



Scope of Agro-tourism development of Rural Areas: A Geographical study of Baramati Tahsil, Pune district Maharashtra, India.

-- Sunil Ogale

Assistant Professor Department of Geography, Vidya Pratishthan's A.S.C. College Baramati, Pune District Maharashtra State, India. sunilogale@gmail.com

Abstract

The present study scope of Agro-tourism development of Rural Areas in Baramati tahsil in Pune district. The study region is mainly agrarian having 84.89 percent net sown area of the total geographical area. Agro tourism is one such form of tourism which has recently emerged in Maharashtra. Agro tourism for farmers is considered as "A range of activities, services and amenities provided by farmers and rural people to attract tourist to their area in order to generate extra income for their businesses". Agro tourism for tourists is considered as "anything that connects tourists with the heritage, natural resource or culinary experiences unique to the agricultural industry or a specific region of the country's rural areas." Agro-tourism, involves any agriculturally based operation or activity that brings visitors to a farm or ranch. Baramati tahsil has a great potential to the development of agro-tourism, because of natural conditions and different types of agro products as well as variety of rural traditions, festivals. It gives an opportunity to the tourists to experience rural life, taste the traditional food and to live in a peaceful environment.

Keywords: Agro tourism, Agriculture, Tourism etc.

Introduction

Agriculture is the main sector of Indian Economy. Around 65 percent of the population is directly or indirectly dependent of agriculture. Out of total GDP around 15 percent GDP comes from agriculture sector. Providing additional income generating activities to existing agriculture would certainly increase contribution of agriculture to national GDP. Agro tourism will serve this purpose. Agro tourism is the latest concept in the Indian Tourism industry. It gives an opportunity to experience the real enchanting and authentic contact with real life. Promotion of Agro tourism needs conceptual convergence with rural tourism, health tourism and adventure tourism. Agritourism as "rural tourism" (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004; Fleischer & Pizam, 1997; Sharpley, 2002; Tanrivermis & Sanli, 2007; Wilson et al., 2001) and acknowledge that some label confusion between both types of activities exist in the literature (Busby & Rendle, 2000; Kizos & Iosifides, 2007). More recently though, the distinction between both types of tourism are more clearly differentiated; "rural tourism" is considered the broader term encompassing a diversity of activities (e.g., "nature tourism", "eco-tourism") as long as those activities and experiences are offered on a rural setting (Colton & Bissix, 2005; Hegarty & Przeborska, 2005; Kizos & Iosifides, 2007; McGehee & Kim, 2004). It is also important to recognize that visiting an agricultural setting for recreation purposes should not only be circumscribed to rural settings as some of those facilities may have been trapped in urban settings due to urban sprawl.

