



Sustainable Development Through Human Effort in A Bio Diversity Zone

KEYWORDS

Sustainable economic activities, human effort, bio diversity zone

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ABSTRACT *Human effort to protect resources on one hand and derive livelihood out of them on the other hand shall pave the way for sustainable development. Resource endowment is considered a dependent variable for undertaking an economic activity and deriving livelihood of people relying on such resources. Assam is a rich biodiversity zone in the North-East Region of India with extensive forest areas, flora and fauna. The present study shall concentrate on the sustainable economic activities and the peripheral activities pursued in the vicinity of the World Heritage Site "Kaziranga National Park" which also has a glorious history of its own.*

INTRODUCTION:

Sustainable development as defined by the Brundtland Commission refers to development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. To achieve sustainable development co-existence of people, nature and resources is a necessary condition. For various developmental issues it has been found that green environment and natural resources have been depleted in varying degrees.

Resource endowment gifted to the planet earth is considered as a dependent variable for undertaking an economic activity. Use of such natural resource is made for deriving livelihood of people dependent on such resource. There is a close similarity between this analogy and the type of economic activity adopted in and around a heritage site located at Kaziranga National Park engulfing a confluence of Golaghat, Karbi Anglong and Nagaon districts of the state of Assam. Considering the scenic beauty of the geographical spot and the economic activities that are generally undertaken in that area, the present researchers have undertaken a study in that area with special emphasis on sustaining the resource endowment of mother nature and on the others deriving livelihood for the inhabitants of the aforesaid territory.

OBJECTIVES:

The present research enquiry has been undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To trace the historical evolution of Kaziranga National Park (KNP);
2. To examine the sustainable economic activities undertaken in that area supporting livelihood.
3. To examine the peripheral activities undertaken in and around that territory.

METHODOLOGY:

For the purpose of this study the present researchers have adopted the following methodology:

Area of research survey:

The area of research survey is confined to a World Heritage site known as Kaziranga National Park and its adjoining areas. The authors have taken an extensive tour and interaction with the people inhabiting the areas in the vicinity of the park. The researchers also paid repeated visits to this spot and conducted detailed enquiry for collecting information about the sustainable economic activity carried on in the area which is now recognized as a World Heritage Site.

Sources of information:

The information collected for the purpose of this study is based both on primary and secondary sources. Primary source includes field visit, interaction with the government officials managing the park, small entrepreneurial activities undertaken in the area and the respondents residing in the area.

Secondary information have been collected from government publications, monographs, booklets from various governmental agencies. Further, internet sources and websites were also consulted for the purpose.

With reference to the objective 1 stated above, we now plan to venture into deliberating historical profile of Kaziranga.

KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK (KNP):

Kaziranga National Park (KNP), the richest biodiversity hot spot in the Indomalaya Ecozone, is situated between 26°30'N and 26°45'N latitude and between 93°5'E and 93°40'E longitude. KNP covers an area of 430 square kilometers and is bounded by the Karbi Anglong Hills on the south and River Brahmaputra on the North. It is famous for its flora and fauna, particularly for the natural abode of the great Indian one horned rhinoceros, Swamp deer, Asiatic wild buffalo, Asiatic elephant and the Royal Bengal tiger. The park is only habitat on earth giving space to all these big five together. It is also the home to Hog deer, Barking deer, Sambar, Wild Boar, besides ample green vegetation and medicinal plants.

A brief history:

- During tea cultivation in 1903, the British came to know about the existence of a big one horned animal in the dense forest of Kaziranga. When this information was conveyed to Lady Curzon, wife of Lord Curzon, the then viceroy of British India, she developed a profound zeal to visit the one horned animal of Kaziranga. Later in 1905 Lady Curzon visited Kaziranga forest with the help of elephant riding and discovered the existence of one horned rhinoceros. She was infatuated by its natural beauty and requested Lord Curzon to preserve Kaziranga and rhinoceros. Lord Curzon initiated the process and declared Kaziranga as "Kaziranga Reserve Forest" on 3rd January 1908.
- The contribution of two nature lovers- Mahi Chandra Miri and Padmashree Dr. Robin Banerjee towards Kaziranga is worth mentioning. Miri is credited with putting Kaziranga in the world map of forest and Dr. Banerjee, a committed naturalist, made more than 50 documentaries on 'Kaziranga', wildlife, flora, fauna and bio diversity which were telecasted by Discovery Channel from time to time.

The historical evolution of the place has been depicted here-under in chronological order.

