

## Kurukshetra Summary December' 2017

### Rural Tourism in India: Scope and Potential

- Today, fuelled by a massive increase in purchasing power and development of faster and cheaper modes of travel, more and more people are travelling across the world. The purpose of travels now tend to be more of leisure, and increasingly so, for getting to know new things and experiencing cultures, cuisine, traditions, etc. This kind of travel is called '**experiential travel**'.
- The tourist is also looking at being a responsible traveler, about giving back to the community and interacting with the host community and interacting with the host community so that he has a visible stake in the whole development of the region.

#### India's tourism attractions:

- Our culture, which is both syncretic and dates back to ancient times, is our most visible attraction. The great monuments ranging from the symbol of eternal love, the Taj Mahal to the great temples of South India, varied landscape of snowcapped mountains, golden beaches, rich forests and verdant deserts all make India an 'Incredible' destination.
- Be it Medical and Wellness Tourism, be it Golf courses or be it Adventure Sports, India has it all.
- The villages are repositories of the country's culture and tradition. The villages and the rural economies also have practitioners of unique arts and crafts in their original forms that are hard to come by in the cities.
- However, there are not enough jobs available in villages and many young men and women are increasingly migrating to cities looking for better opportunities. This has also led to some of the arts and crafts traditionally being practiced in the rural communities dying a slow death.
- Rural Tourism is one of the solutions, which can cater to all the above questions.
- Many cases of rural tourism also include **voluntourism** in which the tourists spend some time in volunteering and giving back to the community they visit in the form of teaching at local schools, helping out in the farming activities, etc.

#### Promotion of Rural Tourism

- The **Endogenous Tourism Project** was launched with the help of the United Nations Development Programme in 2003-2004.
- The locations were selected on the basis of their proximity to well established tourist circuits and presence of unique art/craft or culture that could be marketed as a USP.
- Even after UNDP withdrew from the project, the Ministry of Tourism has continued to fund such projects through various schemes including the earlier scheme for **Product Infrastructure Development** and now through the **Swadesh Darshan** scheme.

#### Success stories of the Rural Tourism

- **Shaam-e-Sarhad** project in the village of Hodka in Gujarat. Shaam-e-sarhad is a tourist camp, built, owned, and managed by the Hodka community. Tourism could enable the communities in improving the quality of their life by creating more livelihood options while also enabling them to conserve and develop further their unique cultures.

- Kerala has been in the forefront of developing the Rural Tourism model and evolving it under the greater ambit of 'Responsible Tourism'.
- The award winning Kerala Responsible Tourism projects in Kumarakom, Wyanad and other locations combine a unique model of involving the local community and getting the visitor experience village life with the local stakeholders as story tellers.
- Another Success story is in Sikkim which has empowered many village communities to develop tourism experiences including homestays thus spreading the tourism products evenly and away from the traditional destinations.
- The projects in Rajasthan including in Samode and Mandawa have come up on a public private model. A noteworthy mention is of the **Govardhan Eco-village** in Maharashtra which won the UNWTO Ulysses Award for Innovation last year.
- Challenges Chief amongst the challenges is that of the marketing.
- The Ministry of Tourism has contributed to the marketing efforts by displaying the rural tourism sites on the main website of the Ministry quite prominently. The Rural Tourism Kerala Mission is also another example of a successful marketing effort by the State Government of Kerala.

## Government Initiatives for Development of Rural Tourism

### **Concept of Rural Tourism:**

- *Any form of tourism that showcases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefitting the local community, economically and socially, as well as enabling interaction between the tourism and the locals for a more enriching tourism experience can be termed as rural tourism.*
- Rural tourism is essentially an activity that takes place in the countryside.
- As against conventional tourism, rural tourism has certain typical characteristics like – it is experience oriented locations are sparsely populated, it is predominantly in natural environment, it meshes with seasonality and local events and is based on preservation of culture, heritage and tradition.

