MAKING A DIFFERENCE

DOSSIER ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ON NATURE BASED TOURISM IN INDIA

Making a Difference.
A dossier on community engagement on nature-based tourism in India

EQUATIONS, 2009

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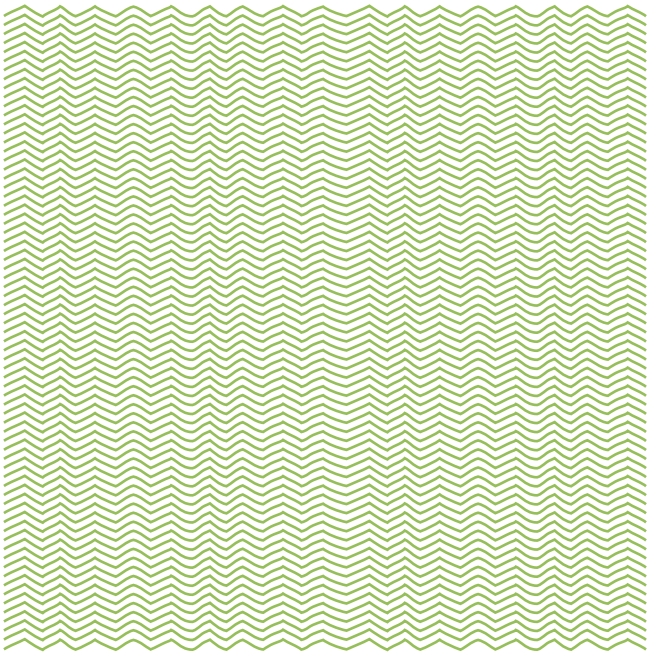


INTRODUCTION

In 2008 through a collaborative project coordinated by African Safari Lodge (ASL) Foundation looking at community based efforts in nature based tourism, EQUATIONS got the opportunity to study three very interesting initiatives in India. While each have their unique contexts and histories and are on different stages of tourism development, they also have common features. These tourism initiatives are located in some of the most scenic and alluring places – **Himalayan Homestays in Ladakh, Mountain Shepherd Initiative in Uttarakhand and Manas Maozigendri Jungle Camp in Assam.**

The case studies attempted to understand the particular context and history of each of these initiatives – what set of factors led to their genesis and what they set out to achieve. In each case, tourism was seen as a means of providing communities with economic benefits in the form of supplementary incomes. In all three cases, perhaps not incidental, the element of conservation and care of natural resources was central to their practices. The communities involved, as well as those helping the implementation of these initiatives, were aware that through the process of communities shaping the how and what of tourism they would also feel empowered to charter the course of tourism on their terms. These terms, as the cases clearly show, were not about control, but about visioning principles that were respectful and wise.

The process of engagement and implementation was slow and complex. Many dilemmas and challenges came their way. The "balance" between development of the community and running a successful tourism venture was one. In case of the Mountain Shepherd Initiative this is a core issue they are currently grappling with. Another challenge was building the necessary skills and capacities. Marketing, speaking in English, working with computers, management, learning to interpret and guide, adapting to meet the needs of the guest in terms of food, housekeeping – seemingly simple things needed to be learnt painstakingly. With the decision to employ local community members, this was an important aspect of building confidence as well as attracting tourists.

Ensuring widening of local benefits and systems of equity have also been present to varying degrees. With increase in tourism came competitiveness within community members. Their traditional occupations had encouraged more collaborative and interdependent ways of living which were exposed to new ways of behaving and thinking that tourism brought in. Was greater commercialisation that tourism brought in, a bad thing? What did communities feel about the change in traditions

and cultural practices – that may privilege what the tourist valued? In the case studies, communities became aware of the need for designing their own systems of review, checks and balances so that they could decide if a trend was worrying and if there was some way to address it.

Another issue for consideration was - how does one develop tourism that is not necessarily ambitious in size and scale, but is holistic and sustainable. In the case studies clear systems of long term sustainability have not been thought through – but it seemed clear to them that the bridge would need to be crossed at some point.

However each of these case studies was clearly about the desire to Make a Difference - to envision forms of tourism that would leave both the visitor and visited enhanced by the encounter.

In this dossier, in addition to the case studies, we have provided some articles (by EQUATIONS as well as other researchers) that serve as a backgrounder to the issues. We also have included framework for analysis that may be useful for anyone who wishes to investigate ecotourism / nature based tourism development issues.

We thank several people in Ladakh, Uttarakhand and Manas who have helped us in the field visits and interactions with the local communities.

1. Himalayan Homestays, Ladakh – Team members at Snow Leopard Conservancy – India Trust and community members at villages Rumbak and Ulley.

2. Maozigendri Jungle Camp, Manas – Team members at Help Tourism and members of the Manas Maozigendri Ecotourism Society and the Bodo Territorial Council.

3. Mountain Shepherd Initiative, Uttarakhand – Team members at Mountain Shepherds Initiative and community members at villages Lata and Tolma.

Seema Bhatt as an independent researcher wrote the Manas case study and we are grateful for her contribution

We would like to acknowledge African Safari Lodge Foundation and Ford Foundation, India for providing us the valuable opportunity to document these stories and learn from the exchange.

EQUATIONS Team

April 2009

SECTION A
CASE STUDIES

1.

AT HOME IN THE LAND OF HIGH PASSES

A case study of the Himalayan Home Stays Ladakh

By EQUATIONS

Introduction

Ladakh 'the land of high passes' is located on the eastern side of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir spread over 96,701 Sq. km. Ladakh lies between the Kunlun mountain range in the north and the great Himalayas in the south. Ladakh is a cold desert region subject to extreme climatic conditions that include severe winters and is. It remains land locked for almost seven months in a year due to the long winters[1] . Ladakh is divided into two districts - Kargil and Leh.

The high altitude cold desert type of climate of Ladakh supports diverse flora and fauna, being home to a few of the endangered species such as the snow leopard[2]. The Hemis High Altitude National Park covering 3,350 sq. kms, situated in eastern part of Ladakh, is one of the prime habitats of the snow leopard and the only national park in the district of Leh. The area is representative of the trans-Himalayan ecosystem that is sparsely populated and has rocky terrain with a poor vegetative growth. . The park was established in 1981 by protecting the catchments of the Markha and Zanskar valley in the south and Rumbak valley in the east[3]. About 1,600 people live in the park in more than a dozen settlements. Though the Markha valley had been famous amongst trekkers since the past 3-4 decades the local communities have benefitted very little from the tourists who trekked and camped in their areas[4]. It has been earmarked by the Central government as a snow leopard reserve for conservation of this species.

This case study is about the initiatives of the Snow Leopard Conservancy-India Trust (SLC-IT) (www.snowleopardconservancy.org) to conserve snow leopards in its prime habitat and to generate benefits and opportunities for local communities through tourism while protecting their rich natural and cultural heritage for future generations. The communities at the villages of Hemis National Park have been provided opportunity to develop homestays to get an additional source of income to compensate the livestock that have been killed by predatory animals.

History

The Himalayan Homestays were first established at the Hemis National Park in 2002 by the SLC-IT. Within the Hemis National Park, which consists of twelve hamlets & villages, homestays were first set up in Rumbak, an important snow leopard habitat, with visitors coming through tour operators in Leh. Subsequently, the homestay programme was expanded to other villages in National park as well as other regions. . Today, over 100 homestays have been established along three trekking routes – Hemis, Sham and Zanskar.

The SLC-IT was established in 2000 to promote community based conservation of the snow leopard and its prey and habitats and support community development. The initiative of Himalayan Homestays was an outcome of discussions SLC-IT had with the villagers of Hemis National Park in a year to reduce the livestock loss of the villagers owing to the snow leopard attacks. The villagers were losing 12! of their livestock annually attributable to this cause. Increasing losses and resulting economic hardship increased local community resentment against the snow leopard. This resulted in retribution killings by local people thus threatening the survival of this endangered species as well as other predators.

The initial discussions were on identifying the major hot spots where retribution killings is high, areas where one needs to be alert while herding,

Source: http://www.lehladakhindia.com/india/ladakhmaps.html

as well as making predator proof pens to prevent livestock losses. But on further working it was realised that reducing losses by making predator proof livestock enclosures was not going to make much difference as livestock when free ranging in high open pastures would continue to be lost. A snow leopard walking across a mountain is more likely to come across domestic livestock that are less alert to predators than Bharal (blue sheep) or Ibex (wild mountain goats). Since communities are primarily involved in subsistence agriculture when livestock was lost to snow leopards and other predators, they also lost sources of income.

In discussions with the villagers at Rumbak in Hemis NP, SLC-IT explored various means for enhancing livelihoods through other opportunities if they continued to lose livestock. This attempt aimed at a positive attitudinal change amongst the local communities towards the highly despised snow leopard so as to promote co-existence while increasing the value of the snow leopard in the eyes of the community.

Tourism facilities

A. Establishment of homestays

In the discussions with the local community of Rumbak, the villagers acknowledged the existence of beautiful landscape and the fact that a lot of visitors passed by and trekked. They noticed that while they got some camping fees they didn't really make much from it; and it would probably be more useful to work as guides. Another idea was to have guest houses as in Leh. Since only a few households could benefit from guest houses SLC-IT proposed nature guides as another option. A workshop followed in 2001 on Opportunities for Ecotourism in Rural Areas held at Leh, representatives from the villages, Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, TourismDepartmentofLeh-Ladakhandorganisations like World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Ladakh Ecological Development Group (LEDeG) and facilitated by The Mountain Institute (TMI) and SLC. The villagers from different rural areas defined what a homestay should be according to them:

- The homestays would be developed as part of existing households and a small amount would be required for renovation of these buildings
- The homestay would share traditional, local values of the Ladakhi culture
- It would offer traditional Ladakhi food and would be based on local décor.
- It would be based on eco-friendly concepts such as –dry compost toilets which would conserve the scarce supply of water in the region.

Finally the definition evolved as follows:
"A traditional village based Ladakhi Homestay would share their traditional way of life and values with visitors, provide traditional food, in an eco–friendly environment that requires little initial investment"

To follow up on the strong desire for homestays, a market survey was conducted in 2001 by SLC – IT in collaboration with WWF, LEDeG with over 500 visitors trekking through Hemis National Park to determine visitor preference for stay, food and activities. Sixty percentage visitors voted their preference for homestays against other types

of organized trekking, tented accommodation and guest houses. Likewise, the interest for local food, need for nature guides and dry compost toilets were rated high. A small percentage was interested in handicrafts. The following criteria were evolved for the selection of households for the development of homestays with the approval of the village headman (Namnbradar)

- The family should let out only one room to tourists (since rich families could give more rooms and thus reduce benefit sharing)
- They must not have more than 3 pack animals (an indicator of a family's economic standard. This criterion was adopted so as to ensure the poorer /not so well off sections of the community was privileged and did not have to compete with the influential families from the beginning. The influential and more wealthy families, who wished to be part of the programme were allowed to join in 2 years later)
- Should have a toilet (with a door). Traditional homes used to have only a curtain.
- Should be a new entrant in the tourism sector
- Readiness to participate in capacity building trainings for running homestays
- 10% of the money generated would go towards a conservation fund which would be used for village level activities
- Any case of retribution against snow leopards & other predators would lead to the discontinuation of marketing of that particular homestay / village (This criterion was added later to ensure the conservation of predators).

When the homestay programme was initiated at Rumbak in 2001(as a pilot project and officially in 2002), four families came forward to start the venture qualifying the above criteria. They got feedback from the visitors on how the homestays could be made better. For instance they said the pillows were rock hard! Based on visitor feed back training were given particularly on service and hygiene. The training was onsite. A staff who worked in a hotel in Manali – Holiday Inn conducted it. A small session on health issues and Ladakh to English language class was also given. As the participants were able to read and write in Ladakhi, a phrase book on Ladakhi to English was later developed. To help learn English, Ladakhi to English cassettes were made since tape recorders are commonly used by the Ladakhi families. This training in English language was done since there was a lack of confidence amongst the community members about communicating with the visitors, as they did not know English.

With the training on service and hygiene, women in the homestays were also encouraged to think of norms to guide visitors' behaviour as well as for themselves to follow as hosts or providers. The list of norms was prepared and put up in the homestay[5].

Please:

- Do not make public displays of affection.
- Do not wear revealing clothes such as short skirts and sleeveless tops.
- Do not urinate or defecate near water or in the fields.

- Do not taste from serving spoons.
- Do not stick your finger or spoon in cooking or serving pots.
- Do not interfere with cooking.
- Do not sit on the Choktse (Ladakhi table).
- Do not bargain over the Homestay rates.

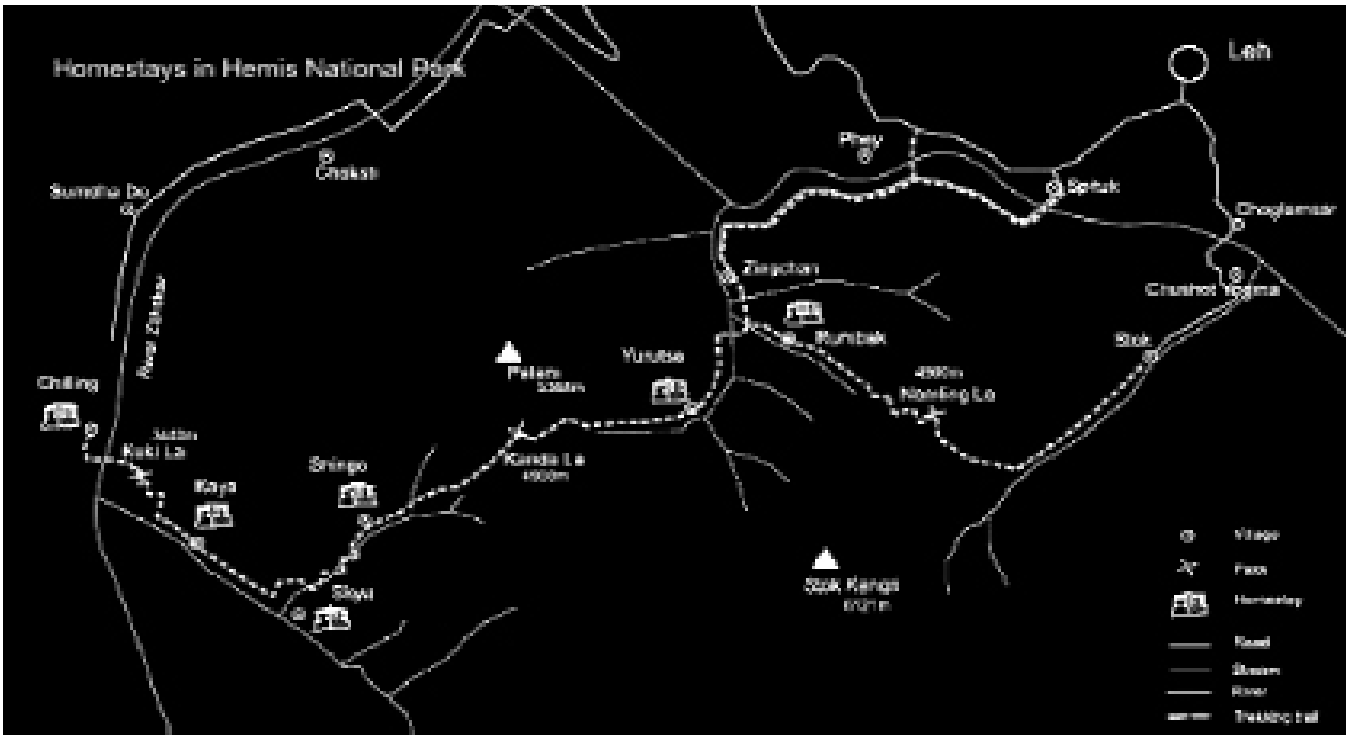
The homestay providers had to invest around 1500 rupees for the renovation of homestays and for providing basic minimum facilities like simple mattresses. While this money was quite a huge amount for the homestay families, SLC-IT decided to provide these minimum facilities on a loan rather than giving them for free. In addition, the money that was lent by SLC-IT was given on the condition that they would return it after one year, after they had enough number of visitors and a substantial profit. The repaid money was put in the Village Conservation Fund.

The interest in homestays increased after two years and the wealthier families joined in programme in Rumbak.

A Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercise was done in the villages - the village mapping to get the basic facts on where the resources are and planning for starting the homestay programme in other villages. Based on the exercise, in 2002 itself the programme expanded from Rumbak to five other villages in the Hemis National Park and 5 villages subsequently in Sham region. By end of year two over 60 households had joined the programme. In 2008, the concept moved to Zanskar and Lumnag areas.

In order to ensure that all homestay families in the village have the opportunity to benefit from the tourists who come to the village on a trek or for staying in the homestays, a system of rotation has been initiated. Communities are encouraged to decide the best way of involving all homestay providers in a given tourist season. As a result, in some villages, the communities have appointed a point person who keeps track of the household whose turn it is to receive the visitors. So when the tourists come with a voucher of Himalayan Homestays, they are directed to the homestay provider whose turn it is to receive the tourists. This is followed in Rumbak. In villages like Ulley in the Sham region, the rotation system has not worked well either due to inadequate cooperation within the village in a few cases or the distances between homestays is large and problems caused by exhausted tourists who refuse to go to the homestays whose turn it is to receive visitors.

The system that usually operates is once business is finalised, the tour operator sends a voucher to the village and in most cases, the operator does not mention the name of the house. In many places the homestays are scattered and the visitors find it difficult to trek to a place which could be 3km from the first home they reach in the village. The lack of communication facilities between the remote village level homestays and town based tour operators also complicates matters. There is another body - the Youth Association for Conservation and Development of Hemis NP, which works voluntarily and gives information to tourists as well as arranges



Source: www.himalayan-homestays.com/ladakpages/hemis.htm

homestays. This is a body of local youth from Markha Valley formed by the Department of Wildlife who also organise tours in the Hemis National Park of Markha Valley. With SLC-IT and the Youth Association operating in the same area with a limited number of households there are instances of double booking for the same homestay. More recently homestay providers have started making separate rooms for tourists sent by the Youth Association and those sent by the Himalayan Homestays. SLC –IT is trying to encourage communities to use the same rooms rather than assign more rooms for tourists. This lack of coordination becomes serious when walk in tourists who land up at the homestay on their own occupy a room in the homestay which is also assigned to tourists who follow the channel of the tour operator. As a result the walk in tourists who do not have the homestay voucher issued by the tour operator, are thrown out of the homestay to make room for those who have come through the tour operator.

But in some places the rotation system works better with one or two people taking charge in allocating the houses or the tour operator themselves ensuring the process works equitably. There it is the tour operator who keeps a record of the homestays in the village which did or did not receive tourists. Thus visitors are sent directly by the tour operator to the household which is due to receive tourists.

Payments for homestays go directly to the providers to avoid situations where guides or tour operators hold back the money that was due to the homestay provider. There have also been problems like the case when a group of Israeli tourists sneaked out of a homestay in the early hours of the morning without paying.

B: Nature guides

While homestays were being set up in Rumbak, youth from the village were also provided training to function as nature guides. Since only one or two households could benefit from guest houses SLC-IT also went in for training for the youth as nature guides. The guides were trained so that they are also available for the homestay visitors.

The first training was given at Rumbak in 2001 in association with TMI (The Mountain Institute) and ICIMOD (The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development) and later this was followed up again at Rumbak and Tangyar in Nubra. The second and third training were done in collaboration with the Department of Wildlife Protection Jammu & Kashmir. In the initial year, 15 people were trained and the second year it was 22. The majority of the participants were girls. The participants were given certificates jointly signed by Wildlife Department and SLC-IT.

The training announcement was given on the radio. Training was given at Leh on the flora and fauna, how to brief the tourists, etc. It was a combination of classroom teaching and field learning including a field visit on bird-watching. A check list was also prepared and given to them on list of items they should have as guides. Later field books on birds were given at subsidized rates and binoculars were given to the youth and the community respectively.

Later, in 2003 & 2004 SLC-IT in association with –MUSE (an NGO from Spiti) and All Spiti Youth Association, two additional trainings were conducted in the Spiti district of the state of Himachal Pradesh. This is another significant snow leopard habitat where the Homestays were later extended through a partnership with MUSE.

C. Parachute cafe

The third aspect SLC-IT looked at were the Parachute cafes, named so because they are made from the discarded parachute materials used by the army. Parachute cafes were not initiated by the programme, but launched earlier through the Leh Nutrition Project (LNP). The LNP initiative gave incentives to start small businesses to communities in the Hemis NP. SLC-IT noticed that they were just selling tea and beer and thought there could be some value addition. The families engaged in the parachute cafe were given training in cooking. Solar Parabolic heaters were given to them on a subsidy and encouraged them to boil water, filter and give to the tourists rather than selling mineral water bottles that caused plastic waste in the area. They were also given training on segregating garbage. The programme's involvement was limited to training and making it little more responsible than what it was. But despite all the training, the cafes end up selling noodles and chips based on demand from tourists who do not have enough time to wait for other food to be cooked.

In some areas parachute cafes are also run on a rotational basis by families from a village. This is especially important for those families who are non homestay providers as this helps distribute tourism benefits more equitably. While rotation is encouraged by SLC-IT, whether it actually happens depends on the community.

D. Souvenirs and woollen products

The other aspect the programme looked into was souvenirs, though this was not a major area of emphasis. The families were already doing some weaving in the winters which they sold to the visitors. They were advised to make light items that trekkers could carry along on the way. They made hats, caps, socks and gloves and this was very popular with the tourists. The homestay providers said that they would make these woollen products and would either sell it in their homes, (they would display it in their homes) or through the parachute café, where a lot of visitors pass by. In summers the sales are more at the cafes, but in the winters when tourists come for special snow leopard treks, the sales are more from the homestays.

E. Community solar showers

SLC-IT has tried to spread the benefits from tourism to even those families who do not have rooms to offer as homestays. Based on visitor feedback from foreigners who wanted to have a place to bathe on reaching the homestays after their treks, SLC-IT has been encouraging non home stay providers

to set up community solar showers. These families then run the solar showers on chargeable basis. They charge Rs. 50 per shower and contribute 5% from the income earned to the conservation fund.

Even though the showers gave opportunity to involve families with resource constraints and an effort to evoke people's ownership of the tourism infrastructure and resources available within their village this has not been a very successful initiative due to lack of visitor demand in Ulley and lack of water connectivity in Kaya, the two villages currently where they have been installed.

Marketing

The programme had started involving local tour operators right from the beginning. The tour operators were brought in even when the training was given so that the community could be clear about the role of the tour operator and of the community for mutual benefit and discussing & clarifying expectations. The tour operators were encouraged to bring brochures and show how they position the homestays in the market. The component of selling homestays to visitors/tourists was also a new product for the tour operator as well as an opportunity to tap those domestic and foreign tourists who preferred to see something different-authentic experience. Initially in 2001 when they started the homestays in Rumbak fliers were put up all over Leh. SLC-IT has strived to establish a link between entrepreneurs in travel and trade and community so as to strengthen the link between tourism and the conservation agenda. Thus four tour operators from Ladakh who were sensitive to the community aspirations as well as objectives of the initiative were identified to market Himalayan Homestays.

For the marketing, the major tool is the website: www.himalayan-homestays.com to reach out to potential visitors online who plan their visit in advance. Then there are fliers all over popular restaurants and main corner markets which list the tour operators. This is meant for those tourists who arrive at Ladakh and then look for options. The tourists can book with any of the four listed tour operators (Maitreya Tour Operators, Snow Leopard Trails, Golden Peak Adventure, Overland escape). Each year, one of the tour operators is designated to handle the queries coming through the website. This designation is based on the performance in the earlier years on how many tourists they have sent and the success of the existing marketing technique in bringing tourists. The tour operators charge a nominal amount of Rs. 50 as a commission for their services and the remaining amount of Rs.300 per person per night is paid directly by the visitor to the homestay providers. Sometimes when a high end client comes, the tour operator packages it differently and charges for additional services. They may send their own cook or provide their own bed sheets. But this is considered as acceptable as additional service is given.

Many tourists (both domestic and foreign) also take a jeep safari and to this the component of homestays is also included to cut down on the monotony of road travel and stay at regular hotels. This provides an opportunity to spread the benefits from tour operators and hotel accommodations in urban areas to homestay providers in rural areas.

Even remote villages in the Hemis National Park which are not reachable by motorable road and thus require walking for 2-3 hours are not excluded. This is called the 'homestay trek'. Since these villages are also sought after amongst tourists for snow leopard sightings, trekking and snow leopard sighting are combined. Thus the group can make use of homestays even aiming primarily for wild life sightings. SLC-IT has also printed promotional material such as posters and maps of trekking routes across homestays in villages which are sold to tourists who trek alone without a tour operator. It also contains possible itineraries and is aimed at walk-in tourists.

Economic aspects

The homestays are priced at Rs.350/- per person per day (accommodation plus 3 meals). 10% of the income earned goes to the conservation fund. The income from homestays has more than doubled especially in villages like Rumbak, Ulley and Sku in the last few years.

In some villages, the community provides camping sites by fixing tents. A part of the money from that also goes to the conservation fund. This is an additional source of income for the community as well as families in charge of managing the camping site for a given season. Families manage the camping sites on a rotational basis. For example in Rumbak village three families from the village manage the camping site in a given tourist season. They keep 50% of the income earned and the remaining 50% goes to the village conservation fund. A part of this money is then also used for management of the camping site. Earlier the villagers did not charge the tourists and whatever was given by the camping tourists was accepted graciously.

The guides have also started benefiting from the initiative. Although the idea of training guides

was to make them available for the homestays, some of them got absorbed by the tour companies. This has resulted in a shortage of guides during the peak season. But when they are around, the visitors take them during the trek. At the beginning of the programme, guides used to charge around Rs.200/- per day; but now that has increased to Rs.400- 500/- . There are guides who are fluent in English and those more experienced charge in dollars and are called "dollar guides".

In the initial year after the 2001 workshop, efforts were made by LEDeG to develop a pony association, but this has not proved very successful. In most treks organised ponies are essential for carrying heavy luggage across the rugged terrain and high passes. Currently ponies are arranged by tour operators themselves based on their own contacts. Forming an association would imply standardised rates and rules for people providing ponies. It could have led to more equitable distribution of benefits to local people, and passing of control from the tour operators to the local association. This is probably a reason why this has been difficult to make it happen.

Environmental aspects

Initially there was an attempt to take the tourists to see the Tibetan Argali – a species of mountain goat, so that the tourists would stay for a longer period in the homestays. In the beginning two–three Argalis came to the Rumbak village and there have been attempts by the poachers to hunt them. The village people got the hunters arrested. The Argalis multiplied and now there are around 20-22 of them. Now the programme is making an attempt to pressurise the forest department to create a reserve for the Argalis. Also efforts are there to bring other stock of Argali, as there is high level of inbreeding here. In 2007 the villagers of Rumbak and Yurutse decided they would set aside an area (16 sq miles) for an Argali reserve where domestic animals will not be allowed to graze. The programme has involved the village youth to monitor the Argali population. In 2004, the community of Rumbak valley, decided to set aside Husing Valley -a prime snow leopard habitat, have also set aside an area for the Bharal – the Himalayan blue sheep, and agreed they would not take livestock there for grazing. Another such initiative from Ulley village was in 2006 to invest the revolving fund in insuring their livestock against kills by predatory animals. Since its inception the villagers have successfully claimed 2 separate incidents of Yak kills by snow leopards through this scheme.

An important change has occurred also in the attitudes of the local community - they have started seeing the "wild animals as the ornaments of our mountains." [6]

In initial years of the programme, training was given to the communities on segregating biodegradable and non biodegradable garbage. The garbage used to be segregated and money from the conservation fund was used to hire ponies to bring the non bio-tin containers and plastics waste down to Leh. They used to sell it and make some money out of it. Now the Wildlife Department is able to get *kabadiwalas* (one who purchases junk[7]) to collect the garbage from the villages. Since a lot of tin waste was being generated, which also fetches a good price in the junk market, there is an agreement with the *kabadiwala* that they would pay the community the same price that they would pay in Leh for the tin they collect. The *kabadiwala* is also contracted to collect the plastic waste but they do not pay for it but are responsible to bring the plastic waste back to Leh as well. So now everyone views garbage as money. Apart from taking care of the waste generated by the homestays, villagers in Rumbak are also becoming aware of the garbage left behind by

tour operators. The communities were aware of how only one or two of such operators take back their tin, plastic waste etc. while many leave it behind. They are thinking of prohibiting travel groups from carrying live hens which used to be killed and served to tourists on the trek. The communities also thought of recording the names of the operators who crossed the region and note the plastic bottles they carry inside the national park. If they are found polluting the area the communities would a file a complaint with the Department of Wildlife Protection and would prohibit them from coming into the region.

Social aspects

All the homestays have gas stoves for cooking. The programme insisted that they did not do away with the traditional Ladakhi stoves which use shrubs and a mixture of cow and yak dung, while they could continue using their gas stoves. The programme also encouraged that the meals are served in the traditional Ladakhi kitchen and Ladakhi seating is used rather than western styled chairs so that the tourists could experience this. Those who were building new houses were encouraged to have the traditional Ladakhi stove and they have complied. In many villages the money that was set aside for the conservation fund was used in the restoration and white-washing of Stupas[8]. Solar showers that were built for tourists are also being used by the community in some instances.

The income earned from the homestays and the conservation fund is also being used to pay the premium for insuring their livestock against predator attacks under a community run insurance scheme. In Ulley it has also become possible with this income to pay an honorarium to volunteers who take the animals to the pastures and stay there during the entire summers looking after the livestock while they graze in the open pastures. These volunteers are also selected on a rotational basis from families who are non homestay providers and paid Rs. 150 per day for two months. Now nearby villages like Himeshupachan approach the people of Ulley to take their small animals like cows or Yak calves to the pastures and pay them for it. They have also been able to make predator – proof pens for protecting their livestock and thus reduced their economic hardships.

The programme has enabled the villagers to send their children to better schools. This is a major change from the earlier situation in which people needed sponsors for funding their children's education. The women say that they now have cash in hand; they don't have to ask their husbands. Also the money from tourism has helped buy household supplies like cooking oil and gas and to upgrade home furnishing like pillows, mattresses and bed sheets. This has increased the decision making powers of women in economic matters within the household.

Another aspect is the role and participation of women in the whole initiative. In the initial years when the planning exercises were done, when the villagers were asked to gather at a certain time, it

was only men who came. But later on it was the women who took the lead in attending the training for homestays and nature guides. They also applied what they learnt in the training to their own lives and did not restrict it to tourists. In one of the feedback evaluations, the women said they now to brush their teeth twice a day. Earlier they used to do it once a week or often forget to brush!

Though homestay programme have raised the standard of living of the families providing homestays it has also been the cause for conflicts within the community due to dysfunctional or partially functional rotational systems. This gets aggravated by visitors who at times are insensitive to community dynamics when they refuse to go to the assigned homestay, causing one provider to receive more tourists than fellow homestay providers and thus leading to disputes. The community then faces difficulties to return the loans on the basis of not getting enough revenues. On the positive side dialogue within communities to resolve this irregular spread of benefits are taken up at times by communities themselves. For example in Ulley, a family whose homestay is further up in the mountains is unable to get their share of visitors but the community has decided that since they also have three pack horses those will be hired for trekkers.

With an increase in engagement with tourists, the community has become more commercial. Sometimes they expect the local people / students to pay the same amount as the tourists for stay. An elder from Ulley felt people were becoming more selfish and only thinking about themselves and not others, and that this trend was not right.

Another critical issue is of land transactions. Ladakh is governed under the special status of Article 370 of the Constitution of India and provides special provisions for the state of Jammu and Kashmir under which the Parliament has limited powers to make laws for the State except on those subjects mentioned in the Union and Concurrent list in consultation with the State Government. Under article 370 nobody from outside J&K state can come and buy land. That takes the question out for outsiders buying land here but there will be prominent business men around Leh or may be in Kashmir who may want to invest in the concept or make a nice lodge up there. This might result in stiff competition for the existing homestay providers of the village. Though this has not become a problem till now but the local communities in Rumbak do recognize that with increasing popularity of tourism and money coming in the area there are people (outsiders) who would like to purchase land or invest in Rumbak. To deal with it the communities have thought of putting in a clause in the homestays association declaration. They also have a village level committee called the Larsisupa who mentioned that such things would not be allowed to happen. Even a rich person who decides to open a guest house in the village will not be allowed to run it separately – it is a decision that has been taken by the community.

Monitoring and evaluating tourism impacts

To initiate the process of monitoring tourism impacts, SLC-IT introduced an innovative method - photo voice evaluation. Three villages were chosen and community members were given digital cameras. Over a span of few days they were asked to take as many pictures of what they believed had changed since their engagement with tourism. It could be something they feel good about or something that they feel has changed for the worse. After this community members spoke about the photos they had taken and discussions were held. This is a creative method to generate awareness among community members to initiate the process of monitoring impacts.

At the end of each year, there is a process of evaluation with the villagers – to understand what is working and what is not working well. This is also a review of what was planned in the last year, what the conservation fund was used for, social impacts etc. This is documented in the annual report of SLC-IT. This also helps the community to decide what norms need to be in place.

Learnings and challenges

Although tourism has brought benefits to the community it has not been as successful in motivating conservation. For example while Rumbak started with the concept of homestays and is also receiving more tourists, it is Ulley, which is off the main trekking route that has undertaken more conservation initiatives. Perhaps the commercial gains that come with tourism are not much of an incentive for conservation.

In recent times SLC - IT has started to think about the long term sustainability of the programme and the need to plan their own exit. It has already begun phasing out of older areas it started with. But an institutional process needs to be thought through and put in place. The formation of an association of homestays is one of the steps towards this and is in the pipeline. Issues like streamlining the rotational system for homestays, formation of the pony association, ensuring the direct payment to

homestays providers, or ensuring the solar showers or parachute cafes work better are challenges, but they are on the radar of the SLC-IT and seem to be worked at. Homestays have helped communities meet their daily needs. It will be a challenge in the coming years to balance community demands that are defined by the tourism sector with those of conservation and community development.

New opportunities and concerns

Recent policies of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council shows a shift towards promoting community based rural tourism. With the popularity of community based tourism programmes like the Himalayan Homestays on the rise, government departments, especially the Wildlife Protection Department (Jammu & Kashmir state) in addition to the Department of Tourism, are looking at directing large amounts of funding into scaling up homestay programs in Ladakh, thus multiplying the potential that homestays hold for aiding conservation while also contributing to local livelihoods. Previously, the Wildlife Protection Department had been involved in nature guide training, and had also been supportive of SLC-IT's work in Hemis National Park, for which they freely granted access and permission. Now, they will become involved in implementation of homestays themselves, and this massive effort presents opportunities as well as challenges, and several useful lessons can be gleaned from the current study of Himalayan Homestays.

It is clear that scaling up homestays to include more households, villages, and regions will require a significant investment in developing relationships with the communities themselves if they are to ultimately succeed in aiding conservation. This challenge can best be taken up by using the expertise of local NGO's whose role should be to engage the communities in "bottom-up" participatory processes and training that result in successful homestays. This dialogue will help ensure that the cultural pressures facing homestay communities are understood and considered. Such sensitivity will be crucial for ensuring the social and environmental sustainability of the program over the long-term.

We have learned from this study of Himalayan Homestays that understanding the needs of visitors and ensuring a flow of clients will require partnership with travel agencies, tour operators, and the client base itself. One additional benefit of this is that engagement with these sectors presents an ideal opportunity for the Wildlife Department to also begin to educate the broader community about conservation and community-based tourism, and to mainstream these values throughout the Ladakh tourism industry.

The Wildlife Department intends to register their homestays with the Tourism Department and license them, primarily with the agenda of conserving the biodiversity of the national parks in Ladakh. Given the intensity and huge spread of resources they will be able to invest in tourism, one immediate challenge they will face is that of determining the carrying capacity of the region, both ecologically as well as socially.

