Community based Sustainable Tourism Development - A tool for fostering and promoting peace: A case study of Odisha, India

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Abstract

Much has been analyzed, discussed and written about tourism, its interdisciplinary approach and multidimensional concepts, but one of the most significant roles that the tourism has been playing for a while now and which has not come into the limelight is the fostering and promotion of peace. Tourism is regarded as one of the most pioneering sectors, and has not only made socio economic contributions but also created a harmonious platform for all to exchange, share, and understand each other better in order to gain co-operation, mutual understanding, a sense of belonging, and integrity. In the backdrop of a peaceful society where justice, equality, human rights and prosperity stand firm, this is in part due to the remarkable contributions of tourism in assimilating people into a common platform of thought. Society and its people have witnessed socio economic development, the creation of equal opportunities for everyone to live in, and sustainability which to a greater extent has been achieved due to the catalytic nature of tourism which in turn fosters and promotes a peaceful existence. This paper emphasizes and explores the role of tourism in enhancing peace through community based sustainable tourism development by interconnecting the environment, the local community, the tourists, and other important aspects .The paper cites some of the key examples of Odisha in terms of its community participation and their involvement in sustainable development initiatives leading to the harmonious inter-existence between locals and visitors.

Keywords: Harmony, community participation, sustainability, development, India.

Introduction

Although tourism today is propelled as an engine for accelerating economic growth and is a vital force for abolishing poverty, diminishing unemployment ,opening up of new avenues for activities, and the betterment of lower strata of the society, the benefits that tourism provides sometimes vanish due to unsustainable approaches. The increasing mass tourism development has created environmental and socio cultural degradation and has also lowered the intrinsic values of tourism

activity. In the recent past Odisha's tourism development has to a greater extent moved into the arena of inter alia, spiritual growth, wildlife, beach tourism and eco-tourism. The initiatives from governmental authorities, regional and local tourism planners, stakeholders, as well as the active participation of community in rural and tribal areas has ushered in the growth and development of tourism in Odisha. But in Odisha apart from a few community based organizations involved in sustainability environmental practices, more community based tourism activities should be encouraged from the governmental level in order to conserve the biodiversity, and to maintain the ecological balance. This will also strengthen the socio economic development of the local people that turns places into a peaceful environment. Community based sustainable tourism development can benefit society by restoring the social harmony and integration, preserving the

cultural heritage, abolishing the social unrest and restoring the peace, while eradicating diseases, and stabilizing economic potency. Dissemination of knowledge and awareness is very important for the success of community based sustainable tourism development in a local and tourist- host responsible approach which helps in this process. The community based sustainability approaches can be implemented in nature based or environmental tourism, eco-tourism, responsible tourism and cultural tourism. Hence the participation and involvement of community organizations can maximize the tourist satisfaction, maintain the ecological balance and lead to the restoration of peace among the locals where there is often strife.

Literature Review

When the word peace comes to the mind of a common people, it automatically defines the absence of war or violence, and at the same time demands the presence of harmony, equality, prosperity, and equal opportunities. Peace is a word which is very hard to define from various angles, but in very simple terms it is the absence of war, but it does not simply make society peaceful and its people happy. A peaceful environment exists when human rights are fully protected and conserved, and when everyone is equally treated in the eyes of law. The denial of fundamental needs such as education, shelter, food and health services leads to the non-existence of a peaceful environment. Therefore, a peaceful society needs the presence of such basic rights and not just the mere absence of physical war (Moufakkir, 2010.) More often than not, a peaceful environment is based on the foundation of good human culture and traditions. It is very often expressed that peace is a complex process which should be cultured and polished to stabilize it for the welfare of society. Hence education and awareness are the most essential elements by which peace can be cultured and nurtured in any society. Peace is one of the most vital and cherished dreams of mankind and also the pillar of societal harmony and equilibrium and it not only indicates the absence of violence and agitation, but also propels people to sustain the cordial relationship amongst people from all the segments of society.
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According to various authors (Arai, 2010; Bodhi, 2008; Galtung, 1996; Moufakkir and Kelly, 2010; Rees, 2003; Salzar, 2006; Satani, 2003) many publications across the globe help to find out the critical areas thwarting sustaining peace, like violence, agitation, cultural imbalance and violence, political turbulence, intolerance, racism, community and ethnic conflict, global warming, environmental degradation, poverty and prejudice, human rights etc. IIPT, (2011a) suggests that peace is a prerequisite for travel and tourism as well as all round growth and development of human beings. The tourism industry, otherwise known as a submissive industry rests on a peaceful environment (Adhikari, 2005; Bhattarai & Dahal, 2007; Grandon, 2007; NTB, 2008; Upadhayaya, 2008; Upreti and Upadhayaya, 2010).

