

Rural tourism the path of empowering rural Development special reference to Santal tribal villages near Santiniketan ,West Bengal.

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Abstract

Rural tourism is an integral part of rural culture. Rural tourism creates its strong foundation based on the characteristics of the region where the tourism activities take place. The development of rural tourism can contribute to both socio-economic development and environmental benefits for the people within rural areas. It has significant contribution in society, fostering business growth, income generating potential and ensuring a better livelihood for rural inhabitants. One of the most important strategies to solve the problems and challenges of rural areas is rural tourism development. In recent decades, rural tourism has been considered as an approach for the economic development of sensitive places, especially in remote areas where unbound natural beauty has been observed.

In today's world significance of rural tourism gaining propriety in order to improve the quality of tourist comfort, protect, manage, secure & promote the great natural and cultural heritage in rural areas. It is tried to use the tourism development strategy to solve rural challenges such as poverty, migration, improving income, diversifying jobs, reducing pressure on nature, improving the quality of life, improving the level of technology, improving environmental and physical conditions ,population stability, improving public services, and socioeconomic stability. The present study attempts to analyse the socio-economic condition of rural people and tribes also and future prospect of rural tourism in Birbhum District, West Bengal, India. This is an effort towards promoting Rural tourism and to preserve the culture and heritage of rural West Bengal. Santiniketan is a unique place of tourist attraction as it was the home of Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore for a major part of his life. It is situated in a predominantly tribal belt in one of the backward districts of West Bengal. Tribals are a primitive and underdeveloped community of the society. This paper discusses the rural livelihood & tribal villages and their cultural heritage. This paper also highlights the future prospect of rural sustainable tourism based on santals villages Ballavpur Danga. Socio- economic infrastructural developments of tribal (santal) people have been analysed in this work.

Keywords: socio economic development, rural livelihood, tribal villages, rural tourism, Santal tribe

1. Introduction

Rural Tourism is multifaceted and may include farm or agricultural tourism, cultural tourism, nature tourism, adventure tourism and ecotourism. Strategies to use tourism as an instrument of growth in rural areas emerge in different contexts. The rural tourism is currently has got prominent position throughout the world and also got recognition and popularity as an important path of economic growth of the rural communities. It can be defined as the form of tourism that showcases lifestyle of rural people and their art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefiting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling efficient interaction between tourists and locals for a more enriching tourism experience. Rural tourism helps in income generation and raising the living standards of the local population. In a country like India where approximately 70% of its population lives in villages, the concept of rural tourism certainly holds a lot of significance.

Boner Pukurdanga is popularly known as Sonajhuri village for Adivasi people, particularly of Santals community, located between 23 °41' N. latitude and 87° 40' E. longitude in the vicinity of Santiniketan, West Bengal, India. It has distinguished identity along with remarkable changes in the economy, culture, and livelihood pattern due to the touch of modernity. The area consists of more than 40 families with about 300 people in total. Agriculture is the main economic backbone of its inhabitants, mostly landless laborers and practices farming as daily laborers in farmers' land. This area has splendid natural beauty named "khoai" (an eroded landscape) which pulls a number of visitors throughout the year in this area. Keeping the pace with the changes worldwide, the society of Adivasi people have been experiencing changes due to influx of tourists coming particularly at Tagore's Santiniketan and

“khoai” area. Interestingly when it is almost well established that a number of tribal societies are being adversely affected due to arrival of globalization and their cultural identity is on the verge on extinction, Adivasi of Sonajhuri village have cordially welcomed it, accepted many behavioral and cultural changes and simultaneously maintained their own cultural heritage and identity.

