

## COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM- WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON HOMESTAYS

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### **Abstract**

Community based tourism (CBT) can be one way of creating a more sustainable tourism industry. CBT development is characterized as a form of locally situated development that uses tourism to generate economic, social, and cultural benefits within a community. This process occurs through increased community participation in decision making and the sustainable development of both natural and cultural resources. Homestays are one such means through which CBT is being encouraged. This paper focuses on the various dimensions of CBT with special reference to Homestays. Homestay tourism is a rapidly growing niche market, utilized by an increasing number of domestic and international tourists. The paper explores the importance of homestays in Tourism with special reference to the homestays at Orchha (M.P.)

**Key words: Community Based Tourism, Homestays, Tourism**

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## Introduction

Tourism has become one of the largest global industries (Roe and Khanya, 2001), with the expectation of 1.6 billion international arrivals by 2020 (UNWTO, 2011: 11) has adopted the principle of sustainability in anticipation to the destructive tendency of mass tourism.

Community-based tourism has, for over the last few decades, been promoted as a means of development whereby the social, environmental and economic needs of local communities are met through the offering of a tourism product of the local region.

Community Based Tourism (CBT) is quite popular all over the world. It is a `visitor-host interaction that has meaningful participation by both, and generates economic and conservation benefits for local communities and environments. It can be found in Asian countries such as in Thailand, Cambodia, Mongolia, India and Indonesia which has formed a CBT network. Other countries in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean have also formed a CBT network. A community based homestay is one of the programmes in the CBT activities (Amran, 2009).

CBT aims at small-scale tourism development using the community traditional life and the rural environment as a principal attraction, emphasizing the involvement of the local people as key players during its planning and implementation. Thus the impact will go directly to the community; any benefit is expected to be used as resources for the village development.

While ecotourism moved towards strategies being chalked out towards environmental conservation, community based tourism looked towards preservation of the socio-economic fabric of small communities, apart from ensuring the moral perspective of letting people manage their own resources, thereby increasing accountability, while the income from tourist activities acts as an incentive, as well as providing means to, conserve the natural and cultural resources. CBT promotes sustainable tourism. The market niche for this type of tourism is: people want to live close to nature and experience an authentic way of life; therefore, CBT facilitates their way to find meaning in life.

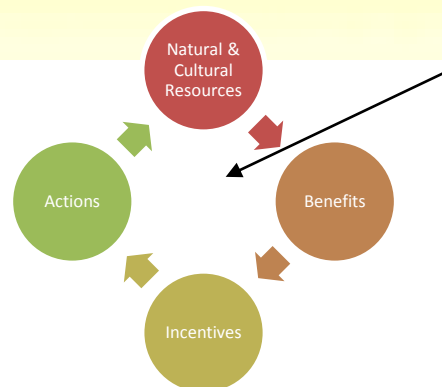
With the world, increasingly coming into the grip of a sustainability driven frame of mind, empowering small and rural communities, enabling them to preserve their traditional lifestyles is the baseline of every long term growth strategy. In this backdrop, tourism ethics are gradually transforming from 'leisure' to 'experience', and niches involving the local community as a core component of the product have gained strong momentum, where 'involvement' and 'adaptation' to the traditional lifestyle forms a crucial element of tourist behaviour.

For a number of developing countries their natural and cultural heritage continues to be a source of significant economic benefits, attracting international and domestic visitors often in search of an authentic natural and to a lesser degree, cultural experience. However, detailed information on the number of visitors visiting these areas and the amount of resultant economic activity in developing countries is both difficult to obtain and often unreliable

Regarding the change occurring in CBT villages, the ideal development is to preserve the culture, tradition, and natural environment while embracing the opportunity to develop, and satisfying the tourist's needs. The key rationale underlying the approach and objectives of CBT for conservation and development is that CBT through increased intensities of participation can provide widespread economic and other benefits and decision making power to communities. These economic benefits act as incentives for participants and the means to conserve the natural and cultural resources on which income generation depends.