### **Major types of Rural Tourism in India:**

- Agricultural Tourism
- Cultural Tourism
- Nature Tourism
- Adventure Tourism
- **Food Routes** - This tourism is all about food and knowing more about different staples of different places.
- **Community Eco-tourism** - It is a rather responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment and improves the well-being of local people.
- **Ethno-Tourism** - Expand the horizons to view different cultures. It is essentially to know more about various ethnic and cultural lifestyles and beliefs.

### **Increasing Interest in Rural Tourism:**

- Rural tourism helps to garner knowledge on agriculture, farming local governance, etc.

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

## Different Schemes of the Government of India:

- **Swadesh Darshan** – Scheme Guidelines for Integrated Development of the Theme Based Circuits.
- **PRASAD** - Pilgrimage Rejuvenation for Spiritual Augmentation Drive - Pilgrimage tourism is a form of tourism motivated partly or wholly by religious sentiments.
- **Special Tourism Zones:** The Union Budget of 2017-2018 has announced that Five Special Tourism Zones, anchored on SPVs, will be set up in Partnership with the states.
- **e-Tourist Visa Facility** : Facilitate arrival of international tourists, Ministry of Tourism has been working very closely with Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of External Affairs for easing of the Visa Regime in the country over a period of time. In order to make rural tourism attractive, Ministry of Tourism is promoting Farm Tourism as niche products. Ministry is also encouraging Home Stay Facilities in rural area.

## Impact of Rural Tourism

### Positive Impact

- The most important impact of increasing rural tourism is the impact on economy.
- Through tourism, the visitor can have the benefit of directly buying the finished products from the local people.
- Exchange the ideas with the tourists will create a new idea among the villagers. This entails increasing interest in education, preventive health care, modern gadgets, etc. That will help in universal literacy.
- With more tourists visiting the villages, there will be improvement in the connectivity by means of roads, increase in public transports, etc.
- Villages, which are close to sanctuaries and reserve parks, can teach the idea of preserving the nature of their urban counterparts.
- Tourists may develop an interest in the local religion and traditional rituals that act as catalyst for social harmony.

### Negative Impacts

- To facilitate tourism, there would be an increase in the infrastructure development of the countryside. This may lead to concretisation of rural area and may distort the natural beauty.
- It may have an adverse effect on the traditional livelihood of people. The village people may shift from agriculture and other traditional livelihoods to lucrative livelihoods related to tourism.

### Scope for Improvement

- In order to make tourists feel comfortable while visiting any place, they may be provided detailed information regarding their place of visit in advance. They may also be informed about any particular custom prevalent in that region so that the tourists may prepare themselves accordingly.
- There is a necessity for having good infrastructure and logistic support in villages.
- It is better to encourage homestay.

- The exotic flora and fauna of rural India can be a huge source of learning for students. Student excursions can be allowed with proper permission from competent authorities.
- There is a need to have trained and qualified interpreters language.
- The Government may take steps to ensure that tourists get a first-hand experience in seeing how GI products are being made, packed and showcased.
- Many states of India are blessed with medicinal herbs and other *ayurvedic* products which have strong medicinal values. The Government can develop suitable infrastructure to capture such tourists.
- It is necessary that state Governments identify their potential and work in close coordination with the Union Government to promote rural tourism.

**Some Popular Rural Tourism Destinations :**

- Kutch Adventures India, Itmennan Lodges Punjabiyat, Ecosphere Spiti, Lachen
- Sikkim, Ballabhpur Danga, Sunderbans village life, Majuli in Assam, Pochampally, Telengana

**Conclusion :**

“To other country, I may go as a tourist. But to India, I come as a pilgrim”, the words of Martin Luther King Jr. have their resonance in the words of Mahatma Gandhi, “We are inheritors of a rural civilization. In this context, we can say that Rural India has a lot to offer to people.