Ballavpur Danga, three km from Santiniketan and six km from Bolpur (Santiniketan) railway station, 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. The various types of Santhali art, craft and culture is closely related with the community's life. The adivasi communities are very much skilled for handicrafts terracotta works, batik prints, leather work, carpentry, mat weaving, broom binding with parts of trees, grass etc. and making ornaments with bena grass, date leaf, palm leaf and various kinds of seeds,. Beautiful designs adorn the walls and floors of the homes of the santal adivasis, made from red earth, cow dung and lime. The tribal dance in the open air around fire, to the rhythmic beats of the drums(dhamsa and madal in local term), their traditional musical instrument; Adivasi myths and history remain woven in their songs and recitations.

The villages are fairly simple and mainly encompasses of Santhal community. The natural environment and exclusive lifestyle of the Santhal makes this village unique from others. It is the lone village that has well-preserved rich tribal culture and generation old traditions. Tour to the charming village of Ballavpur Danga can be truly exciting as well as learning experience too. An important festival is Chabbish Prahar, which is celebrated for three days based on Adivasi rituals and cultural program. Another festival, Badna is celebrated for 5 days, besides these Charak Puja and Basanta Utsav are also observed in the same ways. There is a 'Haat' named “Sonibarar Hat” on every Saturday at Sonajhuri and 'Amader Haat' every Saturday and Sunday.

Rural Tourism in India

After independence, the government was paying more attention towards the growth of key areas like agriculture, industry, infrastructure, etc. Tourism was not on their priority list. Whatever growth happened, was on its own merit. Although tourism has started receiving some attention since last decade, rural tourism was never given any priority. (Bordoloi & Kalita, 2012). Worldwide tourism is ranked second highest revenue-generating industry next to the oil industry. It is necessary to differentiate between different types of tourists to understand and analyses their purpose of visit. There are different ways to attract and retain the customers. There is a large potential market for rural tourism especially for foreign tourists, which has not yet developed because the government has not taken up any systematic approach. It will not only bring people of dissimilar cultures, faiths, languages and lifestyles together but will also provide an expansive outlook towards life. It will not only generate employment for the people but it can also develop social, cultural and educational values. It is a type of nature-based tourism that unravels the essence of rural life, culture, art and heritage at natural surroundings, thereby creating an incredible effect on the development of the local economy and socio-cultural scenario of the area

Challenges & Opportunities in Rural Tourism

Other traditional jobs are not worth it. The major problem in the rural area is Most of them are engaged in agriculture, some of them are artisans But none of their traditional business is remunerative Villagers are struggling with one or two earning members in the family and high consumption expenditure. Due to some taboos and literacy, most of them are not practicing. Big family low income and poverty in rural areas. Since there is very little scope for increase in the earning in the village, where they get some chance to earn. Today, rural migration has become a major problem in India.

Rural tourism development can give rise to many new economic activities, more demands, competition for services. With the arrival of rural tourism, regions will not be the same place as the challenges and opportunities for local communities are to be anticipated while developing a plan to enhance rural tourism. The major challenges needed to protect the environment and natural resources, the need for education, proper understanding for both tourists and local people, and the need to generate a democratic movement which helps people in all levels participate in tourism.

2. Literature review:

As per the development of the environmental movement in the 1980s helped to the development and the increase of the availability and the range of holiday types which was more environmentally friendly than these which was associated with Mass tourism. Wearing & Neil (2000) define alternative tourism as a type of tourism that is made to be friendly to the environment and to respect social and cultural values of the local communities, and which allow both hosts and guests to enjoy the positive and worthwhile interaction and shared experiences.

According to Mishra and Saudal (2008), the rural truism is actually an activity that takes place in the countryside. It's multifarious and should entail farm/agricultural business enterprise, and cultural, nature adventure and eco-tourism. As against typical tourism enterprise, a rural tourism enterprise has typical characteristics; it's experience-oriented; the locations area are usually less inhabited, it's preponderantly in natural environments and it supports the preservation of culture, heritage, and traditions especially locally. As per Meena (2015), the notion of rural tourism is to benefit the local community through entrepreneurial and employment opportunities, generation of income, conservation and development of handicrafts and preservation of the environment and heritage. Rural tourism will bring people of different lifestyles, cultures, and beliefs closer to one another and help in providing a wider outlook of life. Apart from above-mentioned benefits, it will also help in developing social, cultural and educational values.

