

**HOSPITALITY PRACTICES IN HOMESTAY OF SIKKIM AND ONGOING COVID-19**  
**OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES**

**Sanjiv Kumar Sharma<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. Shatrajit Goswami<sup>2\*</sup>**

<sup>1\*</sup>Research Scholar and Assistant Professor, School of Hospitality and Tourism Studies, <sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Shri Ramasamy Memorial University Sikkim, India

Email: <sup>1\*</sup> dr.sanjivkunnu@gmail.com , <sup>2\*</sup> goswami.shatrajit@gmail.com

***Abstract***

Homestay is a wonderful form of accommodation which provide all the unique facilities & services akin to what you have at your own house. Since the hospitality industry is one the most important sector and, homestay plays a vital role as an alternative accommodation.

There is no as such methodology used in this paper as whole paper discuss concept of homestay in India and Sikkim. Traditional challenges and strategic interventions for homestay. Now most challenges is Stop spreading COVID-19 in all sectors, so government of India Ministry of Tourism has given new direction and common guidelines for Homestay uniquely not for any state particularly.

Traditional Challenges of homestay about new policy of government of India due spreading Corona virus epidemic.

***Key words:*** Home stay, Home food, Sikkim, Community, Culture, Hospitality, Guest, COVID-19.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

A decade ago, homestay in India were a niche in local travellers, but now it has gained a massive popularity among the travellers. Since the hospitality industry is one the most important sector and, homestay plays a vital role as an alternative accommodation for all. Indian homestays offer a unique experience to the visitors, because of the various cultural backgrounds present in the various states and regions. However, Homestay visitors has opportunity to observe that, how others live, think and interact with locales cultural and hospitality (food, drink, entertainment and many more). (Edgell, Allen, Smith & Swanson, 2019)

Travelling has always been to seek new experiences. The new form of technologies and urbanization has changed the lifestyle of people tremendously. A huge piece of populace is moving to metropolitans and urban zones for better openings for work and furthermore great expectations for everyday comforts gave. The urban way of life gives almost no chance to unwind in quiet situations. This desires the individuals to take occasions and move to calm and quiet zones. The optional pay,

optional time, status and notoriety, decreased family estimates are a portion of the components which has added to the development of the travel industry.

New types of the travel industry like social the travel industry, eco-the travel industry, nature-based the travel industry, agro the travel industry, town/rustic the travel industry, volunteer the travel industry recommend the developing interest of the travel industry where it brings a vacationer near indigenous habitat and host communities.

## **2. CONCEPT OF HOMESTAY IN INDIA**

Homestay is a house inside ranch and estate in region which are away from the town or a city. Individuals live in those zone have changed over their homestead houses, legacy houses, slope cabin so as to suit two or three visitor. In this homestay individuals can live with a plain environment get an opportunity to speak with a nearby who are the host of the house. Homestay is a type of a travel industry or study abroad that permit guest to lease spaces for neighborhood families. It was some time utilized by individuals who wish to improve their language abilities and become acquainted with the nearby way of life.

According to the rules set by Government of India, any Home Stay can have just Five (05) rooms at the most extreme. A few nations energize homestay as a methods for improvement their travel industry. Homestay permitted the receiving families to acquire a salary. The guest rents room from neighborhood family at a concurred rate. The visitor then again take an interest in everyday happenings in the life of the host. Social connection and trades likewise happen during the guests remain and along these lines this idea is additionally appropriate for voyagers looking for live social encounters.

Homestay alludes to a visit to somebody's domestic in a remote nation which permits guests to lease a room from a nearby family in arrange to memorize neighborhood culture, lifestyle, or language. It may be a living course of action advertised by a have or have family that includes remaining in their outfitted house. The visitor of a domestic remain would be remaining in home-like settlement with shared living spaces Facilities, and civilities. Utilities and dinners are ordinarily included and the length of remain may be day by day, week by week, month to month, or boundless unless indicated something else by the have waterways (Rivers, 1998).

Separated from convenience Domestic Remain offera run of exercises which allow visitors the one of a kind opportunity to involvement the particular culture of the zone.

Activities will differ from home to home and depending on the location. For instance, activities at a home stay in Thailand can range from giving morning alms to monks, learning how to weave silk or cotton cloth, participating in agricultural activities, to going on nature tours, learn a skill practiced by

local villagers, such as making local handicrafts or cooking Thai food. In Japan one can learn doll-making art.

