

Community Participation in Tourism: A Case Study on Golden Temple

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Abstract: Tourism and its impacts is a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses economic, social, cultural, religious, ecological, environmental and political forces. Sense of community is the feeling of obligation and commitment of an individual towards other members in the community. It develops over time through understanding of collective values, beliefs and interests among community members. This study emphasizes the participation of the community and involvement of local people as volunteers in tourism development and destination management process. Golden temple, the highest Sikh shrine, is well known for its historical significance, architectural splendor and religious importance. The lesser known fact is this that an important tourism centre like Golden temple which on an average receives more than one Lakh visitors every day is managed largely through volunteer ship and community participation. The seamless organization of tourism services like food, accommodation, transportation and housekeeping through community involvement is a model lesson in management of tourism services. In the above background, we have taken Golden temple as a case study to highlight the management of community kitchen, Langar, through community involvement and participative tourism. Langar at Golden temple is considered as world's largest kitchen and our objective is to study and highlight the organization and management of the service. Our study also involves other volunteer services in providing facilities to visitors at Golden temple. Through observation on site visit, interviews of the service providers, volunteers and tourists at the site and through secondary information sources such as internet and existing literature on the subject. The study highlights the role of community and volunteers in tourism destination management. It analyses and brings to the forefront a viable model of tourism in which all stake holders has an active level of involvement.

Keywords: Hospitality, Tourism, Culture, Community, Volunteers, Participative tourism, Sense of ownership.

I. INTRODUCTION

Man is a social animal. Success of human race in comparison to other species is largely based on this singular trait. In pre-historic times when odds were heavily stacked against our predecessors, because of their physical frailty in comparison to other animals and elements of nature, they soon realized that staying in groups and helping each other is the only way through which they will be able to survive, sustain and evolve. Millions of years of community existence and a natural predisposition for community living helped human beings to attain what we call today a highly civilized and evolved race which metaphorically speaking rules this planet.

In modern day context, we observe that communities weaved together are responsible for foundations of great nations and their institutions. It is no surprise that phenomenal success stories neither are created by powerful governments nor through individual perseverance but it's a participative community that is responsible for the genesis of great ideas and their effective executions.

In this background, it will be a pertinent argument that if tourism is primarily an activity of cultural linkages then community being the carrier-vehicle of local culture must have a participative role in management of tourism product. Unfortunately, this basic premise of holistic tourism development is not adhered to in most of the cases. Tourism development and service delivery is often left to government planners and private developers who provide a myopic and cocooned experience to the traveler. Local community, left out of the tourism product management process, is at best indifferent and at worst antagonized about the whole business of tourism.

If we intend to develop sustainable tourism at a destination we must involve local participation and encourage a sense of community among residents as a way of contributing to tourism development. In this research paper we have taken Golden Temple, Amritsar, as a wonderful case –study to highlight the role of community and its participation in successful management and service delivery at a tourist destination.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Tourism industry is regarded as a means of achieving sustainable development and it represents significant economic, environmental, and socio cultural opportunities for many local communities (Sharpley,2002). Without community participation and sense of community tourism development could not be achieved. Bopp et al.(2000, p. 113) defines sense of community in the following way: “sense of community refers to the quality of human relationship that makes it possible for people to live together in a healthy and sustainable way”. The sense of community plays an important role in fostering community support for tourism development and may enhance its long-term sustainability as a broad basis for tourism development planning (Hall et al., 2005). Sense of community can be seen as the capacity of the local people to participate in development activities (Cupples, 2005). There is a lot of noteworthy body of literature on the definition and conceptualization of sense of community (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990;Davidson & Cotter, 1989; McMillan & Chavis,1986), only a few literatures discuss the practical application of approaches that have been successfully used to measure sense of community in different cultural contexts. Community participation can be seen as a process whereby the residents of a community are given a voice and a choice to participate in issues affecting their lives. Whether a community participates or not is determined by a variety of factors. One such factor is reluctance to participate because the community members do not trust each other. Community participation can thus be enhanced by addressing barriers to participation while at the same time taking the necessary steps to promote the principles of sustainable participation (Theron, 2005). Fariborz Aref (2011) in his research article mentions that participation is a continuum based on the degree of people’s involvement in deciding or influencing the decision making process concerning the tourism development program or its implementation.