### Fig 1: Relationship between Resources and Actions in CBT

(Adapted from Community-Based Tourism for Conservation and Development: A Resource Kit)



The community where community based tourism is started should necessarily have a good understanding of CBT to be able to respond properly and take control. One of the critical issues for CBT is the development of products that satisfy the tourists, whilst also accommodating the interest of the community and the natural environment. The CBT products do not require sophistication and high investment, because the CBT tourists who choose to stay in the village need only basic tourism facilities and services that emphasize keeping clean and hygiene. They want to enjoy the authentic village life the way they are. However, information and communication regarding the CBT villages must be made available to the potential market. It is apparent that CBT has a potential to become a solution for sustainability and simultaneously functioning as a means of community development.

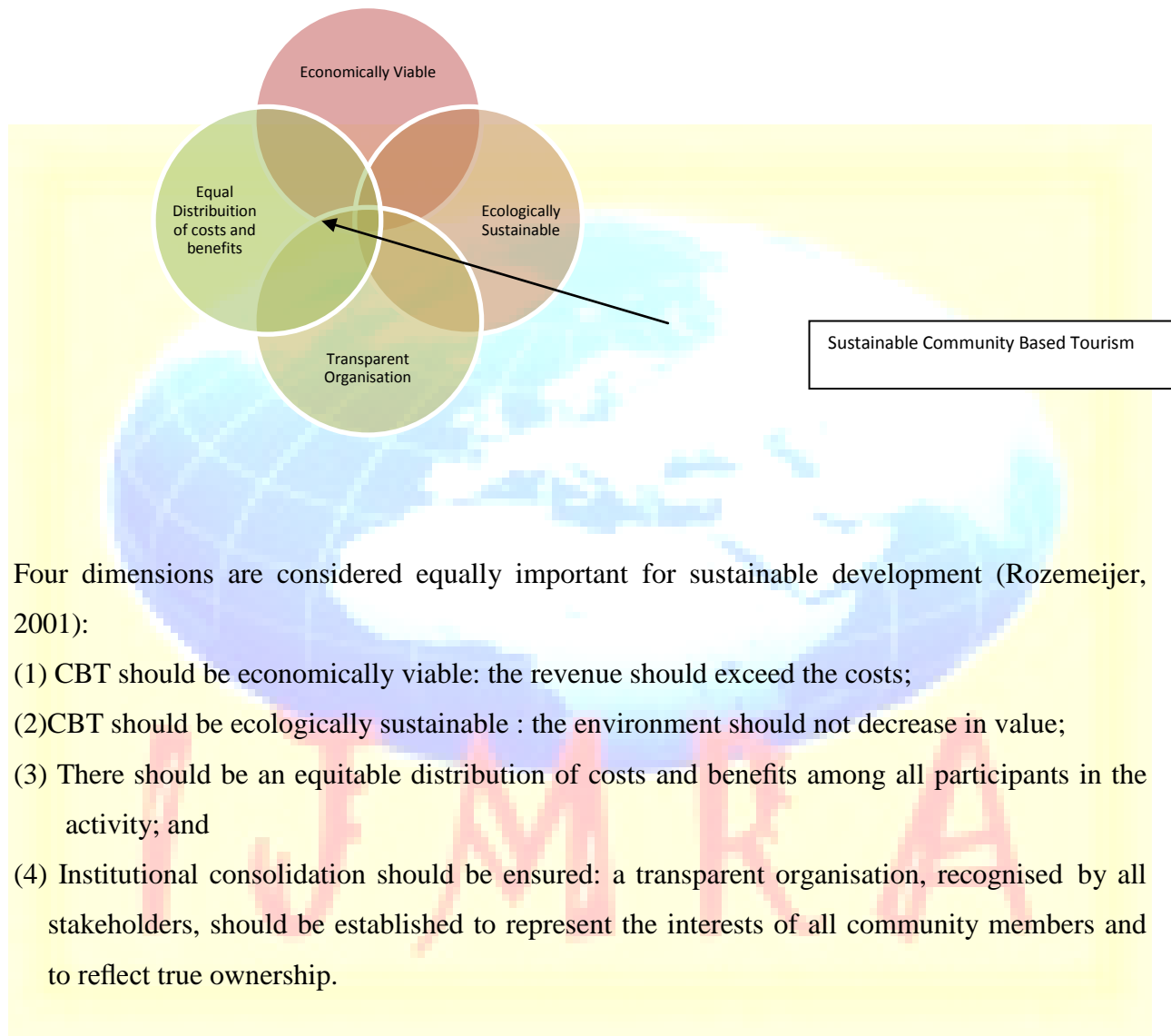
### **Sustainable CBT**

Sustainable tourism is 'tourism that is developed and maintained in a manner, and at such a scale, that it remains economically viable over an indefinite period and does not undermine the physical and human environment that sustains and nurtures it' (Harris et al, 2002).

Sindinga (1999) states that sustainability in tourism implies resource conservation which supports the local community's level of technology and lifestyle and also allows for sound environmental management. This concept is also in line with the principles adopted by the 1992 Rio Earth Summit which calls for increasing the capacity of increasing incomes and employment, creating institutions and empowering local people and using tourism to 'fuel economic growth, alleviate poverty and to facilitate the equitable distribution of resources (Sindinga, 1999).

For CBT to be successful it is important to be aware of and incorporate critical linkages with other scales and sectors of operations. According to Rozemeijer (2001) CBT projects are economically viable if revenue generated exceed the costs, ecologically viable if the environment does not decrease in value, promote sustainable development if there is equitable distribution of costs and benefits among all participants in the activity, and are institutionally consolidated when they are transparent and are recognized by all stakeholders, represent the interests of the community and reflect true ownership. This is shown diagrammatically in the figure below.