In India numerous Homestays in Kerala offer backwater travels in houseboats and trips down the contract canals in canoes. In Rajasthan a few Homestays organize safaris by jeep or horseback into the farmland, to visit tribal towns and spot natural life. In manor and slope stations, has can take visitors trekking and orchestrate guided strolls through zest gardens and timberlands. Depending on the family, numerous has will offer to require visitor's circular the sights of their town or town, sharing nearby bits of knowledge and an encounter distant expelled from the normal visitor walk.

Domestic remains aren't fair a base from which to spend many days investigating the neighborhood zone, they are an occasion goal in themselves. (Frederick, 2003) too characterized the homestay as remain by a sightseer or a going by remote understudy who is facilitated by a neighborhood family. Homestay can happen in any goal around the world; inhabitants of homestay nations empower homestays in arrange to create their tourism industry. Moreover, homestays as a concept, brings individuals from changed foundations beneath a single roof, very truly, and offers a perfect stage for long enduring fellowships.

India, since time immemorial has been in the priority list of all the globe trotters. India spans a geographical region that stretches from mighty mountain ranges in the north to the Indian Ocean in the south, from deserts in the west to deltas in the east. In India, many cultural, social, religious and regional strands come together to make a truly unique tapestry. Each state is unique in its cultural and natural formation. India has been known for its hospitality.

Indian tourism has taken a jump with the concept of homestays getting to be the modern mantra within the neighborliness situation. This interesting way of genuinely encountering the beat of the put is quick catching up with not as it were sightseers but too has. The Indian proverb 'Athithi Devo Bhavah' or 'GUEST IS GOD' is genuinely lived up to by homestays in India where the visitor is invited with enchant to the domestic.

Indians consider it a huge honor to have guest in their home, and go out of their way to please them. The visitors staying in homestays get to experience true Indian hospitality. A tourist's visit to India can be made memorable with the Homestay Units offered to them. The state tourism departments in India have introduced the concept of homestays. Kerala, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, New Delhi, NCR, Goa, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Rajasthan and Gujarat are the states to have introduced the concept of homestays.

### **3. OPERATIONAL GUIDELINE OF HOMESTAY IN INDIA - COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

(Safety and Hygiene Protocols and Operational Recommendations for Service Providers Ministry of Tourism Government of India Hotel & Restaurant Division June 2020)

These guidelines will apply to Bed and Breakfast (B&B), Homestay and Farm stay units. These guidelines are subject to the provisions of any law, rules or any other directions issued by the competent regulatory authorities of the respective State or Central Government from time to time, which will override these guidelines.

#### **1. FOR ESTABLISHMENT PREMISES**

(I) Ensure availability of hygiene and sanitation equipment at pro-active replenishment

- a) Thermal Gun thermometer for temperature checking of staff and guests.
- b) Hand Sanitizers, Hand Gloves and Masks to be made available in the Reception Area.
- c) Sufficient disinfectants like sodium hypochlorite (1%).

(II) Posters/standees should be displayed at prominent locations for information and awareness:

- a) Emergency helpline numbers - at the reception
- b) Social distancing (6 feet) - Reception & other strategic places
- c) General Information - Reception
- d) Hand Washing - Reception & Inside the room
- e) Respiratory hygiene - Reception & Inside the room
- f) Dos & Don'ts – At all appropriate places

(III) For air-conditioning/ventilation, the guidelines of CPWD shall be followed which inter alia emphasizes that the temperature setting of all air conditioning devices should be in the range of 24-30 C. Relative humidity should be in the range of 40-70%.

#### **2. FOR STAFF AND HOST**

- a) Ensure all staff wear mask & hand gloves which should be changed/ disinfected after handling each customer to avoid cross contamination.
- b) Ensure daily temperature check via thermal gun thermometer.
- c) All employees must mandatorily download Aarogya Setu mobile application.
- d) All staff must use tray to avoid hand contact while serving water bottle/ toiletries/ medicines/ food etc. while maintaining 6 feet distance.

### **In case any guest develops symptoms of COVID-19**

- a. Place the ill person in a room or a designated area where they are isolated from others.
- b. Provide a mask/face cover till such time he/she is examined by a doctor.
- c. Immediately inform the nearest medical facility (hospital/clinic) or call the state or district helpline.
- d. Disinfection of the premises to be taken up if the person is found positive. Linen and other items must be washed separately.
- e. Maintain empathy with the guests.
- f. In case suspected guests flee/ not traceable, inform the police immediately.

