PREFACE

The past twenty years have witnessed a national economic growth through diversification of various economic activities. Tourism is such a sector of rapid growth. As two-thirds of country’s population live in rural areas, the development of tourism in these areas offers better means of economic progress and the fruits of development reach larger sections of the society. The present study is an attempt to analyze the contribution of tourism sector in rural development in the backdrop of one of the economically backward districts of western West Bengal. The district lacks development in the fields of agriculture and industry. As a consequence, among the eighteen districts of West Bengal, Bankura district ranks fourteen in terms of its contribution of secondary sector (12.7%) to NDP. But it has huge scope for diversifying tertiary sector by exploiting the tourism potential. About 90 percent of its population resides in rural areas with vulnerable economic condition. This study has been undertaken to evaluate the alternative means of economic development in Bankura district.

To find out the contribution of tourism in the process of rural development, the principal source of information happens to be the on-field observation, questionnaire survey among the tourists, souvenir shops, hotels and local people. Some secondary sources of information are also explored, analyzed and presented in this study. After analyzing these information, the present study has found that tourism caters rural economy in two ways- creating direct and indirect employment for rural people and by revitalizing the existing rich souvenir industry of the district. It conserves its natural endowments as well as its rich culture and heritage. This is the only form of
economic activity where rural economic progress is possible by means of conservation of environment as well as culture and heritage of rural areas.

In the present context, the major findings of the study may be appreciable as the government is searching alternative means of rural economic development of the Junglemahal area of the State. Tourism may offer the best alternative path as it is environment friendly and involves local people in the development process. This form of rural economic diversification also acts as major force in minimizing the tendency to migrate towards its nearby urban areas. People of these areas may find employment and generate more income from tourism locally for their economic sustainability. This will gear the rate of rural area development with consequent economic progress of the district to go up the economic ladder of the State. A planned link between tourism and rural development will help in achieving rural development in particular and regional development of the district in general.

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