

## Socio-economic Empowerment of Rural Women Through Rural Tourism Projects in Jammu Region of J&K State in India.

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### ABSTRACT

Rural tourism is a collaboration of activities, services and amenities provided by farmers and rural people to attract tourist to their area in order to generate extra income from their business. The present study was carried out in Surinsar and Shamachack (Jhiri) villages which were covered under rural tourism project by the Department of Tourism, Govt. of Jammu and Kashmir. Two groups comprising of 60 women constituted by the Department of Tourism, J&K were studied. Data was collected on a comprehensively designed tool from 58 respondents involved in rural tourism project to study their level of empowerment, constraints and suggestions through the personal interview technique and group discussion. It was observed that rural based tourism activities strengthened the women empowerment in socio-economic upliftment, household decision making, enhanced participation in educational activities within and outside the state and supplement the family income. Education and extension contact have been found positively correlated with women empowerment under rural based tourism activities.

**Key words :** Tourism, decision making, empowerment

### INTRODUCTION

India is a country of villages and agriculture is the main Tourism is the world largest industry. It accounts for more than 10 per cent of total employment, 11 per cent of global GDP and total tourist trips are predicted to increase to 1.6 billion by 2020. As such it has major and increasing impact on both people and nature. Tourism is termed as rural when rural culture is a key component of the product to offer, depending upon the primary activity component of this product. Rural tourism is a subset of tourism that would consist of wide range of things such as farm/agricultural tourism, cultural tourism, nature tourism adventure tourism and eco-tourism. Any form of tourism that showcases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefitting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling interaction between the tourist and the locals for a more enriching tourism experience can be termed as rural tourism. (Kumara, 2008)

The distinguishing feature of tourism products in rural tourism is the wish to give visitors personalized contact, a taste of the physical and human environment of the villages and also allow them to participate in the activities, traditions and lifestyles of local people. There is also a strong cultural and educational element in this form of leisure tourism. One of the successful examples of community based tourism are BARPAK rural tourism

destination in Nepal, which as a special feature offers the project is Barpak home stay, to enjoy unique features and qualities of village life including accommodation, tasting local foods and having the occasion to see special cultural programmes. Another example of community based tourism is for Tay ethnics in Ho village of Sapa district, Vietnam. Home stay and ethnic foods are the tourist attractions of this community based tourism project funded by *Brot fur die welt* (Bread for the world) Germany. In Philippines 'The Hundred Islands National Park' is one of the community based rural tourism project which offer the features of tourist attractions like swimming, banana boat ride and other water based sport activities. Rural tourism activities have undergone a rapid development in China. It acts as effective catalyst for promotion of agriculture development and upgrading the rural area. Pastoral agriculture tourism which regards rural pastoral landscape & agricultural production activities as tourist attractions such as rural food tour, flower tour, country side tour to meet visitors psychological demand of experiencing and a return to nature. This type of rural tourism model is located in sub-urban area of Beijing, Shanghai, and Chongqing. Similarly folk custom tourism which encompasses cultural and heritage as attractions to stimulate tourist to generate travel motivation and undertake tourism activities. Folk culture tourism is mainly located in China remote area among ethnic minority groups. Turban Karried folk Park, Renziatai, folk village in Rhizao, Shandong province, Jingping in ancient

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culture village in Hunan province are typical folk and custom tourist attractions in China. (W.Ling-en.al, 2013).The concept of rural tourism is also very much prevalent in Malaysia. Home-stay rural tourism in Malaysia include the opportunity to participate in local events, festivals, craft demonstration and a learn about local agricultural practices. This takes the form of home-stay particularly in village like Oranganasli,a tribal group living mostly in forest of central peninsular Malaysia. Agriculture focussed tourism ranges from organised day tours that scratch the surface how tea or fruits are grown, harvested and processed.

The positive contribution of rural tourism to women empowerment can only be determined if poverty reduction and the enhancement of women's dignity and role in the work place are addressed” there is need to develop procedures and established mechanisms to ensure that women really benefit from tourism. To enable women socially and economically empowered tourism has addressed issues of poverty reduction and gave women a chance to earn a living with equity and dignity. Ampumuza(2010) holds that women empowerment through tourism presents a complex situation with chances and challenges intricately weaved together.

