

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOME STAYS TO ENCOURAGE RURAL TOURISM IN UTTRAKHAND STATE

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Abstract - Uttarakhand became the State of Republic of India. Located in the Himalayan belt the State of Uttarakhand with snow mountains lakes and wild life and Parks, Fairs event and festivals and safe environment with friendly tourist destination. The State of Uttarakhand which has also acquired an acronym "Dev Bhoomi" because of its tremendous potential for the tourism activities and specially related to holidays /Leisure for the purpose of visiting Uttarakhand. Uttarakhand people are simple and warm and follow ancient Vedic traditional of "Atithi Devo Bhava" or "Guest are God" and they welcome their guest with open arms and offer personalized care and services. Home stay is playing major role in developing tourism in Uttarakhand. Main reason of this paper to highlight the force migration due to an employment in hilly/rural areas of Uttarakhand. Villagers are forced to leave their home in search of jobs/earnings. Many villages become Ghost Villages in Uttarakhand due to unemployment. Uttarakhand Govt has initiated home stay scheme in the State to check the forced migration. People have started renovating their homes for Home Stays purposes with help of Uttarakhand Govt. Homestay in Uttarakhand eyes jobs in hills to check forced migration

Keywords - Tourism, Travel, Uttarakhand, Homestay, Self Employment.

I. INTRODUCTION

Uttarakhand became the state of the republic of India. Uttarakhand in the north of India, the state is carved out of Uttar Pradesh. On Uttarakhand travel, you will find the great diversity of the region where snow-clad mountain, green hills, fertile valleys, flowing rivers and thriving lakes add to the natural beauty. The popular hill stations of Uttarakhand are Nainital, Ranikhet, Pithoragarh, Munsiyari, Mussoorie, Valley Of Flowers, Rishikesh, Haridwar, Nanakmatta, Meetha-Reetha Sahib, Piran Kaliyar and Purnagiri. The four dhams get their sacred waters as four streams - Yamuna (in Yamunotri), Bhagirathi (in Gangotri), Mandakini (in Kedarnath) and Alaknanda (in Badrinath). Traditionally, the Char Dharm yatra (or excursion) is done from the west to the east - beginning from Yamunotri, then continuing to Gangotri lastly to Kedarnath and Badrinath. In spite of the fact that the Char (four) Dhams are open through a system of motorable streets, burdensome trails remain in the antiquated havens of confidence for a satisfying experience. The other favored goals are Haridwar. Among the different hypnotizing religious customs, the night Aarti by the banks of the Ganga at Haridwar is in itself an awesome ordeal. The Yatras to explorer goals, for example, Nanda Devi and Kailash Manasarover offer a chance to relish some of the most stunning sceneries. Holy conjunctions, beautiful environment, and an atmosphere of profound tranquility make a perfect residence the divine beings and is an invigorating prize for the travelers and sightseers who visit Uttarakhand. Home stay is playing major role in developing tourism in Uttarakhand. Home Stay is the best way to experience the famed Himalayan Hospitality of Uttarakhand.

Uttarakhand people are simple and warm and follow ancient Vedic traditional of "Atithi Devo Bhava" or "Guest are God" and they welcome their guest with open arms and offer personalized care and services. Concept of Homestays Home Stay: A home stay is staying in someone home as a paying guest for a short time period where the guest is provided with budget friendly accommodation and services by individual family and the local communities.

Refers to a visit to somebody's home in which allows visitors to rent a room from a local family in order to learn local culture, lifestyle, or language. It is a living arrangement offered by a host or host family that involves staying in their furnished home. The guest of a home stay would be staying in home-like accommodation with shared living spaces, Utilities and meals are usually included and the length of stay could be daily, weekly, monthly, or unlimited unless specified otherwise by the host. Apart from accommodation Home Stay offer a range of activities which give guests the unique opportunity to experience the specific culture of the area. Activities will differ from home to home and depending on the location for example, participating in agricultural activities, to going on nature tours, learn a skill practiced by local villagers, such as making local handicrafts or cooking local food, to visit villages and spot wildlife. In plantation and hill stations, hosts can take guests trekking and arrange guided walks through herbals gardens and forests. Depending on the family, many hosts will offer to take guests round the sights of their town or village, sharing local insights and an experience far removed from the usual tourist trudge. Home stays aren't just a base from which to spend a few days exploring the

local area, they are a holiday destination in themselves.