One question is whether the communities will become overly dependent on tourism. The fear that new alternatives are taking over the main tradition is not unfounded. With tourism gaining more popularity as a means of livelihood it may substitute the traditional agro pastoralism, and among the Wildlife Department's goals are to incentivize communities to reduce grazing livestock. Such a consequence may indeed have positive effects for wildlife populations, but the lesson that has emerged from Himalayan Homestays is that community actions are complex, and that commitment to conservation by the community depends not only on revenue gained from tourism but on community dynamics and leadership, as well as a host of other factors. The actions the communities take will be borne of their own experiences and needs, and for conservation professionals to have an impact on these decisions requires constant engagement and dialogue at the village level.

The question of how to determine the carrying capacity for tourism and how to implement a cap on the number of visitors to fragile areas has been ongoing between tour operators and SLC-IT. As the debate continues, one of the tour operators points out that it is the role of the Wildlife Protection Department to decide on the number that can enter the park. With the Wildlife Department now taking the lead to promote homestays, an important question is – how best can they regulate visitation while also ensuring the sustainability of their own programs? This question presents an enormous challenge, but one which can be met with a carefully designed program that seeks to optimize the multiple goals of community based tourism. Careful management of this process and involvement of multiple stakeholders will be key to maintaining the core agenda of economic benefits, preservation of cultural traditions and conservation of natural heritage that are at the heart of the Himalayan Homestays community based tourism initiative.

Acknowledgement

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Endnotes

1. *www.jammukashmir.nic.in, data retrieved 25 April 2009*

2. *The snow leopard is an endangered species listed in CITES agreement (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, 1977). A highly elusive cat it is found in the high mountains of 12 - 13 countries of South and Central Asia including in the Himalayas in India. Their total numbers are between 4500-7500 only and their traditional habitat is under conflict with agro pastoral land use. (http://www.snowleopardconservancy.org/conservation2.htm, ,data retrieved 25 April 2009)*

3. *http://tourism.webindia123.com/tourism/wildlife/nationalpark/hemis_high_altitude_national_park/index.htm*

4. *http://www.snowleopardconservancy.org/conservation2.htm, data retrieved 25 April 2009*

5. *http://www.himalayan-homestays.com/ladakpages/tourist-tips.html accessed on 24.04.2009*

6. *Rinchen Wangchuk (2008) Ladakh Himalayan Homestays: For People and Conservation In Redefining Tourism – Experiences and Insights from Rural Tourism Projects in India, UNDP, New Delhi*

7. *A term in Hindi used commonly to refer to a person who deals with used/ discarded household objects and exchanges it for money /utensils / clothing. This junk is usually recycled.*

8. *Stupas is a mound-like structure containing Buddhist relics, Wikipedia, data retrieved 25 April 2009*

9. *Slahuddin Ahmed, Article 370 : Diagnosis And Prognosis Of The Special Status Of J & K, 9 August 2008, < http://www.legalserviceindia.com/article/l248-Article-370.html>, data retrieved 25 April 2009*

Contents

2.

THE POT BELLIED FEMALE CAT

A case study of the Manas Maozigendri Jungle Camp Manas National Park Assam

By Seema Bhatt[1]

Introduction

The Manas Maozigendri Jungle Camp (MMJC) is situated on the eastern range of Manas National Park at Kokilabari in the Barpeta District of Assam and is run by the Manas Maozigendri Ecotourism Society (MMES). The Park gets its name from the Manas River, a tributary of the Brahmaputra and part of it extends into Bhutan where it is called the Royal Manas National Park.

Manas was declared a wildlife sanctuary in October 1928[2]. The Manas Tiger Reserve was created in 1973. The park was declared a World Heritage site in 1985 by UNESCO. In 1992, UNESCO declared it as a 'World Heritage Site in Danger' due to heavy poaching and terrorist activities. It is still under this category. The Park is also an Elephant Reserve and a Biosphere Reserve. Manas is known for its rare and endangered wildlife which is not found anywhere else in the world. This includes the Assam Roofed Turtle, the Hispid Hare, the Golden Langur and the Pygmy Hog. The park has listed 55 species of mammals, 380 species of birds, 50 species of reptiles, and 3 species of amphibians.

Manas Maozigendri Jungle Camp (MMJC)

The camp gets its name from a legend about a king who ruled in this area in the mid 18th century. Among his many workers was a short stout female cook, who the king favoured because of her hard work and dedication. He lovingly called her 'Maozigendri' (literally meaning pot-bellied female cat). One day, she was washing in the river close by when she collapsed and died. The king was greatly saddened on hearing this and declared that the river be called Maozigendri after her. Understanding the significance of the river for local people, the Society (MMES) was thus named. Perhaps the name also indicates prosperity and good health, both important for the Manas National Park. The MMES runs the MMJC.

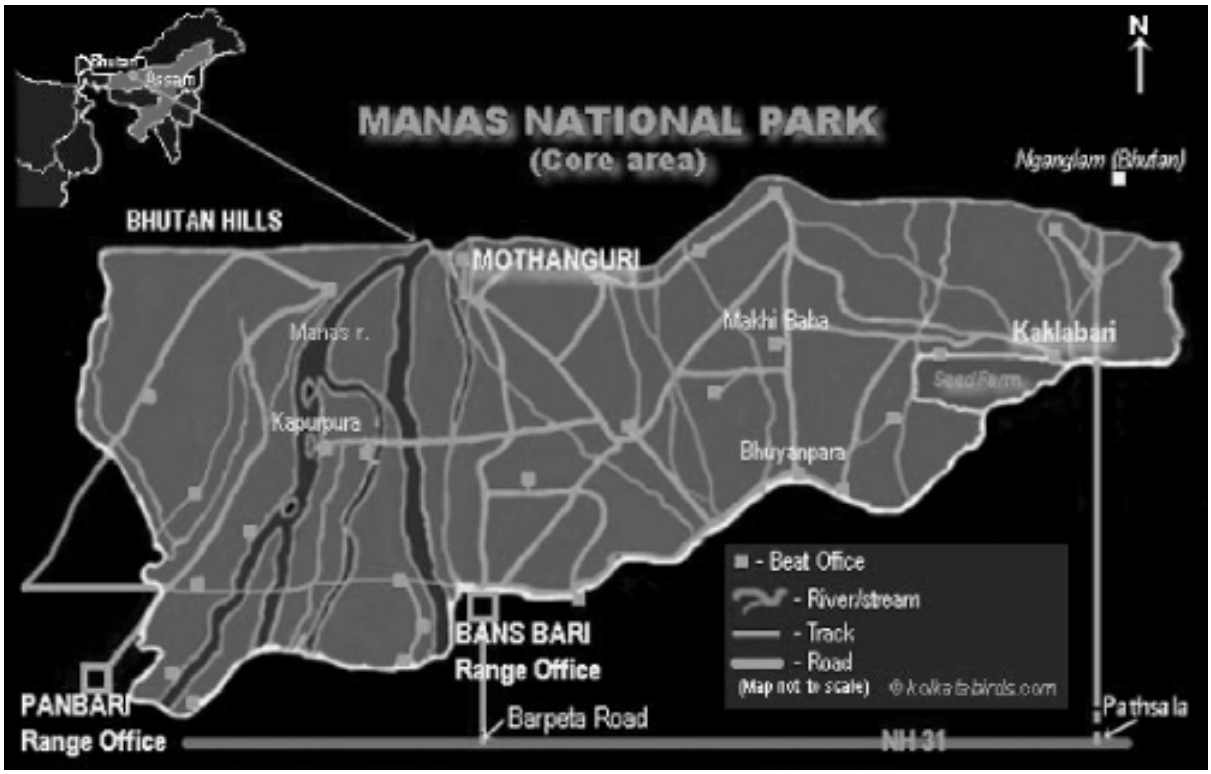
In addition to this, the other tourist lodges include, a tourist lodge of Assam Tourism in Bansbari that has been leased out to Jungle Travels and one more lodge run by Blue Hill.

There is a government tourist lodge in Barpeta road and another two privately–run initiatives.

History and genesis

The 1980s were a turbulent time for Assam as the movement to demand a separate land for the Bodos began. In the late 80s, the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) and Bodo political parties joined hands to demand a separate state called Bodoland. This movement took a huge toll on the national park first, since the insurgent groups and militants used the forests as hideouts and second because, both national and international poaching groups took advantage of the situation leading to destruction. The once resplendent park became a mere shadow of its former self as a result of rampant felling of trees and poaching of animals. In 2003, an accord was signed resulting in the establishment of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC).

There was also a realisation then that Manas needed to be brought back to its former glory. Some local youth and activists from the ABSU decided to take the responsibility for this through their local unit of Chapaguri Koklabari Anchalik Committee (CKAC). As a result, the restoration of the park and the endeavour to make it an important tourist destination was incorporated as a special package in the Bodo



Source: www.kolkatabirds.com

Accord signed in February 2003. It emphasized that participatory tourism should be promoted.

Under the initiative of the ABSU and CKAC, the Manas Maozigendri Ecotourism Society was formed on 13th December 2003. It was given the mandate to look after conservation and ecotourism issues in and around Manas. In 2005, Help Tourism stepped in to facilitate the ecotourism work. MMES was registered in 2006. The then Field Director, Mr.Abhijit Rabha invited Help Tourism to be involved. Help Tourism got involved to use tourism as a tool to accelerate the peace process and support community conservation.

Help Tourism is an organisation that describes itself as, "a tour operator and destination management consultant specialising in East- and North East India". It sees tourism as a tool for conservation and sustainable development. Help Tourism facilitates the enhancement of local people's livelihoods through tourism that would also serve as an incentive to conserve.

Structure of MMES

MMES hopes, "to bring about sustainable, equitable socio-economic development of the community living in the fringe villages of Manas through sustainable conservation and responsible tourism"[3].

MMES is a legally registered society. It was much later, at the suggestion of Help Tourism, that MMES became a legal entity through the registration under the Society's Act. This was to enable more financial support through grants etc. It was also done for greater credibility of MMES as a partner for conservation in Manas.

The members include ABSU workers, former Bodo Liberation Tigers Force (BLTF) members, ex-poachers, ex-timber fellers and local community members from fringe villages of Manas. MMES is a membership organization and basically a local, democratically-run body. MMES has a Board of Patrons and a Chief Patron. It also has a Board of Advisers with Legal Advisers as well. The Board of Advisors guide members as and when the need arises.

There is a Cabinet Body (of 15 members) headed by a President, followed by a Vice President and a General Secretary. There is an Executive Body consisting of 35 members. On the basis of the activities that MMES carries out, there is a Conservation Body consisting of 80 hard-core volunteers and an Ecotourism Body consisting of 20 members. Finally, there is a General Body of approximately 200 members. There are different members who coordinate conservation, tourism and cultural activities respectively. At present the ecotourism officer also looks after the cultural aspect of the programme. There is an overall Public Relations Officer. MMES has two accountants, one for conservation related work and the other for the ecotourism related work. There are women members in sub-committees and have the power and capacity to undertake or initiate any activity. Two self help groups of women members run the handloom and handicraft units.

Help Tourism plays an advisory role. It has also facilitated capacity building for the staff and

contributed in the development of the infrastructure. Help Tourism played a catalytic role when Manas was declared a "World Heritage Site in Danger" and mobilised support for the Park. Help Tourism encouraged the Bodos to support conservation and restore the lost glory of the park. This was done by first initiating the stopping of all poaching in an area of 250 sq km. Felling of trees and sale of wild meat was also prohibited. The hunters/ poachers were punished and subsequently rehabilitated for patrolling and protection. Help Tourism has motivated the local people, ensured that an appropriate institutional structure is in place and has facilitated capacity building through training programmes in the hospitality sector.

Tourism infrastructure

Tourism infrastructure at Manas Maozigendri Jungle Camp consists of four cottages and a dining cum common room all built with bamboo and other indigenous material. Additionally there are three huts with single beds and a two-room set with a single bed each. There are also four rooms available in the MMES office in the village and another three rooms with a common toilet in the old ABSU office available to accommodate the tourists. Overall, there is provision for 20 guests at a time.

The first investment support came from Ashoka Holidays at the ABSU complex where a guest house with common toilet was set up. Help Tourism supported this through sending tourists here. The land for the present set up was taken on lease by MMES from a local person who had attempted sericulture there and failed. There is no written lease as of now. Help Tourism initially provided tents for tourists and later helped with the design of the complex. Part of the funds for establishing the complex came from funds collected during the Park Centenary celebrations. Help Tourism initially invested in the upgradation of the infrastructure. This was adjusted with the funds collected from bookings. Help Tourism also initiated donations from visitors directly to MMES. Help Tourism also arranged free patrolling gear, rain coats, torches, tents etc. for MMES.

Help Tourism has contributed the initial funds to help build this infrastructure. A new dining hall is in the process of being built on this campus. This has also been supported by Help Tourism.

MMES carries out what it terms 'participatory tourism' where the tourists are encouraged to participate in various activities of MMES such as patrolling the park, monitoring and census of various faunal species. MMES has developed three types of forms. One to be filled in by tourists that indicate that they have been taken on as 'Temporary Conservation Members of the Society. The other is for 'Lifetime Conservation Members' and finally those for the 'Hardcore Conservation Volunteer'. A membership fee of Rs.10/- is taken from each category of member. Anyone who wants to support the conservation efforts of MMES can become a temporary member. The Cabinet and

the Executive Committee decide and nominate members in consultation with local people.

Tourists can go on treks and walks and also avail of the cultural experience by interacting with the local villagers. Guides do escort tourists. There are four trained guides at the moment in Maozigendri area itself. All of them have received training from experts on fauna and flora identification; interpretation; basics of wildlife monitoring and management. The treks are of varying durations ranging from three hours to seven hours depending on the route and are mostly in the Eastern boundary of the Park.

Cultural programmes are organised if tourists are interested. The local cultural team managed by the Cultural Group performs cultural programmes. They perform the traditional war dance, harvesting dance and songs etc. There are some dance forms that have been revived as a result of the tourism activities. The team consisting of 10-12 performers earns approximately Rs.2000 per performance. There is definitely a very positive influence of being involved in these performances on local people as they feel proud of their culture. Traditions are being revived as a result of appreciation by the tourists.

MMES has established a small museum in the village that displays some traditional Bodo artefacts, weapons etc. The entry to the museum is free.

Benefit sharing mechanisms

There is a pool of 31 local people who manage the tourism activities ranging from service, housekeeping, gardening and maintenance. Members who have the skills and propensity towards hospitality and service were selected for tourism related activities. Income depends on flow of guests. The entire surplus from tourism goes to the community through various projects run by MMES. At present the number of tourists coming to MMJC is low and the project has not crossed the break even. Therefore Help Tourism at present supports the project without any monetary benefit and will consider profit sharing once the number of tourists increases.

Help Tourism has also helped in the capacity building of the local people handling the tourism aspect by organising training in the hospitality sector at its other tourist sites in Darjeeling. About 60% have attended the training programmes.

Revenue earned from tourism is directed towards conservation activities of the organisation. The entire profit is spent for conservation after paying expenses and salary/remuneration.

Tourists visit the park and this establishment from November to March. The camp has received 1270 tourists (domestic and foreign) since its inception in 2005. The year wise break up is as follows. In 2005 – 117, 2006 – 246, 2007 – 402 and 2008 – 505 of which 60% are foreign and 40% Indians. These include bird watchers, photographers, butterfly enthusiasts, cultural tourists, wildlife lovers, conservationists and documentary film makers. A gross of almost Rs.10,00,000/- has been the earning from tourists from the time since the camp was established. This includes donations from tourists as well.

Tourism is being marketed to this location with the support of Help Tourism that includes this in its relevant packages. Both MMES and Help Tourism have websites where the location is well documented. The website is a platform for generating information about the positive developments taking place in Manas and create visitor awareness and also to inspire the travellers to become a part of this transformation through their visits.

Conservation and awareness

One of the most significant mission's of MMES is to help restore the Manas National Park and to support this it carries out a range of activities. MMES with the help of its volunteer work force has established 12 camps within the park boundary to help in patrolling and monitoring against illegal felling and poaching activities. As late as 2003, wild meat and illegal timber were both freely available at the local village market of Lwkhibazar, which has historically been an important trade route between Bhutan and India

MMES started with a house-to-house campaign against the killing of wild animals and the illegal felling of tress and convinced people to refrain from these activities. Women were particularly mobilised to help in this campaign. Those caught poaching were publicly reproved. Ex-poachers were trained to help in conservation and a Conservation Task Force consisting of ex-poachers and ex-timber fellers was formed. A total of 47 ex-poachers are now part of the joint patrolling efforts that have started with the Forest Department. They are also part of the MMES. Today, the Forest Department in recognition of MMES efforts has officially recognised them as partners in conservation. The ABSU encouraged the youth to get involved. Bird checklists were made and wildlife surveys also carried out. This has helped in the tourism activities as well. Two wireless sets were given to the youth from the Forest Department. The Bodoland Territorial Council

(BTC) is also supporting some of the conservation activities of MMES. 17 villages located on the periphery of the park are involved in this initiative.

MMES has been the winner of the prestigious Amrita Devi Bishnoi Wildlife Protection Award, 2006 and the Anirudh Bhargava INTACH Environmental Award for 2005.

Capacity building exercises related to waste disposal and water management have been initiated recently There is also an attempt to keep the tracks clean and free of wastes and plastics. Rain water harvesting is being attempted by digging ponds.

This is the first conservation-based tourism initiative that dedicates its entire effort and earnings for revival of Manas and protect its wildlife while engaging local communities in every sphere of its activities.

Discussion

The ecotourism initiative that is run by the MMES is a relatively small component of the larger vision of conservation of the organisation. Given the scale of operations, the number of tourists visiting and the revenue earned, it is very difficult to say if this initiative has contributed towards poverty alleviation in the region. Out of the 60 plus villages in the fringe area of the park, at least 17 are involved in various activities of MMES. However, revenue generated from ecotourism activities is not distributed amongst the local community but is routed to help support conservation activities.

Most of the work within MMES is carried out on a voluntary capacity and revenue earned individually is not very significant The biggest challenge being faced by the Society today is how to keep up with providing food to the volunteers who patrol the park.

The Manas initiative needs to be understood in the context of political strife that the areas have been subject to. There is also an entire cadre of people ranging from youth to people who had been involved in the illegal felling of trees and poaching of wild animals that now need to focus their energies into something positive and constructive. The ecotourism initiative combined with the conservation and awareness activities of MMES have given an appropriate direction to these people. It has also instilled in them a sense of pride and purpose to help regain the lost glory of Manas. The ecotourism initiative in particular has brought to Manas a number of tourists, both domestic and foreign giving the local people a further incentive to protect what is left of the ecosystem. Also, since the activities of MMES are so intricately connected, all the stakeholders including tourists and volunteers see the connection between the health of the ecosystem, tourism and the well being of the local community. The relevance of the initiative becomes greater since it enhances the pride of the community and gives them an incentive to conserve.

Even more significant is the fact that the political system in the form of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) supports this initiative and would be keen to support many more of this kind. Discussions

with the Deputy Chief of the BTC, Shri Kampa Borgoyary endorsed this. He is eager to support MMES and also indicated an expansion of tourist facilities at Maozigendri. The MMES has to some extent also got support from the Forest Department.

Key challenges and recommendations

1. Limited Wildlife Sightings

The many years of conflict in the region has taken its toll on the forests and wildlife of Manas. Protection in the last few years has helped but there is still a long way to go before the Park ecosystem regains its health. As a result, wildlife sightings are not that common. This has a direct impact on tourism at the Jungle Camp. This perhaps is one of the biggest challenges for this site. The Camp is an ideal site for serious bird watchers, but the average tourist who would like to spot at least a few animal species may be disappointed. Help Tourism confirmed this by noting that with continuous patrolling and monitoring by local conservation volunteers, the wildlife situation in Manas is much better now compared to what it was during the political movement. Other than birds, mammals such as Wild Buffalo, Hog Deer, Golden Langur, Asiatic Elephants sightings are common nowadays. Spotting the tiger is always a matter of chance as in other protected areas.

Recommendation

The ecotourism package being offered by MMES at present is quite varied and offers a range of activities. This is a good strategy and needs to be diversified even further. The cultural and rural tourism aspect could be strengthened. The central seed farm that is part of the Park provides an excellent habitat for the Bengal Florican (The logo of MMES). This site should be developed and could be made part of the package. Sighting of the Bengal Florican would be a great attraction for the tourist interested in wildlife. Help Tourism is initiating discussions with BTC to declare the seed farm as an important bird area and ensure that it is protected from various pressures.

2. Accessibility to the Site

At present, the access road to the eastern side of the park where the Jungle Camp is located is poor and not too many tourists venture towards this side. There are two tourism establishments on the other side of the park at Bansbari and a Forest Department establishment at Mathanguri. Only a planned package or more effective marketing will bring more tourists to this camp. The access road is in the process of being re-done.

Recommendation

The marketing for this site may need to be enhanced. Help Tourism is at present marketing it through its own packages. The websites also help. More effective communication would be needed for better marketing. Help Tourism has tied up with some overseas operators who promote and support community tourism projects and responsible wildlife holidays. The last few seasons have registered steady growth and response. Better results are expected through these tie ups

3. Scale of Operations

At present, the ecotourism set up at Maozigendri is quite small. If ecotourism is to become a more significant activity of the MMES and the number of tourist were to grow, then the scale operations would need to grow considerably. However, the caution is that it should also not grow to the extent that it could be detrimental to the park itself.

Recommendation

The BTC has indicated that it might help support a larger establishment at Maozigendri. It must be kept in mind that if this does happen, and then the new establishment is developed in the same style as the present one. Help Tourism is also supporting a larger dining room. It might help to carry out a survey with tourists to know what kind of additional facilities they might like to have at this site. Help Tourism believes that the carrying capacity of a particular site should not be exceeded, It is developing and encouraging other community groups to set up similar infrastructure in Central and Western Manas. The Basbari site is already operational. Few more sites will be ready by next season in Ultapani and Chakrashila

4. Capacity Building

At present the staff at the Jungle Camp is relatively small and Help Tourism has facilitated the training of some of the local boys in the hospitality sector. However, there needs to be a more professional approach to running an establishment of this kind. Although situated in a remote and rustic setting, tourists do expect the minimum in hospitality.

Recommendation

Constant reinforcing of guidelines and a fairly rigorous enforceable Code of Conduct is required. A system of monitoring and rating of services needs to be developed. Cross-site visits for the staff may also be considered.

5. Sale of Local Products

There is at present, a small weaving outlet run by a Women's Self Help Group in the village. This is a good place for tourists to come and see the indigenous weaving process and also buy some locally woven fabric. However, there is a need to expand the sale of local products.

Recommendation

A small shop could be opened on the Jungle Camp premises where the tourists could buy local products. There is a need to expand and diversify local products and ensure the quality and supply of these products.

6. Development of Communication Material

The MMES has at present (besides the website), a brochure that describes the ecotourism initiative. However, what the Jungle Camp itself lacks is some simple but effective communication material that explains why this Camp is unique. There also needs to be some material clearly spelling out a Code of Conduct for the site.

Recommendation

Simple material needs to be developed as handouts and even as attractive brochures to be placed in each room. One Board can be put up on the site indicating the history and genesis of the initiative and also highlighting a Code of Conduct. Help Tourism has limited financial resources and fund and so printed materials could not be made available. They have approached BTC in this matter and a comprehensive information booklet is being planned which can be used and displayed in all the sites. An audio-visual system has been already financed by Help Tourism which will be used for film shows and awareness campaigns.

7. Ensure Financial Stability

Since this is a unique initiative where ecotourism is so closely tied to the protection of the park and the livelihoods of the people involved in the protection that it is important to ensure financial security for this endeavour. It needs to be highlighted that the people involved in these activities are ex-poachers and those formerly part of the timber mafia. It is to their credit that they have been motivated enough to become protectors. But it is a thin line that they are walking. For them to continue working as protectors there needs to be financial stability.

Recommendation

Ecotourism can assure funding this cadre of people at least for part of the year, if a certain number of tourists are assured. This then needs to be taken into consideration and all efforts made to ensure that this does happen. Help Tourism has been pursuing this since the inception of the project – mostly on pro-bono basis. Despite their best effort tourist footfalls (they do not encourage day visitors and weekend picnickers) are still very low owing to many factors such as negative publicity by media, travel warning issued by European countries, Australia and North America. Cross-border programme has been initiated by us with Bhutan so that cross-border entry and tourism could be established for international travellers which are producing encouraging results.

Acknowledgment

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Endnotes

1. *Seema Bhatt was commissioned by EQUATIONS to do this case study. She is an independent consultant based in India working on issues related to biodiversity. She holds a Masters degree in Environmental Studies from Yale University, USA. She has served as Senior Programme Officer, Biodiversity 'Hotspots' Conservation Programme WWF- India. Her particular focus of work is on strengthening the links between conservation of biodiversity and livelihoods of local communities. She views ecotourism as one such link and has coordinated two projects on ecotourism as the South Asia Coordinator for the USAID supported Biodiversity Conservation Network. In 2008 she co-authored with EQUATIONS a book on "Ecotourism Development in India' published by the Cambridge University Press. Seema is at present a Fulbright Research Scholar based at the Centre for Responsible Travel (CREST) in Washington DC.*

2. *Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manas_National_Park accessed on 20.04.2009*

3. *http://www.manasmaozi.com/?q=node/67*

Contents

3.

DARING TO DREAM

A case study of the
Mountain Shepherds Initiative
Uttarakhand

By EQUATIONS

In the fall of 2006, the Mountain Shepherds Initiative, a community owned and operated ecotourism venture, was formerly inaugurated in the vicinity of the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve (NDBR) in the North Indian state of Uttarakhand (Figure 1). The Mountain Shepherds Initiative is born out of social struggle of the Chipko[1] (early 1970s) and Jhapto Cheeno[2] (late 1990s) movements and more recent efforts by the Nanda Devi Campaign - to reclaim peoples land and forest rights[3].

Background

The Mountain Shepherds story begins in Lata, a village situated in the Niti Valley of the High Himalayas. The people of the Niti Valley, which forms the Western boundary of the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve, belong to an Indo-Tibetan ethnic group known as the Bhotiya who are further divided into several subgroups with varying degrees of affinity with either Hindu or Buddhist cultures in the region[4].

Two seminal events shaped the lives of the Bhotiyas of Niti Valley. The first was the 1962 India-China war resulting in the closure of the age old cross border trade relationship with Tibet. The second was the declaration of Nanda Devi region as a national park in 1982 ending all mountaineering and trekking expeditions to Nanda Devi, one of the Himalayas' highest and most popular peaks[5].

Mountaineering expeditions

Mountaineering expeditions to the Niti valley can be traced back to the late 1930s peaking in the 70s and 80s. Since 1939, the Nanda Devi game sanctuary has attracted international expeditions, though activities remained low as access was rarely granted because of its proximity with the borders. By the 1970s, the sanctuary had become a major tourist attraction for mountaineers. For the local communities, the arrival of tourists was a bonus for the shattered economy with many youth getting jobs as porters and guides. However by 1977 with the high influx of tourists, the region encountered severe ecological damage. Valuable herbs from the sanctuary were extracted in an unsustainable manner and waste from several expeditions had started accumulating at an alarming rate. Traffic increased in all the newly opened trekking routes, and by 1982, around 4000 travellers and porters were treading the sanctuary annually. The declaration of the region as a national park was to protect it from further destruction and allow the ecosystem to heal. Restrictions were put on the local communities from grazing their herds, harvesting medicinal plants and collecting fallen wood[6]. Local communities were restricted from taking their herd to Dharansi, their traditional summer hamlet. Restrictions were imposed on traditional harvesting of herbs and in practicing their religious rights inside the core zone.

By 1988, the Nanda Devi National Park was converted to a Biosphere Reserve (NDBR) extending the park boundaries to encompass surrounding village lands. Although the buffer zones have remained open for the survival use by resident communities, restrictions were imposed on cattle grazing in certain additional lands. With diminished pastures, overgrazing developed into a serious problem, leading many shepherds to reduce their flock, and consequently wool production in the villages. Likewise, the reduced availability of fuel, fodder and other non-timber forest products rendered the traditional subsistence-based agriculture to an even more precarious state. Most upsetting was that the reserve was imposed unilaterally, without community consultation or any regard to the consequences for local livelihoods[7]. From 1998 to the present time, the people of the

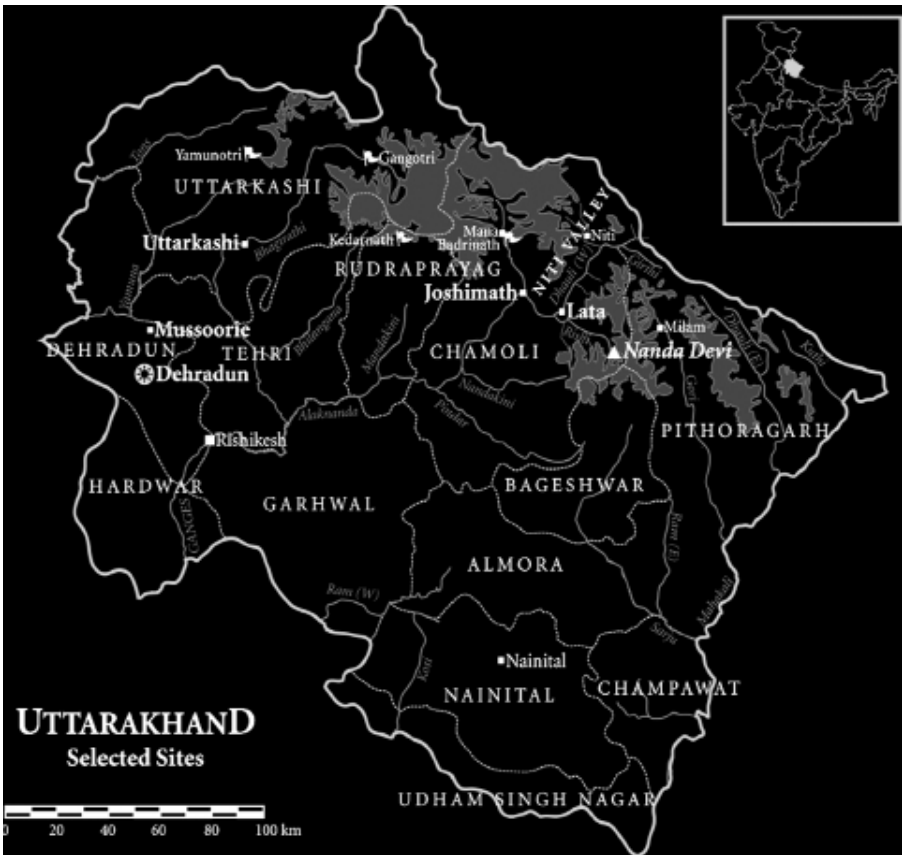


Figure 1: State of Uttarakhand

Niti valley have persisted in their efforts to regain access rights to the Nanda Devi National Park.

Statehood

In November 2000, the new state of Uttarakhand (called Uttaranchal between 2000 and 2006) was carved out of the hill region of Uttar Pradesh. The people of the Niti Valley looked forward to statehood to establish for themselves their cultural identity, decisions on appropriate development and local control of resources.

Tourism was considered as a key sector for development. In May 2001, the state government, with the support of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) commissioned the Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF) to determine the feasibility of reopening the park to limited tourism activity. This came as a bolt for the local communities still battling with the ban. They feared that this move would allow national and multinational tourism operators to take control of tourism at Nanda Devi.

This gave birth to the Nanda Devi Campaign in Lata Village. The Bhotiya communities received critical assistance from external groups, both in Uttarakhand and abroad. Jaanadhar, a forest rights organization working throughout the state, assisted in launching the Vanaadhikar (rights over forests) initiative to unite similar communities affected by protected areas. It also helped convene the Alliance for Development, a coalition of grassroots organisations that aimed to introduce a strong pro-people and pro-environment voice to the development debate taking place in the new Uttarakhand state. On October 14, 2001, the community members of Niti Valley issued the progressive Biodiversity Conservation and Ecotourism Declaration (Annexure 1) to guide its future endeavours and held a workshop elaborating their community-based ecotourism proposals. The Nanda Devi Declaration attempts to achieve a new relationship between tourists and local communities based on equity and mutual learning.

Initial stages

In 2003, the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve (NDBR) was partially opened, with the government allowing 500 visitors to enter a small segment of the park's core zone every year although the peak itself would remain off limits. The revision called for the employment of local guides and porters, although this was not accompanied by any job training. With the keen involvement of Alliance for Development and the positive inputs received during the 2001 workshop, the community had considered the move an opportunity for economic rejuvenation.

In the initial years of 2003-2005, the Campaign pioneered several innovative and creative programmes to raise awareness of the Nanda Devi region and about the need for equity in the tourism industry in general. Conceived and organized by

a consortium of researchers, social activists and the Gram Sabha of Lata village, these programmes have embraced everything from artist camps to raise resources, women's festivals on Republic Day and participation in regional and international academic workshops. Also over successive summers, student groups from American and Canadian universities visited Lata village as part of their studies in Mountain Geography and sustainable Development. These programmes raised the global profile of the region and demonstrated tourism contribution in helping diversify the community's economic strategies. In 2004, these efforts were recognized when the area was selected as a runner up for Best Ecotourism Destination by Conde Nast Traveller. This was followed in January 2005 with a full feature article in French travel magazine GEO that highlighted the pertinent issues and concerns raised by the campaign with regard to ecology and cultural survival[8].

An important strategy adopted was the use of technology like the web to aid effective communication of the campaign as well as market the tourism initiative. By 2004 the Campaign had a significant presence on the internet. Through the website, queries were received for trekking & mountaineering expeditions that helped generate business on a small scale.

Mountain Shepherd Initiative

By 2006, a steady stream of people had started visiting the region as a result of the Campaign. The focus at this stage was on three critical aspects – to build capacities of the youth, to develop a product line and marketing and planning of an event that would draw international attention and formally launch the company. For the latter, the organizers decided to hold the Inaugural Nanda Devi Women's Trek, by reaching out to the world's women mountaineers to pay tribute to the mountain goddess Nanda Devi as well as the region's women who have played a central role in movements of forest, land, and water rights. This trek was also to commemorate the 30th death anniversary of Nanda Devi Unseold. In 1976 Unseold and his daughter Nanda Devi were on an expedition to climb her namesake mountain Nanda Devi. She died during the climb, which was plagued by accidents and eventual tragedy.

Another reason for the organisers to choose a women's trek was to use the launch event as an opportunity to position themselves differently. MSI believes that if it can provide safe trek to a single woman in remote mountain areas, who are otherwise considered vulnerable, then it automatically demonstrates that everyone will be safe. In fact small women group have actually started visiting the area accompanied by trained women guides from the region.

On International Women's Day of the year applications were invited for a women exclusive trek. 64 applications were received from various parts of the world. Seventeen women from India, the US, Canada, and Taiwan were selected and invited to the Nanda Devi region in October 2006.

Final choices were based on the candidates' interest and experience in women's issues, mountain environments, and social justice. The women needed to bear their own expenses until Joshimath (Chamoli district) but the 2 week trek expenses for the trekkers were borne by MSI. In this endeavour, MSI was greatly assisted by American students from the Appalachian State University (North Carolina, USA), through their successful "Gear for Garhwal" project. They had put up donation boxes in shopping centres for collecting trekking equipment. A significant amount of high quality mountaineering equipment was then delivered to MSI in May 2006.

Unlike the typical high end holiday package to the Himalayas, the participatory nature of the tour was emphasized, so that the newly trained guides and organizers could learn from the trekkers as well as impart the history, geography, and ecology of the Nanda Devi region. On conclusion of the Inaugural Trek, the participants were asked to submit their feedback and suggestions to MSI.

