



# RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

## ISSUES AND PRACTICES



## LESSONS FROM GUWAHATI AND AURANGABAD WORKSHOPS



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**Ecotourism Society of India (ESOI)**

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New Delhi - 110029, India

This is a compilation of the presentations made at the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> workshops of the Ecotourism Society of India in March and April, 2012 in Guwahati and Aurangabad, respectively.

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The Ecotourism Society of India (ESOI) continues its series of workshops on responsible tourism issues. This publication contains the outcomes of ESOI's 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> workshops – in Guwahati, Assam (March 2012) and Aurangabad, Maharashtra (April 2012), respectively.

It introduces the reader to a wide range of successful ecotourism initiatives in India. It also highlights challenges that have to be addressed to make tourism practices in the country more sustainable.

The overarching focus of the workshops, as the topic suggests was, 'Responsible Tourism – Issues and Practices'. This publication covers a range of topics that include lessons learned in the areas of biodiversity conservation in the context of tourism; involvement of local and tribal communities in tourism; sustainable use of resources and conserving built heritage.



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# FROM THE PRESIDENT

From  
The President,  
Ecotourism Society of India

On behalf of all of us in the Ecotourism Society of India, I have the great pleasure in releasing our Society's second publication that contains the presentations and proceedings of our tenth workshop held in Guwahati, Assam on March 23-24, 2012 and of our eleventh workshop held in Aurangabad, Maharashtra on April 27-28, 2012. Both workshops focused on the topic 'Responsible Tourism – Issues and Practices'. This is a continuation of our journey with the vision to conserve our tourism heritage assets by establishing responsible tourism practices for all stakeholders, especially targeting inclusive growth, waste management, efficient energy uses and minimizing the ecological footprint.

This publication is also intended to provide key reference sources to tourism entrepreneurs, managers, local communities, central and state government representatives, including the forest departments, training faculty and students.

For us, every workshop has raised the level of awareness, while being a learning experience as we incorporate local issues specific to the venue and region of the workshop. We are greatly encouraged by the response from our partners, resource persons and participants, who have enriched the outcomes with unique ideas, issues and solutions, thereby drawing appreciation across tourism industry.

This publication also contains a brief on the Ecotourism Society of India objectives, its founding members and current members.

I thank our resource persons who offered their professional experiences to this initiative and contributed immensely. I urge all stakeholders in the tourism industry to obtain this publication, and to join our endeavour for strengthening sustainable tourism practices in India that can be replicated globally.

With best regards,

**Steve Borgia**  
President  
Ecotourism Society of India

# INTRODUCTION

The Ecotourism Society of India (ESOI) continues its series of workshops on responsible tourism issues. Following the aim of spreading awareness and orienting tourism service providers, local government officials and other relevant stakeholders on the urgent need to ensure sustainable tourism practices, ESOI has so far conducted eleven workshops in various states.

This book contains the outcomes of ESOI's tenth and eleventh workshop – in Guwahati, Assam in March 2012 and in Aurangabad, Maharashtra in April 2012 respectively. Whereas both events focused on the overall topic of “Responsible Tourism – Issues and Practices” the detailed discussions and lessons learnt are more region-specific.

The North Eastern States of India represent relatively pristine and unexplored nature and are also home to a great number of indigenous tribes. The Guwahati workshop highlighted issues related to biodiversity conservation and involvement of local communities in tourism. Topics discussed included amongst others eco-sensitive architecture, sustainable use of resources and community-based tourism initiatives.

Cultural and build heritage as well as rural communities are vital assets of tourism in Maharashtra. Accordingly, the presentations and discussions in Aurangabad emphasised on successful initiatives and the need for further action in the areas of conserving build heritage, strengthening living culture and empowering local communities through rural ecotourism and agritourism.

Thanks to the valuable contribution of all speakers this book introduces the reader to a wide range of successful ecotourism initiatives in India. It also highlights challenges that have to be addressed to make tourism practices in India more sustainable and advantageous for those involved.

**Seema Bhatt**

Honorary Secretary, ESOI

# ESOI: WHO WE ARE

The Ecotourism Society of India (ESOI) was established in 2008 under the advice and support of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, by environmentally responsible and sensitive individuals in senior positions in the tourism industry, as well as, in the government.

ESOI is registered under the Societies Act XXI, 1860, under Regn. No. S/61047/2008 as a non-profit organisation. The mission of ESOI is to educate and sensitise tourism service providers in the organised and unorganised sectors to follow sustainable tourism practices. As the national body for responsible tourism the society's primary objectives are:

- (i) Advocacy for tourism service providers and visitors to adhere to sustainable tourism practices
- (ii) Facilitating the formulation and implementation of sustainable tourism policies at the national, state and local levels that harmonise tourism with the environment, local communities, and
- (iii) Helping stakeholders with sustainable tourism certification

ESOI envisions tourism as a vehicle for furthering conservation and generating community benefits. In an effort to facilitate the practice of ecotourism, ESOI has been engaging with tourism stakeholders through discussion and dialogue, publications and training programmes.

Towards its initiatives for spreading awareness of sustainable tourism practices and their implementation with a code of ethics, ESOI launched a series of workshops. So far, ESOI has successfully conducted eleven workshops in six states, with the support of their state tourism departments and the PATA India Chapter, as well as, with WWF-India as a knowledge partner. The 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Sustainable Tourism (BICST 2013) was held in Bhopal in April, 2013 with over 150 participants and international experts as speakers. The theme of the conference was 'Tourism: An enabler for conservation, livelihoods and sustainable growth.'

The society will continue its series of workshops across various states. The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India has officially declared ESOI as their partner in helping them develop policy guidelines, code of conduct and ethical practices for sustainable tourism, to position India as a global ecotourism destination.



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# LESSONS FROM GUWAHATI

March 23 and 24, 2012 – Greenwood Resort, Khanapara, Guwahati, Assam

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\* Please refer to the Aurangabad chapter for this presentation

## DAY - 1

### Inaugural Session: Setting the Context

#### **INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES AND THE GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CRITERIA MOVEMENT AND THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CRITERIA FOR INDIA (STCI) FOR TOUR OPERATOR SECTOR**

Mandip Singh Soin

I would like to share some of my experiences from the time when I was serving as a member of the judging panel of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) for the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards. The WTTC is the global forum for business leaders in tourism industry. The Tourism for Tomorrow Awards aim at recognising best practices in sustainable tourism worldwide. There are four categories of awards: Destination Stewardship Award, Global Tourism Business Award, Community Benefit Award and Conservation Award.

The Destination Stewardship Award goes to a destination – country, region, state or town – that shows success in sustainable tourism management, incorporating social, cultural, environmental and economic aspects as well as multi-stakeholder engagement. One of the finalists for this award was Heritage Watch, Cambodia which is a non-profit organisation to protect Cambodia's cultural heritage. It has established a heritage-friendly tourism campaign that reaches tourists, tour operators, schools and universities and the community to reinforce the importance of preserving Cambodia's culture.

The Conservation Award is open to any tourism business, organisation or attraction, able to demonstrate that their tourism development and operations have made a tangible contribution to the conservation of natural heritage. In 2009, this award was won by NatureAir in Costa Rica. In 2004, NatureAir made a pledge to set new standards for sustainable practices in the airline industry, compensating 100% of its greenhouse gas emissions through preservation and reforestation of tropical forests.

The Community Benefit Award is for a tourism business or initiative that has effectively created direct benefits to local people, including capacity building, the transfer of industry skills, and support for community development. Zakoura Foundation, a Moroccan-based not-for-profit organisation won the awards in 2009. The foundation launched a Rural Tourism Programme to provide rural people with opportunities to diversify and increase their incomes by creating or developing sustainable tourist activities.

The Global Tourism Business Award is open to any large company from any tourism business with at least 200 fulltime employees and operating in more than one country or in more than one destination in a single country. This award was won in 2009 by Marriot International – one of the world's largest hotel groups. With Conservation International it has put 1.4 million acres of Amazon Rainforest under conservation protection, in what many conservationists consider “game changing” collaboration between the private sector and conservation organisations.

To strengthen and enable an increasing number of good practices in tourism the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) developed a set of standard criteria to be met by responsible tourism stakeholders. The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria are well-acknowledged guidelines for hotels, tour operators and destinations worldwide engaged in protecting and sustaining the world's natural and cultural resources, while contributing to conservation and livelihood creation.

Originating from the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria and other best practices around the world, in 2010 Indian tourism stakeholders expressed the need to establish a set of principles and criteria adapted to national circumstances. Both sets of criteria centre five overall principles:

1. Demonstrate Effective Sustainable Management
2. Design and Construction of Buildings and Infrastructure
3. Maximise Social and Economic Benefits to the Local Community and Minimise Negative Impacts
4. Maximise Benefits to Cultural and Historical Heritage and Minimise Negative Impacts
5. Maximise Benefits to the Environment and Minimise Negative Impacts

Under guidance of a Steering Committee consisting of national tourism experts, a new range of Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India (STCI) is being developed and will be launched soon. [Editor's note: the STCI were launched in April 2013. They are available for download from: <http://tourism.gov.in>]

*Mandip Singh Soin, FRGS is an explorer, mountaineer, environmentalist, and adventure travel and ecotourism specialist. With over 35 years of climbing and exploration experience in India and other parts of the world, he is the Founder and Managing Director of Ibex Expeditions Private Limited and the President of ESOL.*

## **WHY RESPONSIBLE TOURISM IN THE HIMALAYA?**

Seema Bhatt

Tourism is the world's fastest growing industry and in recent years, has come to play an increasingly dominant role in the economies of developing countries. The demand for ecotourism and nature-based holidays is expected to double and even triple in the next 20 years. The Himalaya have great potential for tourism owing to the rich flora and fauna found in abundance here. Nearly 1 million visitors come to the Himalaya annually for mountain trekking, wildlife viewing, and pilgrimages to major Hindu and Buddhist sacred places.

