

# **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TOURISM: A CASE STUDY OF SHERGAON VILLAGE**

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## **Abstract**

The modern world has recognized the potential of tourism for eradication of poverty, unemployment and development of community. 'Shergaon' is a small village in the state of Arunachal Pradesh (India). Located at 27° 7' 0" North, 92° 16' 0" East, it is surrounded by lofty mountains of the eastern Himalaya ranges. The village is home of the 'Sherdukpen' community. The people are mostly depended on agriculture. Sherdukpen community practices Buddhism along with animism. The place is surrounded by scenic beauty, Buddhist monasteries and archaeological sites. The place has the potential to be a destination for rural tourism and adventure tourism. With a vision to develop the community, a group of village youths have started developing tourism promotion strategy without any external assistance. The organization is known as Garung Thuk. These youths are from various educational background and some of them are working in various organizations. However, they share the same vision to develop their community through tourism. The strategy is to promote tourism in the village by developing attractive tourist packages such as homestay, local museum, trekking, sight-seeing etc. Many villagers have come forwarded to support the youths in making the vision successful.

The case study provides deep insight into the various phases of tourism development strategy for community development in Shergaon.

**Keywords:** *Shergaon, community participation, local level strategy, Garung Thuk*

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### **ABSTRACT**

The modern world has recognized the potential of tourism for eradication of poverty, unemployment and development of community. 'Shergaon' is a small village in the state of Arunachal Pradesh (India). Located at 27° 7' 0" North, 92° 16' 0" East, it is surrounded by lofty mountains of the eastern Himalaya ranges. The village is home of the 'Sherdukpen' community. The people are mostly depended on agriculture. Sherdukpen community practices Buddhism along with animism. The place is surrounded by scenic beauty, Buddhist monasteries and archaeological sites. The place has the potential to be a destination for rural tourism and adventure tourism. With a vision to develop the community, a group of village youths have started developing tourism promotion strategy without any external assistance. The organization is known as *Garung Thuk*. These youths are from various educational background and some of them are working in various organizations. However, they share the same vision to develop their community through tourism. The strategy is to promote tourism in the village by developing attractive tourist packages such as homestay, local museum, trekking, sight-seeing etc. Many villagers have come forwarded to support the youths in making the vision successful.

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### ***Introduction***

Community Development in its essential aspects is not a new idea (Witte, 1957). Community development comprises of two terms 'community' and 'development'. Community is "a group or network of persons who are connected (objectively) to each other by relatively durable social relations that extend beyond immediate genealogical ties, and who mutually define that relationship (subjectively) as important to their social identity and social practice." (James, 2012). Thus a community is a collection of people who live together. The Cambridge dictionary defines the term 'development' as 'the process in which someone or something grows or changes and becomes more advanced'. It means new options, diversification, thinking about apparent issues differently and anticipating change (Christenson et.al., 1989). Thus community development in its base means a group of people living together and changing for advancement. Warren defines community development as "a process of helping community people analyze their problems, to exercise as large a measure of community autonomy as is possible and feasible, and to promote a greater identification of the individual citizen and the individual organization with the community as a whole." (Warren, 1978) Thus community development empowers people and enables capacity building. According to World Tourism Organization the people "traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes" (WTO, 1995) are called tourists. In the modern world, tourism is seen as an important factor for modernization, economic development and prosperity in emerging nations. (William, 1998). Tourism generates

employment and income leading to community development. (Ige and Odularu, 2008). Rural areas depended on natural, social and cultural resources can benefit from tourism (David, 2011) as the lack of modern development often attracts tourists to such places (Ashley, 1995).

### ***Literature Review***

There are many studies that have already been done in the field of community development. Various researchers have defined community development in different ways.