Rural tourism is expected to emerge as an important factor for sustainable human development including poverty alleviation, employment generation, environmental re-generation and development of remote areas and empowerment of women. This paper recommends that the government as well as private agencies including NGOs intending to promote rural tourism in the state, India can ensure sustainable economic development and positive social change (Ray *et al*, 2012). In Jammu region tourism department has taken initiatives for boosting rural tourism. In these projects women groups were framed and training intervention on various aspects were imparted to the rural women on local crafts, jute bag making etc.These interventions were mainly focussed on the use of locally available resources / material which could attract the attention of visitors and the locally hand made products which find a good space of marketing in the hands of visitors as there is round the year flow of tourists in Jammu region. Many other interventions of tourist attraction have been deliberated with women group members like folk dances, local songs in traditional dresses and ethnic foods etc.The main focus of these projects is to involve rural women so that they may contribute to the family income thereby raising socio-economic status and attain overall empowerment. The women involved in these projects are earning additional income from jute bag making and from local crafts. The present investigation is an effort to study the

level of socio economic empowerment of women involved in rural tourism projects in Jammu region.

## METHODOLOGY

Village *Shamachack (Jhiri)* is known on the name of *Baba Jitu*, a simple and honest farmer who preferred to kill himself rather than submit to the unjust demands of the local landlord to part with his crop. The place is situated some 14 Km from Jammu. An annual fair is held at Jhiri on the appointed day from and the followers from every corner of North India attend to revere compassion, courage and honesty of *Baba Jito*. *Surinsar* in Jammu district of J&K state is one of the holy shrines of north India situated in lower Trikuta hills. The annual Mela in the month of August attracts devotees and the *Surinsar* Lake attracts tourists round the year. The site is situated 40 kilometers from Jammu and south of Udhampur town. On *Sankranti* day of every month a large number of people visit the Lake Shrine for holy bath and enjoy the scenic beauty of the historical place. Both the places have been developed as rural tourism sites by J&K Tourism Department.The present study was carried out in rural tourism projects at *Surinsar* and *Shamachack (Jhiri)* villages which were covered under rural tourism project by the Department of Tourism. Two groups comprising of 60 women constituted by the Department of Tourism, J&K were studied.Data was collected on a comprehensively designed tool from 58 respondents involved in rural tourism project to study their level of empowerment through the personal interview technique and group discussion. The dimensions of perceived socio economic empowerment considered for the study included; the decision making capacity, social involvement, communication behaviour, psychological aspects and economic independence.For seeking response on each dimension suitable statements were devised, tested and validated for inclusion in final schedule. By summing up the scores obtained on all five dimensions of empowerment of each respondent, final empowerment scores were obtained and correlation coefficient between socio personal characteristics and empowerment was calculated.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pursuant to table 1 it is clear that there was enhancement in the decision making capacities of rural women involved in rural tourism projects.Participation in household decision making received highest (78.45) mean per cent score followed by decision making for better education to children (56.03), decision making for selection of enterprises (17.24) and contribution to the community decision making (10.34) respectively. Respondents were of the view that after becoming a

contributing factor in the augmentation of family income, they are being duly considered in household decision making.

**Table1: Perceived change in decision making capacity of women under rural based tourism activities n= 58**

Attribute	MPS	Rank
Participation in household decision making	78.45	I
Contribution to the community decision making	10.34	V
Decision making for selection of enterprises	17.24	IV
Decision making for better education to children	56.03	II

MPS: Mean Percent Score

It is interpreted from table 2 that participation in educational activities within and outside the state is the leading indicator of social empowerment of women (46.55 MPS) under rural based tourism activities followed by gain in knowledge from cross cultural approach (18.96 I), sense of personal security (15.51), freedom of expression due to self dependence (9.48) and increase in reputation as an agent of social change (8.62). These findings are in conformity with findings of (Lama,2000) and Tzu *et al* (2005)

**Table 2: Perceived change social participation of women empowerment under rural based tourism activities n=58**

Attribute	MPS	Rank
Freedom of expression due to self dependence	9.48	IV
Sense of personal security	15.51	III
Participation in educational activities within and outside the state	46.55	I
Gain in knowledge from cross cultural approach	18.96	II
Increase in reputation as an agent of social change	8.62	V

**Table 3: Perceived change in economics of women under rural based tourism activities n=58**

Attribute	MPS	Rank
Supplementation to family income	84.48	I
Enhancement in purchasing capacity	48.27	II
Augmentation in asset possession	7.75	V
Liberalization of attitude of banks towards loaning	18.96	IV
Involvement in chit-fund self financing committees	21.55	III

The in-depth scrutiny of table 3 depicts that supplementation to family income is the main economic indicator of women empowerment through rural based tourism activities (84.48) followed by enhancement in purchasing capacity (48.27), involvement in chit-fund self financing committees (21.55), liberalized attitude of banks towards loaning (18.96) and augmentation in asset possession (7.75 MPS Rank IV). The findings of the study are in consonance with the findings of the study conducted by Scheyvens (2010).