Tourists would be provided home cooked food) will also help provide a platform to popularize the ethnic culture and cuisine among tourists.

The Home Stay Scheme will go a long way in developing Uttarakhand as a tourism state.

As per Uttarakhand Govt has set a target of developing 5,000 homestay facilities in the state as part of its Mission-2020.

It is mandatory for homestay owners to ensure food service for tourists staying on their residential premises. It would also be mandatory for them to spare from one room set to the maximum six-room sets for visitors.

Any village, which will have more than six homestay facilities, will be developed as a cluster and will also be equipped with infrastructural facilities. These facilities will also include websites and mobile apps. "Uttarakhand Govt is planning to introduce a programme, under which training will be imparted to home stay owners in keeping with the high standards of the hospitality industry.

Villages along the trekking routes would be given special preference as far as promotion of homestay facilities is concerned by Uttarakhand Govt.

Those associated with tourism industry welcomed the homestay policy but cautioned that it might not be successful without the state government extending full support to home stay owners in rural areas.

With an aim to check forced migration from the hills and rural migration, the Uttarakhand government has introduced a homestay policy under which tourism-based self-employment will be encouraged in rural areas

The newly introduced home stay policy, under which people will be encouraged to develop homestay facilities will go a long way to ensuring tourism-based self-employment in hilly areas.

The strategy aims to check forced migration from the hills by developing tourism as an industry.

As per the policy, only those persons, who are domiciled in Uttarakhand, would be entitled to financial benefits to be provided under the home stay scheme. In the hilly areas, people wanting to set up homestay facilities would be entitled to a subsidy of up to ₹10 lakhs each besides ₹1.5 lakh exemption in interest subsidy till the first five years. Those who will set up homestay facilities in the plain areas would be entitled to a subsidy of ₹7.5 lakh each besides ₹1 lakh exemption in interest subsidy, under

the homestay policy. It (homestay policy) is, no doubt, a welcome move but the government will have to do handholding to ensure that the people in rural areas are able to successfully run homestay facilities.

They (people) would need to be trained to treat visitors with courtesy, maintain hygiene, and also have their residential premises equipped with English toilets instead of Indian toilets.

Also, the government will have to do marketing for homestays besides equipping villages with facilities like the internet and roads.

If proper handholding is not done by the state government the concept of homestay tourism would end up benefiting the wealthy instead of the rural poor, for whom it is meant.

II. HOMESTAYS IN INDIA

India spans a geographical region that stretches from mighty mountain ranges in the north to the Indian Ocean in the south, from deserts in the west to deltas in the east. In India, many cultural, social, religious and regional strands come together to make a truly unique tapestry. Each state is unique in its cultural and natural formation. India has been known for its hospitality. Indian tourism has taken a leap with the concept of homestays becoming the new mantra in the hospitality scenario. This unique way of truly experiencing the pulse of the place is fast catching up with not only tourists but also the hosts. The Indian adage 'atithi devo bhava' or 'Guest is God' is truly lived up to by homestays in India where the guest is welcomed with delight to the home. Indians consider it a huge honor to have guest in their home, and go out of their way to please them. The visitors staying in homestays get to experience true Indian hospitality. A tourist's visit to India can be made memorable with the Homestay Units offered to them. The state tourism departments in India have introduced the concept of homestays. Kerala, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, New Delhi, NCR, Goa, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Rajasthan, Gujarat are the states to have introduced the concept of homestays. Ministry of Tourism, Government & Strategic Interventions for Tourism India initiative in this direction has been the 'Bed and Breakfast' Scheme. Under this scheme comfortable home-like, clean and affordable accommodation facilities are provided to the tourists. The scheme gives the foreign tourists an opportunity to experience the customs and traditions and relish the authentic cuisine of India during their stay with an Indian family. The Regional Classification Committee inspects and assesses the Bed and Breakfast Establishments on the parameters of the services offered by them. Uttarakhand tourism policy emphasizes on developing a network of home stays across the state. The home stays will be minimally regulated and will be treated as a non-commercial

