

Scope of Ecotourism in Baguran Jalpai: A Case Study of West Bengal Coastal Area

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Abstract: In this paper we have discussed the scope of ecotourism in Baguran Jalpai and its socio-economic impact on rural local people. The tourism industry is global. It is big business and will continue to grow. Meeting this growth with well-planning all over the world. In the global scenario, tourism is the world's largest industry. Ecotourism has received much attention in recent years, especially within the developing world. It has been linked to sustainable development initiatives. This study mainly concentrates on the future of West Bengal coastal ecotourism. There is an excessive load in the existing tourist spot like Digha, sankarpur of west Bengal coastal area.

IndexTerms -Ecotourism, excessive load, west Bengal Coastal area, Baguran Jalpai.

1. INTRODUCTION

Worldwide tourism is recognized by the governments as a sector with high potential for economic development and employment generation. International agencies like World Tourism Organization (WTO) have underscored the vast developmental potential of tourism particularly for the developing nations like India. It is estimated that economies like India and China would emerge as the superpowers in world tourism by the years 2020. In spite of the appreciable growth in tourism over the last few years and the excellent growth prospects of the industry, there are growing apprehensions regarding the sustainability of tourism as a development paradigm primarily because of the adverse environmental impacts of tourism. It is widely believed that environment friendly tourism alone can be sustainable for development in the long run, and accordingly the concept of 'Ecotourism' is gaining significance day by day. In this context, this paper seeks to make an overall review of the current status of eco tourism and its broad trends and patterns with a focus on West Bengal tourism.

The state of West Bengal is unique in terms of tourism, given the fact that it is the only state in India, which has all the three vital ingredients – sea (The Bay of Bengal), mountains (The Eastern Himalayas) and forest (The Sunderbans).

Ecotourism is "Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people." (TIES, 1990). Ecotourism is increasing in popularity across the world, but has significant practical value in developing countries where the needs of impoverished communities may conflict directly with the need to capitalize on the growing tourism industry. In many cases developers move in and designate certain areas as tourism hotspots without giving much thought to the impact that this will have on local communities. These communities may depend on the area for food and shelter, but their concerns are buried beneath the potential for financial revenue.

This study mainly concentrates on the future of coastal tourism. In west Bengal the main point of attraction of coastal tourism are:

Digha: Digha is West Bengal's most popular sea resort and tourist spot located south west of Calcutta. It is 187 km from Calcutta and Described as the 'Brighton of the East, Digha has a low gradient with a shallow sand beach with gentle waves extends 7 kms in length. The beach is girdled with casuarinas plantations along the coast enhancing the beauty of this place. The sea at Digha is calm and shallow for about a mile from the beach making it quite safe for swimming.

Shankarpur: Also known for its beautiful beach, only 14 km east of Digha Shankarpur is also a regular fishing harbor. The morning sun reflecting on the sea waves in the east, and the local fish-boats on the coast offer excellent photographic opportunities. Shankarpur is also being developed as a sea resort with hotels, tourist lodges and other facilities

Junput: Junput is 40 km from Digha by bus, with a change at Contai. The place offers beautiful sea-view and lines of trees. The beach is unspoiled. Brackish water fish cultivation and research are done here by the State Government Fisheries Department.

Tajpur: Tajpur is the latest addition in tourist map of Bengal. The prime attraction of Tajpur is its pristine sea beach fringed with a dense forest of tamarisk trees. The beach is infested with infinite number of red crabs whose presence makes the beach look crimson.

Mandarmani: Mandarmani is a small virgin beach on Bay of Bengal, only few km from Digha. It is also a small fishing harbor and a fast developing tourist resort.

A report on the future of tourism in the above mentioned places mentioned that the future scopes of tourism of these places are very alarming. This is supported by the following facts.

Condition of existing tourist coastal towns:

Table: 1 West Bengal Priority Circuit Town Wise Carrying Capacity Assessment

Tourist Town	Existing Load	Carrying Capacity	Available Capacity	Estimated Load	Available Capacity
	2010			2020	
New Digha	11917	14480	2563	29862	-15382
Shankarpur	7942	26480	18538	18164	8316
Tajpur	7654	9680	2026	9632	48
Mandarmani	7450	31200	23750	10739	20461
Junput	89499	114400	24901	103425	10975

Source: DSDA, West Bengal

Tourism Carrying Capacity" is defined by the [World Tourism Organisation](#) as "The maximum number of people that may visit a tourist destination at the same time, without causing destruction of the physical, economic, socio-cultural environment and an unacceptable decrease in the quality of visitors' satisfaction". Whereas Middleton and Hawkins Chamberlain (1997) define it as "the level of human activity an area can accommodate without the area deteriorating, the resident community being adversely affected or the quality of visitors experience declining" what both these definitions pick up on is carrying capacity is the point at which a destination or attraction starts experiencing adverse as a result of the number of visitors.

