

Prospects and Potentialities of Eco-Tourism Circuit at the Land of Golden Langurs “Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary” of Assam

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Abstract-Eco-Tourism is now one of the major centre of attraction in all over the world. In India also, Eco-Tourism is playing a major role in tourism development and local employment generation. Government is also taking up various initiatives to develop the remote places and off beat destinations as Eco-Tourism spots. My research will be focused on Eco-Tourism prospects and opportunities in Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary which is still unexplored. This research will highlight the possibilities of rural tourism opportunities, wildlife and how we can convert the overall destination into a perfect eco-tourism destination. It will bring out the planning, role of local people, facilities and possible future growth of the destination. The research will also help us to know about the actual potentiality of the destination and how can we develop it professionally and systematically.

The outcome of the research will create a positive impression about the destination and it will create an awareness about the Tourism Industry. It will provide us the information on all necessary steps and benefits which can be implemented properly for future sustainability of the destination and its economic growth. Method of Research will be maximum Qualitative and little bit Quantitative and the sampling method will be Convenient Sampling.

Keywords- Opportunities and Potentialities, Development of the destination, Eco-Tourism, Rural and Wildlife Tourism, Employment opportunities, Future prospects and possibilities

INTRODUCTION

In today's world we can observe that biodiversity is getting damaged everywhere. People's settlements are increasing, carrying capacity is getting over loaded, wetlands and creeks are on its way to destruction due to constructions, pollution is increasing etc. So it's becoming a global challenge and due to this irresponsible behavior environment is badly affecting and result of causing global warming.

One of the major causes of affecting the environment is Tourism. In India, we can see it's a country of rich diversity and forests. We have more than 80 national parks in India, 400 wildlife sanctuaries and thousands of reserve forests. The country is having rich flora and faunas with amidst rainforest, mountains and

dense jungles. India is also famous for Wildlife Tourism which attracts tourists from across the country and globe. The animals like One-Horned Rhino, Asiatic Lions, Asiatic Elephants, Royal Bengal Tigers, Golden Langurs, Wild Buffalos, Swamp Deers etc. are prime identities of our country. But here the challenge is wildlife tourism is very sensitive, if we don't take care of the destination properly then it will get spoil. Wildlife Tourism is depending on pure environment, cleanliness, pollution free, sound free etc. In wildlife destination, we generally concentrate on carrying capacity of the place. No doubt, increasing tourism day by day at wildlife destinations is helping in revenue generation but at the same time it also deteriorating the environment. Rather than having emotional attachment with the place tourism industry is taking it as a commercial

selling of the destination. Tourism is important but it is more important to be conserve properly because if environment gets spoiled then tourism will automatically get vanished. In western countries, we can see that administration is very strict regarding their environment and they strictly prohibit the activities which is harmful for their environment. For a country's revenue generation, tourism has to be developed but at the same time we have to see the following steps too to sustain the environment:

- a) Stop illegal construction
- b) Follow environment rules and policies
- c) Strictly follow the Wildlife Protection Act
- d) Reduce pollution
- e) Concentrate on carrying capacity of the destination
- f) Support Eco-Tourism
- g) Conserve the wildlife and preserve its heritage
- h) Cleanliness of the surroundings
- i) Introduce local community participation
- j) Become a Responsible Tourist

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Ravi Shankar Kumar Singh (1995) in his book 'Ecotourism and Sustainable Development' remarks that ecotourism activities have been increasing rapidly worldwide over the past two decades and further growth is expected in the years ahead.
- In the book 'Sustainable Tourism: A Geographical Perspective', Hall and Alan (1999) describe, "Ecotourism is environmentally friendly and sustainable tourism, which also benefits the local community".
- Raghavan (2005) opines: ecotourism is ecologically sustainable with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation. It is therefore necessary to bring together conservation and development in the activities yearning economic progress.
- According to Dr.Vijaya Kumar's book 'Environment, Tourism and Development'

(2014), tourism and environment should not only depend upon each other, but also benefit mutually. He also highlights the importance of environment in tourism.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study for the scope of eco-tourism with wildlife tourism at Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary.
- To study the economic impact of eco-tourism and rural tourism upon the local people dwelling in the fringes of the aforesaid areas.
- To study the promotion of conservation of nature by creating a sustainable tourism model.