### **3. FOR GUESTS**

- a) Following DO's and DON'Ts should be followed by guests:
- b) Do not step out of the room unnecessarily.
- c) Wear a mask whenever outside the room.
- d) Keep the doors closed and avoid any contact with the doorknobs.
- e) Always keep a safe distance as per social distancing norms.
- f) Wash your hands frequently with the soaps/sanitizers provided.
- g) Put all disposable plates' /cups/ bottles after use in the garbage bag.
- h) Guests should not visit containment zone.

### **4. SPECIFIC GUIDELINES PER AREA OF OPERATION**

#### **(I) Reception:**

- a) Ensure check-in formalities are completed in contactless manner (QR code/online forms) to reduce contact and time at the front desk.
- b) Guest details to be sent in advance for guest registration along with government approved identity card, any other information required by the hotel via Email/ Whats App.
- c) Information on travel history & medical condition are recommended to be captured for all guests.
- d) Travel itinerary may be sought from the guests to ensure traceability.

#### **(II) Check-out:**

- a) Guests should inform at reception using intercom or personal mobile, an hour before the check-out.
- b) Payments should be made via an online platform with cashless transactions only.

(III) Dining

- a) Gloves should be worn when handling used dishes and utensils.
- b) Physical distancing of minimum 6 feet should be maintained in dining area/ restaurants as well.
- c) Breakfast should be prepared in kitchen where guests should not be allowed at all.
- d) It is advisable to use disposable cutlery for all purposes which must be disposed inside a garbage bag.
- e) In case of non-disposable cutlery, the guests should be advised to keep the used cutlery outside their room.

(IV) Room cleaning & Housekeeping

- a) Ensure that staff wear disposable gloves and masks while cleaning rooms or other common areas.
- b) Staff must sanitize or wash hands with soap after every cleaning process.
- c) Mopping of floor of common areas is recommended to be done twice a day.
- d) Cleaning of Guest Room is mandatory on daily basis.
- e) Linen must be changed after every Check-out. In the event of longer stay, it should be as per the request of the guest.
- f) All touch points must be cleaned with proper disinfectant (Sodium Hypochlorite).
- g) After every check-out, tables, cupboards, wardrobes, lockers, light switches, mirrors, electronic devices or any other item which a guest may touch during his/her stay, should be cleaned properly.
- h) Garbage needs to be disposed as – dry, wet, glass, biodegradable. PPE's like gloves, masks etc. to be segregated or disposed separately in bio-hazard bags.

**4. THE IMPORTANT PRODUCTS OFFERED BY HOMESTAYS IN GENERAL**

- a) **Accommodation:** The homestays are within the houses of the local people. The houses are built on the regional/local engineering of the region. All over India there are numerous diverse sorts of homes, their different structural styles are normal of the area they are found within, the history of their proprietors and extend of social and devout conventions. There are the Havelis of Northern India and the Theravadas houses in Kerala, the planters' houses on tea and zest ranches and the colonial bungalows. The homestay and the rooms have furniture of neighborhood flavor. The homestays may hold cowsheds, goat house, herb cultivate, kitchen cultivate, nectar comb etc. as attractions. Rooms are single, twofold and twin. The rooms have attached private lavatories with each room at the side all toiletries.

- b) Home cooked foods:** Meals form very integral part of stay in homestays. The local cuisine/food is served to the guests. At times delicious organic vegetables and fruits is picked fresh and cooked straight from the garden and forest. The cooked food is served to guest with the host and family.
- c) Amenities and Supplies:** Apart from the accommodation, there are other features which are required for a comfortable stay to guest. This comes in the form of amenities and supplies like laundry service, television in rooms, reception (lobby) parking, wake-up call, mineral water, heating in rooms (as per the weather conditions), baby-sitting ,Wi-Fi service ,iron and iron board (on guest request) complimentary newspaper and many more.
- d) Unique Activities and Recreations:** Each area specializes in different activities because of the geographical location as well as the socio-cultural milieu of each place is distinct. The activities might also differ from day and night. Homestays give a real feeling of local culture and also gets an opportunity to learn about all sorts of local customs and traditions.
- e) Some of the local activities enjoyed are as follows:**
- Lifestyle exploration through village walk
  - Visiting ethnic groups
  - Helping to milk the cow and churning, grinding corns, husking anticipating in the daily or seasonal chores with family.
  - Cultural shows
  - Tradition massage
- f) Sight Seeing:** The homestays are located in the natural surroundings, places of historical and cultural importance. Thus the scope of sight seeing is immense. The family members of home stays or locals can prove good guides and provide good company.
- Village tour
  - Camping, Boating, Campfire, Fishing,
  - Walks and hikes to caves, lakes and waterfalls
  - Visit to tea gardens/spices plantations/rubber plantations
  - Elephant safari
  - Plantation Visits