As a result of this mass tourism, there are several impacts, for example, social and cultural changes. People living in remote, isolated valleys have generally preserved their cultural entities. However, improvements in transportation and communication, particularly satellite television are affecting traditional social and cultural structure.





It has also had economic and environmental impacts like deforestation, particularly in the western Himalaya, which has increased as a result of demand for firewood, extensive tree trimming in order to feed livestock, and construction of roads in the border regions. Tourism is linked to people and depends on people. However, the current tourism model is unable to develop into an economically and socially viable option for local

communities. Tourism has also played a significant role in privatisation of common resources in tourism destinations, displacement of people and forest dwellers from their homelands to make way for hotels and resorts.

In terms of economic impacts, there are many less favourable effects of tourism such as inflation, leakages and dependency. Studies estimate that on an average, of every US\$ 100 spent on a vacation tour by a tourist from a developed country, only around US\$ 5 actually stays in a developing country destination's economy. On the other hand, tourism can potentially yield significant benefits in the Himalayan remote and rural areas where traditional livelihoods are under threat as a result of various factors. However, in spite of this huge potential, tourism has so far contributed little to poverty reduction in mountain areas.

Community-based home-stays have become an important part of responsible tourism in the Himalaya and are becoming an vital source of livelihood for Himalayan communities. Home-stays offer an innovative and fresh opportunity to tourists and are actually ideal examples of ecotourism.

The Himalaya are a fragile ecosystem that provides ecosystem services to local communities and people living downstream. However, unplanned tourism in such landscapes can destroy the very environment that attracts such tourism in the first place. Hence, there is a need for a model of responsible tourism that is compatible with this fragile landscape.

***Seema Bhatt** is the Honorary Secretary of the Ecotourism Society of India. She is an independent consultant working on issues related to climate change, biodiversity and ecotourism. She has worked extensively with ecotourism projects across India and South Asia. Seema recently co-authored a book on Ecotourism Development in India published by the Cambridge University Press and is currently working on setting standards for ecotourism in India.*

## TOURISM POTENTIAL AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTHEAST

Dr. Sheila Bora

Northeast India is a region of great natural beauty and cultural diversity. It is one of the only two regions in India recognised as international biodiversity hotspots. Hence it has massive potential for tourism. It also has the geographical advantage of having large international boundaries. Moreover, the region is home to more than 200 ethnic and tribal communities each of which is characterised by unique culture, dialect, food, art and customs. It also boasts of ancient civilisations and religious shrines, in addition to waterways favourable for river-based activities like boat racing, river-rafting and angling.

However, there are several challenges for the development of ecotourism or even tourism in the northeast. These include a lack of knowledge of the biodiversity in the region, few regulations or laws for investors, the intricate relationship between the people and their biodiversity, sub-standard quality of education, absence of entrepreneurship and work-culture, and lack of traditional skills in the present generation. If a few measures were to be taken, tourism in the northeast would reach its potential. For starters, there needs to be some capacity building on all fronts. The government should identify and highlight to potential tourists local festivals, handicrafts, antiques, indigenous products, promote cultural tours and protect and preserve archaeological sites. The kind of ecotourism projects that are flourishing don't meet the standards of ecologically and culturally sensitive travel that benefits local communities and host countries. However, meaningful ecotourism is one that takes place with the help of broad-based community inputs, where the community retains control over tourism development and government decisions do not infringe on traditional rights. Moreover, it is imperative that the foundation of tourism planning is correct in order to ensure that economic benefits will automatically percolate down to the lowest level. The people of the northeast will not derive the desired benefits from developing its potential for purposes of ecotourism unless they themselves assume the role of active players in developing the potential in the region.



*Sheila Bora is a professor in the Department of History, Dibrugarh University, who was appointed Co-ordinator, Centre for Tourism Management in July 2006, a post which she held till her retirement in 2008. Currently, she has been appointed Visiting Professor in the Departments of History and Women's Studies, Guwahati University. Dr. Bora is also a founder member of Eastern Himalaya Tourism Initiative (EHTI), a society engaged in promotion of tourism in the Eastern Himalaya Region.*

## Technical Session - 1: Sharing Best Practices

### ROLE OF HOTELS IN ECOTOURISM INITIATIVES AND STCI FOR HOTEL SECTOR

Rakesh Mathur

Our country is known for its rich man-made and natural heritage which is, essentially, its environment. Unlike other countries, India is not traditionally a shopping, gambling or entertainment destination. These aspects have come in recently but, on the whole, our tourism still stands on the foundation of our natural heritage. Therefore, there is a direct link between the environment and tourism which is why ecotourism is so important.

Keeping that in mind, I'd like to talk about the concept of perpetual sustainability. Let's not forget that hotels are high consumers of all kinds of resources, be it water, electricity or gas, and there is also a high amount of wastage and pollution. We offer high value experiences which have high environmental costs. In the long run, uncontrolled tourism and human intervention have contributed massively to climate change. As an industry, we all need to attempt to maintain the ecological balance through the cycle of sustainability. This cycle involves the use of available natural resources but also requires us to recycle and convert as much waste as we can back into the environment. Nature should be allowed to reinvent itself which in essence is the sustainability cycle. We need to actively and consciously contribute to this cycle.

If hotels actively practice ecotourism, it will not only benefit the environment but also reap economic benefits for them in the long run. Conservation of energy will contribute to the bottom line of the hotel and this cost efficiency will give it a leadership advantage in the sector. Because of this, the hotel will establish a good reputation, leaving the others in the sector to emulate it. It also has a social impact as local people are employed to staff the hotel and local products are used to build and run the hotel, contributing positively to the community.

As an industry that has benefitted immensely from our country's rich natural resources, we have a moral duty to give back and should always be striving to set new benchmarks. One small example of what can be done is that just like we measure our average room rate, we should also calculate the average energy consumed per room. The key, though, is that one must conserve the environment without compromising the guest's experience. This is why hotels

WHERE HAVE WE GONE WRONG?	EXAMPLES OF HIGH CARBON FOOTPRINT:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pressure of population</li><li>• Basic human greed to consume more and more</li><li>• Lack of education, awareness and sensitisation</li><li>• Getting it wrong at the conversion and recycling stage</li><li>• Concept of luxury being interpreted as conspicuous consumption</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Golf carts energy consumption - often energy is coal based</li><li>• Imported food – environment cost in packaging, transportation, storage</li><li>• Airline tray – environment cost, wastage and plastics</li><li>• Luxury bed cushions – chemical effluents in frequent wash</li></ul>

need to follow a few essential norms as they strive to be eco-friendly. These are:

1. Strict conservation enforcement
2. No compromise on environmental matters
3. Long term plans – not short term projects
4. Internal training of staff
5. Identification of economic benefit
6. Sharing of best practices
7. Making it a CSR initiative
8. Energise creative ideas amongst staff and others in industry and ensure participation
9. Motivation for energy conservation through system of rewards

An ecotourism criteria (STCI) is being developed for hotels in India and I would like to share with you some of the guidelines that are being put in place for this initiative. These are basic steps that should be followed by all in the industry.

## **GUIDELINES FOR ECOTOURISM PROJECTS**

### **+ INFRASTRUCTURE**

- Reuse existing building material for construction
- Use locally manufactured materials and handicrafts for decoration. Avoid imports
- Use earthy colors for painting walls and avoid chemicals
- Use white and/or reflective roof and glass for minimal heat absorption cutting down the need for air conditioning
- Plant trees and plants around the properties
- Use indoor plants and avoid artificial room fresheners
- Ensure regular servicing and cleaning of the air filters in the rooms and common areas
- Use non or less carbon emitting vehicles
- Install ventilation system in the kitchen, laundry and other heat and pollutant generating areas. Try heat transfer technology

### **+ WATER**

- Install rain water harvesting system
- Install water recharge system
- Install eco-friendly water purification system
- Change towels, sheets and other clothes on demand of guests
- Ensure regular checking of water distribution channels for leaks
- Encourage and motivate staff for water conservation
- Use filtered water over R.O or bottled water as these are devoid of minerals and lead to wastage of water in the extraction process

### **+ ENERGY**

- Use energy saving lighting techniques and energy efficient tools such as solar cookers
- Use solar lighting for outdoor terraces
- Use gas or induction ranges instead of electric ranges
- Put up signage to encourage and motivate guests for energy conservation
- Encourage and motivate staff to practice energy conservation

### **+ WASTE**

- Separate collection and disposal of waste produced, especially plastics and synthetics
- Use reusable or recyclable products
- Reuse sheets of paper which have already been printed on one side
- Use reusable cloth laundry bags
- Purchase amenities in bulk
- Use naturally scented, non-toxic, phosphate-free, biodegradable cleaning products for housekeeping
- Encourage and motivate staff to practice waste conservation