III. TABLE GIVEN BELOW SHOWS THE MAIN TYPOLOGY OF PARTICIPATION

Typology of community participation in tourism development (Preety – 1995)

Passive Participation	-People participation is limited to be told what is going to happen -People’s responses are not taken into account -Information belongs only to external professionals
Participation in information giving	-People participation is limited to provision of information in response to questionnaires, surveys etc. designed by external agents -Findings of the research are not shared with the people
Participation by Consulting	-People participation involves consultation with local people -They may take into account people’s views during this process, but are not obliged to do so
Participation for material incentives	-People participate by contributing resources (e.g. labour) in return for food, cash or other material incentive -Farmers may provide fields and labour but are not involved in the experimentation or the process of learning -This is often called participation, but people have no stake in prolonging activities when the incentives end
Functional Participation	-People participate by forming groups to meet specific objectives related to the project -Involvement may be interactive but tends to arise later in the project cycle after major decisions have been made -Institutions formed tend to depend on external facilitators, but may become self dependent
Interactive Participation	-People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and creation or strengthening of local institutions -Participation is seen as a right and not only as a means of achieving projects goals -It tends to involve interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systematic and structured learning processes -Local groups take control of local decision making and determine how resources are to be used giving them a stake in maintaining structures or practices
Self-mobilization	-People participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions or change systems

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -They develop contacts with external institutions for advice and resources, but retain control of the use of resources - Self-mobilization and collective action may or may not challenge existing inequitable distributions of wealth and power
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Preety (1995)

Sangat and Pangat in Sikhism: Participative community philosophy:

Among numerous new concepts initiated by the Sikh Gurus, the concepts of *Sangat* and *Pangat* occupy an important place in Sikh thought and form an integral part of tenets of Sikhism. The idea of *Sangat* was enunciated by Guru Nanak Dev, which has now been turned into one of the significant institutions in Sikhism. The word *Sangat* literally means ‘an assembly of individuals’. According to the Sikh thought, the *Sangat* means a congregation of the Sikhs for purpose of common prayers. Bhai Kahan Singh (1960) records, *Sangat* means a place where the Sikhs of the Guru assemble. According to G.S. Deol (1999), “The *Sangat* is a congregation of Sikhs to work in a corporate manner for the all round development of the community.” For the congregational prayer, when you are in a group, you form a *Sangat* and then pray together. In the *Sangat* everybody was welcome, whether rich or poor, man or woman, high or low.

Pangat:

The concept and the institution of *Pangat* have also been enunciated by Guru Nanak Dev. The word *Pangat* literally means a group of people sitting in a line. At Kartarpur, first Guru established an institution of *Langar*, a community – Kitchen. It served two purposes; first to provide free food to the poor and the destitute out of the common contributions made by people for the service of the needy, secondly it was to serve effective machinery for leveling up the society. In this community-mess all were to sit in one line, called *Pangat*, and eat the same food, irrespective of the fact whether a person was rich or poor, king or pauper, man or woman and the like. Since then the free kitchen became an institution, as an integral part of Sikh Temple.

The place where *Sangat* assembles for prayer led to establishment of the institution called Gurudwara, or the Temple of worship and prayer. The Sikh Gurus combined worship and bread. The later, brought in the idea of *Pangat*, Gurudwara becoming place of free meal, too. The word *Pangat* though initiated by Guru Nanak Dev was popularized by Guru Amar Das. It is an arrangement for feeding people in the free kitchen, called *Langar*. The community-mess is a place for training in service, the practice of philanthropy and equality. The sharing of worship and food is an important part of Sikh religion. Guru Nanak writes:

“He alone knows the path of righteousness, O Nanak, who earns his bread with honest labour and shares it with others.”(Adi Granth, p.1245)

“One gets hereafter only what gives here out of honest earning.” (Ibid., p.472)

It was Guru Amar das who made *Pangat* a part of every Sikh Gurudwara. His commandments were that any person who wanted to see him or offer prayers must first take a free meal in the community-kitchen. It became proverb at Guru Amar das’ time: *pehley Pangat ,paechhay Sangat*(first meal in the community-mess and afterwards participation in the religious worship). Thus *Langar* became an integral part of every Gurudwara. The institution of *Langar* became instrumental in breaking caste –distinctions, barriers and taboos. Even Emperor Akbar and the raja of Haripur had to take food with the common folk in the *Pangat*, before they could call upon Guru Amar Das. Here another interesting instance can be cited from recent history, relating to Maharaja of Patiala. It is mentioned in the life of Late Sant Attar Singh of Mastuana that once Maharaja Bhupendra Singh arranged a big *Langar* for the common people in which he requested Saint to perform the *Ardas*. In his prayers, he just thanked God for the provision of eatables in the *Langar* and praised the devotees, who distributed *Langar* among the people gathered there. One of the ministers of the Maharaja asked saint that as to why he did not mentioned the name of the Maharaja in the prayers, he replied neither Maharaja nor any of his queens or any other member of the royal family had either prepared or distributed the *Langar* personally to the *Sangat*. Consequent upon this, the *Langar* was again arranged the next day in which the King and Queens personally distributed the *Langar*. The saint then prayed for the maharaja and his family. (Deol, G.S.,1999)

The last Guru, Guru Gobind Singh too, continued the practice of *Langar*. His standing instruction to his followers was to maintain *Langar* in their own houses. It is recorded that once Guru Gobind Singh told his Sikhs as under, “if a hungry

person calls at your door and you turns him away, remember that you are turning out not him but me. He who serves the poor and the needy serves me. The mouth of the poor is Guru's till." In his composition named *Krishan Avatar*, he writes:

"May the kitchen and the sword prevail in the world".

