

THE SCENARIO OF AGRI-TOURISM IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract: The fact is that Agri-tourism in India belongs to rural economy and it experiences the real rural life with the taste of local genuine food and gets familiar with the various aspects of farming in the country. It is estimated that 75% of the total population of India directly or indirectly depends on Agriculture sector and 26% of India's total GDP comes from Agriculture Sector. Therefore, here it is urgent need that Agri-tourism should be developed as one of such activity. However, Agri tourism is the latest concept of tourism industry in India, but we can't ignore the fact that rural life has always been key aspects of tourist destinations since ancient days. Today Agri tourism is emerging as a favourite destination for foreigner tourist as well as Indian tourist. The present research paper highlights the recent scenario of Agri-tourism in India.

Keywords: Rural Economy, GDP, Agriculture Sector, Agri-Tourism.

Introduction: Agri tourism in India is a new concept which normally occurs on farms and its related activities. It gives the opportunity to experience the rural life with the taste of local genuine food and culture. It also provides an opportunity to escape from the hectic life of the city and also gives a chance to relax in pure natural environment of rural life. If we want to see the real India, then we should ensure the experience of stay on any farm during holidays. According to many psychologists, rural life is better than urban life. Today Agri-tourism is emerging a key center of attraction in tourism sector. It is said that holidays on farm provides the complete entertainment and a chance to ride on bullock carts likewise cow milking may also be an exciting activity. Tourists may also get an experience to see how the rural women cook food on the Chullahs which tastes the authentic rural genuine food. Here on some occasions of fairs and festivals tourist can enjoy traditional dance, music and such other cultural activities in different parts of India.

What is Agri-Tourism?

The term Agri-Tourism is defined most broadly involving any Agricultural activities that bring tourists to a farm. Some of the scholars have defined this term in different ways. Sometimes it refers to farm stage as it includes a wide variety of activities including buying produce direct from a farm stand, navigating a corn maze, slopping hogs, picking fruits, feeding animals or staying at a bed and breakfast on a farm. Moreover, Agri-tourism is a form of niche tourism that is considered a growth industry in developing countries like India. It is an assume fact that Agri-tourism is an instrument for employment generation, poverty elevation and sustainable women development in rural India. But we need to bring awareness among rural people to make agri tourism more attractive. For many people, the tourist who visits farms may enjoy real life of rural India. Today Agri-tourism is emerging as a popular destination for tourist in the country.

Agri Tourism Farms in India: Agriculture is the backbone of Indian economy and agri-tourism is one of the latest concepts in tourism Industry. There are some farm stays in India which has attracted the tourists and contributed to combat poverty and unemployment from some parts of rural India as under:-

Dewalokam Farmstay Retreat: It is the organic ancestral farm of a welcoming Syrian Christian family named as paradise which is located in Karimanoor, Kerala and a convenient located drive from Kochi Airport bounded by a tranquil river and natural beauty. Some of the major activities on this farm are to grow fruit, vegetables, spices, milk and honey and there is a range of activities for guests such as spice walks, bamboo rafting, temple visits and cow milking including yoga and Ayurveda activities.

Maachli and Dwarka Sindhudurg Region: It is a divine farm stay situated in Parule village on the far south Konkan cost of Maharashtra. The name Maachli means elevated huts in the local language of the region. There are four attractive hut style accommodations built deep within natural environment amongst the Samant families coconut, betel nuts, banana and spice plantation including the activities like village watch, cooking lessons, trekking and farming experiences in the natural environment of rural India.

Dwarka is a modern farm stay spread on 15 acre orchard in Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra. The main activities of this farm stay are to grow mangoes, coconuts, cashew and some other fruits including some of the interesting activities to visit to a pottery village, bamboo workshops and mat weaving site. There is also a swimming pool for the visitors.

Dudhsagar Plantation and Farmstay: It is located at the foothills of the western Ghats mountains in sedate south Goa which was started in 1985. It has a vast variety of organic fruit trees, spices, medicinal plants, herbs and flowers. The farm stay has two basics, clean and cozy cottages in the midst of a tropical palm garden.