### **+ SEWAGE**

- Either ensure connectivity with public sewage line or onsite sewage treatment plant
- Recycle or reuse sewage waste

## **GUIDELINES FOR ECOTOURISM PROJECTS**

The following need to be strictly regulated and monitored:

- Commercial use of natural water resources including groundwater harvesting
- Air and vehicular pollution
- Sign boards and hoardings
- For establishment of hotels and resorts – rules on height, design, interiors and coverage
- Erection of electrical cables and telephone towers in environmentally sensitive areas
- Fencing of premises of hotels and lodges
- Use of polythene bags and plastics and synthetic packaging – all should be banned, apart from essential goods (milk, bread, biscuits)
- Movement of vehicular traffic at night
- Noise pollution

Apart from the basic guidelines, a number of new ideas and innovations have the potential to drastically cut down the carbon footprint of the hotel industry. These are just some of the ideas out there:

1. No need for tubs in bathrooms – provision for shower and/or bucket bath is sufficient. Shower cubicle may not be made of glass as it has a high manufacturing energy cost (embedded costs)
2. Low flow showers, dual system WC, waterless urinals, self-closing taps
3. Water and electricity meter for guest – motivates the consumer to be eco-friendly by giving discounts based on energy consumption
4. Divert cold water from taps back in system before hot water comes
5. Aircraft style toilets in rooms – saves water and space
6. Small mirror size – reduces the environment cost in manufacturing (embedded costs)
7. Use rubber wood – not tropical forest wood
8. Monitor room size and height– cuts down on the air conditioning
9. Solar reflectors on windows – generates power
10. Remove fridges from every room – only provide on demand
11. Avoid use of aluminum / steel - high embedded cost



12. Minimise queen / double beds – join singles to reduce the amount of linen washing
13. Use cotton mattresses rather than foam
14. No blanket or duvet – reduces need for air conditioning
15. No suits / ties at conferences - reduces need for air conditioning
16. Preset A/C at 21 degree centigrade
17. No flowers in rooms – use live potted plants
18. Use handmade and recycled paper.
19. Use CFL / LED lamps
20. Provide newspapers only on demand
21. Ban on use of plastic sachets of shampoo, soap, oil – use shampoo dispensers instead

The idea is to go back to basics and think out of the box to ensure that we fulfil our duty to the planet. It comes down to a question of choice – short term profits or perpetual sustenance? Do we not want to leave the world a better place than what we inherited? We must reverse this basic human greed to consume as much as possible and instead redefine our lifestyles where we only consume as much as we need. There is a fine line between luxury and comfort which must be recognised.

Finally, I have initiated a Code of Conduct for Safe and Honourable Tourism in India in collaboration with Save the Children, India that has been adopted by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. We must all abide by and implement this pledge and code.

*Rakesh Mathur is a Founder and Honorary Vice President of the Ecotourism Society of India. He was CEO of BASS Hotel (now IHG) for south and west Asia and President of WelcomHeritage Hotels. Post retirement, he is now Director and Principal Advisor to Zinc Hospitality, Crossroads Hotels and Specialty Restaurants Ltd. Mr. Mathur has been at the forefront of promoting Heritage Tourism in India and has won several awards and recognition for his work. He was awarded the Karmaveer Puraskaar by the Indian Confederation of NGOs – iCONGO - for launching the Concept and Code of Conduct of Safe and Honourable Tourism.*

## **SUSTAINABLE TOURISM EXPERIENCES FROM ‘OUR NATIVE VILLAGE’ – PRACTITIONER’S VIEW POINT**

C. B. Ramkumar

We, at Our Native Village are implementing several environmental initiatives to achieve complete sustainability. These include initiatives in the area of energy, water, waste, architecture and the food chain. We use a bio gas plant, Gujarat boilers, a natural swimming pool, sun-dried bricks, reed beds to process waste water, natural detergents, and more. As our prime business, we promote leisure activities, processes, rituals, and games from the Indian village - all that are revivalist in their approach and promote the overall principle of sustainability.

If someone were to ask me, why we need sustainability, why link it to the experiences and technological challenges, I would say that it is a lifestyle need, the only choice that we have. We deeply believe in this concept and apply it to our everyday living and operations. For most people it is a cunning marketing ploy, but for us it is our life. We are running a 24-room resort in north Bangalore with a restaurant, pool and spa in a sustainable manner. We are doing it because that is the only choice we have.

The resort is located outside the city but we re-engineered our thinking and considered factors like the adequate supply of sun and rainwater for our energy and water requirements. We have a zero-waste attitude, especially since there is nobody to take away all the waste for us. 50% of our electricity is self-generated through solar panels. The rest comes from the state grid. Water is heated through solar-powered water heaters and a Gujarat boiler, which also makes it very cost effective. Our rainwater harvesting tank has a capacity of 84,000 litres, while our swimming pool is a natural pool which uses aquatic plants and not chlorine to keep the water clean. Our buildings are made of sun-baked bricks, a lot of our food grows on a 12 acre farm, and we do not use detergent to avoid contamination of groundwater. Our soaps and shampoos are natural and handmade made available in terracotta containers made by a local potter.

Through our resort, we are also trying to preserve cultural heritage, in the form of the six forms of Indian art which are fast dying. Hence, every room is painted with one of these art forms. For the entertainment of our guests, we indulge in local games like gilli-danda, kite flying, spinning tops, marbles and more. Local drummers from the village also provide entertainment. It is actually all very simple!

To be able to adopt environmentally sustainable practises, it is essential to first believe in them and then implement them sincerely. If you simply pretend to do so, your consumers will find out since they are well-informed and conscious these days. Therefore, our core business is a synergy between sustainability and eco-living. We are working towards a dream of developing a 100% self-sustaining model.

*C. B. Ramkumar has been an advertising and marketing professional for two decades. He is the founder and Managing Director of Our Native Village, an eco resort, 40km outside Bangalore in a village called Hessargatta. A Past Life Regression therapist and a Rebirthing breath work therapist, Ram has led Our Native Village to be a pioneer in the concept of a 100% eco resort.*

## Technical Session - 2: Conserving Cultural and Natural Heritage

### CONSERVING NATURE THROUGH ADVENTURE TOURISM

Anirudh Chaoji

I would like to share an example of how community participation in nature and adventure tourism can help conserve nature. Through our Pugmarks projects we have implemented



community participation in a number of forests in Central India. Pugmarks is an organisation that has been organising nature camps and taking tourists into the jungle, helping them explore the local flora and fauna for a number of years now. But when we began we were faced with one basic problem – poorly trained forest guides. Many of these guides were untrained and knew very little about the flora and fauna of the forest beyond the basic information. We realised there was a problem of knowledge and, to ensure we gave our customers a fulfilling experience, we needed local people and naturalists who knew a lot more about the forests.

So 12 years ago, we started the process of training young boys from nearby villages to become guides for our camps. It began as a purely selfish pursuit for our organisation but we realised

that this was helping the local community as well. When we began the training, these boys did not know the specific details about the animals and trees but their instincts were amazing at picking up movements and sounds. We discovered that their local lifestyle made them ideal candidates for forest guides. So, as part of our training, we took groups of these boys along with Pugmarks volunteers and we all explored the forest together.



© Anirudh Chaoji

We started training them with the basics – identifying pugmarks. All the boys could point out pugmarks of tigers, sloth bears and leopards, but that was very rudimentary. We wanted to make the process interesting – to weave stories around the pugmarks and to give the visitor something that they could relate to. For example, rather than just pointing out a tiger pugmark we wanted our guides to tell the visitors what the tiger might have been doing at the time – walking normally or crouching to attack his prey, or getting ready for a kill. And then go on to find drag marks where the kill might have taken place. Stories like this make the experience more informative and interesting for the visitor.

Shit, for example, tells a very good story. If you break up the scat of a jungle cat you will be able to see the bones and remains of its previous meal and will probably be able to reconstruct the body of the shrew or mouse that it would have eaten. Sloth Bear scat will show the bodies of small ants and termites along with seeds of fruits that it must have eaten. These anecdotes remain in the minds of the tourists.

Birds are some of the most interesting creatures to get people involved in. Identifying bird calls really fascinates people and we often convert their calls into words as an easy way for people to recall them. Telling the story of how a spider eats its own is particularly popular

with the children and adults who come on our camps, and it shows how a simple anecdote can enhance the whole tourist experience. Trees, too, tell stories. For example, a tree called the 'Devil's Tree' is abundant in these forests but the local tribes never sleep in the shade of this tree because they believe they will never wake up if they do. And, interestingly, scientists have found an alkaloid called Picrinin present in the tree that actually numbs the nervous system. Ancient hearsay and science have come to the same conclusion through different reasoning. Facts like this really get people engaged in getting to know the forest better. What we were trying to do was ensure that tourists got a wholesome and fulfilling experience of the forest and, at the same time, local youngsters used their expertise and the knowledge we had given them to make a living for themselves. Typically, if u looked at the experience of guides earlier, they would only get a tip or get paid better if they pointed out a tiger or a leopard to tourists. But that can never be guaranteed, so we trained these boys to become naturalists so they can show tourists how beautiful a forest is, which they would have otherwise missed running after a tiger.