venture. They can be compared with the “Bed & Breakfast” of the western countries. Department of Tourism who will serve the purpose and will offer adequate and suitable facilities to the tourist. The Uttarakhand Government has also taken this innovative step by introducing Home Stay Scheme thus providing comfortable homestay facilities of standardized world class services to the tourists, and to supplement the availability of accommodation in the rural tourist destinations. The basic idea is to provide a clean and affordable place for foreigners and domestic tourists alike including an opportunity for foreign tourists to stay with Uttarakhandi families to experience Uttarakhandi customs and traditions and relish authentic Indian/Kumauni/Garhwali cuisine.

Guidelines for Approval and Registration of Homestay Units in India: The State Tourism Departments in India follow more or less same guidelines for homestays in their respective States. The guidelines are as follows:

1. Homestay Project shall be considered only if the owner of homestay facility resides in the place of homestay facility.
2. The Number of rooms provided by the owner of Home Stay facility should be minimum one room and should not exceed Six rooms.
3. The room accommodation of minimum standard sizes with attached toilet facility, reasonably furnished and ready for letting out to the tourists/guests as prescribed under the scheme.
4. The Home Stay Units being run by the families having ownership shall be treated as non commercial activities.
5. Registration and classification is compulsory to avail the facility under this project.
6. A Police Clearance certificate from Local Station House Officers shall be submitted along with the application.
7. Since the place of home stay units stands as a part of household and comes within agricultural, plantation, natural and cultural area the position of home stay places continues as it is. The house owners of home stay Project shall not alienate the land other than the purpose for which it is being used at present.
8. Domicile of Uttarakhand
9. The houses in areas of tourism importance will get priority.
10. Home Stay units must ensure the location, facilities, surrounding environment, hygiene, cleanliness, security, architectural designs and safety of the tourist.
11. Any proprietor/owner of a private house located in an appropriate area of the State has to apply in the prescribed pre-format provided by the Department of Tourism, of respective States for approval/registration of the Home Stay Unit.
12. The selection of the home-stays from among the applicants will be done by a committee appointed by

Government for the purpose, based on the following criteria; • Location of the house • Quality of house and surrounding areas in terms of facilities & hygiene for offering to tourists. • Access • Educational and professional background of the applicant and family members. • Tourist attraction of the area. The committee for classification of Home stays units constituted by Government for the purpose will visit the unit and if found satisfactory with the facilities recommend to Department of Tourism for the classification of the unit. The order on classification will be issued by Department of Tourism of respective States. Tenets of Home Stay Units The home stays are accommodations provide firsthand experience to the tourists. Following principles are used in developing the homestays so that the overall experience of the tourist is satisfactory and also the host community is benefited.

Product Line of Homestays. The most important part of homestays is the accommodation and the amenities provided. It varies from place to place throughout the globe because of the cultural and physical uniqueness.

The important products offered by home stays have been discussed in general.