CHAKRASHILA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary is again one of the important wildlife sanctuaries in Assam situated in Kokrajhar and Dhubri Districts of Assam. This wildlife sanctuary is very famous for successful conservation of Golden Langurs. Its area is 45.56 sq kms. First declared as reserve forest in the year 1966 and later recognized with the status of wildlife sanctuary by the Govt. of Assam. A local Environmental activist group "Nature's Beckon" played a vital role for this recognition.

ANIMALS FOUND IN CHAKRASHILA

Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary is the home for many faunas like Golden Langurs, Rhesus Macaque, Chinese Pangolin, Asiatic Jackal, Bengal Fox etc.

HOW TO REACH CHAKRASHILA

BY AIR: Nearest Airport from Chakrashila is Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport in Guwahati, situated approx. at 225 kms away.

BY RAIL: Kokrajhar Railway Station is the nearest major railhead from the sanctuary which is situated at around 15 kms away and another railhead is situated at Dhubri which is 55 kms away.

BY ROAD: Chakrashila is easily accessible by road via Kokrajhar Town, which is a headquarter of B.T.A.D. and also via Dhubri

Town. You can take a cab either from Guwahati or Kokrajhar and Dhubri.

BEST TIME TO VISIT

Best time to visit for both the parks is from October to March. Sometimes people also travel during monsoons to Dehing-Patkai Rainforest but it's not too safe at that time so people are suggested to visit during winter days.

TOURISM IN CHAKRASHILA SANCTUARY

- a) Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary is situated in western part of Assam coming under two districts namely Kokrajhar and Dhubri Districts. Major part of the wildlife sanctuary is situated in Kokrajhar District, a part of Bodoland Territorial Council. Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary has its independent wildlife division called as Chakrashila Wildlife Division.
- b) Kokrajhar Town is the nearest transit point, which is around 8 kms from the sanctuary. Kokrajhar Railway Station is one of the important stations in the state which lies on Guwahati-Kolkata-New Delhi rail route. By road, Kokrajhar is around 240 kms from Guwahati and nearest airport is situated in Rupshi, restarted its flight operations in May 2021
- c) Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary can be also reached from the Salkosha side, which is coming under Dhubri District. Salkosha is a place situated on Guwahati-Gauripur Highway via Goalpara. Kokrajhar Town and Dhubri Town are also very close to the cities of North Bengal as well as neighbouring countries Bhutan and Bangladesh.
- d) Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary is very famous for Golden Langurs and the sanctuary is conserving by a popular nature activist group of North-East India called as "Nature's Beckon". As per their data, it's a second protected habitat for Golden Langurs in India. Local people are playing a very important role of conservation and preservation of the site.
- e) Jungle Trekking and Nature walk are two major activities in Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary. Adventure activities are also available near the sanctuary. A group of

professionals conduct adventure activities for the tourists/visitors visiting the sanctuary.

- f) Popular wetlands called "Dhir" and Deeplai" Beels are situated near to the sanctuary where one can get some beautiful snaps of photography as well as nature walk.
- g) Best time to visit Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary is from October to March. Winter season is the best time to explore the sanctuary.

SCOPES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN CHAKRASHILA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

- a) **COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM:** - Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary is known for its community participation. Nature's Beckon, an environment activist group has played a very important role in Chakrashila with the help of local villagers for conservation of Golden Langurs in the area. Bodo Tribe and other tribes reside nearby Chakrashila and since many years local people are playing a major role in safeguarding the sanctuary.
- b) **RURAL STAYS:** - Though Chakrashila don't have any rural stays or homestays, but it has a huge potentiality to introduce small homestays facility as well as tented accommodations too. Generally, people visit Chakrashila as a daylong visit, and they prefer to stay at either Kokrajhar or Bongaigaon. Local villagers of Chakrashila can adopt the model of homestay facility for the visitors. Winter season is the best time to visit Chakrashila and definitely people will prefer to stay nearby sanctuary if they get good homestay facility. Local people can also offer delicious Bodo Cuisine to the visitors. The place is very least explored destination, so it can be an ideal place for bird and wildlife lovers.
- c) **ECO-TOURISM AND WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY:** - Chakrashila is a nature's own address and there are many beautiful places nearby the sanctuary such as Dheer and Diplai beels. They can be an upgraded eco-tourism spots and in winters many local visitors enjoy picnic nearby there. If we can successfully introduce an Eco-Tourism model in Chakrashila, then many wildlife and nature lover people will visit the place. Not only eco-

tourism, but the place can be an important centre for wildlife and nature photography.