Capacity building

In October 2004, board members of the USA based Winterline Foundation had visited Lata Village and were keen on supporting the Initiative as they saw this as an opportunity for the local community to claim stake and control over tourism development in their region. Until this point the Nanda Devi Campaign had stayed away from taking donor money as they wished this Initiative to be on their own terms and values. Winterline Foundation helped fund and train the first batch of 40 youth in the basic course in mountaineering. In 2006, MSI approached the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering, Uttarkashi (NIM) for capacity building of the local youth. To accommodate all 40 youth together MSI without a subsidy purchased an entire course worth Rs.17,00,000 (US$ 36,500 approx) – Rs 40000/- being the expenditure of training one candidate

The NIM training provided a fresh start to many of the youth who could not finish school or return to their traditional livelihood. By equipping their traditional knowledge with modern techniques, they could access more specialized and therefore higher paying work. Most important was the increased probability of Himalayan youth finding gainful employment closer home rather than in urban centres[9] and to become owners of the company rather than employees.

The prospective participants for the NIM training were selected in consultation with the Gram Panchayats and core members of the Nanda Devi Campaign from the districts of Pithorgarh, Chamoli, Uttarkashi & Dehradun, with a maximum number of youth being from the Niti Valley. Those unemployed youth who were already involved in tourism and residing in the targeted villages were considered. Criteria were further developed to identify the entrepreneurship, discipline, and ability to work in a team.

In keeping with the general socio-cultural outlook of MSI, NIM's basic curriculum was enhanced in consultation with the Principal, Nehru Institute of Mountaineering . Thus in addition to a month of physically demanding mountaineering training, a week of lectures were held on topics as diverse as the special needs of the senior citizens/ disabled persons, the culture and history of Uttarakhand, flora and fauna identification and mountain tourism. Successful candidates made a pledge to the campaign indicating their commitment to work collectively for the promotion of the collective enterprise as well as abide by the principles of the Nanda Devi Declaration[10].

With MSI starting to get regular business, they requested grants for further training on (advanced, method of instruction and mountain search & rescue), which Winterline Foundation offered. The training was for 40 more boys and girls too were encouraged. Currently MSI has over 60 boys and 10 girls who have been trained. Most have completed 3-4 courses and are now qualified instructors, certified search and rescue volunteers for accidents in high altitude areas.

In addition to the trekking and mountaineering courses, youth have also been given training in yoga, cooking, English language and computers. They have been also trained to use the Global Positioning System (GPS) as part of the documentation training.

Product design & marketing

MSI sought to create products that were in tune with and guided by the Nanda Devi Declaration. They have developed various treks ranging in length and level of difficulty so as to provide multiple options to clients. Their treks have been designed keeping in mind varied interests so as to attract students, families, the differentially-abled, women, as well as the seasoned trekker.

"You are a woman and you have a mind of your own. You stand up against what is wrong and stand with what is right. Your ideals match our own — you share our history. And we have an exclusive invitation for you — to be our special guest. There is no package, there are no deals. You can come when you want and stay for as long as you want. Your safety is our promise. This is the

land of Gaura Devi. She was the quiet inspiration behind the Chipko movement and is the enduring strength of our community's many struggles. We invite you to discover her, somewhere along the banks of the Dhauli Ganga, or in a brilliant sunrise or in the soft light of the stars. Or maybe in you."

Mountain Shepherds Initiative Website[11]

Another area where they see a potential and growing numbers is tourists wanting to experience village life - to stay in traditional homes and be part of the daily chores! Some accompany the shepherds when they take their livestock to graze, others join the families in the fields while others go along with the women to collect firewood.

A third area is in developing souvenirs, an entire component that is overseen by the women. In every house there is a Khaddi (weaving loom). During the non-agricultural season the loom runs in every house and the women are engaged in carpet weaving. However the quality is inferior to what is available in the market. MSI plans to reintroduce vegetable dyes and provide design inputs. While most women weave carpets, as these are fairly large and heavy, most tourists may be unwilling to buy. Therefore smaller mats with motifs for yoga or meditation are being designed.

The marketing of MSI is mainly through the website and word of mouth. As of now the website is maintained by volunteers from Canada. MSI also has tie-up with an organisation called Nature Link (www.nature-link.org) as their marketing partners.

As a marketing strategy MSI plans to have all its treks visually documented. The youth have been trained to use the camera and GPS devices. On any new route being taken the guides carry with them a video camera & shoot, which is then edited into 2 minute film and parked in You Tube (Internet) . Once sufficient documentation is done, MSI will upload its redesigned website with the GPS coordinates of the trek to give the client a precise route for planning their treks. This gives them an added advantage over the hundred others promoting treks in Uttarakhand. Their aim is to cover the entire state and not just the areas they are currently operating in. For this they have given themselves 2 years.

Another important marketing strategy they rely on is the quality of their trained guides. The guides in the process of doing a thorough documentation of all treks – they are required to fill up trek logs - location coordinates using GPS, water sources, bridges, zones of rock fall, all this helps in building collective knowledge. The training and this collective knowledge is the basis on which MSI is able to say,

"As we go higher up in the Himalayas there are 2 options – First option is to take a well cultured, well spoken, English speaking guide from Delhi. The second option is that our boy doesn't know English though he will manage to say yes/no and minimum communication. But if there is a problem our boys being technically qualified and well versed with the terrain can carry you all the way back. So it is their choice to decide who they want to take.

Sunil Kainthola, Director, MSI

The Ford Foundation has helped fund 3 components – developing the product design, documentation and reintroduction of vegetable dyes.

Tourism impacts

Economic aspects

Key sources of sustenance and income for the community are agriculture (wheat, barley, millet, pulses, grains, kidney beans and potatoes), rearing of livestock and homespun wool and woollen items. By adopting tourism, the local community now have supplementary income avenues - guides, porters, pony owners, cooks, driving a taxi, homestays, crafting souvenirs. With increase in livelihood opportunities youth who earlier migrated are now planing to work in the region. Before joining MSI, a majority of the youth were engaged in farming with an annual average income that varied between Rs.5000/- to Rs.10,000/-. But after having undergone training as guides they now earn Rs.250/- per day; earning on an average Rs.15,000 - 20000/- annually which is like bonus income to the family. Most guides come from low income families.

MSI works on the model that the youth are paid only if they are actually engaged in a business activity. Having invested in training the youth, the MSI requires them to volunteer time in product design on the days when they are not on a trek. For example a camera, rations, equipment is given and travel expenses taken care of to survey and visually document a trek. However if the guide is not engaged and they receive a request from other tour operators / groups they are allowed to join other groups though their first commitment is to the company.

People engaged in providing homestay facilities receive between Rs.150 - Rs.250/- per person per day (twin sharing basis), the porter – Rs.250/- and the cook Rs.500/-. The pony owner gets Rs.400/- per day for a pony. MSI works on the principles of fair wages, good working conditions, top quality gear and that income is distributed in an equitable manner and amongst as many as possible. For e.g. while a pony is able to carry the load of 4 men and

is much more cost effective, MSI wherever possible, chooses to go with porters as this would help 4 people benefit instead of one. Also the porters MSI engages usually carry less weight compared to porters hired by other groups (20 kilograms) as they do not want them to be loaded with more weight in case of an emergency and when trekkers are required to be carried down. Further, there is no discrimination in the food offered to the clients and camp staff accompanying the trek.

Apart from the monetary aspects, the accumulation of specialised man power in these regions in remote villages is an extremely valuable asset – replacing the need to hire such expertise from cities.

MSI has ensured through the system put in place that the money earned will stay and trickle down to the community. At the village level they have developed a rotational method so as to ensure equitable distribution of opportunities. A system of backward linkages is in place – for instance if one family is providing homestay facility, another family provides food supplies, and from a third the tourist is encouraged to buy souvenirs.

MSI has consciously stayed away from a 'funding & project mode' though items like the mountaineering gear have been received by the community at no cost to them. Most villagers on seeing the material believe that it should be distributed amongst all as this is what the Forest Department does. The common equipment used to be treated without care and also went through a phase of it being stolen. For e.g. fuel efficient stoves worth $220 per piece which were bought were broken in a day or extremely expensive mountaineering rope cut up to tie bundles of grass or catering equipments and plates were stolen. MSI is putting in efforts to counter this.

MSI did micro financing for the purchase of vehicles, where the person from the community is the owner. Whenever needed MSI asks for his services, otherwise he is free to earn an income out of it by private or commercial use for ferrying local passengers. However people who were trusted with loans at times have not fulfilled their obligations of paying back.

Homestays: Two key motivations for tourists visiting the region are religious and adventure. The pilgrim and the adventurer do not expect high end comforts, but primarily want basic facilities like clean accommodation, toilets etc. An extremely innovative idea for solving the accommodation problem, with minimum investment is to use non-performing assets like properties or bungalows. Most communities in the region have a summer and winter home, at a higher and lower altitude respectively. During summers (also the tourist season), the winter homes are vacant which are leased out to MSI. The marketing strategy is to attract the tourist coming to Joshimath and give them a choice to either stay in a polluted town like Joshimath paying Rs1000/- per room or 25 kms further down in Lata village pay Rs.800/- and get an entire house of a Bhotiya including food.

However most of the houses are in need of repair. A part of the profits earned by MSI is reinvested back as micro credit to help owners renovate their homes, build bathrooms and toilets. This system is being introduced and demonstrated to help the community become familiar with how it operates. Out of the earnings from the tourists who stay at their homes, the family will retain 50% and the remaining will be given to the company against the advance given. People have been given inputs – a person was encouraged to use a double glass pane system and cover the windows with wire mesh so that the flies don't come in or that the interiors are refurbished with modern facilities while the exteriors are traditional. However this system has not been functioning well with the community because people perceive it to be like some kind of government funding, while it is actually the micro finance experimentation with the profits. This not only increases the bed capacity of the village but in turn also promotes better hygiene practices among the villagers. However there is still a difference in the notion of cleanliness that a tourist demands and of the community member. It is for this reason that MSI just hires the rooms and all the housekeeping is done by MSI staff using linen from MSI store. Similarly the meals are prepared and served by MSI so as to be sure that the food has been prepared in a hygienic manner.

Currently in 2 villages (Lata and Tolma) they have initiated the concept and now have a bed capacity of approximately 40. MSI has also leased a 5 room leased property, near Joshimath, the closest town to the village as pilgrims may prefer staying in town.

Social aspects

MSI is attempting to create a egalitarian culture by encouraging the guides, porters to move away from the 'sir' system and address the client by his/her first name. They are encouraged to relate with the client as an equal rather than as the boss, so that if need be they can exercise necessary authority (particularly if client's demands crosses the boundaries of safety or common sense while mountaineering or trekking).

MSI has inculcated in the youth a sense of cleanliness and hygiene (towels, mirrors, shaving brush etc are given to all guides and porters)

MSI has invested in life insurance of Rs.10 lakh and personal accident insurance of Rs.1 lakh for its youth in the core group. 50% of the premium is borne by MSI and the remaining 50% by the youth themselves.

Discussions on tourism have taken place in Panchayat meetings and even amongst women. Earlier the women and children used to see the tourists as strangers, but now with people coming and staying in their houses, the fear and anxiety about a stranger has gone.

Youth who are part of the Initiative have also become important members of the community and are now approached by vehicle owners, pony men, as it is through them that business for the others is generated.

However while girls have been encouraged to come forward and undertake training, their participation has been low. This is mainly due to the conservative outlook of the community. Also with many youth joining MSI (especially from the Niti Valley) the burden on the women increases as the tourist season is also the season for farming and crop harvesting. When the men desert the village at this labour intensive time to engage with tourism, it leaves a double burden on the women.

Practice of caste discrimination remains strong in the villages. Though attempts have been made to involve participation of scheduled castes (SC) (marginalised community within the social structure) this has been resisted by the upper castes - for example activities like cooking by SCs are not accepted by upper caste youth. Also many SC youth are not keen to engage because of the prevailing system of governmental subsidies they receive. Also when MSI talks about such initiative, they feel that if MSI is paying Rs.40,000/- for training of one youth, then why can't they pay them Rs.5,000/- to help when the youth is away from home on the training and not earning.

MSI has put strict regulations for the youth group and the tourists during the trek. Youth are strictly prohibited from consuming alcohol and smoking. When the tourists eat toffee or biscuits then their wrappers are not allowed to be thrown and they are asked to carry it back. Also when on the path if a villager is coming / going, the tourists are advised to move to a side and make way as villagers have the right of way. MSI also ensures that the tourists maintain dress codes appropriate to local culture.

There have been stray incidents of tourists behaving badly. Often tourists become a little fuzzy in their behaviour when they climb altitudes. But the youth understand this behaviour and are trained to manage these situations. For climbing mountains, acclimatisation is necessary. There was an incident where the tourist ascended the peak too quickly without adequate acclimatisation. The person felt severe headache after the climb, spent the night at the top and climbed down the next day and went away. Instead of paying the Rs.30,000/- that was due he left paying just Rs.7000/-.

MSI believes that youth who belong to a particular region will be environmentally responsible compared to youth who do not belong to that region. This is because a boy who belongs to the Nanda Devi knows that his livelihood depends on that area and if that area gets dirty then there will be no tourism there and so he will not have any source for livelihood. Thus they involve boys who belong to a given area for tourism purposes and marketing it to tourists rather than youth from other areas. In turn they would be implementing the "no traces" principle with more honesty instead of a guide belonging to Delhi or Rishikesh in the Nanda devi.

Though the nature of trekking in mountains followed by MSI is such that the kitchen staff leaves a location or a camping site after the tourist has gone further. Thus it is difficult to ensure that the garbage generated at that site is carried back and not left behind. The MSI is trying to encourage its youth to carry back the garbage generated during the trek. An action workshop was organised with EQUATIONS in November 2008 along the Kauri Pass Trail to develop strategies for zero waste and no trace principles. As a result MSI is now working on new packaging systems so that most of the plastics/polythene is left at the base itself before commencing the trek.

Philosophy & structure

While the MSI emerged out of the Nanda Devi Campaign, the organisers realised that this needs to move from a campaign mode to a professional business venture. To make it a successful business model on the grounds of equal opportunity, it was critical to adopt the principals of choosing people on the basis of need, interest and ability. It is hoped that the initiative will serve as a prototype of socially conscious and community owned tourism operations in the region. MSI's emphasis is on developing leadership skills of Himalayan youth, who in turn would eventually become the major stakeholders, a new community-owned and operated tourism company.

MSI was registered as a private limited company in February 2008, currently having two directors (Dr. Sunil Kainthola and Mr. Dhan Singh Rana). In the core team there are 7-8 people who have been with MSI since the beginning and understand its purpose and philosophy. The plan for the coming years is that the two directors would eventually give up a major part of the company shareholding to the youth to run and manage the company in the future. Distribution of shares is planned as 40% of the shares to the youth and the remaining 60% transferred to a trust that will be constituted called the Nanda Devi Educational Trust. Therefore while the structure will remain that of a private limited company, 40% equity will be distributed to the community directly. But for youth to get entitlement to shares, they will have to exhibit discipline and work towards taking the company forward. Till date 4 % of the share has been distributed to the first batch of MSI members. Those having shares would

not entitle them to profits earned by the company. The profits will be reinvested back - in purchasing property, buying equipment, training for the youth and as micro credit loans for renovations of homes.

Future plans

Future plans for MSI involves the following currently in progress or in the process of being initiated:

- A concerted effort for e-marketing through the campaign website www.nandadevi.org and the newer www.mountainshepherds.com.
- Over the next 2-3 years to visually document possible treks so as to establish themselves throughout the state and not only in the three districts they are currently operating in.
- Mountain Shepherds will eventually plan trips directly from arrival in Delhi to Nanda Devi. This is to ensure that no trip is marred by the incidental horrors that often beset travellers, whether in being overcharged in Delhi to facing harassment in Haridwar, to transportation chaos on the roads.
- Regularise and upscale the production of vegetable dye-based products in the area with the involvement of women in 20 families and to market it through e-bay. With emphasis on training women into the role of master makers or trainers who will be giving quality inputs to other women.
- The government will be opening the waters of Tehri dam for adventure sports. To train 50 youth from the region in water sports.
- Train youth to take care of senior citizens needs as they form a large population of the pilgrim traffic doing the Char Dham yatra. The entire pilgrim emphasis is on infrastructure like hotels, transport but the human element is missing. They believe that it is important to take special care of senior citizens. A wing is to be developed within MSI that looks into the needs of this sector.
- Develop benchmarking indicators and conduct socio economic studies to regularly monitor progress and impacts and take corrective action.
- Buy land in Uttarakashi to build a tourist lodge and camping site. This tourist lodge will be made using locally available material based on different state concepts; the construction work will be done by youth to build a sense of participation and ownership.
- MSI is presently negotiating properties on the Dodital Trek route in District Uttarkashi and working on a legally valid understanding of location specific profit sharing with the person selling land to the company.
- Set up a chanting hall named Krishna, in Uttarakashi that will provide yoga facilities for tourists
- An environmental education centre at Bhebra, midway to Dodital focussing children. The centre is expected to serve as a source for understanding the cultural and environmental biodiversity of the region.
- Develop site offices in strategic locations like Rishikesh and Joshimath, to be done in collaboration with partners and on a franchisee basis. These offices to serve as outlets – display and sale of MSI products and souvenirs.
- Create their own brand in catering at local/ regional level. Many youth migrate to urban centres and work in restaurants along the highways, hotels in Delhi, Mumbai for paltry wages. MSI plans to do a skill survey of these youth and select 40 for training. A sister company is being planned to run the catering division.

Challenges & conclusion

For MSI there are still many challenges, developmental lags and sustainability issues that lie ahead. The challenges are related to retaining youth, further training in communicative English, briefing them on aspect of hygiene, food & water safety, trash collection, developing managerial skills and ultimately instilling self-confidence in them. The developmental lags that need to be addressed are sorting inter-village rivalries, bringing in greater equity and transforming this initiative from a people's movement mindset to a business entity. To ensure sustainability of this venture, MSI plans to recover indigenous knowledge and skills, develop participatory benchmark studies and build in monitoring systems to guarantee work which is line with the principles of the Nanda Devi Declaration.

As MSI is in a nascent stage and business is not guaranteed, regular monthly income is also not possible. Many youth trained under the MSI banner have moved on and joined other (more steady) employment. Some leave the job as they are well off and not interested in this kind of work, some fear working in the high altitudes but a high percentage move out on account of seasonal opportunities which fetch better money. For e.g. - collection of the herb "kidajadi"[12] (Cordyceps sinensis), which is then exported to China. According to the Chinese the consumption of this in their diet has been the success factor behind the Olympic victories. For the villagers it fetches Rs. 3 to 3.5 lakhs per kilogram.

A critical aspect that needs attention is building up capacities and creating the second line of people who can manage managerial aspects of MSI. Currently there is no qualified manpower to handle queries, costing, promotion & marketing, accounts all of which being handled by Sunil Kainthola. MSI is in contact with people who are working in the tourism department and about to retire. They plan to bring that manpower in to handle such roles.

Another challenge that MSI as well as the tourism industry will soon face in Uttarakhand is competition from growth in tourism business in Nepal and Kashmir, once those regions become politically more stable. MSI is preparing itself by gearing up on services, competitive rates and low overheads. However the biggest challenge is whether they would be able to go beyond doing business of Rs. 15-20 lakhs annually (which is what it currently stands at) or whether it will be able to scale up without compromising the commendable vision & principles as laid out in Nanda Devi Declaration of 2001.

MSI is attempting the monumental task of establishing a community-owned operation - a future without human exploitation and environmental degradation. It hopes to implement its guiding philosophy in all aspects of tourism planning - in making mountain tourism accessible to all regardless of age, gender, income or ability. As a model, its success will have an important bearing on the fate of the Himalayas and its people.

Acknowledgement

The case study has been complied based on the interviews in 2008 with Dr Sunil Kainthola & Shri Dhan Singh Rana (Directors), Govind (Member), Mr Harish Chandola (Journalist), community members from Lata and Tolma villages as well as based on papers written by Mr Rajiv Rawat (2008) and the booklet on Cultural Survival & Sustainable Livelihoods brought out by Alliance for Development (2004)

Annexure 1

The Nanda Devi Biodiversity Conservation and Eco Tourism Declaration

October 14, 2001 Gram Sabha Lata Chamoli, Uttarakhand

Today on the 14th of October, 2001 in the courtyard of the temple of our revered Nanda Devi, we the people's representatives, social workers and citizens of the Niti valley, after profound deliberations on biodiversity conservation and tourism, while confirming our commitment to community based management processes dedicate ourselves to the following –

1. That we, in accordance with the resolutions adopted by the World Tourism Organisation's

Manila Declaration 1997 on the Social Impact of Tourism will lay the foundation for community based tourism development in our region

2. That in our region we will develop a tourism industry free from monopolies and will ensure equity in the tourism business

3. With the cessation of all forms of exploitation like the exploitation of porters and child labour in the tourism industry, we will ensure a positive impact of tourism on the biodiversity of our region and the enhancement of the quality of life of the local community

4. That in any tourism related enterprise we will give preference to our unemployed youth and under privileged families, we will also ensure equal opportunities for disabled persons with special provisions to avail such opportunities

5. That we will ensure the involvement and consent of the women of our region at all levels of decision making while developing and implementing conservation and tourism plans

6. While developing appropriate institutions for the management of community based conservation and eco tourism in our area we will ensure that tourism will have no negative impact on the bio diversity and culture of our region, and that any anti social or anti national activities will have no scope to operate in our region

7. We will regulate and ensure quality services and safety for tourists and by developing our own marketing network will eliminate the middlemen and endeavour to reduce the travel costs of the tourist

8. While developing the tourism infrastructure in our region we will take care of the special needs of senior citizens and disabled persons

9. As proud citizens of the land of the Chipko movement, we in the name of Gaura Devi will establish a centre for socio-culture and biodiversity, for the conservation and propagation of our unique culture

10.We will ensure the exchange and sharing of experiences with communities of other regions to develop eco tourism in accordance with the Manila Declaration of 1997 in those regions

11.Acknowledging the spirit of Agenda 21 of the Earth Summit, Rio 1992, the Manila Declaration on the Social Impact of Tourism 1997 and the International Year of the Mountains and Eco tourism, 2002, we will strive for bio diversity conservation and an equitable economic development within the framework of the Constitution of the Republic of India

12.Today on October 14, 2001, in front of our revered Nanda Devi, and drawing inspiration from Chipko's radiant history we dedicate ourselves to the transformation of our region into a global centre for peace, prosperity and biodiversity conservation

Endnotes

1. *In the 1970s, an organized resistance to the destruction of forests spread throughout India and came to be known as the Chipko movement. The name of the movement comes from the word 'embrace', as the villagers hugged the trees, and prevented the contractors' from felling them. The first Chipko action took place spontaneously in April 1973 in the village of Mandal in the upper Alakananda valley and over the next five years spread to many districts of the Himalayas in Uttar Pradesh. It was sparked off by the government's decision to allot a plot of forest area in the Alaknanda valley to a sports goods company. This angered the villagers because their similar demand to use wood for making agricultural tools had been earlier denied. With encouragement from a local NGO, Dasoli Gram Swarajya Sangh, under the leadership of an activist, Chandi Prasad Bhatt and women of the area, went into the forest and formed a circle around the trees preventing the men from cutting them down. In March 1974, women from Lata, Reni and other nearby villages led by the elderly Gaura Devi protested against men that had come to clear cut local forests. The Chipko protests in Uttar Pradesh achieved a major victory in 1980 with a 15-year ban on green felling in the Himalayan forests of that state by the order of Mrs Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India. Since then, the movement has spread to many states in the country. (http://healthy-india.org/saveearth6.asp)*

2. *In 1998, inhabitants of the Niti Valley prepared for direct action. Many of the same women who had earlier participated in the Chipko movement were again at the forefront of this new agitation - Jhapto Cheeno (swoop and grab). Under the inspired leadership of the Lata Village Chief, Dhan Singh Rana, people from 10 buffer zone villages entered the core zone en masse, presenting a series of demands to the government for restoration of their traditional rights and roles as guardians of the Nanda Devi sanctuary. Compensation for their losses and a full accounting of funds spent on their behalf were also requested. The villagers vowed to continue this movement and present their case in various platforms until the government recognized their claims. (Rajiv Rawat (2004). The Nanda Devi Campaign For Cultural Survival & Sustainable Livelihoods in the High Himalayas, Alliance for Development, Dehra Dun)*

3. *Rajiv Rawat (2008). The Mountain Shepherds Initiative: Evolving a New Model of Community-Owned Ecotourism In Redefining Tourism – Experiences and Insights from Rural Tourism Projects in India, UNDP, New Delhi*

4. *Ibid*

5. *Ibid*

6. *Rajiv Rawat (2004). The Nanda Devi Campaign For Cultural Survival & Sustainable Livelihoods in the High Himalayas, Alliance for Development, Dehra Dun*

7. *Ibid*

8. *Ibid*

9. *Ibid*

10. *http://mountainshepherds.prayaga.org/trek-options/*

11. *Cordyceps sinensis- scientific name. It is fungus that is used in Chinese medicines. Its In Chinese its name means "worm in winter, plant in summer", www.plantlife.org.uk/international/assets/med-plants/projects-case-studies/AERF%20project/Final-Report-AERF.pdf , data retrieved 27 April 2009*

SECTION B
BACKGROUNDER

1.

TOURISM, TRADE AND GLOBALISATION

Impacts on biodiversity: a one act play

by EQUATIONS

2009

We present this overview in three parts:

Scene 1 Setting the Stage: interrogating the assumptions, myths and realities of globalisation

Scene 2 Writing the Script: exploring the trends in conservation ideology and its implications

Scene 3 Enter Tourism: examining how tourism – which is emblematic of globalisation – plays its part in this drama – its overt and covert agendas and their implications on biodiversity and people's rights

Finally, Curtains: raises some of the dilemmas, questions and challenges for conservation researchers, policy makers, international financial and other global institutions, international and national NGOs and the industry.

Scene 1
Setting the Stage

Interrogating the assumptions, myths and realities of globalisation

Globalisation is by no means a recent phenomenon or idea – but what is worth focussing on is its modern avataar – the advance of neoliberal capitalism or corporate globalisation. Naomi Klein[1] a vocal and articulate critic of globalisation observed that "the past 30 years has been witness to the most extraordinarily successful liberation movement of our time – the global movement of the elite and wealthy to liberate themselves of all constraints and shackles in order to accumulate unprecedented levels of wealth". These shackles have been of taxes, environmental regulations, trade unions and other forms of organisation, capital controls, trade barriers, and publicly owned and controlled services.

This liberation project, she says, has relied on some core ideas (myths) that have been propagated with remarkable dexterity and efficiency to serve their purpose:

1. That capitalism and democracy are inseparable – in fact two faces of a coin
2. That the private sector is inherently more efficient/effective than government/publicly managed
3. Wealth created /accumulated at the top does trickle down
4. (Even if all the above fail) Anyway there is no alternative!

Neo-liberal theory best exemplified by the economist Milton Friedman takes the view that individual liberty and freedom can best be protected and achieved by an institutional structure, made up of strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The implication of that is that the state should not be involved in the economy too much, but it should use its power to preserve private property rights and the institutions of the market and promote those on the global stage if necessary. The well known Marxist geographer David Harvey described how neo-liberalism functions by redistributing wealth through a process of "capital accumulation by dispossession", rather than generating wealth through processes of accumulation such as by the expansion of wage labour. In India as well, with the steady increase in business's economic and political power over the past 30 years we can see how this neoliberal (market-can-do-it-all) ideology has become firmly entrenched in establishment thought and practice – in think tanks, the Planning Commission, academic institutions and in global bodies.

Classical free trade theory goes like this: when an economy opens up to the rest of the world it gets the opportunity to specialise in areas in which it has a comparative advantage. Needs that are not efficiently

met through domestic production activity are satisfied through imports. The question however is what the consequences are for economic, social and environmental sustainability – do economic, social and environmental indicators improve over time in a sustainable manner along with growth in trade?

That "free trade is good" is at the heart of neo-liberal economics and one of its best sold myths. Ha-Joon Chang, the articulate heterodox economist in his book "Bad Samaritans[2]", provides persuasive arguments about the damage that myths about free trade have and continue to do to developing country economies. He notes that virtually all successful developed countries since the Second World War, initially succeeded through nationalistic policies using protection, subsidies and government intervention. A process he describes as "kicking away the ladder they climbed on" they now impose free trade and neoliberal policies on developing countries, while this is not the method by which they reached developed status themselves!

Furthermore, it must be recognised that free trade theory is about economic efficiency of resources in the short run and does not really base itself on or promise to deliver economic development. This is a rather fundamental drawback. It may therefore maximise consumption in the short run – but is not the best way to develop a countries economy in the long run. The developing countries, on the other hand, are being persuaded that they should specialise in labour-intensive production (because that is where their comparative advantage lies) without any concrete proposals on how to increase capital, skills and technology, which is the basis for their real and continued growth which is distributive in terms of increase living standards. Chang argues, for instance, that the current emphasis to get rich countries to liberalise their agriculture as a way to help poorer countries, is faulty as it fails to see that the quid pro quo is for the poor countries to dismantle foreign investment controls, reduce tariffs, and dismantle protection and subsidies and domestic regulation. These policy instruments are far more core and strategic for poor countries long term development and should not be bartered away.

So what has all this to do with the topic at hand – conservation and biodiversity? With the advance of neoliberal corporate globalisation the greatest causality has been the shrinking of democratic space to influence domestic policy. In the rush for greater liberalisation and greater "growth" the key causalities have been environmental deregulation and the indiscriminate use and abuse of use of natural resources for the benefit of a few to the detriment of us all. Furthermore what has been paid less attention to is the extent to which the neo-liberal project has successfully crept into every aspect of our lives influencing frameworks and ways of thinking about the world.

As an example the Confederation of Indian Industries Sustainability Initiative asserts "The fact that rapid economic growth is the only realistic means to lift the poor out of extreme poverty and the fact that most economic activities depend on product and services provided by the ecosystems, necessitates the ushering of a new business paradigm which enables rapid economic growth without compromising the capacity of the ecosystem to sustain, nurture and fuel economic development and human well-being." When rapid economic growth is determined as the only realistic means to lift the poor it is no wonder that the winners of the award by the CII ITC Centre for Excellence in Sustainable development for 2008[3] for sustainability are Tata Steel, JSW steel Vijayanagar and Vedanta Sterlite in Goa and Tutucorin! All companies indicted for unsustainable practices and gross human rights violations.

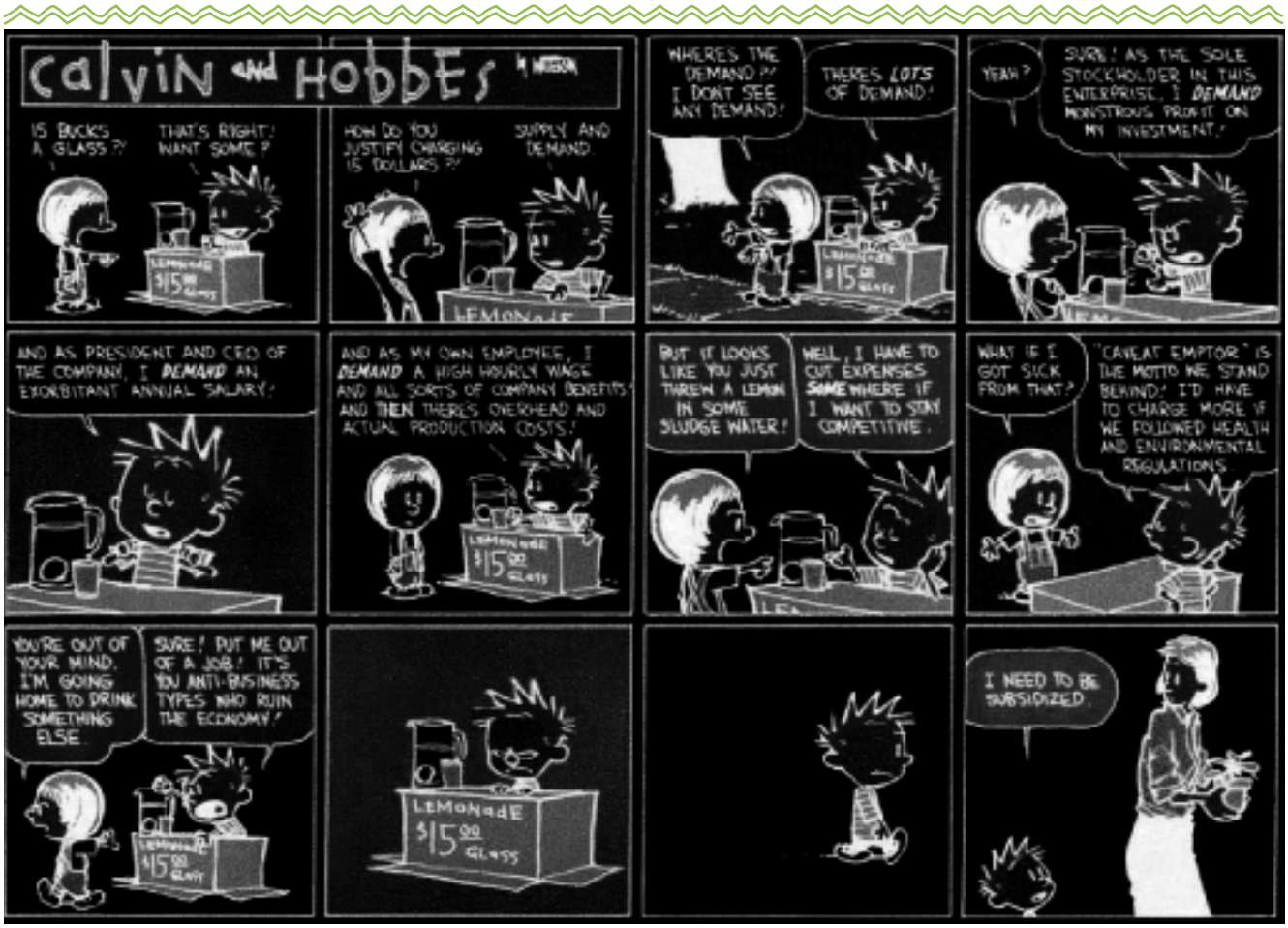
It is very interesting that the current global financial crisis is being referred to as a financial tsunami – this is indeed a very revealing metaphor as it tries to propagate the idea that the financial crisis is some kind of natural disaster – (what insurance companies coyly refer to as acts of God). This absolves in one stroke the deliberate actions of greed, exploitation, and complete lack of controls and accountability that have resulted in this and earlier crises and disasters that have been wrecked on the world at large!

The global financial crisis has not shaken these steadfastly held myths. If one examines the responses of our government in the past few months on FDI, on EIA, on bailouts to the banks and private sector, on clearances for development projects, on Satyam, it is life as usual.

Scene 2
Writing the script

Exploring the trends in conservation ideology and its implications

Conservation frameworks and principles are increasingly coming under the scanner for various reasons. The link between conservation and displacement is the first, particularly the displacement of indigenous people or "conservation refugees". Mark Dowie[4] observes that with the massive political and financial backing that was given to conservation groups, the process of 'conservation' through creation of Protected Areas



(PAs), National Parks and Sanctuaries speeded up globally. In 1962, the world had some 1000 official PAs, today the number is close to 110000. The area under protection has doubled since 1990 with 12% of all the earth's land (nearly as much as the entire land mass of Africa) is under 'conservation'. At a first glance, such land and "nature" conservation seems good, but when we consider its impacts on native people of the world, one realises that all land had once been occupied by who now constitute the world's 6 million "conservation refugees". India has a total of 650 Protected Areas[5] (96 National Parks, 508 wildlife sanctuaries, 29 tiger reserves, 14 existing biosphere reserves and 3 conservation reserves) and an estimated 2 million of the world's conservation refugees.

This kind of conservation has relied on a contested set of principles of "wilderness". Humans have been viewed primarily as an invasive species, encroaching on otherwise pristine areas, their activities leading inexorably to the erosion of biodiversity. This has mandated the exclusion of humans from biologically diverse landscapes, or the restriction of livelihoods of local people in such areas. As a result, the role of adivasis in the protection of nature through symbiotic relationships – religious, cultural, economic and social has not been studied enough, their histories not documented and their knowledge and active participation has not been sought to be included in the body of scientific knowledge and project implementation.