Peace and tourism has very often judged by a number of international agreements understandings such as inter alia, The UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the International

Bureau of Social Tourism in 1963, The Helsinki Accord in 1975, the World Tourism Organization's Tourism Bill of Rights & Tourist Code in 1985, and the United Nations World Tourism Organization's Sustainable Tourism-Eliminating Poverty 2003 plan. The United Nations has declared and identified that tourism has paved the way for achieving the peace and this has been emphasized in aUN conference on Environment and Development on June 14,1992 , as well as in the Amman Declaration on 'Peace through Tourism' which adopted at the Global Summit on Peace through Tourism on November 11, 2000 (IIPT, 2011a; IIPT, 2011b; Kunwar 2006).

Research Methodology

As the nature of this paper is conceptual, various relevant data and information have been derived by applying a secondary methodological approach. The author thus went through different national and international refereed research papers, articles, conference proceeding papers, symposium note books, state records and projects in the gathering of the data.

Fostering Tourism for Peace

Benefits derived from tourism are manifold by its very nature; apart from this tourism has the vast potential for contribution of peace and restoring the social equilibrium, promoting conflict resolution, and eradicating prejudice and poverty. Though tourism and peace may not be identical by nature, or immiscible by nature, the various tourism activities have the ability to germinate peace in the minds of tourists. On a larger platform tourism has the ability to transform society into becoming a harmonious and peaceful environment.

Tourism promotes cultural exchange and assimilation among the community and the tourists and this helps in the fostering of peace. Burtner (2010), asserts that tourism helps to make society harmonious, wealthy and economically strong and that leads to reductions in conflict and injustice. The contributions made by tourism have led to various developments in the societies, as well as in promoting mutual understanding linking the people, culture and community on one platform. In turn, understanding among people and cultures is what ultimately enhances harmony.(Theobald, 1998).

Fostering tourism for peace is one of the cherished quotes and most popular concepts as tourism in India is growing rapidly and tourism related initiatives have a robust presence in every nook and cranny. The fostering of tourism for peace has come a long way because of stringent practical actions emanating from all stakeholders in all levels. In fact tourism is an effective strategy for the promotion of peace by eradicating the problems of poverty and unemployment. Thus by implementing proper action plans and initiatives taken by the tourism planners, the host community and civic authorities, things could go really well. India as well as Odisha have a very solid community and ethical republic concept.

In Odisha, though socio economic problems among the people in society persist, tourism has enabled the community to forge ahead based on initiatives and activities where people's active participation has gradually solved many problems The community based sustainability efforts, activities, and collaborations have led to and molded a peaceful and jovial environment in which to live. If the tourism strategy and planning involves community based organizations, they in return can promote and foster the peace in a realistic way.

Peace, Community and Tourism: The Triangle of Sustainability

A community is a consistent and uniform way or pattern of people living, thinking and working together to achieve common objectives. It is also a small institution where the art of living is learned to maintain the peace, harmony and integrity among the people of society. It is also a voluntary and an autonomous association of people constantly endeavoring to achieve the socio-economic, cultural and other aspects of the society. The fundamental values and virtues of community are equality, togetherness, co-operation, unity and also responsibility.

