

# DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM AND ITS OUTCOME WITH AGRI-TOURISM

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**Abstract:** *The concept of rural tourism is common in all places of world. People from all over the world are travel far and wide not only to watch places but also to interact with local people to know about their culture. Kerala has significant tourist potential place in India, especially in rural tourism.*

*Beyond the scenic backwater, captivating hills, and rich wildlife are off the beaten tourist villages of Kerala that are just the perfect place to those who wishes to see something unconventional. Simply serene and peaceful, in the villages of Kerala one can see the most pristine form of nature, barely untouched by industrialization, and illustrating the traditional style of living. Village tourism attractions in Kerala are in Kuttanad, Cherai, Kovalam, Kumarakom, and Kumbalang. It's not easy to study all places in detail. Therefore, this study was conducted in Kuttanad( 'Rice Bowl of Kerala') is a rural Village situated in Alapuzha district, Kerala, India. The purpose and objectives of this paper is to develop priorities for rural tourism development with its effect from agri- tourism , based on rural tourism activities, and to outline some guidelines and principles in revitalizing rural environment in Kuttanad.*

**Key Words:** *Agri tourism, growth, rural tourism, rural development.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Tourism growth potential can be harnessed as a strategy for Rural Development. The development of a strong platform around the concept of Rural Tourism is definitely useful for a country like India, where almost 74% of the population resides in its 7 million villages. Across the world the trends of industrialization and development have had an urban centric approach. Alongside, the stresses of urban lifestyles have led to a “counter urbanization” syndrome. This has led to growing interest in the rural areas. At the same time this trend of urbanization has led to falling income levels, lesser job opportunities in the total areas leading to an urbanization syndrome in the rural areas. Rural Tourism is one of the few activities which can provide a solution to these problems. Besides, there are other factors which are shifting the trend towards rural tourism like increasing levels of awareness, growing interest in heritage and culture and improved accessibility, and environmental consciousness. In the developed countries, this has resulted in a new style of tourism of visiting village settings to experience and live a relaxed and healthy lifestyle. This concept has taken the shape of a formal kind of Rural Tourism.

Alappuzha is one of the prominent destinations for Farm tourism in Kerala. 'Kuttanad' in Alappuzha district is considered to be the 'rice granary of Kerala'. The spectacular sights of the green paddy fields will always refresh our mind and soul. The term Kuttanad means 'low lying lands', and is considered to be one of the fertile regions of the world. One of the specialty of Kuttanad is that here we can see farming below sea level. The land is cultivated twice in a year. The harvest season of Kuttanad is filled with fun and celebration. It is one of the few places which is still following traditional system for agriculture practices. They still use traditional water wheel and box made of wood. In order to promote agriculture in 'Kuttanad', the government has initiated an integrated farming system. This includes revival of farming, ecological rehabilitation and enhancement of the livelihood. Keralites should be proud that in 2013, the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has granted heritage status for the farming system in Kuttanad. Kuttanad also holds a tag on Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System. This rich agriculture background of 'Kuttanad' is always attracting tourists to this beautiful place. This also directly and indirectly promotes farm tourism here. Government is also taking major steps to promote 'farm tourism' in Kuttanad.

### 1.1 Domestic Tourism

Tourism development in India has passed through many phases. At Government level the development of tourist facilities was taken up in a planned manner in 1956 coinciding with the Second Five Year Plan. The approach has evolved from isolated planning of single unit facilities in the Second and Third Five Year Plans. The Sixth Plan marked the beginning of a new era when tourism began to be considered a major instrument for social integration and economic development. India is a country known for its lavish treatment to all visitors, no matter where they come from. Its visitor-friendly traditions, varied life styles and cultural heritage and colorful fairs and festivals held abiding attractions for the

tourists. The other attractions include beautiful beaches, forests and wild life and landscapes for eco-tourism, snow, river and mountain peaks for adventure tourism, technological parks and science museums for science tourism; centers of pilgrimage for spiritual tourism; heritage trains and hotels for heritage tourism. Yoga, ayurveda and natural health resorts also attract tourists.

Domestic tourism is as old as the Indian society. According to available statistics, domestic tourism has grown substantially during the last one decade. It increased to 167 million in 1998 from just 64 million in 1990, thus registering a compound annual growth of 12.8 per cent.