(a) Community development as an attempt/effort:

"The deliberate attempt by community people to work together to guide the future of their communities, and the development of a corresponding set of techniques for assisting community people in such a process." (Bennett, 1973)

"All of the efforts made to establish and maintain human interaction while improving the appropriateness of the physical setting to that interaction. Underlying values to this development are the recognition of the individual's right to select the extent of community or privacy and the group's right to identify its own needs for community development." (Koneya, 1975)

"A situation in which some groups, usually locality based such as neighborhood or local community ... Attempts to improve its social and economic situation through its own efforts ... using professional assistance and perhaps also financial assistance from the outside ... and involving all sectors of the community or group to a maximum." (Voth, 1975)

(b) Community development as a process:

"A process, as a method, as a program, and as a movement; or as a set of purposes." (Hauswald, 1971)

"A process of creating special community organizations throughout society which will be responsible for channeling demands to centers of power, to distributors of benefits." (Hammock, 1973)

"The process which basically initiates and develops structure and facilitates program development that includes users of the program. Identify Community Development in the context of initiating and of developing supportive human relationships." (Miles, 1974)

"A process in which increasingly more members of a given area or environment make and implement socially responsible decisions, the probable consequence of which is an increase in the life chances of some people without a decrease in the life chances of others." (Oberle, Darby, & Stowers, 1975)

"The process of local decision-making and the development of programs designed to make their community a better place to live and work." (Huie, 1976)

"A process of helping community people analyzes their problems, to exercise as large a measure of community autonomy as is possible and feasible, and to promote a greater

identification of the individual citizen and the individual organization with the community as a whole.” (Warren, 1978)

(c) Community development as a participatory system/ approach:

“A public-group approach dedicated to achieving the goals of the total body politic.” (Weaver, 1971)

“The programme involves a change in attitudes, habits, ways of thinking, change in relationship among people, change in the level of knowledge, and intellectual advancement of people, changes in the skills i.e., practices of agriculture, health, etc” (Daharna, 1973)

“An open system of decision making, whereby those comprising the community use democratic and rationale means to arrive at group decisions to take action for enhancing the social and economic well-being of the community.” (Littrell, 1975)

It assumes that people in communities anywhere can and should work together co-operatively to improve their patterns and levels of living. It assumes that these people can be convinced of their ability to solve many of their problems. It emphasizes self-help, self-reliance and the intelligent participation in community life. Further, the, making of decision will be through democratic discussion in which the whole community will be involved...” (Cousins, 1957)

“Community development is concerned with the whole community, with the community's active participation or involvement in decision making and action with the stimulation of the whole community's initiative and with the community's self-reliance to the greatest possible extent.” (Thomson, 1961)

“Direct involvement of individuals concerned in a developmental activity or in an organization working towards such an activity beneficial to the members of the organization or a large community in which members are part.” (Selvam, 2004)

From the above definitions this can be clearly understood that community development can be defined in various ways. However, in all the definitions the most important factor is people of the community. For tourism to flourish in an area community plays a very important role. Local people support is mandatory for tourism to flourish and sustain (Ratz, 2010). Gursoy and Rutherford also suggested that before starting a new venture, the tourism developers need to consider the perception and attitude of the local residents. (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004). The perception about the impact of tourism on community has a very high impact on the community tourism. ( Moscardo, 2008; Nunkoo & Ramkisson, 2011; Sharma and Dyer, 2009). If tourism is perceived to be beneficial, than local people supports tourism (Gursoy et al, 2009). Thus local people are the core element for community development through tourism.

The various phases of Community development as a process are explained by Hays (Hays, 1947). The phases are:

- a) Consciousness of need. Some individuals or groups become aware of and express the need.
- b) Spreading this consciousness - the leader convinces his group or organization of the reality of need.
- c) Projecting Consciousness - the concerned group arouses wider interest.

- d) The emotional impulses to meet the need quickly.
- e) Presentation of other solutions.
- f) Conflict of solutions.
- g) Investigations - often-expert assistance is used here.
- h) Open discussion of issues.
- i) Investigation of solutions.
- j) Compromise on the basis of tentative progress

Keeping these concepts in mind, the case of Shergaon village of Arunachal Pradesh is presented here as a model effort of developing the local community of an area through the effort of a group of local youths through tourism.

### **Shergaon Village: An overview**

Located at 27° 7' 0" North, 92° 16' 0" East, Shergaon village is in the West Kameng District of Arunachal Pradesh (India) and is 60 km away from Bomdila, the head quarter of West Kameng district. It is surrounded by lofty mountains of the eastern Himalaya ranges. The village is home to the 'Sherdukpen' community. Sherdukpen community practices Buddhism along with animism. Shergaon village together with villages like *Demachang*, *Jigaon*, *Mushaksing*, *Tenzingaon*, and *Yokmupam* are considered as Shergaon Circle of the district. There are two government run primary schools and one Government secondary school. Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya is also present in the village to impart education in the region. The organization also organizes awareness campaign to promote health and hygiene in the community.

