

## **Idea and Practice of Rural Tourism in South Asia: Cases in India and Bangladesh**

Tetsuya Nakatani

Rural tourism has gradually become popular in South Asia. Although the idea of rural tourism has been introduced and applied predominantly in Western economically developed countries, it has also been applied in economically developing countries such as India and Bangladesh. Rural tourism is regarded as an alternative to or an augmentation of conventional development in these countries.

The government of India launched Rural Tourism Projects in 2002/3 under which a total of 203 rural tourism projects in 29 States/Union Territories sanctioned by 2013. Two cases of rural tourism projects in West Bengal have demonstrated that the projects were not successful because of the lack of proper ideas about rural tourism, effective development initiatives, and the continuous input of the budgets. Responsible tourism was launched in Kerala with the initiative of the State of Kerala in 2007. This initiative, which has no link with the central government rural tourism project, nevertheless shows remarkable success. It organizes village women as supply groups of local agricultural produce, which are supplied regularly to resorts and hotels. Village life tours are guided by the locals. The project is well organized under the idea of Responsible tourism.

The case in Bangladesh illustrates successful rural tourism development with effective collaboration between the local NGO, which has been working to improve the area and local community. Differences of outcomes among project cases are related to whether a clear idea of rural tourism development and effective initiatives for its implementation exist, or not.