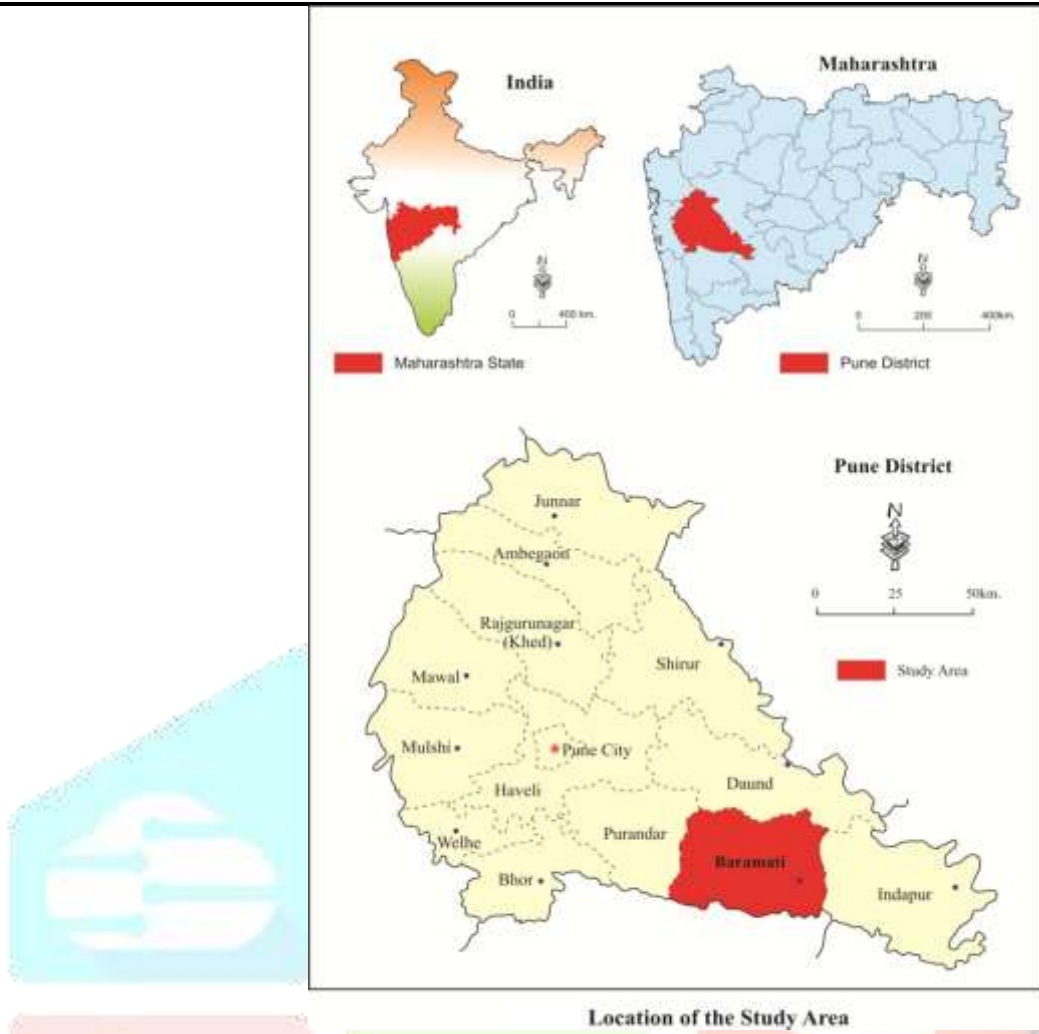
Agro tourism is one such form of tourism which has recently emerged in Maharashtra. It is a field with potential to develop. It of the urbanization, many children as well as the adults do not have an idea about gives an opportunity to the tourists to experience the real enchanting and authentic contact with the rural life, taste the local genuine food and get familiar with the various farming tasks during the visit. Tourists can relax and revitalize in the pure natural environment. The urban life is becoming more hectic and complex. The corporate world has provided good employment avenues but along with this it has increased the stress level and the complexity. With the experience of Agro tourism the people can get relaxation. Because the rural life and the agriculture. Agro tourism

provides them a chance to experience rural life and see the agricultural activities. Agro tourism includes opening up farms to tourists from urban areas and from abroad, and letting them to take experience of rural life. Apart from telling them about the various crops and how they are sown and harvested, agro tourism exposes tourists to traditional food, handicraft, culture, music and language. Tourists can get an experience of rural activities such as bullock cart rides, milking cows and goats and picking farm fresh fruits and vegetables etc. *World Tourism Organization (1998)* defines agro tourism as “ involves accommodation being offered in the farm house or in a separate guesthouse, providing meals and organizing guests’ activities in the observation and participation in the farming operations.”

Agro tourism for farmers is considered as “A range of activities, services and amenities provided by farmers and rural people to attract tourist to their area in order to generate extra income for their businesses”. Agro tourism for tourists is considered as “anything that connects tourists with the heritage, natural resource or culinary experiences unique to the agricultural industry or a specific region of the country’s rural areas.” Agro-tourism or agro-tourism, involves any agriculturally based operation or activity that brings visitors to a farm or ranch. *Rich et al (2012)* defines agro-tourism to comprise of activities offered on working farms and other agricultural settings for entertainment or educational purposes.