1. Accommodation: The homestays are in the houses of the locals. The houses are built on the regional/local architecture of the area. All over India there are many different types of homes, their various architectural styles are typical of the area they are found in, the history of their owners and a range of social and religious/ traditional bungalows. The homestay and the rooms have furniture of local flavor. The homestays may retain cowsheds, goat house, herb garden, kitchen garden, honey comb etc. as attractions. Rooms are single, double and twin. The rooms have attached private bathrooms with every room along with toiletries.
2. Cuisines: Meals form very integral part of stay in homestays. The local cuisine is served to the guests. At times delicious organic food is picked fresh and cooked straight from the garden and jungle. The food is eaten with the family.
3. Amenities: Apart from the accommodation, there are other features which are required for a comfortable stay. This comes in the form of amenities like laundry service, television in rooms/lobby, parking, wake-up call, mineral water, heating in rooms (as per the weather conditions), babysitting or child care, complimentary newspaper, non-Smoking.
4. Local Activities: Each area specializes in different activities because of the geographical location as well as the socio-cultural milieu of each place is distinct. The activities might also differ from day and night. Homestays give a real feeling of local culture and also gets an opportunity to learn about all sorts of local customs and traditions. Some of the local

activities enjoyed are as follows: □ Lifestyle exploration through village walk □ Visiting ethnic groups, helping to milk the cow and churning, grinding corns, husking participating in the daily or seasonal chores with family. Cultural shows & Tradition massage.

5. Sight Seeing: The homestays are located in the natural surroundings, places of historical and cultural importance. Thus the scope of sight seeing is immense. The family members of homestays or locals can prove good guides and provide good company. Village tour Camping, Boating, Campfire, Fishing, Walks and hikes to caves, lakes and waterfall, Visit to tea gardens/Herbs plantations, □ Elephant safari, Plantation Visits

III. METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on the survey undertaken by direct interview. The Twenty owners of homestays at Kumaun region of Uttarakhand were interviewed. The study has been done by collecting data from the government agencies, Uttarakhand Tourism Development Corp. (UTDC) who are associated with tourism development activities in Uttarakhand.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The homestay project has undoubtedly brought new life to Uttarakhand. People realize that a tourist is coming to their village for the invaluable resources possessed by the community. It gives the host community happiness and thus encourages the community to conserve its biodiversity and their culture and tradition. Homestays have empowered the local communities as new job opportunities are created. The females can contribute to the family income as they are the ones who maintain the homestays. Youth have the opportunity to act as guides to the tourists. Uttarakhand has found its place in the hearts of tourists. Tourists enjoy the warm welcome received by the locals. They enjoy the village life. There are various challenges of running homestays in Uttarakhand. From the point of view of tourists, the major problem faced by them is the hygienic conditions of the homestays especially toilets are not satisfactory. Language becomes a barrier when it comes to communicate with the family members and villagers. It becomes all the more difficult for non-English speaking tourists. Local cuisines are served in the homestays which at times is not preferred by the guests. Medical facilities are lacking and also there is no one in the family or village equipped to deal with any medical emergency. The

communication network is good but lack of internet facility definitely makes the tourist unhappy. The host community find that the tourists are coming from different cultural backgrounds so at times they fail to respect the local traditions and customs. They fear that in times to come people may get materialistic in their approach as they find that they are being benefitted by the tourists. They may be just perceived as object. The young population tries to copy the foreigners which may in times to come change the lifestyle of local community and hence it may be a threat to the sustainability of culture. There is no sufficient formal training imparted to the family members of homestays. This affects their proper management of tourists. Home stays have no doubt provided valuable and rich experience to the tourists as well as to the home stay owners. Tourists enjoy the natural and cultural resources in the company of family members and thus a unique stay experience. Home stay owners get to know a world outside their miniscule world through tourists and also get an additional income and recognition from the tourists. There are few problems which can be overcome. The Capacity Building Programs can be organized for the family members of homestay which shall help them in developing soft skills and technical skills. Young population can be encouraged to learn foreign languages which shall open their horizon to non English speaking tourists as well. Exclusive marketing of homestays is required. The educational programs for the tourists can help them have a better understanding of the host population and this might also result in increasing their stay. Homestays in away is a step towards empowering the community and thus utilizing their resources optimally and also taking care of their resources. The authenticity of the community can be sustained.

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