The community association strongly believes in the values of honesty, integrity, and social responsibility and especially in caring for others. The linkage between peace and tourism is crystal clear and the baffling nature of peace has different definitions and dimensions in different disciplines. The Amman Declaration on Peace Through Tourism states that peace is a prerequisite for travel and tourism as well as the all-round growth and development of human beings.

According to Satani (2003/04.), peace can be treated as one of the most important fundamental rights that everyone is entitled to. Edgel (1990) also emphasized the demand of peace for tourism by quoting 'peace: passport to tourism'. Tourism, being a universal phenomenon, and an integral part of globalization and liberalization, seeks peace, stability and tranquility for its growth, development and prosperity(Mihalic, 1996; Tarlow, 2006). According to Satyal (2000) tourism thrives on peace.

Tourism can thus can be defined as peace based industry. In the present era of growing awareness, tourism cannot be detached from the sustainability concept and environmental approach for sustainable development either. Upadhayaya and Sharma, (2010) stated that the scope of sustainable development is based on sustainable tourism which is one of the 21 key areas of the millennium development goals. Hence for peace-building, the role of sustainable tourism cannot be neglected. Murphy (1985) and Waddilove and Goodwin (2010) emphasized local community as the backbone of tourism development. Hall and Richards (2000:1) also reconfirm that, "without community sustainability, tourism development cannot be expected to be sustainable". Hence local peace are very important for tourism and also for the natural environment.
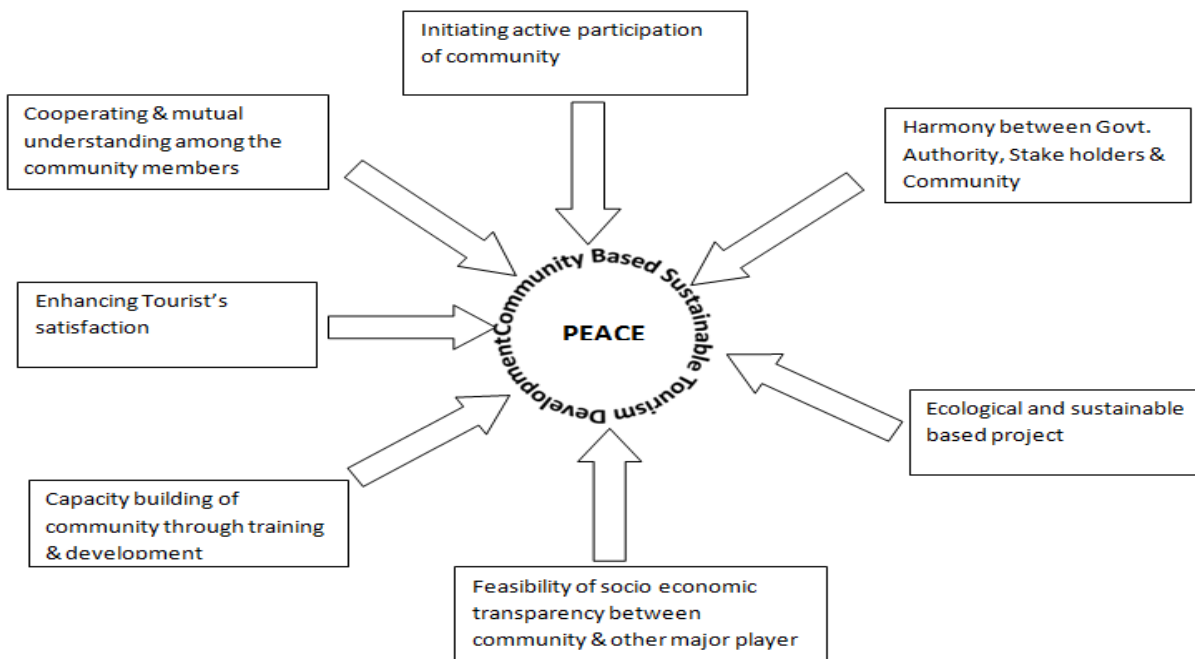
Community and Sustainable Tourism Development leading to peace

If the peace is really to be derived, the intrinsic values should be cultured and nurtured among the people in the society. But in the present era, human values are stagnant, neither are they well propagated nor communicated to a greater extent. Hence peace has become very static and elusive. So undoubtedly, in this modern scenario, the organizations or institutions having value based foundations, have a significant role to play in getting the peace that society thrives on. The communities in all areas have a strong advantage over other organizations in this respect due to their often much higher levels of human-consciousness.