We also added another component to our project. These boys were so physically fit that we decided to involve them in adventure tourism as well – as instructors for trekking and rappelling. And what happened with both the naturalist training and the adventure tourism was that we ended up making these local boys stakeholders in the conservation of the region. Normally, they would have no compassion for the area and would look at the forest as an impediment in their lives. But, now, since they earned a living from the forest, these guides and their families wanted to preserve the forests. Also, it ended up preventing migration. It ensured that these families were not forced to migrate to urban areas to make money as they were able to do it in their own region.

This is the Pugmark experience where we convert youngsters from the local forest dwelling communities into naturalists and promoters of the forest. It is an experience that has been beneficial for all involved and can be replicated anywhere.

*Anirudh Chaoji is the chief promoter of Pugmarks, which offers camping experience to youngsters in wildlife, trekking and adventure. It covers a mix of heritage sites, wildlife sanctuaries and spectacular landscapes. Anirudh is deeply involved in ecology restoration and environment education.*

## **ECO-SENSITIVE ARCHITECTURE FOR TOURISM DESTINATIONS**

Mariyam Zakiah

The Arch-i Platform is a not-for-profit organisation that was set up by four School of Planning and Architecture graduates and Dutch architect, Anne Feenstra in 2009. We strongly believe in an open design process that involves the clients. We engage with the people involved in the design process giving them a sense of ownership so that buildings do not remain uncared for. We have a strong network that is spread across India, Nepal, Afghanistan and the Netherlands. In this world of concretisation, we believe in slow architecture which means that if clients approach us with pocketfuls of money to buy a design, we do not entertain such requests. We believe in doing a lot of research before constructing buildings. We

research the culture and tradition of the area and lifestyle of the local people. In other words, we believe in eco-sensitive architecture.

In 2011, WWF Sikkim approached us with the Red Panda Conservation Project. The Red Panda is an endangered species and its numbers are rapidly decreasing because of the destruction of its natural habitat to fulfil human needs for firewood. Slowly, all the forests are being destroyed in the Red Panda's natural habitat in Sikkim as people consume more and more of the wood for cooking and insulation. We did a lot of desk research and we came across alarming data that local people spend up to six hours a day collecting wood for fuel. Their monthly earnings are about Rs. 8,000 and they spend Rs.2,000-3,000 on just buying firewood. We tried to figure out alternative forms of heating and insulation to reduce the amount of wood being consumed by the local people. We initiated the Space Heating Improvement in the village Gnathang at an altitude of 3600 m and above, where villagers volunteered to help us insulate houses without the use of wood. Our team gave the local

volunteers basic tips on insulating their houses by using layering in the walls and the roof. We prepared posters and told them about small steps to take, about the importance of the Red Panda for the local people and about keeping their natural surroundings clean.

We taught the locals how to use bottles for ceiling insulation. Each household collected approximately 10 glass bottles a day because liquor consumption is

high in the area. The bottles had to be cleaned, dried and laid on the ceiling and the village children helped in this endeavour. They laid a layer of bottles on the ceiling and then covered that with a layer of mud so that air could not get into the house and there was sufficient insulation. We also showed them how to plug the gaps in their windows to stop the cold air from getting in. Villagers were taught the simple technique of cutting up a stepney tyres and using the rubber as washers on the windows. It took them just a few hours to repair all the windows in the village this way and it made a huge difference to the insulation in the houses.

Our project in Afghanistan is another great example of eco-sensitive architecture. Afghanistan has a similar topography and altitude as northeast India, but a very different climate. The big difference is in humidity and precipitation. Band-i-Amir is a series of six pristine turquoise coloured lakes surrounded by elevated rock walls. Through millions of years, the sedimentation process of the highly calcareous water created natural dams. A small bazaar was built in a side valley, a little distance away from the lakes halfway through the last century. But after the invasion of the Russians, the civil war and the Taliban, the





bazaar was razed to the ground. Our Afghan team, headed by Anne Feenstra, was brought in to rehabilitate the bazaar. They made a master plan designing a visitor centre/community centre, and other plans for the restoration of the area. After a lot of research and efficient planning, they were successful in rebuilding the bazaar. The buildings were built using local traditional material along with improved mud plaster, double glazing and techniques for roof improvement. The old bazaar was basically restored to its original state.

We have also recently released an Uttarakhand ecotourism map envisaged as a perspective view of the region. We wanted to show the rich topography of the state and highlight the 14 ecotourism destinations in the state that follow best practises.

*Mariyam Zakiah is deeply involved in community-based grass root architecture. She is a graduate architect from Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi and has been working with Anne Feenstra at Arch-i since 2011. Mariyam is head of several projects including the Space Heating Improvement project with WWF in East Sikkim, and has organised several community workshops to improve the existing houses. She was sent on an exchange programme to the Faculty of Architecture, University of Erfurt, Germany on the basis of her merit.*

## ECOTOURISM ARCHITECTURE AND EXPERIENCE – THE WAKRO ECOTOURISM PROJECT

Shivumso Chikro

Many would be unaware of the immense ecotourism potential of Arunachal Pradesh. The state is endowed with vast and illustrious flora and fauna, natural beauty comprising of five mesmerising major rivers, eastern Himalayan Mountains, fascinating landscape and idyllic climatic conditions. But much of Arunachal's natural beauty and cultural abundance remains unexplored because of a lack of awareness and inadequate basic infrastructure and adequate tourist facilities. Realising these constraints, Mr. Prashant Lokhande, the former

Deputy Commissioner of Lohit District, requested Mr. Rohinso Krisikro, a community leader and social worker to take up the Wakro Ecotourism Project.

Wakro was chosen as the location for this ecotourism initiative because it is an ideal offbeat wilderness destination. It is a picturesque hamlet surrounded by thick rainforests and hemmed in between the Kamlang and the Lohit Rivers. It is accessible



© Shivumso Chikro

as well, being just a four-hour drive away from Dibrugarh Airport. But it is not just the natural beauty that makes Wakro a great tourist destination. The area is also the home to the Mishmi tribe that has lived in the area for centuries and remained true to its culture and traditions.

So the Wakro Ecotourism Project was set up to not only promote tourism in the region but also to educate visitors on local customs, to encourage community participation in tourism and provide employment to local people. The guest houses have been built in the style of traditional Mishmi huts using thatch and bamboo. Local community members and craftsmen were engaged in building the tourism infrastructure with minimal external intervention. The textiles used in the interiors depict Mishmi weaves, and local art and craft made by the tribal people adorn the rooms.



© Shivumso Chikro

Tourists are given a truly authentic local experience by natives of the area. Local cuisine is prepared for visitors and they are taken to the local villages to spend time with the tribal people while they work. There is a strong emphasis on promoting the local way of life so that the culture of the region is preserved and tourists are more sensitive to the local traditions. The natives are trained to take visitors on treks and walks in the nearby forests, including the Namdapha National Park. Day excursions are conducted to the pilgrimage site of Parashram Kund on the banks of the Lohit River, as well as to Buddhist monasteries in the area, to the Wakro Organic Green Tea farm and also to Glow lake on the hills. The neighbouring region of Upper Assam is dotted with tea plantations, offering opportunities to visit working plantations and staying in heritage tea bungalows. Visitors are also encouraged to help out at the library and the charitable educational institute set up by Mr. Krisikro.

This project is a great example of how community participation can greatly enhance the tourist experience. The project has shown that local, community-led micro projects can effectively fill in the infrastructure gaps. Such initiatives being low on investment can be taken up by local communities without external funding. The project – although basic in terms of amenities and luxuries – offers the visitor a unique experience.

*Shivumso Chikro is presently serving in Don Bosco College, Jollang-Itanagar as Assistant Professor, HOD-Department of History with additional charge of Programme Officer-National Service Scheme (NSS) Unit. He is also a keen social activist for the Mishmi community and Arunchal Pradesh.*

## Technical Session - 3: Raising the Responsible Tourism Bar

### BALANCING WILDLIFE AND TOURISM NEEDS

Dr. Bibhuti Lahkar

The wildlife tourism potential in Assam is huge. The state is home to innumerable wildlife destinations including five national parks, 20 wildlife sanctuaries and two world heritage sites (Kaziranga National Park and Manas Tiger Reserve). Assam is incredibly rich in biodiversity, housing not just the large, well known mammals like tigers and rhinos but many lesser known and equally fascinating species of plants and animals. Most of you will be unaware that Assam is home to about 50% of the country's 1500 butterfly species.

This wealth of natural beauty and biodiversity has attracted increasing numbers of tourists to the state but, in most cases, this tourism has had a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of the wildlife. Tourism in

developing countries ought to be good business, yielding happy travellers, increased revenues for park systems, and higher investment in conservation. This, unfortunately, has not been the case in India and in Assam in particular. Park systems are failing to invest at anywhere near the necessary levels to build capacity for managing the growth in park visits.

To accommodate more tourists, park authorities are exceeding the carrying capacity of sensitive areas which is adversely impacting ecology there. Unregulated tourism-related business activities have translated into pollution increased tenfold. Tourism has become a threat to biodiversity rather than a benefit.



© Deba Dutta, WWF-India

Visitors come from all over the world to see the rhino and the tiger in our national parks and reserves but, because of a lack of proper regulations, this uncontrolled tourism is threatening these endangered species even further. For example, elephant rides into forests to find rhinos have severe psychological and behavioural impacts on the animals, and jeep safaris in tiger reserves end up polluting the forest and destroying the natural habitat of the animals. On the Brahmaputra, pollution from motorised boats and the dumping of waste in the river is now threatening the survival of the dolphins – the very creatures that the tourists have come to see.