**National Tourism Policy: The Potential Game Changer**

- Tourism has been one of the major driving force of India’s remarkable growth in recent past.
- As per the Report of World Travel & Tourism Council, India is the world’s seventh largest tourism economy in terms of its total contribution to the country’s GDP. According to the latest data available, Travel & Tourism generated INR14.1 trillion (equivalent to 9.6% of the country’s GDP) in 2016.
- As per the latest data, travel and tourism sector has supported 40.3 million jobs in 2016, thus, making India global second in terms of total employment supported by travel and tourism. This particular sector accounts for 9.3 per cent of the total jobs in the country.
- However, this remarkable growth of India’s travel and tourism sector is being driven by domestic tourism, which accounted for 88 per cent of the sector’s contribution to GDP in 2016. Thus, there lies significant potential in India’s tourism sector.

**Need for a tourism policy:**

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

- Medical Tourism
- Education Tourism
- Golf Tourism
- Eco-Tourism : Ecotourism as defined by the International Ecotourism Society is “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of local people, and involves interpretation and education”. Eco tourism is ecological sustainable.

- Other forms of tourism that are gaining popularity are wedding; sports tourisms; tea tourisms and rural tourisms.
- It is essential to ease the paper works that are required for obtaining Indian visa for foreign tourists.
- Thus, there are several issues that need to be looked into. To address this need, a national tourism policy is essential.

**National Tourism Policy:**

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

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

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

- Focus of the policy on employment generation and community participation in tourism development.
- Stress on development of tourism in sustainable and responsible manner.
- The Policy enshrines the vision of developing and positioning India as a “MUST EXPERIENCE” and “MUST RE-VISIT” destination for global travelers, while encouraging Indians to explore their own country.
- Development and promotion of varied tourism products including the rich-Culture and Heritage of the country, as well as niche products such as Medical & Wellness, Meetings, incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE), Adventure, Wildlife, etc.
- Development of core infrastructure
- Developing quality human resources in the tourism and hospitality sectors.
- Focus on domestic tourism as a major driver of tourism growth.
- Emphasis on Tourism as the fulcrum of multi-sectoral activities and dovetailing of activities of the Ministry with important/Flagship schemes of the Government of India.

Targeted and Country specific campaign is expected to boost up Indian tourism as it is a welcome departure from “one-size fits all” approach. Cooperative federalism has been strongly encouraged by the policy.

**Conclusion:**

The implementation of proposed National Tourism Policy will go a long way in removing the impediments associated with this particular sector and will provide a sustainable and conducive environment for the overall development of the tourism sector.



**VAJIRAM & RAVI**

### **Rural Tourism: Infrastructure and Capacity Building**

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

#### **Rural Tourism in India:**

- India's National Tourism Policy 2002 identified Rural Tourism Project-Rural Tourism Scheme (ETP-RTS) is a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (MoT) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) initiated in 2003.
- UNDP contributes towards awareness creation between locals and outside agencies. The MoT contributes towards development of infrastructure, which includes improvement of roads, hygiene, surroundings of the village etc.
- The implementation is done through a Paryatan Samiti headed by the District Collector of the concerned rural tourism site.
- In the year 2014, MoT introduced Swadesh Darshan, a central Government scheme for integrated Development of Theme-Based Tourist Circuits. A Tourist Circuit is a route on which at least three major tourist destinations are located such that none of them are in the same town, village or city.
- Tourist circuit with a consistent theme such as religion, culture, ethnicity and niche is known as Theme Based Tourist Circuit. Rural Circuit is one of the thirteen thematic circuits have been identified for development.

#### **Capacity Building of the Community:**

- Rural tourism is unique in the sense that it banks upon the ownership and involvement of the community.
- Capacity building programme for the community is implemented with the help of NGOs operating in rural areas at the grass root level.
- Two steps approaches for these projects includes community mobilization & building capacities in the communities. The challenge is to create tourism products because they cannot be imposed from outside, they have to be generated from within the village. One of the project's aims is poverty reduction.

#### **Infrastructure for Rural Tourism Project:**

- The is to create an environment that will help the tourist experience rural settings and not rush to create urban comforts in a rural setting.
- Under ETP-RTS scheme, Hodka village Resort in Rann of Kutch, Gujarat is an example where infrastructure has been created successfully. Popularly known as Shaam-e-Sarhad Resort, it is owned and operated by the village Tourism Committee (Paryatan Samiti) of Hodka.

