MANAGEMENT OF INDIGENOUS LIVELIHOOD THROUGH DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM: A CASE STUDY OF BALLAVPUR DANGA VILLAGE, WEST BENGAL

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Abstract

The greatest potential benefit of Rural Tourism is its ability to generate money, which can translate into numerous progressive economic openings for locals and their communities. For local residents the first advantage of tourism development is job opportunities within the tourism sectors and even outside of it. Tourism development means more income and profits for tourist related business. According to the economic multiplier model an increase in local income & jobs is ensured if local revenue from tourist expenses is spent within the native area. Thus the present study highlights the opportunities of Ballavpur Danga Village near Shatiniketan, to develop as an idea Rural Tourism Destination in West Bengal. Rural Tourism development in the destination has helped the development of indigenous livelihood. A number of handicrafts and local art and craft can be promoted as an attraction for rural tourism that will bring them a source of income too. Development of Rural tourism will also attract investments and will in long term beneficial for the village. Thus development and promotion of Rural Tourism in Ballavpur Danga Village will bring in an overall integrated local growth.

Key Words:
Rural Tourism, Indigenous Livelihood

Introduction:

West Bengal has extensive variety of charms in terms of tourist spots from the busy Kolkata megalopolis with its bygone-era and modern charms, to the regions of tranquility like
the Himalayan territory in the north to the Sunderbans in the south. From the tea gardens of Darjeeling to the cultural incubator of Santiniketan, West Bengal has much to offer to the world traveler, but it doesn't have a popular tourist destination status yet. Only few of the destinations viz., Sunderbans, Darjeeling, Kolkata, Shantiniketan have a National and International recognition. The unfortunate fact is these destinations have reached the level beyond their carrying capacity and rest many are not even explored by the tourist community. One such destination is Ballavpur Danga near Shantiniketan which has rich potential to attract tourists. This kind of potential Rural Tourism destinations and their development will help the development of indigenous livelihood. This with careful development will have features of sustainable tourism.

**Study Area:**

Ballavpur Danga Village is located in Birbhum District of West Bengal near Shantiniketan, the celebrated home of Nobel laureates Rabindranath Tagore and Amartya Sen. The village is fairly simple and mainly encompasses of Santhal community. The natural environ and exclusive lifestyle of the Santhal makes this village different from others. It is the lone...
village that has well-preserved rich tribal culture and generation old traditions. The best time to visit Ballavpur Danga is between October-April. Ballavpur Danga will definitely transport any tourist to the timeworn memories of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore through his songs.

**Objectives of the study:**

As aptly evident from the title of the study, the major objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the existing rural tourism pattern and its capability to manage the indigenous livelihood
2. To understand the tourism potential in Ballavpur Danga Village.
3. To identify the natural and man-made resources in Ballavpur Danga Village.
4. To understand the potential of rural tourism.

**The Concept of Rural Tourism:**

Rural areas in India have always featured prominently in the development of tourism and leisure. In modern times, the countryside endures to form an important tourist destination. The appeal of the rural landscape as a tourist destination is multifaceted; linked to opportunities for a variety of sports and activities, peaceful and noiseless, nature space and traditional ways of life. The countryside represents a lost “golden age”. It contains everything that urban areas lack.

**Rural Tourism may be defined as-**

“*Rural tourism is the tourism which is taken place in the countryside*” (Lane 1994).

“It is a range of activities, services and amenities provided by the farmers and the rural people to attract the tourists to their area in order to produce some extra income particularly for their businesses” (Gannon, 1988).

Briefly rural tourism is a form of tourism that takes place in rural areas or settlements. This type of tourism provides employment and income to local population. The features of the rural tourism explain the countryside beauty. That are-
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- Remoteness & solitude
- Peace & quiet
- Adventure & challenge, opportunity to pursue sport or hobby
- Health & fitness concerns, fresh air
- Wildlife & landscapes, interests in the environment
- Experience of rural communities, lifestyles and culture.

