

## **Rationale for AgroTourism in Konkan ; An initiative for Sustainable Development. ( Specific Reference with Ratnagiri District)**

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*Abstract: - Drafting the growth and development model for India is challenging task before policy makers, earlier growth & development models experienced in west will not be useful for our economic structure. Diversity on all fronts is the key challenge in deciding development patterns. Development henceforth will be referred to as sustainable development. Maharashtra a leading state in India has witnessed different development experience concentrated within few areas, precisely urban places. Political economy of Maharashtra state has important dynamics of Regional Imbalance, coastal area excluding Mumbai Metropolitan region has lagged behind. I feel that true reason behind this is not ignorance of Agriculture, but failure to link business aspect in Agriculture. Present paper attempts to establish linkage between Agriculture & Tourism to utilize local resources in most efficient manner. It will first explain the development experience of state & district. Further explore the scope for sustainable tourism & importance with case study.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

After completing six decades of planned economic development we have seen tremendous structural convergence in economic environment. Though it took more than 40 years to change development pattern, after liberalisation in 1990's we have significantly developed on all fronts. Primitive agrarian economy to human capital driven service sector economy is welcoming change. It is worth discussing the share of economic growth and its trickledown effect. In India there are huge differences in standard of living measured by per capita income across the states, also other qualitative disparities in health, infrastructure, literacy, skill development and political stability. Macro problems before and after structural change are almost same but there is change in situation. Increase in GDP rate and increase in usage of new technology have mesmerized us and forced to believe that we are on right path. At the same time new emerging challenges are waiting to be tackled viz. Rapid urbanization, changing life style, impact of new media, changing income and consumption pattern, inequality among wage earners and professionals, change in center and state relationship, governance issues in implementation of development plan. If development was the key word of 20<sup>th</sup> century, sustainable development is the key factor for 21<sup>st</sup> century. Accepting the fact that development issues need to be addressed by taking into consideration, both local and global factors we cannot compromise sustainability and approach of human development. India faces problem of diversity (though we believe in unity in diversity) in drafting growth models. Therefore we must consider bottom up and bottom down approach in policy formation. Tourism as an industry is not the business only driven by capital, it is the linkage of three important dimensions of the mother earth first Nature, second Facilitator(industry) and third Target audience(Guest). The welfare of last two totally depends on sustainability of nature. While developing tourism we cannot compromise with its long term impact on environment and ecology. Presently in India agriculture is contributing less than 20% but accounts for large no. of work force. Linkage of agriculture and tourism can be a viable business in long run. If we take the case of coastal Maharashtra agro-tourism can be break through to build regional development model.

### **II. DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE**

#### **Maharashtra State**

India's fastly growing state with rapid rate of urbanization, presence of auto hub and I.T. parks, sugar and cotton cooperatives; Maharashtra has always been top few states on economic growth progress card but it is irony that excluding Mumbai metro politan region, few dominated districts in western Maharashtra and couple of others in Vidarbha, state also faces problem of regional imbalance. Political economy and dominance of few geographical areas can prove misleading story of the overall growth of Maharashtra. Decentralization and inclusive growth have been pursued by the planning commission to achieve balance regional growth. Massive investment by government or private sector cannot solve the critical issue of balance regional growth especially

the challenge in developing coastal Maharashtra is to plan without destroying the environment. Growth and development story should not only be investment oriented but it should be people oriented.