Tourism has emerged as an instrument of employment generation, poverty alleviation and sustainable human development. During 1998-99, employment generation through tourism was estimated at 14.79 million. Government of Kerala announced its tourism policy in 2012 aimed at tapping the tourism potential of the State to the maximum and making Kerala a visible global brand in domestic and international markets. This was an extension of the efforts which began in the late 1980s to position Kerala among the major tourism brands in the world. Since then, more specifically since 1990, with peaks at 1992, 2002-04 and 2006-07 very high growth rates have been reported. The fact that for the last five years Tourism has been contributing 7-10% of the state's GDP summarizes the importance of tourism sector in the economy of state and livelihood of the people.

## 1.2 Village tourism in Kerala

The rural life in a Kerala Village, untouched by the sophisticated behaviours of industrialization offers a pristine experience to any traveller. The serene backwaters, swaying coconut farms, soothing paddy fields everything makes the village life of Kerala a memorable and cherishable experience. Far from the tumult and turmoil of the cities these villages usher us into a world where contentment and peace prevail and what better way to enjoy the Kerala Village Tour than watching the idyllic village folk in a Kerala village tour. This is an opportunity for anyone who wants to witness in person the nuances of crafts-making and skills of traditional artisans of Kerala and enjoys the beauty of a Kerala country side. Some of the activities you could enjoy when you opt for a rural tourism are

**Coir Making** – Kerala in colloquial language means land of coconuts and coir is made from coconut fiber extracted from the coconut husks. The husk contains 20% to 30% fiber on which can be spun into strong threads that can be used in mats and handicrafts. The first step in making coir is to “ret” the coconut husk by putting husks in saltwater and then covering with mud. The husks are removed after nine months from the retting mound, and taken to the threshing compounds where retted husks are then pounded and crushed by mostly ladies with mallets or machetes where husks are pulled off to collect fibers which are dried up for spinning. The dried coir is then spun by a spinner at a wheel using a gear with a small spinning axle to create strong yarn thread that can be used in mats and handicrafts. Kerala village tour involves watching the process of creating the coir thread by two female workers in a wheel as coir making is the usual means of livelihood in rural Kerala backwater villages.

**Fishing in Backwaters**–The traditional way of fishing is still practiced in backwaters of Kerala where fishermen uses small canoes for fishing with the help of net/ fish hook. Canoe is parked in the middle of backwaters from where fishes are caught with net or using a bait in fish hook. Fishing is the main source of income for people residing near backwaters where they catch freshwater prawns, lobsters, crabs, clams and oysters. The taste of the much celebrated ‘pearl-spot’ fishes have to be relished to be believed.

**Toddy Tapping** – Toddy is the country liquor in Kerala extracted from Coconut Palms and you can climb up the coconut tree to extract fresh madhura kallu (sweet toddy extracted from the coconut palm) and have it the Kerala way with exotic karimeen pollichathu (baked fresh water fish) or spicy pickles. Toddy is an all-time favorite drink of the rural Kerala and you can add toddy tapping to must do activities in a village tour of Kerala.

**Paddy field Walk** – Walking through paddy fields is completely different walking experience through the narrow dykes that separates one field from another. You may lose yourself in the dazzling green around you, as you’ll have to watch out for the slushy water passages that run through your mud path

**Visit a Nalukettu and Kavu** – One of the activities that can be included in the village tour is the visit the 350 year old Nalukettu house (ancient Keralan architectural style) where a traditional Kerala Hindu family resides and visit the kavu (sacred grove) with the snake god of the family resides.

**Country Boat Cruise** – A country boat cruise offers you a chance to learn about the life of local village people through a Kerala Village tour and chance to know about that part of Kerala which lives along these backwaters throbbing with its own unique culture. When you take a country boat cruise you can enjoy the scenes in a Kerala country side in a backwater cruise -skim past Chinese fishing nets, bowed down paddy fields, local inhabitants engaged in making coir products, rustic homes and swaying coconut palms. When you drift along serene waterways in a country craft, enjoy the breeze, answer a cuckoo’s call, wave back at the cheerful village folk on the banks. Invite some of their chirpy children to hop in for a ride who will keep you well entertained.