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

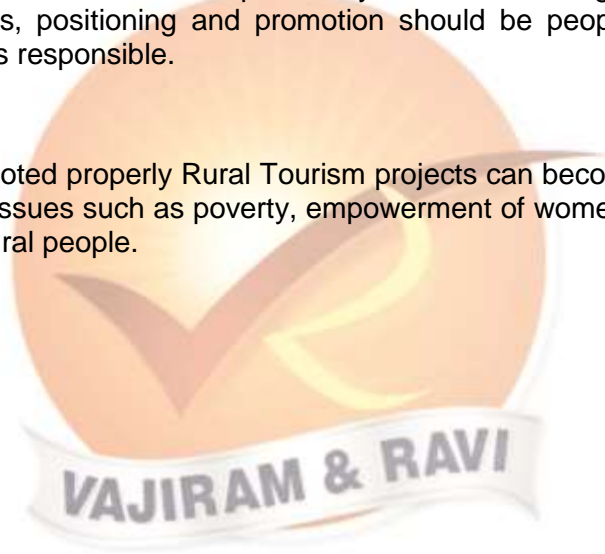
- Enterprises and NGOs acting as service providers have been working towards fostering rural tourism in the country and they are the most essential component in the supply chain for tourists. Such initiatives include Grassroutes, Rural Tourism Network Enterprises, DHAN Foundation, Travel Another India etc.

**Accessibility and Improvement:**

- The impact and Evaluation Study of Rural Tourism Projects cited the low tourist flow to project areas and difficult access as the key factors for the failure of many rural tourism projects.
- Therefore, in order to develop a village as a tourist destination, first step should be to identify the core strength of the village around which the theme of Rural Tourism can be developed. Key factors which drive growth of tourism, namely, location, proximity to prominent tourist destinations must also be considered.
- The complex part of marketing Rural Tourism sites in developing countries is that it is not just about being happy or grateful about any tourist coming in, but about communicating what the experience of that site could potentially be and attracting those tourists who are looking for that. Thus, positioning and promotion should be people centric and not only market centric various responsible.

**Conclusion:**

If implemented and promoted properly Rural Tourism projects can become a driver of economic growth and will address issues such as poverty, empowerment of women and strengthening the economic status of the rural people.



**VAJIRAM & RAVI**



**EMPLOYMENT POTENTIAL IN RURAL TOURISM**

- There is a social obligation on the government to make tourism an **all inclusive platform** for the overall development of the nation.

**Thrust Areas for Action:**

In order to promote rural tourism, the following issues need to be addressed in an organized fashion:

- **Rural tourism Resources Mapping** - A systematic survey to identify such distinct products/ practices/ processes may be initiated in order to showcase the attractions. Resources **mapping** brings to the force what rural India has to offer to tourists.
- **Awareness Creation**
- **Identification of the Service Providers at the Village Level.**
- **Skilling the Unskilled:** Hospitality and accommodative spirit being the core values of rural India, a little orientation/ training with respect to operational aspects of tourism is enough to make villagers embrace tourism/ tourist.
- **Optimum Utilization of Human Resources** - some of the rural youth may find alternative income generating sources by engaging themselves in tourism and allied activities.
- **Ecosystem for Rural Tourism - Accessibility, Accommodation, Attractions and Amenities** – popularly known as 4 A's in the Tourism parlance constitute the four important pillars of Tourism.

**Conclusions:**

Balanced regional development which is an avowed national objective can be achieved with minimum investment. Rural tourism thus provides an alternative model for the overall development of rural areas of India. Gandhiji's dream of '**Gram Swaraj**' may be realized for the prosperity of the Nation.

**PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS: PROMOTING VILLAGE TOURISM**

- Tourism is capable of providing employment opportunities for the unskilled and specialized alike even in the farthest parts of the country side.
- It also has the potential to promote pro-poor growth than many other sectors because tourism converge a number of activities like transportation, accommodation, eating and drinking establishment, retail shops, entertainment business etc.