Study Area:

Barmaid tahsil lies between $18^{\circ} 2' 44''$ N to $18^{\circ} 23' 19''$ North latitudes and $74^{\circ} 13' 8''$ E to $74^{\circ} 42' 47''$ East longitudes. It is located at an altitude of 538 meters above mean sea level. The tahsil lies in the eastern part of Pune district of Maharashtra. The river Nora flows west to east forming the southern boundary of the Tahsil and the district. The river Kara flows northwest to south-east Barmaid tahsil is bounded by Indapur tahsil towards the east, Satara district towards the south, Purandar tahsil towards the west and Daund Tahsil towards the north. The total geographical area (TGA) of Baramati tahsil is 1382 sq. km., which is about 8.80 percent of TGA of the Pune district (See Fig.1). Baramati tahsil may be divided into two physiographic regions according to altitude. The first one is the hilly track above the 650 meters altitude observed at northwest corner of the tahsil. The other one is gently sloping belt along Nira and its tributary Karha. There are two water divides; one divides the Nira and the Karha basin while the other runs from west to east between Karha and Bhima. The second belt of hilly region runs from northwest to southwest corner of the tahsil. The riverine belts along Nira and Karha occupy 40 percent area of the tahsil. This region offers favorable situation for irrigation and hence agro-based development. Topographically, it is almost a plain region with alluvial soils. The generalized direction of slope is from northwest to southeast in the Karha basin and from west to east in the Nira. Baramati tahsil is mainly drained by river Nira and its main tributary Karha. Nira is an important tributary of river Bhima. It is a natural boundary between Pune and Satara District.



Location of the Study Area



Location of the Agro-tourism centers

Objectives:

The present study is an experiment for the development of rural areas which are not rich with historical or natural wealth. Being an agricultural land, most of the farmers are bound to depend on the seasons. This thought or an idea will create an alternative source of income, engagement and pride. Following are the objectives of present research;

1. To evaluate and scope of agro-tourism of rural areas.
2. To evaluate the Benefits of agro-tourism in rural areas.

Research Methodology:

The primary and secondary data have been used for the research paper. The information and data were connected from the secondary like academic journals, Reference books, Periodicals, internet and similar authorized publications. The cartography and GIS techniques are used to represent data. Baramati tahsil is most important for tourism as well as agro tourism. In tahsil following agro-tourism centers are available. They are as follows:

1. Agricultural development Trust, Agro-tourism center Malegaon Kh.
2. Baramati Agro and Rural Tourism Center Palshiwadi.
3. Agro and Eco-tourism, Sonkaswadi.

Agro-tourism Centers in Baramati Tahsil Rural Area-

1. Agricultural Development Trust (KVK) Baramati, Malegaon Kh.

Maharashtra Agricultural and Rural tourism cooperative federation and Agricultural development trust, Sharadanagar established the ATC at Malegaon kh. Baramati tahsil. This Kendra & host institute farm is situated at 6 kilometer west of the Baramati city. This center has an area of 20 ha of land required for the technology assessment & demonstration while 24 ha belong to host institute. From this total 44 ha land, the total land under cultivation & demonstration is 30.03 ha, Dairy 1.6 ha, Nursery 1.4 ha, Poly house 0.40 ha, KVK & host institute Buildings has occupied 3.4 ha, Well & water storage tanks 2.4 ha & Roads 4.77 ha of land. The demonstration farm is used for the on farm testing of new technologies. It is also used for the genesis of the good quality seed and seedlings.

Facilities in this center -

Administrative Building, Agricultural Technology Information centre (ATIC)., Conference Hall, Audio Visual Training hall, Demonstration plots, Hi-tech green house poly house, Plant health clinics & Bio-control laboratory, Soil, water, leaf & pitiole testing laboratory, Grading and packing unit, Apiary unit, Water storage tank with solar motor, Automated fertigation unit, Farmers hostel, Loose housing Dairy farm, Poultry Hatchery, Goat & Sheep unit, Silage demonstration unit, Integrated Fish & poultry unit, Fish Hatchery, Agri & Echo tourism, Indo-Dutch project for hi-tech farming, Hydro phonic unit, Nursery, Wind solar hybrid system for electricity generation, Farmers visit planning. New Facilities of our KVK are inaugurated by Hon. President of India and The Centre of Excellence for Vegetables; An Indo-Dutch project is inaugurated by Hon. Prime Minister of India during past year. In this project in addition to training and demonstration we are providing disease free quality planting materials to farmers. In addition to this Bee Connect: A project in collaboration with ICAR, New Delhi & Crop Life India for the Awareness in farming community for Honey bee & pollinators through the mobile app.