The approach and values of the community are the role model to create sustainable development leading to peace. They are meant to safeguard and protect the human rights, values and the natural environment, and enable the members of society to be more aware of their freedom and inform the ways for deriving desired peaceful co-existence. They also promote products and services in a sustainable manner so as to improve their living standards.

The community strengthens the rural economy by its active participation in a sustainable way for tourism development. The community and sustainable tourism are thus part and parcel of peace building development process .The contribution of the community is considered to be the ambassador of peace in maintaining and fostering the very well-being of people in society as well as the natural environment.

Image 1 (Community sustainable development and peace Model)

Source (Designed by the Author)

The agenda of peace is better fulfilled by the active and productive participation of the community and the various tourism activities and initiatives. The message of peace is communicated by tourism and its active members like different communities in rural areas. To achieve the desired sustainable tourism development , there are two fundamental requirements to be considered like maximizing the tourists satisfaction and maintaining the ecological balance, and these two can happen through the community involvement and productive participation. The tourism policy of India has a decentralized approach where there is also an active as well as passive participation in all strata of people in the society. But community participation in tourism is emerging, and in the case of Odisha there are some instances of community sustainable tourism development which are considered to be the creators of local peace.

The host-guest interaction is mutually benefited by a community based sustainable tourism development plan leading to the creation of peace and harmony in any destination. The tourism stakeholders, public private partnerships and community participation are the key players for the creation of peace and sustainability. It works both ways by providing the tourist with satisfaction as well as driving the well-being of the host population. Odisha has a tremendous repository of tourism resources and can become one of the most preferred tourism destinations. The blue water of the serene Bay of Bengal has very attractive white sand and palm fringed beaches, rich bio-diversity, an enchanting wildlife, fascinating and lofty mountains and three nonconformist glorious temples which are some of the major attractions. However while the state has promoted mass

tourism at a large, very little attention has been paid to the environment, sustainability and community participation.

The Case of Odisha

The State of Odisha has an ample natural forest that stretches from coastal mangroves to tropical deciduous forests in the Bay of Bengal and Eastern Ghats. The state itself has a forest area accounting for up to of 37% of land mass, and it is blessed with two national park and 18 wildlife sanctuaries having protected areas status. The state provides unique opportunities for the promotion of eco-tourism, as there is a plethora of inter alia vast forest cover, beaches, protected areas, lakes and biosphere reserves. Though the state is very famous for its spiritual tourism, it deserves a larger exposure for the promotion of eco-tourism as well as community based tourism for the protection of the environment and sustainable development. Community based sustainable tourism is well linked with the environment, because it benefits the local communities and destinations culturally, socially and economically thus creating a harmonious and peaceful environment. Community participation and involvement for sustainability development is guided by the set of principles based on eco-tourism.

Community based tourism relies on the concept of eco-tourism approaches like, conservation, ecological balance, protection, responsibility and sustainability leading to the creation of peace and harmony. Community based tourism and eco-tourism are not well understood in Odisha, and are yet to be executed in a meaningful way which can benefit the environment and the local community optimally. When the community and eco-tourism go hand in hand many benefits accrue such as the:

a. minimization of obnoxious impacts.
b.creation of socio-cultural and environmental awareness and respect.

c.provision of real-time experiences for both visitors and hosts.

d.provision of financial leverage for conservation.

e.empowerment of local peoples.