Madhya Pradesh's Baiga tribals fight forest officials to save jungles

For hundreds of years, Baiga tribals living in 52 forest villages of the Baigachak region, spread over Samnapur, Karanjia and Bajag blocks of the Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh, had never consciously bothered to conserve forests. For this community of 30,000-35,000 people, it was the forest that protected people, not the other way round. Non-felling of sacred trees and rules about harvesting of forest products were ingrained as religious rituals rather than understood as conservation methods.

Then came forest officials. The department paid villagers to clear forests for commercially valuable sal plantations, and traders paid them to extract fruits like gooseberry (amla) and chaar or chiraunji, and medicinal herbs. "We were told the forests belonged to the government," said Nanki Bai, octogenarian matriarch of Pondi village.

With the disappearance of beneficial vines and herbs, the community began to grow impoverished. "We were getting increasingly dependent on the wages paid by the forest department and traders"

said elderly Fagu Gholu Baiga of Ranjra village. The simmering discontent reached a head during the sal borer epidemic of 1995.According to forest department records, the epidemic destroyed one-third of the area's forests. The Baigas, however, tell a different story. "We were asked to cut healthy trees as well. Twice as many healthy trees were felled as infested ones," said Gondi Singh Rathuria of Ajgar village "We had never seen felling on that huge scale." Protests flared up in many villages, but in most places they were easily suppressed.

The villagers became cautious. They began discussing the extent and causes of forest degradation. Soon they realized what loss disappearance of vines had caused. "Vines conserve moisture in the soil and air, provide hideouts to animals, make it difficult to fell trees by covering them, and most important, they make forests impenetrable," said Bir Singh Sarodia, an elder vaid (village doctor) of Ajgar, named after pythons found in the dense, vine-covered forests. Vines like sinhar, kaniyakand, geeth and kirchi provide fruits, seeds, fibre and tubers, a nutritious substitute for grain. Sinhar leaves are used in plate-making and roofing.

Disappearance of vines also led to the drying up of swamps in the region. These swamps were reservoirs of important medicinal plants like tejraj, bhograj, kamraj, bada sukhra, hata jodi, aithi, telia kand, kali haldi, kali bhoolan, satvaar and musli. There was a cure for every ailment available here. Of the 61 varieties of medicinal herbs once available in the region, only 10-12 are left.

Other useful plants and trees like gooseberry, harra, surei, doomar, apple stone, mango and bamboo also nearly disappeared, so did some vegetables. "Ours were mixed forests," said Dhansingh Kusram, sarpanch of Serajhar. "There were about 50 varieties of large trees, of which just 23 are left. Of every 1,000 trees, 920 are now sal."

The next step was framing rules for conservation. No felling of live trees or vines, no harvesting of forest produce until it is mature, patrolling to stop forest fires and pilferage. Traders were forbidden from bringing outside labourers and harvesting was done carefully by villagers, who also planted gooseberry, mango, bamboo and chaar in the forest.

The results were encouraging. Dhaba, Kanheri and Rajani Sarai villages saw their water bodies revive within three years of the conservation drive that started in 12 villages in 2001-2002. Disappearing species are reported to be regenerating in patches of forest, totalling 3,200 hectares, protected by villagers. "We now find lac, chaar, tendu fruits, musli and kanda in jungles," said Charu Singh Nandia of Dhaba. It will take at least two decades of undisturbed protection for the forests to regain full health.

But disturbance there is. In the past few years, several villages have had a faceoff with forest officials over coupe felling—routine tree felling by the forest department to encourage re-growth that villagers say is more of a timber-extraction exercise. In Dhaba, some 4,000 trees were marked out for felling in 2004. When villagers demanded they be allowed to select trees for felling, the department brought labourers from Rajani Sarai, 25 km away. A revenue official intervened and 200 trees were felled. In Rajani Sarai, only half the marked trees were allowed to be felled last year. In Ranjra when the felling of 3,000 trees was announced in 2007, people objected. After long and tense negotiations, very few trees were allowed to be felled. "The timber came to half a truck," said Lalla Singh of Ranjra. Another conflict is on the cards. Ranjra residents report that in October-November 2008 officials quietly marked a coupe close by. Ajgar, Pondi, Chapra tola, Kandawani, Tumatola and Kanhar also reported clashes over felling.

According to Anil Garg, a lawyer who has studied forest land records and coupe felling in the region, the department is continuing with the colonial way of forest management by concentrating on timber extraction. "The working plans of all districts of Madhya Pradesh have over the years referred to mixed forests as 'inferior forests'," he said. Officials admit their working plan has no provision for the protection of vines and other "inferior" species so crucial to biodiversity and the Baiga's livelihood. Except in a few biodiversity compartments, the working plan recommends destroying vines and "useless" bushes that obstruct the growth of sal and teak.

Villagers and forest officials also differ on the merits and methods of coupe felling. Officials say it is a scientific activity aimed at inducing growth in the forest and has nothing to do with timber extraction. "Felling is carried out using silvicultural methods and a detailed follow-up, including dressing of trunks to ensure regeneration," said P G Fulzele, Dindori's divisional forest officer. The Baigas say coupe felling is highly damaging. "When a tree is felled, vines on it die. Falling trees crush herbs and seedlings. It disturbs birds and wildlife and forest regeneration is delayed. Trucks carting timber

damage small plants," said Juglal Ningunia, sarpanch of Ranjra and head of its forest study group.

Villagers also contest the criteria for tree felling, one of them being a 120 cm girth for sal trees. According to officials, at this stage the tree stops growing and is no more useful. Villagers say sal trees, which reach this size in 25 years, live much longer. "Old trees shelter birds, vines and wildlife," said Lalla Singh of Ranjra. Sunil Bakshi, director of the forest department's human resource centre at Chhindwada and a botanist by training, said a sal tree lives for over 100 years but after it reaches the girth of 120 cm (35-40 years), its heartwood grows hollow, bringing down its timber value.

Afraid of backlash, the Baigas have not challenged coupe felling in toto, but insist that felling be done according to rules and in consultation with them.

Tree is not timber, Aparna Pallavi, Down To Earth Vol 17, No 18, 03rd February 2009 (part extract)

The tiger vs tribal debates exemplify this kind of dysfunctional thinking in silos. Even more dysfunctional has been the "activism" of conservation organisations (and the BNHS being one of them) to challenge the Forest Rights Act through Public Interest Litigations in various courts in India including 2 cases in the Supreme Court. A study of the petitions will show that many of the arguments emerge from the "pure wilderness" assumption and, even more sadly, from a rather elitist and arrogant mindset that it is conservation scientists and high officials who know best. The issues of rights and of ethics largely go unaddressed, as well as the mandate and legitimacy of conservation scientists to take exclusive positions on these issues.

The erosion of credibility is another issue. Conservation has always involved big money and is increasingly becoming big business quite literally. There is an increasing trend of large conservation organisations in partnership with big business which is seriously eroding their credibility among grassroots actors[6]. Executive officers of corporations that are major polluters serve on the boards of many environmental organizations. Friends of the Earth International the world's largest environmental grassroots movement has recently withdrawn from its membership of the International Union for Nature Conservation (IUCN) in protest against IUCN's partnership with Shell and Rio Tinto both notorious for their unsustainable business practices and human rights violations in several countries[7]. In the IUCN case it is reported that when confronted with its ethical choices IUCN did not even put on the veneer of defending its ability to influence big businesses to reform. "The core funding (of some 1.2 million US dollars) would be lost", an internal IUCN paper reportedly says, should Shell take legal action. "The financial consequences (for IUCN) are unforeseeable." WWF more recently under the scanner for its role in the Round Table for Responsible Soy, Monsanto and Syngenta have been accepted as full members in the Round Table on Responsible Soy, which anti GMO activists say, makes this forum an oxymoron.

Neither money nor science can claim to be ideologically neutral. The politics of funding and the potential influence of those providing the money for research and advocacy to direct positions, is not a concern that should be dismissed easily. E.g While many conservationists in India have been agitated about the forest rights act and its implications, they have not demonstrated agitation about the ease with which the Ministry of Environment and Forests has handed over vast tracts of critical ecosystems to mining, petro chemical, plantations and a variety of other big business.

Central government clearance for forest diversion became mandatory under the Forest Conservation Act 1980. Data[8] about Forest Land Diversion for non Forest Purposes since 1981 (in hectares)

1981-1990	270991	24%
1991-2000	243245	21%
2001-2007	625941	55%
1981-2007	1140236	

The last 10 years has seen 73% of the diversion for mining. Diversion of industries has also been high in this period. If this is combined with the recent chilling statistics (see box below) about the rush of mining projects cleared by the MoEF following the National Mineral Policy in 2008 the situation indeed looks very bleak for the future of conservation in the country.

A record 441 mining projects cleared in 2008; a rise of 63.94%

Even as agitations over the land for mining and other infrastructure projects are gaining momentum; Rajasthan, Orissa, Karnataka, Goa, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra continue to be the major destinations for mining projects. Ministry of environment and forests (MoEF) has cleared 441 mining projects in the calendar year 2008 compared to

269 mining projects approved in the calendar year 2007, an increase of a record 63.94%.

Of 441 projects, nearly 369 have been proposed in the above given eight states. These approvals were granted as per the environment impact assessment notification of 2006.The rise in mining approvals is especially due to the Centre's move, which has allowed private sector in mining of thirteen minerals like iron ore, manganese ore, chrome ore, sulphur, gold, diamond, copper, lead, zinc, molybdenum, tungsten, nickel and platinum group of minerals. Earlier, these minerals were reserved exclusively for public sector earlier.

Informed sources told FE "The rise in mining approvals is also largely because of the National Mineral Policy announced by the Centre in 2008. Besides, the Centre, based on the high power committee's report, also plans to revise royalty. Mining is an eligible activity for obtaining financial support from financial institutions. However, so far only those mining projects which have a substantial component of mining machinery, equipment and buildings are being financed.

The government proposes to take steps to facilitate financing of mine development and also of exploration integral to the mining project. Moreover, the Centre has proposed slew of incentives. Mining being a high-risk venture, access to "risk funds" from capital markets and venture funds will be facilitated. Early stage exploration and mining companies will be encouraged and differential-listing requirements through segmented exchanges will be explored. Induction of foreign technology and foreign participation in exploration and mining for high value and scarce minerals will be pursued.

Foreign equity investment in joint ventures for exploration and mining promoted by Indian Companies will be encouraged.

Sanjay Jog Financial Express: Feb 05, 2009 Mumbai, http://www.financialexpress.com/news/a–record–441–mining–projects–cleared–in–2008–a–rise–of–63.94/419414/0

In addition to the legitimacy and credibility issues highlighted above, current conservation frameworks and values seem to be increasingly embedded in the neoliberal ethic. The credence and weight given to market based conservation whether it is ecotourism, the economic valuing of environmental services, carbon sequestration, carbon trading and now REDD[9] – the fundamental belief seems to be that once these are embedded in market terms the logic of the free market should take over to solve environmental problems. This is evident in World Bank supported projects like Joint Forest Management and India Eco Development Project and is pushed by several conservation organisations as a means to fund conservation efforts. We believe that the consequence of such embedded frameworks by the conservation scientist fraternity needs some significant and honest soul searching.

Scene 3
Enter tourism

Current tourism models & policies and their implications on biodiversity and people's rights

Over the past six decades, tourism has grown to become one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world. From 1950 to 2007, international tourist arrivals grew from 25 million to 903 million. By 2010 international arrivals are expected to reach 1 billion, and grow 1.6 billion by 2020.While, in 1950, the top 15 destinations absorbed 98% of all international tourist arrivals, in 1970 the proportion was 75%, and this fell to 57% in 2007, reflecting the emergence of new destinations, many of them in developing countries.

Tourism has become one of the major international trade categories. Today, the export income generated by international tourism ranks fourth after fuels, chemicals and automotive products.

The overall export income generated by these arrivals (international tourism receipts and passenger transport) grew at a similar pace, outgrowing the world economy, exceeding US$ 1 trillion in 2007, or almost US$ 3 billion a day. The corresponding figures for India are 5.37 million international arrivals in 2008 and forex earnings of 11457 million USD (INR 50730 crores)[10].

While its growth in global economic terms has undeniably been impressive, the tourism industry's claims have been pretentious at best, and misleading (if not downright untrue), when it comes to the vulnerability of the sector, its contribution to stable jobs, its capacity for poverty alleviation and its green credentials.

There is virtually no ecosystem on our living planet that has not felt tourism's footprints. While the fact that tourism has negative impacts on the environment and on indigenous & local communities is widely acknowledged, practically nothing is being done to check these

undesirable impacts. Furthermore, tourism is increasingly being located in natural areas that are frontier, inaccessible, ecologically fragile and critical in terms of their biodiversity.

In India, national parks and wildlife sanctuaries have been assiduously promoted as ecotourism attractions. The National Tourism Policy of 2002 clearly states – "wildlife sanctuaries and national parks need to be integrated as an integral part of the India tourism product, and priority needs to be given to the preparation of site and visitor management plans for key parks, after a prioritization of parks."

While the Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972 does allow tourists into Protected Areas, it clearly disallows commercial establishments. The Indian Board for Wildlife, the apex advisory body in the field of Wildlife Conservation in the country, in its XXI meeting in January 2002 resolved "lands falling within 10 km. of the boundaries of National Parks and Sanctuaries should be notified as eco-fragile zones under section 3(v) of the Environment (Protection) Act and Rule 5 Sub-rule 5(viii) & (x) of the Environment (Protection) Rules". Despite this, a rash of tourism establishments are found cheek by jowl in the immediate periphery of every Protected Area of repute like Corbett, Ranthombore, Bandhavgarh, Kanha, Rajiv Gandhi – Nagarahole, Bandipura, Mudumalai and Periyar.

Under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, section 2(d), non-forestry activity is prohibited in a forest area, except with the approval of the Central Government. Thus tourism enters the forests though a devious route! In this case, a proviso on explanation of "non-forest purpose" lays down that it does not include any work relating to or ancillary to conservation. Using the argument that revenues from tourism could potentially be used for conservation, tourism has pushed itself into forest areas, though it is clearly a non- forest purpose. A growing trend is of forest departments promoting and implementing tourism – many have eco-tourism cells but very few have clear strategies or plans for impact assessments of tourism's implications on conservation or biodiversity. The National Environment Policy 2006 in fact promotes ecotourism in many fragile ecosystems and glosses over negative impacts that tourism brings in.

Tiger declared maneater in Corbett, forest dept blames tourist pressure

In Corbett National Park, the repercussions of constant tourism activity are beginning to show, with a tiger being declared a "man-eater". The Uttarakhand forest department has admitted that the north Indian Terai stretch, with the densest tiger population in the world, is reeling under a man-animal conflict on a scale that is unprecedented.

"The tiger was declared a man-eater after it killed a woman who had entered the buffer zone of the reserve three days ago. It has also attacked two people who were riding a motorbike. We have all options open to deal with this now. It may be eliminated if it cannot be caught," says Vinod Singhal, director, Corbett Tiger Reserve. But the problem, he admits, is man-made. "This particular tiger did not tolerate the presence of elephants (carrying tourists) and used to charge at them. He gradually lost his fear of humans. Tourism around the park is a problem. Ideally, it has to be checked," he says.

The Indian Express had earlier reported how tiger conservation in Corbett is taking a hit with the mushrooming of private resorts around what can arguably be called the most famous tiger reserve in the world.

Neha Sinha, Feb 09, 2009, http://www.indianexpress.com/news/tiger–declared–maneater–in–corbett–forest–dept–blames–tourist–pressure/420907/

Creation of 'tourism zones' inside PAs further intensifies the seeming contradiction between the aims of conservation and the rights of displaced communities. This has lead to the process of legitimising the functioning of presence of a global industry inside an ecologically sensitive region, while indigenous people and local communities have been aggressively ejected from their forests. This ejection continues as data from EQUATIONS research in Uttarakhand (Corbett), Madhya Pradesh (Bandhavgarh, Pench, Kanha) Karnataka (Nagarhole) and several PAs in Chattisgarh.

Tourism is a sector that is built and relies on natural capital (both human and ecological) and this makes issues of sustainability very critical. Globally, the new interest in tourism-environment interrelations is particularly notable with rising concerns on the links between tourism and climate change. In this context, an interesting trend is evident when the notions of sustainability lead to the phenomenon of the class dimensions of tourism. Under the banner of sustainability, policy makers clamour for "high-value low-volume" tourists. This is a recurrent theme in several tourism policy and planning documents in India. This suggests a form of neo-colonialism

disguised as green, as it links who deserves to travel solely with their ability to spend. In the light of environmental degradation also being a reality, it will be important to deconstruct the implications of these terms and nuance how we use them.

On a more global stage, tourism promotion and industry bodies like the World Travel and Tourism Council and the UN World Tourism Organisation (now a UN body – so the UNWTO) have constantly fallen back on global guidelines and agreements to showcase their commitment to sustainability and to the environment. It is important we take a closer look at these documents as they are quite educative. The key "global documents" linked to tourism have two core ideas running consistently

- That they promote the principle of free market, and protectionism in trade and investment is to be dismantled.
- That the initiatives should be voluntary and industry led

These core principles are at the heart of the Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry 1992 (an offshoot response to the Rio Declaration). They are also at the heart of the UNWTO's global code of ethics (2001)! This is also the case with the Commission on Biological Diversity (CBD) and tourism. The CBD guidelines on Tourism and Biodiversity approved in the COP in KL in 2004 overruling protests from grassroots linked NGOs and indigenous people's formations and movements. The guidelines continue to view people as threats to biodiversity. They suggest that generating revenues from tourism would reduce poverty and therefore threats to biodiversity. Restriction of, prevention and management of tourism especially in fragile ecosystems has not been considered. The role of the private sector and of corporations has been privileged at the expense of indigenous and local communities that inhabit biodiversity rich areas.

Closer home, the Ministry of Tourism has abdicated completely any regulatory role and sees itself as organiser of road shows and promotion/ advertisement campaigns. The Ministry of Environment and Forests' reputation as a protector and regulator is not very credible either. Example after example has shown that voluntary initiatives and self-regulation by corporations does not work as they are guided by a self serving bottom line morality and little else. The tourism industry has used an image of relatively green in comparison to extractives like mining and oil and gas and is the least regulated industry in the country today. It is a documented fact that the first push for dilution of the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification (CRZ), 1991 (issued under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986) came from the tourism industry, with repeated demands for the relaxation of the "no development zone". Subsequently, with over 21 amendments (read dilutions), in the battle between development and the coastal ecology, development won hands down.

CRZ norms have been flouted blatantly by the tourism industry in all coastal states including in ecologically fragile ecosystems like the Andaman Islands. In Kerala, the vigilance wing of the Local Self-Government Department detected 1,500 cases of unauthorized constructions and CRZ violations in Vizhinjam Panchayat where the beach destination – Kovalam is located. The Comptroller and Auditor General of India's Report on the country's tsunami relief and rehabilitation plans have clearly implicated the Ministry of Environment and Forests for failing to ensure the strict implementation of this regulation and allowing considerable expansion of industrial activity on the country's coastline which led to increased losses of life and property as a result of the disaster (CAG, 2006). However the push to "allow" tourism infrastructure to be built in violation of coastal zoning regulations continues to receive overt support from policy makers and planners at the state and centre, with regulations seen as archaic and "anti-development".

A classic case of the holiday from accountability is tourism's exemption from the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification (also under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986). EIA for projects was made mandatory in India in 1994 with the objective to predict environment impact of projects, find ways and means to reduce adverse impacts, and if these impacts were too high, to disallow such projects. The Ministry of Environment and Forest's Notification in 2006, removed tourism projects from the mandatory list requiring the conduct of EIA and clearance from the Central Government. This is a retrograde step, as the negative impacts environmental, social, economic and political of tourism projects has been established conclusively. Subsequent to this move trends are visible where international financial institutions like the ADB are sneaking in large infrastructure projects for e.g in the North eastern region which will invite less scrutiny because they are termed as tourism projects. This is indeed a dangerous trend and needs to be watched.

Curtains

The frameworks and ideological underpinnings of neoliberal globalisation that inform much of current conservation thinking and action sidelines issues of ethics and rights of vast sections of society

who are protectors and dependent on natural resources and biodiversity. They also sideline actual impacts on conservation and biodiversity

Are conservation scientists ready to walk across the "barriers" of scientific knowledge, listen to, learn form and dialogue with the original stakeholders of these resources?

Similarly are tourism policy planners, regulators and implementers willing to do likewise? If not the possibility of sustainable futures seems dimmer.

Equating sustainability with green concerns is not sufficient. It is critical to move from the dominant orientation of environmental sustainability towards the idea of a just sustainability - an approach that will focus explicitly on justice, equity and environment together.

Keynote presentation for the session on Tourism Trade Globalisation: Impacts on Biodiversity, at the International Conference "Conserving Biodiversity in a Globalising India 17-19 February 2009 Bangalore on the occasion of Bombay Natural History Society(BNHS) 125th year

Endnotes

1. *Naomi Klein is a Canadian journalist, author and activist well known for her political analyses and critique of corporate globalization*

2. *Bad Samaritans: The Myth of Free Trade and the Secret History of Capitalism, Bloomsbury Press, 2007*

3. *http://www.sustainabledevelopment.in/sustainablity_awards/winner08.htm*

4. *Mark Dowie, "Conservation Refugees", Chapter 14, Paradigm Wars: Indigenous Peoples Resistance to Economic Globalization, International Forum on Globalization, 2005.*

5. *EQUATIONS, 2007b*

6. *An increasing number of environmental groups are working closely with the businesses and industries whose practices they claim they are trying to reform. (http://www.multinationalmonitor.org/hyper/issues/1990/03/donahue.html)*

7. *In October 2007, IUCN signed an agreement with oil giant Royal Dutch Shell with the aim of enhancing the companys biodiversity conservation performance and strengthening IUCNs capacity to influence large corporations into a greater environmental commitment. Similar partnerships were signed with Holcim, the leading global supplier of cement, and Total, the French oil giant. In the pipeline is an agreement with Rio Tinto, the worlds largest coal extractor.*

IUCN is the worlds oldest and largest global environmental network. It is a democratic membership union with more than 1,000 government and NGO member organizations, and almost 11,000 volunteer scientists in more than 160 countries.The partnership with Dutch company Shell was highly controversial from the beginning. A coalition of NGOs including Friends of the Earth International, the Netherlands Society for Nature and Environment, the Sierra Club and Dutch-based environmental and development service BothENDS opposed it. According to these NGOs, Shells operations have huge negative social and environmental impacts. Moreover Shell has a highly controversial reputation in dealing with communities affected by oil exploitation, for example in the Niger delta, where Shell continues flaring gas, despite several promises to phase out the process. Shell also rejected plans of the European Union to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by European companies, is increasingly its investments in highly-polluting oil sands in Canada and is planning oil explorations in the Arctic.

8. The environmental NGO Kalpavriksh applied the Right to Information Act to get this data from MoEF

9. Policymakers, conservationists and scientists have high hopes that REDD, a mechanism for compensating countries for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, will spur a massive flow of funds to tropical countries, helping preserve rainforests and delivering economic benefits to impoverished rural communities

10. Source UNWTO and Ministry of Tourism, GOI

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Contents

2.

THE TOURIST WELCOMED; THE ADIVASI EXILED

Unmasked: Reflections on tourism's impacts on indigenous communities in India

By EQUATIONS
2007

Johar for us in Jharkhand is more
than just a word in our language...

...Johar is a spirit, an attitude, a feeling
and an expression of welcome, of gratitude,
of praise, of togetherness, a salutation...

...It is the word we first use
when we meet one anther for the first time...

...We said Johar to you,
but our song and dance, our language and folklore
have become just pages in books of libraries
where your anthropologists can debate over.Thus you
have distorted our history.
You have misinterpreted our culture,
and made it a commodity to be marketed
at your universities and seminars.

We said Johar to you...

[From the poem "JOHAR" – Manifesto of the
Jharkhandis Organisation for Human Rights.]

In Hawaii, Craig Chatman, a native[1] Hawaiian says, "Indigenous people do not own their own tourism and culture. The big travel corporations have also treated Natives like "wind up the Hawaiian and let him play music." We are an Indigenous Zoo and I take extreme offence to that."

In Bali, Tjokorde Raka Kerthyasa says "Some tourists and visitors who know nothing (or do not want to know) about the meaning and purpose of our customs and religious practices attend ceremonies just for the sake of taking pictures or proving that they have been on a holiday"

In the Amazon, tour guides contract out to tourists to take them to into the wilds of the rain forest to "go native". Tourists follow them into indigenous villages, demand to stay with local families, eat their food, expect the locals to entertain them and make only a token payment before moving to the next village.

In New Zealand, Dikihoro Mulligan, a Maori says: "We are a god-fearing and relaxed community. Maori elders are trying to coax the younger generation to educate themselves in their culture, which has huge potential. Even many Europeans who have lived here for generations don't know about us. Today, tourism is helping to create awareness about the rich Maori culture and traditions".

The indigenous peoples of India, who constitute 8.2! of the country's population[2] and live with great diversity in culture, language, lifestyle and art forms, are also rising to face the new invasion of tourism. This paper contextualises the growing debate on indigenous peoples' struggles in the country by drawing attention to tourism – as a compelling factor that has, in tangible ways contributed to their increasing exploitation, displacement and marginalisation. The paper discusses the issue in three parts – part one details impacts of tourism on indigenous communities along three lines of exploitation, eviction and benefit sharing with examples of community experiences from India as well as other parts of Asia, South America and Africa. Part two presents an overview of significant international guidelines that address the issue of tourism's impacts on indigenous communities and the ensuing debates. Part three analyses the current policy and legal framework in India related to tourism and the extent to which it recognises and addresses these concerns and opportunities.

Part 1
How tourism has impacted indigenous communities around the world

The Indigenous on Display

Alerting us to the trend of the targeting of indigenous homelands for tourism, Deborah McLaren wrote a decade back[3], "Marketing trends point toward the Amazon, the Himalayas, the hills of Northern Thailand, the tribal areas in Africa, and the aboriginal areas of Canada and Australia. Travel advertisements market the residents of such places as people who are warm, smiling, friendly, unthreatening; who are servile and welcoming; there for the tourist's pleasure…Tourism markets cultures – hula girls, wandering tribesmen, Asian mountain folk and Native Americans. Some critics of tourism suggest that when we travel, we buy a product, a product that includes people."

"Exotic" tourism and ecotourism have drawn wider attention to the richness and diversity of indigenous peoples' cultures, but frequently engage in "packaging" and marketing strategies which distort cultures, degrade traditional ceremonial practices, and transform indigenous communities into trinket-selling, wage-dependent Hollywood back-lots[4].

That tourism in India has put indigenous peoples and their culture on display, for sale, is indisputable. A scrutiny of the colourful and attractive tourist brochures printed by central and state departments provides ample evidence for this.

"Orissa: the Soul of India"
Orissa Tourism (1998)

"The antiquity of Orissa is endorsed by her ancient people who continue to inhabit their traditional dwelling places in remote areas in the deep forests and hilly terrains. Steeped in the mysteries that surround their ancient ways, the Oriyan tribals continue to be a source of deep interest not only for anthropologists and sociologists but also for numerous tourists who flock to Orissa in search of the exotic mystique of this relatively unexplored state….

…Folk and tribal songs and dances continue to be an integral part of the Fairs and Festivals and village festivities throughout the year in Orissa and visitors can see these performed in their original settings…

…Orissa has 62 distinct tribal groups who continue to live in their traditional dwellings amongst the hills and forests and in a manner they have been accustomed with for centuries. A trip to the tribal areas can be an educative and exciting experience where you share the beauty of their usual customs for that brief moment in time…

"BASTAR: Not Just An Escape – A discovery"
Chhattisgarh Tourism Board (2002)

Bastar – Perfect for camping trips, painting holidays, tribal tours, adventure escapes and motoring tours…

…No matter where in the district you travel you cannot fail to see those elegantly clad tribal people making their way to the local haat (weekly market). Sure-footed, balancing their huge loads, the women walk in a single file, baskets on their heads, child on their hip, heavily-tattooed old ladies, brightly dressed young girls…It's an evocative sight…

…One can combine a trip here with a visit to a Sericulture Farm and the Anthropological Museum to enjoy a slice of Bastar's tribal culture…

(as part of the planned itineraries)

…This is a tribal country and we've arranged for you to meet some of the tribal people in their homes. It will be a wonderful opportunity to interact with them and learn something about their culture…

… After breakfast, a well-versed Palace guide will accompany you on an introduction to the secrets of Kawardha's little-known natural and tribal world. You will meet the gentle and friendly Baiga people, the principal indigenous forest tribe. Enjoy picnic lunch with them…

…You will also meet some of the local Bison-Horn Maria tribe, renowned for their spectacular ceremonial dancing. You will be entertained by a performance of the tribal people before returning to your hotel…

"India's Northeast: paradise unexplored"
Incredible India
Ministry of Tourism, India (2005)

Arunachal Pradesh: A visit to the Apatani tribal home is a must. The Apatanis are one of the most advanced and intriguing of Arunachal's tribal people. Both men and women tattoo themselves and the women wear great nose plugs made of bamboo and face tattoos.

Nagaland: Grocery shopping in Kohima is a treat, visit the wholesale market for a visual feast of Naga village women wearing their splendid tribal costumes and gathering to sell farm, field, forest and stream products.

These excerpts from material fashioned to attract the tourist eye, are characteristic of how mainstream society, seeking tourism extravaganzas views indigenous people. In addition to the portrayal of indigenous peoples as products, even more disturbing is how the tribal woman is represented as exotic and desirable. Brochures and promotional materials are replete with phrases such as "a Reang belle with traditional jewellery", "a smiling young Tripura girl", "Khasi belle in dance costume" or just "tribal women". Colourful photographs of women decked in traditional attire accompany these 'titles'. Tribal villages are depicted as mystical, paradise-like, intriguing places that provide the viewer a glimpse of mystery, a taste of an alien culture. References to tribal culture, folklore, culture and traditional belief systems of these ancient people, often border on the arrogance and sometimes ignorance that typifies mainstream thinking. Commodification is evident – a traditional motif becomes an "artefact" or "souvenir", traditional dresses and accessories – "costumes" and ancestral traditions – an "experience".

World over, commodification of indigenous cultures has taken varied forms through tourism. Countries in the global south are not the only ones affected politically by tourism. In the United States, especially in Alaska and Hawaii, indigenous people must confront the political repercussions of the rapid growth of tourism. Jon Goss writes in 'Seductions of Place', "'Aloha' is perhaps the most complex and certainly the most contested concept attributed to the Hawaiian people. For the visitor, it is typically glossed as simply greeting and leave-taking, or more generally 'love', but anthropologists discover deeper meanings…"[5] With its unwillingness to engage in a society and its meaning with any depth and its need to create consumerist packages of nearly everything, the use, and abuse, of language and dialect and symbols is inherent in tourism's exploitation of indigenous culture. As tourism makes its presence felt it is likely that 'johar' as the poem eloquently puts it, has a similar fate in store.

The transformation of Mexico's famed Huichol Art from being a manifestation of religious faith for the Huichol indigenous community to being a source, an economic gain and sale is yet another example (Cruz, 2002). The Huichol believe themselves to be "mirrors of the gods" and their art reflects a sacred vision of the world, but tourism and globalisation have made their art easily available on the internet or reproduced to suit tourists' preferences for souvenirs.

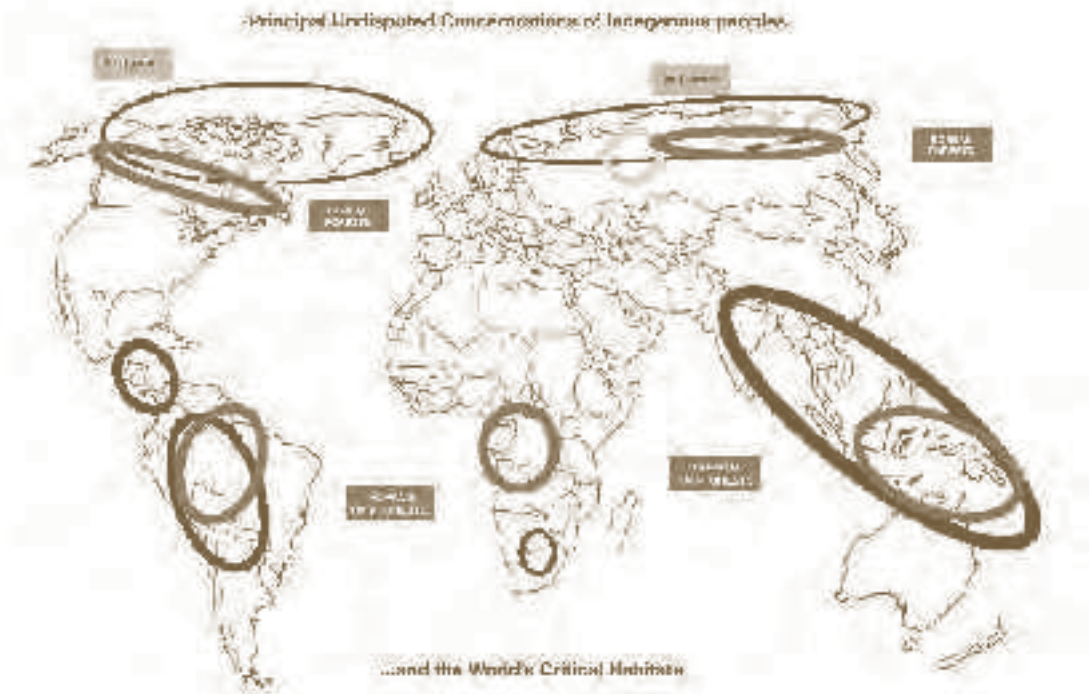
In the Philippines, the mountainous province of Sagada has gained prominence as a tourist spot, threatening the survival of the Kankanaeys. The people of Sagada revere their ancestral lands but curious tourists have invaded the sacredness and solemnity of rituals celebrating the agricultural cycle. Furthermore, their sacred burial sites have been desecrated by tourists taking away bones of their ancestors as souvenirs and freely using coffin covers for graffiti[6].

In the Andaman Islands in the Indian Ocean, the Jarawas are a dwindling tribe with just 250-odd surviving members living in the Islands. In 2002, the Supreme Court of India passed a set of landmark judgements to protect the Islands' fragile ecology and its tribal communities. One of the orders was the closure of the Andaman Trunk Road (ATR) – an arterial road constructed in the 1950s connecting South to North Andaman passing right through the Jarawa tribal reserve area. But the Islands' Administration and its industrial lobbies have been violating the Court's orders with impunity. Apart from problems of alien food, loss of precious forest cover and exposure to diseases against which Jarawas have no immunity, the ATR had also facilitated the rise of a pernicious endeavour, perversely called 'Jarawa Tourism'[7]. Tourists visiting the Islands were being openly solicited with offers of rides along the ATR and the promise to see stone-age, naked tribes. But, more recently, with greater awareness and rising protests, one at least notices a welcome change in the Administration's attitude and respect for these communities with tourism brochures making mention of them but clearly stating that interaction with or photography of these tribes is prohibited.

In India, one sees a growing trend of tribal art being "mainstreamed" – as one tourist brochure put it – "…Some of the finest works of Bastar crafts are showcased in some of India's five star hotel lobbies and upmarket urban stores…" While there are efforts to use tourism also as a means of keeping local art, culture and handicrafts alive by assuring a market for them, the fear of commodification and twisting them out of their intrinsic contexts, meanings and functions is not unfounded. An adivasi woman from Chhattisgarh, India, referring to statues of their deities made from traditional bell metal, spoke of her fear of entering any room in which they were kept! She said she could not face them inside a room as their gods were always kept outside the village to protect them from harm. In making a popular product, no one asked the adivasi what they thought and how they felt.

Displacement of the First People from their lands: Tourism Evicts...