d) **ADVENTURE TOURISM:** - Already near to Chakrashila, there is an adventure tourism body who offer paragliding activity for the visitors. The team is very young enthusiastic and successfully conducting the paragliding activity without any problem. Not only paragliding, but Chakrashila can also be an ideal destination for jungle trekking or forest walk. In winter season, the mist and fog grip the sanctuary and you can just imagine how a tourist will feel in that atmosphere. Chakrashila Sanctuary is situated on a hilly terrain and forest is situated on a hill top, so soft treks can be one of the major activities there. Even there are small roads which are passing through the sanctuary and it can be converted into a cycle track. Few more important activities, which we can introduce in the sanctuary are as follows: -

- 1) Tented accommodation
- 2) Mini climbing activities
- 3) Fishing or Angling
- 4) Bon Fire in the jungle

CHAKRASHILA'S UNIQUENESS: -

- a) Highest concentration of Golden Langurs
- b) Eco-Friendly atmosphere
- c) Friendly behavior of local people
- d) Least explored destination
- e) One of the major sites in North-East India, which is completely controlling by Nature's Beckon.
- f) Ideal destination for Eco and Responsible Tourism along with Wildlife
- g) Easily accessible from all parts. It's easily accessible from Guwahati, the state's capital city and even easily accessible from North Bengal Towns, Siliguri (West Bengal).
- h) Chakrashila is now has a nearest airport called as Rupshi Airport, which has restarted again for civilians and direct flights are available from Guwahati and Kolkata.
- i) Chakrashila can be easily accessed from three major towns of Assam which can be a major transit point for tourists such as: - Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon and Dhubri.

ECONOMIC GROWTH POSSIBILITIES IN CHAKRASHILA

- a) Local tribal handicrafts
- b) Entry charges for nature walk
- c) Forest Guard charges
- d) Earning from tourism activities like Adventure and Boat ride on Dhir and Diplai Beel.
- e) Cycles for cycling around the adjacent areas of Chakrashila
- f) Tented accommodation
- g) Selling of local cuisine.
- h) Local Guide.
- i) Homestays.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE TECHNIQUES:

The present study employed the CONVENIENCE SAMPLING AND STRATIFIED RANDOM SAMPLING.

- In this research study, first I have decided to find out the respondents as per the convenience. After deciding the respondents from various divisions, I have chosen Stratified Random Sampling which has been divided into categories like Group-1, Group-2, Group-3 and Group-4.
- Group 1:- Local administration/ Government officials
- Group 2:- Local people
- Group 3:- Visitors/Tourists
- Group-4:- Local associations, service providers etc.

STUDY AREA: - The study area includes local people, local associations, visitors and local administrative officers of Chakrashila Wildlife Division, Kokrajhar Town Area and Dhubri side who have highlighted about the various aspects, prospects and potentialities of Eco-Tourism and Rural Tourism in Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary.

COLLECTION OF DATA: -

PRIMARY DATA: - Questionnaire, face to face interview, personal observations, field visit.

SECONDARY DATA: - Journals, Magazines, Book, Internet etc.

RESEARCH METHODS: -

In this study, the method of QUALITATIVE RESEARCH has been taken up: -

a) Qualitative Research: - During conducting the field work and extraction of primary data, following processes have been taken: -

- 1) One-On-One Interview
- 2) Focus Groups
- 3) Case Study Research
- 4) Record Keeping
- 5) Process of Personal Observation
- 6) Ethnographic Research

b) QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH: - Under this research, only the SURVEY METHOD has been conducted to get a proper figures and facts of the research study.

c) DESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH: - Under this research method, SAMPLE SURVEY has been conducted by forming the questionnaire patterns.