Fig1: Four Dimensions of Sustainable Community Based Tourism (Rozemeijer 2001, 15 and Mearns, 2003, 30)



The anticipated benefits of CBT are three (Rozemeijer, 2001):

- (1) CBT generates income and employment and, as such, contributes to rural development – a benefit that especially applies in remote areas;
- (2) The benefits derived from the use of natural resources for tourism will prompt the community to use these valuable resources in a sustainable way; and

(3) CBT adds value to the national tourism product through diversification of tourism, increasing volume and economies of scale.

### Typologies of Community Participation

Various scholars have attempted to develop useful models that conceptualize community participation in the context of development studies in general, but not related particularly to any economic sector (Arnstein, 1969 as cited in Tosun, 2006; Pretty, 1995; Tosun, 1999). Simply put, their studies focused mostly on participatory development approaches in development studies though they offer a useful tool towards a more authentic and interactive community participation (Tosun, 2006). However, Tosun (1999), after reviewing these studies, examined community participation in the tourism industry and designed a model that can be applied specifically to the tourism industry. His model suggested three forms (typologies) of participation which “contextualizes community participation as a categorical term that allows participation of people, citizens or a host community in their affairs at different levels: local, regional or national”. These are: spontaneous community participation, coercive community participation and induced community participation (Figure 2). Tosun (2006) compares his three forms of community participation to those proposed by Pretty (1995) and Arnstein (1971).

Figure 2. Normative typologies of community participation

8	Citizen Control	Degrees of citizen power	→	Spontaneous participation
7	Delegated power			
6	Partnership			
5	Placation	Degrees of citizen tokenism	→	Induced participation
4	Consultation			
3	Informing			
2	Therapy	Non-participation	→	Coercive participation
1	Manipulation			
Arnstein's (1969) typology of community participation.				Tosun's (1999) typology of community participation.

