

# **Economic Inequality and Poverty in Sacred Tourism Sites: A Study of Developmental Barriers and Opportunities in Braj Bhumi**

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**Abstract:** Braj Bhumi — made up of Mathura, Vrindavan, Barsana, Govardhan, and Nandgaon — sees millions of pilgrims a year and a lot of economic activity. Yet, as sacred tourism has grown, the region still struggles with uneven wealth distribution, only modest poverty alleviation, and sluggish socio-economic development. This research analyzes the links between tourism, inequality and local livelihoods through a mixed-method research design including surveys with residents, tourists and vendors. Results/General findings demonstrate that although the majority of respondents acknowledge tourism to be primary source of income and employment generation, its benefits are not evenly distributed. Rising living costs for lower-income groups and vendors, who face limited access to tourism profits. The extremely low levels of awareness of sustainable tourism practices also reflect bad governance. The study ends with a suggestive inclusive policy, infra and community participation to promote equity in tourism led development.

**Keywords:** Sacred Tourism, Economic Inequality, Poverty Alleviation, Sustainable Development, Braj Bhumi

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