Destiny Farmstay, Ooty: It is a lovely destination for kids secluded away around 25km from the hill station of Ooty. There is a stable full of horses, cows, sheep, guinea pigs and geese. A huge range of Agro products is grown here such as coffee, spices, fruit, vegetables, herbs and flowers. There is also a luxury spa for adults with 35 guest rooms.

Green Dreams Farmstay: It is a popular destination for tourists in the coffee region of Coorg, in Karnatka. It belongs to a local coffee connoisseur and trader which is very peaceful destination with five echo friendly best cottages suitable for a family tour.

Prakarti Farm and Citrus County in Punjab: Prakarti farm is a non-profitable organic farm located in Roopnagar in Punjab. It has a much more rusty feeling surrounded by the natural environment. Likewise Citrus County is one of the biggest farm stays in Punjab located on the way to Amritsar with four rooms and nine luxury tents with a swimming pool, café and bar. It is named because citrus fruit is grown on a 70 acre land here and tourist can enjoy the activities like fruit peking, explore local villages, visit a dairy farm, and to cook Punjabi food.

Tathagata Farm, Darjeeling: it is a favorite destination for tourists, which offers an opportunity to go back to nature on a tea estate up in the hills. The farm grows cardamom, ginger, vegetables, orange including the major activities of tea production. This farm includes the activities like plantation tours, trekking, nature trails fishing, birding etc.

The Goat Village, Uttarakhand: This destination is located in the greenery of hills and it is an initiative to augmentation local income and increase markets for organic products by farming activity. It offers an opportunity for the villagers to provide hospitality and cooking delicious local cuisine, exploring the local way of life for guests.

The Country Retreat Farmstay, Pali: It is located in Pali, Rajasthan which comprises 130 acres of farmlands and it offers a vast variety of agricultural activities and some other popular activities including bird watching, animal herding, photography, farm tours and cooking lessons.

Agri Tourism in Haryana: Tourism business in Haryana has become very popular in the perspective of agri-tourism which provides a delightful opportunity to tourist to enrich their lives with nature and adventure and at the same time instilling pride amongst farmers. It also provides an opportunity to invite the non-resident Indians to bring their children back to their roots through the fascinating concept of farm holidays. There are some farm stays which attract tourists. Some of them are Laksh Farm and Awesome Farms in Faridabad, Lake View Farm and Lush Green in Karnal, The Peepal Kothi Farm in Mewat, Banni Khera Farm in Rohtak, Partapgarh Farm and Rattangarh Farm in Jhajjar, Vedic Gram, Surjivan Farm, Golden Creeper, Thakran Farm, Kotarwara Farm, Golden Turtle, The Golf Retreat Farm, and Aranya Greens Farm in Gurgaon District.

Importance of Agri Tourism: There are so many benefits of Agri tourism and its related activities for farmers, rural community and tourism operator as under:

- It is a potential way of using farm based products in a new way, improves farm revenue streams, expands farm operations, develops new consumer markets, increases awareness of local agro-products, improves farm living conditions and farm recreating opportunities and also increases the long term sustainability for farm business.
- It also provides a potential way of generating additional revenue for local business and services, upgrades community facilities, increases protection of rural environment, preserve local customs and traditions, promotes inter regional and inter-cultural

communication, increases awareness of agricultural issues, promotes the ongoing use of agricultural products and also helps in the creating of local income.

- It is beneficial for tourism operators by diversifying the mix of tourism products and service, increases tourism flows in to attractive rural regions, extends rural local market and provides an opportunity of job for local tourism operators.

Conclusion: Thus agri-tourism is an instrument for the generation of rural employment and poverty alleviation. Today it is emerging as a growing market in rural economy. The government of India is trying to develop infrastructure for the development of agri-tourism in the different part of country. Actually agro-tourism is leisurely activity in the rural areas that helps to discover the rural destinations for tourists and helps to go back to nature. Moreover, it is very beneficial for farmers, local communities and tour operators. Nevertheless, here it is an urgent need to develop full-fledged tourism market in local areas to enhance agro based economy.

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