### **III. RATNAGIRI DISTRICT PROFILE.**

Surrounded by the Sahyadri hills on the east and the Arabian Sea on the west, the coastal strip of Maharashtra is known as the Konkan region. Historically, Konkan has been the land with dense forest cover and a landscape fringed with beautiful beaches, picturesque hamlets, paddy fields, coconut groves and mango orchards. Transition from rural to urban area is most essential feature to have any further development, and this area is showing this trend since 10-15 years. Due to some development in industrial activities area has kicked off on the path of growth but this is just a beginning. Ratnagiri district is located on 16.30<sup>0</sup> to 18.04<sup>0</sup>, North Altitude & 73.02<sup>0</sup> to 73.53<sup>0</sup> East Latitude. Ratnagiri district is spread along 8208 Sq.km area which is divided into 9 "Talukas" viz. Ratnagiri, Guhagar, Dapoli, Mandangad, Khed, Chiplun, Sangmeshwar, Lanja & Rajapur. Population of this district is 1696777 as per the 2001 population census. This district was splited in 1981 & Sindhudurg district was formed for better Administrative control. As per the 2001 census district has 1543 villages. Ratnagiri, Khed, Chiplun, Rajapur have "NagarParishad" & Dapoli has "NagarPanchyat". There are 5 Urban Places viz. Jalgaon, Kherdi, Guhagar, Nachane & Lanja. Historically Konkan has been a major international trade centre. Rajapur & Harnai are two old ports from which export & import activities used to take place. Currently no port has direct connectivity from foreign trade excluding local supply of Fishery to Mumbai. Ratnagiri district is blessed with many unspotted & virgin natural beaches which is the major attraction of tourists. Government of Maharashtra has announced many tourism development plans but in reality this area has yet to be developed as tourism epicenter of coastal Maharashtra.

### **IV. DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE OF RATNAGIRI DISTRICT**

Development model of Ratnagiri district is concentrated by mainly three factors Mango, Fishing activity & Tourism. Mumbai & geographical reach of Ratnagiri played a significant role in shaping unique development pattern. Many skilled & unskilled workers migrated to Metro city & eventually settled. Due to which many families in Mumbai have their native place in district. Employment pattern was developed such that Konkan used to be referred to as Money Order Economy (*term coined by many old natives*), because randomly families used to get income from earning member from Mumbai. When Cotton Mills of Mumbai collapsed in eighty's migration took place to Konkan. Post liberalization period saw phase of industrial development. After initiative of MIDC industry has grown areas near Chiplun and Ratnagiri, but I have serious doubt on their real economic contribution, if we consider the loss of biodiversity due to industrial pollution. Government agencies claim that they have taken serious action, my personal visit to district I found that economic growth is happening at the cost of environment. This part of coastal Maharashtra seen India's initial attempt of FDI in early 90's when Enron Power Corporation initiated Power Station near Anjanvel (Taluka Guhagar, Dist. Ratnagiri). After the 'powerplay' of politics & economics today this plant is nothing but a fixed liability with producing very little efficient, cost saving energy (with planned chain of power projects this area will generate more electricity than its requirement but gain really less other than property tax to local panchayat !)

Journey of Konkan from Money Order Economy to Money Generation Economy is only possible if we could able to connect tourism & Agriculture. Globalization is the key factor which connects the local & world markets. Many farmers in Maharashtra too have benefited by export oriented farming of Crops like Fruits, Flowers. In Ratnagiri District Mango is becoming an opportunity to explore outside markets. Recently farmers had to pay heavy cost for dissatisfaction of Norms of Western countries. Due to Heavy investment on Storage Export is not possible for small farmer, even if monetary arrangement is made transportability is another key factor which is big hurdle. Here if we can connect Agriculture & Tourism it will create direct opportunity for people to earn, preserve the heritage & achieve human centric growth.

### **V. RESPONSIBLE TOURISM & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Maharashtra has tremendous advantage to develop as a tourism destination due to its connectivity with entire nation & World. Efforts of British officers yielded few famous tourist places example. Matheran & Mahabaleshwar. There is greater scope to develop coastal Maharashtra as a tourism destination by converting challenges into opportunities. I want to stress on the idea that tourism can be an opportunity to achieve long term sustainable development. I propose the idea of responsible tourism for sustainable development,

*responsible tourism is an activity in which visitor is introduced to culture, nature where he respects the same without environmental damage at any cost & utilises the same in monetary return to the owner.*