**Table 4: Perceived change in communication behaviour of women under rural based tourism activities n=58**

Attribute	MPS	Rank
Enhanced understanding of group dynamics	73.27	I
Improvement in interpersonal communication	40.51	II
Development of empathy	6.03	V
Interest for information seeking through mass media	23.27	III
Enhancement of information processing	16.94	IV

Analysis of table no 4 shows that rural based tourism activities improved the communication behaviour of the women. Among different indicators/ attributes of communication behaviour; enhanced understanding of group dynamics (73.27) was the leading indicator of women empowerment under rural based tourism activities followed by improvement in interpersonal communication (40.51), interest for information seeking through mass media (23.27), enhancement of information processing (16.94) and development of empathy (6.03) in order.

**Table 5: Perceived change in psychological attributes of women under rural based tourism activities. n=58**

Attribute	MPS	Rank
Attitude change	57.75	I
Removal of prejudices	30.17	II
Improvement in Co-opting approach	7.75	IV
Enhancement of achievement motivation	23.27	III
Removal of cognitive dissonance	4.31	V

Data incorporated in the table 5 depicts that attitude change was the major psychological indicator of women empowerment under rural based tourism activities (57.75) followed by removal of prejudices (30.17), enhancement of achievement motivation (23.27), improvement in Co-opting approach (7.75) and removal of cognitive dissonance (4.31). The changes in psychological attributes was observed at a lesser extent, however the findings are supportive to Lennie (2002) where it was reported the respondents perceived increase in self-confidence and self-esteem, feeling more valued, respected that have more standing or credibility and greater motivation, inspiration, enthusiasm and interest to develop new skills and knowledge, to keep pushing for better services for rural people.

**Table 6: Overall changes in perceived empowerment of women under rural based tourism activities n=58**

Indicator	MPS	Rank
Decision making	39.55	I
Social empowerment	19.82	V
Economic independence	36.20	II
Improved communication behaviour	32.00	III
Psychological indicators	24.65	IV

Perusal of data in table no 6 shows that among all indicators of women empowerment decision making was the leading indicator (MPS 39.55) followed by economic independence (MPS 36.20), improved communication behaviour (MPS 32.00), psychological indicators (MPS 24.65) and social empowerment (MPS 19.82).

**Table 7: Correlation between socio-personal characteristics of the respondents with the degree of women empowerment.**

Personal characteristics	Correlation coefficient
Age	-0.863*
Education	0.824*
Family size	0.136*
Size of holding	0.064NS
Extension contact	0.863*

Significant at 5% level, NS: Non Significant

The data incorporated in table 7 shows the correlation between different socio personal characteristics and degree of women empowerment and it has been concluded that there is significant positive correlation between extension contact and degree of women empowerment. Education is also found to be positively correlated with degree of women empowerment. Age of the respondents was found to be negatively correlated with degree of empowerment and there is non-significant correlation of size of holding with women empowerment.

### CONCLUSIONS

The study it has been concluded that through rural based tourism activities women empowerment has been noticed in the key areas such as participation in household decision making, participation in educational activities within and outside the state, supplementation to family income. It has been further concluded that responsible rural tourism is far more than just economic viability. Participation in rural tourism activities has brought psychological changes in rural women. In fact rural tourism activities mobilize the rural community as a whole and women folk in particular. When a woman is empowered, family is empowered and when family is empowered whole society is empowered that is why it is said that a woman is the torch bearer of the society. In this background it has been suggested to frequently organize the capacity building programmes in the area of rural tourism potential along with education tours within and outside the state for increasing the exposure of the persons. Strengthening the linkage between tourism department, tour operators and these groups to increase the tourists' influx and wide publicity of rural tourism through involvement of mass media has to go a long way in its popularity. Through self-help groups rural annual congregations may be organised on large scale for

promotion of rural tourism, rural games, folk dances, ethnic food *melas* and marketing of rural products for which policy support in the form of better road connectivity is required and ultimately integration of all stake holders is the way ahead.

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