Terri-Lynn Williams-Davidson, an indigenous writer says this of the connection of indigenous



Principal Concentration of indigenous peoples (dark brown) and the world's critical habitats
Source: Russel Barsh, The World's Indigenous People

people and the land they inhabit – *"For indigenous peoples, the Earth and all of its life forms the fundamental context, the foundation and ultimate source from which culture emerges."* [8] For, while the role of big companies in oil, drugs and timber business has pushed people out, the role of global "conservation" efforts in creating millions of "conservation refugees" is equally insidious.[9]"

In his aptly titled piece "Conservation Refugees", Dowie lucidly observes that with the massive political and financial backing that was given to conservation groups, the process of 'conservation' through creation of Protected Areas (PAs), National Parks and Sanctuaries speeded up globally. In 1962, the world had some 1000 official PAs, today the number is close to 110000. The area under protection has doubled since 1990 with 12% of all the earth's land (nearly as much as the entire land mass of Africa) is under 'conservation'. At a first glance, such land and "nature" conservation seems good, but when we consider its impacts on native people of the world, one realises that all land had once been occupied by who now constitute the world's 6 million "conservation refugees".

Tourism has also played its part in the eviction of indigenous people from their ancestral lands only to then open them up to 'ecotourism'. All PAs are irresistible tourism attractions - their evident natural beauty, wildlife attractions and wilderness component have lured visitors in large numbers. The lack of a clear and generally accepted definition is probably what has made 'ecotourism' both appealing and highly dangerous. Ecotourism has come hand-in-hand with conservation but its contribution to conservation efforts has been questionable and empirically unproven yet. The edge to ecotourism came with its positioning as a more 'sustainable', 'green' and 'environment-friendly' form of tourism – an imaging that targeted eco-sensitive travellers and worked in favour of the industry but to the detriment of forest dwelling communities[10].

In Kidepo Valley National Park in Uganda, the situation of the Ik tribe is dire. Before the creation of the Park, the Ik – a hunter-gatherer society - gathered vegetables, roots and berries as they moved during their annual nomadic cycle that took them through Sudan and northern Kenya. When the valley was declared a National Park, the Ik were forcibly evicted without warning. The draconian Ugandan National Park, which does not allow any form of local utilisation, meant that the Ik were now confined to the inhospitable mountain slopes, unable to follow their previous lifestyle. The Ik had little impact on the wildlife as they hunted only for consumption but today the park entertains European and North American tourists who come on hunting safaris[11]! It is estimated that well over 50 per cent of indigenous communities in Kenya have experienced some form of land dispossession in the name of ecotourism or other development initiatives (this reaches 60–70 per cent in northern Kenya)[12]. Communities affected by exploitation and discrimination, include the Maasai and the Ogiek in the Southern rangelands; the Endorois, Ilchamus, Pokot, Sabaot, Sengwer and Turkana in the Rift Valley; the Borana, Ghabra, Rendille and Somalis in northern Kenya; and the Orma in the wetlands of the Kenyan coast.

India has a total of 650 Protected Areas[13] (96 National Parks, 508 wildlife sanctuaries, 29 tiger reserves, 14 existing biosphere reserves and 3 conservation reserves) and an estimated 2 million of the world's conservation refugees[14]. It comes as no surprise these national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and biosphere reserves are also the homelands of tribal populations for whom the forests are the basis of habitat, survival and history. But British colonisation followed by a colonisation effected by the government of independent India, produced a new understanding of forests, which was to sound the death knell for the country's tribal communities. Firstly this understanding was based on the Western notion of 'wilderness' – an expanse of greenery devoid of all human habitation. The second was a reformulation of 'conservation' which implied the de-legitimisation of forest dwellers and part of the of the forest habitat, de-recognition of traditional rights and exclusion and eviction of tribal communities from forests[15].

In India, national parks and wildlife sanctuaries have been assiduously promoted as ecotourism attractions. The National Tourism Policy of 2002 clearly states – *"wildlife sanctuaries and national parks need to be integrated as an integral part of the India tourism product, and priority needs to be given to the preparation of site and visitor management plans for key parks, after a prioritization of parks."* The aspect of eviction of indigenous people from their traditional lands for the cause of ecotourism development and its consequent impacts does not find adequate mention in these policies.

The Kanha National Park sprawls over a wide area in Mandla and adjoining Balaghat districts of the state of Madhya Pradesh and is in the forest belt of the Satpuras and the Vindhyas that stretch for almost 500 km east to west. This rich forest is the ancestral home of the Baiga and Gond tribals. The tiger is undoubtedly Kanha's main tourism attraction and in 1974, the government declared the area as a "Tiger Reserve". Today, tiger conservation efforts have displaced 26 tribal villages (comprising 1217 families covering a displaced area of approximately 5431 sq. kms)[16]. Tribal villages that used to sustain life with cultivation and collection of minor forest produce are today displaced and prohibited from collecting forest produce. Efforts have been made to resettle them into nearby areas but without providing adequate title deeds for their lands. While life is tough and sustenance nearly impossible, harassment by forest officers is a common occurrence. But today, Kanha is one of the most popular National Parks of India. An official tourism promotion website claims – "When you holiday in Kanha you will feel as if you are entering the pages of this unforgettable book and you're likely to hear Sher Khan the tiger roar in the jungle…[17]" They obviously make no mention of the voices of evicted adivasis.

A similar fate met the tribals living inside the Pench National Park, also situated in the same forest ranges of Madhya Pradesh and declared the country's 19th Project Tiger Reserve in 1992. With the launch of the World Bank's Eco Development Project[18] in 1995, several villages within and in the periphery of the sanctuary began to be systematically displaced. Fifteen Gond families who had traditionally lived on the banks of the Pench River were displaced from their village of Alikatta and forced to resettle in Durgapur[19]. They were told they had to move because a National Park was being created. Villagers, who had fertile, cultivable land in Alikatta, today don't cultivate or go into the forest anymore for fear of being arrested. The Gond culture and identity took a back seat in the face of establishing the Park, and relations between villagers and the Forest Department have deteriorated. It is not even clear if wildlife is being adequately "protected" when the sanctuary was opened to tourists.[20]

The Nagarhole National Park is located in the Kodagu and Mysore districts of the state of Karnataka. A total of about 32000 adivasis reside in and around the National Park. Tribes of the area are mainly the - Jenukurubas (honey gatherers), Bettakurubas (Hill Kurubas), Yeravas, Soligas and sub castes of Yeravas i.e. Panjeri Yeravas and Pani-Yeravas. The adivasis of Nagarahole were first displaced by the same controversial Eco Development Project of the World Bank, which placed severe restrictions on them including bans on cultivation, hunting and on collection of forest produce. Notwithstanding this injustice, the government of Karnataka awarded a contract in 1994 to Gateway Hotels and Getaway Resorts (a subsidiary of the Taj Hotels group) to run India's first eco-friendly resort within the Nagarahole National Park. Strong resistance to this move by local groups and adivasi rights' organisations, supported by legal interventions that were upheld both at the High Court and Supreme Court level finally resulted in stalling construction of the resort and a strong indictment of the role of the state government in this sorry affair. The Nagarhole judgement set precedence for the use of protected areas and national parks for eco-tourism development but the fate of the adivasis continues to hang in balance. The region continues to have a growing number of tourist resorts mushrooming around the Park periphery which have lead neither to protection of forest land nor to adivasi wellbeing.[21]

These cases are emblematic of the growing tension between communities and government policy privileging a certain understanding of conservation in India. Creation of 'tourism zones' inside PAs further intensifies the seeming contradiction between the aims of conservation and the rights of displaced communities. This has lead to the process of legitimising the functioning of presence of a global industry inside an ecologically sensitive region, while indigenous people and local communities have been aggressively ejected from their forests.

When the United Nations declared 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism (IYE), it was met with vociferous protest primarily from the world's indigenous peoples. Indigenous groups, summarising the fundamental problems they face from tourism, warned against the large scale unrestrained promotion of ecotourism without an adequate assessment of the nature of the industry and its effects on the environment and people.[22] It would, they said, lead to disruption of local economies by displacement of activities that previously served to carry self-reliant and sustainable community development. Physical infrastructure to provide tourists access to remote areas would expand and this would lead to increasing damage to the environment and local communities. Several years later, these fears and concerns are proved to be not unfounded.

The preservation of biological diversity is undoubtedly urgent. The point however, is to revisit its fundamental principles.[23] In India, the National Park Management concept is a blind copy of the American experience based on wilderness. Citing studies, Gadgil and Guha in their book – "This Fissured Land" state that the – "…highest levels of biological diversity are found in areas with some (though not excessive) human intervention… the dogma of total protection can have tragic consequences." Mark Dowie provides a thought provoking statement that he believes is receiving acceptance, albeit hesitatingly, from various parties to the debate that – "Indigenous Peoples' presence, it turns out, may offer the best protection that protected areas can ever receive'[24]. This is, in fact, a position that indigenous people have maintained all along.

Notions of 'conservation' in India have also failed to acknowledge the role that adivasis have played in protection of nature and its diverse forms through the symbiotic relationship their share. Adivasis in various states have religious beliefs, prohibitions and taboos to the access and use of natural resources. In Kalahandi, Orissa, the tiger is treated as a brother and if a tiger dies, the adivasis observe community mourning. Similarly in East Singhbhum in Jharkhand, adivasis worship Gorang, Dorang and Buchiwudi - gods and goddesses whose abode are the hills, rivers and forests, making these sacred.

Moti Ram Baiga from Daldali, Chhattisgarh says: "We worship our mountains, trees and rivers. Our Devi Devta (deities) "Kher mata", "Khunt Paat", "Thakur devta" or "Nanga Baiga" live in these forests and mountains. They protect us from all evils."

Communities that share such a strong bond with nature, whose religious beliefs and social customs are oriented to protect nature from over exploitation, are now being termed 'encroachers' in their homelands. States like Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Orissa which have abundant forest, water and mineral resources have witnessed several cases of marginalisation of communities by modern development. Industrialisation, mining, dam and other big infrastructure projects have led to large scale displacement of indigenous communities, affecting their livelihood and socio-cultural milieu. Tourism seen as gentler, more sophisticated and green, if not unmasked, can prove to be the uninvited and exploitative guest into their homelands.

Indigenous Communities' share of the pie: Tourism Benefits?

While there is growing resistance by indigenous communities to exploitative forms of tourism, there are many who are keen to explore how they can benefit from tourism. But do current models of tourism development provide scope for community involvement and community control and do they materialise in community benefits? How do current forms of tourism also engage with issues of culture and identity of these communities?

New forms of eco-travel profess to save the planet and create economic advantages for local people. But do they? Research by NGOs and even by the World Bank point to the fact that Park Management strategies have not met with much success in terms of local economic development.[25] Even at highly "successful" parks like the Khao Yai National Park in Thailand, where tourists bring in nearly USD 5 million annually, the surrounding communities remain poor. Ecotourism revenues in Rwanda support park management but have not been able to translate into economic alternatives for local people. Developers often overlook the critical aspect of benefit sharing that is intrinsic to the definition of ecotourism.

The more disturbing issue is the denial of indigenous peoples' rights in the context of tourism. According to International Tourism Rights International, "prior

informed consent" is crucial; its absence has been at the heart of most conflicts which indigenous communities face from the outside world. This includes: access to all information (negative and positive) concerning proposed tourism activities as well as access and participation in policy making that affects them, official support for tourism models developed by indigenous people themselves and the absolute right to say "no". Alison Johnston opines – "If the ecotourism industry wants to engage Indigenous Peoples in a way that naturally draws community support, it must be willing to learn who it is talking to, what these people's experiences and aspirations are and why the right to self-determination is so passionately defended. Companies need to learn how to approach business as a HOLISTIC relationship.[26]"

Demands for benefit sharing in tourism by indigenous people come in different forms and are not always directly associated with a tourism project. In the Andes, indigenous people demand compensation for having their photographs taken. A woman in Otalavo exclaims – "We see our and our children's photos on postcards. We do not benefit from our photos being taken, a tourist does. We demand part of the profits." In the mountainous regions of northern India, hill communities supplement their incomes by allowing tourists to briefly adorn their traditional dress and be photographed. Tribal communities in Mexico are now getting more worldly wise and demanding royalty for use of their motifs and art forms on tourism promotional material.

There are also few international initiatives, which are quoted as having moved from the "community-based" forms of tourism to being genuinely "community-owned" by indigenous people. The Toledo Ecotourism Association (TEA) in Belize– is a community-owned organisation owned and operated by an association of Mopan, Kek'chi and Garifuna villages.[27] The objective of TEA is to share the benefits of tourism as widely as possible throughout each participating village. Guides, food providers and entertainers are rotated among seven to nine families in each village. A parallel programme is succeeding in Ecuador. Ricancie (Indigenous Community Network of the Upper Napo for Intercultural Exchange and Ecotourism) was founded in 1993 by several Quichua communities living in the Napo province of Amazoinian Ecuador.[28] Their goal is to improve the life of nine Quichua villages via a community-based ecotourism project. Prior to this, tours in the region were conducted by foreign tour operating companies, which provided little benefit to the villages. Ricancie has been able to change that by adopting a self-determined path where all decisions are taken by villagers. In Australia, the Mutawintji National Park, Historic Site and Natural Reserve in New South Wales were returned to aboriginal ownership in 1998 and is now run by the Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council.[29] The organisation is in charge of all tours to the Park and has licensed their operators. In Africa, to garner greater local benefit from tourism, San community members from Botswana, Namibia and South Africa approached organisations to support them in initiating community-owned joint venture tourism projects.[30] The movement has spread to San communities in other regions who have felt encouraged to start their own tourism ventures not only for economic gain but also to inform tourists about San culture and traditions.

In few states of India, attempts have been made where civil society and local people have played a role in deciding the nature and form of tourism in their areas. In 2003, a group of people in Jharkhand, mostly belonging to various indigenous communities from different districts of the State, evolved the "Jharkhand Peoples' Policy on Sustainable Tourism". The inspiration to develop such a people's policy came from the people of Pan Sakam, a village near the famous Dasam waterfall of the region, as adivasis of this village had taken control of the waterfall after a prolonged fight with the Forest Department. The peoples' policy includes benefit sharing of resources, access to natural resources and provision of core team formed by communities, looking after planning, implementation and monitoring. This policy was presented to the state tourism department, but so far no action has been taken by the government to incorporate its suggestions.

Similarly, in Kataki village of Araku panchayat (Andhra Pradesh), there is a small waterfall on the Gostani River. The Gram Sabha has taken steps to develop this as a tourist attraction and has created basic infrastructure like pathways and stairs and a check post. It also collects toll from tourists and allows them to visit the waterfall. But as this spot has gradually become popular among tourists who visit the nearby Borra caves, realising the revenue potential, the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC) has now planned to develop the waterfall area as a tourism product. If not opposed, such a move will lead to transfer of control and benefits moving from the Gram Sabha to the state owned APTDC.

Experiments and models in India privileging indigenous ownership and control of tourism are yet nascent.[31] But with growing interest in responsible tourism in India, policy makers need to study these initiatives for promoting a tourism

that is community-led, owned, and implemented. Many indigenous communities hope that tourism will offer an alternative to more destructive forms of "development" in their regions such as logging, mining and other extractive industries. They are alert to and some even welcome ecotourism projects that can help conserve their natural environments and provide alternative sources of livelihood. There are no ready models or easy answers to these aspirations, but what seems essential is that alternatives, best practices and new models be evolved by and with them.

Part 2
International guidelines addressing issues of tourism and indigenous peoples

Recognition of tourism issues in the indigenous peoples' debate has found place in many international guidelines. Many of these guidelines and codes have developed in response to powerful resistance by indigenous groups to impacts of tourism development on their lives, cultures and regions. While they are not legally binding, they form a useful guiding framework to governments and policy makers on the issue of indigenous people and tourism.

One of the first institutions to put in place progressive conventions respecting indigenous communities' traditional rights was the International Labour Organisation. The ILO Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Populations, 1957 (No. 107), recognises indigenous peoples' ownership of the lands they occupy. It was ratified by 27 countries, mainly in Latin America. India has also ratified the Convention. In 1989, the ILO revised this Convention, making it much stronger. ILO Convention No. 169 (1989) provides generally that "special measures shall be adopted as appropriate for safeguarding the persons, institutions, property, labour, cultures and environment" of indigenous peoples, and that "such measures shall not be contrary to the freely-expressed wishes of the peoples concerned." Convention No. 169 is a comprehensive instrument covering a range of issues pertaining to indigenous and tribal peoples, including land rights, access to natural resources, health, education, vocational training, conditions of employment and contacts across borders.[32] It also has strong clauses in relation to seeking prior informed consent from indigenous people before undertaking development activities in their regions. It further states that – "indigenous peoples concerned shall have the right to decide their own priorities for the process of development as it affects their lives, beliefs, institutions and spiritual well-being and the lands they occupy or otherwise use, and to exercise control, to the extent possible, over their own economic, social and cultural development." Only 13 countries have thus far ratified ILO Convention 169; India is not one of them. These ILO clauses have significant implications when applied to tourism and can be effectively used to promote participation of indigenous communities in tourism in deciding its forms and priorities and prevent undesirable forms of its development.

Specifically on tourism, the most universally known set of guidelines for tourism development is the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics that received official recognition by the UN General Assembly on 21 December 2001. Clause 1 of Article 1 of the Code articulates: The understanding and promotion of the ethical values common to humanity, with an attitude of tolerance and respect for the diversity of religious, philosophical and moral beliefs, are both the foundation and the consequence of responsible tourism; stakeholders in tourism development and tourists themselves should observe the social and cultural traditions and practices of all peoples, including those of minorities and indigenous peoples and to recognize their worth. It further states in Article 2 "…tourism activities should respect…the individual rights of the most vulnerable groups, notably children, the elderly, the handicapped, ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples."

The Oaxaca Declaration of the International Forum on Indigenous Tourism, adopted in 2002 is another landmark declaration recording the impacts of tourism on indigenous communities. Issued by representatives of indigenous communities from 13 Western Hemisphere countries at the time of the IYE, the Declaration stated – "We register our profound disagreement with the IYE's and ecotourism's most basic assumptions that define Indigenous communities as targets to be developed and our lands as commercial resources to be sold on global markets. Under this universalistic economic framework, tourism brings market competition, appropriates our lands and peoples as consumer products, and renders our traditional knowledge vulnerable to bioprospecting and biopiracy." It goes on to reject the IYE to be used as a space to legitimise the takeover of indigenous lands by "sustainable development". The Declaration articulates several pertinent points with regard to how indigenous people are viewed in tourism. Primary among these is the need to recognise that indigenous peoples are not "stakeholders" but "internationally-recognized holders of collective

and human rights, including the rights of self-determination, informed consent, and effective participation." It particularly addresses governments, private developers, conservation and ecotourism NGOs, development agencies and specialists. It asserts "Tourism is beneficial for indigenous communities only when it is based on and enhances our self-determination. Outside "experts and assistance" are useful to us only if they work within frameworks conceptualized and defined by our communities. Therefore, tourism projects must be undertaken only under the guidance and surveillance of an Indigenous Technical Team, and only after a full critical analysis of the long-term pros and cons of tourism development." In addressing the United Nations, the Declaration appeals for devising a transparent and honest process that allows for indigenous peoples participation directly in tourism development. It demands that national governments implement laws and regulations pertaining to the environment and indigenous peoples and urges for the development of ecotourism guidelines that can regulate visitation in conformance with local culture and sensitivities.

Another process in motion has been with the Draft UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. On Thursday 29 June 2006, the Human Rights Council adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and recommended its adoption by the General Assembly[33]. The Declaration was one of the chief outcomes of the United Nations' International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1995-2004)[34] initiative with the main objective of strengthening international cooperation for the solution of problems faced by indigenous people in such areas as human rights, the environment, development, education and health. This Declaration, which is pending adoption by the General Assembly, it is hoped, gives wider publicity and endorsement to rights of indigenous communities. While it does not mention tourism specifically, its applicability would definitely extend to situations of tourism infringing indigenous rights. In the words of the UN's Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues[35] - "When adopted, it will likely be the most comprehensive statement of the rights of indigenous peoples ever developed: the draft declaration foresees collective rights to a degree unprecedented in international human rights law. Adoption of this instrument will give the clearest indication yet that the international community is committing itself to the protection of the individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples."

But not all UN processes have received the endorsement of indigenous communities. An intensive debate has been ensuing internationally in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) tourism guidelines. When in 2004, the CBD's seventh Conference of Parties (COP7) planned to finalise and adopt the draft tourism guidelines, many indigenous groups wrote in stressing that the adoption be stalled, as indigenous people had not been party to its formulation. The statement from the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB) to the Chairman of the COP stated – "We are dismayed to learn that draft guidelines on tourism are being considered for adoption here in Kuala Lumpur. The draft guidelines focus on vulnerable ecosystems. This causes great anxiety. Globally, it is the Indigenous Peoples' ancestral territories that are most vulnerable to the so-called 'eco' tourism industry. This sector has a documented standard of abuse. Again, we must stress that worldwide the vulnerable areas in question are Indigenous territories."

Additionally, the lack of cultural sustainability and diversity in the Guidelines is an equally serious matter of concern. The IIFB rejected the process and content of the CBD's tourism guidelines on grounds of the disregarding and non-representation of indigenous peoples. Indigenous people's representatives had urged that the matter of adoption of the draft tourism guidelines be deferred to COP 8, two years later in 2006. However, despite these appeals, the CBD went ahead and adopted the Tourism Guidelines that are now formally part of the CBD. For indigenous people, the guidelines continue to disregard issues of cultural sustainability and use of indigenous peoples' ancestral lands by tourism. It is held as a travesty of the process of democratic consultation that institutions like the CBD are meant to stand for. In her analysis of these events surrounding the CBD, Alison Johnston observed – ""In UN forums, Indigenous Peoples have observed mounting apprehension among world governments towards their submissions – particularly on ancestral title, which entails customary law for sustainability. World governments know that Indigenous rights and international environmental standards are routinely overridden. They want to look forward to profit, not become mired in present or past issues like liability and compensation. Thus, as the CBD process on tourism progressed, it became evident that many feared the Indigenous Peoples' analysis. There was a level of protectionism which had no rational explanation other than the corporate bottom line.[36]"

These international guidelines do provide a useful framework that national governments may choose to adopt. However, processes like the CBD are indicative of the fact that even at the global

level, there remains a challenge in ensuring the meaningful and rightful participation of indigenous peoples in processes that deeply impact them.

Part 3
An overview of tourism policies in India in the context of the indigenous peoples' debate

Tourism came on to the radar of Indian policy makers during the sixth five-year plan period (1977-1982) when the country's first tourism policy was introduced. Soon after, in the 1985-90 period, tourism was elevated to the status of an industry that gave it access to institutional financial support, infrastructure support and a rationale for rationalisation of taxes applicable to the sector. The post liberalisation period from 1991 witnessed further opening up of natural and biodiversity-rich areas in the country for tourism. Ecotourism was the new buzzword and the focus was on forests, coasts, hills, mountains and other biodiversity-rich regions. Many state governments began exploiting the 'market' potential of tourism by actively promoting ecotourism, culture and heritage tourism, deregulating coasts and opening up forests for investment in tourism.

National Policies on Tourism

The National Tourism Policy (NTP) 2002 has identified ecological sustainability, judicious use of natural resources and tourism as a means to alleviate poverty as some of its basic principles. The policy recognises lack of community participation as one of the factors contributing to increasing conflicts in tourism areas and therefore, emphasises greater community participation, role of panchayats and other local bodies especially in ecotourism and adventure tourism activities.

But although certainly progressive compared to earlier policies, the NTP fails to clearly identify and provide guidelines to work with some of tourism's adverse impacts. In relation to indigenous communities, the policy only makes two cursory references to indigenous and tribal communities[37]. The policy emphasises ecotourism but yet does not even highlight the need for caution while promoting tourism in areas where indigenous communities live. The adverse impacts of tourism on adivasis including issues of commodification of culture, land alienation, denial of access to resources and exploitation are not acknowledged. Other important policy documents on tourism have also overlooked the critical need to regulate tourism in indigenous areas. The X Five Year Plan's chapter on tourism does not make any references to concerns regarding indigenous communities but, like the NTP, asks governments to focus on ecotourism promotion. Laying the foundation for the next five years, the report of the Tourism Working Group for the XI Five Year Plan places high emphasis on promotion of heritage and culture tourism along with ecotourism but yet again, fails to take notice of the need to regulate tourism such that indigenous communities are not adversely impacted.[38]

The Ministry of Tourism (MoT) - Government of India launched its Ecotourism Policy and Guidelines in 1998. These guidelines have been formulated "to ensure regulated growth of ecotourism with its positive impacts of environmental protection & community development". The Ecotourism Policy of 1998, issued by the Ministry of Tourism, is based on several international guidelines and frameworks prepared by various tourism industry associations.[39]

But with a focus on environmental conservation, the policy fails to acknowledge the cross linkages between ecotourism and the social, cultural, economic and institutional processes of the indigenous and local communities. By identifying indigenous and local communities as "stakeholders" and not "rights holders" who have knowledge of the local environment, the policy makes them subservient to a process where environmental protection is beyond their control and is being pursued for the sake of supporting economic enterprise.[40]

Mentioning the need for involvement of local community, recognition to local livelihood and tourism that is compatible with environmental and socio-economic characteristics of local community gives a false sense that the policy privileges community based and sustainable tourism principles. But when it comes to the actual role to be played by these communities in need-based planning for physical infrastructure, zoning exercises, evolving tourism management plans, and impact assessment, the policy goes silent.[41]

State Tourism Policies

Several states have evolved their own policies on tourism, and these have not necessarily been inspired by the broad principles of the national policies. What remains common is that state policies too have failed to address tourism from a peoples' perspective and thus their tourism policies read more like investment and marketing strategy papers.

Madhya Pradesh, one of the first states in the country to announce a tourism policy (1995), has

identified promotion of ecotourism and adventure tourism as one of the key objectives. Cashing in on its 31% forest area, in 2001-02, the Department of Tourism, Government of Madhya Pradesh formulated an Eco and Adventure Tourism Policy for the state. The background note to the policy states - "Today's tourist is not content with cultural or religious tourism alone- the tourist today looks for some thrill, fun, adventure and something other than routine. In keeping with this change in attitude of tourists, the State Government has decided to actively promote Eco-Tourism and Adventure Tourism. In order to popularize and develop these forms of tourism, Government is for the first time, seeking participation of private investors." The other key points of the policy include measures to involve private participation.

But in a state with 23% proportion of its population as adivasis, the government's priority seems to be to satisfy the changing demand of tourists, rather than address the livelihood concerns of local communities. Forest eviction due to declaration of national parks and sanctuaries is rampant in Madhya Pradesh, with Kanha and Bandhavgarh as glaring examples. The state tourism policy does not appear to take cognisance of these problems.

Neighbouring Chhattisgarh is no different. From the 2006 tourism policy, it is clear that tourism promotion and marketing of the state as a tourist destination are the clear focus areas of the state government. It mentions principles like sustainability, community participation and environmental conservation without the wherewithal to ensure that these principles are implemented. It talks of decentralised tourism development and local community participation but these seem merely lip service as the same policy has made the state-government managed Chhattisgarh Tourism Board as the nodal agency for all tourism-related development! The policy also makes some ludicrous propositions to ease tourist connectivity like proposing helicopter facilities into interior inaccessible areas - areas where tribal and indigenous population lives. Its focus on "Ethnic tourism" is strong and the policy states that it will attempt at showcasing the state's rich cultural heritage and monuments, which will be integrated into the ecotourism circuit.

Orissa launched its tourism policy in 1997 and this is also no different from other state policies. In the state's tourism policy, Ganjam, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Deogarh, Dhenkanal, Angul, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj proposed for wildlife tourism, all have significant adivasi population. The commodification of adivasi culture is evident through proposals like - "a museum of tribal art and artefacts will be set up in different tribal regions at Bhubaneswar to bring tribal life and culture alive for the tourists."

Current tourism and ecotourism policies that actively promote forms of tourism in adivasi-populated areas of the country will only intensify inequities. The growing trend towards declaring areas as National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries and up-gradation of forests within the broad category of 'Protected Areas' in the country is disturbing from the perspective of adivasis. In 1935, after the enactment of Indian Forest Act 1927, there was only one national park in the country - Jim Corbett National Park. In the 35 years hence, i.e. up till 1970, only 5 more were added to this list. However, the 1972 Wildlife Protection Act, Project Tiger initiated in 1980, Forest Conservation Act 1980 and several legislations have been instrumental in identification and up-gradation of forest areas into protected areas, national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. As a result, by 2004, India had 92 declared national parks and several others are in pipeline. Similarly, the declaration of more areas under reserved and wildlife sanctuary categories means further deprivation of adivasi rights over forests.

Legal Safeguards and provisions that could be applicable to tourism as well

The 73rd and 74th Amendments, 1993 to the Indian Constitution were landmark legal provisions, allowing greater peoples' participation in planning and decision making. Initially, the Amendment was valid for all parts of India, including Schedule V Areas. But as traditional tribal institutions were still functional and required legal legitimacy to their self-governing systems, several activists and groups challenged the implementation of 73rd Amendment in Schedule Areas. In 1996, based on the Bhuria Committee's recommendations, the PESA Act was enacted that went one step further to the 73rd Amendment by acknowledging the rights of adivasis to plan and decide the course of development in their regions by empowering the Gram Sabha to have a say in the nature of development, land acquisition and also in resettlement and rehabilitation measures in the region. The Gram Sabha and Panchayat have also been given the power "to prevent alienation of land in the Scheduled areas and to take appropriate action to restore any unlawfully alienated land of Scheduled Tribe"[42] Along with these important clauses on people's role in decision making, PESA also gives rights over minor water bodies and minor minerals.

Orissa has diluted its Gram Panchayat Act, while Jharkhand's Panchayat Act is not in accordance with

the central legislation. States like Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh who adopted PESA provisions are bypassing their own state laws in favour of private companies while in Andhra Pradesh, the government machinery is influencing the gram sabha's decision on transferring land to mining companies. The clause empowering the grama sabha to monitor land acquisition and alienation is particularly important in the light of the nature of tourism development in these areas and the need for regulation. While examples abound of disregard and violation of the PESA in the context of extractives-linked industries, we begin to see a similar trend in the context of tourism. In Anantgiri mandal of Andhra Pradesh, which is a Scheduled Area, the last few years have seen several new resorts and hotels come up in the Araku valley. Similarly, areas around the Kanha National Park in Madhya Pradesh have about 30-35 resorts that have come up. In most of these aforesaid cases, tourism developed mostly without consultation or consent of the grama sabhas.

Another historic development in the legislative space is the Scheduled Tribes and other traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006. Reserved and protected forests, sanctuaries, national parks and other protected areas have been given the status of "community forest resources" by this Act and therefore, rights of tribal and other forest dwelling communities extend over these areas. Important community rights recognised include: the right to live in the forest land, right of ownership; access to collect, use and dispose minor forest produce; rights of fishing and grazing, rights for conversion of pattas or leases, right to conserve and right to enjoy customary rights. While the rules and detailed implementation guidelines of the Act are being negotiated and drafted, it can only be hoped that the principle and spirit of this legislation is retained and that adivasi communities will be able to use it for what it is meant to be – a tool to ensure that their lives, practices and culture are not subservient to the market and to powerful commercial lobbies.

Closing Thoughts

This paper has put forth arguments and cases, drawing from international and national experiences to tourism's increasing role in the indigenous peoples debate. But as we acknowledge that tourism indeed is contributing to the displacement, exploitation and marginalisation of indigenous communities, there is also the hope that it might transform itself into a tool for benefiting these communities – economically and culturally – without being exploitative. When confronted with highly destructive forms of "development" like mining, dams and extractives, indigenous communities are pinning their hopes on tourism – that it can be a tool for their collective economic empowerment, and a means for promoting greater understanding and respect for their identities, culture and traditions. But will tourism development in India respond to this call? Will tourism which by its very nature is a human space - be more human and ethical? Will it be guided by its responsibility to be a steward of the peoples, cultures, and natural environment that it so benefits by? Will its relationship with communities it depends on, be respectful and harmonious or predatory and exploitative? Is it willing to be unmasked and respond to the adivasi's johar?

Endnotes

1. *Usage Note: When used in reference to a member of an indigenous people, the noun native, like its synonym aborigine, can evoke unwelcome stereotypes of primitiveness or cultural backwardness that many people now seek to avoid. Despite its potentially negative connotations, native is enjoying increasing popularity in ethnonyms such as native Australian and Alaska Native, perhaps due to the wide acceptance of Native American as a term of ethnic pride and respect. natives. www.dictionary.com. The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/natives (accessed: July 04, 2007). In this paper we prefer to use the term indigenous people/tribals/ adivasis.*

2. *Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2001 census*

3. *"Rethinking Tourism and Ecotravel: the paving of paradise and what you can do to stop it," Deborah McLaren, Kumarian Press, 1998.*

4. *Russel Barsh, "The World's Indigenous Peoples", Department of Native Studies at the University of Lethbridge, Canada. (year unknown).*

5. *Jon Goss, "The souvenir and sacrifice in the tourist mode of consumption" from the "Seductions of Place: geographical perspectives on globalisation and touristed landscapes," edited by Carolyn Cartier and Alan. E. Lew, Routledge, 2005.*

6. *Joan Carling, "Tourism Impacts on the Indigenous People of Cordillera", Contours, Volume 8 No ¾, Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism, November 1998.*

7. *"Questions about a Road", Panjaj Sekhsaria, Down to Earth, May 31 2007.*

8. *Terri – Lynn Williams-Davidson, "Sacred Objects, Art and Nature in a Global Economy", Paradigm Wars: Indigenous Peoples Resistance to Economic Globalization, International Forum on Globalization, 2005.*

9. *Mark Dowie, "Conservation Refugees", Chapter 14, Paradigm Wars: Indigenous Peoples Resistance to Economic Globalization, International Forum on Globalization, 2005.*

10. *"Mixed Promises of Ecotourism", Susanne York, International Forum on Globalization as part of "Indigenous Peoples' Resistance to Economic Globalization", published by IFG, 2004*

11. *"Trouble in Paradise: tourism and indigenous land rights: towards ethical solutions", Briefing, Minority Rights Group International, January 2007.*

12. *Ibid*

13. *Wildlife Institute of India, June 2007, http://www.wii.gov.in.htm*

14. *Id 10*

15. *Pradip Prabhu, "Tribal Forest Interface – Logic of Survival", Combat Law, Volume 2 Issue 5, December – January 2004, p 5-18.*

16. *Data collected from primary field investigation by Souparna Lahiri and Devjit Nandi for NFFPFW, India.*

17. *http://www.incredibleindiaholiday.com/incredible-india-wildlife-holidays/kanha-wildlife-tour.html*

18. *In 1995, the World Bank launched the ecodevelopment project with the Indian government. Pench Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh was eventually selected as one of the loan recipients. The general objectives of the project were to protect biodiversity and ecosystems in India by motivating villagers in the buffer zones around the national parks to reduce their dependence on the forests for survival. The World Bank designed a program based upon an understanding that human populations living in wildlife conservation areas have a negative impact on the delicate plant and animal ecosystems; they must therefore be resettled outside the boundaries of the wildlife reserves and encouraged to survive without entering the forests. This course of action, it was felt, will protect villagers and their crops from wild animals and will protect wild animals and plant species from human encroachment.*

19. *The park is in a designated V Schedule Area – Areas identified by the Constitution of India with high percentage of tribal populations that are to be administered differently in recognition of tribal institutions and governance.*

20. *Id 16*

21. *This case is drawn from "adivasis, rights and tourism: an assertion from Nagarahole", EQUATIONS, 2000.*

22. *Refer the Declaration of the International Forum on Indigenous Tourism, Oaxaca, 2002 issued in response to IYE*

23. *"Creating voice for Indigenous People", published by National Advocacy Council for Development of Indigenous People (NACDIP) in association with PREM-Orissa and ITWWS – Tamil Nadu, December 2002.*

24. *Id 12*

25. *"People and Parks: Linking Protected Area Management with Local Communities", World Bank, 1992.*

26. *Alison M. Johnston, "Is the Sacred for Sale? Tourism and Indigenous People", Earthscan Publication, 2006.*

27. *Id 11*

28. *Id 11*

29. Id 11

30. "Tourism and the SAN in South Africa", Contours, Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism, Volume 8 No ¾ November 1998.