**Conceptual Framework of Panchayats and Village Tourism:**

- Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are peoples' institutions at grassroots levels.
- Among others, following activities have also been included in the list of 29 subjects of the Schedule, which are relevant in the context of village tourism :
  - (1) Rural housing
  - (2) Drinking water
  - (3) Roads, culverts, bridges, ferries, waterways and other means of communication
  - (4) Rural electrification
  - (5) Technical training and vocational education
  - (6) Cultural activities
  - (7) Markets and fairs
  - (8) Health and sanitation, including hospitals
  - (9) Maintenance of community assets

Since, Panchayats would prepare plans for economic development and social justice, they can include other activities, which are relevant for promotion of tourism under their jurisdiction in the plan. Hence, Panchayats are entitled to form their own strategies to promote Rural Tourism.

**Strategy for the Development of Village Tourism:**

There are seven Ss sutra capsule to be addressed for the promotion of tourism in any area. These are

- (1) Swagat (Welcome)
- (2) Swachhta (Cleanliness)
- (3) Soochana (Information)
- (4) Suvidha (Comfort)
- (5) Surksha (Security)
- (6) Sahyog (Cooperation)
- (7) Samrachana (Infrastructure)

**Promoting Rural Tourism:**

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

- There are a number of villages where village tourism may be developed with the collaboration of Panchayats. Hence, there is a need to make Panchayat's functionaries aware particularly the chairpersons of all tiers of the Panchayats about the concept and benefits of the village tourism. In this context state institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj with the collaboration of the Tourism Department of State Government may organize workshop of selected personnel of Panchayats.
- Seven components of the strategy for the development of tourism need to be developed properly for village tourism.
- There a number of building/Haveli laying vacant in the vicinity of tourist places. These buildings could be used for tourists coming this place and in this way tourists will get accommodation at cheaper rates and villagers also get additional income from village tourism.
- There is a need to develop tourist products for the benefits of tourists. There is need to promote Panchayat tourism because of its uniqueness in term of people's participation through the institutions of Panchayats, Gram Sabha and various Subject Committee.
- Farm tourism may be another tourist products. There may be many such products which could be developed locally by the Panchayats with the involvement of community.
- Humans Resource development is necessary for the promotion of village tourism. Such activities may be taken up under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission and Deen Dyal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushal Yojana and similar schemes of the state governments.

