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**ECOTOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: A
CASE STUDY OF DARJEELING DISTRICT**

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ABSTRACT

Ecotourism plays an important part in community development in the communities that host it by providing alternative livelihoods that are nevertheless environmentally friendly. This technique in tourism satisfies the requirements of both tourists and hosts while minimizing its impact on the surrounding natural environment. These days, this type of tourism entails traveling to new locations for the purpose of gaining knowledge about varied landscapes, environments, and habitats, in addition to the cultural pursuits of a specific community. Additionally, it broadens the range of possibilities for the future. As a result, ecotourism has the potential to become an efficient tool for achieving environmentally responsible rural development in the Himalayan region of West Bengal. In the West Bengal districts of Darjeeling and Kalimpong, ecotourism is still mostly practiced on a community level, with participants drawn from the area's native population and their unique culture. The majority of the ecotourism destinations in this region of West Bengal are located in hilly or forested terrain. The recent flood of tourists has contributed to a fantastic increase in ecotourism in this location over the past few decades, which has helped the local economy. This study examines the symbiotic link that exists between the ecotourism practice and the sustainable community development of Darjeeling District. The study is based on a case study. In addition to this, it discusses the opportunities and difficulties facing the ecotourism industry in the Darjeeling District.

Keywords: Ecotourism, Community Development, Rural Empowerment, Sustainable Livelihood, Darjeeling District