

# **Tourism for Rural Employment, Women Empowerment and Youth Entrepreneurship: A Pathway towards Viksit Bharat @ 2047**

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## **Abstract**

Tourism has emerged as a significant driver of growth and development in rural and semi-urban regions of India by promoting inclusive and sustainable livelihood opportunities. Within the framework of Viksit Bharat @ 2047, tourism has substantially enhanced rural employment generation, strengthened the socio-economic status of women, and facilitated the early establishment of small-scale enterprises by youth. Various forms of tourism such as rural tourism, eco-tourism, agro-tourism, and community-based tourism have contributed to income diversification, reduced distress-driven migration, and improved livelihood security in rural areas. Tourism-related activities including homestays, handicrafts, and traditional culinary services have played a vital role in advancing the economic independence and social empowerment of rural women. Simultaneously, the tourism sector has created entrepreneurial opportunities for young individuals through start-ups in areas such as digital tourism, adventure tourism, hospitality services, and local tourism enterprises. Government-supported initiatives such as Swadesh Darshan, Dekho Apna Desh, Start-up India, and Skill India have further strengthened tourism-led development by enhancing infrastructure, skills, and entrepreneurial capacity at the grassroots level.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Tourism; Rural Employment; Women Empowerment; Youth Entrepreneurship

## **Introduction**

Tourism has become an important driver of socio-economic transformation, particularly in developing economies where employment generation, poverty alleviation, and inclusive growth remain central policy objectives. As a service-

oriented and labour-intensive sector, tourism has the capacity to generate large-scale employment opportunities with relatively lower capital investment compared to many industrial sectors. It stimulates a wide range of direct and indirect economic activities, including accommodation, transportation, food services, handicrafts, cultural performances, event management, and local enterprises [1].

India, endowed with vast geographical diversity, rich cultural heritage, historical monuments, spiritual destinations, and ecological resources, possesses exceptional potential for tourism-led development. Rural and remote areas, in particular, hold untapped potential for tourism development through rural tourism, eco-tourism, agro-tourism, cultural tourism, and heritage tourism [2].

In rural India, agriculture continues to be the primary source of livelihood, yet it is often characterised by seasonal employment, low productivity, income uncertainty, and vulnerability to climate change. Tourism offers an alternative and supplementary source of income that helps diversify rural livelihoods, enhance household income, and reduce excessive dependence on agriculture [3].



**Fig.1: Tourism for Employment, Women Empowerment Youth Entrepreneurship**

Tourism functions as a multiplier-driven development model that integrates economic growth, social inclusion, and skill formation. The figure illustrates how tourism-led interventions, supported by Government of India schemes, can accelerate inclusive and sustainable development, contributing to the vision of

Viksit Bharat @ 2047, shown in fig.1. The national vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047 emphasises sustainable development, inclusive growth, women-led development, youth empowerment, and innovation as core pillars of national progress [4]. Tourism aligns closely with this vision by promoting community participation, local entrepreneurship, cultural pride, and environmental stewardship. Recognising this potential, the Government of India has introduced initiatives such as Swadesh Darshan, PRASHAD, Dekho Apna Desh, Skill India, and Start-up India, highlighting tourism as a priority sector for employment generation and skill development [5].

Tourism also plays a transformative role in advancing women empowerment and youth entrepreneurship. Women's participation in tourism-related activities enhances economic independence, social recognition, and decision-making power [6]. Similarly, tourism offers diverse entrepreneurial opportunities for youth through start-ups, adventure tourism, digital platforms, and creative industries [7]. This chapter examines the multifaceted role of tourism in generating employment in rural areas, empowering women economically and socially, and fostering youth entrepreneurship. Tourism creates a wide range of direct and indirect livelihood opportunities across sectors such as hospitality, transport, handicrafts, local cuisine, cultural services, and digital platforms, thereby contributing to income diversification and rural development. Participation in tourism enables women to achieve financial independence, enhance skills, and gain greater involvement in household and community-level decision-making. Simultaneously, the expanding tourism ecosystem provides youth with diverse entrepreneurial avenues through innovation, technology integration, start-ups, and community-based enterprises.

This chapter adopts a framework of a descriptive and analytical research study to identify the emerging trends, opportunities, and challenges of Tourism Development in the Indian context. This paper also gives importance to the types of models of Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism, as explained in this paper, to address the issue of balanced distribution of benefits and the preservation of cultural heritage and natural resource assets. This paper concludes by saying that proper management of the vast potential of the Tourism sector would help achieve the goal of Viksit Bharat @ 2047.

