

Evaluation of Agro Tourism Potential in Baramati, Pune district, Maharashtra

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Abstract

Agriculture has the key role in the Indian Economy and more than 80% people of the country are directly or indirectly dependent on the agricultural sector. Almost 25% GDP of the country comes from agriculture. Agro tourism is a new and emerging approach in the tourism industry. Baramati is located on the banks of Karha River at a distance about 100 kms southeast of Pune. Well known for its rich political and cultural heritage. The main objective of the present study was to assess and evaluate the potential of agro tourism activity around Baramati. Extensive field study, questionnaire filling, interviews of farmers as well as people from other sectors, landuse and landcover analysis were carried out to identify and locate the suitable sites for agro tourism. From the present study it is clear that Baramati has a vast scope for agro tourism due to canal irrigation, growing of variety of vegetables, crops and fruits, organization of hurda party by farmers, village fairs and markets, jaggery making unit; poultry farm; sugar factory; oldest religious temples and cultural activities. Agri Tourism Development Corporation's project at Palashi village near Morgaon is a first agro tourism centre in India, offers variety of agro tourism activities. In addition to this the Agricultural Development Trust (Baramati) has turned Baramati into a hotspot for agro tourism at Malegaon Agricultural Farm.

The major conclusion that emerges from the present work is that the Baramati has a great potential for agro tourism activities.

KEYWORDS: Tourism, Baramati, agrotourism, rural area, employment

Introduction:

Agriculture has the key role in the Indian Economy and more than 80% people of the country are directly or indirectly dependent on the agricultural sector. Almost 25% GDP of the country comes from agriculture. Agro tourism is a new and emerging approach in the tourism industry. The travel and tourism sector holds strategic importance in the Indian economy providing several socio economic benefits. Provision of employment, income and foreign exchange, development or expansion of other industries such as agriculture, construction, handicrafts etc. are some of the important economic benefits provided by the tourism sector (Smith, 1998; Dugar, 2005). In addition, investments in infrastructural facilities such as transportation, accommodation and other tourism related services lead to an overall development of infrastructure in the economy. According to the World Economic Forum's Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2013, India ranks 11th in the Asia pacific region and 65th globally out of 140 economies ranked on travel and tourism Competitiveness Index. India has been witnessing steady growth in its travel and tourism sector over the past few years. The travel and tourism sector supported 25 million jobs in 2012 directly related to the tourism sector. Constituting 4.9 per cent of the total employment in the country in 2012, this is expected

to amount to 31 million jobs by 2023 (KPGM, Tourist Fest, 2013, Stevens and Momsen, 2008). While these numbers indicate direct employment supported by the tourism sector reflecting employment by hotels, travel agents, passenger transportation services or other restaurant and leisure employment, the total contribution including indirect and induced effects is expected to cause a multiplier impact on the economy resulting in greater employment generation (KPGM, Tourist Fest, 2013, Oppermann, 1993).

It has great potential in India in general and Maharashtra in particular. Since 2004 agriculture tourism is operational, it started in Baramati agri tourism center under the guidance of Pandurang Taware who is known as father of agri tourism concept in India. Agricultural tourism is the holidays concept of attracting travelers or visitors to a working farm or any agricultural operations for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation. Agro tourism includes a wide variety of activities, including buying produce direct from a farm, agricultural education programs, how to grow different crops and fruits, goat and cow milking, honey making, silk making, jaggery making, rural games, bullock cart ride; tractor rides; watching domestic animals; clay molding; tree climbing etc.

Objectives:

The two main objectives of the present study are-

1. To evaluate the potential and challenges of agro-tourism in Baramati.
2. To study the role of agro-tourism in employment generation and economic development of Baramati.
3. To introduce Agri-tourism Development Corporation and Agricultural Trust of Baramati

Study Area:

Baramati ($18^{\circ} 21' N$ $74^{\circ} 23' E$) is located Pune district of Maharashtra state (Fig. 1). It is about 100 km southeast of Pune City. It has an average elevation of 550 metres from sea level. It is located on the bank of Karha River. It is located in rain shadow of western Maharashtra and therefore receives only around 400–500 mm of average rainfall in monsoon season. The agriculture of Baramati is mainly depending on left bank canal constructed in British era. This canal starts from 'Veer Dam' near Saswad and ends at Walchandnagar a length of more than 100 km. Baramati experiences hot summers from March to May and cold, dry winters from November to February. The city receives scant rainfall mainly in June to August approx 60 cm. Weather in Baramati is dry and hot in summer, with day temperatures crossing 40 degrees Celsius. Typical winter day temperatures are about 25 degrees Celsius, with night temperatures as low as 8 degrees Celsius. Baramati and surrounding areas mostly depend on agriculture as the main source of income. The land in the region is very well irrigated because of Left Bank Canal irrigation from Veer Dam. Drinking water is also sourced from this canal. Additionally Municipal Council also receives drinking water from 'Ujjani Dam' through a pipeline. Baramati is well connected by road with major cities in the State. Baramati is 100 km from Pune by road. It connects to major highways via the road network. Baramati is also well connected by Rail Network to Pune via Daund Junction.

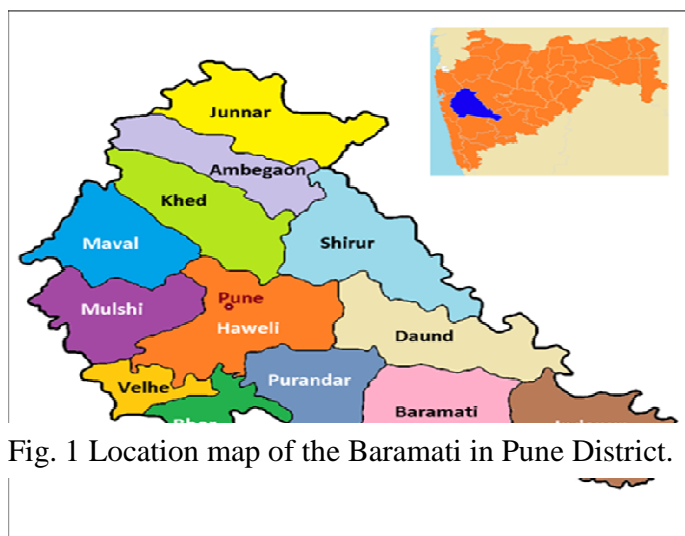


Fig. 1 Location map of the Baramati in Pune District.

Methodology:

To achieve the major objectives of the present study the following methodology has been adopted.

The present study is based on primary and secondary data. The primary data has been collected through questionnaires and personal interviews of tourist and farmers of the Baramati tahsil. Secondary data were obtained from agricultural department, Municipal Corporation and agricultural trust of Baramati. Also, for some necessary information we had visited Agro-park of Agri tourism Tourism Development Corporation which is located near Morgaon. The websites of the Agricultural trust of Baramati and Agri tourism Tourism Development Corporation were accessed to obtain information about their projects. All the data obtained through different kinds of methods have been analyzed and attempts have also been made to study the agro-tourism potential and prospects of the Baramati. Mostly, theoretical and subjective information were used for the present paper.

Result and Discussion:

The main focus of the discussion is on the introduction of the well known agro-tourism projects of Baramati, one is Agricultural trust of Baramati and other is Agri-tourism Development Corporation. On the banks of river Karha, Baramati is located at a distance of about 100 kms from Pune. Well known for its rich cultural heritage it is also a popular site for agro tourism because of the vast agricultural lands here that produce some of the finest crops in Maharashtra, a large share of which are exported. Baramati is two hours away from Pune and you can see beautiful green fields much before you enter the city limits. Apart from a number of temples that are popular tourist sites, The Agricultural Development Trust (Baramati) has turned into a hotspot for agro tourism. At its land on "Malegaon Agricultural Farm" the trust offers Luxury tent as well as dormitory facilities for guests along with traditional vegetarian meals. Experience farming firsthand. Understand various agricultural techniques during farm visits and winery visits. Enjoy a night by the bonfire. The trust also offers a number of cultural

activities such as Jagran Gondhal, Bharud, Gaja Nritya, Kambad Nritya etc that are performed by local tribals. Those interested in nature and wildlife can experience backwater bird watching, visit the Supa Wildlife sanctuary or enjoy some time by the waterfalls. A visit to Malegaon agriculture farms is the perfect opportunity for you to leave your modern lives behind and immerse yourself into the rich cultural heritage that Baramati offers. On a visit here also be sure to visit Kashivishveshwara Temple known to be an architectural wonder built in the ancient times and the Siddheshwara temple. In general, Agri-Tourism is the practice of attracting travelers or visitors to an area or areas used primarily for agricultural purposes.