In other words it can be simplified as the maximum number of tourists that an area is actually able to support. In the case of an individual tourist attraction it is the maximum number that can fit on the site at any given time and still allow people to be able to move. This is normally assumed to be around 1m per person. "PCC per a day = area (in metres squared) x visitors per metre x daily duration" (Mowforth and Munt). This is a formula which has been used to calculate the physical carrying capacity.

Available Capacity is evaluated by finding the difference between the Carrying Capacity of the tourist town and the Existing Load in the town.

Available Capacity = Carrying Capacity - Existing Load

Whereas Existing Load= Aggregate peak density x Area of the town. Also, Aggregate peak density= Resident population density + Tourist density.

From the Table 1, we see that the projected figure of available capacity in Digha in the year 2020 will be -15382. This implies a state of total damage of the tourist place Digha. Also, we observe a declining available capacity for the other famous coastal towns like Shankarpur, Tajpur, Mandarmani and Junput.

Principles of Ecotourism:

Ecotourism is about uniting conservation. Ecotourism is a move to counter this. It aims to create viable and sustainable tourism opportunities, and limit the impact that all related activities will have on the environment, while improving the lives of the local people living in the area. According to Ecotourism.org, the concept consists of a number of core principles, including:

- Minimizing industrial impact on the environment
- Building environmental and cultural awareness
- Empowering local communities
- Raising awareness of the political, environmental and social issues of the country concerned, and

• Ensuring that the experience is positive for all parties, including visitors and hosts

- Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect.
- Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts.
- Provide direct financial benefits for conservation.
- Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people.
- Raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climate.

BENEFITS OF ECOTOURISM

i) Environmental

One of the main goals of ecotourism is its benefit to the environment. At many destinations, park fees are directed towards conservation and park preservation efforts. The economic benefits of ecotourism provide strong anti-poaching incentive for local communities, which increase wildlife diversity. Ecotourism also provides environmental education, awareness and funding for conservation efforts. Some researchers found out that educational information provided through ecotourism increased knowledge of the protected area, changed behavior patterns of tourists and increased philanthropic support of conservation.

ii) Local Communities

Ecotourism provides visitors with exposure to local culture and lifestyles. Ecotourism dollars also provide economic benefits for local people in the form of park fees that go to build schools and infrastructure, additional jobs within the community and the sale of local crafts and products.

iii) Employment opportunities

Ecotourism provides large number of employment opportunities in the country. It will help to the growth of the nation and reduce the unemployment level also. The people surrounded to the tourist places can easily get the job, if they have the skill to prove whatever they can. Increasing the employment level help to reduce the poverty and create a good income level it will lead to better standard of living of the people.

iv) Tourism development

Ecotourism provides a wide range of tourism developmental opportunities in the domestic territory. It brings various changes in the tourism sector and they can attract the foreigners through various developments to attract them and create a good tourism atmosphere. Presently most of the foreigners are selecting Kerala as their tourist place because of the nature and environment and the climate of our place, so we have to utilize our opportunities what we have and gain maximum benefit.

v) Inflow of money

Ecotourism help to make a huge inflow of foreign money from various nations. Presently most of the countries are earning or targeting a good inflow of money from the tourist sector, if in kerala we are making a good ecotourism development, it will help to make good inflow of foreign capital and FDI from various countries. It will help to make our reserve balance as stronger one and create a good value to our currency.