2. Baramati Agri Tourism Development Center, Palashiwadi-

Total Agri Tourism Center Area – 20 Acres, Rustic Maharashtra Vegetarian food only. Special Crops / Activities – Agri Tourism and Rural Training ,Research & Development Center, Organic Farming, Water storage Farm Pond– shetale (2 crore liter water storage capacity) Fisheries – Tilapia , Prawns (Sweet water), Flowers Gardens , Local Tree Plantations, Indian Vegetables farm, Swimming in the well (optional), Bullock Cart, Tractor Rides, Spotting The dear.

Local Sightseeing - Famous Supa Bird Sanctuary – 12kms, Famous Mahadev Mandir Supa – 12 kms, Famous Historical Village ‘ Lonibharkar Village’ just 4 km, Famous ‘Datta Mandir’ just 4 km., Famous ‘Rajwada’ of More family and Deshpande families just 10 k.m., Famous ‘Shiva Temple Someshwar’ just 15 k.m. Famous ‘Ganpati Morgaon Temple’ just 10 k.m, Famous ‘Malegaon Sheti Farm’ just 20 k.m., Baramati Town Visit just 28 kms, Famous Historical Town Phaltan and Nimbalkar’s Rajwada 25 kms, Goat breed farming Phaltan 25 kms, Famous Nira Jaggery Market - 15 kms, Padegaon – Sugar research Center – 20 kms, Famous Datta Mandir and Boating Nira – 15 kms, Surrounded by sugar factory and jaggery making units, Milk processing units “Navnat Dairy. Special Activities-Specialty wine for sale (Baramati Wine / Indian), Organic Grains / Cereals for sale, Herbal tea for

Breakfast and Evening Snacks, You can play with these domestic animals – Dog, Buffalo, Cow, Rabbit, Goat, Hens. Can Participate in Farming Activities, Adventure Activities like cycling, can be arranged at advance notice, Tribal Folk Dance / Music can be arranged for evening entertainment program.

3. Agri tourism Baramati, Sonakaswadi-

The Guests here are welcomed in traditional way with kumkum and garlands, and then invited to partake of an authentic breakfast made by local farmer. Fruit Plantations Tour, understanding the growth cycle pattern, Fruit Food Values etc. Tourists and kids will be told the information of the supply chain cycle from farmer to customer. Cow Farm Tour, Cow milking, visiting the talulka milk processing units near by getting insight of how milk, cow dunk by product are made. Sheep and Goat Farm Tour, goat walking, milking. Silk Farming and producing with retail counter to buy silk cloth and silk sarees. Farm Equipment Museum, Medicinal Plantation Tour, understanding the uses of plants in day to day life. Practical demonstration of various experiments on crops and fruits. Various Modern methods of water irrigation demos. Large nursery of mother saplings to help grow superior grade fruits trees. Here tourists can know about the different types of saplings. Supply improved and processed sugarcane sets. Irrigation water and soil analysis, fertilizers plants and animal feed & to guide the farmers accordingly. Rural Games like (gilli dandu) vittudandu, gotya, bhavra, bullocks cart and tractor rides. Bee Hive Demo Farm. As an alternative to electricity the trust has installed solar, wind mill, bio gas, and other non conventional modes of energy generation.

Benefits of Agro-tourism in Rural Areas-

Agro tourism brings major primary sector agriculture closer to major service sector tourism. Benefits for agro tourism can be illustrated as follows –