Community Based Eco Tourism in Satkosia

The Forestry Department of Odisha has chalked out a piloted project for a few protected areas and community based eco-tourism initiatives are one of the major strategic segments to have made it successful. Community based eco-tourism development is the most effective tool to enhance the livelihoods of locals as well as keep the biodiversity intact by conserving the natural areas. It is a participatory process and a sustainability approach between the forest department and the local community is important as this has enabled them to increase their livelihoods and it also paves the way for the sustainable survival of village people and wildlife in and around the designated protected areas.

An assessment of key threats to biodiversity was undertaken in four sanctuaries of Odisha (Panwar *et al.,* 2009) under the Odisha Forestry Sector Development Project. The study shows that a major part of the area is impacted by forest fires, the unregulated collection of timber, fuel wood, and non-wood forest products (NWFPS), livestock grazing, shifting cultivation and also poaching.

Satkosia is one of the major wildlife sanctuaries established in 1976 and is considered to be a paradise of natural scenic beauty. In 2007 it was declared as a tiger reserve and it spread across four major districts of Odisha, namely, Cuttack, Anugul, Nayagarh and Boudh. It is 190 kms from Bhubaneswar, the state capital of Odisha and home to Gharial, and in past few years the Satkosia forest has become vulnerable to ecological imbalances and biodiversity pressures. There are 116 villages located within the protected area, which have been depending on the forests for their livelihoods (Popli, et al., 2008). The local community initiative and awareness and their active involvement has resulted in a meaningful sustainable development and an inclusive growth for them.

Image 2. Camping in Satkosia

Source:R. Raghu prasad   Ecotourism and protected areas: contributing community development and conserving biodiversity, piloted in Satkosia,   *Orissa Forestry Sector Development Project, SFTRI Campus, Bhubaneswar*

Nature Camp, Tikarpada

In 2006 the local community managed to set up a temporary nature camp at Tikarpada .Twenty four poor local people from the adjoining village of Tikarpada were grouped together to run the nature camp. This community based eco-tourism group was registered into a society called *Tikarpada Paribesh Parytan Samiti*(TIPPS).

The chief objectives of this *Samiti* or community are to protect the biodiversity and wildlife of this protected area as much as possible and also to provide the best natural experiences for the tourists coming from far off places. Since 2006 the nature camp has been set up on the bank of river Mahanadi for 4 months during the winter season. Technical training was also imparted to the community members in the allied fields of hospitality, catering and reception services, so that they are able to provide the best possible hospitality services to the tourists.

The local community also provides the nature camp tour packages including accommodation, boating, trekking and other facilities. The tourists pay for the same to the local *Samiti* (TIIPS) for using the service. The *Samiti* manages and maintains the entire infrastructure including tents, cots, toilets and their amenities. Within a very short time span the camp has become very popular among ecotourists. The community has been able to derive a sustainable growth for the region as well as its own.

Image 3. Nature camp Tikarapada

Source: R. Raghu prasad   Ecotourism and protected areas: contributing community development and conserving biodiversity, piloted in Satkosia, *Orissa Forestry Sector Development Project, SFTRI Campus, Bhubaneswar*

Image 4. Eco tourism Group , TIPPS

Source: R. Raghu prasad   Ecotourism and protected areas: contributing community development and conserving biodiversity, piloted in Satkosia**,** *Orissa Forestry Sector Development Project, SFTRI Campus, Bhubaneswar*

Nature Camp, Chhotkei

After the successful nature camping efforts initiated by the local community in Tikarpada, a second nature camp started in the Chhotkei village community near Satkosia under the Odisha Forestry Sector Development Project (OFSDP) supported by the Japanese International co - operation Agency(JICA).The local community has supported this camp for the benefit of the tourists as well as its own development due to its productive participation.