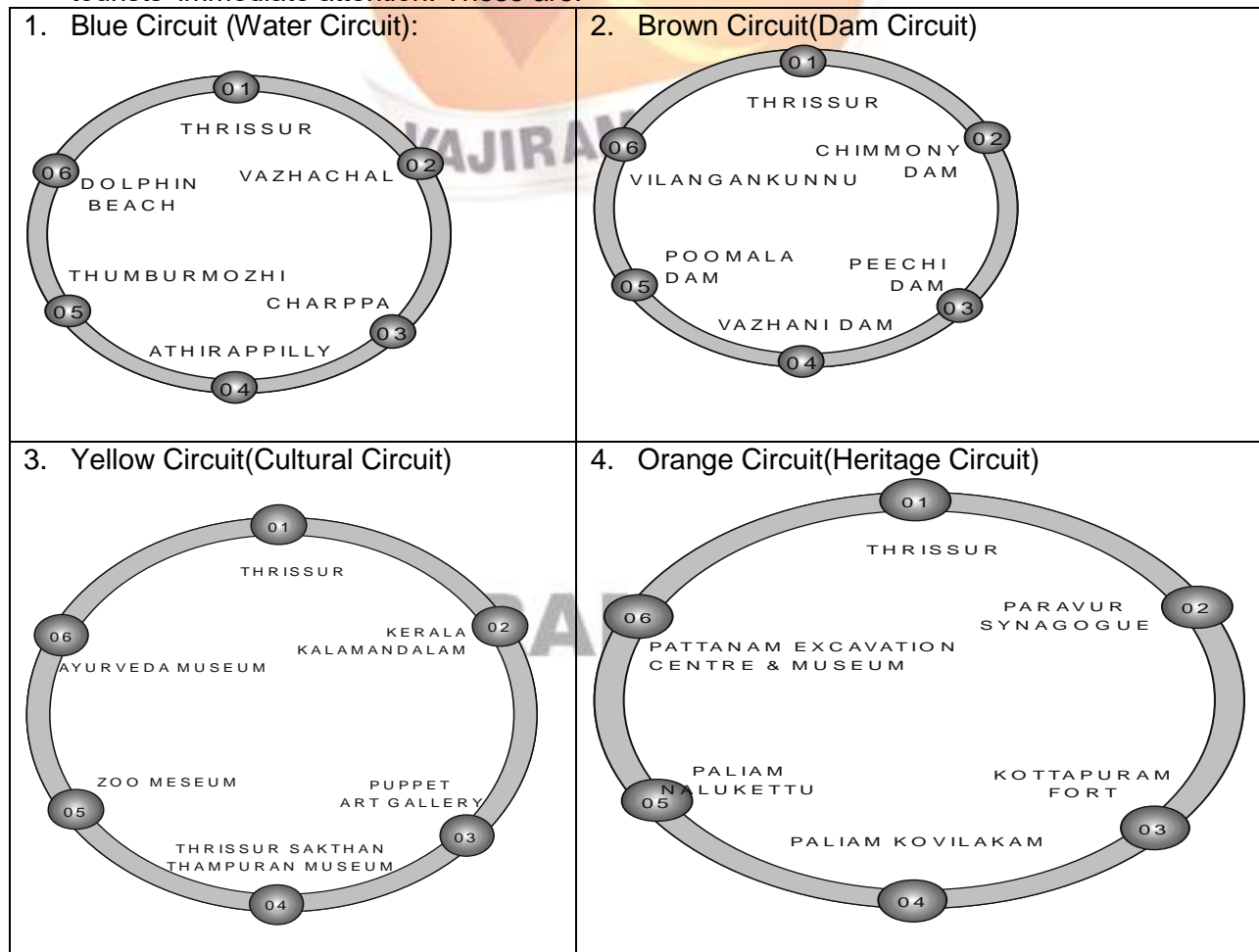
**Cleanliness and Village Tourism:-**

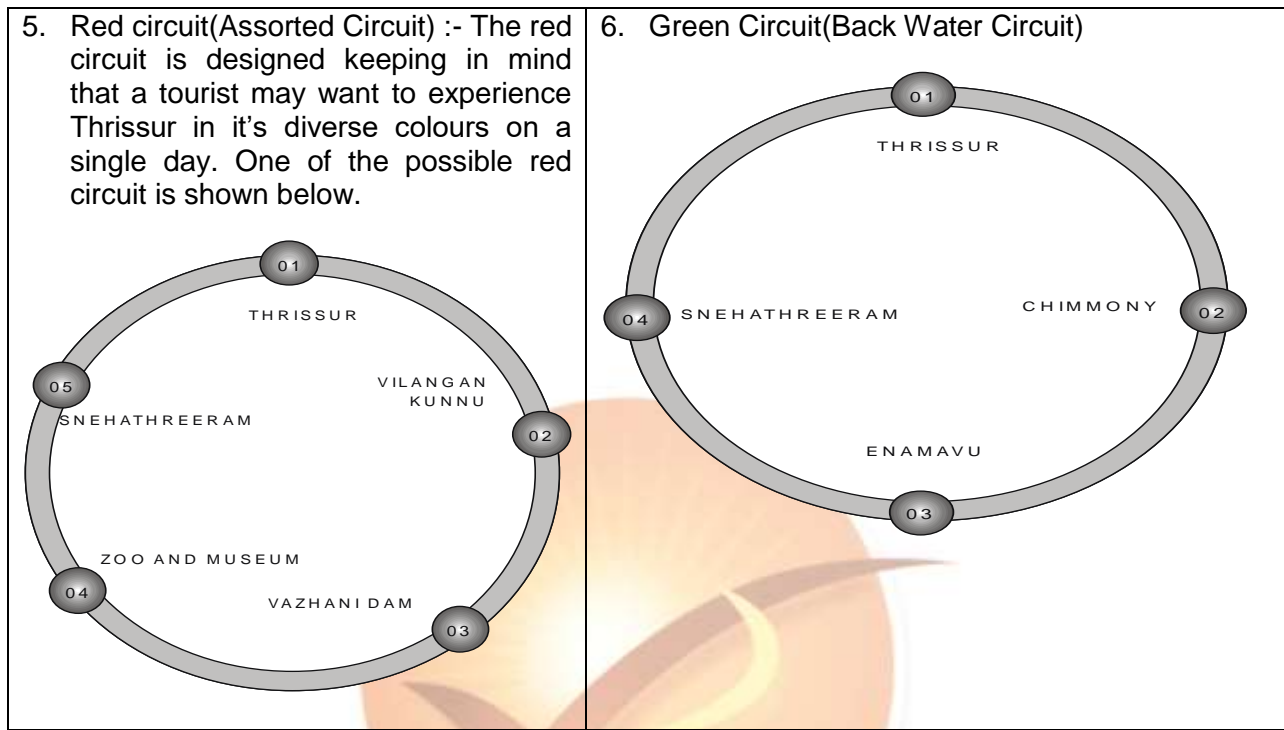
- There is the need to adopt cleanliness as a way of life by the people.
- It would be possible if cultural aspects of people could be addressed by way of making attitudinal changes in their behaviour.
- In view of the significance of Swachhta, the Government of India has launched Swachhta Hi Seva nationwide campaign on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2017 to accelerate people movement for sanitation.