In *charitt pakhyan* he says:

"Charity and sword are symbolic of self-respect" (Dasam Granth,p.322). It is thus evident that the institution of *Pangat* has a significance of its own in Sikh philosophy. Its unique contribution symbolizes social equality and channelizing source of charity and self less service to the humanity. Commenting on the significance of the institution, G.S.Mansukhani observes, "The free kitchen serves a number of purposes. One the one hand, it is an example of equality of men because all the people have to sit on one and the same platform, eat the same type of meal, and it offers opportunities for social service because you have to cook the food. You have to wash the dishes. All this is obviously a practical lesson in social service. Secondly, the institution of free kitchen which he (Guru Nanak) established meant a channelizing of charity for the common good. Individual charity is all right but it does not go very far. So Guru Nanak tried to institutionalize charity by giving the Sikhs a directive that they must support the free kitchen-the *Langar* or *Pangat* as we call it"

It can, therefore, be said that this is how Guru Nanak dev taught and practiced brotherhood of man through the system of *Pangat*, where all people being treated alike being seated on the same platform, sharing the same food without any consideration of caste, creed, colour, sex or position. It will not be an exaggeration to say, that the institution of *Sangat* and *Pangat* are a notable contribution to the Indian philosophical thought and have proved their importance for the evolution and spiritual achievement of man.

Golden Temple: Background and Significance:

Golden Temple, Amritsar is famous for its beautiful architecture and dazzling combination of Golden domes and pure white marble. All visitors to the shrine, whether pilgrims or tourists, are equally stunned by the soothing peace and tranquility of the Temple. Construction of the Golden Temple also known as Sri Harmandir Sahib or Darbar Sahib was started by the 4th Guru, Guru Ram Das Ji and completed by Guru Arjun Dev Ji the 5th Guru in the year 1589. The Temple holds unique and marvelous attributes and is the highest Sikh shrine in the world. The site where the temple now stands has been regarded as a mystical and divine place years before its construction. Foundation stone of Golden Temple was laid at the request of the Sikh Guru by a Muslim Saint called Mian Mir. The Golden Temple has four entrances in the North, East, South and West. This symbolizes how all people from all four corners of the earth are welcome and free to enter. About 45% of the pilgrims visiting Darbar Sahib are from other faiths and regarded as equals. The stairs entering the temple go down, rather than up like traditional holy places. This is designed to bring a sense of humbleness rather than haughtiness to people lucky enough to visit it. The whole temple complex itself is purposely built on a lower level to the rest of the city. The temple is beautifully decorated with gold and has some of the best Mughal and Indian architecture, as well as hand painted mosaics and patterns. The Temple complex floor is built in beautiful pure marble, with the Golden Temple sitting in the middle of a striking man made lake. Built directly opposite the Golden Temple in the complex is the Akal Takht - the parliament of the Sikhs.

The Harmandir is not only a place for religious observances but also a social organization with an egalitarian base. It has been promoting good will among different section of society, and indoctrinating them into the citizenship of love. *Sangat*, the assembly of such citizens comprises of those who have undergone an attitudinal change in their outlook who have unflinching faith in god and the holy word, who have vowed to fight against social tyranny, and who consider mankind as one. The idea of *Sangat* mooted by Guru Nanak got a boost when the construction of Harmandir was in progress. Thousands of people, irrespective of their social standing and financial background worked together to build the heaven of their dreams in which there would be no distinction on the basis of caste, colour, creed, race, or sex, and where everyone would partake of food together in the *Guru ka Langar* (free kitchen) and serve it in turn. This promotes the concept of voluntary work and social equality, which were later to become the pivot of Sikh ethos. (Kapoor S. K., 1999)

Guru Ka Langar: Community Kitchen at Golden Temple:

Langar service at Guru Ramdas *Langar* hall of Golden Temple is a marvel in itself. It's open round the clock and seven days of the week. The hall with a seating capacity for 3000 people at one time serves nearly 80,000 people everyday on an average while on weekends and special days the number may be as high as 1,50,000. How this free of charge service is

managed on a volunteer basis by the community and with the active involvement of visitors is a fascinating case study. Entire operation has very limited automation and the thrust is on 'Seva' or volunteer service without any expectations of return.