Image 5. Nature camp Chotkei

Source (R. Raghu prasad   Ecotourism and protected areas: contributing community development and conserving biodiversity, piloted in satkosia,   *Orissa Forestry Sector Development Project, SFTRI Campus, Bhubaneswar)*

The Picnic Site at Gaindi

Satkosia and Tikarpada are one of the most preferred tourist destinations and in the winter months, many visitors tend come to this site for picnic purposes. Earlier visitors held their picnics in the dense forest which created a biodiversity threat, but in the year 2009 the local village community of Gaindi took initiatives for developing a well maintained picnic spot in order to provide better services to the visitors. The spot was managed by the eco development committee of Gaindi village providing all the facilities and amenities to the picnickers. So the people of Gaindi village now earn a fair to good income during the peak seasons.

Image 6. Picnic site at Gaindi.

Source: R. Raghu prasad   Ecotourism and protected areas: contributing community development and conserving biodiversity, piloted in Satkosia,   *Orissa Forestry Sector Development Project, SFTRI Campus, Bhubaneswar*

Image 7. Eco guides briefing visitors in nature trails and trek

Source: R. Raghu prasad   Ecotourism and protected areas: contributing community development and conserving biodiversity, piloted in Satkosia,   *Orissa Forestry Sector Development Project, SFTRI Campus, Bhubaneswar*

Image 8. Former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Wildlife, Orissa, Sri. P.N. Padhi, IFS, interacting with Ecotourism group members, during their training at Institute of Hotel Management and Catering, Bhubaneswar

Source: R. Raghu prasad   Ecotourism and protected areas: contributing community development and conserving biodiversity, piloted in Satkosia,   *Orissa Forestry Sector Development Project, SFTRI Campus, Bhubaneswar*

Community Conservation Effort at Mangalajodi near Chilika

Chilika is one of the most important rich biodiversity areas and it is the home to many migratory birds. Mangalajodi is one of the villages which is located very near Chilika and it is famous for its wetlands where during the winter months, numerous birds migrate and this has made it it one of

the biodiversity hotspot for tourists. It is one of the richest ecosystems which are on the verge of extinction due to the expansion of urbanization.

Frequent poaching activities are a common activity since some years ago which causes an imbalance in the ecosystem. But a decade ago the initiative taken by Wild Orissa has resulted in the establishment of the *Sri Sri Mahabir Pakshi Surakshya Samiti* (Bird Protection Committee) for conservation efforts. This bird protection committee was managed by Mr. Nanda Kishore Bhujabala a, local resident of the Mangalajodi village, and it has led to greater local community involvement in efforts to protect birds from vigorous poaching. Some-time after its establishment, the Mangalajodi Eco-Tourism Society has taken care of the sustainability and eco-tourism activities of this place.

Gradually the community participation benefits not only the protection of birds but also its aquatic biodiversity. For their stupendous achievements, the committee was bestowed with the prestigious '*Bijju Patnaik Pakhee Mitra's* (Friends of Birds) award for conservation and sustainability of the wetland. At the present time, Mangalajodi is a full-fledged community which owns and manages ecotourism activities and it has a clear vision of protecting the wetland as well as creating a livelihood for the local community. They are inspired by this sustainable source of livelihood through well managed tourism activities. The community has three significant visions including a capacity-building programme through training, infrastructural development, and a strong marketing strategy to popularize it among the current and future desired tourists.

Findings

Whether it is called eco-tourism, sustainable tourism, environmental tourism, or responsible tourism, the main objective each of these is to conserve and preserve the environments for future tourism activities. Hence the potential risks can be minimized by constantly monitoring the environmental, economic and socio-cultural negative impacts. In this regard, (UNEP et al., 2008:8-9), 12 principles (including local control, community wellbeing, resource efficiency and environmental purity) for sustainable tourism development have been set by UNEP and WTO.

