

Management of Rural Tourism in Rajasthan: Prospects and Issues (An Analytical Study of Shekhawati Region)

***Dr. Om Prakash Sharma**

Abstract

The main thrust area of the study is to bring out the prospects and emerging challenges in relation to promotion and management of rural tourism in Shekhawati region of Rajasthan. The study also widely touches upon the promotional strategies that are required to be focused by tourism sector. The 'Shekhawati region' covers a large rural area (**15,760.7 Sq. Km.**) of north-eastern Rajasthan and comprises mainly the **Sikar, Jhunjhunu and Churu** districts. It is the homeland of Birla, Singhania, Modi, Todi, Poddar, Lahiya, Jhunjhunwala, Kedia, Kanoria and other Marwari business houses. The management of rural tourism leads to the encouragement of mass tourism. It offers sources for employment opportunities and handsome earnings of foreign currency and generates multiplier effects to the rural economy. This study covers all aspects of the development and management of rural tourism in the region of Shekhawati. Challenges and obstacles regarding promotion of rural tourism have been described in proper manner. Moreover, significant and constructive suggestions for effective rural development in Shekhawati area have also been narrated at the end.]

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

To identify various natural as well as man made known and lesser-known rural tourist attractions, which can be investigated for tourists in Shekhawati region to promote the Rural Tourism. And to find out the social, economic, cultural and environmental problems and emerging challenges in way to promoting rural tourism & allied aspects and their probable solutions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The universe for the present study is the Shekhawati Region of the State of Rajasthan. To assess the factual position of the inventory management of KCC, significant tools and techniques like – questionnaires, schedules, personal interviews, opinion polls etc., have been used for collection of data and various information.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM: Now a days, tourism has emerged as a dominant socio-economic force on the world horizon. This phenomenon has become one of the world's fastest growing industries. In the last two decades, tourism industry has developed so fast that it has not only changed the attitude of the people towards tourism but so many new concepts of tourism have

Management of Rural Tourism in Rajasthan: Prospects and Issues (An Analytical Study of Shekhawati Region)

Dr. Om Prakash Sharma

also evolved throughout the world. Earlier cultural, historical, religious and business tourism were popular in the world. But now the changed mood of tourists has paved way for 'Rural tourism', Eco tourism, Adventurous tourism, Health tourism, Theme Park tourism, Night tourism etc., which attracts tourists from far off places. The concept of **Rural Tourism** establishes the argument that Rural Tourism could be one of the important non-farm sector economic activities to generate employment in rural areas and contribute substantially to socio-economic development.

The discreet and planned promotion of rural tourism with active involvement of people and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIS) can be one of the important key inputs in generating rural employment, protecting the cultural heritage, art & crafts, social traditions in the far-flung areas where there is hardly any scope for any other economic activity and there is abundance of rich and attractive tourism products. All regions of Rajasthan including Shekhawati have everything to gain by focusing on rural tourism. Therefore, the State Government should play the role of catalyst and facilitator to promote the rural tourism. But it is also important that the promotion of rural tourism should be based on perspective plans which must incorporate environmental impact studies, carrying capacity studies, instruments of spatial and land use planning, instruments of architecture controls, strategy for preparing the local community to safeguard its cultural identity and awareness programmes for local participation.