Source: Tosun (2006)

### Community Based Homestays

In concept CBT is managed and owned by the community. It still gives the communities the power to decide its own pace of development protects the environment and fosters cross-cultural awareness (Tsonis, 2009). Community-based homestay tourism is a form of tourism that is closely related to nature, culture and local custom and is intended to attract a certain segment of the tourist market that desires authentic experiences. In 1996, holidays involving staying with an ordinary family in a private home were identified as a tourism product with the potential to grow in popularity (Swarbrooke and Horner, 2007). However, whilst many projects have been funded in developing countries, their success (or otherwise) has not been widely monitored and, therefore, the actual benefits to local communities remain largely unquantified. In a homestay programme, a community based homestay are collectively based on the community actively hosting tourists. The homestay programme is seemingly synonymous with the Community-Based Tourism programme. Community based tourism in the form of homestay also means the villagers do not have to leave their villages to seek fortune in the cities.

Homestay is an alternative tourism product that has the potential to attract tourists due to a marked increase in international demand for tourism that enhances tourist knowledge by allowing them to observe, experience and learn about the way of life of the local residents of their destinations. A homestay programme is a form of accommodation that involves having tourist stay with selected families where they can interact and experience the daily life of these families as well as experience the host country's culture (Amirruding, 2009).

Many tourists believe that the homestays they participate in represent a unique living in a new culture. Tourists seek authentic experience and architecture of the host culture. Homestays could provide the cultural experience and the sense of being at home. This allows them to behave more freely and feel comfortable and relaxed in a foreign culture. The search for an authentic experience among travelers also increases the construction of cultural and heritage based tourism in order to provide a more authentic encounter for tourists. Through homestays, these cultural attributes often provide participants - with such staged authenticity and acceptable satisfaction while hosts seek to offer tourists a genuine connection to the community. Residents desire

tourists to visit their houses because travelers bring economic benefits to their community while they still maintain their traditional culture and heritage (Cole, 2006).

Culture and heritage tourism trends have particular relevance for rural areas when they are accompanied by abundant natural resources. Traditional ways of earning on stocks provide the primary source of income. But, to stimulate rural economies, it has become unavoidable for rural regions to seek alternative uses for local resources (Liu, 2006). Cultural heritage tourism is an option for enhancing rural lifestyles and distributing income in the region. As a result, tourism has become the priority tool of rural orthodoxy (Augustyn, 1998). Homestay programs play the main role in cultural tourism and are the fastest growing segments of the tourism market. (Wang, 2007). The culture and heritage that has been preserved in a location causes the local people's everyday lives to infiltrate the everyday lives of travelers and thus, makes a homestay more attractive. Because of this, homestay tourism is a rapidly growing niche market, utilized by an increasing number of domestic and international tourists. As an attraction, it also continues to grow due to word-of-mouth. Therefore, to expand this market, the desirable cultural and heritage attributes should be considered in order to raise the number of travelers and thus, increase the local resident income. In addition, operators need to regard which attributes influence tourist satisfaction and their destination choice in order to formulate the strategies that attract and better satisfy customers.

By having CBT, the community will be aware of the commercial and social value placed on their natural and cultural heritage through tourism. These include social benefits such as exchange of knowledge, moral contribution to the overall community experience, and economic contribution to the whole community, enhances structure, increase materialism and raised expectations (Tsonis, 2009). On the individual basis, the benefit could be in the form of experience of guests, experience of host and family, beside the economic benefits and the cross-cultural interaction.

Community Based Homestays is seen as an opportunity for local people living in tourism destinations to gain positive benefits from tourism development and the state's conservation of forests and protected areas. Past studies have elucidated that the standard of living and employment opportunities of the rural communities depend very much on tourism industry



