

Tinchulay : A Report

The land of home hospitality

Tinchuley - which literally means three chullas or ovens - is a land of Home Hospitality. It is a small little village tucked away in the picturesque Darjeeling district of West Bengal and is a village with a difference where a silent movement was launched by the villagers not too long ago.

It was once a poor farmers' village where people toiled to make a living. It is today a model village where the villagers have used traditional techniques of farming, forestry and alternative income schemes to earn a living. They are rapidly moving towards attaining self-sufficiency and have in the process saved the fragile environment of the area. The process has set an example by using the ecosystem of the region through implementation of effective conservation programmes.

In 1996 WWF's Project SERVE (Save the Environment & Regenerate Vital Employment - an organization dedicated to the improvement of environment of Darjeeling and its adjoining areas with active participation from the local people), stepped in. The people of Tinchuley, with the guidance and the sponsorship of Project S.E.R.V.E, built a forest nursery, a floriculture project, implemented agriculture in the form of metre square gardening, bio-compost manure projects, vermi-compost projects, cow dung gas plants, box apiaries and an organic tea nursery with hand-made tea making facilities. In all 17 families have participated in the programme. This not only stopped the destruction of the pristine forest cover but also paved the way for its conservation as now the villagers are dependent directly on the survival of a healthy forest cover.

The villagers were gradually losing enthusiasm due to lack of promotion of their produce and villagers wanted to return to the short term profit schemes. Later, an initiative was taken by Help Tourism to introduce the concept of eco-tourism. This unveiled to the traveler its un-spoilt beauty of the landscape with forests, picturesque villages, tea gardens and snow caps peaking over blue mountains laced with clouds.

However the major attraction of this village is its Home Hospitality where one gets to eat bio-organic food and stay in the village. The appreciation that the villagers received from the visitors coming from far and wide arouse fresh enthusiasm in the villagers who now felt proud of the work that they had started. Their prduce started moving because of the word of mouth campaign. Today adjoining villager want to start the same model. Like any other tourist destination one can go to a number of beautiful sites as well. These are :

TINCHULAY SUNRISE POINT from where one can have a 300 degree view of the Teesta valley with its tea gardens, Samtaha Plateau, Kalimpong, East Sikkim, snow capped peaks, Thungdara (Latpanchar), South Sikkim etc.

TINCHULAY MONASTERY, a religious site where a monk meditated for 17 years.

AGRICULTURAL VILLAGES of Sorens, Bada Mongwa, Chota Mongwa, Chiagra, Takling, Kolbong etc.

DURPIN DARA, the top of Teesta Valley, 11 kms from Tinchulay.

GOMBU DARA VIEW POINT, a one km trail from Tinchulay which also offers natural rock climbing facilities.

The guides, treks, trails, tours, transport are provided by the members of the Local Youth Club. If one is on the look out for adventure there are a number of options such as white water rafting on the Teesta from Tinchulay and return.

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Tinchuley is 12 kms from Teesta Bazaar Road and is centrally located in the district of Darjeeling. It has therefore the advantages of being centrally located and allows the possibilities of day visits from all these places. It is 32 km from the heritage town of Darjeeling, 60 kms from the gateway city of Siliguri, 43 kms from the flower nursery town of Kalimpong and 88 kms from Sikkim's capital town Gangtok.

Tinchuley was awarded as the most innovative product at TTF - New Delhi, March 2002. The same was promoted by Help Tourism from the Darjeeling Tourism Counter of DGHC.