

Challenges for Development of Eco-tourism in Northeast India; With Reference to Arunachal Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

North-east India representing the 'MINI INDIA' is comprising of eight states and each state is sharing international boundary with one or more country, is one of the most potential region for tourism development of India. It is so, not only in terms of geography with the unique flora and fauna, diverse topology but also in terms of its ethnic and cultural biodiversity. Eco-tourism industry can have potential for the development of tourism industry in the stated region with its twin benefit i.e. benefiting the indigenous community and protection of the rich culture and environment of that particular region. Tourism has not only economic benefit but also social and cultural benefit. Development of tourism market may turn NORTH EAST REGION to the most representing region of Asia for tourism. But due to lack of infrastructure and proper strategic outlook the region is getting to the status of the land of unexplored paradise. The tourism market in the region is disproportionate to its potential. This paper tries to deal with the prospect and challenges for development of eco-tourism in the north-east region with special reference to Arunachal Pradesh.

Key words : North East, India, Eco-Tourism, Development, Arunachal Pradesh.

Introduction

Arunachal Pradesh is the north easternmost part of India, it is popularly known as 'the sun rising part of India'. It falls in the Eastern Himalayas of India among 200 globally important eco-regions. The state is endowed with more than 500 species of fauna and also with rich variety of avifauna with over 65 bird's species. The state is also found in the list of eighteen 'Biodiversity hotspot' in the world. More than 500 varieties of Orchid flower are there in the particular region, so Orchid is likely to be known as 'Jewels of Arunachal Pradesh'.

Overview of the Region

Arunachal Pradesh, land of dawn-hit Mountains is one of the most ecologically rich part of Northeast India. It borders with the state Assam and Nagaland

to the south. It also shares international border with Bhutan in West, Myanmar in East and China in the north. Arunachal Pradesh got union territory status in the 22 of January 1972 and got the full statehood status on the 20th of February 1987. Itanagar is the capital of Arunachal Pradesh. The state covers the area of 83,743 square km. According to 2011 census total population of the state is 1,382,611 with density 17/square km. The official language of the state is English and the state dominated by tribal people. The climate of the state varies with elevation. The low altitude areas of the region have a humid subtropical climate and high altitude areas of the region possesses subtropical highland climate. The region is rich in hydel power because of the high concentration of rainfall availability in the region. Arunachal Pradesh has the highest diversity of mammals and birds compared to other states of India. More than

200 species of mammals and around 750 species of birds are found in the region. If we look at the economy, it is seen that the development is mostly driven by construction activities by the Government. Agriculture is the primary source of the livelihood of the people and they perform agricultural activities following shifting cultivation. From religious point of view it is found that, most of the people are followers of the Christianity.

Objective Of The Study

The one of the main objective of my study is to focus on the major challenges for the development of ecotourism in Arunachal Pradesh.

Potential Areas for Eco-tourism Development in Northeast Region

Arunachal Pradesh is one of the most potential states for nature based ecotourism development. The greenery nature and hills provides scenic beauty and fresh air, which is sufficient to attract not only national tourist but also foreigners. Generally all most all the parts of the state is blessed with nature, but here some most potential places for the development of ecotourism industry are described below_

Tawang: Tawang is high altitude town located in the lap of mighty Himalayas with perfect blend of nature and culture. Tawang is mainly famous for the largest Buddhist monasteries of India. Along with that it is also popular for the high altitude passes, war memorial and scenic lakes. The preferable time to visit the particular place is March-June and September-October. The nearest roadway to Tawang is via Bhalukpong, which is 262 km. There is no direct route via railway and airway. The nearest railway station is Tezpur railway station and the nearest domestic airport is Salonibari Airport, Tezpur.

Namdopha National Park: Another important place for the tourist in Arunachal Pradesh is the Namdopha National park, which is the largest protected area and the third largest national park in India. The national park is famous for towering mountains, dense jungles, many water bodies, extensive range of wild life species including snow leopard and the most excellent biodiversity. It is located in the Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The preferable time to visit the place is October to April. The park is easily connected via extensive road network connected to Miao, the entry point of the park. From the district headquarter it is located in 136 km

distance. Dibrugarh airport i.e. known as Mohanbari airport is the nearest airport and Margherita railway station (91 km) located in Assam is the nearest railway station.