(Bredhenhann&Wickens, 2003; Ruiz Molina, Gil-Saura, &Moliner-Velazquez, 2010). Nonetheless, tourism may bring negative impact to the local residents if it is not managed in a responsible way. In order to achieve a sustainable tourism development, local community leaders and stakeholders in tourism industry should work together to manage rural tourism industry as a 'community industry' (Murphy, 1985). Hence, for the tourism-related economy to sustain it and the residents to be satisfied, residents must be willing to take part in the process. Considering the frequency of interaction between residents and tourists, their willingness to serve as kind hosts is critical to the success of tourism. Therefore, residents are encouraged to be actively involved in the planning process and their attitudes toward tourism and perceptions of its impact on community life must be continually assessed to increase their satisfaction (Allen, Long, Perdue &Kieselbach, 1988)

The associations of homestay establishments which link to the concept of the home can be distinguished from other forms of accommodation. In homestay accommodations, the boundaries of private homes are opened to public space, distinguishing from other accommodations with private space open to staff only (Lynch, 2000b). Thus, one may refer to the sector of homestay accommodations to distinguish the accommodation from other types which do not share all characteristics to visitors. Homestay accommodation types include farmstay accommodation, some small hotels, host families, and bed and breakfasts. It is used to refer to types of accommodation where tourists or guests pay directly or indirectly to stay in private homes (Lashley& Morrison, 2000). Lynch (2000a) studied networking in the homestay sector which found the particular nature of the homestay was the interaction between guests and hosts/family. The family has a key role to play in setting the norms of behavior which impact the guest while staying in the home.

Homestays are outstanding attractions which pull for the attention from operators. Moreover, homestay activities develop communities and increase community income while still maintaining the culture and environment of the local area. Simple lifestyles of local residents have become an important attraction which gains the attention of tourists.

Homestays are viewed as culture and heritage tourism, which emerged with the culture of local residents. Homestay tourists believe that the homestay represent a unique way of living in a new culture. They need an authentic experience, to see the architecture of the host culture and a sense of being at home. Understanding motivation is therefore a starting point to understand homestay tourists and how they satisfy their needs.

### **Home stay host/family**

The associations between visitors and hosts may be described as linked by the concept of the home which may be perceived to distinguish homestay establishments from other forms of accommodation. Host of homestay is described as family who live on the premises, sharing their space which becomes public while other forms of accommodation, such as hotels where the host's (the manager or staff) private home is not on the premises and the boundaries of the private space are open to staff only (Lynch, 2003).

### **Culture and Heritage Attributes**

A destination attribute is an important factor for evaluating tourists' satisfaction of a destination. To satisfy guests, accommodation providers need to understand their guests in terms of the experiences they seek. It is important to evaluate the experiences provided, both tangible and intangible, by mainstream accommodations in contrast to homestays (Howell, Moreo, & De Micco, 1993). Previous studies have shown an increased demand for accommodations in private homes or hosted accommodations, especially homestays or nature lodges, which represent a rapidly growing sector of the tourism industry (Morrison et al., 1996). Therefore, it is important for homestay providers to understand which attributes satisfy guests in order to develop better business strategies and gain the attraction of more customers.

### **Socio Economic Impacts of Homestays**

A research by Kadir (1993; 1995) found that the tourism industry has contributed to the creation of employment opportunities for local people and increase their income. The study by Amran (2003) claimed that the homestay programme can improve self-satisfaction, healthy living and changing socio-economic level of the participants. The growth of this homestay programme will not only increase revenue and infrastructure but also change the mindset of the local culture to

realize the importance of safeguarding and preserving cultural heritage to be shared and developed together with the global community (Yahaya et al, 2008). Other studies have, found that the homestay programme also contributed to the preservation and conservation of the environment through the control of logging activities that may affect the river water pollution.

### **A Case of Homestays at Orchha, (MP), India**

Orchha, meaning a "hidden place", is situated 18 km southeast of Jhansi, the former capital of the Bundela dynasty gets only a small portion of the Khajuraho bound traffic. Architectural gems, however, abound in this town. Other than the scenic beauty of the river Betwa, Orchha has a number of notable places of Tourist interest, some of these are, JehangirMahal, Raj Mahal, Rai Praveen Mahal, Ram Raja Temple, Chaturbhuj Temple, Laxminarayan temple, PhoolBagh, Chhatries and ShahidSmarak. In Orchha, the Hindu lord of virtue, is revered as a god *and* a king, due to a strange series of events in which a palace was "transformed" into a temple. A nightly sound-and-light show inside these fortress walls helps illuminate the tale and the city's rise to glory.