However, Agri-Tourism is small-scale, low-impact, and, in most cases, education-focused. Because landowners operate the majority of farms in Maharashtra, opportunities for uniqueness and customization are limitless. Many agri-tourism activities require only a small farm crew in order to be successful. For instance, farm tours, bed and breakfasts, Tractor / bullock card rides, grapes, mangoes, and other horticulture farms, by product farms, birds / animal zoos, and many other activities may be operated with little additional investment in labor. The central Government's Indian Agricultural Research Institute extends help to establish a "Krishi Vigyan Kendra" at district level. In July 1992 the central Government accorded sanction to establish such a center at the Trust. This center is a boom to many poor farmers & affords opportunities to employ science and technology can argument farmers per capital production from land. An in-depth study of the ways and means of stepping up agricultural produce, yielded by land, to feed the teeming millions of our country, is needed through thus research center we propose to import training to farmers and their wives without charging any fee. This center is working towards the goal of enhancing the farmer's standards of living and their income from land.

Baramati Agri Tourism is an experiential Rural exploration option that allows guests to experience lifestyle of villages around Baramati as guests participate in wide ranging activities and festivities of the area. The following are the reasons to visit Baramati.

- Experiential rural stay located in Baramati
- Baramati is part of Agri Tourism in Maharashtra part which has 500 trained farmers and 152 agri-tourism locations across the state of Maharashtra.
- Activities at Agri Tourism includes Animal Feeding; Guided Crop /Vegetables / Fruits farms visits and tours, Watching domestic animals and How to care for cattle, Harvest festivals, Rural Festivals, visit Farmers' markets, Visit Taluka Milk Collection centers, Milking the Cow, Temples Visits, Agricultural education programs etc.
- Guests get to play rural style games and rides such as Bullock card and tractor Rides, Vittidandu, Gotya, Surparanbhya, Kabaddi, Langadi, Kho-Kho, Bullock Ploughing, Lagore & Gallori
- Homemade meals served to guests to get a feel of authentic cuisine in rural Maharashtra
- Recommended for day picnics ex-Pune and experiential overnight getaways ex-Mumbai / pune

Since 2004 Agriculture Tourism is operational, it started in Baramati Agri Tourism Center under the guidance of Pandurang Taware who is known as Father of Agri

Tourism Concept in India. He received the National Tourism Award from the President of India, for the most innovative Tourism Product. Agri Tourism India (ATDC) is pioneer in the development and marketing of agri tourism concept in India. ATDC, as of 2014, has 218 affiliated farmers and operates agri tourism center in their respective villages in the state of Maharashtra. ATDC (Agri Tourism Development Corporation) following a phase of research and an initial pilot programme in the village of Baramati in 2005, ATDC now has 500 trained farmers and 152 agri-tourism locations across the state of Maharashtra. The project of ATDC at Palasi village near Morgaon offers Agri Tourism activities like farm tours; tractor and bullock cart rides; grapes, mangoes, and other horticulture farms and by - product farms; birds and animal farms; There are lot of things the visitors or guests can enjoy in this agri tourism unit/farm; Total area under cultivation here is of 30 acres, primarily use for agricultural purposes. The visitors here can also visit the grampanchayat village office and school; village fairs and markets, nearby Jaggery making unit; Emu bird Farm; Sugar Factory; Taluka Milk Collection Centers and some of the oldest religious temples and also Museum

Conclusions:

On the basis of the information presented in this paper it can be concludes that Baramati has a vast potential for agro-tourism industry. Basically, Agricultural Trust of Baramati and Agri-tourism Development Corporation established by Pandurang Taware has a major role in the agro-tourism development of Baramati. These two projects have provided employment to many personals. Besides, these two major parks, there are many other areas have potential to begin such industry. Many farmers of the Baramati have started Hurda-Party at their own farms. Finally it can be concluded that with proper plnning and management Baramati can be an Agri-tourist hotspot in near future.

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