The place is located on the Himalayan mountain ranges with elevations form 100 meter to 7000 meter. The land forms consist of deep gorges, terrain, valleys and peaks which make it suitable for various adventure sports such as mountain climbing, trekking, paragliding etc. The region is also very rich in various forms of flora and fauna.

Table 1. Diverse flora and fauna found in Shergaon circle

(\*\*Source: Department of Environment & Forests, Government of Arunachal Pradesh Retrieved from <http://www.shergaonforests.org/p/place.html> on 13/12/2014)

<b>Flora</b>	Pine	<i>Pinus roxburghii</i> , <i>Pinus wallichiana</i> and <i>Pinus kesiya</i>
	Oak	<i>Quercus incana</i> , <i>Quercus serrate</i> , <i>Magnolia sp.</i> , <i>Rhododendron sp.</i>
<b>Fauna</b>	Primates	Langur, macaques, slow lorries ( <i>Nycticebus coucang</i> )
	Ungulates	Hog deer, barking deer ( <i>Muntiacus muntjak</i> ), musk deer ( <i>Moschus sp.</i> ), sambar ( <i>Cervus unicolor</i> ), wild pig ( <i>Sus scrofa</i> )
	Carnivores	Leopard ( <i>Panthera pardus</i> ), Himalayan black bear ( <i>Ursus thibetanus</i> ), red panda ( <i>Ailurus fulgens</i> ), yellow-throated marten ( <i>Martes flavigula</i> )
	Rodents	Himalayan marmot ( <i>Marmota himalayana</i> ), Himalayan striped squirrel ( <i>Tamiops maclellandi</i> ) and porcupine ( <i>Hystrix sp.</i> )
	Pheasant	Blyth's Tragopan ( <i>Tragopan blythii</i> ), Temmick's Tragopan, Ruddy Shelduck ( <i>Tadorna ferruginea</i> ), Rufous-necked Hornbill ( <i>Aceros nepalensis</i> ), Ward's Trogon ( <i>Harpactes wardi</i> ), Rusty-bellied Shortwing ( <i>Brachypteryx hyperythra</i> ), Sibia ( <i>Heterophasia Pulchella</i> ), White-naped Yuhina ( <i>Yuhina bakeri</i> ), Austen's Barwing ( <i>Actinodura Waldeni</i> ), Hoary-throated Barwing ( <i>Actinodura nepalensis</i> ), Broad-billed Warbler ( <i>Tickellia hodgsoni</i> ) and Yellow-vented Warbler ( <i>Phylloscopus cantator</i> )

The richness in pheasants (birds) has led the Shergaon forest circle to be listed in Important Bird Area (IBA) by Birdlife International under Eagle's Nest Wildlife Sanctuary (Arunachal

Pradesh). Shergaon is also known for trout hatchery where both brown and rainbow trout fishes can be found. The trout hatchery is looked after by the Department of Fishery, Government of Arunachal Pradesh.

### ***Garung Thuk: An attempt/ effort***

On 4<sup>th</sup> October 2014 an organization was formed by the name 'Garung Thuk', which means 'Born to serve my village' at Shergaon (Arunachal Pradesh). The organization comprises of local educated youths and is working in various fields. However, they are connected to each other to promote community development in their village in the field of health, education, tradition and culture, and biodiversity conservation. These local youths are working as government servant and share the vision to uplift their community. With a motive to develop their community, these local youths have started the organization. As has been discussed earlier community development should be started by the local people. (Cousins, 1957; Oberle, Darby, & Stowers, 1975; Bennett, 1973).