**Cycling** – A cycling tour in a Kerala village offers rich mix of endless backwater views and wide sandy beaches and portrayal of the Kerala’s unique culture and rich heritage as well as scenes from Kerala Village life. Cycling tour is one of the most enjoyable activities in rural village tourism

## 2. OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the problems in the development of Agri-tourism
- To discuss the challenges faced by Agri-tourism industry.
- To make suggestions and recommendations for the success of Agri-tourism

The Agri-tourism industry is very wide subject and it includes all over the whole country is not physically possible. Therefore, this study was conducted in Kuttanad ('Rice Bowl of Kerala') is a rural Village situated in Alapuzha district, Kerala

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The research methodology involved both the desk research and field research which was widely used to understand the concept of Agri-tourism and the various components that are involved in the successful development of Agri-tourism.

For the field research, a questionnaire was used comprising both open-ended questions and close-ended questions. The sample size used for the study was 100. The sample was selected in a random manner and the respondents were personally interviewed.

## 4. COMPONENTS OF RURAL TOURISM:

The basic components of rural tourism are:

- Accommodation in rural housing in apartments or small hotels
- Power based on traditional local cuisine
- Complementary activities of leisure and recreation in the vicinity in the place of accommodation, enhancing the knowledge of local culture and traditional life styles, crafts etc
- It is done in rural areas meaning the environment consisting of natural landscapes, mainly agriculture in nature.
- Interaction with local society, ie communication and participation of the local community.
- Motivation based on contact with environment, where tourists seeking nature, traditional architecture, traditions, folk customs etc

## 5. BENEFITS OF AGRI-TOURISM:

### • **Employment opportunities**

Job creation typically occurs in the hotel and catering trades, but can also take place in transport, retailing, and in information/heritage interpretation.

### • **New Business Opportunities**

Tourism generates new opportunities for industry<sup>18</sup>. Even those rural businesses not directly involved in tourism can benefit from tourist activity through developing close relationships with tourist facilities where local foods can be used as part of the tourism offering in a locality.

### • **Increase arts and crafts sale**

Arts and crafts have a special place in the cultural heritage of regions and nations. Many commentators have noted that tourism can assist arts and crafts, both by recognizing their importance, and by purchasing craft products. Income flows from these activities are well documented. Support between the arts and tourism can be a two-way process.

### • **Environmental improvements**

Environmental improvements such as village paving and traffic regulation schemes, sewage and litter disposal can be assisted by tourism revenues and political pressures from tourism authorities. These help develop pride of place, important in retaining existing population and businesses, and in attracting new enterprises and families.

### • **Opportunities for Youth**

The tourism industry is often promoted as an exciting and growing industry suited to the energies and enthusiasm of young people. Career options are enhanced with the opportunities for training and direct involvement in running tourism businesses, especially those within small communities.

### • **Rural Tourism Enhances and Revitalizes Community Pride**

Tourism encourages conformity to an ideal image of community which can result in growth of personal ties and community solidarity. Thus the basis for community solidarity shifts from shared cultural background to shared image. Amenities play a fundamental role in shaping a shared cultural background to shared image. Amenities play a fundamental role in shaping a amenities has positive implications for community pride, particularly rural museums as an important repository of rural culture.

- **Landscape conservation**

Landscape conservation has become an increasingly important form of heritage protection. Landscape is of crucial importance to rural tourism but, equally, visitor use is vital to the landscape conservation industry. Visitor use brings political benefits, can bring economic gains, and can provide jobs in maintaining and repairing traditional landscapes worn by recreational activities.

## 6. BASIC PRINCIPLES OF AGRI-TOURISM:

- **Have something for visitors to see:** Animals, birds, farms and nature are the few things which Agri-tourism could offer to the tourist to see. Apart from these, culture, dress, festivals and rural games could create enough interest among forest in Agri-tourism.
- **Have something for visitors to do:** Participating in agricultural operations and swimming, bullock cart riding, camel riding, buffalo riding, cooking and participating in the rural games are the few activities to quote in which tourist can take part and enjoy.
- **Have something for visitors to buy:** Rural crafts, dress materials, farm gate fresh agriculture products, processed foods are the few items which tourist can buy as memento for remembrance.

