

Spirituality, Sense of Community and Economic Welfare: A Case of Mawlynnong Village, India

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Abstract : Decent work and inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection, eradication of poverty and hunger as well as clean water and sanitation are the rudiments of 2030 agenda of sustainable development goals of the United Nations. On the other hand, spirituality is deeply entwined in the fabric of daily lives that helps in shaping attitudes, opinions, and behaviors of common people and ensuring quality of lives and overall sustainable development through protection of environment and natural resources. Mawlynnong, a small village in North-Eastern part of India, is a vivid example of how spirituality influences the development of sense of community leading to upliftment of the economic conditions of the people. Mawlynnong as a small hamlet has been in existence for a couple of centuries and it was acknowledged as the cleanest village of Asia in 2004 by BBC and National Geographic and subsequently endorsed by UNESCO in 2006. Consequently, it has attracted large number of tourists over the years from India and other parts of the world. This paper tries to explore how spirituality leads to a sense of community and the economic benefits for the people. Further, this paper also tries to find out the answer whether such an informal collective effort is sustainable or not for achieving solidarity economy. The study is based on both primary and secondary data collected from the local people and the State Government records. The findings of the study indicate that over the last one and a half decade the tourist footfall has increased to a great extent in Mawlynnong and this has brought about a paradigm shift in the occupational structure of its inhabitants from plantation to service sector particularly tourism and tourism related activities. As a result, from the economic standpoint, it is observed that life is much better off now as compared to before. But from the socio-cultural standpoint, the study finds a drift in terms of the cohesiveness and community bonding which was the hallmark of this village. This drift puts a question mark about the sustainability of such practices and consequently the development of solidarity economy.

Keywords : spirituality, sense of community, economic welfare, solidarity economy, Mawlynnong village

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