Today, Shekhawati is known more for its exquisite **Frescoes** that adorned on the walls of the buildings here. It may well be described as **An Open-Air-Art Gallery & Fresco land** of Rajasthan. No wheels in the world is there such a profusion of wall paintings, so intricate and finely executed in hundreds of temples, forts, havelis, chhatris, wells, cenotaphs and monuments situated in rural area of Shekhawati region. In addition to Frescoes, the semi-desert zone of Shekhawati gets its natural diversity from the **Aravalli hill ranges and desert strip**. It also has a long chain of **famous and old Pilgrimage Centers** in rural areas. The typical topography, glorious past heroic feats, rich history, gay folk life, arts & crafts, music & dance, fairs & festivals and special food cuisine of villages of Shekhawati region have also created a special halo of attraction for the tourists from the country and abroad. With all the richness available in rural areas, Shekhawati region offers great possibilities of further promotion of Rural Tourism. If the rural tourism potential in this region is fully exploited, it is estimated that four times increase in employment, five times increase in the number of tourists and three times increase in foreign exchange earnings is possible. It may be pointed out that in Shekhawati; little attention has been given to investigate the hidden but splendid tourist places at the micro level. The few empirical works on regional tourism have remained centered on the business-oriented views. It may also be stated that the results achieved through Tourism Department in Shekhawati in relation to promotion of rural tourism, have not been encouraging.

Overview of Literature: 'Rural Tourism' could be one of the important non-farm sector economic activities to generate employment in rural areas and contribute substantially to socio-economic development. In India and Rajasthan, although certain researches on Rural Tourism, have been undertaken but mostly these studies have focused on administrative and economic aspects of rural tourism. Some studies involving theoretical issues of Tourism Industry in Shekhawati Region have

Management of Rural Tourism in Rajasthan: Prospects and Issues

(An Analytical Study of Shekhawati Region)

Dr. Om Prakash Sharma

also been undertaken. Such studies may be mentioned as under:

'Shekhawati ka Naveen Itihas' (1990) a study by Dr. R. L. Mishra is a nice work on the historical background of this region. Though the study covers most of the historical monuments of Shekhawati region but these monuments have not been discussed as an important attraction of rural tourism. Problems and suggestions relating to maintenance and protection of these monuments have not been analyzed by the author. Tara Dat Nirvirodh in his study 'Shekhawati mein Paryatan' (1983) has given a detailed analysis of old Havelis, Forts, Temples, Wells, Cenotaphs made by Marwari business houses, however, this study discusses only the size and design of these old buildings. Another study of Dr. Pradeep Shrivastav on 'Fresco Paintings of Shekhawati' has been concentrating mainly on the history and pictures of fresco paintings adorned on the walls of old buildings of this region. This has also ignored the maintenance and preservation of these valuable paintings. Some government publications / browsers relating to tourism attractions of Shekhawati are also available but these throw light only on those tourism attractions which are available in the towns of Shekhawati region. They have not touched the issue of potentials and future challenges of Rural Tourism in this region. Therefore, it is essential to undertake a comprehensive research study relating to promotion of rural tourism in Shekhawati region.

The fresco painters of Shekhawati were called "**CHEJARAS**" and belonged to the caste of Potters or Kumhars. In this region, initially only vegetable pigments were used for colors – like neel for blue, lime for white, geru sand for red, cow urine for yellow. Mixed in lime water and subsequently beaten in to plaster, they remained unfazed for almost as long as the building lasted.

It was observed during the study that in Jhunjhunu and Sikar districts of Shekhawati region, the following villages have various buildings in which the fresco paintings exist, which attracts many Indian as well as foreign tourists:

Name of Villages	Number of Fresco Buildings
Danta Ramgarh	126
Mahansar	17
Alisar	36
Malsisar	18
Baggar	22
Chirawa	68
Balara	18
Bisaua	35
Churi agitgarh	124

Management of Rural Tourism in Rajasthan: Prospects and Issues

(An Analytical Study of Shekhawati Region)

Dr. Om Prakash Sharma

Khetri	33
Singhana	17
Ringas	26
Mandrella	43
Khachariabas	19
Devgarh	20
Ragunathgarh	08
Khandela	31
Others	206

It was observed during the study that the hidden wealth of the wall paintings of Jhunjhunu and Sikar districts of Shekhawati has drawn the attention of tourists a bit late. Before 1978 hardly a few foreign tourists had paid a visit to this area, because at that time there was dearth of hotel accommodation for foreign tourists. During 1978 when Hotel Castle was started at Mandawa to accommodate the foreign tourists, it attracted several foreign tourists. Afterwards, Hotel Dera in Dundlod and Hotel Roop Niwas Palace in Nawalgarh were started. This resulted in pouring in of several foreign visitors to this area. Presently more than 28 hotels have been opened by Government as well as private entrepreneurs. that provides all kinds of facilities to the foreign tourists.