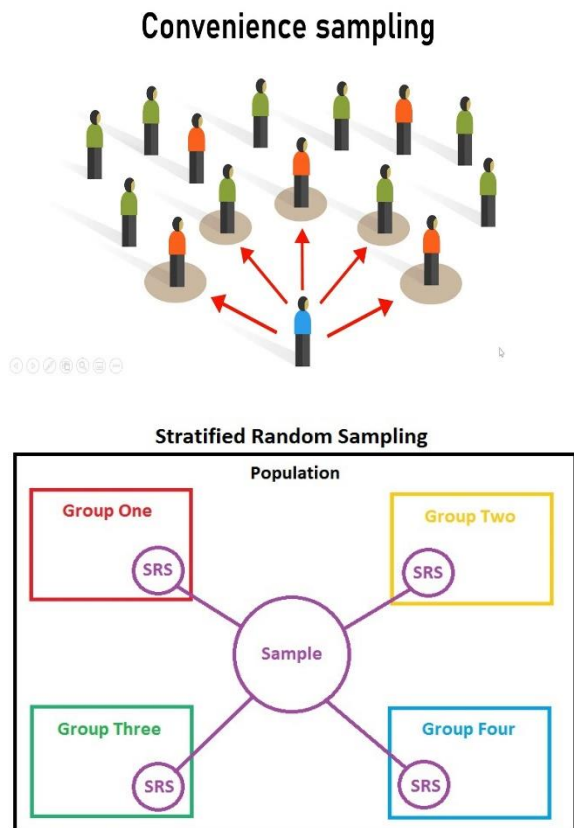
DATA ANALYSIS: -

Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary is having its own wildlife division. The population of the area is less than 2,000. The tribes that inhabit the fringe villages of Chakrashila are the Rabha and Bodo. Besides them there are some Garo and the Rajbanshi tribals, along with some Muslim families as new entrants to the villages. Agriculture is the main occupation of the villagers, with paddy as the main crop. In addition to paddy, potatoes and green vegetables are grown for home consumption and a few livestock are kept. Most families own their own looms and weave their own cloth. The income levels of the villagers are low, and they depend upon the surrounding forest resources in order to meet most of their daily requirements, such as raw material for houses, agricultural and musical implements; and for food, fuel and fodder. Most of the protein in their diet comes from the forest areas in the form of fish, snails and insects. There is a heavy dependence on the perennial springs of the forest for irrigation and potable water.

Some of the constraints of community-based conservation in Chakrashila are: -

- 1. Total lack of infrastructure for the management of the biodiversity (such as specialized field equipment) for this protected area.
- 2. Uncertainty tenure of the villagers over the forest resources.
- 3. Lack of knowledge in local people about the conservation and basic information about the sanctuary.

Maximum local people within Chakrashila are coming to know about its importance through NGO Nature's Beckon, leading by Mr. Saumyadeep Dutta. The members and awareness programs conducting by Nature's Beckon is praiseworthy and they are also bringing the culture of adapting Eco-Tourism in Chakrashila Division.



POPULATION AND SAMPLE: - The population of Chakrashila Village is 1702 approx (2020) and sample size taken is 30 respondents.

Out of 30 respondents: - 15 responses are supporting for Eco and Rural Tourism.

10 responses are not actually saying anything

05 responses are in doubt. Proper guiding required.

FINDINGS

• In the research work following points has been found: -

- a) Not sufficient Government support.
- b) People are not aware of Tourism properly. Hence, awareness program is required.
- c) No proper infrastructure for tourists near to the wildlife sanctuary
- d) Local people are very interested to start homestays and to sell local handicrafts, cuisines etc. But, due to insufficient sources and less promotion of the destination they are not able to move forward.
- e) Require a State Government running accommodation unit.
- f) Sent a proposal to Government of Assam's Tourism Department to promote the place properly as well as to provide signage at various major spots near to Chakrashila with their Awesome Assam Logo
- g) No proper tourist circuit.

DISCUSSION

The above findings of the study indicated that there is a huge scope of introducing eco-tourism model at Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary. The findings of the study depict that proper concentration should be given on infrastructure, planning and making policies. Proper promotion from the government end is required to promote the destination.

CONCLUSION

The Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary is unexplored But, now we think that its high time to highlight this beautiful wildlife sanctuary so that the local people able to meet their expectations and livelihood. The research project will bring a positive outcome about the destination and we want the local people to earn their income and benefits through this wildlife destination. We hope that, in future the Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary will play a vital role in wildlife tourism and eco-tourism of Assam.

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