A study done at the Kaziranga National Park shows that over the last four years, the number of visitors has increased exponentially. But none of the extra revenue that has been generated from this increase has gone back to the revival of the habitat or the management



of the habitat. The condition of the park and the infrastructure has not improved despite the higher influx of revenue. Local authorities continue to flout guidelines put in place to protect the sensitive areas of the park.

While ecotourism can be hugely beneficial for the conservation of wildlife, we have noticed that this is not always the case. Though ecotourism development can provide extra support for nature conservation, not all areas or sites where wildlife and natural areas occur are capable of supporting profitable ecotourism enterprises. This can even be so if the wildlife involved is spectacular and unique. It is important to realise that ecotourism projects can make economic losses. When this happens, it may actually reduce funds available for nature conservation. Consequently, ecotourism projects that ‘go wrong’ can become a threat to conservation. This may also go wrong for technical rather than economic reasons. So, one must be sensitive to the fact that not every form of ecotourism is necessarily beneficial to wildlife conservation. We are working with a number of NGOs around the Manas Tiger Reserve to set up ecotourism initiatives that are favourable to the conservation of the local flora and fauna. We have identified the following steps that need to be taken to ensure ecotourism is sustainable in and around reserves and wildlife sanctuaries. These are:

- Planning approaches for zoning and visitor management
- Improving understanding of the biology of targeted species and monitoring of the impacts of tourism on them
- Training, awareness and interpretation for all stakeholders including the tourism industry
- Evaluating the conditions required for wildlife tourism to be a viable option particularly for generating net revenues for conservation and benefits for local communities
- Improving planning and management of tourism in protected areas and wildlife viewing sites

*Dr. Bibhuti Lahkar is the Programme Secretary of Aaranyak, an organisation based in Assam that is primarily involved with biodiversity conservation in the northeast. Dr. Lahkar has coordinated several internationally funded projects in the Manas Tiger Reserve on research, community empowerment and capacity building of staff and local conservation NGOs. He has also written and published several papers on wildlife conservation.*

## **ECOTOURISM FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS IN SIKKIM**

Dr. S. Anbalagan

Sikkim is the mega-biodiversity hotspot of the Eastern Himalayan region. It has more than 4,500 species of flowering plants, more than 50 species of fish, 690 species of butterflies, 16 species of amphibians, 78 species of reptiles, 550 species of birds and 154 species of mammals. The Forest, Environment and Wildlife Management Department (FEWMD), Government of Sikkim is implementing the JICA assisted Sikkim Biodiversity Conservation and Forest Management Project (SBFP). The forest Department, through this project is looking to develop ecotourism in the State and the process is described in brief. It is strongly believed that ecotourism can play an important part in strengthening livelihoods of the people of Sikkim. The project aims to incorporate all the true elements of ecotourism and to lead to sustainable forest management, livelihood promotion and conservation of biodiversity.



For sustainable forest management, we are trying to create awareness amongst the local communities about the importance of the forests, and resolve any human-forest conflict that has arisen if any. In our endeavour to conserve biodiversity, we aim to provide an opportunity to visit protected or relatively unexplored areas without damaging or changing the original character and appearance of the areas. To ensure livelihood promotion, we look to provide economic incentives for local communities to safeguard their unique natural resources. This also increases the chance that money spent by travellers remains within the local community. The process of ecotourism development and strengthening of livelihoods will be achieved in three stages. In the Foundation Stage, the Sikkim Ecotourism Policy has been proactively brought out by the State with a vision to establish Sikkim as an ultimate and unique ecotourism destination offering memorable and high quality learning experiences to visitors and to contribute to poverty alleviation as well as to promote nature conservation. The Policy also defines a number of strategies that have to be followed in the development of ecotourism in the State. Guidelines have been worked out not only to facilitate nature conservation but also to ensure clients' safety.

The next stage is the Preparation Stage. Based on certain criteria 10 village clusters have been identified to be actively promoted and developed as ecotourism hubs (see box). Each village/cluster has its own uniqueness, and ecotourism activities based on the unique character of each place is being developed. Since ecotourism is “a form of tourism that involves travelling to natural areas with the specific objectives of learning, admiring and enjoying nature and its wild plants and animals as well as local people's cultural aspects including religious monuments while conserving the natural and social environment, and improving the welfare of the local people”, activities are being developed in each of these clusters which will be co-ordinated by nature and cultural interpreted designed to entertain and educate the ecotourists.

In order to assess the future potential of ecotourism in the State and to understand the needs of visitors, a questionnaire survey was carried out with about 1,000 international and domestic tourists. Some of the objectives of the survey included to determine the preferred

#### **CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF ECOTOURISM VILLAGES:**

1. On-going ecotourism activities or potential
2. On-going home-stay and guesthouse activities or potential of them
3. Strong willingness
4. Good leader/facilitator
5. Good and easy accessibility
6. Clear community benefit-sharing opportunities
7. Linkages with other villages
8. Good local administration and NGOs support
9. Sufficient households

destinations of tourists, their preferred activities, interest in visiting protected areas (PAs), interest in availing eco-tour guides, willingness to stay in home-stays, priority while choosing home-stays etc. The needs of eco-tourists and the gaps in tourism supply have been captured in the survey and the same would be addressed/met during the development of ecotourism activities in the villages.

One of the important aspects of preparation is the training of the stakeholders. Different people (ecotourists) look for different experiences. They may be explorers, experience seekers, facilitators, professional/hobbyist, spiritual recharger etc. To cater to this diverse range of interests of eco-tourists, a variety of activities are being planned and developed involving the natural and cultural assets available in the village/area. Stakeholders' consultation workshops have been organised in 4 villages to identify the ecotourism assets. The stakeholders' training requirements were also identified through a series of visits to these villages. To develop ecotourism products and services, a variety of trainings for interpretive guiding, bird watching guide, trekking etc are being imparted to the stakeholders identified for this purpose.

The final stage is the Implementation Stage where the products developed are marketed. National and international marketing strategies have been developed. Some of the promotion activities planned are-branding, advertising, personal selling, e-marketing and public relations.

*Dr. S. Anbalagan, IFS (2003 batch) is presently promoted as Additional Project Director I, SBFP. He holds the position of DFO (Ecotourism), SBFP, Forest, Environment and Wildlife Management Department (FEWMD), Forest Secretariat, Gangtok, Sikkim. Earlier Dr. Anbalagan held the post of CEO at the Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation (STDC).*

## COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM IN THE NORTHEAST

Pema Wange

Our Community-based tourism project is based in the West Kameng and Tawang District of Western Arunachal Pradesh where 78% of the forests are owned by the indigenous community. More than six years ago we have conducted feasibility studies in the region and found that community-based tourism was the most suitable livelihood option in the villages of Arunachal Pradesh. We were trying to



© Pema Wange

promote a livelihood in the villages as an incentive for their contribution for conservation of biodiversity rich forest. Following these studies, we came up with the concept of Community Conserved Areas (CCAs). The Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) are natural areas exclusively owned by the local communities that live there. The legal nature of the CCAs would ensure that the traditional rules and regulations are strong enough to deal with the new threats and challenges due to the fast changing demands of the dynamic society.

The villages of these local communities were developed into ecotourism centres which strengthen their livelihoods and encourage conservation at the same time. We developed this concept for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the community would benefit financially so it would develop a sense of responsibility to the biodiversity rich forest area, providing them with a vested interest to conserve which would reduce the locals' willingness to hunt, collection of timber or other forest products for commercial purpose or other such activities which would reduce the forest cover.

Secondly, very little investment was required on the part of the community so the risk was minimal and the villagers were happy to be involved as it provides a good income opportunity for the community with a very little risk.

Thirdly, a maximum number of villagers can be involved in it by engaging in various services like home-stay, home-restaurant, guides, cooks, porters, pony-men, cultural troop, local handicraft etc. and the latest being tent-manager and CBT-manager and many others. The shop-keepers, the vehicle owner, the vegetable vendors, the milkman present in the village are also directly or indirectly getting benefit out of it.

We undertook exhaustive procedures to create the initial CCAs. Meetings and discussions were conducted with local authorities and the villagers before the areas were identified and demarcated. Community Conserved Area Management Committees (CCAMCs) were then formed to oversee and manage each CCA. We then conducted studies and surveys in every CCA area for the biodiversity, natural resource and the socio-economic status of the villagers and finally for the most suitable livelihood option for the village.

To begin with, we established one CCA at Thembang in West Kameng and two CCAs at Zemithang in Tawang district and put systems in place to ensure proper functioning of the CCAMCs. The CCAMCs were registered under the Society Registration Act-1860 (as modified by the Society Registration (Extension to Arunachal Pradesh) Act, 1978). The basic office infrastructure was developed for smooth working set-up of the management committee, the staff was trained and equipped to do basic surveys and maintain a record of day-to-day activities in the CCAs. The basic training on accounting and billing etc were also given.

Signboards were put up demarcating the CCA and notice boards were made to spell out bans and restrictions. Circulars were sent to listed hunters, grazers and neighbouring villagers informing them of the regulations. And finally, circular and notice were issued through local administration and government officials to all the Panchayats, village headmen, public leaders after we have requested the administration to support the initiative. Once the basic

systems were in place, a sub-committee was formed under every CCAMC to take care of community-based tourism. The sub-committee identifies the villagers for establishment of home-stay and home-restaurant, guides, cooks, porters, pony-men etc. It also ensures that all the identified service providers benefit equally by following the system of rotation basis. It fixes the rate according to the market rate of various commodities and decides and resolves day-to-day issues with regards to community based tourism.