Tezu: One of the most important places to be visited in Arunachal Pradesh is Tezu. It is located amidst the scenic Mishmi hills. It has a lot on offer for the tourist including wildlife sanctuary, museum, botanical garden and quaint villages. However, the most attraction there remains with the photogenic glow lake sitting against the backdrop of snow capped mountains. It is located at the headquartering of Lohit district with dual experience of nature and culture. The most preferable time to visit is December to July. The nearest railway station to Tezu is Tinsukia railway station (120 km) and the Dibrugarh, Mohanbari airport (154 km) is the nearest airport. Tezu is connected via bus services from Tinsukia, Dibrugarh and Guwahati.

Ziro valley: Ziro valley is also listed in world heritage site for its stunning natural beauty. The site is popularly known as Apatani Plateau and is located in the headquartering of Lower Subansiri district. The region is rich in rich fields and surrounded by mountains. The wide varieties of flora and faunas make the place more stunning. The wild life sanctuary, Meghna cave temple, Kile palcho, Midung, Ziro poto, Dolo mando, Hapoli, Dilopolyang, pine grove, Taria fish farm, Bambo grove, Tipi Orchid research centre are famous attraction in Zero Valley. The nearest railway station to Ziro Valley is Naharlagun (100km) and nearest airport is Johan (Assam) which is 93 km from Zero. Bus facilities are available from Guwahati to Ziro run by Arunachal Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation.

Itanagar: Itanagar is the capital of Arunachal Pradesh. The places which is mostly visited in Itanagar are_ Ganga Lake, Ita Fort, Rupa, Gompa Buddhist Temple, Itanagar wild life sanctuary, Indira Gandhi National Park, Jawaharlal Nehru State Museum, Polo park etc. Naharlagun railway station is nearest from Itanagar and Lilabari in Assam is the nearest airport i.e. 67 km from Itanagar. The bus services are available from Shillong, Ziro, Guwahati, Balijan, Poma, Lilabari, Jote, Raga, Sagalee, Pasighat, Dibrugarh, Tezpur, and Bomdila.

Pasighat: Pasighat is considered to be a unique blend of peace and adventure place for tourist. The oldest town of Arunachal Pradesh i.e. Pasighat is famous for mainly of Daying Ering wild life sanctu-

ary, Pangin, rafting, kekar manying and Komsing. The gateway of Arunachal Pradesh i.e. Pasighat lies in the home to river Brahmaputra, which transcends down from Tibet. The nearest railhead to Pasighat is Morkong selek (35 km), nearest airbase is Dibrugarh, Mohanbari and buses and taxis are easily available from train station and airport.

Bomdila: Bomdila ranks among the most leading tourist place in Arunachal Pradesh with snow cold Himalayan Mountain ranges and lush greenery natural beauty of it. It is well known as 'Photographer's Delight'. The places to be visited in Bomdila includes Sessa Orchid sanctuary, Englenest wild life sanctuary, Dirrang Valley, Bomdila Monastery, Apple Orchards, Bomdila viewpoint, R.R hill, craft centre and ethnographic museum, Tipi Orchidarium, Upper Gompa, Lower Gompa and Middle Gompa. Rangapara North railway station (145km) is closest to Bomdila and Tezpur airport (150 km) is the nearest airport from Bomdila. Bomdila can easily be reached via Tezpur or Guwahati roadway.

Daporiju: Daporiju is a town situated 600 meters above the Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh. The town is a stopover on the route of Along to Ziro, so it is also to be claimed as a potential place for the development of eco-tourism. The famous places for tourist are_ Meghna Cave Temple, Kamla Reserve Forest, river Subansiri, good Shepherd Church and shopping of traditional handicrafts in the town. Lilabari airport (280 km) is the nearest airport from Daporiju and Dibrugarh town railway station (87 km) is the closest railway station. The buses are easily available from Itanagar, Ziro and Lilabari.