31. There are a few initiatives in progress in India that are beginning to orient tourism development towards indigenous community needs with some even being community-owned and initiated. These include the UNDP and MoT's Endogenous Rural Tourism Project where few sites work with indigenous communities, work of NGOs in East and Northeast India towards striking a balance between cultural, ecological conservation and tourism and few village-level initiatives like in Khonoma, Nagaland.

32. http://www.ilo.org/public/english/indigenous/standard/index.htm

33. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: http://www.ohchr.org/english/issues/indigenous/declaration.htm

34. On 22 December 2004, the General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RES/59/174 for a Second International Decade, which commenced on 1 January 2005. The Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. José Antonio Ocampo was appointed Coordinator for the Second Decade. The goal of the Decade is the further strengthening of international cooperation for the solution of problems faced by indigenous people in such areas as culture, education, health, human rights, the environment and social and economic development, by means of action oriented programmes and specific projects, increased technical assistance and relevant standard setting activities. The theme of the Decade is: "Partnership for Action and Dignity". http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/second.html

35. The Permanent Forum was established by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 2000/22 on 28 July 2000. In this resolution the UNPFII was given a mandate to "discuss indigenous issues within the mandate of the Council relating to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights." http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/structure.html

36. Id 26

37. The two references are: "The railways have a special fascination for foreign tourists who wish to experience the country both at leisure and close personal contact with the indigenous people…" and "…ecotourism must help in… in encouraging tribal and local crafts and in improving overall environment and facilitating growth of a more just and fair social order", National Tourism Policy, Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India, 2002.

38. XI Five Year Plan, Tourism Working Group Report, 2007

39. According to the 1998 Ecotourism Policy, it is based on Guidelines for the development of National Parks and Protected areas for Tourism developed by the UNWTO , PATA Code for Environmentally Responsible Tourism, Environmental Guidelines of the World Travel and Tourism Council, the Himalayan Code of Conduct prepared by the Himalayan Tourism Advisory Board and Ecotourism Guidelines by Ecotourism Society.

40. Ecotourism as Market Based Conservation Mechanism, briefing paper, EQUATIONS, 2006

41. "Globalisation, Governance & Grassroots: The case of ecotourism and its impacts in tribal dominated areas in India", EQUATIONS, November 2006.

42. Section 4 (m (iii)) of PESA

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Contents

3.

COMMUNITY-BASED RURAL TOURISM IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Some insights & lessons from the Endogenous Tourism Project in India[1]

by EQUATIONS
2008

The Endogenous Tourism Project- Rural Tourism Scheme (ETP-RTS) is a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (MoT) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) initiated in 2003 and being implemented currently at 36 sites across the country. While the primary objective of the project is to focus on sustainable livelihoods, it extended beyond the achievement of mere economic objective of employment and income augmentation, putting it on a much larger canvas of community based action. The project aims at a convergence of issues -sustainable livelihoods, gender equality, empowerment of women, youth and other disadvantaged sections and working towards cultural sensitivity and environmental sustainability. It goes on to suggest that if tourism is to fulfil its promise of being a transformative agent, capable of changing the minds, values and behaviour of the tourists and the local citizen alike – as well as of providing a broad impetus to local economies throughout India, then tourism needed to be "radically altered in design and concept".

The ETP in many ways has been a total shift from the standard tourism projects implemented by the Ministry of Tourism in the past that were infrastructure-centric and infrastructure-heavy. It has an overall framework which is ambitious, emphasising processes rather than products, and placing at the centre the notion of local communities taking the decisions related to tourism. Thus a unique feature and indeed core principle of the ETP is to examine and take further the links between tourism and development.

This paper attempts to "put together" some of the insights and lessons that emerge from the ETP. The insights are generalised to apply to rural tourism projects in developing countries. For examples and details from the ETP, we urge the reader to refer to the detailed review report titled Sustainability in Tourism – Rural Tourism Model.

Globally, community based tourism is increasingly receiving attention as tourism initiatives combine aspects of community development, poverty alleviation, cultural heritage, and conservation. Community based tourism lends itself as a window to achieving broader development goals at national, regional and local levels. In developing countries this tends to inevitably be located in rural areas.

Community involvement in tourism has been widely supported as being essential for sustainability. It is emphasised from equity, developmental and business management perspectives. The positives of this form of tourism are - community ownership, livelihood security, minimal leakages & backward linkages, efficient conflict resolution, increases in the local population social carrying capacity, and improved conservation. Revenue from tourism reaching the communities is distributed by them, in accordance with their wishes; either split between all the inhabitants equally, or invested in infrastructure such as schools, roads, and clinics (Spenceley, 2008)[2].

Broadly the costs associated with community based tourism projects include that they generate high expectations which may not be feasible, new conflicts may arise as marginal groups become more empowered while elites gain greater benefits through networks. In addition, despite attempts to empower communities to benefit from tourism, they are frequently unable to provide the standard of service the tourists require (Spenceley, 2008).

The level and distribution of benefits depends on many factors including the attractiveness of the tourism asset, the type of operation, the nature and degree of community involvement,

and whether earnings become private income or are partly or wholly channelled into community projects or other benefit-spreading mechanisms.

Juxtaposing tourism and development

Development planning acknowledges that macro economic growth is no guarantee of human development. The need for public policy to specifically address strategies for elimination of human poverty and inequalities remain significant challenges. Greater accountability of public policy implementation bodies, gender equality, capacity building to ensure greater decentralization and empowerment of marginalized groups are key to these objectives.

Many rural tourism projects and the ETP in particular, are conceived as a means to rural development. In the backdrop of increasing rural crisis in developing countries, providing social and economic justice to the vast segments of the masses who have been persistently deprived of livelihood, basic services like health and education, remains the greatest challenge. Rural tourism cannot be a one stop solution for ensuring goals such as equity and empowerment. However this component is a valuable and critical one if one were to aim at people centred tourism.

The ETP was conceptualized with development and tourism as twin goals. The implementers were faced with the challenge of devising ways by which the tourism product gets a "value addition" because it is tightly integrated with development processes (of empowerment, asset generation, enrichment equity etc). In the ETP development is not a side agenda but the co-agenda in order to add value to the tourism process. This was unusual as compared to many other rural tourism projects and threw up its own significant challenges.

However in the drive to "implement" rural projects one can easily slip into project based mode, products and results get privileged and timelines are collapsed. Thus important development goals of equity, gender, empowerment and social transformation, all of which require time and effort, get sidelined and the tourism product part of the project gets privileged.

Rural tourism projects are essentially a social and economic intervention in rural areas and it is quite likely that several conflicts surface. Some of these may not be inherent to a tourism project, but simmering or underlying conflicts and tensions in the society which exist anyway and come to the fore when a project like this is introduced. Others could be attributed particularly to the challenges to status quo or social orders or existing power structures that the project deliberately introduces as part of its agenda of social change and the resultant forces that are then unleashed.

The dilemma always exists about the extent to which it can really address, challenge and transform deep rooted social inequities. The objective of livelihood promotion and human development of rural community, especially the disadvantaged, women and youth, helps focus on what is their 'own', i.e., their skill in traditional arts and crafts, their cultural heritage, community or private land, natural resources (flora and fauna) and environment of the area. The attempt to promote what is their 'own' obviously leads to addressing what is their 'due', i.e., their right to the wealth generated by tourism in the given locale and the right to decision making about its creation and equitable distribution, on the one hand, and the right to protect and preserve what is their 'own', on the other.

It is not uncommon in rural tourism projects to see funds, institutional arrangements, designed to benefit the poor being passed on to the not so poor. The absence of a critical analysis of the community and segregating it in terms of poverty - of who have not been involved and why would highlight these exclusions and disparities. Poverty is seen as homogenous, but it is a fact that there are some people in each community who barely manage to break even with consumption and production. For them to have a choice of livelihood options, the opportunities are few. Those who are the current gainers of the existing tourism, or those powerful ones who aspire for gaining out of the project often try to dominate. In their presence the weaker sections of the villagers and women find it difficult enjoy equal status and equal say in the functioning of the project.

Communities expectations and community choice: A question of social agency

In 'choosing sites' for a rural tourism project, the choice of sites are made primarily on the basis of there tourism potential. The social capital, the informed choice of the communities and their readiness, is usually not taken into account. In many rural tourism projects, when communities are faced with the prospect of a project which promises huge economic benefit and that money would be spent in their village it is very unlikely that they would reject such a project!

A system prior to finalization of a site that would help in understanding the social criteria and for the community to make an "informed choice" on

whether they wish to engage on a project of this nature is important. Tools like the participatory rural appraisal (PRA) exercise can help communities to understand the implications of tourism and contribute to their choice and decision to engage in tourism. Also key questions like what kind of institutions already exist, their functions, quality of processes, degree of decision-making, whether the community was divided / fragmented on lines of religion, caste, class, what were the other kinds of inequalities and inequities, were there more pressing development issues that needed to be addressed-poverty,education,health,indebtedness, sanitation and access to water, what were the occupational patterns, cultural traditions and sensitivities of the community - these and other questions of this nature must be discussed and debated amongst the community. The reason to do this ground work before selection is that firstly, the community is facilitated to take ownership of a process and it becomes the basis of their right even to say no to tourism. Secondly, only when certain basic 'other' factors are in place are the chances higher for tourism to function smoothly.

The site selection criteria and process is a critical factor for success. Where these have been diluted or short circuited the impacts on the form and progress of the project is evident. The experience of the ETP indicates that sites which relied on more organic processes to develop the rural tourism product were more "successful".

There is a need for constant dialogue to hear from the community on how they perceive the project, what are the changes they wish to see. It is also important to keep the dialogue open on what this project may be able to achieve and what it will not be able to achieve. It is often when the project objectives are not stated and understood clearly that the expectations of the community rise. Too many hopes are pinned on the project and when it does not materialise, there is a slump and a stage of being demoralised – from which it becomes very difficult to start up again.

When communities engage with tourism it must be recognized that the scale at which a particular site engages will and should vary depending on a set of contextual factors - intrinsic and external. Tourism cannot and will not be the solution to the rural crisis – and the introduction of tourism must not be seen as a substitute for more stable and sustainable livelihood options. This is critical particularly as tourism is an activity that is based on consumption, and it seeks to substitute in the rural context, livelihoods based on production. Some sites depending on their situation may choose to engage in a process in which a very small section engages others in which this a significant section of the population of the village. How much of the village overall economy is reliant on tourism will also vary. The time they will need will also be different. The pace will also be different.

Rural tourism projects should be customized to each sites particular characteristic. The tendency of tourism to go through a life cycle of exploration, consolidation and decline is well known. Equally well known is the inadvisability of over dependence on tourism. Policy makers tend to oversell the benefits of tourism and there is not enough of substantiation or research data on the distributive justice of tourism as a development tool.

Marketing an "experience": The tourism product and its promotion

For creating a rural tourism experience the natural, cultural, human or capital resources indigenous to the rural area would have to be attractive to tourists. Key factors in relation to competitive advantage are the attraction (including its authenticity), quality of service and facilities, the destination's accessibility and pricing (perceived as value for money). Unless we are able to change the way tourists perceive / experience tourism in a rural scenario all these aspects will be critical from a tourist's point of view. Many of these are also aspects that should be basic to people's lives- particularly basics such as a clean environment, hygiene and sanitation. However it must remembered that we need to create an environment that will help the tourist experience rurality and not rush to create urban comforts in a rural setting, because that is what the "tourist will want". Ultimately with the combination of the Unique Selling Proposition (USP) and competitive advantage the community will need to learn and compete within the bounds of the market.

Often in the case of marketing of a rural tourism product, the emphasis is on marketing an experience. This is not as simple as creating attractive advertisements and has many layers – imaging, ethics and knowing what sells.

Marketing involves product/service development, place (location and distribution), pricing and promotion. It defines the market and the customer and makes the match between beneficiary, the "product" they design and offer and its match to customer needs and expectations.

While meeting the needs of the market is certainly an important goal from a commercial viability

perspective, the dilemma also is about how such a project can help preserve traditions in their 'pure' form. Here we do not mean to suggest that traditional crafts have not evolved and have not responded to changing times and changing needs. This perhaps has been the greatest strength of our artisans and our crafts and one of the main reasons why they have survived. However it is factors and spaces like tourism that are increasingly playing the role of 'the new patrons' of such skills and traditions. In such a case it is not enough for rural tourism projects to see how the artisans can fit into the market but also to be able to play the important role of a patron - which is to appreciate, preserve and support art and skill for its own sake.

It is important also to understand the form and content of promotion that will be attempted for these sites. The philosophy of the project, how a marketing firm sees and portrays this - is it just a pretty picture postcard or should the marketing be positioned differently? Highlighting the community based and community led aspect of tourism at these sites could be a way of educating tourists and not just attracting them. There is nothing inherently wrong in attracting tourists, but this is also an opportunity to present a more authentic and holistic aspect of the place and contextualise the tourism experience in it.

Imaging is what exists between marketing and aesthetics. It includes aspects of

- Process of stereotyping / standardising
- Creating constructs and categories
- Politics of the process – what gets put in, what gets left out – resulting in a set of communication products
- Recognition that the result of all this is for 'consumption' and when it hardens, slowly moves into the 'non-negotiable' – which is often a process that happens by a subtle consensus

One of the core understandings of the ETP was to create a unique rural experience for the tourists, to move away from infrastructure centred form of tourism. While this outlook is commendable and recommended, it is not easy to achieve. Much more thought needs to then be put in as to how one sees, builds on, and creates opportunities for tourists to experience 'authentic' rural life in a way that it transforms their mindsets. It is often the tangible /physical that will attract and bring the tourists, but the intangibles of a place that will be remembered, which make or break the tourist's experience. One may very well ask the question – can/should there be rural tourism at all?!

Many rural tourism projects have the idea of homestays as a central part of the tourism product on offer. There are both opportunities and dilemmas related to homestays in a rural setting. On the one hand homestays allow for more decentralised benefits both in terms of economic benefits and in terms of varied and more authentic experiences for tourists. What is interesting is that the rural communities in the ETP seem to be demonstrating a preference for centralized accommodation option rather than the authentic homestay. Would the homestay option be the preferred choice if community members had an opportunity to economically benefit from a centralized accommodation option? It must be acknowledged that the jury is still out on this aspect. There are many social, cultural and economic reasons why homestays will not work or work in a limited manner. Culturally – "hospitality as a commodity" - the idea that one's guest pays for staying in one's home is difficult to accept. Also modes of interaction and the behaviour of the tourist are criterion (some community members reported foreign tourists as being more at home than domestic tourists). Policy makers have been a vigorous promoter of the homestay idea – seeing it as an answer to the tourist accommodation deficit. This may work in urban areas – but a strong pursuit of this strategy in rural areas may not be advisable, without more feedback and research.

As the USP and competitive advantage has very strong links to the tourist profile - how the possible experience /product is presented to the potential tourist, how it has been positioned and marketed, what have been the strategies to ensure success. This needs an additional layer of positioning (presenting the product) and marketing to ensure success. Clear business plans and marketing strategies to ensure commercial viability of these ventures are critical. It is equally important to be able to define the tourist profile, set up a system for capturing and verifying this data (based on who actually comes) and then feed this back into promotion, marketing and product development.

Another aspect is the links of tourist profile to undesirable impacts of tourism. How can we 'filter out' tourists who might have an adverse impact on the host community's culture and values?" Could a combination of pricing, positioning and experience be designed to narrow the appeal to a specific tourist profile? The suggestion that the tourist be "screened" is not accompanied by a practical way of going about this. There is also an element of risk about a stranger coming in and living in one's home or in one's village. Research on tourism in rural areas of Goa, Kerala and

Orissa have reported clear links between child sexual abuse and home stay and or easy access to children.

It would be important from a policy perspective to approach some of these aspects of positioning vis-à-vis local cultures more cautiously, as the risks, levels of comfort and willingness of the communities to embrace this option must be studied with a sense of openness and objectivity.

Building local institutions and capacities to implement rural tourism

Institutions are primarily holders of ideas. When rural tourism projects builds institutions to take this different idea of tourism forward within existing structures of the rural society – two things may happen – the new structures may be challenges or they may be compatible with the existing structures.

Working with the twin objectives of development and tourism itself offers a significant challenge and would require timeframes that in all cases would go beyond the typical timeframes of policy makers for rural tourism projects. To setup norms and evolve a common vision, to ensure they work in tandem with one another and in alignment with an over arching purpose is an institution building challenge. It involves consultations with the stakeholders to identify key participants and opinion leaders and facilitate the work towards a common vision. Understanding of formal and informal ways of working together towards a common purpose that is beneficial for everyone, forms the stable basis for institution building.

Apart from this, even from just a tourism perspective alone, to achieve some degree of stability, to get the institutions working, building them strong to servicing the tourist, will need time and will only come with tourist interaction. Time frames should also have a bottom-up approach rather than top-down. In the structure and formalizing of institutions we saw many examples of them being formulated on the basis of trust– which was not given time to actually develop and solidify. As a result many crisis and grid locked situations developed. There is need for proper documentation of contracts and taking care of statutory and legal aspects of institutions especially as business models, assets and the shift in power structures are involved.

Various entrepreneurship models – private-community partnership, community-credit institution, community–tourism network, PRI integrated tourism planning development initiative emerge. It would be valuable to understand the links between the emerging entrepreneurship models, community institutions that therefore did or did not evolve and impacts in terms of community benefits and "successful" tourism in the long run.

In the ETP the idea of introducing the capacity building agenda into the Rural Tourism Scheme was a significant intervention and contribution of UNDP. The aim was to help the community build their capacities, to benefit from the ownership and control of assets that were to be created, modified, or renovated for their use. The capacity of community members by conducting training was on varied issues - awareness, tourism linked skills and livelihood, alternative livelihood and institutional management. Capacity building often led to acquiring specific skills, but could also be seen as creating the space for building or articulating perspectives. e.g There is not much awareness amongst the community in many sites in the ETP to why there is such a great emphasis on vernacular architecture. Their reflection is limited to an extent that 'tourists want to stay in accommodation which resembles and suits the rural ambience'. The broader vision of use and relevance of local materials, providing opportunities to local vendors and benefiting the local economy as a whole is also part of capacity building.

All sites in the ETP attempted building an apex body – the Village Tourism Committee (VTC). There have been two different approaches to the formation of the VTC. One, the membership of the VTC was confined to the people who were thus far excluded from or exploited under the existing tourism industry, namely, the artisans, the craftsmen, the women, the youth and the other weaker sections of the village community. The capacity building programme was designed for their skill formation, value addition to the old products and the creation of new products. Since the objective is to empower the powerless and marginalised, the VTC was a potential space to challenge existing power structures. The other approach was to open up the doors to all: the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak. In some sites this was believed to be a more pragmatic and effective method - to leave the choice of selection to the community-and aim to avoid social tensions in the process of implementation the project.

Given that a commonly held vision clarity, positive social dynamics, capacity building and handholding over time are the basic requirements of strong institutions - institution building is inevitably a slow and complex process. Furthermore, given the early stage of actual engagement with tourism at many rural tourism sites, it is very difficult to hazard a guess about the sustainability of the institutions that are being promoted and this will need to be studied further.

Tourism impacts

Any tourism, endogenous or otherwise, has the potential to cause social, cultural and environmental damage, if left unregulated to market forces and social power structures. The success of a rural tourism project should not be judged by the economic gains alone but by the level of improvement of the social justice and growth of social capital as well. Even and equitable distribution of the economic gains among all the participating communities and individuals needs to be ensured. Communities are usually quite unaware of caveats and negative impacts that inevitably accompany tourisms growth. With tourism coming in, the risk of commodification of culture and traditions is there. One hopes that community control will avert this inevitable impact but as of now there are no particular safeguards to avert this phenomenon, or significant discussions on the issue in most sites.

Common property resources are often privatized by tourism as its property and this must be checked. In India, lack of waste management and garbage were universally visible and acknowledged as a serious issue. The aspect of sanitation often is addressed only to the extent of acknowledging the need to provide clean toilets for tourists. It is really sad that in many of these "picture postcard" destinations basic sanitation does not exist for those who live there - open drains, no public or community toilet facilities. Touristic artefacts like decorative gates or car parks seem more important than basic sanitation, drinking water, primary health or hygiene, electricity and basic transportation and connectivity for the community.

Through the charter/codes of conduct evolving process the community needs to decide what kind of tourism they want, what they allow, what they disallow, what makes them proud, what they want to offer? This has the possibility therefore of not being a mechanical exercise but a powerful process of helping them to search for and articulate their identity. Where communities have come up with their own charter which has clear defined lines as what tourist's should not do in their village, it has increased their feeling of belonging and responsibility. Charters and guidelines would help ensure the meaningful participation of these marginalised sections, backward castes and classes, women and poor to a certain extent.

Awareness building through the development of community-based tourism impact assessment is one way of doing this. Tool kits need to be prepared and shared with the communities once such an initiative is taken. An impact on local livelihood and access to environmental resources at the cost of the local needs is to be monitored at regular intervals. It is very rare that reliable and valid data is captured and analyzed at the level of the site in order to find out what was the real progress and benefit of the project is to various sections. A site level system of collecting and analysing data related to benefits and impacts is essential.

The system developed must collect and analyse the information regarding tourism related activities at the sites. Communities should be empowered and their capacity should be built for this activity. This set of statistics collected on site should become a tool to be used by community to understand and review their own progress and also to be used across the entire project sites as a whole to plan and make course corrections.

This should also be seen as an important and integral part of the monitoring & review process. Sites should be encouraged to develop baseline data through a PRA. Implementing agencies should be well trained in PRA. This is critical as PRA is an important tool for data generation, group mobilization, as well as a way to generate the sense of motivation and ownership about the project.

1. There could be a system of consistent and simple data collection formats and systems developed at the local level - tourist arrivals, their profiles, requirements, demands, what they spend on, levels of satisfaction, how they learnt about the destination etc.
2. Income and impacts should be disaggregated by development and tourism objectives – gender, poverty, caste, marginalization, livelihoods, economics and distribution of benefits.
3. A participatory community based impact analysis can then be done to find out. e.g:

- How many people have moved from the low income to middle income groups after being associated with the project?
- Gender impact - change in the roles of women engaged with the project
- Employment generation
- Increased ability of the less powerful and marginalized to participate (e.g having home stay facilities, engaging directly in service provision, crafts etc)

The generation, consolidation, and analysis of this data is essential for a factual assessment of the project impacts at local level and consolidated across sites. It will help policy makers test their hypothesis that tourism can indeed be a relevant development intervention in the rural setting.

Many rural tourism sites have in their plans a building / space that will work as the tourist information /

interpretation centre – but this often not been conceptualised very clearly as to what the function of such a centre will be. It would be useful to see if these centres could be spaces for local communities to present their own histories in creative and local ways. It could also be conceived as useful spaces to handle data generation and impact, gather information about tourist profiles and have rudimentary tourism impact assessment cells running out of these collective spaces. Basic information technology based resources such computers / internet facilities could be manned by village youth for bookings etc. It could also serve collective village needs and not only serve tourism. The youth in the village could be trained to run this.

Transforming tourism, transforming tourists

The complex part of marketing rural tourism sites in developing countries is that it is not just about being happy or grateful about any tourist coming in – but about communicating what the experience of that site could potentially be and attracting those tourists who are looking for that. In that sense it is also very much about empowering the communities to think, choose and shape what kind of tourist destination they wish their village, their home and their locality to be. This aspect is rarely dwelt on, in the general anxiety that "somehow we must get tourists in". Such an approach would be respectful both of the visited and the visitors as the 'psychological contract' as well as the contract about what is on offer would match. Thus position and promotion should be people centric and not only market centric. Given the increasing interest in many community based and rural tourism promoters positioning themselves as practitioners of responsible and sustainable tourism they must recognise the ethical and developmental position on this issue.

Rural tourism is also a powerful opportunity to impact and change the minds of tourists. This idea transforming the tourist is crucial to achieving the developmental objectives aimed for. How tourists could become active participants and partners in the process, and ways by which they could be enabled and facilitated to do so are important questions. Relegating the tourist to a passive consumer, an extrinsic agency is equally disempowering, and will adversely impact its success. There is a flourishing of all sorts of ethical/responsible tourism groupings worldwide. They regard actively engaging with and contributing to local developmental processes as intrinsic to their tourist experience. In other words, they see no diminishing of their 'value for money' by virtue of this engagement – on the contrary, they find it far more enriching and personally fulfilling. This offers the possibility to reconceptualise 'tourism' as a 'cultural exchange' framed within a developmental ethos, driven by both the agent communities and facilitated by the NGO/ state/other intermediaries. Recent trends towards travel philanthropy and responsible and ethical tourism are also aiming to address these issues.

The design, implementation and promotion of the rural tourism projects should encourage potential tourists to "see" more than just the product or the wonderful view but actually be willing to experience, be impacted, and even a little changed by the experience of engaging with the rural community. Rural tourism projects need to be designed so that the community participate in the entire process from the very outset, and be made aware of the pros and cons involved – well before the project is initiated. If we accept rural tourism as a developmental project, we must accord the community agency to actively participate in and give shape to it. Community engagement in the process of decisions on infrastructure (what, why, where, design – how was it taken, how much money has been spent on it) have been low. Often the views of the community are not been sought and in many instances the process has been top down. Empowering the communities to think, choose and shape what kind of tourism and tourist image they wished their village, their home and their locality to be is a central aspect.

This provides a rare opportunity to try and transform the nature of tourism – from its mass consumptive nature to something which had the elements of interaction, learning and human contact as well.

Endnotes

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Contents

4.

PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION, POVERTY ALLEVIATION & NATURE TOURISM[1]

By Dr. B Vijayakumar[2]

2009

Introduction

The diverse consequence of tourism on economy, society and environment has been a subject of serious debate across the world during the last two decades. By augmenting the process of resource exploitation, tourism has been occupying a pride of place in the GDP of many countries. Experiences have shown that, in general, the poor local community and natural endowments are the causalities of tourism development. The much expected trickle down effect of tourism development is practically not experienced in most destinations. Though in the theoretical paradigm, provisions are made for resource conservation, regional development and economic benefit to poor in tourism, little progress has been made so far in this regard. Realizing the ability of tourism to eliminate poverty through community participation, efforts are being taken in identified destinations that are known for nature / eco tourism all over the world. Any attempt to make this venture a success should strictly adhere to local specific specialties, while framing programmes.
A major strategy adopted in Kerala for poverty alleviation is the promotion of micro enterprises through self help groups known as Kudumbasree units. But the activities of these units are largely confined to identify areas of operations where tourism finds no place of its own. How to take the existing institutional arrangements, organizational structure and the social empowerment acquired by the SHG members for developing micro enterprises related to nature tourism is the question that needs to be addressed seriously. With this in view, an attempt is made to make a SWOT analysis through focus group discussion among the SHG's to prepare an action plan for implementation in Thirunelly Panchayat of Wayanad district in Kerala.

Community participation

Much has been debated on the concept of community participation. A typology of participation illustrated by France L (1998) shows that community participation in development projects can be ensured at different levels. The way in which and the magnitude at which community participate in decision making process determine the sustainability of the project. In the context of tourism, by community participation, we presume the ability of a community to influence the decision making process. Once community participation is ensured in tourism, it can work as the guide and guardians of the industry. Generally, tourism businesses at destinations are controlled by the rich and elite leaving a message that the poor has little to do with tourism development. Quite often the destination people are alienated from the industry causing dire consequences to the future of the industry. Considering this, policy makers and the proponents of the sustainable development strongly advocate local / community participation in tourism. The guidelines for participation in community tourism in South Asia states that in tourism local residents (often rural, poor and marginalized) are active participants as land managers / users, entrepreneurs, employees decision makers and conservators, rather than just community co – operative running camp sites. The aim is for residents to have a say in decision over tourism development in their area and work with other stake holders to develop opportunities for employment, enterprise, skill development and other improvements in local livelihoods. Same actions such as participation in planning may be done by communities acting collectively and some such as enterprise development by local, individuals and families. The advantage of community participation includes protection of people, land and culture from

exploitation. It balances visitor entertainment and creates tourism programmes where financial, social and environmental benefits flow to community. In this context, it is worthwhile to examine the social representation and tourism community relationship discussed by Molotch (1976), Murphy (1983), David et.al (1988), Pearce (1989), Allan et.al (1993), Simous (1994), Howard (1994), Madrigal (1995) etc. Community based tourism is more sustainable development than conventional mass tourism as it allows communities to break away from the hegemonic grasp of tour operators and the oligopoly of wealthy elites at the national level (Filton, 1996). Community involvement in the benefits of tourists is also widely discussed (Brohman 1996, Daliles1997, Smith 1998, Schvens 1999, Timothy 1999 etc). The role of tourism in development and its theoretical framework is provided in detail by Richard Sharpley et.al. (2002)

The concept of community participation in decision making process of tourism planning is viewed as central to the success of sustainable tourism development initiation. It enables more equitable distribution of economic benefits to the society. It is suggested that the benefit is achieved through a reduction of leakages between tourism and related industries with import of goods within the destination area. Further benefits that are deemed include such factors as the improvement of host – guest interaction to their mutual benefits. Therefore, community participation is viewed as a means of challenging the prevailing tourism development paradigm which typically minimise the tourism infrastructure of the developing world controlled by the powerful multi nationals of the developed nations. However, considering the geographical, demographic and ethnic diversity, appropriate strategies have to be adopted for destination to promote community participation. In this backdrop an attempt is made to how communities perceive participation in tourism development in the tribal dominated district in Kerala, India. For case analysis the focus is on Thirunelly Panchayat in Wayanad district.

Wayanad

Wayanad, the loveliest hill station, lies at a height of 700 – 2100 meters above mean sea level on the northern part of Kerala. Wayanad lies between 11˚ 20′ and 11˚ 58′ north latitude and 75˚ 47′ and 70˚ 27′ east longitude. For revenue purpose the district is divided into three taluks. There are three block panchayaths and 25 grama panchayaths and one municipal corporation in the district. The total area is 2131 square kilometers, of which 544 square kilometers is reserved forest. The climate is fairly cool that suits varieties of temperate crops. During the cold season temperature drops to less than 15˚C. The district accommodates majority of tribal population of the state. Scheduled Tribes (ST) population comes to 17.43% of the total population of the district.

Thirunelly grama panchayath (Study area) in Wayanad ranks first in ST population in Kerala. According to 2001 census 41% of total population of this panchayath belongs to Scheduled Tribes and majority of the people consist of poor farmers. The intervention of state poverty alleviation mission, namely Kudumbasree has resulted in establishing 257 self help groups in Thirunelly grama panchayath, and of which 64 are Tribal units each having 16 members on an average. The economic activity of these groups is mainly confined to farming and animal husbandry. But most of these are not focusing on tourism which has got immense potential for development in the district. Compared to other districts in Kerala, the association of local people to tourism activity in Wayanad is very meager. However, the association of poor and marginalized women in self help group has enriched their understanding on organizational arrangements and institutional operations which in turn resulted in confidence building to work in unison with main stream economic activity of the state.

Tourism and poverty alleviation

Wayanad, the green village in Kerala is well known for nature tourism in Kerala. Since there is ample scope for the local people to include directly as well as indirectly in tourism activities without eroding their cultural base and at the same time protecting the natural environment, any mechanism to integrate tourism with Kudumbasree will bring home economic benefits to the marginalized communities. Activities will definitely bring home additional income to the local people especially the poor. With this in view, focus group discussions were organized among the self help groups associating the male members of their family (The Kudumbasree SHGs consist only women) to elicit various information for enabling them to participate in income generating activities related to tourism in Wayanad. The information thus gathered were discussed with community leaders and elected representatives of the local self government to form the basis for SWOT analysis. The various strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats received by the group members in associating with tourism activities are discussed.

SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis is done for identifying the strength, weakness, opportunity and threat connected with the

performances of the identified SHGs unit. This will enable to make suitable programme for the future.

Strength

Unlike other parts of Kerala, Wayanad is bestowed with rich variety of natural resources and indigenous skill and technology that are part of the terrain and tribal population. Modernization and urbanization has intruded in the traditional living and the displaced were neither able to stick on their own footing nor able to cope with modernization. Majority of tribals and marginalized –non tribals are in urgent need of reasonable income for their sustenance. As far as the women of SHGs are concerned most of them work as housemaids or part time servants. They were paid more in kind than in cash. Work force wiling to do job is available in anticipation of a reasonable income. The on going micro enterprises activities are confined to goat rearing, cattle rearing and poultry which are unable to bring reasonable income. Wayanad is bestowed with wide variety of non-wood forest products and seasonal fruits. These provide rich raw material source for starting enterprises having more indigenous base. More over, the skill and knowledge of the local people especially that of tribal population add strength for producing cost effective environment friendly and homely products. The need for collective action is nurtured by Kudumbasree and there is an organizational set up for running micro enterprises. The members are aware of the procedures and hurdles. The fund earmarked for the tribal development add strength for forming new enterprises, imparting training programmes etc and the climate at Wayanad is also conducive for the production of Wayanad special products. All this along with the need for viable income generating programme from the local add to the strength for forming new micro enterprises. The major strengths are identified as availability of man power, existence of non wood forest products, indigenous knowledge and skill, organizational setup – kudumbasree – SHGs, demand for income generating programme, funding from central and state governments and salubrious climate.

Weakness

Lack of adequate marketing channels for products and reasonable price stand as barrier for the smooth performance of these enterprises. It is observed that cattle rearing, goat rearing and poultry are the major activities under taken by these enterprises. Though seemingly all these items are much demanded locally, nationally and internationally, the SHGs in Thirunelly have not succeeded to market them properly and get due rewards. The major reason for this state of affairs is that the local community who comes from true agrarian background does not have the skills or sophisticated technologies to market these products. More over the mainstream population could have all these items in their households also and thus denied the opportunity to sell them in local markets. The bulk of demand comes from hotels, restaurants and from outside, could not be tapped properly by SHGs. Lack of network for collection and marketing often contributes to the poor performances of SHGs. More over since the tribal population is not accustomed to these type of activities – commercialization schemes and marketing technologies, a natural lethargy creeps in. From the discussion, it is revealed that any programme will succeed provided it is moulded from the society imbibing their natural and cultural identity.

A proper identification of the weakness of the community will enable us to find out appropriate solution. The perception of the tribal population towards life is entirely different. By nature they are least interested in savings and accumulation. The other marginalized too, due to the prevailing environment, lack motivation to launch new programmes. In other words, lack of motivation works as a major hurdle against good entrepreneurship. To crown this the performance of the on going projects are not up to the mark. Hence it could not even be able to give a ray of hope for better performance. More over many of the products of SHGs lack standardization and quality assurance and the existing projects are designed by out side agencies too. The SHG members are destined to execute externally designed programmes which ultimately fail to sustain. The scope of using the indigenous skill and technology are too limited giving no incentive to promote indigenous talent. The major weakness are summarized as lack of motivation, failure of on going projects, lack of standardization and quality assurance, lack of network in marketing, project proposals by outside agency, limited scope for using local skill and knowledge and lack of commitment of implementing agencies.

Opportunity

All the above weakness does not mean that there is no scope for promoting SHGs in Thirunelly. The discussions among the group and the suggestions made by the tribal people substantiate this feeling. They have identified a good number of items which they are interested to collect from the forest and suburbs and process it for making final products. But in general they are not interested to do this in a massive scale and mass production and marketing

is alien to them. Still most of them are satisfied with a sustenance living. If we are able to identify young educated youths from among the tribes and succeed in getting the cooperation of the tribal leaders more programmes having indigenous basis can be framed. By and large these programmes relate to non wood products including medicinal plants and indigenous technology. The non tribe population who constitute the general category of SHG can also be promoted by designing programmes that can be interwoven with their daily life and household surroundings. As SHGs lack infrastructure facilities any programme that can be linked to their household activities can be successfully implemented. Collection of fruits, preservation of fruits, cultivation of medicinal plants, procurements, processing etc. are suggested by members in FGD.