Sharpley and Vass (2006) emphasize that rural tourism exists in some form or the other. In various tourist destinations, the main centres of attraction are located in rural areas; some of them are mountains, lakes, national parks, cultural sites and others. Apart from these tourist spots, this sort of tourism can also be extended to experiencing actual rural lifestyles and locals of the area may readily welcome tourists to their life. Rural tourism has emerged as an important means of addressing the complex socio-economic challenges of the rural communities following the decline of the traditional agricultural economy.

According to Ramakumar & Shinde (2008), Rural Tourism is developing as one of the best options available with its proven results in the west, to promote incredible India both for local and foreign tourists. Rural India has much to offer to the world. Rich in traditions of arts, crafts, and culture, rural India can emerge as important tourist spots. The current estimated market for rural tourism in India is around Rs.4, 300 crores p.a . It has the potentiality of appealing to both foreign and local tourists. Rural tourism projects in India have 310 million domestic tourist potentialities. The concept of 'Atithi Devo Bhava' is more openly practiced in rural India in comparison to urban India.

Karanwal & Dabral (2014) imply that the pressure of urban lifestyles has given birth to counter -urbanization syndrome. People living in the urban areas are worn-out because of the hustle and bustle of the cities and are willing to try rural lifestyle. This has led to rising interest in the rural life. There are other factors, which are responsible for the shift towards rural tourism can be the increasing levels of awareness, growing interest in heritage and culture, improved accessibility, and environmental consciousness amongst urban dwellers.

Karri (2016) said that urban population is increasing day by day, today urban children's world is restricted in the closed-door school, classes, cartoon programs on the television, video games, chocolates, soft drinks, spicy fast food, computer, internet, and so on, and they see Mother Nature only on television screen but now the trends have changed and now families living in the urban cities want to come and explore the lifestyle of rural India. They want to go back to their grassroots and experience what their ancestors initially did. They want to show their children the true India and Mother Nature which they cannot experience in the cities. People living in the cities are getting bored of the daily city chaos and are willing to step into the rural lifestyle and experience rural tourism. Even Okech, Haghiri & George (2012) stress that developing any tourism project has challenges, and the same goes for rural tourism as well. Any successful tourism development depends on commercial, economic and logistical issues, such as the quality of the product, availability of skills, accessibility, and infrastructure of the destination and interest of the investor. In most of these aspects, rural tourism may be at a disadvantage. It will lack the policy coordination

between rural development and tourism development, and also the low priority that is provided to rural areas by central governments. Thus, ways to deal with these challenges are needed.

Maricia, Drutu & Dorobantu, Maria Roxana(2011) say that sustainable tourism development encounters the needs of tourists and host areas, protecting and increasing the possibilities for the future. Both advantages and disadvantages can be brought about by tourism. It can help to increase the revenue through the growth of other economic activities. The development of fresh cultural and commercial facilities could be helpful for both locals and tourists through the motivation of tourism. The aptitude of the state to control the inaccessible areas and also private welfares to reframe places, to justify them to make proprietorship a part of the natural process of growth.

Ismile.M. & Guha. S. (2015), stated that the Santal tribe on of the major tribe in India in respect of the population. They have their own unique traditional cultural life. But the globalization and modernity are liable to the socio-cultural changes throughout West Bengal. Their language, religion, dress, food, occupation are going to be changing gradually.

Sen. M. (2021), in his study also reveals that the santal tribe in Bolpur-sriniketan block is also experiencing the cultural transformation due to their lack of jobs in the Khoai badland area.

3. Objectives of the study

The major objectives are as follows:

- To understand the tourism potential in Ballavpur Danga village.
- To identify the natural and man-made resources in Ballavpur Danga village.
- To find out the impact of Rural Tourism on the tribal residents.
- To identify the challenges and opportunities of rural tourism in Ballavpur Danga village area.