### **Founding of Homestays in Orchha**

Friends of Orchha is a registered non-profit organisation working in Madhya Pradesh, India on creating livelihoods linked to tourism, preserving the environment of heritage sites and promoting cultural exchange between visitors and locals. Interaction with a group of women from a poor neighbourhood of Orchha was the spark that led to the creation of Orchha Home-stay, a social enterprise that creates incomes and assets for families below poverty line while providing a rich cultural experience for both visitors and hosts.

The people behind the project, D'Souza and Vreeswijk gathered together a core group of poverty-plagued women. After numerous meetings they agreed to create a new home-stay program, which would not only offer income for participating families, but would also provide a rich opportunity for cultural exchange for both villagers and their guests.

The activities of the NGO are funded through individual contributions of the members of Friends of Orchha.. The German Consulate in Mumbai also gave a small grant in 2007 for improving

water supply and sanitation, also the Swiss Commune of Vandoeuvres and the Josephina Stichting in the Netherlands that have helped the NGO in investing in the construction and furnishing of the home-stay. The 1% for Development Fund in Geneva supported its efforts to improve public health in the Ganj neighbourhood through the construction of toilets and bathrooms for the twenty poorest families.

In a relatively short time, Friends of Orchha has grown to six houses, with eight homestays. Using a revolving loan fund, participating families build guest houses using green building techniques that vastly reduce energy consumption. They install state-of-the-art composting toilets. These need no water source, and composted waste provides high-quality natural fertilizer, as well as bio-gas to replace wood for cooking (reducing deforestation). The Orchha Home-stay links responsible tourism with community development.

The rooms are tiled and are well adapted to the local climate and are maintained in a clean and comfortable manner. The rooms are equipped with lights, a fan and mosquito nets and furnished with wooden beds or *charpoys*, natural cane chairs and a table. Each of these houses has a newly built bathroom and toilet that is shared with the family. The host families provide hygienically prepared local meals.

The loan repayment process is designed in a manner which makes it easy for the loan to be repaid. For each night a guest stays, the homestay family earns 20% of the room rate directly. Another 20% pays for housekeeping, booking and management. The remaining 60% automatically pays off the zero-interest construction loan. If the rooms are unoccupied, loan payments simply stop until more guests show up. Besides, the family gets the whole amount charged for meals. The economic benefits of the home-stay enterprise have been spectacular, all the host families have more than doubled their incomes. The extra cash has served to repair leaking roofs, keep their kids in school & set up other small businesses. During the tourist season, which lasts from October to March, families often earn Rs. 25,000-30,000 per month.

Friends of Orchha supports a number of other community services, too: a youth center which merges education, sports, theater and activities to combat caste discrimination; local

entrepreneurial development (including the training of local women to make paper bags from handmade paper to replace the scourge of plastic, which currently despoils the countryside); and plans for a municipal waste facility to compost, recycle and vastly reduce solid-waste landfill.

### **Problems being addressed through the Homestay concept**

1. Poverty and unemployment: The families which took up the concept of homestays allowed them to add value to the resources they had to make a living.
2. Caste and gender discrimination: Most of the host families belong to lower castes with whom others would not share a meal. Being able to receive foreigners and Indians from big cities in their homes has boosted their self-image. Women were confined to the home without any decision-making powers. Now they have assumed an economic and social role that has improved their status in the family and community.
3. Lack of sanitation: Open defecation was the norm in this area. Most families did not have toilets and women could relieve themselves only before sunrise and after sunset, risking snake bites and even sexual harassment. Having to bathe in the open with their clothes on, skin infections and boils were frequent. Availing of a toilet and bathroom has had a positive impact on their health and personal hygiene.
4. Almost no general knowledge: Illiteracy is high particularly among the women. Even those who have been to school have little knowledge of geography or current events. Living with people from other cultures and finding out about life elsewhere has been a 'window on the world' for people who have so far lived in closed societies.