- g) **Personalized Service:** Rather than a lodging, a homestay generally just has a couple of rooms. The family who dwells there runs it, and goes about as host. This ensures visitors get a lot of individual consideration. You can spend as meager or as much time with the receiving family as you like. A few visitors pick just to feast with them, while others go through hours talking to them. Notwithstanding, remaining with an Indian family is the most straightforward method of getting some answers concerning Indian culture and lifestyle. Numerous visitors and hosts find that they bond with one another so much, that they stay in contact long after the get-away is finished.

The most important part of homestay is local hospitality with the accommodation, amenities and



supplies provided. It varies from place to place throughout the globe because of the cultural and physical uniqueness.

## **5. HOMESTAY AS BED & BERAKFAST PRODUCT OF SIKKIM**

Sikkim is a little hilly State within the Eastern Himalayan locale expanding around 114 km from North to South and 64 km. From East to West, having add up to geological is 7096 sq.km. The state has four locale specifically East, West, North and South, Nine sub-division and eight towns. Sikkim is the 22nd state of India, spread underneath Mt. Kanchendzonga (8598 mt.), the third most elevated mountain within the world. The State is presented with plenteous normal assets. Sikkim is different in culture and conventions. Three important communities living in Sikkim are the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalties. It is one of the foremost quiet states within the nation. There's a solid sense of community living with unmistakable commitment within the individuals to serve the society.

The Sikkim Himalayan Domestic remain is the UNESCO extend for the advancement of Social Tourism and Ecotourism within the Hilly locale of Central and South Asia. It is supported by the Norwegian Government with the back of the Territory of Andorra. The Extend points to advance participation between neighborhood communities, national and universal NGOs and visit organizations in arrange to involve local populaces full within the work openings and salary producing exercises that tourism brings.

The objective of Sikkim Himalayan Domestic remains is to advance community based tourism whereas making a difference nearby communities' advantage completely from the financial openings of low-impact tourism. Too the characteristic environment and social legacy of these can be secured for future eras and tourism can create to



meet desires of neighborhood communities. Ecotourism and Conservation Society of Sikkim (ECOSS) could be a NGO working to achieve a mission of maintainability and preservation within the state of Sikkim.

The women are exceptionally affectionate of overwhelming jeweler made of unadulterated gold. The gems things utilized by the Bhutia ladies are known as Yencho (hoop), Khao (jewelry), Phiru (pearl adornment), Diu (gold bangle), and Joko (ring). The person venture was too made by the communities and tourism division of bolstered each part of the community to alter their houses with essential comforts. The individuals of the community were given a comprehensive preparing on neighborliness, visitor taking care of and planning conventional cuisines.

Marketing and promotion of the Homestays at is taken care by Department of Tourism, Government of Sikkim. Also there is tie with Mahindra Homestays for marketing and promotion. They work with a third party operating in Sikkim to affiliate these homes. All bookings made through Mahindra Homestays for Kewzing is channeled through the third party. Mahindra Homestays as an organization also keeps a close check on the home stays' standards, including comfort, cleanliness, safety and originality. All the host families of the home stays have had direct interaction with the Mahindra Homestays representatives before they are recommended. There are regular and mystery audits to ensure the quality of home stays in addition to providing training to the home stay owners. This venture with Mahindra Homestays' helps these home stays in earning an additional income across the community and also promotes rural tourism helping the locals in preserving their local arts and crafts besides leaving minimum carbon footprints.