Significance of rural tourism

Rural tourism in India is envisioned to generate employment opportunities, sustainable livelihood for the local community by addressing the issues of poverty reduction and developing a vibrant local economy by revival and regeneration of the old art and crafts and preservation of the rural India. With the blend of rural Bengal and its rich artistic and spiritual exuberance, Birbhum offers a lot. Now, as a mean of entrepreneurship and employment, rural tourism can provide the local people with new alternative scope and opportunities.

Research methodology

The research has been designed in accordance with the theme of the study which is quantitative research. The present study consists of several parts. Primary data was collected through interviews and observations method. The respondents are the members of NGOs, villagers of Ballavpur, Mokrapur, Shyambati, Prantik, Bhuban Danga staffs in the tourism fields and tourists of Ballavpur Danga area. One project managed by Women's Interlink Foundations in collaboration with district authority, Zillaparishad and Sriniketan Santiniketan Development Authority (SSDA), Birbhum district, which was conducted by Enterprise Development Institute (EDI), Kolkata, supported by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and UNDP at Ballavpur Danga Santiniketan considered for this study. The source of this study is based on the data published by Ministry of Tourism and other information available through internet. On the other hand, the secondary data was collected from various Books, Journals, Internet, Newspapers, Reports of Ministry of Tourism and also Parliamentary Committees etc.

4. Result and Discussion

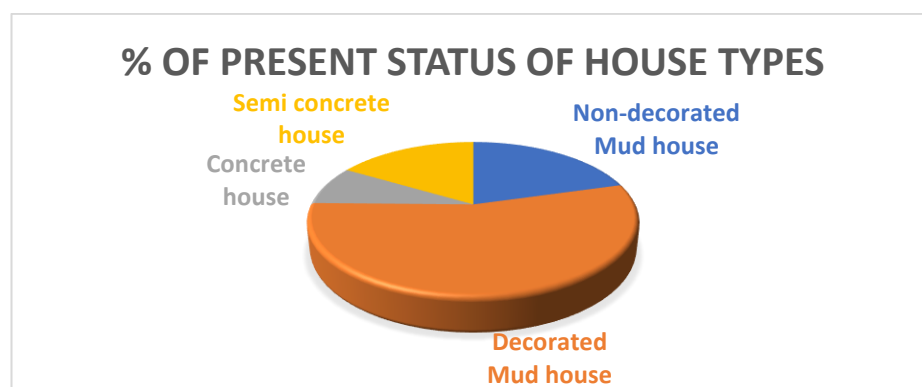
Geographical Identity of Santal TribeSanthal are the largest Hindu religious believer Adivasi community in India and can be found mainly in the states of Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Tripura and Orissa. In India, 90 million people belong to the indigenous communities known as Adivasis or tribals

The Santal are an ethnic group native to eastern India (Fransisco. C. 2017) Santals are the largest tribe in the Jharkhand state of India in terms of population and are also found in the states of Assam, Tripura, Bihar, Odisha, and West Bengal. The Santals speak the Santali language, the third largest language of the Austroasiatic family. Physically the Adibasi people living here are characterized by the dark to very dark-brown in complexion with dolichocephalic head with a narrow forehead. They have coarse black, straight, and occasionally curly hair. Perished rice (boiled) is the main food item taken by them in lunch and dinner almost daily. The principal beverage of the Adibasi is a kind of rice beer, known as Handia. Santals are generally speaking in the Al-chiki language.

House types:

The houses are situated on both sides of the main village road that extend through the village. Hence it can be called a linear type settlement. The village is generally surrounded by tall trees and clumps of bamboo bushes. A central road communicates is found within the village. In the village, a dwelling consists of one or more huts, and its boundary is generally defined by a mud wall. The general extensions of an Adibasi dwelling are cattle-shed, pig shed, manure pit, kitchen garden, and a rectangular or square courtyard.