### **Data and Methodology**

The chapter adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the role of tourism in promoting rural employment, women empowerment, and youth entrepreneurship in India. The analysis is based exclusively on secondary data, as the objective is to synthesise existing knowledge, policy perspectives, and empirical evidence related to tourism-led development within the framework of sustainable development and the national vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047.

Secondary data have been collected from credible sources, including publications of the Ministry of Tourism, NITI Aayog, and international organisations such as UNWTO and WTTC [8, 9]. In addition, peer-reviewed journals, edited volumes, doctoral dissertations, policy briefs, and research reports focusing on tourism, rural development, gender studies, and entrepreneurship have been consulted.

The methodological approach involves content analysis and thematic analysis of selected literature. Key themes such as rural employment, women's participation, youth entrepreneurship, sustainability, and community-based tourism have been identified and systematically analysed. Comparative insights from national and international experiences have been used to contextualise India's tourism development trajectory and highlight best practices.

Policy documents and government initiatives related to tourism, skill development, and entrepreneurship have been critically reviewed to assess their effectiveness in promoting inclusive growth. Given the conceptual nature of the chapter, no primary surveys or statistical modeling have been employed. Instead, qualitative interpretation and logical reasoning have been used to derive meaningful conclusions and policy implications.

**Table 1: Key Government Initiatives Supporting Tourism-Led Development**

<b>Scheme / Programme</b>	<b>Focus Area</b>	<b>Contribution to Employment &amp; Entrepreneurship</b>
Swadesh Darshan	Infrastructure development	Rural job creation
PRASHAD	Pilgrimage destinations	Local economic growth
Skill India	Skill development	Trained tourism workforce
Start-up India	Entrepreneurship	Youth-led tourism enterprises
Hunar Se Rozgar Tak	Hospitality training	Employment for disadvantaged youth

## Results and Discussion

### Tourism and Rural Employment

Rural employment remains one of India's most pressing developmental challenges. A large proportion of the rural population depends on agriculture, which is often characterised by seasonal employment, low productivity, and income instability. Tourism provides an alternative and supplementary source of livelihood by diversifying rural economies.

Rural tourism encompasses various forms such as village tourism, agro-tourism, eco-tourism, tribal tourism, and heritage tourism. These forms create employment opportunities in accommodation (homestays, guesthouses), guiding services, transportation, local cuisine, cultural performances, and handicraft production

[10]. The promotion of homestays has enabled rural households to earn income using existing infrastructure, thereby lowering entry barriers.

Tourism also has a strong multiplier effect. For example, an increase in tourist arrivals leads to higher demand for agricultural produce, local crafts, and transport services, thereby benefiting multiple sectors simultaneously. Government initiatives like Swadesh Darshan, PRASHAD, and Rural Tourism Projects have focused on developing tourism infrastructure and enhancing local capacities [11].

Furthermore, tourism reduces rural-urban migration by creating livelihood opportunities within villages. By generating year-round employment and enhancing income stability, tourism contributes to poverty reduction and overall rural development. However, issues such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of skills, and limited market access remain challenges that need targeted policy intervention.

**Table 2: Forms of Tourism and Their Contribution to Rural Employment**

<b>Type of Tourism</b>	<b>Key Activities</b>	<b>Employment Opportunities Generated</b>	<b>Target Beneficiaries</b>
Rural Tourism	Village stays, local cuisine, cultural exchange	Homestays, guides, cooks, artisans	Small farmers, rural households
Eco-Tourism	Nature trails, wildlife tourism, conservation	Eco-guides, forest guards, local service providers	Tribal and forest communities
Agro-Tourism	Farm visits, farm stays, agri-experiences	Farm hosts, local labour, agri-entrepreneurs	Marginal and small farmers
Heritage & Cultural Tourism	Monuments, folk arts, festivals	Artists, performers, craft producers	Traditional artisans
Spiritual Tourism	Temples, pilgrimages, religious events	Transport, accommodation, vendors	Local traders and service workers

*Source: Compiled from UNWTO (2019), Ministry of Tourism (2022)*

### **Tourism and Women Empowerment**

Women empowerment is a central pillar of sustainable development and a key priority under the vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047. Tourism offers significant opportunities for enhancing women's economic participation, social status, and

decision-making power. Women are actively involved in various tourism-related activities, including hospitality services, homestays, catering, handicrafts, cultural performances, tour guiding, and souvenir production. Participation in tourism enables women to earn independent income, thereby improving household welfare and children's education and health outcomes [12]. Self-help groups (SHGs) linked with tourism have played a crucial role in empowering rural women. These groups engage in activities such as running homestays, preparing traditional food, producing handicrafts, and managing eco-tourism sites. Training programmes in hospitality management, communication skills, digital literacy, and financial management have further strengthened women's capabilities [13]. Tourism also contributes to social empowerment by enhancing women's visibility and confidence. Interaction with tourists exposes women to new ideas, cultures, and perspectives, fostering self-esteem and leadership qualities. However, challenges such as limited access to finance, safety concerns, workload imbalance, and socio-cultural barriers persist. Addressing these challenges through gender-sensitive policies, credit support, and capacity-building initiatives is essential for ensuring equitable participation.