The discussions held among the elected representatives and NGOs, throw more light and opportunities. The ongoing agricultural practices in certain parts of Wayanad also enabled the group members to share this view. The growing concern towards environment is considered as a good quality opportunity for local products. The demand for organic farm products is growing more internationally. The scope for developing organic farming is very high in Wayanad not only to meet increased international demand but also due to the fact that classified hotels and tourist resorts are also looking for these products. This factor strengthens local market organic farm products. Besides this, the nostalgia and resilience to nature by man also accelerated the demand for herbal products both for medicinal purpose and cosmetic use. The opportunity for tapping this on a commercial base is very high as it can fetch sustainable income to stakeholders. The ongoing process of urbanization and modernization has virtually resulted in the disappearance of most local/rural/indigenous projects. It is widely acknowledged that rural products are much demanded in cities and towns. A concerted effort to make available these will definitely bring prosperity to all those involved.

All the above factors are directly and indirectly related to modern tourism also. The global trend in tourism is towards nature tourism/ecotourism. Wayanad is well known for its natural cultural attraction and authentic indigenous products. Ethnic products form part of modern tourist attractions. The scope for designing and developing destination and attraction for modern tourist are very high in Wayanad. The opportunities emerged from the discussions are growing environmentalism, demand for organic and herbal products, urbanization and gradual disappearance of traditional products, scenic beauty and climate, changing trends in tourism and demand for authentic and ethnic products.

Threat

Lack of infrastructure facility is the major threat suggested by most of the group members. Since no mechanism for standardization and quality assurance exists, they fear that their product will not be totally accepted by the market. More over the high income brackets in the society do not want to support this activity as they fear that there will be an erosion of labour supply. More over, any programme that is being implemented through an external agency w ill not succeed and hence the need of the hour is to evolve programme from their own ambience. The major threats can be summarized as vested interest of high income groups, lack of commitment of implementing agency, operations by outside agency. Inadequate patronage to indigenous skill and lack of adequate local involvement in decision making processes.

The information thus collected along with the suggestions made by elected representatives, kudumbasree officials, NGOs and tribal leaders were put together to frame suitable action plan that can be implemented in Wayanad with particular focus to Thirunelly Panchayat.

Conclusion

In the back drop of the performance of SHGs and the information gathered from the focus group discussions and personal interviews with voluntary organizations like Uravu, Wayand Social Service society, elected representatives of the local bodies and age old leaders of tribal community an action plan was prepared for linking local people with nature tourism business. The broad areas identified by the community related to tourism includes agri-tourism, medicinal plants and health products, non timber forest products, food processing, handicrafts, souvenirs, tourist guides, eco lodges, way side amenities and ethnic shops. The major idea behind this action programme is to restructure the existing self help group by offering new programmes which will enable them to produce varying products to cater the needs and requirements of tourism industry directly or indirectly.

Endnotes

1. This paper written in April 2009 is a modified version of the paper "Tourism in a decentralised framework - a model for community participation" presented at the International Conference "A decade of decentralisation in Kerala" organised by Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi from 7th - 9th October 2005 at Thiruvananthapuram.

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5.

ECOTOURISM IN INDIA

Policy and legislative frameworks[1]

By EQUATIONS

2008

The term 'ecotourism' was coined by a marketing agency that was promoting Costa Rica as a rainforest destination and since then it has been seen as a niche market by the World Tourism Organisation, as it uses resources that are linked to the biodiversity and cultural pluralism of third world societies or countries, which have been forced into tourism as a core competency area by inter-governmental agencies for development.

The World Conservation Union (IUCN) defines ecotourism as: "... Is environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features - both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low negative visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations." [IUCN, Tourism, Ecotourism and Protected Areas, Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996]

The travel industry defines ecotourism as "purposeful travel that creates an understanding of cultural and natural history, while safeguarding the integrity of the ecosystem and producing economic benefits that encourage conservation . . . The long-term survival of this special type of travel is inextricably linked to the existence of the natural resources that support it" (Bandy, 1996 quoting: Ryel and Grasse 1991:164).

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as, "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people".

According to the World Tourism Organisation [UNWTO] tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed natural areas with the specified objective of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural aspects [both of the past and the present] found in these areas is defined as ecotourism. An optimum number of environment friendly visitor activities, which do not have any serious impact on the ecosystem and the local community and the positive involvement of the local community in maintaining the ecological balance are some of its key elements (UNWTO, 2002[2]).

Key components of Ecotourism from various definitions

- Contribute to conservation of biodiversity
- Benefit indigenous / local communities
- Minimum consumption of resources
- Address site specific issues
- Stress upon local participation, ownership and business opportunities
- Cater to small groups by small-scale businesses
- Include an interpretation / awareness experience
- Involve responsible behaviour on the part of tourists and tourism industry

Status of ecotourism

Ecotourism is now a much-contested term ecologically, economically and politically. It has been used by proponents of ecotourism comprising practitioners from government departments and industry to open up new areas for tourism. It has unfortunately opened avenues for the tourism industry to promote initiatives that have had a profound impact on people and the environment in the name of ecotourism.

Each player has tried to define it to its advantage. For the hotel industry, it is adopting environmental friendly practices like recycling, alternative energy usages, adopting local architecture and providing employment to the local people. For the tour operators, it is identifying newer areas

for the promotion of ecotourism, away from the run of the mill tourism destinations.

There is little or no consensus over the definition of ecotourism. Communities have accused ecotourism, and consequently its definition and concept, of being largely industry driven and developed through non-consultative processes. The voices of concerns raised during the International Year of Ecotourism in 2002 and processes that lead to it, including the World Ecotourism Summit are testimony to this. Many organisations reiterated the need for assessing what ecotourism is or what it could be made out to be and not a promotional event for governments, tourism sector and recipients of development aid. The Rethinking Tourism Project (now Indigenous Tourism Rights), based in Minneapolis USA, raising similar concerns as mentioned above on behalf of indigenous and community based organizations, further added that most ecotourism projects were not community based and were developed on the basis of top-down approaches. There were no critical analyses or assessments conducted to assess long-term impacts of such developments. Concerns were raised that what is presently considered as ecotourism is intended to "benefit investors, empower managerial specialists, and delight tourists, not enhance the economic, social and ecological health of the host communities" (Rethinking Tourism Project, Letter to UNEP, 27 October 2000) and the communities are left with negative impacts and very marginal profits.

The term 'ecotourism' is now generally used in the context of tourism in ecologically sensitive areas like protected areas. It has evolved from nature-based tourism and is also sometimes referred to as nature-tourism (Bandy, 1996). The tendency to qualify tourism in natural and undisturbed areas, like forests and islands, as 'ecotourism' or 'nature tourism' is too vague a terminology. The very reason why the tourism industry opted for this terminology was because wherever tourism is practiced, it has proven detrimental to the environment and the social fabric and promoted dehumanising situations like displacement, marginalisation, siphoning off of natural resources and violation of basic human rights of indigenous peoples & local communities.

Discussions on ecotourism development in a country like India need to be seen in the context of what attracts tourists and tourism industry. The rich natural heritage and biodiversity hotspots spread out along the coasts, backwaters, forests and mountain regions are the major tourist attraction on which the tourism industry banks in the name of ecotourism. Even the Protected Areas (PAs), which previously had seen limited tourist activities, are targets of intensive tourism development. The industry vouches its ability to boost the economic potential of these natural resources, which were otherwise what the industry and tourism proponents describe as 'idle' resources and the economic potential had remained untapped. It is evident that the concept of ecotourism is not limited by the so called notion of conservation and community benefits, but is determined by the market factors. Innovations are made to the existing systems of practices to entertain the tourists and aspects of conservation and community benefits are brought in to call it as ecotourism products. For example night patrolling in forests has been a routine work of the forest department and now it has become an ecotourism product where the tourists are taken along with the forest guards on their night beats.

The high demand of tourists to visit protected areas has resulted in shifting the role of the forest department from conservation and forestry activities to promotion of tourism. Let us take the example of Kerala Forest Development Corporation.

Kerala Forest Development Corporation Ltd. (KFDC)

The National Commission on Agricultural (NCA) has suggested setting up of Forest Development Corporation in every state which will be able to raise institutional finance for raising man-made forests so as to meet the domestic and industrial needs of Forest produce and re-clothe the degraded forest areas and bring them under productive use.

Core Activities of KFDC Ltd.

1. To acquire, purchase or take over on lease or otherwise reserved forest, unreserved vested forests and other lands form Kerala Government and others either with tree growth or not and to develop such areas and raise plantations of industrial use.
2. To cultivate plantations of rubber, pepper, cashew, cocoa, cardamom, etc. and to buy, sell, export, import, process, distribute, deal in all kinds of forests plants, trees, and agricultural crop.
3. To acquire, purchase or take over or lease or otherwise and manage forests to maximize production of timber and other produce.
4. To carry on business of foresters, planters, cultivators, sellers, dealers in timber and industrial woods, firewood, charcoal, etc. and to manufacture and dispose of, sell and deal in forest produce.

KFDC Board has now approved the following, as its core activity

"To carry on Tourism activities including Eco Tourism, Farm Tourism, Forest Tourism, Health Tourism etc. and to establish necessary infrastructure such as Hostels, Hotels Tourist Houses, Museum, Zoo, Hospitals, Health Clubs etc. for the purpose and to act as travel agents, tour operators etc for promotion of tourism activities".

The market demands infrastructures to be developed to entertain the tourists in protected areas. Luxury oriented and resource intensive accommodation infrastructure is being set up in sensitive & fragile ecosystems, and even around many protected areas in the country. Periyar Tiger Reserve in Kerala has three hotels with boarding and lodging facilities owned by the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC) inside the Reserve, which is also a wildlife sanctuary. Although the lease period for KTDC hotels was over in 1996, the Forest Department still finds it difficult to remove these hotels from the sanctuary premises. The situation is same all over India as we see safari lodges and parks are being created with luxury facilities as in the case of Taj Safaris Wildlife lodges at Mahua Kothi (Bandhavgarh NP) and Baghvan (Pench NP). Two more new safari lodges are being opened up at Banjaar Tola (Kanha NP) and Pashan Garh (Panna NP) by the Taj Group.

We need to understand that this infrastructure compete with indigenous & local communities for use of natural resources. The indigenous & local communities have been living in these areas for a long time and are dependent on the ecosystems for their day-to-day needs without causing significant impacts, which is not the case with other forms of infrastructure like tourism infrastructure and tourist activities.

The protected areas have been a major reason for evicting indigenous people from their original homelands, and other local communities, as these people came to be recognised as a 'pressure' on the protected areas in India. Creation of 'tourism zones' inside PAs further intensifies this discrimination. This has lead to the legitimised presence of a global industry around and sometimes inside an ecologically sensitive area. While many a time indigenous and local communities have been displaced from forest areas, tourism is aggressively promoted.

Legislative frameworks & regulations relevant to ecotourism in India

National environmental laws and policies

While tourism policies at national and state levels are increasingly promoting development of ecotourism, policies and laws for environmental protection are inadequate to regulate its extensive development. Some important environmental laws and notifications are discussed below. At the national level, there exist legal and policy frameworks that have the potential to regulate ecotourism. However, there are problems with these as in some cases, like the Forest Act, 1980 where they have been misused for the sake of promoting ecotourism and in others, like the National Environment Policy, where there are deliberate moves to open up areas for ecotourism. What is important to note is that both the central and state policies and plans take no account of these.

Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, Amendment 1993 and 2002

The word tourism occurs just once in the Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972 in Section 28(d) and the permission to tourist entry rests totally with the Chief Wildlife Warden of the State. Tourism has come a long way since the time these laws were framed. The present forms of tourism practices are clearly detrimental to the well being of biodiversity in the PAs, as compared to what was practiced in the 70s. Therefore, there is an urgent need to make amendments in the clause or at least bring out elaborate set of guidelines that define tourism and the way it should be carried out in and around protected areas.

The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980

Although the Act has the potential to regulate tourism development in forest areas, there are two loopholes in the Act that have been used for large-scale promotion of ecotourism in both protected and reserve forest areas. Protected areas come under the jurisdiction of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 and are designated as wildlife sanctuaries and national parts whereas reserve forests are forests that are not designated as protected areas. They are:

a. Use of the term "non-forest purpose" – the Act does not recognise tourism as an activity that is non-forest related. On the other hand, state forest departments that have been actively pursuing development of ecotourism have interpreted it as a "forest related activity" that is related to or ancillary to conservation. This has been a major factor for the spread of mass tourism in the garb of ecotourism in many forest areas.
b. Section 2(iii) that any forest land or any portion thereof may be assigned by way of

lease or otherwise to any private person or to any authority, corporation, agency or any other organisation not owned, managed or controlled by Government– when linked to the above, leaves space for the entry of tourism and tourism related operations into forest areas.

Hence there is an urgent need to clarify these matters in the context of implementation of this Act.

The Biological Diversity Act 2002

As part of India's endorsement of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, the Biological Diversity Act came into being in 2002. The Biological Diversity Act 2002 is a law meant to achieve three main objectives: a) conservation of biodiversity; b) sustainable use of biological resources and c) equity in sharing benefits from such use of resources.

The Act does not explicitly mention tourism. However, tourism could actually play a significant role as an activity related to the sustainable, non-consumptive use of biological resources. There is also the role of the community when it comes to the use of these resources. Ecotourism in particular could benefit from this Act, if specifically recognized as an activity where resources are used and benefits from this use equitably distributed. Article 37 of the Act deals with the issue of declaring a Biodiversity Heritage Sites. However, it is not clear whether tourism is an activity that will be allowed within these areas and what role the local communities would play in the management of these areas.

Environment (Protection) Act, 1986

Under the implementation of this Act, there are two very important Notifications that are closely linked to the development of ecotourism. These are the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification, 1991 and Environmental Impact Notification, 1994. The crux of the Act and its Rules is that it empowers the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) with substantial power to take action "for the purpose of protecting and improving the quality of the environment and preventing, controlling and abating environmental pollution."

Coastal Regulation Zone Notification, 1991

The Coastal Regulation Zone Notification, 1991 (CRZ) under the Environment (Protection) Act 1984 was issued on 19th February 1991. It is the most significant and specialised legislation guiding anthropogenic activities along the coast. But since 1991, there have been 20 amendments and 3 corrigenda (up to January 2005) to the provisions of the Notification. Each of these amendments dilutes and introduces newer clauses that complicate and render many of the protective clauses meaningless.

Reduction in the No–Development Zone for promotion of tourism

- The first amendment to the Notification was made because of pressure from the tourism lobby.
- The amendment was vide notification no. S.O. 595(E) dated 18th Aug 1994 on recommendations of the Vohra Committee, which was constituted on 1st Jan 1992 and report submitted on 31st Dec 1992. The issue dealt with was tourism. The reason for the constitution of the committee was that there was intense pressure from the hotel and tourism lobby on the Government of India (GoI) stating that the said notification was very stringent and their work was severely restricted by the CRZ.
- One of the recommendations of the Committee was reduction of distance of the No Development Zone (NDZ) in selected coastal stretches for promoting tourism. The Ministry amended the CRZ Notification, 1991 on 18th Aug 1994, reducing the NDZ area all along the coast from 200m to 50m. The amendment also permitted construction in NDZ thus giving expansive powers to the central government to permit such constructions on the landward side within 200m from the HTL according to its discretion.
- Although the Supreme Court (SC) quashed the amendments later.
- The NDZ reduction was eventually reduced to 50m in the case of Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep for tourism development through amendment of S.O.838 (E), 24th July 2003 against the directives of SC in 2002, which were based on Shekhar Singh Committee report. The relaxation was based on identification of areas in NDZ by the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan study conducted by the MoEF.

Environmental Impact Assessment Notification 1994 and 2006

Environmental Impact Assessment for projects was made mandatory in India in 1994 by the Ministry of Environment and Forests vide the Environment Impact Assessment Notification no. S.O. 60(E), dated 27/01/1994 under the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986 with the following four objectives:

- Predict environmental impact of projects
- Find ways and means to reduce adverse impacts
- Shape the projects to suit local environment
- Present the predictions and options to the decision-makers.[3]

The Ministry of Environment and Forests, which is the central agency for providing EIA clearances for projects, has brought out a new notification on 14 September 2006, which has significantly

changed the approach to EIA processes in India. In the original EIA Notification of 1994, tourism (including hotels, beach resorts) was considered as a Category 1 project. That is, projects where EIA is mandatory and requires clearance from Central Government for: all tourism projects between 200m - 500 metres of High Water Line and at locations with an elevation of more than 1000 metres with investment of more than Rs.50 million were included in Schedule 1 of the EIA Notification[4]. However, the new Notification has totally neglected Environmental Impact Assessments for tourism projects and mentions tourism only in passing.

Current national policies and ecotourism

The National Environment Policy 2006

The National Environment Policy (NEP) has been formulated keeping in mind the need for a comprehensive policy statement on environment in India. The NEP while promoting ecotourism in many fragile ecosystems overlooks tourism as an impacting agent. The Policy accuses poverty as the main factor behind use of natural resources and turns a blind eye on the wasteful expenditure of resources by affluent sections of the society - urban and semi-urban, across the country, and resource intensive activities like tourism The Policy does not provide a regulatory framework for tourism development in PAs/ non-PAs and any other healthy, fragile, vulnerable or sensitive ecosystems. The commercialization of environmental services as suggested by the Policy would open up a host of problems, as these are vulnerable to manipulations and distortions. Assigning an economic value to wildlife for instance, as has been done in the case of indigenous cultural aspects, would mean neglecting their roles in the intangible benefits that they provide and to make them objects for tourism purposes. The result is opening more areas for more tourism. The Policy recommends that forest and wildlife areas be targeted for promotion of ecotourism. This could potentially lead to the degradation of these areas while depriving many other ecosystems such as deserts for potential development.

The National Forest Policy 1998

The National Forest Policy, 1998 focuses on addressing community rights over forest for access and use of resources. Where it can contribute is strengthening community rights over forest and therefore subjecting the tourism development process to local decision-making. The Policy recognizes education as an important aspect that can help in conservation of forests. Therefore this provision of the Policy would be important in making interpretation activities an integral aspect of ecotourism.

National Tourism Policy 2002

The National Tourism Policy (NTP) – 2002 is considered the result of long deliberations and discussions among all groups related to tourism. The NTP aims to develop ecotourism in priority regions like the Himalayas, Northeast, Western Ghats, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands; and make it a community-based movement.

The policy envisions the environmental impacts of tourism but has not clearly stated what it proposes to do about it. The efforts of the NTP at realizing sustainability as an important objective are commendable. However the policy does not go far beyond stating it as an objective and therefore in terms of actual policy measures, leaves much to be desired. In support of the above statement the following critique is presented:

National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)

The NBSAP deals primarily with gross impacts of tourism activities in major ecosystems identified in India. It also tries to focus on principles in relation to tourism and biodiversity, and not detailed aspects like ecotourism initiatives in a particular area. The section on ecotourism has been included because of the fact that tourism in/around PAs and in eco-sensitive areas is being promoted as ecotourism by many agencies; governments, tourism industry and communities themselves.

Ecotourism in India – Policy and Guidelines – Ministry of Tourism – Government of India, 1998

The Ministry of Tourism considers the policy and guidelines for the development of ecotourism in India a result of its initiatives in pursuance of Government policy to achieve sustainable tourism development. These guidelines have been formulated to ensure regulated growth of ecotourism with its positive impacts of environmental protection and community development. The policy and guidelines are addressed to all state governments, industry associations and those involved in tourism development and preservation of environment and natural resources.

The policy draws heavily on the definition provided by the UNWTO and enlists the key elements of ecotourism as being: natural environment as prime attraction, environment friendly visitors; activities that do not have a serious impact on the ecosystem and positive involvement of local community in maintaining ecological balance.

The policy pans all ecosystems of India and considers these as major ecotourism resources. The resources, the policy assumes, have been well protected and preserved. The indication of the

policy that all of these ecosystems are potential ecotourism destinations is a matter of concern as tourism has the propensity to cause, and in fact has caused undesirable impacts in many ecosystems.

The policy identifies all seven Biosphere Reserves as ecotourism resources. Of these, two Biosphere Reserves, Nilgiris and Nanda Devi have confronted pressures due to tourism development. In fact tourism has been one of the major factors for degradation of ecosystems in these two biosphere reserves. Great Nicobar is presently difficult to access due to regulations on movement of people by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration. Sundarbans was the site of a mega tourism project, which was eventually blocked in the basis of a national campaign. The Gulf of Mannar has become the site of tourism development, especially after the Tsunami of 26 December 2004, when the Department of Tourism, Government of Tamil Nadu has planned activities here.

The policy states that a selective approach, scientific planning, effective control and continuous monitoring are required for ecotourism development. This is positive step, however reconciliation between aspects highlighted earlier such as the opening of new areas and recognition of existing tourism impacts etc, also need to be factored in.

State Tourism / Ecotourism Policies

Andaman and Nicobar Islands

The Tourism Policy for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is a rather simplistic document serving very little of its purpose of providing guideline and principles for implementation. The one-page document simply states its vision to develop the Islands: '…as a quality destination for eco-tourists through environmentally sustainable development of infrastructure without disturbing the natural eco-system with the objective of generating revenue, creating more employment opportunities and synergies and socio-economic development of the island' (Directorate of Information, Publicity & Tourism 2003).

Chhattisgarh

The State of Chhattisgarh does not have a ecotourism policy. Information on ecotourism sites is provided on the official website[5] which states that one of the major objectives of the policy is to promote economically, culturally and ecologically sustainable tourism in the State.

Under the section ecotourism it has been emphasized that "with 12 share of India's forests, Chhattisgarh's 3 National Parks and 11 Wildlife Sanctuaries and National Parks are a major attraction. It has several virgin attractions in protected areas such as Kanger Valley National Park, Barnawapara, Sitanadi, Udanti and Achanakmar Sanctuaries. Mainpat (Surguja), Keshkal valley (Kanker), Chaiturgarh (Bilaspur), Bagicha (Jashpur), Kutumbsar caves, Kailash caves, Tirathgarh falls, Chitrakot falls (Bastar) are all exhilarating destinations being promoted for nature and wildlife tourism. Wildlife areas, camping grounds and trekking facilities would be few of the prime attractions"[6].

With a focus on ecotourism in the protected areas of the State, the policy gives an impression that entertainment activities within the pristine and ecologically sensitive areas are ecotourism. The policy also states that natural attractions are being promoted with increased local participation. The level of participation in the process and mechanisms of benefit sharing are not clarified. The policy stresses on encouragement to herbal gardens and natural health resorts. When the traditional knowledge of the indigenous and local communities is being exploited for tourism purposes, no clear plans have been stated to benefit them from these activities.

Himachal Pradesh

The ecotourism policy of Himachal Pradesh has been formulated in 2005 by the State Forest Department[7]. The purpose, as stated in the policy, is: "to bring the wilderness of Himachal closer to the tourism visiting the State and at the same time attempts to put in place adequate safeguards and systems leading to the preservation of these natural resources. By involving the local communities, the policy would help improve their prosperity through increased livelihood opportunities. It would also ensure adequate economic returns to the State which would be ploughed back into the environmental system for its proper upkeep and maintenance". It hopes to achieve this by 2010 and make Himachal the leading ecotourism destination of the country. To be able to meet this goal, it has proposed the establishment of a "special purpose vehicle" (SPV) and setting up partnerships between the SPV and civil society (including communities, NGOs, academic institutions, private enterprises/ businesses) and State (forest, tourism departments).

Some of the key objectives of the Policy are to:

- Community based ecotourism has been identified for promotion and benefits of income and employment be made available to the local communities
- Actively promote home-stays in rural areas
- Create education and awareness, and emerge as a resource centre for the natural heritage

of Himachal and Greater Himalayan Region
- Ensure environmental safeguards

Overall, the policy sounds more progressive to the ecotourism / tourism policies of other states.

Jharkhand

In Jharkhand, in the absence of a separate policy on tourism and / or ecotourism, tourism has been included in the State Industrial Policy of 2001. Chapter No. 12: Tourism states "priority shall be accorded to develop ecotourism". No inferences can be made from such a plain statement[8]. What can be assumed, however, is the importance accorded to ecotourism development.

Karnataka

Karnataka does not have an ecotourism policy but it has a Wilderness Tourism Policy[9], which it brought out in 2004. The policy states that wilderness tourism is a constituent of ecotourism. The assumption is that wilderness tourism has been gaining importance in the State and hence it is imperative "to formulate a policy to encourage, guide, direct and regulate it in such a manner that it grows in the desirable way."

The reason for encouraging and permitting wilderness tourism is for furthering the cause of conservation through appreciation, respect and enjoyment by the public. Hence specified areas of national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and forests will be opened. Casual tourists will be discouraged.

It is further stated that wilderness tourism should benefit the local community, especially tribals. The Forest Department will work out ways and means by which such benefits are accrued.

On the whole, the policy seems to have been formulated for the sake of propagating wildlife tourism in protected areas and forests of Karnataka. It touches the aspects of conservation, benefits to local communities and regulation; it does so at a superficial level and is silent on the mechanisms of achieving these aspects.

Kerala

The defining framework for ecotourism in the state of Kerala is the Kerala Tourism Vision, 2025 formulated in 2001. The reference to ecotourism is made where the Vision[10] states as one of its objectives, "To promote sustainable and eco-friendly tourism in the State based on the carrying capacity of the destinations. The strength of Kerala Tourism is its excellent natural resources in the form of backwaters, hill stations and beaches. Having understood the need for looking into the sustainable development of these destinations, Kerala Tourism focuses on the conservation of ecology to reduce the negative impact of tourism on the environment and intends to promote development of tourism based on the carrying capacities of the destination. The development of the tourist destinations will be controlled and regulated based on the guidelines formulated through Area Development Plans to have a planned development".

This is a welcome approach provided there is a realistic stock taking of current practices and lessons learnt from the ground to realise what aspects have contributed to 'non-sustainable development of destinations'. However, it must be kept in mind that 'carrying capacity' is only one of the components for sustainable and eco-friendly tourism. Other components also need to be explored.

Madhya Pradesh

The Government of Madhya Pradesh has resolved to make the promotion of ecotourism in the State a priority area. The focus shall be on conservation of natural resources through awareness building, diversification of tourism activities and destinations, and local community participation. This Policy is aimed at informing and sensitizing the general public and related Government Departments towards ecotourism and laying down the framework for its growth in the State in an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable manner.

The guiding principle states that promotion of ecotourism will happen in strict conformance with the provisions of the existing environmental law of the country, especially the Wildlife (Protection) Act, the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and the various directives and guidelines issued by the Government from time to time. Since there are loopholes in the above two acts, aggressive promotion of ecotourism activities in protected areas could be expected.

Tamil Nadu

The tourism policy note of 2005-2006 of the Tamil Nadu Government demands the implementation of various ecotourism development schemes under the Development of the Ecotourism Circuit in the ecologically sensitive areas of Point Calimere Wildlife Sanctuary, Muthupet Mangroves and Pichavaram.

The development of ecotourism has been referred to in the vision document 2002, the policy note of the Tourism Department for the year 2003-2004 and 10th Five year Plan (2002-2007) document. It was therefore proposed to establish an Ecotourism Circuit covering Point Calimere in Nagapattinam District, Muthupet in Thiruvarur District, and Pichavaram in Cuddalore District.

The components of the ecotourism projects are: Eco Tourism at Point Calimere Wild Life Sanctuary at a cost of Rs.21.20 million; Providing interpretation center; Provision of tented accommodation; Erection of publicity boards; Dubbing of wild life films in local language; Improvement of the tourist track inside the sanctuary; Creation of nature trail; Renovation of Poonarai Illam rest house; Providing compound wall to forest lodge; Children's park; Parking lot; Creation of infrastructure facility in Thambusamy illam rest house; Providing approach road to the sanctuary; Development of eco-tourism at Muthupet mangroves in Thiruvarur District at a cost of Rs. 5.15 million; Creation of a visitor's center; Providing power boats; Construction of visitor's rest shed; Raising observation towers; Creation of bio-diversity spots; Providing wooden board walks; Publicity and awareness; Development of ecotourism in and around Pichavaram (covering Portnova, MGR Thittu and Chinna Vaikkal) at a cost of Rs. 10.45 million; Construction of jetty; Construction of cottages; Construction of restaurant; Construction of waiting shed; Construction of pre fabricated toilets, urinal blocks, sales counter, water tank, benches; Providing interpretation center; Purchase of boats.

The ecotourism development plans of the Department of Tourism, Govt. of Tamil Nadu are not even remotely close to ecotourism concepts of conservation and community benefits. These plans are only masquerading mass tourism models as ecotourism in ecologically sensitive areas.

Uttaranchal

Uttaranchal does not have a separate ecotourism policy but the development of ecotourism has been included in the tourism policy of the state[11], which was formulated in April 2001.

The Policy's vision is to elevate Uttaranchal into a major tourist destination both nationally and internationally and make Uttarnachal "synonymous to tourism". It wishes to develop this sector in an "eco-friendly manner, with the active participation of the private sector and the local host communities."

Ecotourism has been considered as an asset and strength; the policy states[12]:

"Uttaranchal has a rare diversity of flora and fauna. This makes it an ideal area for developing ecotourism, projects and activities like jungle safaris, trekking on mountain and forest trails, nature walks, catch and release angling for Mahaseer and other fish species. All these activities have to be conducted in a manner that promotes awareness of environment and helps maintain the fragile ecological balance".

The action plan to develop nature and ecotourism is through their optimal development as a thrust area. Thus the activities enlisted are[13]:

Botanical gardens cum heritage centres and theme parks will be established in order to highlight the biodiversity of Uttaranchal; Integrated eco-tourism projects will be developed and established and steps will be taken to promote eco-friendly tourism activities like jungle safaris, nature walks, mountain treks, camping, etc. in a manner that also promotes awareness and sensitivity towards environment conservation. Tree plantation as a tourism-linked activity will be given special attention. Action will be taken in a planned manner to deal with the problem of non-bio-degradable wastes. Intensive campaigns to regulate plastic waste will be launched with the assistance of the private sector and non-government organisations. The use of earthquake resistant technology and techniques in construction of buildings, and use of local materials will be promoted and encouraged. Special attention will be given to the aspect of carrying capacity while preparing tourism development plans. On the whole, the policy comes across as a business model.

Procedures for ecotourism development

In the absence of adequate environmental laws to regulate an activity like ecotourism and to check its undesirable fallouts, there is a need for ecotourism proponents to adopt a few self regulatory practices/ procedures that would help to reduce their ecological footprint. This could be continued till and beyond such time when gaps in environmental laws can be plugged and policies are made to regulate rather than aggressively promote such activities. Some relevant procedures are discussed below. However, the need is to factor in principles of sustainable tourism keeping in mind that ecotourism is a sub-component of sustainable tourism. While the imperativeness of community level decision making prior to establishment of an ecotourism project or plan cannot be understated, the procedures discussed below would help during the planning and execution phases.

Social and environmental impact assessment

Social and environmental impact assessments are the first step in any ecotourism development process, post the decision making phase. It has been recognized that tourist - local community interactions not only have an effect on the host country and its communities, but also on tourists. The cross pollination of concepts, beliefs and traditions, while conducive to fostering respect and appreciation of diverse cultures, can also

be detrimental and insensitive when carried out in an atmosphere which is inherently unequal, both economically and socially. It gives rise to the imposition of the values and behaviours of the stronger community on the less powerful one and brings with it a host of socio-cultural changes that are not sustainable. Keeping the adverse impacts of tourism in view, it is important to develop tourism in an appropriate way. Therefore, for minimizing the adverse impacts of tourism on local society and economy, the impact assessment exercises are suggested.

Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) is a tool that uses defined indicators to identify and predict impacts of tourism on the total environmental. EIA warns of adverse environmental changes that are always more expensive to correct than prevent. It obtains a comprehensive view of the impact and costs of such projects within the framework of environmental conservation and sustainable development. Thus an EIA serves to:

- identify tourism effects on the bio-geophysical resources, including flora and fauna, abiotic factors like soil, air etc., state and natural flux of these natural resources
- identify effects on resources from increased usage
- interpret and communicate information about such impacts
- work out project alternatives involving various stakeholders
- propose measures to mitigate negative consequences on environment and community
- predict probability of significant adverse environmental effects after mitigation measures are implemented
- devise contingency plans for eventualities with unforeseen adverse environmental effects

The assessment of tourism impacts is based on the important concept of carrying capacity. Carrying capacity is defined as the maximum population of species and interacting structures that can be supported indefinitely in a defined habitat without undermining or damaging the functioning and productivity of that habitat.

Carrying capacity

Carrying capacity can be estimated on the basis of the ecological parameter under stress and the data available on the amount of change it has, and ideally can undergo. For instance if the stress factor is increased visitation in a section of the forest over the year, then the possible stress factors could be the disturbances caused to birds during their daily activities such as feeding or foraging; another impact of could be the compaction of soil on the trails that lead to increased erosion.

Conducting an environmental impact assessment of a tourism project involves a series of steps. Of course these stages are not rigidly predetermined. They usually vary from project to project and from region to region and allow for inclusions of intermediary stages that are location of situation specific. The ecosystem under study, the details available, and the associated development as a composite scenario are all determinants in the EIA. The legal instruments governing this process in a given country normally define the format and contents of an EIA.

The Khonoma Green Village Project in Nagaland attempted an environmental and social impact assessment (E/S–IA) by the community.

The Environmental Impact Assessment Intervention was designed to:

- **To identify tourism locations in Khonoma and surrounding areas.**
- **To identify and structure possible tourism itineraries in Khonoma, and evolve product development and marketing aspects for tourism**
- **Create a body of baseline data, which will be used to form educational, and interpretation modules in the Interpretation Center.**
- **Provide conceptual clarity on mapping exercise for Khonoma Village and surrounds including Khonoma Nature Conservation and Tragopan Sanctuary**
- **Contribute to the formulation of Code of Tourism Ethics and Sustainable Tourism Guidelines for tourism development in Khonoma Village.**
- **Creation of baseline data for furthering research and monitoring of socio–economic and environmental aspects of the Khonoma Village and surrounds.**

The EIA Study has helped community members in compiling and analyzing the information on Khonoma.
In the course of EIA study, number of discussions and interviews were held with the community members and their views and aspirations were incorporated.

Code of Conduct / Environmental Guidelines

An ecotourism tourism initiative being different from other tourism endeavours, also has as a component of a 'Code of Conduct' or Guidelines, which dictate tourism development and tourist behaviour at a particular tourist destination.

This includes a set of guidelines indicating why the particular place is of interest and reminding tourist of certain 'Dos' and 'Don'ts'.

Visitor Survey

It might be important to consider what tourists expect when an ecotourism initiative is being planned. A visitor survey could be a good way to gauge this and a survey like this is very important to determine what kind of facilities could be developed at the site. This could be through questionnaires or interviews to understand the tourist profile and what the tourists' expectations of hospitality are.

Certification

Certification is a procedure (generally, voluntary) that assesses, monitors, and gives written assurance that a business, product, process, service or management system conforms to specific requirements. It awards a marketable logo or seal to those that meet or exceed baseline standards, i.e. those that, at a minimum, comply with the national and regional regulations, and, typically, fulfill other declared or negotiated standards prescribed by the programme. Sustainable tourism certification is a programme or scheme that measures a range of environmental, socio-cultural and economic equity issues both internally (within the business, service or product) and externally (on the surrounding community and physical environment). In other words, a programme or scheme that includes a set of principles that tour operators can subscribe to (Ecoworks Foundation 2003).

For ecotourism initiatives, such a certification could be thought of in the long run. Certifications of various kinds are available the world over. However, it might be more feasible to develop a 'home grown' scheme in the Indian context.

Whereas certification may aid the tourism industry to create niches for itself in the tourism market, it should really aim at regulating operations and improving the accountability of the tourism industry to the local community and environment where it is located. That the consent of the community to permit such an operation exists should be a key component of the certification process.