Before starting the community base tourism project the identified service providers were given basic training such for home-stay, home-restaurants, guides, cooks, porters, pony-men, managers etc. To start the community based tourism project we have transferred some amount to the CCAMCs sufficient to establish basic home-stay and home-restaurant. The CCAMCs then grant loan to the home-stay operators and home-restaurant operators in zero (0 %) interest. The home-stay operators and home-restaurant return back Rs.300 to the CCAMCs every month or they return the amount equal to half of the bill generated while rendering their services during tourist visit to the home-stay or home-restaurant. Once the amount is fully recovered from a home-stay or home-restaurant the CCAMCs will grant the same loan to another villager who is interested to open a home-stay or home-restaurant.

Through community based tourism projects the villagers in the CCAs have earned good revenue by providing various services. Meanwhile, the CCAMCs were also able to generate revenue to develop corpus fund by charging basic fees like camp site charges, entry fees, camera fees (applicable if tourist goes inside the CCAs) and an overall conservation fee (10% and 15% for domestic and international tourist respectively on total bill generated). Substantial amount was also earned by the CCAMCs by renting the camp materials to visiting tourist.

Our data shows that, over the last three years, the community based tourism projects have generated more than Rs. 12 lakhs out of which more than ten lakhs were directly earned by the villager by providing various CBT services while the CCAs have managed to build a corpus fund of nearly two lakhs, which the CCAMCs would support villagers to establish new home-stays and home-restaurant in the villages.

Apart from the economic impact, the presence of the CCAs has also led to a number of other positive impacts including villagers pledging to give up hunting, collection of firewood and timber for commercial purposes being banned, a patrolling team of local youths set up to check illegal activities and ensure that the rules are followed.

This CCA project has, without doubt, shown that community-based tourism is a success. It is not only advantageous for local communities but also ensures that conservation and tourism are mutually beneficial.

*“You save your rich and pristine forests so the tourists come to see it, you earn from tourism so you are able to work for better conservation initiatives.”*

*Pema Wange is a Project Officer with WWF-India (Western Arunachal Landscape Programme). He has been actively involved with the CCA project since its inception. His work includes community mobilisation, livelihood intervention, monitoring of the project implementation and progress, and coordination with government officials.*

## ENERGY ALTERNATIVES FOR TOURISM IN THE NORTHEAST

Mrinal Chaudhury

Alternative energy is an integral part of ecotourism. Management of energy supply and consumption, therefore, is a critical component of any sustainable tourism project. The energy usage of different hotels varies widely depending on a number of factors (see box).

### FACTORS THAT AFFECT HOTEL ENERGY USE:

- Local climate
- Accommodation type (e.g. business or beach hotel)
- Range of guest amenities
- Efficiency of facilities and equipment
- Quality of maintenance operations

Taking these factors into account, a large amount of energy still gets wasted but with the use of new innovations, this wastage can be drastically cut down. The hotel industry must actively participate

in and promote energy conservation with the availability of a number of alternative energy options. The use of renewable energy sources like solar, wind, hydro and bio gas has the potential to revolutionise the hotel industry. Some alternative options and appliances that can be adopted to cut down on their energy consumption are:

**Basic Solar Cooker** – Uses energy from the sun to heat food. Ideal for smaller establishments but it is time consuming as it takes 2-3 hours to heat up.

**Parabolic Cooker** – Sunlight is concentrated into the kitchen or the community cooking area using a giant mirror outside. This takes much less time than the basic solar cooker.

**Solar Water Heater** – This is an ideal replacement for electric geysers which guzzle a lot of electricity. Solar water heaters can take care of the entire hot water requirement of a large facility and heat water up to 65 degrees centigrade. They use clear or diffused sunlight to heat the water so it works on cloudy days as well.

**Evacuated Tube Solar Water Heater** – These water heaters are more suitable for very cold regions. The water runs through tubes made of glass which are directly heated by the sun. The concept was invented in China where the tubes have been fitted onto the outside of a number of buildings, to ensure maximum exposure to the sun. The financial benefit of this system is huge in the long run because it is just a onetime investment.

**Solar Photovoltaic Energy** – A perfect solution for non-electrified rural areas. Photovoltaic is a method of generating electrical power by converting solar radiation into direct current electricity using semiconductors. Small silicon chips called solar cells are made into modules and then into panels which are kept outside to get maximum sunlight. These panels can be used to electrify anything from charging small batteries to generating power for an entire household. A typical unit is called a Solar Home Lighting System.

In Assam, more than 35,000 solar home lighting systems have been installed in approximately 700 remote villages. They have come as a huge relief to villagers who had no access to electricity in the past. Using this technology, we have also installed solar street lights and even small solar power plants in various areas throughout the state. In Karbi



Anglong, we installed a small power plant for a rural hospital and the 1 kilowatt system has made a huge difference to the functioning of the hospital. Now doctors stay through the night, using computers and other equipment powered by the solar power plant, unlike before. Even in areas where there is a lot of cloud cover and rain, systems have been developed that can run on diffused sunlight using amorphous photovoltaic panels rather than the crystalline ones which require direct sunlight.

We are also promoting the concept initiated by TERI's 'Lighting a Billion Lives programme', in which an entrepreneur in the village is given about 50 solar lanterns to lend to the villagers. This entrepreneur rents out the lanterns for a small amount each night to the local villagers which are brought back in the day for him to charge. The concept has really caught on in Assam.

**Wind Energy** – Wind can be a great source of alternative energy in the northeast particularly in the more windy states of Andhra Pradesh and Sikkim. Windmills can be used to run water lifting pumps and as battery chargers for creating electricity. Solar Wind Hybrid systems are also a possibility where the system uses sunlight in the day and wind at night.

*Mrinal Chaudhury is the Additional Director of the Assam Energy Development Agency, Guwahati.*

## WASTE MANAGEMENT: EXPERIENCES FROM SIKKIM

Nima Tashi Bhutia

Waste management is a major issue for everyone, not just the tourism industry. This is why we at the Khangchendzonga Conservation Committee (KCC) have begun a waste management initiative in the Kanchenjunga National Park in Sikkim. The park is the highest in India and is the most popular tourist destination in the state. We are attempting to create a 'Zero Waste Trail' along the Yuksam Dzongri Trail located inside the park.



© KCC, Yuksam

Waste management practices in the area used to be extremely detrimental to the sensitive surroundings, with waste just being dumped out of sight, buried or burnt. So when the KCC was set up in 1996, we started clean-up campaigns where the locals including school children, local clubs and government departments got involved in cleaning up the



dumped waste from the mountainside. But we found that once these clean-up campaigns ended, the area would be kept clean for a while but gradually litter would return to the mountainside and the cycle would continue. This, on its own proved to be an ineffective solution. The other problem is that even when people put litter in their dustbins, they do not think of where the waste is actually going. More often than not, the waste is taken

to landfills which are not scientifically designed and poorly managed. Instead of waste management, only waste transfer is taking place which does not solve the problem. Taking these problems into account, we began our waste management project on the Yuksam trail which goes all the way to the base of Mount Kanchenjunga.

It is a trek that takes approximately nine days with 7-10,000 people visiting the trail every year. We instituted codes of conduct for trekkers, demarcated designated campsites and tried to emphasise the importance of not just dumping waste. But what we found was that while the camps were kept really clean and no one was throwing litter on the trail itself, the area surrounding the trail was filthy as people had just thrown their trash off the main trail so that it would not be seen. That is when we came out with a monitoring form which had to be filled in every time tourists entered the national park. In the form, we noted down every disposable item that they carried with them into the park. And when they returned from the trek, we would make sure that the tourists were carrying the empty packets of those items with them

or if the items were unused, then we made sure that they were still carrying those items. Everything had to be accounted for, and if a tourist could not account for things that he/she had taken into the park then they would be fined.





We have also decided to educate people on how waste can be recycled and how it, too, can be used as a resource rather than something to get rid of. At the entrance of the park, we have installed a number of different bins for collected waste to be segregated. Once the waste is collected from the bins, it is further segregated into 23 categories by colour, brand, material and other factors, which makes it easier for the staff to identify what is reusable and recyclable. Some of this waste gets sold immediately while the rest can be cleaned and stored till it becomes viable to be reusable. Through this vital segregation exercise, a lot of the waste collected from the park does not have to be dumped.

The issue of safe landfills is another major waste management concern that we try to address. While a large percentage of non-recyclable waste comes from urban areas, the landfills are mostly in the rural areas which means people living in these rural areas suffer through no fault of their own. Since most landfills are not properly managed, they end up contaminating the surrounding environment and become a hazard to locals. We try to educate people about how to tackle the problems associated with living near these landfills.

The best way to make a sustainable difference in the community is by taking the participatory approach which requires getting local people involved. Innovative ways of recycling waste have been found which use local skills and also provide a financial benefit to the community. For example, bags for workshops are made out of waste rice bags, banners made from waste cloth and badges made from tetra packs. A number of private players have got involved in the process of manufacturing goods from waste which means there has been a big injection of investment and initiative. These are also a good means to spread awareness to the community. We at KCC, along with other concerned citizens and organisations, are working towards achieving a 'Zero Waste Himalaya'. The most important way to achieve this goal and aim for a better, waste free future is through the sharing of ideas and innovations. We believe that small initiatives are sustainable and will work in the long run. We cannot continue to allow big landfills and big factories to use up crores of our tax money to run unsustainable businesses. The principal of zero waste needs to be followed, clean production must take place and waste management must be economically beneficial.