**Rural Tourism scenario in India:**

The basic concept of Rural Tourism is Development of the local community through entrepreneurial opportunities, income generation, conservation and development of rural art and crafts and preservation of environment and heritage. Rural tourism is gaining importance in Indian tourism with its social and economic benefits. It is estimated that Rs. 4300 crore, surplus revenue can be created through rural tourism. It may play a vital role as a connection between rural & urban India as still 74% of the population lives in 7 million villages in India (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2009). The Government off late has realised that, what the rural India can offer to the rest of World. The 10th five-year plan has reported Tourism as one of the main sources for creating employment & encouraging sustainable livelihoods. In collaboration with UNDP, the Union Ministry of Tourism has launched the Endogenous Tourism Project in the year 2004, connected to the prevailing rural tourism scheme of the government. For the project the UNDP has committed $2.5 million. UNDP will support areas of capacity building, participation of NGOs, local populations and artisans forge strong community – PPPs. The government has taken decision to develop essential infrastructure for smoothing rural tourism. So far the Ministry of Tourism (MoT), Government of India (GoI), with the help of State tourism departments has recognised 31 villages across India as tourist sites and granting Rs. 50 lakh as financial support for each project. Besides, an added amount of Rs 20 lakh would be delivered for increasing logistic facilities and initial community participation centers through self-help groups.

**Rural Tourism scopes in West Bengal:**

The Tourism Sector in West Bengal has recently got some attention towards development of rural tourism. Though still not among the leading performers in the country, the state tourism
has been able to entice some tourists. In the area of rural tourism, some expressions of development have been felt. Ballavpur Danga in Birbhum District and Mukutmanipur in Bankura District have been encompassed as potential rural tourism sites in the Endogenous Tourism Projects jointly taken up by the Ministry of Tourism (MoT), Government of India, UNDP and the Women’s Interlink Foundation (WIF).

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Domestic Tourists</th>
<th>Foreign Tourists</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Absolute</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Absolute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
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<td>1,98,713</td>
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<td>47,37,112</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>2006-2007</td>
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<td>93.8</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>2,23,90,527</td>
<td>94.85</td>
<td>12,16,885</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Tourism, Government of West Bengal. * N.A. - Not Available

In West Bengal there are various tourism destinations at various stages is what designated as the product life cycle. For instance, destinations like Darjeeling or Kolkata have attained a maturity level. They hardly need promotion and have correspondingly exhausted their carrying capacity (environmental, infrastructural or social impacts). Right now their difficulty is to retain their image, check the decline, proper maintenance and such others. On the other hand the
destinations like Mukutmanipur, Santiniketan in Bengal is facing tough challenges to promote its attractions in rural areas and nurture its tourism products. Marketing becomes a major concern for promotion and elevation of Rural Tourism in West Bengal. This is mostly because the local bodies are either not aware about the progressive role of tourism or are reserved by their own politics or lack of economic assistance. To marketing a rural tourism destination there is a requirement of strategical methodology on the resulting aspects:

- Attractions – like campaign of rural tourism around a heritage site
- Infrastructure – like cuisine, accommodation, hygiene, clean water (basic amenities)
- Accessibility – like roads and other modes of transportation as available locally
- Environmental aspects – like pollution, Eco-fragility
- Safety and security
- Future strategies

**Scope of Rural Tourism in Ballavpur Danga near Shantiniketan:**

The old world charisma of 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 a 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 an 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. They are expert in mat weaving and basket making, fan making, binding broom, and making ornaments with bena grass, date leaf, palm leaf and various kinds of seeds; terracotta and batik work; woodworking and leather work and also musical instruments unique to this region.

**Pull factors for the Tourist of Ballavpur Danga village:**

- **Local Culture** - The tribal inhabitants of Ballavpur Danga are chiefly the Santhals, the ethnic people of this region who have close bonds with forest life. The cultural settings of the adivasis blend with the cultural backdrop of Ballavpur Danga. The village is situated in the
lateritic area identified as the 'Khowai'. The contemporary livings of the tribal involves daily labour, farming and goldsmith creations. The Santhal community is rich in ethnicities of art and culture. 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 follow the Sama religion. They also pay reverence to spirits like Kal Sing, Lakchera, Beudarang etc.

✓ **Oral tradition** is an integral part of Adivasi culture and it is inextricably linked to their bygone and historical value. This also comprises the unseen heritage of the Santhals in the form of myths and history preserved in their songs and sayings. This divergent feature of the adivasis to reserve their identity and birthplace is dissimilar from that of the non-tribal social groups.