## **6. CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS FOR HOMESTAY**

Communities and UNESCO to assist communities accomplish the objectives of Sikkim Himalayan Homestays. To create the homestay goals, ECOSS has worked closely with the villagers of the distinctive goals in building their aptitudes and capacities for the economical tourism activity. Each town encompasses a tourism administration committee, which neglects the operations and administration of the tourism exercises. These country tourism goals serve as show destinations for presentation visits. Bunches are encouraged for learning the town tourism elements and operation modalities. Beneath the volunteer and internship Program of ECOSS, national and abroad candidates work in homestays to create the aptitudes and capacities of the nearby communities UNESCO has chosen nine places for Sikkim Himalayan Homestay extend. They are:

<b>1</b>	Dzongu Homestays	<b>2</b>	Kewzing Homestays
<b>3</b>	Yuksom Homestays	<b>4</b>	Pastanga Homestays

<b>5</b>	Hee-Bermiok Homestays	<b>6</b>	Lachen Homestays
<b>7</b>	Assangthang Model Village	<b>8</b>	Kabi Homestays

The benefits flowing to local community from homestays are immense. It gives an additional income to the all community other than the regular income. The homes that are unable to directly serve as homestays are also given the opportunity to supplement their income by acting as guides for the guest and packing meals for travelers. The tourists mostly visit during October to December months. The tourists come either single or in pair. The duration of stay of guest in the homestay is one to two night.

The homestays offer one room to the tourists. It can be used as single or double room as per the requirement. The accommodation is simple, comfortable and near and clean, Wholesome neighborhood nourishment is served from the family kitchen.

**The facilities provided to guests in homestays include:**

- Guests are received in the village’s monastery by the head Lama. The homestay family welcomes the tourists by garlanding and Tilak and Khada (scarf) is offered. In local hospitality welcome drink and traditional dance are also part of the warm welcome
- Authentic Sikkim’s meal
- Homemade millet-based drinks
- Organic vegetables are grown and served
- Most families are multilingual and speak English, Hindi and other regional languages
- Bed room attached with bathroom including amenities and supplies. Guest room Impeccably maintained high quality of cleanliness
- 24 hours Hot and cold running water
- Homestay allows consumption of Non-Veg Meals and alcohol and many more.

**7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

It gives the host community happiness and thus encourages the community to conserve its biodiversity and their culture and tradition. Home stays have empowered the local communities as new job opportunities are created. The females can contribute to the family income as they are the ones who maintain the home stays. Youth have the opportunity to act as guides to the tourists. Homestay got place in the hearts of tourists/guests, and tourists/guests enjoy the village life warm welcome by the locals or host family.

There are various challenges of running home stays in Sikkim. From the point of view of tourists the major problem faced by them is the hygienic conditions of the home stays especially toilets are not satisfactory. Language becomes a barrier when it comes to communicate with the family members and villagers. It becomes all the more difficult for non-English speaking tourists. Local cuisines are served in the home stays which at times is not preferred by the guests. Medical facilities are lacking and also there is no one in the family or village equipped to deal with any medical emergency. The communication network is good but lack of internet facility definitely makes the tourist unhappy.

The host community find that the tourists are coming from different cultural backgrounds so at times they fail to respect the local traditions and customs. They fear that in times to come people may get materialistic in their approach as they find that they are being benefitted by the tourists. They may be just perceived as object. The young population tries to copy the foreigners which may in times to come change the lifestyle of local community and hence it may be a threat the sustainability of culture. There is no sufficient formal training imparted to the family members of homestays. This effects their proper management of tourists.

Home stays have no doubt provided valuable and rich experience to the tourists as well as to the home stay owners. Tourists enjoy the natural and cultural resources in the company of family members and thus a unique stay experience. Home stay owners get to know a world outside their miniscule world through tourists and also get an additional income and recognition from the tourists. There are few problems which can be overcome. The Capacity Building Programmed can be organized for the family members of home stay which shall help them in developing soft skills and technical skills. Young population can be encouraged to learn foreign Challenges & Strategic Interventions for Tourism.

Languages which shall open their horizon to non-English speaking tourists as well. Exclusive marketing of homestays is required. The educational Programme for the tourists can help them have a better understanding of the host population and this might also result in increasing their stay.

Homestays in a way is a step towards empowering the community and thus utilizing their resources optimally and also taking care of their resources. The authenticity of the community can be sustained.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

Home stays are a wonderful form of accommodation which provide all the unique facilities & services akin to what you have at your own house. In India all tourist spot have more or less homestay, but activities and products of homestay depends on geographical location, infrastructures of spot, and cultural and socio economic activities and natural environmental conditions surrounding homestay. The Capacity Building Programmed can be organized for the family members of home stay which

shall help them in developing soft skills and technical skills. Young population can be encouraged to learn foreign Challenges & Strategic Interventions for Tourism. Now, measurement of potentiality of home stay is essential to follow the operational guide lines in COVID-19 pandemic.

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