***Nima Tashi Bhutia** works with the Khangchendzonga Conservation Committee which was founded in 1996 to tackle the growing issues related to high tourist numbers and pollution in the Khangchendzonga National Park. Nima has extensive experience working on conservation, ecotourism, community-based tourism, waste management, climate change and has wide experience of working with both national and multi-national organisations. In Sikkim he has been instrumental in promoting ecotourism and rural tourism, strengthening of community-based organisations, promoting lake conservation and wildlife conservation, as well as building local capacity.*

## DAY - 2

### Technical Session 4: Environment and Wildlife Law in Tourism

#### TRAFFIC INDIA – CONSERVING INDIA’S WILD HERITAGE

Samir Sinha

As per the recent research led by Rockström J from the Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University which looks at the concept of planetary boundaries, nine parameters on what humanity can operate on safely have been identified; what you might call a health check-up prescribed for the planet. The three parameters in the danger zone are climate change, the change in the nitrogen cycle and biodiversity loss that is already being seen as somewhat of a lost cause. This rapid rate of biodiversity loss is hugely detrimental to the planet as a whole and also has serious implications for the nature-based tourism industry in particular.

Since we are all related to the tourism industry and a lot of our tourism activities are in and around forests, sanctuaries and national parks, it is important for us to see what the laws have to say with regard to this. There is a policy document in India called the National Wildlife Action Plan and one of the most significant things it says is that *“tourism exists for the park and not the park for tourism.”* The second thing to remember is that ecotourism should primarily involve local communities and the first benefit should go to the local people. These points are very important and I use them as a litmus test for all places that claim to follow ecotourism standards. Those in the sector should also own and read a copy of the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA) because it has serious implications for all of us. Its preamble states: *“An act to provide for the protection of wild animals, birds and plants and for matters connected therewith or ancillary or incidental thereto with a view to ensuring the ecological and environmental security of the country.”* This clearly amplifies that this act isn’t just about protecting a few animals and birds but about ensuring the environmental security of the country. It also states that *“Sanctuaries and National Parks are declared for purposes of protecting, propagating or developing wildlife or its environment.”* The Chief Wildlife Warden is the person who is mandated to manage these areas and he may grant permits to any person to enter or reside in a sanctuary or National Park for tourism. He/she is the authority mandated to control, manage and maintain. Therefore, tourism in these areas is very much an activity that is covered by the WPA.

An important recent amendment to the WPA has ensured that no construction of commercial tourist lodges, hotels, zoos and safari parks shall be undertaken inside a sanctuary except with the prior approval of the National Board for Wildlife. This again emphasises that the primary role of such areas is to conserve biodiversity and that any other activity including tourism must always maintain the larger interest of wildlife. Recently, the National Green Tribunal was created to deal with all civil matters arising out of the environment and forest and for the first time in Indian jurisprudence the tribunal has a mandate to award damages. The penalty for non-compliance of orders can go up to Rs.10 crores for individuals, Rs.25crores for companies and for every single day of non-compliance there are also fines. Importantly, the tribunal is not bound by the procedure lay down in the Code of Civil Procedure and shall be guided by the principles of natural justice. Also, you

need not prove your credentials in order to file a complaint with the tribunal which means any individual can feel empowered to protect the environment. This has opened up great opportunities and all of us can play a part in bringing violations to justice.

I would also like to talk about wildlife trade with respect to tourism. The illegal trade in animals and plants is big business and is estimated to be worth \$20 billion globally. India, as a country rich in biodiversity is especially vulnerable to such threats. Under the WPA, seven years in jail is the maximum punishment for this kind of criminal activity but, in the 40 years since the act came into being, this has been awarded in only one case so far. This gives us a clear indication as to the urgent need to implement this law better. What we do, what we eat and what we buy are three differentiators that can have a major impact on protecting wildlife. The major problem now is that wildlife crime and poaching used to be a small-time crime, but today it is a crime of the rich. People who have surplus money are pushing this trade and there is a real danger of tourists buying illegal animal/plant products, even if inadvertently. If you look at the map of India, there is no single tiger inhabited state in India where poaching cases haven't been detected in the last 10 years. The northeast and the Indo-Nepal border, in particular, are hot beds for poaching. The area near Siliguri is a major hotspot for illegal wildlife trade.

Elephants are also poached in high numbers for their tusks. The ivory trade is big business with tusks being made into statues and all kinds of souvenirs. Despite laws being in place, these products are easily available across the globe to people who are willing to pay for them. While rhino species have the highest amount of protection under provisions of the law in India and across the globe, rhinos are threatened by the belief that their horns have magical properties.

It is believed that an unsubstantiated rumour in a SE Asian country that the use of rhino horn cures someone of blood cancer sent the demand and the cost of the horn skyrocketing which means poaching has gone up tenfold as well. Africa has been the major source of illegal horns entering the trade. In 2011, 448 rhinos were killed in South Africa and till February 28, 2012, over 100 rhinos had already been killed.



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But it is not just the big mammals; there have also been examples of butterflies and beetles being stolen from our national parks and sanctuaries across the country. A recent case was from West Bengal where two Czech nationals were arrested while illegally collecting beetles and butterflies from a National Park. Hundreds of cases of smuggling of turtles and tortoises

have been detected in recent times. There is also a very high volume of trade in live birds. In 2010, a very large consignment of birds was caught in Bangladesh being smuggled into Pakistan and many of the birds were found to be native to India. Large quantities of medicinal plants still come from the wild largely through theft. In the absence of proper information, the travel industry can sometimes fuel this illegal trade. Alternately, with good knowledge and best practices, it can contribute significantly towards checking such illegal activities

Conservation is a war that all of us need to contribute to. It is not enough to see animals and plants but to be sensitive to their threats and the issues involved in their conservation. I strongly believe that tourism industry has the power to change lives. While visitors can go back with better experience, attitude and knowledge to play meaningful future roles in strengthening conservation, local communities touched by responsible tourism practices can benefit immensely and also take up very significant measures at the grassroot level to support conservation initiatives. However, for that to happen, tourism practices must embrace sensitivity towards nature and environment conservation as a way of life. So let us all make a pledge that we will harness this power in support of conservation.

***Samir Sinha** is an officer of the Indian Forest Service from the Uttarakhand cadre presently serving as the Chief Conservator of Forests and Field Director, Corbett Tiger Reserve. He has previously served as Director of Rajaji National Park and Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve. He has also served as the Head of TRAFFIC India, South Asia regional office. He has been awarded a Certificate of Commendation by the Govt. of Uttar Pradesh in 1999 for excellence in Wildlife Management and His Excellency the Governor's Trophy for Excellence in Wildlife Management from the Government of Uttarakhand in 2003. He has received the prestigious Fulbright Fellowship for 2013 for studying issues related to management of illegal wildlife trade in the USA and its implications for India. He is also the author of a 'Handbook on Wildlife Law Enforcement in India' published by Traffic India and Natraj Publishers, released in February 2010.*

## Technical Session 5: Public Private Partnerships (PPP) in Ecotourism

### PPP INITIATIVES FOR ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN M.P.

Dr. Ajoy Bhattacharya

The official definition of Public Private Partnership (PPP) is “a project based concession agreement between a government entity and a private entity, to create and/or manage infrastructure for public purpose, for a fixed time-frame, on commercial terms, and assets revert to government on end of contract.” PPPs are extremely beneficial because they allow the expertise and investment of the private sector to be used for the public good. In this context, let me give you a snapshot of the initiatives taken by the Madhya Pradesh Ecotourism Development Board (MPEDB). Set up in July 2005, the Board is the first of its kind in the country. It is an autonomous organisation that comes under the Forest Department of the Government of Madhya Pradesh (M.P.) and was certified under the ISO 9001 for Quality Management System in 2008.

The vision of MPEDB is to ensure conservation and improve livelihoods. Unfortunately, in India ecotourism is mostly tiger centric. So one of the mandates of the Board is to promote non-tiger ecotourism – trying to diversify it to make it less dependent on Protected Areas (PAs). The mission of the Board is to eventually mainstream ecotourism into sustainable forest management. MPEDB’s objectives include

developing basic infrastructure at destinations, increasing nature conservation awareness and creating livelihood opportunities for local communities. The Board has worked to ensure that ecotourism is embedded in the policy directives of the Forest Department. Apart from policy initiatives, we are trying to improve and promote ecotourism in the state. These tasks come under the three broad categories of destination development, infrastructure development and activities. Destination development involves identifying appropriate destinations and developing them for ecotourism. Infrastructure development is the improvement of infrastructure in existing ecotourism destinations. And activities involve the identification of the right and unique types of ecotourism activities for the destinations and ensuring that local communities benefit from the introduction of these activities. We also conduct various events around ecotourism activities like setting up nature camps, celebrating the World Environment Day and others. Training and awareness-raising workshops take place on a regular basis to ensure capacity building is a continuous process for all stakeholders.



