed by the tribal people. There are various fairs and festivals celebrated by the tribal communities.

Challenges faced by the Tribals:

- Problems of poor health condition due to inaccessibility of health services in tribal areas (Sharma & Kulkarni, 2013).
- Other major issue confronting the state are student dropout rate which continues to be higher than the national average.
- Problems of unemployment and less availability of jobs in the area have made them more poor.
- Degradation of local handicrafts and products. Due to lack of proper marketing of handicraft products, the artisans are not able to showcase their products to the society.
- Another problem is of cultural alienation. The tribals are bound within strong cultural and tradition and they are normally not allowed to come out and mingle with outside world.
- There is gender based exclusion. Women are subject to such exclusion and they are deprived of education, health services, and economic work as they are not allowed to step out of their homes.

Importance of Rural Tourism for tribals

Rural tourism can benefit the local / tribal community as well as can be of great interest for the visitors. It can benefit tribal people in many ways:

- Financial benefits to the tribals.
- Revitalizing the community's traditional resources.
- Social integration between tourists and the rural community.
- An alternative avenue of tourism.
- Personal income will be enhanced by getting involved in tourism related activities.
- Literacy rate of the tribals would increase as demand for education will increase.
- Proper training would enhance skills of the tribals and build self confidence in them.
- Increase in prestige and recognition of the tribal community.
- There would be better relationship among the tribal community.

Initiative by the Government and NGO's for Social Inclusion

- Creating awareness about the development programmes for the local artisans
After going through the information provided, it is seen that most of the tribals are not aware of the development programmes initiated by the government. Although the funds for various developmental schemes are released by the central government, it is the duty of the state government to make local community aware of the various developmental programmes made for them. According to a study, "Training programmes can raise the skill base of the industry and thereby contribute to the delivery of quality tourist experiences" (Study on 20 Year Perspective plan for sustainable Tourism in Rajasthan).
- Conducting Social activities in the rural areas
An attempt towards reaching the remote areas is made to update the villagers as they are away from common city living. Various activities are conducted like health awareness, village civic sense, labour problems etc.
- Special programmes in rural areas
Tours are conducted for the tourists in the rural areas who wish to experience rural lifestyle. Community participation plays an important role. "Grameen Heritage Tourism" is an attempt towards rural tourism which also promotes the local economy.
- Jatan Sansthan, a non profit organisation in Udaipur working with the rural population of the state encouraging rural rajasthani youth in achieving literacy, learning various skills, to have a strong hold in the community by participating in local policy formulation and decision making.

- Another non profit organisation is in Southern Rajasthan which works with marginalized communities. Human Employment Ability Development Society encourages micro enterprises through various capacity building workshops, skill building activities and other activities.
- The state government has stated norms for infrastructure facilities in tribal areas.
- Special 45 % reservation provision is made for tribals of scheduled areas.
- Government's initiative like MGNREGA helped in the socio-economic development of the rural poor.

Conclusion

Rural tourism in the coming days will emerge as an important tool for employment generation, poverty alleviation, development of rural areas, and advancement of tribal communities. The tribals do not have to wander from one place to another for sustaining their livelihood. They can involve in the activities related to tourism in their area which would not only bring tourist to their area but also benefit them socio-economically. The government must recognize the importance of rural tourism for social inclusion and thus promote the tribes and their culture which can be a tourism product. Various fairs and festivals are held in the tribal areas of Dungarpur, Banswara and Udaipur which can promote rural tourism as well as benefit the tribals. As these tribals have their beautiful culture and traditions in the form of dance, dress etc which they can be promoted. Local artisans and handicraftsmen can exhibit their products in such fairs which would help them to earn good amount of money as well as keep their traditional handicrafts alive or we can say this would help in the revitalization of traditional arts and crafts. The developmental programmes for tribal women have provided opportunities for women to make decisions, undertake initiatives which have made them to develop self esteem. Government and non profit organisations must take initiative to conduct various training programmes for the tribal community where they are trained on various aspects.

Recommendations

Government both state as well as central should come up with various strategies and programmes to bring the tribal community in the forefront as they live secluded with the outside world. Non profit organizations can take the research programmes among the tribals and find out better ways to create awareness among the socially backward community regarding their rights and how to fulfil it. Private organisations can also conduct various vocational training programmes for the tribals and find out the means for social inclusion through Rural / Village based Tourism in Rajasthan.

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