However, what needs to be kept in mind is that where communities are taking initiatives in ecotourism, certification may not work in their favour. This is mainly because communities may lack the resources to go in for a certain kind of certification process. Further, certification may bring in standardization which would in turn lead to a dilution of local aspects like hospitality, cuisine and architecture. Hence certification should be carefully thought through and may not be applicable to all situations at all times.

Training and Capacity Building

Training and capacity building needs to become an inherent part of any ecotourism initiative. It is unfair to expect local communities to handle ecotourism initiatives without adequate training. Training needs could be varied and very site specific and could range from training in house keeping, catering and finally monitoring of tourism related activities.

Education and Awareness

Important for a tourist destination and particularly for a place of conservation significance, is the need for good communication to convey to tourists the ecological and cultural significance of the place. This could be done through a variety of communication tools and techniques. Posters, written and audio-visual material are some common tools. An Interpretation Centre is probably an excellent way to communicate a variety of issues to visitors.

Cross–Site Visits

Stakeholders in any such activity often learn a lot from other sites where similar activities are being carried out. There is much to learn from visiting new sites or sharing experiences with others from different regions. This is an important component that needs to be built into the sustainable tourism plan.

Monitoring and Adaptive Management: Indicators

(This section is extracted from White paper on Ecotourism Policy July 2006 Centre for Conservation Governance and Policy & Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE)

No activity is complete without a monitoring component built into it. Tourism is an activity where constant monitoring is necessary. Monitoring for an ecotourism initiative would involve the monitoring of the ecological, social, cultural and economic aspects of this activity. Relative importance of the first two over the Economic criterion is probably justified by the fact that in certain models, the Economic criteria needs to have a commercially viable score; while in others like that of a community model, it just needs to be positive. The rationale is that for community ecotourism enterprises like home-stays, it is a supplementary livelihood and not an exclusive source of income/ profit. Profits are essential for these ventures but are not at all sufficient or even priority criteria[14].

*Score of any indicator = Value * Weightage*

Value: is the measure of impact on the various parameters by the model based on observations and calculations. The value here is taken as ranging from -3 to 3. These values can be given appropriate weightage as their importance varies depending on the immediate environment and operational conditions.

Weightage: is site specific; models compared here belong to different sites and hence are not weighted. But weightage is crucial when one impact can have severe consequence eg: water pollution by houseboats can be weighed more than the use of imported material in boat construction.

Ranges of values for an indicator taken in the score tables below are as follows:

+3 = major positive impact
+2 = improvement in status quo
+1 = potential improvement in status quo
0 = no change/status quo
-1 = major negative impact
-2 = negative change
-3 = potential negative change to status quo

Monitoring the socio-ecological indicators is important for the sector not only in terms of assessing the impact but also for financial sustainability, as in many cases; the demand is related to factors like biodiversity (Naidoo and Adamowicz, 2005). For any enterprise a score table in the manner discussed below can be prepared. This can also be used to draw inputs for identifying successful models in particular destinations. The sample score tables provided here just demonstrates the process. The numbers are only indicative, in the absence of a serious participatory quantification effort.

Ecological indicators (see Table 1 for scores)

1. Topography- alterations of the physical landscape during the inception and operation of the model
2. Air quality- activities like burning inorganic waste, fuels like kerosene, petrol, diesel etc
3. Noise-resulting from the use of generators, motors, engine, transport vehicles etc.
4. Water quantity- per capita consumption of water and water conservation measures like rainwater harvesting
5. Water quality- activities like garbage disposal, runoff and wastewater discharge in local water bodies
6. Solid waste management- scientific collection and disposal methods for solid waste
7. Terrestrial flora - introduction of invasive species eg: lantana, excessive lighting, trekking (trampling) etc which affects the local flora
8. Terrestrial fauna- activities like excessive lighting, fire, smoke and noise, which affects the local flora
9. Aquatic flora and fauna- activities like angling, boating, fishing, water sports etc, which affects the aquatic biodiversity
10. Conservation efforts- reporting illegal activities to police, patrolling, energy conservation methods and generating awareness among locals

Table 1 : Sample scoring of ecological indicators

Criteria	Indicators	Unweighted score across models			
		Homestay	Public Sector	Co–managed	Community owned
Ecological	*Topography*	0	0	0	–1
	Air quality	–1	–1	–1	–1
	Noise	–1	–2	0	–1
	Water quantity	–1	–1	–1	–1
	Water quality	0	–1	0	0
	Solid waste management	2	1	–2	0
	Terrestrial Flora	–1	–1	–1	–1
	Terrestrial Fauna	–1	–2	0	0
	Aquatic flora & fauna	0	–1	0	0
	Conservation efforts	1	1	2	1
	Total	–2	–7	–3	–4

Source: White paper on Ecotourism Policy July 2006 Centre for Conservation Governance and Policy Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE)

Socio–cultural indicators (see Table 2 for scores)

1. Design - Habitat/tradition friendly design and material in construction.
2. Local art forms - support to local art forms like folk dance, music, theatre etc arranging performances etc.
3. Local handicrafts - promotion of local handicrafts by establishing gift shops or other types of promotion.
4. Local cuisine - Emphasis on ethnic menu, using locally produced and indigenous ingredients
5. Culture - impact of the activity on the overall living style of the local community, change in values and traditions
6. Education and awareness of guests - on local resources by way of literature handouts, interpretation etc.
7. Employment - number of employees per bed/cottage
8. Leakages - benefits flow to outside communities eg: purchases of commodities or services from outside the locality
9. Multiplier effect on local economy - activities resulting indirect generation of benefits like taxi/auto, shops etc.
10. Equitable distribution of benefits among the stake holding communities
11. Proportion of domestic tourists to foreign visitors

Table 2 : Sample scoring of socio cultural indicators

Criteria	Indicators	Unweighted score across models			
		Homestay	Public Sector	Co–managed	Community owned
Socio Cultural	*Design*	2	0	2	2
	Local art form	0	0	1	0
	Local handicrafts	1	0	0	0
	Local cuisine	0	0	0	1
	Culture	1	0	1	1
	Education/ Awareness	2	1	1	1
	Employment	1	3	2	1
	Leakages	–1	–2	3	2
	Multiplier effect on local economy	0	1	1	1
	Equity in benefit sharing	0	0	2	0
	Domestic tourist	1	1	1	2
	Total	7	4	14	11

Source: White paper on Ecotourism Policy July 2006 Centre for Conservation Governance and Policy Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE)

Table 3 : Sample scoring of economic indicators

Criteria	Indicators	Unweighted score across models			
		Homestay	Public Sector	Co–managed	Community owned
Economic	*Profit*	1	3	2	2
	Gestation period	2	1	1	2
	Occupancy	1	3	2	1
	Living standards	1	1	2	1
	Competition	0	1	2	0
	Total	5	9	9	6

Source: White paper on Ecotourism Policy July 2006 Centre for Conservation Governance and Policy Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE)

Table 4 : Consolidated scores for demonstration

Criteria	Homestay	Public Sector	Co– managed	Community owned
Ecological	–2	–7	–3	–4
Socio cultural	7	4	14	11
Economic	5	9	9	6
Total	10	6	20	13

Economic indicators (see Table 3 for scores)

1. Profit (of average annual profits)
2. Gestation period- no. of years to break even
3. Occupancy- average occupancy/ year
4. Living standards- change in public health, literacy etc
5. Competition- number of competitors in the vicinity

Scores for the three criteria can be compared between enterprises or models in and across any site. The decision on the cut-off level for each criteria and the relative importance of any of the criteria for making a decision on any venture needs to be discussed by concerned stakeholders in the specific context as discussed in the previous section. *Table 4* provides the consolidated scores for demonstration.

Role of Economic criterion is only in ensuring that ET is not a loss making enterprise. Once this is ensured this criterion need not be instrumental in making a choice between enterprises or models.

Community Institutions

For an ideal ecotourism initiative the presence of a community institution is important. Ideally, it is best to build upon an existing institution. However, if none exist then the process of establishing such an initiative could be facilitated. Community institution would help in the management of the tourism initiative; facilitate the equitable sharing of benefits and also help resolve conflicts if any.

Environmentally sound practices

- infrastructure
- energy use
- use of natural resources like water
- reducing carbon footprint
- waste management

Bringing Principles and Values of Sustainable Tourism in Ecotourism

In India, tourism is viewed and promoted as a 'development paradigm' and a major engine for growth. Developmental debate is broadly categorised under economic, environmental and socio-cultural dimensions. In this process, what we often overlook is the political motivation and support that plays a crucial role in achieving developmental goals and objectives. The principles and values of sustainability too can be mapped using these five broad categories.

Political

Democratisation is a process of creating and supporting spaces where informed consensus building and decision-making can materialise. In the realm of collective decision-making in tourism, information collection and dissemination hold the key to making informed decisions. The two components involved in the process include – firstly, information regarding new projects, plans, policies, procedures, legislations and agreements that are directly or indirectly related to ecotourism development, which must be disseminated by the tourism industry and government to local stakeholders; and secondly - information on the impacts and effects of ecotourism (both positive and negative) that could be researched and monitored collectively (involving industry, government, academia, civil society, local bodies and concerned individuals) but must be disseminated to the relevant decision-making bodies at the local, regional, national and international level. Participation in decision-making spaces and seeking accountability are integral part of good governance practices.

As a process, democratisation could be achieved on an issue-specific basis as well, where the tenets of democratic-decision making and participation are applied to specific areas affected or involved in ecotourism. Socially, democratisation could stand for involving vulnerable groups (like women, children, indigenous people) in decision-making process and empowering them through it.

Ecotourism should constitute the components of meaningful and informed participation of local people and local political institutions'- i.e. Panchayats in decision-making spaces that in effect influence the course of functioning of the tourism and related industries.

Building stable partnerships and empowering local communities are prerequisites for sustainability of tourism. Local self-governments and tourism administrations should engage in dialogue with multi-stakeholder processes and evolve destination management strategies and practical responsible tourism guidelines.

Economic

A prerequisite of ecotourism is to minimise negative economic impacts on local communities and set in place a model where the main beneficiaries are the local community. This can be realized by ensuring that hotels and related tourism services are encouraged to strengthen the local economy, employ local people and wherever ecologically sustainable, source raw materials from the local market. This can be done by promoting linkages between tourism and the other economic sectors (like agriculture and fisheries, hospitality education colleges), promoting a broad network of small and medium-sized local entrepreneurs which multiply the economic spin-offs of tourism, extend the number of available small-scale services, and actively and beneficially integrate the local population. Such yardsticks to measure the economic benefits of tourism are far more useful than the conventional growth in visitor numbers. We also need to ensure responsible actions on the part of the tourists in privileging locally owned and run enterprises.

Environmental

Ecotourism development needs to incorporate principles of conservation of natural resources and biodiversity; rational utilisation of resource: land, water, conventional and non-conventional energy sources, for creation and maintenance of tourism infrastructure and facilities that are in coherence with the needs of local environment and culture. It should ensure conservation of biodiversity and natural resources in their pristine forms through low resource utilisation and substantial contribution of benefits by all stakeholders and beneficiaries. Ecotourism also needs to ensure responsible actions on the part of the tourists as well as the tourism industry in working towards the conservation and enhancement of resources in the region they visit / set up commercial activities. The key to this is through information dissemination. Also with increase in tourist activity caution needs to be heeded that access to and use of common property resources to local community are not being restricted to benefit the tourists / industry.

Environmental management systems need to be put in place to monitor, evaluate and ensure minimum ecosystem degradation as an indicator of rational natural resource utilisation for resource-intensive activities. Requisite regulatory frameworks for resource use and control of exploitation and generation of pollution need to be formulated and implemented in association with local self-governing bodies. The regulatory framework may draw from various international and national guidelines / charters pertaining to sustainable development and conservation of the environment.

Apart from the international and national guidelines / charters, the basis of the participatory approach for the sustainable development of tourism is the 73rd and 74th amendment to the Constitution of India, which accords rights to local governing bodies, the Panchayats, brining into their jurisdiction matters related to subjects of land, water, socio-economic development, infrastructure development, social welfare, social and urban forestry, waste management and maintenance of community assets. Tourism development falls under the purview of these subjects and therefore participation from the Panchayats is important. The Panchayats should be involved in all level of sustainable tourism development from approval of the tourism project, to planning, implementing, development, marketing, evaluating, monitoring, and research. The Panchayats have the right to formulate regulatory frameworks and the onus of ensuring this and its compliance from the tourism industry would rest on the State government and is drawn from various international policy guidelines.

Social and Cultural

Ecotourism development has undeniable social dimensions and when unregulated its social costs are high. Two dimensions to socio-cultural impacts of tourism, which must be addressed are the inability of the current tourism model to develop into an economically and socially viable option for local communities and secondly, the denial of its adverse social impacts by government and industry alike. There are instances where ecotourism has commodified and standardised original forms of music, dance, and ceremonies, adapting to accommodate tourist demands leading to a loss of authenticity of these cultures. Over time, this can create social change resulting in culture clashes between local communities and the tourists.

Ecotourism needs to address these adverse impacts by providing a base for social and cultural exchanges to take place between the local communities and the tourists on an equal platform without the former feeling inferior and taking pride in their culture and traditions. Tourists when visiting places need to be sensitive to local traditions and values,

as also the tourism industry when promoting the same by not commodifying art forms. When local communities respect and protect their social and cultural values, others too learn to respect it.

Reorienting processes to contribute towards sustainability in tourism

We have seen that there have been lacunae in the existing policies and legal frame works. A possible way to achieve this is through a reform in the process of policy-making, making tourism development people-centric and ensuring the continuance of the democratic process by strengthening the institutional framework for tourism.

The way forward is to involve all stakeholders of tourism such as local governments and communities, departments of tourism, culture, social welfare, environment & forests, commerce and industry, women and child and Panchayati Raj, tourism industries, civil society groups that have a role to play in bringing about the notions of sustainability in tourism. Democratisation involves creating spaces for the conduct of such meaningful dialogue and policy-making is one such space that can be used more effectively to achieve this end. In all sectors as in tourism, policies are directives that guide and regulate development activities nationally and regionally. We have seen in the past that inadequate consultation has resulted in poor implementation of policy objectives like ensuring environmental protection and the non-inclusion of sustainability concerns in the country's international trade commitments in tourism. For policy to become an effective tool for change, the policy-making process needs to be reformed so that the product is the outcome of a process of consultation.

Strengthening institutions

A necessary step towards pursuing ecotourism in a sustainable manner is to constitutionally empower local governments as primary decision-makers on matters regarding tourism development. Also one needs to ensure that they are empowered – politically and financially, to function independently and responsibly. Empowering institutions of local self-government to be the pillars of democracy would involve engaging them in multi-stakeholder processes, ensuring sustainable tourism within local frameworks with the requisite financial back-up, enforcing code of ethics, transparency in information sharing, taking punitive action against violators and evolving micro-level destination management strategies. Social audit and collective accountability must be made a standing principle of all government activity whether at the local or national level.

Implementation of international initiatives like Agenda 21 guidelines can aid such a process.

Regulatory framework

The continuance of democratic systems and procedures so that its values are defended through time can be ensured only by internally strengthening systems of governance and regulation. Multiple governing bodies with overlapping jurisdictions, contradicting legislation and an incipient regulatory framework make monitoring and regulating tourism a difficult task. Given its important socio-cultural, environmental and economic dimensions, concrete regulations and safeguards must be put in place and adhered to by developers to ensure the sustainability of tourism. In most countries experiencing severe adverse impacts of tourism, regulatory failure has been a main contributing cause to the process. In India, the decimation of the coastline along several stretches is largely attributable to the poor implementation of the Coastal Regulation Zone Act, a piece of legislation aimed at preserving coastal ecosystems by managing development activities.

Bringing in sustainability in tourism is continuous involving and integrating all stakeholders who benefit and will be affected by tourism development. This process poses a challenge to governments as they must review not only external influences and policies but also reform and amend their own internal systems to direct tourism development towards sustainability. It also involves challenging mainstream ideas, notions and definitions of tourism advocated by the WTO-OMT and WTTC when they are in opposition to grassroots perspectives.

Endnotes

1. *This is a discussion note compiling some of the issues related to policies and legislations on the theme of ecotourism.*

2. *http://www.world-tourism.org/sustainable/IYE/WTO-UNEP-Concept-Paper.htm*

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12. *Ibid. _asset.html*

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14. *Source: This section has been quoted from White paper on Ecotourism Policy July 2006 Centre for Conservation Governance and Policy & Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE)*

6.

DO WE NEED THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF ECOTOURISM?

By Anita Pleumarom[1]

2002

The first flush of ecotourism is running into trouble. Claims that we can protect nature, benefit local communities and also bring national revenues to the South are faced with a different reality on the ground. From Thailand to Belize, ecotourism has opened the doors to more forest destruction. Indigenous peoples in affected areas have been forced out of their traditional lands in some cases. Reports are also growing that such "tourists" are illegally collecting forest plants with potential medicinal value for the biotechnology industry.

So when the United Nations proclaimed 2002 as International Year of Ecotourism, many NGOs who have been monitoring tourism impacts went on the alert. In October this year, an international coalition of environmental, human rights and indigenous peoples groups launched a call for a fundamental reassessment of the UN Ecotourism Year 2002. They also denounce the lack of transparency and failure to meaningfully involve indigenous peoples and Southern organizations in ongoing preparations.

"We are extremely concerned that this UN endorsement of ecotourism in light of all the fundamental problems related to the industry - in many cases another greenwash - will destroy more biodiversity and harm even more local communities," said Chee Yoke Ling, a representative of the Third World Network based in Malaysia.

"I really think this is going to be worse than the launch of package tours to the Third World," commented Nina Rao from India, Southern co-chair of the NGO Tourism Caucus at the UN Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD).

The UN General Assembly had adopted a resolution (A/Res/53/200) in November 1998 to prepare for Ecotourism Year 2000. The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN-affiliated World Tourism Organization (WTO) are to organize activities and projects around the event, and one highlight will be the World Ecotourism Summit, to be held in Quebec, Canada, in May 2002.

Critics argue the UN has given approval and is making preparations for the Ecotourism Year, without proper examination of the nature of the ecotourism industry and its many negative impacts on the tourist destinations. A letter to UNEP's tourism programme coordinator, Oliver Hillel, signed by more than 20 groups from the South and North, says, "Too often, international agencies have used the South for misguided and outright destructive development experiments, and … we oppose the idea that the International Year of Ecotourism serves as an instrument for ecotourism experiments in developing countries, which are likely to cause more harm than good."

The coalition letter vigorously questions claims that the ecotourism approach rectifies the economic inequalities, social injustices and ecological problems associated with conventional tourism. Rather, it warns, such developments have "opened opportunities for a whole range of investors to gain access to remote rural, forest, coastal and marine areas", and "more encroachments, illegal logging, mining and plundering of biological resources occur, including biopiracy by unscrupulous and corporate collectors."

In the letter, the groups also point out that "governments are utterly ill equipped for the International Year of Ecotourism" and often "promote all forms of rural and nature tourism as ecotourism, while frameworks to effectively scrutinize, monitor and control developments are poorly developed or non-existent."

Ecotourism promoters primarily target indigenous peoples and their lands, ecosystems and cultures, and this has especially attracted criticisms from indigenous and Southern rights activists. Deborah McLaren, the coordinator of the US-based Rethinking Tourism Project that works for protection and preservation of indigenous lands and cultures expressed worries, "that much of what passes as 'ecotourism' is designed to benefit investors, empower managerial specialists, and delight tourists, not enhance the economic, social and ecological health of the host communities."

Rodney Bobiwash, director of the Forum for Global Exchange's Center for World Indigenous Studies stressed the need for a broader vision of indigenous concerns: "More than anybody, indigenous people realize that the discussion of tourism must be situated within a larger discourse encompassing the discussion of environmental and habitat protection, sustainable development, traditional knowledge, intellectual property regimes, biological diversity, access and benefit sharing, biopiracy and cultural property."

"Any discussion carried on without consideration of the cumulative impact of all of these processes will not only lack credibility but will also limit the opportunities for indigenous participation in the discourse," he said.

The Ecotourism Year is clouded with questions and doubts since its priorities and objectives are far from clear. Critics ask, for example, what will happen if this initiative suggests that all UN member countries should encourage ecotourism projects in rural and natural areas and many thousands of communities around the world end up competing with each other for a share of the tourism market? "…who will take responsibility, when ecotourism initiatives make investments based on miscalculated demand and later face decline, local businesses go bankrupt and entire communities are pushed into crisis?" ask the groups in the letter to UNEP.

Another scenario is that the event will encourage all holiday-makers to become ecotourists, resulting in hordes of travellers invading villages and protected areas, rather than staying in the existing tourist centres. Surely, such development could not be called "sustainable" and would have more undesirable impacts to add on to the vast problems already found in existing organized tourism.

The letter goes on to warn that ecotourism programmes that are promoted as part of the economic liberalization and globalization wave are likely to make matters worse. It states, "As supranational institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF and the World Trade Organization are pressuring developing countries towards trade and investment liberalization, national and local governments are increasingly disabled to plan and manage tourism - and ecotourism - on their own terms."

It emphasizes that local concerns are at odds with the interests of "the corporate tourism industry, (which) aggressively pushes for non-intervention in companies' decision-making processes to expand their business and maximize their profits."

"As nature-based tourism is presently seen as one of the most lucrative niche markets, powerful transnational corporations are likely to exploit the International Year of Ecotourism to dictate their own definitions and rules of ecotourism on society, while people-centred initiatives will be squeezed out and marginalized," says the coalition letter.

With the services sector under tremendous pressure in the World Trade Organization to be opened to foreign corporations, there are signs already that tourism in the South, a major service industry, is eagerly targeted by transnational corporations.

Meanwhile, the NGO coalition's concerns have also been discussed within World Bank circles. One official, Kreszentia M. Duer, acknowledged that "if we don't take a strategic position on tourism development…, small-scale efforts for community-based tourism will always be overwhelmed by the powerful interests of big business and the enticements of the big pay-offs they can offer to government officials."

"Without organizational efforts…and a multi-pronged, strategic approach, community-based tourism will tend to remain ad hoc, piecemeal, and micro," she concluded, adding, "The 'International Year of Ecotourism' will be little more than rhetoric, unless these challenges are addressed directly."

The debates around the Ecotourism Year have been heavily overshadowed by politics and a serious conflict of interests has evolved. Critical NGO observers complain that corporate industry and large nature conservation/ecotourism organizations have colluded to lobby for the UN endorsement of ecotourism and now want to exploit it for self-serving purposes (e.g. to get free promotion or funding for their projects), while voices that question the interests of the protagonists are excluded or given only cursory treatment.

It is conspicuous, they point out, that only certain environmental NGOs and The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) have been allowed to play a key role in the preparations - exactly those organizations that have been strongly criticized by grassroots-oriented and indigenous groups for ignoring local people's concerns.

"In our experience, large nature conservation and development organizations do not respect (local people's) right," says a statement presented by a spectrum of indigenous peoples representatives and NGOs to more than 150 governments at a meeting on the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nairobi, Kenya, last May. "For example, several activities undertaken by the Ecotourism Society, Conservation International and IUCN do not respect the rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, particularly in regard to Year of Ecotourism activities, and often threaten cultural and biological diversity."

Initially, the UN invited all concerned parties "to exert all possible efforts on behalf of the success of the Year" (Resolution 1998/40). But the question arises, success for whom? If the charges turn out to be true that only certain parties will reap the major benefits of the Ecotourism Year, the UN's integrity and its proclaimed mission to primarily work for the well-being of the world's poor and disadvantaged will surely be put in doubt.

Given the great contradictions and ironies surrounding this UN programme, the already shaky image of ecotourism may further deteriorate, to the point that the grandiose Ecotourism Year scheme collapses like a house of cards. Is it worth all the energy and money that the UN can ill afford?

Endnotes

1. Anita Pleumarom works with Tourism Investigation & Monitoring Team (tim-team) based in Bangkok. Tim-team is a research & campaigning organisation working on the impacts of tourism.

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7.

ECOTOURISM AN ECOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC TRAP FOR THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES[1]

By Anita Pleumarom[2]

1999

For many years, tourism experts have sought to develop viable alternatives to mass tourism, to at least mitigate the negative impacts on society and the environment in destinations. Some communities, resisting development impositions on their lives, have also experimented with small-scale, locally controlled and sustainable tourism activities on their own. Yet, all these initiatives have certainly not posed a real challenge to the status quo.

Since the 4th Meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP4) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Bratislava last year, efforts have intensified at the international level to develop tourism programmes that match with the three objectives of the CBD, contained in Article 1, "the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits." But these noble intentions, emerging from a spirit of international good will, are by necessity abstract and vague. At the grassroots level, the new-found attention to sustainable or eco-tourism development appear to cause more harm than good.

Critics charge attempts to rearrange conventional tourism activities towards sustainable tourism to reduce pressures on ecologically fragile areas and develop local communities are doomed to failure. Observation over recent years has confirmed that opening up new biodiversity-rich areas for so-called tourism-cum-conservation projects only add to the multi-dimensional impacts of mass tourism. Countries embarking on strategies to transform their last "unspoilt" territories into tourism attractions risk that their remaining patches of natural forests will be sacrificed for commercial purposes; marine, coastal and watershed areas get exposed and polluted; and already depleting biological resources further threatened.

Since the outbreak of the Asian financial crisis with its volatile effects on the global market economy, tourism growth is more than ever considered as crucial to developing nations' survival, while environmental objectives are receding. Often, tourism is seen as the only industry apart from exports generating the revenue needed to pay back the huge foreign debts owed to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and other international creditors.

In Southeast Asian countries, eco-tourism is increasingly being made a flagship project to attract hard currency for economic recovery and to help communities ride out of the crisis. In Thailand alone, thousands of villages are newly targeted for tourism development. According to an article in the Bangkok newspaper The Nation (7 Apr.1999), a comprehensive community development programme, initiated by His Majesty the King in the midst of economic woes, aims to develop eco-tourism - along with other economic activities such as farm produce processing, medicinal herb planting and traditional Thai medicine – in 15,223 villages, involving more than 300,000 families and a population of more than 700,000! This raises the question of oversupply in the face of unpredictable demand, a common hazard in the tourism industry.

But ironically, to set up such tourism projects and to establish the necessary infrastructure to service tourists, more and more foreign loans are needed, which just add to the already overwhelming financial burden of countries. Meanwhile, many case studies show that the economic benefits from eco-tourism have been highly overrated, and there is simply not enough money for the conservation of natural and cultural heritage and the improvement of public services.

In Thailand, the World Bank agreed in 1998 to provide a US$300 million loan for a social investment project (SIP) aimed at tackling the problems of unemployment, loss of income and the higher cost of social services arising from the economic meltdown and the crippling structural adjustment programme (SAP) prescribed by the IMF. A major set of government programmes under SIP was directly related to (eco-)tourism development, including beautification projects, the installation of bi-lingual signs and the construction of toilets for tourists in rural areas. According to the SIP mission report, these tourism projects to be coordinated by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) would promote "new approaches and procedures, for example, incorporating more local community participation."

However, social activists argued the idea of making tourism a major component of the World Bank-led SIP were deceptive because such activities were primarily to boost earnings for debt servicing, and local communities had other, more immediate needs in this time of hardship. In addition, an eco-tourism project in Northern Thailand to be managed by the Forest Industry Organization with a SIP loan from the Japanese Overseas Economic Cooperation (OECF) provoked protests from indigenous Karen people who saw their traditional livelihoods, culture and environment threatened.

Academics also came out to criticize that the funds and loans granted to villagers under the national social plan to invest in business activities at the grassroots level were destroying communities' initiatives to build up their own self-reliant and sustainable local economies. Community researcher Pitthaya Wongwol told a seminar at the Social Institute of Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok: "A new bubble economy is emerging in villages because now a lot of money is being handed out by the government for people to run their own businesses… All these budgets come with the wrong policy of attracting and urging people to do the same thing nationwide within a short period… How can they sell the same thing, and who will buy their products? There is an oversupply and people will lose out soon."

Pitthaya raised the example of some 5,000 communities in Thailand producing herbal shampoo, processed banana and other items in the absence of sufficient demand. Similarly, the question arises what will happen if thousands of villages, now being encouraged to develop eco-tourism, begin to compete with each other to lure visitors and their money? And what are the consequences if the tourists stay away because the macro-economic situation does not improve as forecasted, other countries in and outside the region offer more attractive eco-tourism destinations, or consumers change their taste and turn to other fashionable tourist products?

These issues are rarely considered in the conceptualization of international sustainable tourism policies. Rather, it is suggested that all nations in the world should implement community-based tourism projects for nature conservation and economic development as soon as possible.

During Asian boom times, speculative investments created a serious oversupply of hotels, resorts, golf courses, shopping and entertainment centers in popular tourist spots, causing environmental destruction and undesirable changes in community life. While many of these establishments are now empty and more or less ruined in crisis-hit destinations, the danger is real that in future, an oversupply of eco-tourism facilities will be created, which is undoubtedly to the detriment of the commitments to achieve sustainable development.

In fact, there is a strong case to warn against inflationary eco-tourism policies, as they may push even more rural and indigenous people into economic despair, while the high-flown goals of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of biological resources can not be fulfilled. In view of this, the deliberations of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), the Inter-Sessional Meeting and COP5 of the Convention on Biological Diversity present a crucial opportunity for a comprehensive and public assessment of the claims and underlying premises on sustainable, "biodiversity-friendly" or eco-tourism. The decision of the UN General Assembly to proclaim 2002 as the International Year of Eco-tourism should also be viewed with caution and be subjected to broader debate.

Endnote

1. This paper was presented in June 1999 in preparation of the 5th meeting of the Conference of Parties [COP5] to the Convention on Biological Diversity [CBD]

2. Anita Pleumarom works with Tourism Investigation & Monitoring Team (tim-team) based in Bangkok. tim-team is a research & campaigning organisation working on the impacts of tourism.

Contents

8.

ECOTOURISM A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSING CONTEXT, OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS

By EQUATIONS

Conceptual framework

1. What was the set of factors leading to the decision to introduce ecotourism? Who are the actors?
2. What was the process of arriving at a definition or introducing ecotourism to communities? What are the components?
3. Who is promoting ecotourism? Who is branding, developing products? What are the values, agenda, goals? What is being promoted as ecotourism?
4. Larger players Agenda? Methods?
5. Who are the smaller players? What are the financing options?
6. What are the products and where is ecotourism being located?
7. What are the laws and policies related to ecotourism development and regulation
8. Are there charters, guidelines, self regulation by communities or industry?
9. What are the various business models - entrepreneurship, partnership, cooperatives, others?
10. Are there accreditation or certification systems in operation or on the cards? Who influences and controls?
11. How is ecotourism being taught?
12. Who are involved on ecotourism research?

Research framework for ecotourism

1. Tourism related

1.1 Documentation of how ecotourism developed in the area
1.2 No. of establishments, history of growth
1.3 No. of private, government establishments; local community owned; partnerships if any
1.4 Profile of tourism establishments – investment, area, ownership
1.5 Profile of tourists
1.6 Tour operators and travel agents; local and non-local
1.7 Tourism activities – products – USP
1.8 Tourist' requirements
1.9 Tourism in protected areas
- 1.9.1. numbers, profile of tourists
- 1.9.2. activities (trekking, safaris etc) and the way it is done
- 1.9.3. accommodation facilities provided by forest departments
- 1.9.4. opportunities for local people

1.9.5. closure periods, if any
1.9.6. any cases of accidents, e.g. wild animal attacks on tourists
1.10 Business Models
1.11 Product development and Marketing (what to put out and what not to put out?)
1.11.1. list of tourism products; USP
1.11.2. promotional material; developed by
1.11.3. what is marketed?
1.11.4. main ways of marketing
1.12 Branding
1.12.1. usage of certification, accreditation processes by tourism establishments
1.13 Partnerships - Various kinds of partnerships that are currently operational at a more broader levels e.g. donor interventions, foreign investments
1.14 Seasonality of tourism

2. Environmental impacts

2.1 Status report of environment of the location
2.1.1. forests, biodiversity, protected areas
2.1.2. land use
2.1.3. other development activities happening in the vicinity
2.1.4. nature of human-animal conflict
2.1.5. natural resources
2.2 Use of Minor Forest Produce / Non-Timber Forest Produce by the local community
2.2.1. before and after ecotourism
2.2.2. has there been a loss of access?
2.3 Protected areas –
2.3.1. local use vs. tourism use
2.3.2. community based conservation measures – community conserved areas and conservation areas – distinguish and describe; community involved
2.3.3. traditional conservation activities, measures
2.3.4. community involvement in conservation activities
2.3.5. specific impacts on women, other marginalised groups
2.4 Availability of natural resources, e.g. water, local building material etc – before and after ecotourism
2.5 Pollution parameters
2.6 Waste management
2.6.1. methods adopted by tourism establishments
2.6.2. methods adopted by responsible authorities
2.7 Usage of energy e.g. solar

3. Economic impacts

3.1 Traditional and contemporary occupations; shifts if any
3.2 Average annual income, what is the difference that tourism has made
3.3 Land use – traditional, tourism
3.4 Land ownership – tenures
3.5 Employment of local community in the tourism sector (disaggregated men –women)
3.5.1. in tourism establishments - profiles
3.5.2. services – guides, tour operations,
3.5.3. self-employment opportunities
3.5.4. scale of wages
3.6 Impacts
3.6.1. price rise of commodities, land
3.6.2. procurement of raw materials in tourism establishments
3.6.3. migration of youth
3.6.4. rise in income level
3.6.5. shift in traditional occupation
3.6.6. linkages & leakages
3.6.7. which are the sections that do not engage?

3.7 What are the revenues that each stakeholder gets from ecotourism – private establishments, governments, local governments?

4. Social impacts

4.1 Demographic data
4.2 Displacement
4.3 Crimes linked to tourism
  4.7.1. drug abuse/alcohol
  4.7.2. trafficking; prostitution
  4.7.3. bio-piracy
4.4 Gender issues
  4.4.1. gender roles – quantum of work for women
  4.4.2. employment of women in the ecotourism sector; departments, levels of work (skilled, unskilled), differential wages (women get less than men) - economic
  4.4.3. role of women in decision making processes in the context of tourism
4.5 Caste
4.6 Other marginalised groups and their engagement in tourism
4.7 Common community benefits; expenditure of surplus income – individual, community
4.8 Community's expectation/s from tourism and whether they are getting it
4.9 Experiences with home stays (impacts, interactions, dynamics of castes, class)
4.10 What are the capacities that were built for communities to engage with ecotourism?

5. Cultural impacts

5.1 Interaction of community and tourists on local art and culture, festivals (special shows)
5.2 Changes from traditional forms, patterns or return to it
5.3 Demonstration effect

6. Education & interpretation

6.1 Interpretation centres
6.2 Awareness building activities
6.3 Information centres, run by whom

7. Institutional arrangements

7.1 Role of LSGIs in ecotourism development. Level of awareness
7.2 Tourism in gram sabha meetings
7.3 Rights of LSGIs and ecotourism development
7.4 Decision making processes; discussions
7.5 New institutional mechanisms with representation of various stakeholders and rightholders
7.6 Institutions built for tourism
7.7 What is the level of engagement of other government departments – tourism, forest?

8. Policy & plans

8.1 Are there ecotourism policies, regulations and guidelines at state level, location level?
8.2 When did ecotourism commence?
8.3 What was the motivation for setting up ecotourism project?
8.4 Was there tourism happening before ecotourism?
8.5 What are future plans? – areas, infrastructure, leasing land for private developers
8.6 Any support for community based initiatives?
8.7 Guidelines for tourism operations, tourists if any
8.8 Shift in role of forest department from conservation to promotion of tourism

9. Charters and guidelines

9.1 Formulated by
9.2 Level of implementation
9.3 Process of formulation
9.4 International conventions like UNESCO (biosphere reserves) and other multilateral environmental agreements

Contents

EQUATIONS is a research, advocacy and campaigning organisation working since 1985 on the impacts of tourism particularly in terms of rights and benefits to local communities. We envision tourism that is sustainable & non exploitative, where decision making is democratised and access to and benefits of tourism are equitably distributed.

Equations