In view of large area of Jhunjhunu and Sikar districts of Shekhawati region and the important places of tourist attractions which are scattered in many villages of these districts, the present population of hotels is not sufficient to cater the increasing needs of the tourists. Therefore, due to increasing trend of foreign tourists in Jhunjhunu and Sikar districts it is felt that Government as well as business organizations should set up new hotel accommodations. It is very essential that Government as well as private owners should preserve the fresco paintings - which are the main cause of attraction of foreign tourists to Shekhawati region. If these Frescoes of Jhunjhunu and Sikar districts are preserved as a lasting symbol of the local culture, they will continue to attract tourists.

MAJOR PROMOTIONAL PROBLEMS OF RURAL TOURISM IN SHEKHAWATI:

It is a fact that the region of Shekhawati is very rich in fresco paintings, natural scenes, architectural buildings etc. These have also enormous historical monuments, forts and buildings with attractive fresco paintings and pilgrimages accompanied with lot of fairs and festivals. Besides this the culture of Jhunjhunu and Sikar districts is also filled with humorous folk dances, folk songs etc. thus it has great potentials of attracting large number of tourists. But view of the following barriers, the rural tourism of this region could not make the desired development in comparison to other developed tourism districts _

Management of Rural Tourism in Rajasthan: Prospects and Issues

(An Analytical Study of Shekhawati Region)

Dr. Om Prakash Sharma

- As on today, despite being a network of road and rail, there are several tourist places in this region where there is lack of proper approach road and rail transport facilities. In certain places no regular transport is available.
- Most of the excursion places of Shekhawati are situated in remote areas far from the reach of train links, although, all the big cities of India are well connected with broad gauge rail line but this region still suffer from broad-gauge lines.
- Since the region does not have air landing facility, this restricts the number of foreign tourists.
- There is dearth of standard residential accommodations which can not meet the requirement of foreign tourists fully. At present there are about 28 hotels operating in this region which are insufficient to cater the needs of incoming tourists.
- At present there is little contribution from private sector on the development of tourist places. Our history speaks that in the past most of the beautiful monuments, domes, havelis etc. were the contribution of private sector, where as today their contribution is negligible and they have lost their interest in this field.
- It was observed during the study that the foreign tourists were not fully satisfied with the boarding facilities provided to them in Shekhawati region. As a matter of fact, the food and snacks served in this region to the foreign tourists are not of their tastes or we can say it was not up to the mark.
- Presently, hardly a few agencies are organizing package tours, such agencies arrange the package tours of the places or big cities which are well connected with rail, road and air links. Thus, rarely any agency might have arranged any package tour for the isolated excursion places of Shekhawati region.
- As discussed earlier, there are a few rural places in Jhunjhunu and Sikar districts where, there is ample scope for their development as tourist place. By a little interest and providing some infrastructural facilities such places could also be converted into excursion places.
- Today, some of the old forts, havelis, and monuments are in very bad shape. Due to their dilapidated condition, they may prove life hazard instead of entertaining a tourist.
- The irregular power supply is also a hindrance in increasing the number of tourists. Because at the time of survey most of the hoteliers and excursionists reported that they were feeling a lot of inconvenience due to irregular power supply particularly in Jhunjhunu and Sikar districts.
- For the historical forts, monuments, buildings etc., it is essential that their historical backgrounds should be explained to the tourists in an interesting way. But there is total dearth of such guides in this region. The guides who accompany the package tours are hardly aware of the historical backgrounds of such rural tourist places in Jhunjhunu and Sikar districts.