✓ **Handicraft work**- Ballavpur Danga has well-looked-after its gorgeous tribal culture with artisans who have a extensive history of refined craft skills. Ballavpurs Santhali art and craft with beautiful designs on the doors, walls and floors of the homes made from cowdung and red earth. Original art forms can be perceived in the daily-use commodities of the adivasis. They are skilful in mat weaving, broom binding, creating ornaments with bena grass, date leaf, palm leaf and several types of seeds, terracotta works, batik works, leather work and carpentry. Products such as baskets, mats, fans, broom and accessories are convolutedly made out of the same. Attractive designs embellish the walls and floors of the adivasis homes. The colours used are prepared from red earth, cow dung.

✓ **Santhali Dance**- The tribals dance to the rhythmic beats of the madal, the traditional local musical instrument; under the open sky intoxicating the spectators. The artists paint themselves with the diverse colors in order to represent the numerous mythical character and dance.

✓ **Fairs and festivals**- The local fair is 'Pous Mela'. The other popular fairs are Sriniketan Krishi Mela, Jaydev Kenduli Mela and Chandi Das Mela. There is a 'Haat' (weekly market) on every Saturday, from 4.00pm-6.00pm, at Sonajhuri. A new Haat 'Amader Haat' has been developed at the site that bustles every Saturday and Sunday. Chabbish Praha, a significant festival is celebrated for three days through Adivasi customs and cultural program. Badna celebration is done for 5 days, Basanta Utsav and Charak Puja. Karam is the most important
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festival celebrated among the tribal. This is celebrated in September and October. On the auspicious day tribal thank their God and Goddess for everything they have and worship to have more.

✓ **Cuisine**- The key diet of the adivasis of the area comprises of rice, pulses (daal) and vegetables. Fish is a compulsion with each meal in this region. The community is fond of locally made sura (drink), namely Hariya that is made from rice and a fruit seed called bakul.

✓ **Sonjuhri Forest**- Ballavpur Danga is sited 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 and a Gallery** filled with Santhali Paintings and artefacts is a must visit in this village.

✓ **The Mayurakshi canal** lies to the south of the village.

✓ **Jaydeb-Kenduli** (30km) has an old temple

✓ **Deer Park** (4km) - The village is within 2-3km of tourist spots such as the Deer Park

✓ **Tarapith**- Renowned for its Kali temple (88km)

✓ **Vishwa Bharati University** (3km)- The seat of Bangla literature, music and learning

✓ **Bakreshwar Hot Spring** (58km) - The hot spring water is supposed to cure a number of ailments. A single dip is supposed to be enough.

**Probable Benefits of Rural Tourism in Ballavpur Danga village:**

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. Tourism development ensures additional income and profits for tourist related business. 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.

1. 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. (Eg. Handicrafts, folk music & folk lore etc.)

2. 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 is an important viable alternative which can provide a solution to this problem of increasing rural urban migration.

3. 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 as a subsidiary occupation can reverse this trend with ensuring some amount of balanced regional development.

4. 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. (Rural Haat, etc).

5. Small-scale enterprise development aided by micro-finance schemes is likely to augment rural livelihood opportunities.

6. This concept has the remarkable potentiality to fascinate the investors in rural areas. Plenty of good hotels are already present here. Ballavpur Danga is introducing home stays very soon. 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.

7. Promotion of understanding & harmony.

8. Restoration of culture.


10. Community development
Challenges in Rural Tourism:

a) Traditional belief that agriculture can help the rural people. There is lack of awareness about how the other resources can be a big crowd puller if Rural Tourism is developed properly.

b) Absence of supporting industry. Attracting the ancillary industries in such remote places most of the times becomes a challenge.

c) Legislation problems. The rural areas remain in the shadow zone from most of the legislative benefits.

d) Shortage of trained manpower. There is acute shortage of skilled and trained labour to cater to the needs of a service industry like tourism.

e) Insufficient financial support. Though several grants have been approved for development of Rural Tourism but much more is required for full-fledged development.

f) 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.

Conclusion:

The development of rural Tourism can ensure lots of benefits to our rural community with proper planning. It might be a revenue-generating and sustainable project for the rural people of our state. It can aid influx to resources to the rural from urban economy. It can also avert migration of rural people to urban centres. Both the short term and the long term planning, implementing and monitoring are very vital in avoiding damage to rural environment including their culture. On the other hand 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. Rural tourism will appear as a significant tool for sustainable human development with prospective for employment generation, poverty alleviation, environmental rejuvenation and growth of the remote areas and progress of womenfolk and other weaker divisions of the society. The findings and suggestions of the study would go a long way in the formulation effective tourism policies and plans and relevant programmes for sound development of the tourism in the state.
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