Pakhui wildlife sanctuary: Pakhui wildlife sanctuary lies in the foothills of Western Himalayan region, Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. In 1977 it was considered as a sanctuary. The wild life sanctuary consists of at least 40 mammal's species of tiger reservoir, three large cats, two candies, and other herbivore species. The plants of the sanctuary are found to be semi evergreen and evergreen. A total of 343 woody species of flowering plants, 1500 species of vascular plants and at least 600 species of Orchids are found there. Tezpur airport, Rangapara railway stations are the nearest airport and rail station from the Pakhui wild life sanctuary. The common roadways are Tezpur and Bhalukpong to reach the destination.

Yingkiong: Yingkiong is headquartering of the Up-

per Siyang district. The particular place is famous for its diverse and colorful ethnicity, where people are living with love and cherish. This place is also famous for trek route, which is more than trekking. Dibrugarh airport (277 km) is the closest airport, Murkongselek (159 km) Railway station is the nearest railway station and From Itanagar, Silapathar and North Lakhimpur one can easily get buses to reach Yingkiong.

Major Challenges for the Development of Ecotourism

From the ecological and environmental point of view, Arunachal Pradesh is the most potential state among the north-east region. But if we the domestic tourist arrival with other states of northeast region, it is seen that domestic tourist arrival is not supplementary to its potential. With the help of some data we can see the picture.

Comparative analysis of tourist arrival in northeast region during year 1999-2000

States	%
Arunachal Pradesh	1%
Assam	3%
Manipur	17%
Meghalaya	28%
Mizoram	5%
Nagaland	4%
Tripura	42%

Source: Project: Tourism master plan for Arunachal Pradesh

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From the table it is seen that in Arunachal Pradesh the development of ecotourism is not satisfactory at all. There are some major challenges for having such situation of tourism industry in the particular area. These are as follows:

- The first and foremost challenge lies in the structure of the state. As the most part of the state is surrounded by hills, there is no direct route to travel to many parts of the state. We have to cross another state i.e. Assam to reach many tourist places in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The quality of infrastructure both physical and social is not well developed. The two way road connectivity in Arunachal Pradesh is found very rarely. The air and rail services are not available in the most of the part in Arunachal Pradesh. Social capitals in terms of education, health, trust etc are lacks in Arunachal Pradesh.

- Arunachal Pradesh is facing initial stage of tourism development, so from the Kuznets analysis it can be estimated that in this stage development and environment is showing tradeoff character as negative externality to environment is more like traffic congestion, depletion of wildlife, reduction of water quality, degradation of landscape etc.
- Again an important challenge for the development of eco-tourism in Arunachal Pradesh includes non availability market price and economic benefit to the tourist.
- Inaccurate state planning and ignorance by both the sets of government is also a major cause of less developed eco-tourism.
- Due to hilly structure and difficult terrain, the cost of tourism is also much more than other state of northeast. So, high cost propels less tourist arrival to Arunachal.
- Rigid law and restriction via inner line permit also a cause for less tourist arrival in the region.
- Lack of proper advertisement, marketing, networking also leads the slow pace of development of ecotourism in Arunachal Pradesh.

Conclusion

Arunachal Pradesh, which is one of the biologically diverse and intact forest eco-system rich state, land of rising sun, land of untouched forest, land of socio-cultural diversity and the most potential land for tourism development among the northeast states. Since most of the districts of Arunachal Pradesh are blessed with nature, there is potential for development of almost every possible kind of tourist activity from fishing and boating to high altitude trekking, from visit to high station districts towns like – Tawang and Bomdila to roaming the Orchids field forest to the lower slope. It has been seen at present that the Arunachal Pradesh Government is becoming more conscious about the development of eco-tourism in the particular region. The Arunachal Pradesh has now planned to provide facilities to enable people from other parts of the country to share the splendors of the area; which was experienced to be lower and so lower arrival of tourist in previous decade was felt, in spite of its abundant

natural beauties. It was because of the major challenges to the development of ecotourism industry in Arunachal Pradesh. So, in conclusion we can say that Arunachal Pradesh Government along with the people of the state should have to put a long lasting and firm commitment to participate in the process of development with the rest of the world in making peaceful and constructive development & progress considering the preservation and enriching of their culture and socio-cultural heritage and the precious environment as well.

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