Management of Rural Tourism in Rajasthan: Prospects and Issues

(An Analytical Study of Shekhawati Region)

Dr. Om Prakash Sharma

- In these districts there is no tourism information Centre except the one which has recently been opened in Jhunjhunu. In absence of such tourism information centers the tourists are unable to get proper guidance and information. At times the tourists returned without any excursion visit in lack of proper information.
- Although these Jhunjhunu and Sikar districts are famous for their fresco paintings but due to proper preservation and protection most of the frescoes are getting faded or destroyed in the dilapidated havelis and forts.
- There is no tourism training Centre in these districts, in absence of tourism training Centre, the taxi drivers, hoteliers, tour operators, tourism personnel force etc. do not have proper information about the places of excursion. Since the taxi drivers etc. are not properly trained, they are not able to handle the tourist's insight manners due to language problem.
- During study some of the foreigners disclosed that they were cheated in India by taxi operators as well as rickshaw pullers. They were also black mailed by some of the travel agents and the member of the LAPKA group and DIBBA group. In addition, they were also making complaints about some touters. Although they stated that they faced such problems in big cities but it is afraid that if no appropriate timely action is taken by the concerned authorities, the above problems may engulf these districts also.
- There are certain attractive and historical rural places in both Jhunjhunu and Sikar districts but still they are unknown to the tourists.
- Some unsocial elements destroy the beauty of the historical monuments by scratching the buildings, frescoes and writing names and other indecent slogans / sentences and by drawing obscene pictures on the walls and also by spreading dirt on such places.
- There is no scheme or facilities from government side to motivate the local and domestic tourists.
- While surveying it was observed that certain greedy people are disposing of the historical and architectural items like chandeliers and other decorated items, wooden windows and doors fixed in historical buildings, forts, havelis etc. situated in rural areas of Jhunjhunu and Sikar districts, on which artistic design work was done in old times. Thus, they are destroying in the beauty of these historical buildings. If such a tendency of the people is not prevented and controlled properly, the time may come when the attraction towards these historical buildings of this region will be lost. And thus, this will have an adverse impact on the tourists.

CONCLUSION:

The main purpose of the present study is to promote and explore the rural tourism potentiality of the Shekhawati region of Rajasthan and to highlight and describe the related problems and future challenges in the present market driven economy. In order to promote the potentiality of rural tourism and to manage the problems having relation to the rural tourism in Jhunjhunu, Churu and

Management of Rural Tourism in Rajasthan: Prospects and Issues

(An Analytical Study of Shekhawati Region)

Dr. Om Prakash Sharma

Sikar districts, constructive and effective measures and techniques must be adopted by the Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan.

***Lecturer
Department of Bus. Admn
Govt. College
Sumerpur, Pali (Raj.)**

REFERENCES:

- Bhawani H. : Shekhawati Ka Naveen Bhogal Kutir Prakashan 1998
- Datta Sakti : Art Architecture in M. India AlfaPublications2007
- Garg Suchi : Diverse Aspects of Tourism Alfa Publications,2006
- Shastri B R : Shekhawati Prakash Kutir Prakashan 1990
- Sharma J M : Sikar ka Itihas Rajasthan Agency, Kolkata, 1986
- Shekhawat S. : Rao Shekha Rajasthan Agency, Kolkata ,1997
- Singh Raghunath: Jhunjhunu Mandal ka Itihas, Rajasthan Agency, Kolkata, 2012.
- Daily Rajasthan Patrika,
- Daily Nafa Nuksan
- Daily Economic Times,
- Daily Hindustan Times, New Delhi.
- Annual Reports and Prativedan of last ten years, Department of Tourism and RTDC Government of Rajasthan.

**Management of Rural Tourism in Rajasthan: Prospects and Issues
(An Analytical Study of Shekhawati Region)**

Dr. Om Prakash Sharma