House	Non-decorated Mud house	Decorated Mud house	Concrete house	Semi concrete house
% of families	20.6	54.7	8.2	16.5



During the study it is found that there is the direct relation between globalization and the Rabindra Nath Tagore's Santiniketan. The study located in the vicinity of santiniketan in this reason many other cultural people invade to the santal village a makes modern houses that also influence the other tribal house structure also.



ReligionSantals people are practice Hinduism and believe in God. They worship numerous Gods, deities and spirits. Their religion is basically centered in this respect. High God among them is Thakur; they referred to a

Singbonga and is regarded as the Sun-God. But now a days they celebrates Christmas, Durga Puja , kali Puja , Saraswathi Puja likes others festivals.

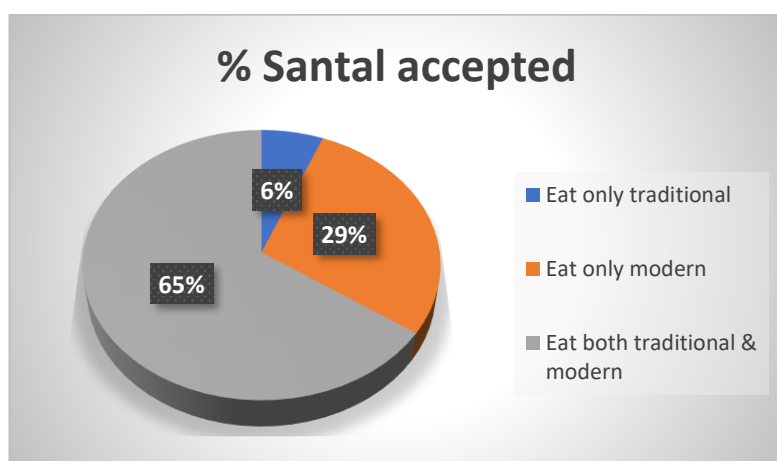
Food

Perished rice (Panta Bhaat) is the main food item taken by them in lunch and dinner almost daily. The principal beverage of the Adibasi is a kind of rice-bear, known as Handia. In case of all families, particularly during social festivals and rituals, Handia is the main drink for all of them, irrespective of men, women and children. They also drink intoxicating liquor from dried flower of Mahua. Tobacco being rolled into Sal leaf is used for smoking



At present, they have been taking chicken and mutton at their meals as food items which were absent in the past. At that time, they took pork during their meals. Although, they preferred to take liquor like Handia as stated earlier but recently they are taking local liquor and occasionally foreign liquor also.

Nature of food	Eat only traditional	Eat only modern	Eat both traditional & modern
% Santal accepted	6	29	65



Scope of Rural Tourism in Ballavpur Danga Village Area

Ballavpur Danga is the home to the famous Nobel laureates Rabindranath Tagore, who was a great poet, a philosopher and the great composer. The village is mainly inhabited by the tribal santal communities. The old-world charisma of Rural Tourism as A Sustainable Development Alternative: An Analysis With Special Reference... International Business Research Conference, 2018 87 |Page Ballavpur Danga village in the Santhal region can be a genuine experience along with being educative. Bahhabhpur and Kankutiya- the

two villages from the Ballavpur Danga area - have an opulent history of craft skills accomplished by a mixed population of Santhal tribal community. The natural environs and the humble lifestyle of the Santhal tribe is a paradigm shift from bustling urban life. Simply to put, Ballavpur Danga is like a tourists' paradise. The section not only offers rustic Bengal beauty but also presents a captivating experience of cultural heritage through its Birbhum music and a strong ancestry of tribal craftsmanship. The artistic bent of mind of the tribal is echoed in the commodities of daily their use. Some of the major scopes are discussed below:

Local Culture - The village is situated in the lateritic area identified as the 'Khowai'. The contemporary living of the tribal involves daily labour, farming and goldsmith creations. The Santhal community is rich in ethnicities of art and culture. The cultural settings of the adivasis blend with the cultural backdrop of Ballavpur Danga. The tribal inhabitants of Ballavpur Danga are chiefly the Santhals, the ethnic people of this region who have close bonds with forest life. Most of the adivasi inhabitants of the area worships Maranburu, a local God. Jahera, another god of the adivasis is worshipped before all festivals and celebrations. They also pay reverence to spirits like Kal Sing, Lakchera, Beudarang etc. They follow the Sarna religion.