### **Uniqueness of the Homestays**

The homestays have had quite a few guests who intended to stay just a few days and have ended up staying for weeks with one of the host families. They were able to discover India from within, to experience the life of a family of small farmers, herdsman or artisans in this picturesque town of Orchha. It's been a discovery for the host families too – they had never had a chance to get to know foreigners and are full of questions about what life is like in those faraway places that they've just learned to locate on a map. By providing accommodation and meals for about 15 days a month, eight months per year, the families have been able to double their incomes. The extra money has been used to repair a leaking roof or get a proper electricity connection.

Besides, they now have an additional room in their houses and a nice, tiled toilet and bathroom that the family shares with their guests. Other families of this poor, low-caste neighbourhood also earn through providing services such as laundry, transport or selling their handicrafts to the guests. Ecological techniques have been used for building that make the community conscious of the need to recycle waste and save water.

The Homestays have allowed a section of the population that was excluded from the economic and cultural opportunities that tourism engenders to access them. They now have food security even when they don't find work, can pay for their children's education, meet their medical expenses, undertake much needed home improvements. The women in particular needed to be able to contribute to family income without going out to work. Their spontaneous hospitality have charmed the guests many of whom have spread the word to other tourists they meet. The cultural impact of the Orchha home-stay on the local community has been tremendous. People no longer regard foreigners as persons to extract money from by any means. They have grown to appreciate them as friends and have learned about their countries, cultures and values. This includes seeing that women can be independent, can choose their own life partners, etc. While opening their minds to other cultures, this interaction convinces local people of the value of their traditions in housing, food and handicrafts, traditions that are adapted to the climate and now even have market value.

Environmental consciousness has grown too. The importance of cleanliness for guests has got host families to adopt more hygienic practices in their homes with regard to cooking, cleaning and dealing with waste. The need for water conservation and waste recycling is demonstrated through the new toilets and bathrooms that recycle water for irrigation and produce compost and biogas.

Visitors have realised that they can choose forms of tourism that help alleviate poverty and protect the environment. At the same time, they have discovered how the majority of Indians live and gone away with a much more positive impression of India than commercial tourism gives.

### **The Main Barriers**

According to Mrs Asha D'Souza, there have been two big challenges: First, they work with the poor, or rather the economically poor because they are culturally rich. They cannot afford to take the risks that business demands. And that's what distinguishes their social enterprise from others - one has to take the burden of risk off their shoulders during the first few years.

Second, is finding the human resources who would be willing to work in this very small town. One has to identify motivated persons and then train them. As they lack experience, constant guidance is necessary.

### **The Final Word**

The effects of homestays are very evident on the families in Orchha, one tends to see happier and more welcoming faces. The houses are cleaner and more hygienically kept. Guests get first hand experience of Indian weddings, Indian festivals and Indian Food while on their stay at the homestay. Some guests have recommended that it would be nice if a trained guide would also be available in the homestay. Homestays of Friends of Orchha started as the first step towards Community Based Tourism in Orchha, but the real problem is in making the venture sustainable and self-reliant. People of Orchha have welcomed this new and innovative practice and with the guidance and help provided to them they can proceed further in this direction. Community Based homestays need to be coupled with Capacity Building exercises so that more skills can be imparted to the residents and thus make them ready to face the challenges brought about with the expansion of tourism and its increasing demands.

The importance of continuous efforts to understand the nature of Community Based Homestay towards promotion of tourism destinations cannot be denied. There are both positive and negative impacts of Community Based Tourism and proper check and control is necessary alongwith the proper upgradation of knowledge of the local community. It is crucial to understand the various concerns of the local communities to ensure a better sustainability performance in the rural tourism setting.

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