In India's highly stratified caste traditions, it is remarkable that at *Langar* hall, no one is bothered who prepared the food, who served it and who is sitting next to you. Each visitor gets a wholesome vegetarian meal, served by volunteers who embody India's religious mosaic (Polgreen, L., 29.8.2010, The New York Times)

The sheer volume of raw material used and food prepared in a day is mind boggling. Mr. Harpinder Singh, the 46 year old manager of this huge operation informs "2.5 lakh rotis are prepared everyday on an average. About 50 quintal wheat, 18 quintal dal, 14 quintal rice and seven quintal milk is daily consumption in the *Langar* hall." Assistant incharge Mr. Kanwaljeet Singh says that there are utensils that can store 7 quintals of cooked dal and kheer at one time. A stock of all items is maintained for two months. Vegetables and milk products are purchased on a daily basis.

Desi ghee comes from Verka milk plant in the city. Every day over 100 gas cylinders are needed to fuel the kitchen. For making tea, served twice a day in a separate hall, 6 quintals of sugar and 25 kgs of tea leaves are consumed. 150 kg of red chilly powder, 60 kg of Garlic and 700 kg of onions everyday are used to provide flavor and taste to the *Langar* food. Devotees make donations in the form of raw material or funds for the *Langar*. Any deficit is fulfilled by the Temple management committee from the Temple funds. On an average, the daily expenses on raw material itself for a day are about Rs. 3 lakh to 3.5 lakhs in the *Langar*.

There are 300 permanent sevadars/volunteers in the service of *Langar*. Thousands of volunteers join everyday to assist them. Volunteers ensure that each visitor gets the complete meal. The whole thing is highly organized. It's an endeavor that is remarkable in scale, the clockwork efficiency with which the kitchen is organized and the fact that all the people manning the kitchen are volunteers who are inspired to undertake the heavy labour all by-self motivation and inner conviction.

The *Langar* at Sri Harmandir Sahib is prepared in two kitchens. They have 14 hot plates (*tawa*), several burners, machines for sieving and kneading dough and two specially imported chapatti making machines which are used on days of heavy rush. The machine can make rotis of 20 kg flour in just half an hour. There are two machines in the basement which knead one quintal of flour in just 5 minutes. It is this coordination of man and machine that makes it possible for the Gurudwara to provide 24 hour *Langar* on all days.

Other voluntary services:

Visitor to Golden Temple are not only touched by the community based management of world's largest kitchen but 'self-less service' being the basic tenet at this destination, almost all tourist services are supervised or delivered through one or other form of volunteership. Golden Temple, almost certainly is one of the cleanest public places in the country. You can find hundreds of volunteers scrubbing floors and washing the premises with their hands to keep it sparkling clean. The sense of ownership, devotion and satisfaction on their faces is seen to be believed. The whole atmosphere provides a humbling experience to the visitor.

You find organized row of people at the utensil washing area with their hands dipped in soap water up to elbows. 40,000 plates, bowls and spoons are a part of *Langar* inventory. These utensils are continuously re-cycled and neatly stacked.

The shoe-house at the entrance, the cloak-room, accommodation, security, information desk, almost all services are delivered through 3000 sevadars from local community and a significant floating population of volunteers who take pride in offering their services.

IV. CONCLUSION

Community involvement and active community participation is an intrinsic part of tourism services management at Golden Temple, Amritsar. With professional services of private or government operators, it is almost impossible to keep the area so clean and orderly, particularly, with more than one lakh footfalls every day. Management of services like *Langar*, accommodation, housekeeping and overall arrangement at Golden Temple is carried out by involving and encouraging community to be a part of the execution process. This creates a sense of ownership and belongingness in the host population. While at most religious shrines in the country, touts, private operators and priests are keen on squeezing

maximum money out of the hapless traveler, community driven service delivery at Golden temple leaves the traveler humbled.

Organisation of Langar service starting from procurement of raw material, storage, preparation of food in a linear sequence, service of food to about 80,000 people a day and cleanliness of area is a lesson in food facility management. In this case-study we have tried to highlight the above aspects with details of process, quantity and delivery mechanism of Langar. We have also focused on the role of community involvement in tourism services. Two basic tenets of Sikhism, Sangat and Pangat, i.e. Congregation and community kitchen, is explored in detail as they form the basis of the exceptional organization and site-management of Golden Temple and time-proven tourist friendly track record.

We believe that the case study has practical applications as it highlights and advocates the benefits of involving local community in the tourism process. The study explores the inclusion of our age-old cultural and social practices like 'service and hospitality' in modern day tourism product. We believe that this will help in strengthening of our cultural roots, projecting a positive image of India as a tourist destination and will be instrumental in developing long-term, sustainable and holistic tourism.

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