### Factors Affecting the Success Of Agri-Tourism

There are 3 factors for the successful of agri-tourism in our country. They are,

- **Farmer :-** Majority of the cases, farmer is less educated, less exposed and innocent. For farmer, any outsider is a guest and treated wholeheartedly without any commercial motive. Treating guest is pleasure for them than pain. He entertains the guest while entertaining himself in the process. He is not like an exploitative natured businessman which itself facilitate a clean tourism atmosphere.
- **Village :-** Village, which is located far from the city lacks urban facilities, but blessed with natural resources. The investment is made by nature in the form of water bodies, fields, forest, mountains, deserts and islands. Community is more homogenous and treating a guest is part of their culture rather than a profession leading to natural environment required for urban tourist.
- **Agriculture :-** Rich resources in agriculture namely land, water and plants are unique from place to place bringing diversity and creating curiosity. Each field is unique which adds to the attraction of tourists. The way of cultivation and the products are great attraction to the urban population. Indigenous knowledge of rural people is a wealth, which adds to novelty and curiosity of urban population. Combination of farmer, village and agriculture create a wonderful situation which provides unlimited satisfaction to the tourist especially from urban areas.

## 7. KERALA'S TRADITIONAL VILLAGE STYLE:

Kerala village tour helps to discover the rustic lifestyle of the people. The village theme will give a taste of typical village life in Kerala .The villagers reaping the harvest in green stretched paddy fields, womenfolk's weaving coir and coir products, Ducks paddling under water etc, will mesmerize the tourists in Kerala. It will feel the smell of fresh air and sound of nature. The Traditions of god's own country used to be practiced during from the old days can no longer be found in recent times in the busy city lifestyle. But many of the villager's can still be seen and to be practiced in the day to day village life of Kerala. The big Theravadu and Nalukettu houses represents the upper and lower class residences in Kerala. In rural area the gave first preference to Family. The male member engaged in agricultural works in the field and female member looks after the household works. But in harvesting season, women also accompany their male partners to the fields for work. In the society in rural Kerala, gave an important place to the older members and they also have an important decision making role in the house.

In festival season, Cultural dances like Kathakkali, Mohiniyattam, Kuchipudi and bharathanatyam are performed mainly in nights. Folk art forms like Pavakkoothu, Villupattu, Kakkari Natakam and the famous Panchavadyam of Kerala are also performed. Another famous and attracted Martial art forms in Kerala are Kalaripayattu and Theyyam

## 8. DISCUSSIONS:

Based on the discussions and detailed analysis, the following positive outcomes at the village in

- ✓ Increased the self confidence of farmers
- ✓ Standard of living of farmers are increased due to agri tourism destination venture
- ✓ Efficient and sustainable use of natural resources
- ✓ Positive support to farmers from the agri tourism spots
- ✓ Multiplier effect in employment generation
- ✓ They have learned various techniques to handle customer services and marketing

- ✓ Farmers have developed themselves into entrepreneurs

The study indicated that the critical factors involved in the successful development of the rural tourism industry are,

- ✓ Lack of access to information
- ✓ Lack of parking lots and narrow roads
- ✓ Hygienic accommodation
- ✓ It affects the local cultures
- ✓ Lack of support from host community
- ✓ Lack of fund by the authorities
- ✓ It affects the freedom of farmers

The success or failure of any tourism depends on its local community; the local people's attitude is one of the key issues for making rural tourism sustainable in the long run.

## 9. CONCLUSION:

The development of agri-tourism in rural areas of Kerala is still in its rising stage. Kerala has perfect opportunities to enhance its agri-tourism offer and it also represents one of the few states which unify different climates, natural characteristics and socio cultural entities. Though there has not been much initiative by the state government for agri-tourism development, it has been successfully initiated through the farmer's efforts.

Life in the villages of Kerala moves at an amazingly slow pace and you will be amazed to find that the people in these villages lead simple lives in the pattern that was prevalent in the olden days. Kerala Village tours are an ideal way to spend a perfectly relaxed holiday at one of these villages in the lap of greenery and an atmosphere of complete tranquillity.

For the success of rural tourism, the tourist must have the following facilities:

- Something to see: Animals, birds, farms, culture of that place, dressings and festivals etc.
- Something to do: Participating in agricultural activities, riding bufaalo and horse, participating in rural games etc.
- Something to buy: Handicrafts, traditional dress items fresh fruits, spot cooking items etc.

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