Ballavpur Danga Art and Craft - Ballavpur Danga Santhali art and craft with designs on the walls, floors and doors of the homes made from red earth and cow dung. The Santhalis have fairs like the Srinilketan Krishi Mela, Chandi Das Mela and Chabbish Prahar. In the Ballavpur Danga Village there is a "Hat" - a small fair every Saturday which comprises of things of daily use. The village of Ballavpur Danga is known for mainly for the folk dance and handicrafts work made by the local Adivasi women artisans to earn their livelihood by selling these handicrafts. The tribal communities of the area possess the rich art and craft skills. The local people produce rich artistic handicrafts like broom binding, mat weaving, making musical instruments, batik, baskets, leather work. They also make various types ornaments by using palm leaf, date leaf and bena-grass etc.



Tribal (Santhali)Dance – The rural tourists can simply enjoy various types of performance or can be a part of the heart filling and vibrant adivasi santhal dance performed by the Santhali women by catching hands in chain system and dressed up in the red or blue bordered white saris. The artists paint themselves with the different colours in order to depict the various mythological characters and dance gracefully on the beats of the traditional music using the sticks. The tribal's dance to the rhythmic beats of the dhamsa and madal, the traditional local musical instrument; under the open sky intoxicating the spectators. The artists paint themselves with the diverse colours in order to represent the numerous mythical character and dance.



Fairs and festivals

Karam is the most important festival celebrated among the santal communities in the village. This festival falls in the month of September and October. For such types of special days these communities convey thank their God and Goddess for everything they have and worship to have more. Another festival celebrated among the santal communities in the village is called Chabbish Prahar (celebrated for 3 days) and Badna (celebrated for 5 days). They also observed Charak Puja and Basanta Utsav. Jaydev Kenduli mela, Sriniketan Krishi mela, Pous mela are some of the major fairs that held every year near the village of Ballavpur Danga. They play great music using Tirio (bamboo flute with the seven holes), for their dance, Dhodro banam (which consists of belly called lac covered with an animal skin on which rests the bridge (sadam, lit, horse), an open chest (korom), a short neck (hotok) and a head (bohok), Phet banam (a fretless stringed instrument with three or four strings), Tumdak, Tamak, Junko and Singa.



Taste of Adventure in and Around Ballavpur Danga & Sonjuhri Forest

Ballavpur Danga is situated in the environs of a bird sanctuary presenting large patches of water that are nesting zone for migratory varieties. This small Bird Sanctuary is a perfect place to be in for 2 - 3 days. Sonjuhri Forest, as it is called by the Ballavpur people, is the inhabitation place for migratory birds, deer and the water flowing by takes to the realm of these quiet animals. It is a good place for kids too without any tigers or lions.



Museum Gallery

There is a small museum gallery filled with Santhali Paintings and artefacts is another attraction to the tourists of this village. The museum keeps 150 items related to Santal culture, exhibited in six different categories. These are (a) Hunting materials, (b) Musical Instruments, (c) Dresses and Ornaments, (d) Household materials, Photographs of Santal olden times and (e) Santal sculptures with stones.



Benefits of Rural Tourism in Ballavpur Danga Village Area

Tourism development ensures additional income and profits for tourist related business. The greatest potential benefit of rural tourism is its ability to generate additional income that can translate in to various positive economic prospects for natives and their communities. For locals the first advantage of tourism growth is jobs within the tourism segment and even outside it. According to the economic multiplier model if income from tourist expenses can be consumed within local area, a rise in local income and newer job opportunities will definitely result. The following items highlight the potential significance of rural tourism in Ballavpur Danga village area.