DISADVANTAGES

vi) Environmental

One of the greatest environmental impacts of ecotourism is the carbon footprint created by flights to far-away places. Ecotourist destinations tend to be remote, and although travelers can buy carbon offsets for plane travel, there is still an impact on the environment. Another potential environmental impact is the paradox of ecotourism: The more successful an ecotourism destination becomes, the more difficult it is to avoid having an environmental and/or cultural impact. Tourism and environmentalism are, in some respects, at odds with each other. The more people visit a natural location, the greater the possibility for degradation of local ecosystems and a decrease in biodiversity. Ecotourism in Kenya led to land-use change when pastoral lands were divided up and converted to farming. This change led to decreases in wildlife populations, with wildebeest populations decreasing by 80% and the overall game population in and around the reserve declining by 60%. Tourism to the area has also changed the way people interact with the wildlife, with vehicles often crowding and harassing the animals. There is also a tendency of ecotourism destinations to focus on “flagship” species, such as dolphins and whales and large carnivores, rather than the entire ecosystem.

vii) Economic

As developing countries become more dependent on ecotourism for revenue, it is important to remember that it is not always a stable source of income. Tourism can be affected by the global economy, the local political situation and natural disasters. Following the events of September 11, 2001 and the current economic crisis, tourist bookings have faced substantial decline. A significant decline in tourism income could have a significant impact on the economy of a developing country. Also problematic is economic leakage, which occurs when international or non-local businesses fill the gap community businesses are not able to provide. Economic leakage not only funnels profits away from the local community; local, rural residents are often forced to bear the cost of conservation (restricted access to water, pasture lands, increase in population, etc), while the benefits often go to others outside this group. Even when ecotourism is run by local communities, rather than international tour operators, the financial benefits are often limited to the elite or those in high government positions. In Kenya, which began one of the first community-run ecotourism programs including local community participation and revenue-sharing of park fees, the results were mixed. A study conducted in Nepal, concluded that only 6% of families living near the national park received income from ecotourism. Finally, the influx of tourists to a location can result in increased prices for local goods; a phenomenon that can seriously impact the ability of residents to buy and use the goods themselves.

viii) Cultural

As a result of ecotourism, local communities sometimes face crowding from visitors, as well as other indigenous people who move closer to the area to take advantage of the economic benefits such tourism has to offer. These communities can also face excessive development in the form of hotels, restaurants and stores. Sometimes, poorly planned project and infrastructure are put into place quickly to meet tourism needs. Additionally, cultural change resulting from increased contact with the outside world is of concern.

2. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Keeping in mind this alarming situation of the existing beach tourism circuit of west Bengal, we have tried to assess the scope of alternative coastal eco-tourism circuits.

Fundamentally, eco-tourism means making as little environmental impact as possible and helping to sustain the indigenous populace, thereby encouraging the preservation of wildlife and habitats when visiting a place. This is responsible form of tourism and tourism development, which encourages going back to natural products in every aspect of life. It is also the key to sustainable ecological development.

The International Eco-tourism Society defines eco-tourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people." This means that those who implement and participate in Eco-tourism activities should follow the following principles;

Aware of the Environment - Today the "Green Laws" of conservation are making people aware of how man and the environment can live symbiotically for more time to come and eco-tourism is the only way to maximize the economic, environmental and social benefits of tourism. Everyone is a stakeholder in the process and we clearly need to avoid our past shortcomings and negative impact that they have had. In India to the movement is gathering momentum with more and more travel and travel related organization's are addressing the needs of the eco-tourists and promoting eco-tourism in the country.

3. DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

For this study we have used both primary data as well as secondary data. For secondary data we used Governments' reports on Tourism data and for primary data we went to Baguran Jalpai, our study area on the basis of pre-structure questioner we have surveyed 30 family . Latter we have tabulated that information and on the basis of that and secondary data source we have analyzed our objective.

We have selected our village on the basis of random sampling method and assigned each individual a particular number chosen on the basis of random selection So that we could avoid the problem of sampling.

4. THE SELECTED VILLAGE AND SCOPE OF ECOTOURISM

The proposed ecotourism circuit is chosen at a distance from 10 km from Contai Township. Contai is well connected by rail and road from all areas.

The coastal area stretches almost 13 km From Baguran Jalpai to Bankiput. It is 10 km From Contai town. The proposed villages which may be considered as future spots of eco-tourism are:

1. Baguran Jalpai
2. Saratput
3. Mankaraiput
4. Shyamraibar
5. Biramput
6. Dakshin Kadua
7. Uttar Kadua
8. Gopalpur
9. Bhogpur
10. Bankiput

The selected village:

For a pilot survey we have chosen the first village Baguran Jalpai. The village selected primarily for adoption is Baguran Jalpai. It is 8 km From Contai town. The total area is 300.27 Hectare (around 3 square kms.) with a total population of 1573 persons. Among

them 192 persons belong to the schedule caste category. The numbers of literate persons are 1218. The main economic activities of the villagers are cultivation and marine fishing. Though a good number of persons are listed as marginal labourers.