Fig 1. The formation of Garung Thuk



### ***The Process***

With consultation and discussion with villagers, the organization is constructing a local museum that will exhibit the traditional ornaments, dresses, handicrafts etc. associated with the 'Sherdukpen' community. The museum will enable visitors to understand the tradition and culture of the community and also enable the new generation to learn about their community. A souvenir shop is also being constructed with the museum for the people who would like to purchase traditional handicrafts & handlooms of the community. The organization aims to provide maximum benefit to the artisans and have planned that 95% of the price should be handed over to the artisans and only 5% will be retained by the organization for operational



activities. The organization has also introduced library sections in the local schools to promote reading habit among the students.

This process is in line with the definition provided by the International Cooperation Administration. There are following sequential phases for community development:

- a) The people of the community organize themselves for planning and action.
- b) They define their common and individual needs and problems.
- c) They make individual and group plans to meet their needs.
- d) They execute these plans with the maximum of reliance upon community resource (Community Development Review, 1957).

The organization has started and is working through donation by the members and by the members of the community. Thus the community development is self-relied for all developments as suggested by Cousins (Cousins, 1957) and by Tomson (Thomson, 1968).

The organization has realized the potential of tourism for community development. Many researchers has agreed that tourism can enhance the socio-economic condition of the region. (William, 1998; Ige & Odularu, 2008; David, 2011; Ashley, 1995).

### ***A participatory system/approach***

Garung Thuk has also started maintenance of an old house which shall be used for 'Home-stay' for the tourists. The local people together are working to prepare the infrastructure for a proper home-stay experience. The local people will serve the tourists based on their expertise. The local youths will perform cultural shows for the tourists. For those who are interested the old-age people of the village will tell the stories related to the community.

Fig 2. The home-stay cum museum of Garung Thok



### **Tourism for Community development**

Various forms of tourism can be promoted in Shergaon circle. Some of them are listed below.

**Archaeological tourism:** The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts has found out the following Archaeological sites in and around Shergaon. (\*Source: [http://ignca.nic.in/img\\_0002\\_as\\_arunachal.htm](http://ignca.nic.in/img_0002_as_arunachal.htm) retrieved on 11/12/2014)

- (a) The monastery of Shergaon is more than 200 years old.
- (b) Lha Gyala Monastery is 600 years old Buddhist monastery located in Sangkem village (Morshing) which is nearly 22.6 km away from Shergaon.
- (c) Ped Ma Chhaling Monastery presently known as Rupa monastery is located in Rupa which is 41 km away from Shergaon.

Apart from the above, places like Kamchoyam (meaning mud house) and Luung Jhuk Thung (meaning place of buried stone) and Senjong are considered as Megalithic sites by the Department of Research, Government of Arunachal Pradesh.

**Adventure tourism:** As mentioned above, the various landforms of Shergaon circle provides opportunity for adventures like mountain climbing, trekking and paragliding. One can also mix trekking with rural tourism as there are villages which are far away from motor-able roads. Bemchang village can be reached after trekking of approximately 6 hours and is famous among villagers for a very old stone rice grinder which is 1.5 meters in length. There is also a cave known as 'Kro' which is annually visited by the villagers and takes approximately 6 hours of trekking to reach there.

**Festival tourism:** The 'Sherdukpen' community celebrates Buddhist festivals like *Lossar* in the month of February every month and *Chekor* in the month of May/June every year. Kikshaba is a non-buddhist festival of the community meant for the forest deities. In the festival one can witness various dance forms and rituals of this indigenous community.

**Others:** There are places like state apple farm in Shergaon, Kiwi farm in Kalaktang (41.7 km), and other villages around the Shergaon which can be of tourist interest. The richness of flora and fauna can also be a major tourist attraction. The unique handicrafts and dress are also attractive for tourists.

The 'Garung Thuk' is trying to explore the potential of these tourism avenues of the place and is considering the various promotional strategies. It can be seen that according to the literature of review the Sherdukpen community has realized the need for advancement and have also started working towards the direction. District Tourist Officer (Bomdila) has also encouraged the organization to write an article to be published in the website of Department of Tourism, Government of Arunachal Pradesh.

Required assistance is provided by the concerned agencies and by the government can enhance the capability of 'Garung Thuk' for community development.

### **Conclusion**

Garung Thuk is an organization formed by the local people which attempt to benefit the people of the community by the process of community development through tourism. The study reveals the practical approach towards community development and has also revealed the association between the literature and actual practice of community development.

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