1. An inexpensive gateway: The cost of food, accommodation, recreation and travel and tourism is low, widening the scope of tourism.
2. Curiosity for the urban about farming industry and life style: Agri-tourism, which involves villages and agriculture, has the capacity to satisfy the curiosity of the urban segment by providing scope for re-discovering the rural life, which is rich in diversity.
3. Strong family oriented recreational activities: through rural games, festivals, food, dress.
4. Finding solace with nature friendly life style: Peace and tranquility are in-built in Agri-tourism.
5. Nostalgia for their roots on the farm: For tourists it is like returning back to their roots.
6. Educational value of Agri-Tourism spreading knowledge about Agriculture science where urban students are moving with the pace of technology.
7. Curiosity about the farming industry and life style - The urban population having roots in villages always have had the curiosity to learn about sources of food, plants, animals, raw materials like wood, handicrafts, languages, culture, tradition, dresses and rural lifestyle. Agri Tourism which revolves around farmers, villages and agriculture has the capacity to satisfy the curiosity of this segment of population.
8. Strong demand for wholesome family oriented recreational activities - Villages provide recreational opportunities to all age groups i.e. children young, middle and old age, male, female, in total to the whole family at a cheaper cost. Rural games, festivals, food, dress and the nature provides variety of entertainment to the entire family.
9. Health consciousness of urban population and finding solace with nature friendly means - Modern lifestyle has made life stressful and average life span has come down. Hence, people are in constant search of pro-nature means to make life more peaceful. Ayurveda which is a pro-nature medical approach has roots in villages. Indigenous medical knowledge of villagers is respected. Organic foods are in greater demand in urban areas and foreign countries. In total, health conscious urban population is looking towards pronature villages for solutions.
10. Desire for peace and tranquility - Modern life is a product of diversified thinking and diversified activities. Every individual attempts to work more, in different directions to earn more money to enjoy modern comforts. Hence, peace is always out of his system. Tourism is a means for searching peaceful location. Peace and tranquility are inbuilt in Agri-Tourism as it is away from urban areas and close to nature.
11. Interest in natural environment - Busy urban population is leaning towards nature. Because, natural environment is always away from busy life. Birds, animals, crops, mountains, water bodies, villages provide totally different atmosphere to urban population in which they can forget their busy urban life.
12. Disillusionment with overcrowded resorts and cities - In resorts and cities, overcrowded peace seekers disturb each other's peace. Hence, peace is beyond cities and resorts. Even though efforts are made to create village atmosphere in the sub urban areas through resorts, farm houses, it looks like a distant replica of the original.
13. Rural recreation - Villages provide variety of recreation to urbanites through festivals and handicrafts. Villagers (farmers) lifestyle, dress, languages, culture / traditions which always add value to the entertainment. Agricultural environment around farmers and the entire production process could create curiosity among urban taught. Places of

agricultural importance like highest crop yielding farm, highest animal yielding farm, processing units, farms where innovations tried add attraction to the tourists. Agricultural products like farm gate fresh market, processed foods, organic food could lure the urban tourists. As result of this agri – atmosphere in the villages, there is scope to develop Agro – Tourism products like agrishopping, culinary tourism, pick and own your tree / plot, bed and breakfast, pick and pay, bullock cart riding, camel riding, boating, fishing, herbal walk, rural games and health (ayurvedic) tourism.

Findings

1. Agrotourism centers has the potential to attract tourists. Beautification work had already done. This center in addition to training and demonstration we are providing disease free quality planting materials to farmers.
2. There is no other source of income other than agriculture.
3. They have no peculiar traditions or cultures but people are very warmth in nature. They welcome their guest with full respect and love.
4. They are good in agriculture practices.

Conclusion –

Baramati tahsil has a great potential to the development of agro-tourism, because of natural conditions and different types of agro products as well as variety of rural traditions, festivals. It gives an opportunity to the tourists to experience rural life, taste the traditional food and to live in a peaceful environment. Agri Tourism Centers are commercially operated in this tahsil. So there is a need to promote the concept to attract the farmers to get involved in the agri tourism service industry. As this is a service industry farmers need to be oriented on maintenance of facilities, hospitality and public relation. Urban customers demand for the facilities like safe and clean accommodation, clean water and hygienic food from the agri tourism service provider. To increase awareness amongst urban customers' mass media like television and radio can be beneficial. Agri Business companies should promote the services in consultation with the farmers, government agencies, farmer's co-operatives and NGOs. It is a good opportunity to develop an agro-tourism business in Baramati tahsil. The study area will definitely in general popular as well as a good agro-tourism spot in Maharashtra. Hence, the agriculture departments and Agriculture Universities should try to give orientation about it and provide some innovative ideas regarding to the Agro-tourism. The government should try to provide optimum financial aids to the agro-tourism activities in the Maharashtra by the grants and institutional finance. The various banks should provide optimum financial help for the agro-tourism activities in the tahsil.

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