- In the recent decades across India rural economy is adversely affected due to the increase in input costs of agriculture and related economic activities which have substantially affected the lives of rural community. Systematic efforts to promote rural tourism of this area as a subsidiary occupation can reverse this trend with ensuring some amount of balanced local area development.
- The concept of rural tourism is definitely helpful and effective for a village like Ballavpur Danga where a sizeable population lives. The village has diverse tourism resources that are scattered in the entire village.
- Rural tourism can substantially check the migration of people in search of jobs in cities like Kolkata. The gradual expansion of cities and increasing urbanisation are leading migration of rural people to urban areas. Rural tourism of this area is an important viable alternative which can provide a solution to this problem.
- A notable advantage of rural tourism as compared to other types of commercial activity for fighting rural poverty is that as the consumer travels to a rural destination. There occurs a prospect for a direct economic linkage amid the tourist and the poor rural people. For instance, over the selling and buying of handcrafts which is perfectly seen the Ballavpur Danga area.
- Small-scale enterprise development aided by micro-finance schemes in this area is likely to augment rural livelihood opportunities.
- This concept has the remarkable potentiality to fascinate the investors in rural areas. Plenty of good hotels are already present here. Also, a tourist complex is coming up next door. Cottages are been building that consists of

two single couple huts and two double huts for twelve persons. Tourist can soon experience life in this village from close quarters.

- Charming accommodation in quiet and calm attractive environment in the lapse of the nature to the tourists those who seek like this area.
- Promotion of understanding and harmony by relationship building of tourists and local people.
- Rural tourism accelerates rural area reconstruction and rural development in over all aspects

Challenges in Rural Tourism in Ballavpur Danga Village Area

There are various types of challenges in the Ballavpur Danga village area. The local communities felt that the following are the challenges they faced in trying to come up with tourism ventures in the area and needs to be critically addressed: • Shortage of trained manpower. There is acute shortage of skilled and trained labour to cater to the needs of a service industry like tourism.

- Off let realization of the fact that tourism can also play an important role in developmental process. There is lack of awareness about how the other resources can be a big crowd puller if rural tourism is developed properly.
- Absence of supporting industry. Attracting the ancillary industries in such remote places most of the times becomes a challenge.
- The rural areas remain in the shadow zone from most of the legislative benefits and lack of clear government legislation. • Insufficient financial support. Though several grants have been approved for development of rural tourism but much more is required for full-fledged development.
- Lack of basic business planning skills. Rural tourism needs a lot of planning from its nascent stage to its marketing, promotion and such others. In most of the scenarios such well-bound planning is missing.
- Lack of linkages between micro, small and medium enterprises which should be kept into consideration

Conclusion

Rural tourism in Ballavpur Danga area will emerge as an important instrument for sustainable human development including poverty alleviation, employment generation, environmental regeneration and development of remote areas and advancement of women and other weaker section of the society. To conclude, the researcher can say rural tourism can be an effective option for developing the rural economy of the Ballavpur Danga area. It can create many employment options for the rural people and can diversify the agricultural activities in the area. The development of rural tourism in this area can ensure lots of benefits to the concerned rural community with proper planning. It might be a revenue-generating and sustainable project for the rural people of our state. The government should promote rural tourism of the area to ensure sustainable rural development and to develop the rural economy. Therefore, to promote rural tourism as primary product and to spread tourisms socio-economic benefits to rural and to new geographic regions, key regions would be identified for the development of rural tourism. Both the short term and the long-term planning, implementing and monitoring are very vital in avoiding damage to rural environment including their culture. The environmental management, sound legislation, sustainable marketing, local people participation and viable planning strategies are crucial factors for the development of rural tourism in Ballavpur Danga area. The findings and suggestions of the study would go a long way in the formulation effective tourism policies and plans and relevant programs for sound development of the rural tourism in Ballavpur Danga area.

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