

# Tourism and organic farms in Uttarakhand villages inspires thousands of migrants to return home

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The hills are alive and maybe it is the efforts of the [Green People](#) that is keeping them alive. The mountains of Uttarakhand that are now bustling with fresh energy and a flurry of activities, are in stark contrast to how dismal the situation was just a few years ago. More than 2300 remote villages situated in the heart of Himalayas were left abandoned by their dwellers who had migrated to towns and cities in search of better livelihoods and new opportunities. This grim condition was exacerbated by the Kedarnath cloudburst tragedy of 2013 that shook the mountains to their very core. This is when the Green People stepped in. Under the guidance of Col. Ajay Kothiyal, Mr. Rupesh Rai founded the Green People community that devised a plan to tackle and solve the issue of migration that sat at the root of many problems in Uttarakhand. Thus, Green People, a team formed by volunteers coming from varied ends of every spectrum. Some were marketing professionals; others had worked in hospitality; while some were organic farmers. This gleefully mixed and experientially soaked lot of volunteers started Green People on 1st January 2015 and had their fundas clear from Day one. "We were and are working for methods to initiate reverse-migration", the Vice President of Green People Mr.P.K. Singh informs TOC. Taking his point forward he explains that "when people migrate from small villages to cities and towns they are actually leaving valuable natural resources unattended and are also creating a deep demographical imbalance". But, the issue of migration was riddled with a web of problems.



The foremost problem among the villagers in these remote areas was the feeling of being left behind when the world had progressed so much. So much hopelessness had seeped in their minds that they believed the places they once called home can now never provide a prosperous life. "The farmers here were growing great quality food crops, using 100-percent natural fertilizers, which are so sought after in the urban markets. But, due to some middlemen and geographical restraints they were not able to reap much profitable results", informs Mr. Singh. Green People then started an initiative what they christened as the Goat Villages. Here the farmers were taught to optimize their produce through various methods and this produce was then packaged under the aptly named "BAKRI CHAAP" brand. Their cause was further boosted when organic food farmers and enthusiasts came from around the world, stayed in these villages, and showed the local farmers that how blessed they truly were with all the abundant grace of natural resources around them. This not only helped the farmers piece together their broken self-esteem but also injected a new pride in the work that they were doing.



Not only this but to increase rural tourism, which in turn uplifts the local economy, the organization trains the youth from the villages in the hospitality sector at a 5-star hotel for six months. After coming back they set-up retreats at their houses where the visitors can bask in the lap of nature, experience local hospitality and then pay whatever they deem appropriate after their stay. "This helps us in making each of our guests less of a tourist and more a promoter of our cause". says Mr. Singh. The snide comments of the villagers saying "our children are going to cities, you people must be stupid coming here" have now subsided and the hills have accepted the Green people as their own. In just a short period, they have set-up three goat villages and various home-stays, are working with 5500 farmers in 110 villages and act as consultants for bodies such as the Uttarakhand Tourism board and the State Horticulture Board.



The villagers now come voluntarily and are ready to put in efforts for the betterment of their lives. "No matter what position we hold within the organization we all will always remain volunteers at heart", quips Mr. Singh before wrapping up. Perhaps, it is this willingness to work at the grassroots that has enabled the Green People to create such a positive change in Uttarakhand. It is this zeal that has inspired thousands across the rural belt of Uttarakhand to finally come back home. This article was first published by [The Optimist](#), on 20 Mar. 2018, under the title How a group of volunteers are setting up examples of rural tourism and organic farms in Uttarakhand to inspire thousands of villagers to come back home