The socio-economic structure of the village has captive potential to become an eco-tourism hub. Blessed with natural scenic beauty and proximity to Contai town has given the village an uniqueness. Our department would like to nurture this possibility with the direct involvement of the habitats along with administration in appropriate level. So that people of that village could make their life and livelihood with better economic prospect.

We have surveyed 30 local families and tried to collect their opinion related to Eco-tourism prospect in their villages. The results of our survey in the village Baguran Jalpai are presented in a descriptive way not in tabular form.

Socio-economic status of the villagers:

1. Majority of the respondents are either fishermen or engaged in various agricultural activities. Also, it is observed that all most all of them are engaged in agriculture during off season of marine fishing.
2. All of them have their own land though the area of their land is around 1 bigha or less.
3. The respondents have their own house, of which 60 percent is kachha and 40 percent pucca.
4. All the respondents are literate but the level of education varies from primary to higher secondary standard.
5. 65 percent of the respondents are schedule caste and the rest are either OBC or general caste.
6. Monthly income of the respondents (as reported by them) is within a range of Rs.3500 to Rs. 7000 per month.
7. They were unaware of the meaning and scope of eco-tourism. When it was explained to them they spontaneously responded and discussed about the economic, social and environmental consequences of eco-tourism in their village.

Respondents view related to the scope of eco-tourism in their village and its consequences.

A. Major challenges of eco-tourism in the village Baguran Jalpai

- i. Lack of adequate infrastructural facilities like road, water facilities, electricity etc.
- ii. The link road from Contai to the village is not well maintained.
- iii. Lack of cleanliness.
- iv. Lack of knowledge among the villagers towards the scope of ecotourism in their village.
- v. Negative attitude in receiving of new concept is prevailing among the few of the members of the Local Community.
- vi. Lack of funds to carry out the project.
- vii. No well organized Co-operative societies in the village.
- viii. Insufficiency of knowledge related to the preservation of local environment and reducing pollution.

B. Economic Impact

Perception of Positive Impacts

- i. Increase job opportunities for local people.
- ii. Generation of income and economic development with proper income distribution in local community.
- iii. Promotion of local economy, with the emergence of demand based services in the village.
- iv. Sustainable development of infrastructure.

Perception of Negative Impacts

- i. Unhealthy economic competition among the villagers.
- ii. Leakage of income.
- iii. If the ecotourism programme is not well monitored, there may be chances of skewed income distribution.

C. Socio-cultural Impacts**Positive Impacts**

- i. Education for the promotion and conservation of various local cultures, traditional and other historical and religious heritages.
- ii. Diversification of cultural activities and cultural exchanges.

Negative Impact

- i. Risk of cultural degradation due to invasion of outsiders.
- ii. Various social problems.
- iii. Undesirable commercialization of cultural and religious assets.

D. Environmental Impacts**Positive Impacts**

- i. Increase in the scope for conservation of local flora and fauna.
- ii. Education for both tourists and local people related to environmental ethics and protection.

Negative Impacts:

- i. Indirect damage of vegetation.
- ii. Decay of habitats.
- iii. Problems of waste disposals.
- iv. Air and noise pollution.
- v. Invasion of new species.

Conclusion

A socially conscious population can lead the way in responsible ecotourism tourism activities. For ecotourism to be sustainable, it has to be small scale in terms of tourist numbers, physical infrastructure and facilities. Ecotourism is not a product for mass market as it appeals to a narrowly defined market of specialized nature interest groups. As the number of tourists increase ecotourism becomes mass tourism and generates high infrastructural demands and proportionate impact on environment as conventional tourism. This necessitates the need for defining the ecotourism properly to convey the message to all. Eco tourism is being entertained by many communities and governments as a reasonable and rational way for economic development and preserving their particular bit for the environment. If the idea of Ecotourism is well planned then it can work beatifically if not , then disastrous results to both the environment and people occur.

Strategies for Development of Ecotourism in Baguran Jalpai:

- (i) Development of Better Infrastructure Facilities
- (ii) Better Publicity regarding the Tourism Services:
- (iii) Enhanced Level of Services and Better Cleanliness
- (iv) Co-operation and support from local population be ensured
- (v) CapacityBuilding amongst the Local Community
- (vi) Enhanced Investment, particularly through PPP (Public-Private Partnership) Model

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