The seven Ss as a strategy for the development of village tourism has to be adopted making PRIs as coordination bodies to converge activities of different sectors at local level.

**CIRCUIT TOURISM: A UNIQUE MODEL FOR INDIAN TOURISM**

- Even around hugely popular tourist places, there lie a number of attractive, but less known places in rural hinterland. If these places are adequately developed into attractive tourist destinations, at one hand, provide wholesome tourism experience to the visitors and one the other, solve the livelihood issues of communities around these places.
- For example, tourism can be a boon to the struggling Korai inhabitants, whose main source of income- dancing bears, were taken away by animal rights activists.
- It has been seen, when a tourist from another country visits a highly popular tourists spot in India, his/her sightseeing is limited to a maximum of two days. This is because other good sites around the place are not fully developed or promoted equally.
- The most popular tourist spots have been milked to the point of overkill and it is high time a model is developed which promotes a vibrant industry not around a single site of attraction but around an entire region.
- This model is named as “Circuit Tourism” and following discussion shows through the example of a single district Thrissur (Kerala), how this model can create new tourist spots of attraction in hitherto unexplored regions.
- The project implemented in Thrissur aims to help tourists who visit Thrissur explore places beyond the conventional ones. This project also helps the tourist to choose one among different circuits of places based on his/her interest.
- Thus, six circuits are proposed. These circuits are identified based on colours to attract the tourists’ immediate attention. These are:





**The working of Circuit Tourism:**

- Each circuit comprises five to six tourist hotspots and it can be completed in one day. This circuit-based tourism is interlinked with hotels, travels' office and cab drivers associations, among others.

**The Economic of Circuit Tourism:**

- One important thread which runs through all these tourist spots is that most of them are located in either rural or tribal belts. Thus, the aims of the project are not only in a tourism perspective but also to promote alternative modes of livelihood for the unemployed youth in the rural areas of Thrissur.
- In most of the tourist destinations identified in the circuit, efforts are in place to include canteen run by a self-Help Group comprising women from the neighborhood.
- This has boosted the hospitality sector big time. Domino effect has ensured that there is positive impact on the business of local restaurants, handicrafts and textile stores, Spurt in handicraft's sales has led to a blossoming of local artisans.
- Kerala provides a unique development model to entire country. It is sustained by a strong welfare state, remittances from Malayalis abroad and the services sector.
- Kerala needs high revenues to finance its' welfare needs – from pension to healthcare to education. Since these revenues are not going to be generated from rapid industrialisation, tourism gains huge importance in the Kerala story. Thus, this project outwardly seeks to promote tourism in hitherto unexplored corners of Thrissur but behind it is the vision of running the welfare machinery of the Kerala state itself.
- This project strives to set a benchmark, which can be emulated, by districts across the state resulting in a circuit conglomeration catering to tourists from the global community. This model can easily be scaled across the entire nation based on local potential and demand.