Nonetheless, Upreti (2010) states that a loophole in these principles does not pay attention to 'conflict sensitivity'. For this, legal and regulatory issues should be institutionalized and empowered to a certain extent. In the case of Odisha, community participation is in great need if sustainable tourism which directly and indirectly benefits both the parties and in return fosters the peace isto be evidenced. As the tourism industry is very fragile and volatile, the non co -operative and suppressive approach by the local community can damage the industry. In any case conflicts should not be germinated between the tourism industry and community, as this will serve to only block the endeavors of tourists thus decreasing the economic activities. Community awareness should be spread to understand the interdisciplinary relationship among the aspects such as peace, tourism and the environment. A more proactive approach and an active engagement from the tourism industry are in great need if there is to be greater participation of the community and if benefits will accrue in both directions i.e. for them and tourists alike.

A regular self-assessment is needed and an orthodox mentality should be avoided if the tourism industry is to try to derive maximum benefits from the community. The peace can be fostered if both the tourism industry and the local community are involved in the decision making process, benefit sharing and the conservation and protection of socio cultural and environmental aspects. A two-way monitoring system adhering to the legal provisions should be initiated to keep peace, tourism and the environment intact. Above all mutual understanding, cooperation and

transparency should be maintained between the local community and civic authorities so as to make tourism sustainable and conflict free. According to Satani (2004:7), the Chinese Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989 and the Rwanda genocide in 1994 showed a decline in tourists influxes and economic meltdowns in the host countries. As stated by Upadhayaya and Sharma, (2010), the bad image of political aspects in a country and resulting conflict, results in a decline in tourist arrivals as has been the case in Odisha from 2000 to 2002.

Suggestions and Recommendations

It should be of paramount importance to promote community based sustainable tourism only through a well bonded linkages among the public, private and community participation stakeholders. The unique roles of tourism stakeholders and planners and even the governmental. authorities should play parts actively in encouraging community participation and this should be increasingly for sustainable development which will benefit the above both directly and indirectly. Constant efforts should be given to tourism destination marketing strategies to bring out confidence and strength among the community participants so as to encourage them to devote more and more time to sustainable development initiatives. Regular conducting of awareness programmes, environmental workshops and seminars, guest lectures and especially one to one interaction with the community as well as its various stakeholders can impact on sustainability and restore socio cultural equilibrium that is often disturbed by tourism activities. Such actions can lead to enhanced economic development and create a peaceful environment for all to live in. As community based sustainable tourism is centered on the rustic areas of village destinations, the following suggestions should be considered in order to achieve the desired objectives.

a. The development /or improvement of basic infrastructure facilities should be initiated.

b. Encouragement and facilitation of investment opportunities must be driven as these will open the door for the upliftment of community sustainable development.

c. Local tourism products should be promoted vigorously.

d. A long term strategic tourism plan should be formulated and implemented accordingly.

e. Local traditions, culture, heritage and lifestyle should be promoted and showcased which will bring confidence and encouragement among the local community as to their value as human beings.

f. An interlinking medium should be established between the tourists and community for the better understanding of sustainable development.

g. Proper education should be imparted to remove the ignorance from the community and make all people more aware of their identity and values.

Conclusion

In the recent past, community based sustainable tourism has become a growing trend for sustainable development of the future. It is a responsible as an alternative approach to minimize the potential risk and hazards of tourism and in creating a cordial relationship between guest and

host that leads to a peaceful environment. It is due to community based sustainable tourism where there is a perfect confluence of guest -host-stakeholders creating avenues for the promotion and preservation of socio –cultural heritage, improvement of living standards, and protecting a delicate balance of biodiversity leading to a more peaceful environment. Hence, active community participation and community involvement is a vital part of sustainable tourism development of any country. Considering community based tourism in a sustainable way can enhance the destination image and help in needed the strategic destination marketing, which further maximizes the tourists footfall. There is also an increased economic potentiality of local populations. As the tourism industry is very fragile, sensitive, and vulnerable to many desirable and undesirable conditions, this may lead to unrest and break the peace, but the local community's constant endeavor for sustainable development protects and enhances the future resources. It also serves to maintain the socio-cultural integrity, and balances the sound ecological process, and to an extent protects biotic diversity for better and more sustainable tourism activities to materialize in the near future.

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