## **VI. AGRO TOURISM & RATNAGIRI DISTRICT**

Tourism in rural areas is critical factor, which can shape regional development. "Tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes" (UNWTO Definition). Agricultural Tourism is the Holidays concept of Visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural, or agribusiness operations for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation. In general, Agro-Tourism is the practice of attracting travelers or visitors to an area or areas used primarily for agricultural purposes. Now coming to the target area of Ratnagiri agro tourism is easily possible where mango cultivation is present. Mango orchards have seasonal earning which starts from early April and it ends by June. It is experience that excess production of Mangoes never results in higher profit if that farmer cannot process that output in form of Pulp etc. on the other hand of due to natural factors if production is less than the average, it will clearly results in financial setback. Other than Mango, district produces Rice which is purely seasonal crop therefore no assurance can be given of income to farmers. Current statistics shows that non cultivated land is increasing, which marks the requirement for alternative business which will support the local economy by generating direct employment for rural youth. According to data of 2011-12 related to Ratnagiri District, 27 % area is not suitable for agriculture, 40 % area is suitable but not used for agriculture, and this creates the opportunity for Agriculture Based Tourism activity. After information technology boom Konkan is emerging as real estate investment destination. Connectivity with Pune & Mumbai places like Dapoli has transformed into destination for developing second home. This will transfer the ownership of land from local people to outsiders, one angle of this model is land which is unused will be used for some or the other purpose, but this is really alarming from the point of sustainable development. Rural local bodies are not capable at all to tackle the problems of increasing pressure of population, solid waste management, groundwater management can be a big challenge in future. One possible solution could be Agro Tourism by allowing private investment but in form of Lease Agreements of land & not transfer of ownership. One agro tourism can generate direct employment to minimum five people for at least seven to eight months, this duration is excluding monsoon season in which ample employment opportunity is available for local labour. As per the tourism policy of state of Maharashtra Ganpatipule, Pawas, Velneshwar, Panhale Kaji, Thiba Palace, Machal these six places are declared as B category Tourism places, which would be developed by financial support from treasury. With present economical situation and priorities I don't think it's very difficult that it will be done in systematic manner. Rationale for Agriculture based tourism is to develop the synergy between people and environment with support of Local Farmers the real stakeholders of development initiative.

**Ganesh Agro Tourism(GAT) – Case study of Responsible tourism**

I would like to introduce to you a unique case related to successful operative business model of Agro-Tourism in Ratnagiri District. Ganesh Agro Tourism, owned & managed by Mr. Ganesh Ranade, situated around 60 km from ratnagiri is one of the similar attempt which is expected in responsible tourism. Beginning of this project could be traced back to 1989 when his father Ashok Ranade, (*won several state level awards for successful implementation of Organic Mango Farming*) started his career in Mango Farming from single Mango Tree. With very limited capital, lack of advanced technology, irregular electric supply he started this venture, which is now a big project of more than 2000 mango trees on around 30 plus acres land. In expansion of said project he secured financial assistance from Nationalised bank. When Mr. Ganesh decided to join this business he had something more than mangoes in mind. He decided to connect Agriculture to Tourism. ,he launched a business which was niche ten years ago. He has clear vision of not depending only on agriculture, which explores opportunity to tourism as alternative source of income. When natural calamity affected mango production in the year 2009, it was the very tourism business due to which loss was covered. Total four rooms are developed with facilities as per the urban standards to cater the needs of tourist coming from cities. Entire food grain and related requirement is fulfilled by his own farm. This gives homely touch to tourism and saves cost of buying from open market. When tourist visit GAT its opportunity to sell farm products both fresh mangoes during season & preserved pulp during rest of the year. GAT directly provides employment opportunity to five people permanently. During mango season it can go up to ten also. Hospitality training to local workers is given by family members of Mr. Ganesh Ranade. I must say that there are many problems faced by him like lack of collective efforts by various government departments to develop infrastructure such as roads,

uninterrupted electricity supply which is required for functioning of tourism industry. What makes this case study interesting is the way he has developed this by personal experience & without any help from Government (excluding permissions). If one such business model goes on track in every village it can prevent migration of more than one thousand people out of district.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Development of region should be considered from perspective of Cultural, Social, Economical transformation for better standard of living. Ratnagiri District has been always a stable from political aspect, its amongst district with highest literacy rate. When tourism activities are initiated local people do interact with different culture, care must be taken that tourism activity will not generate any illegal, unethical activity. The survey of statistics of 2011-12 shows that there is drop in population, when compares with mortality rate it shows that people have been migrating which is clear sign of imbalance. During my personal interaction with college students in Ratnagiri, Dapoli, Khed I found one unfortunate fact that youth has very less confidence of their livelihood within the village. Migration is the only option which they can explore, educational institutions are *generating* many graduates, but have failed to generate entrepreneur. Current generation of self employed youth has learnt from their past generation's experience. Government must take initiative to promote agro-tourism and encourage next generation entrepreneur. Ganesh Agro tourism is promising example which is hope and inspiration for others to develop business that protects, nurtures the environment with economic return too.

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