Table 1: History of Kaziranga National Park

| Year | Event |
|------|---|
| 1905 | Lady Curzon visited Kaziranga. |
| 1908 | Declaration Kaziranga as Reserve Forest. |
| 1916 | Declaration Kaziranga as a Game Sanctuary. |
| 1937 | Opening of Kaziranga to Visitors. |
| 1950 | Kaziranga declared as wild life sanctuary. |
| 1966 | First Scientific and systematic census of mammals. |
| 1969 | Publication of preliminary notification declaring the government intention to declare Kaziranga as a National park. |
| 1974 | Kaziranga declared as a National Park on 1 st January 1974. |
| 1985 | UNESCO declared Kaziranga National Park as a world Heritage site under the criteria N(II) and IV . |
| 2000 | Kaziranga National park received Millennium Award. |
| 2005 | Kaziranga National Park recognized as the centenary greatest conservation success story and celebrates its centenary (1905-2005). |
| 2007 | Kaziranga National park declared as a Tiger Forest. |

Source: Directorate of Kaziranga National Park

KNP, a world famous eco-tourism destination, has been included in Eco-tourism circuit of Integrated Development Tourism Circuit scheme of Government of India and also been included in "Manash- Guwahti Kaziranga" wild life circuit by Assam government.

Now we proceed to highlight the economic activities undertaken in that territory hereunder.

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN THE VICINITY OF KNP:

- In the vicinity of KNP, there are some villages with human habitation. There is a conservation centre near Bokakhat maintained by a voluntary organization for sustainable exploitation of natural resources. The park is located by the side of National Highway 37. More than thirty five hotels, resorts and twelve government lodges and guest houses have come up in order to accommodate the tourist flow to this destination.
- The tourists are allowed to visit the KNP during the month of November to April every year excluding the monsoon season. This monsoon season is considered essential for procreation and mating period for the wild animals without any human intervention. The park area is flourished by abundant growth of tall grasses which are used as a shelter for the one horned rhinoceros, elephants and tigers. The wild grass also provides in a secluded area as a habitation zone for deer that live on the grass. Around 236 water bodies inside the park which gives shelter to rhinoceros and these are also used as a nest for visiting seasonal migratory birds.
- Nearby the KNP, there is a famous institution called Hatikhuli Tea Estate that adds serenity and scenic beauty to the park area. The Hatikhuli Tea Estate yields multi crops namely tea, black pepper and wood for fuel purpose. The tea garden is owned by TATA Tea Limited which produces high quality organic tea. The organic tea and black pepper are retailed in a retail outlet nearby the park on the National Highway. Perhaps this is the only direct retail business for tea outside the auction in the tea marketing literature.
- Further the local dwellers rear cows and goats as a source of income for the family. Mother Nature is so kind to them that grass is available in abundance for feeding the cattle population without any cost. The milk produced by the village dwellers is used in making sweets and sold in the local markets and shops. A good number of shops have come up in this area as a subsidiary occupation for the dwellers. Cream, paneer and other milk products are

also produced in order to sustain the livelihood of the inhabitants. Further, goat reared in the area supplements as an alternative supply of protein food and meat to the villagers.

- Another economic activity around that area is wood craft and wood carving. Craftsmen specialized in wood carving and craft making activity collect the roots of old plants particularly tea plants which can be converted into decorative show pieces that can be used in making tea tables, sitting chairs, replica of birds and animals, most popular among them being the one horned rhinoceros. These highly durable products are used and demanded as a gift item and also as drawing room decorative item.
- A public hall has been constructed for the purpose of entertaining the visitors and tourists with local dance form viz., Bihu, Jhumur, Satriya, Gayan Bayan, Nepali dance in the evening. As a result the outstation visitors get an opportunity to know the place and its people, art and culture and the local artists at the same time derive some sort of livelihood out of this performing art.
- The tourism business in Kaziranga is seasonal one mainly for six month (November to April) when park open to the visitor. But the recent development of MICE (Meetings, Incentives Conferences & Exhibition) tourism in Kaziranga has opened the business opportunity to the entrepreneur for the whole year.
- There are a good number of open hood jeep safaris available in KNP for promoting entry of the tourists inside the permissible area of the forest. Around 150 jeeps are engaged for safari and the people engaged in jeep safari thereby earn their livelihood out of these tourism related activities.
- A band of trained elephant keepers provide elephant ride to the visiting tourists. 50 elephants have been engaged in this park for facilitating elephant riding of tourist. On our enquiry we have gathered that elephant ride facility is offered only in the early morning because the elephants cannot accept the riding exercise when the sun rises to the mid sky. Elephants are non-resistant to heat waves. This is a case where we respect the wish of elephant kingdom while enjoying a ride over its back in the deep forest.
- The area has also flourished in rural tourism. The Durgapur village of Kaziranga has been developed as a tourist village under the government of India and UNDP partner programme, focusing on rural tourism experience and based on rural art and craft, skills, cultural and natural heritage.
- River boating, tourist vehicle services, tracking in Karbi hill and acting as tourist Guides are other profitable tourist related activities engaged in by the local dwellers.

CONCLUSION:

Having discussed the various kinds of economic activities we should be very careful that in the name of promoting tourism and tourist related activities, it should not jeopardize the modesty of mother nature. Overcrowding, excessive proximity to the wildlife be avoided and respect the virginity of mother nature. If we succeed in this venture, mother nature will also allow us to sustain our livelihood. This is not only a necessary but a sufficient condition for achieving sustainable development in a rich bio diversity hub.

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