**Table 3: Tourism as a Tool for Women Empowerment**

<b>Dimension of Empowerment</b>	<b>Tourism-Related Activities</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
Economic Empowerment	Homestays, handicrafts, catering	Independent income, financial security
Social Empowerment	Cultural performances, guiding	Increased social visibility and confidence
Skill Development	Hospitality, communication, digital skills	Enhanced employability
Decision-Making	SHGs, tourism cooperatives	Participation in household and community decisions
Leadership	Community-based tourism management	Emergence of women leaders

**Source: Singh (2021); NITI Aayog (2021)**

### **Tourism and Youth Entrepreneurship**

India's youth population represents a significant demographic dividend, and entrepreneurship is widely regarded as a key driver of employment generation and innovation. Tourism provides a dynamic platform for youth entrepreneurship due to its diversity, flexibility, and growing demand [14].

Young entrepreneurs are increasingly engaging in tourism-related ventures such as travel agencies, adventure tourism, eco-lodges, transport services, event

management, photography, content creation, and digital tourism platforms. The integration of technology has further expanded opportunities, enabling youth to develop online booking systems, mobile applications, and social media-based marketing strategies.

Government initiatives like Start-up India, Skill India, and Hunar Se Rozgar Tak have facilitated skill development and entrepreneurial training in the tourism sector [15]. Youth entrepreneurship in tourism not only generates employment but also promotes innovation, local branding, and destination competitiveness.

Moreover, youth-led tourism enterprises contribute to sustainable development by promoting responsible tourism practices, community engagement, and environmental conservation. Despite these opportunities, challenges such as access to capital, regulatory complexities, and market competition need to be addressed to fully harness youth potential.

***Table 4: Youth Entrepreneurship Opportunities in Tourism***

<b>Tourism Segment</b>	<b>Entrepreneurial Opportunities</b>	<b>Skills Required</b>
Adventure Tourism	Trekking, rafting, camping	Risk management, guiding
Digital Tourism	Online booking, travel blogs, vlogging	IT, digital marketing
Hospitality Start-ups	Eco-lodges, cafés, hostels	Business management
Transport Services	E-vehicles, bike rentals	Operations & logistics
Creative Tourism	Photography, content creation	Media & communication

***Source: WTTC (2023); Government of India (2022)***

### **Tourism and Sustainable Development for Viksit Bharat @ 2047**

Sustainable tourism emphasizes the balanced integration of economic, social, and environmental objectives. It seeks to minimize negative impacts while maximizing benefits for local communities. Sustainable tourism aligns closely with the goals of Viksit Bharat @ 2047, which envisions an inclusive, innovative, and environmentally responsible India [16]. Community-based tourism models ensure local participation and ownership, thereby enhancing accountability and benefit-sharing. Responsible tourism practices such as waste management, energy efficiency, cultural preservation, and biodiversity conservation contribute

to long-term sustainability. By promoting rural employment, women empowerment, and youth entrepreneurship, tourism supports inclusive growth and social equity. It strengthens local economies, preserves cultural heritage, and fosters national integration. Sustainable tourism thus emerges as a strategic instrument for achieving India's developmental aspirations.

### **Conclusions**

The present chapter highlights tourism's immense potential as a catalyst for rural employment, women empowerment, and youth entrepreneurship in India. As the nation advances towards the vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047, sustainable tourism offers a viable pathway for achieving inclusive and balanced development. Tourism's labour-intensive nature, low capital requirements, and strong linkages with local economies make it particularly suitable for empowering marginalised groups. By creating diversified livelihood opportunities, tourism reduces poverty, curbs migration, and enhances social well-being. To fully realise tourism's potential, concerted efforts are required in the form of policy support, infrastructure development, skill training, financial inclusion, and community participation. Emphasis on sustainability and responsible practices will ensure that tourism contributes positively to economic growth while preserving cultural and environmental resources.

In conclusion, tourism, when strategically planned and sustainably managed, can play a transformative role in building a prosperous, inclusive, and empowered India, thereby contributing significantly to the realisation of Viksit Bharat @ 2047.

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