**DEVELOPING RURAL TOURISM RESOURCES IN INDIA**

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

**Benefits of Rural Tourism**

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

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

**Challenges:**

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

**MARKETING NEEDS FOR RURAL TOURISM IN INDIA**

- Probably, the history of Indian Tourism would have been very different, radically different, if we had started tourism by looking at core competency that India enjoyed in its villages rather than starting from five star hotels in the form of Ashok hotels.
- A rural tourism experience can be created, through the natural, cultural, human or capital resources indigenous to the rural areas would have to be attractive to tourists.
- The process of creating that differentiated experience involves a number of components attached to a rural destination.
- The components are *attraction* (which should be unadulterated and authentic), *accessibility* (has to be quickly reachable from cities or any other primary tourist destination with an excitement for a rustic feel ahead), *pricing* (often perceived as value for money) and *quality of service supported by basic infrastructure* (also enabling for an extended stay.)

**Marketing the Rural Richness: A Strategic Approach**

- Rural India has an ocean of experiences to offer. But unless these prospective and potential products and experiences of rural richness are promoted, an opportunity is lost.
- Be it the Ikkat handloom weaving of Pochampally in Andhra Pradesh, Tusser silk weaving Of Nepura in Bihar, Mirror work and embroidery of Hodka in Gujarat, Trekking delight of Surinsar of Jammu, Banana fibre craft of Anegundi in Karnataka, Pattachitra of Raghuraipur in Odisha, Boat carpentry of Kumbalangi in Kerala, Ethnic tribal culture of Deke village of Arunachal Pradesh or Bamboo craft of Durgapur in Assam; all of them need to be marketed.

**Marketing Initiatives by Ministry of tourism, GoI**

1. Structural involvement of site artisans in Dilli Haat.
2. India@60 roadshow in Singapore
3. Volvo Ocean Rove in Cochin to create awareness of rural tourism.
4. World media coverage through promotions at World Tourism Mart (WTM), Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) and International Tourism Borse (ITB) and similar trade fairs and shows.
5. 15 rural tourism sites were chosen and listed as eco-holiday sites for foreign tourists during Visit India 2009.
6. Sub brand Explore Rural India was given ample space alongside the globally recognized brand Incredible India.
7. Rural tourism site committees were encouraged to launch their own websites as part of decentralized marketing strategy.

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

- What gives a competitive advantage is the quality of service, the attraction with authenticity, very basic facilities, accessibility and reasonable and viable pricing.
- Imaging helps in building the bridge between what is there to offer and what is actually being offered. It involves the process of standardizing, categories and deciding on the right set of communication tools.
- This should be supported by a detailed profiling of tourists. An analysis of such a data with an emphasis on demographic, economic, cultural and social profiling enables in a much effective marketing impact.
- The success stories of Hodka, Pochampally, Karaikudi, Banavasi and many others in getting their marketing strategies right at the right time and to a right scale leave us with possible leads into what exactly fits in as marketing strategy for rural tourism sites. Some of the easily adoptable, cost effective and viable strategies require involvement of the community, The Stakeholders (travel agents, tourist guides etc.), Media and the tourists.

### Delhi Haat

- Delhi Haat is one such platform from where artisans, craftsmen from rural India get splendid opportunity to showcase not only their crafts, but also the richness of rural India, augmenting the marketing of rural tourism in India.
- The unique Dilli Haat is an upgraded version of the traditional weekly market, offering a delightful amalgam of craft, food and cultural activities.