© Dr. Ajoy Bhattacharya



### **Rural Ecotourism Home-stay Scheme**

Our home-stay scheme is centred on the four major national parks in M.P. and it involves improving already existing traditional structures for tourism purposes. Tourists will be exposed to the local lifestyle, cuisine and culture. This, in turn, will generate employment opportunities for the local communities as well as promote conservation of forest areas.

### **Ecotourism Certification Scheme**

We have developed an eco rating scheme that measures standards of ecotourism. On the basis of this rating, Eco awards are given out to reward those following best management practices, and to motivate others to adopt similar practices.

### **Introduction of Innovative Technology**

Solar and wind energy applications have been introduced at ecotourism destinations. Local, indigenous knowledge is encouraged to solve problems of water scarcity and waste management. Through our community-based waste management programmes, students of various institutions have partnered with local communities to make ecotourism destinations in M.P. plastic-free. Kerwa and Samardha are now completely plastic-free while other destinations are on the right track. Different institutions have adopted different areas and have pledged to keep those areas waste-free.

### **Eco-friendly Architecture**

We actively promote the importance of eco-friendly architecture. Mud houses, tree houses, bamboo-based architecture and prefabricated structures are just some of the architectural

innovations that we encourage. Recently, in technical collaboration with the School of Planning and Architecture, Bhopal, we conducted a national competition for the design of an ecotourism destination at Laharpur, which received 26 participants.

#### **How we operate**

MPEDB promotes and develops ecotourism in M.P. using a number of different operational models. These are:

1. Departmental Model – The investment, operation and management of the destination is done by the department.
2. Joint Venture with Tourism Development Corporation – MPEDB and the corporation share responsibilities in running of the ecotourism sites. There can be various business models within this framework with investment partnerships, functional partnerships or land/property lease to the corporations.



3. Community-based Ecotourism – Enterprises are owned by the Forest Department and managed by the community and involve conservation, livelihood generation and community development under the supervision and facilitation of the Forest Department.

4. SHG–Confederation Model – This is a new concept being initiated, in which different activities and facilities at

a destination will be run by Self Help Groups (SHGs). Federations are set up to combine these and a state level confederation is to be set up to oversee the workings of all the federations involved.

5. PPP in Ecotourism - Presently two models have been adopted under our PPP framework. The first is a long term partnership for ecotourism infrastructure on non-forest lands. This involves handing over the area to a private player for a lease of 30 years. The bidder pays an annual premium to the board for developing and operating the site as an ecotourism destination. After 30 years, the assets are transferred to the board. We call this process Build Own Operate Transfer (BOOT). The second model involves an operational management contract where the operations of the ecotourism site are outsourced to private players on a short term basis.



© Madhya Pradesh Tourism Development Board

Some of the ecotourism innovations by MPEDB are as follows:

- Sky zipping at Kerwa
- Water Zorbing at multiple destinations
- Eco tour Packages
- Chambal River and Ravine safari
- Boating at multiple destinations
- Cycling introduced as ecotourism activity
- Training of female guides in Kanha

*Dr. Ajay Bhattacharya IFS, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, is the former Chief Executive Officer of the Madhya Pradesh Ecotourism Development Board. He directed the formulation and implementation of ecotourism projects and oversees the supervision of effective ecotourism management. Also, as the Chief Conservator of Forests in Bhopal, his responsibilities included the overall management and administration of the forests of five districts.*



## STRENGTHENING LEGAL PROVISIONS FOR ECOTOURISM

Dr. Ajoy Bhattacharya

There are various gaps that exist between the ecotourism policies and the resources available for their development. Some of them are the ambiguous role of the government, lack of community involvement and absence of incentives. There are also several principles which reinstate the necessity of a legal framework for the development of ecotourism and these are:

- To identify legal back up for ecotourism and draw a comprehensive policy based on the legal provisions available
- To bring in ecotourism under the working plans and promote it as a tool for conservation and sustainable livelihood
- To make comprehensive policies and action plans for ecotourism at the national and state levels

All these will in turn help to institutionalise the concept of ecotourism as a tool for Sustainable Forest Development. There is a stipulation by the Hon. Supreme Court of India, which states that the importance of ecotourism is to be recognised by including 'value of ecotourism' in the monetary value of services accruing from forest for computing Net Present Value (NPV).

The ecotourism mandate of the Ministry of Tourism has put down some basic principles to guide ecotourism initiatives in the country. These include:

- The local community should be involved in the overall economic development of the area
- The likely conflicts between resource use for ecotourism and the livelihood of local inhabitants should be identified and attempts made to minimise the same
- The type and scale of ecotourism development should be compatible with the environment and socio-cultural characteristics of the local community
- It should be planned as a part of the overall area development strategy, guided by an integrated land-use plan avoiding inter-sectoral conflicts and ensuring sectoral integration, in addition to commensurate expansion of public services

### LEGAL PROVISIONS FOR ECOTOURISM ARE PROVIDED IN THESE ACTS:

- Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, Forest Conservation Act, 1980
- Forest Conservation Act, 1980
- Environment (Protection) Act, 1980
- The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974
- Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981
- The Panchayati Raj Scheduled Areas Extension Act, 1996
- Biological Diversity Act, 2002
- Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, December 2006
- National Forest Policy, 1988
- National Conservation Strategy And Policy Statement On Environment And Development, 1992
- National Environment Policy 2006
- National Ecotourism Policy and Guidelines (1998)
- National Tourism Policy, 2002

## QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

- Q.** How can we assess Net Present Value (NPV) in terms of ecotourism? (To Dr. Ajoy Bhattacharya)
- A.** Till present, no NPV calculation has been done for any ecotourism destination. Under the PPP scheme the entrepreneur is given the permission to conduct tourism activities on a lease basis, to generate revenue for the state and the local community. (added by Samir Sinha) NPV is to be calculated in accordance with the Supreme Court guidelines.
- Q.** Isn't the government's policy or hand in the wide-scale deforestation in the name of 'development' carried out for the construction of four-lane roads being constructed from Guwahati to Shillong and from Guwahati to Silchar, questionable? (To Rakesh Mathur)
- A.** Sometimes there is a conflict between human needs and wants, and the safety of the natural environment. People should raise their voices against such cases which pose a threat to the environment.
- Q.** If Kaziranga National Park is declared to be a Tiger Reserve would the value and the business of the park go down? (To Samir Sinha)
- A.** Declaring Kaziranga National Park as a Tiger Reserve would only mean that there would be more Central Government funding for the park. It would mean a greater layer of legal protection for the park. There will be focus on management and the carrying capacity will be decided by the park authorities in terms of number of vehicles and tourists. The fear of the conservation focus shifting from rhinos to tigers is baseless.
- Q.** Conservation is for whom? Should not a part of the benefit of the forests go to the local communities? (To Mandip Singh Soin)
- A.** There are ways of achieving a balance between community involvement and conservation through ecotourism. Ecotourism is one of the pillars of responsible tourism and there are other aspects to responsible tourism as well. I once heard a political Naga leader called Phizo say in Kohima, "we can continue to blame the government or take up things ourselves." Phizo talked about an intervention which was done some years back wherein an entire community signed a pledge to stop playing their traditional role of hunters. (by Seema Bhatt) I had conducted a study at three heritage sites in India which included the Kaziranga National Park, focusing on the "benefits and opportunities for communities." Given the legal framework of the country, ecotourism is the best way to promote responsible tourism and benefit the local communities as well. (by Anurag Singh) There is no concept of "absolute balance." Look at the example of the Manas Tiger Project which went through a bad phase due to political turmoil. It was the local communities who helped get the park back to normalcy. For the local stakeholders to reap maximum benefits, it must be done through sustainable activities and regulation.
- Q.** Can tourism activities be allowed in the Protected Areas? (To Dr. Ajoy Bhattacharya)
- A.** The main area of operation for tourism activities is outside the forest or on its fringes. One has to be careful and judicious while planning the use of PAs and surrounding areas for ecotourism development. (added by Mandip Singh Soin) One should be far more conscious so that ecotourism initiatives do not go wrong.

- Q.** What initiatives are being taken up by Assam Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) for promoting tourism? (To Anurag Singh)
- A.** Steps have been taken by ATDC to develop a kind of tourism that leaves behind a minimal carbon-footprint. For example, the ATDC sponsored river cruise on the river Brahmaputra which is eco-friendly, minimises water pollution through its built-in sewage treatment system and consumes less fuel.
- Q.** Can we stop deforestation and encroachment by further projects? (To Anurag Singh)
- A.** It is imperative that new projects be balanced. Since encroachment is defined by over-population, expanding villages and the like, thereby, there is a need for the right policy in the right place.
- Q.** Can we state that tourism development is successful in the northeast? (To Anurag Singh)
- A.** The tourism department is a budding department and is working on its own development and master plan. Tata Consultancy Service, in collaboration with the government is chalking out a tourism master plan for the northeast region. The tourism department has also started the Joint Forest Community Management programme like the one in Nagaon which was awarded by the World Bank.

# PHOTO GALLERY

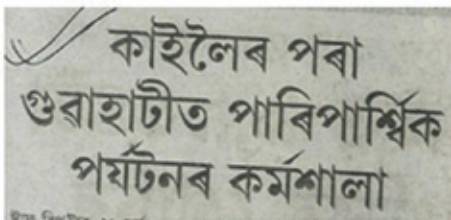




# IN THE MEDIA



ASOMIYA PRATIDIN, MARCH 22, 2012



AJIR DAINIK BATORI, MARCH 22, 2012

## State eco-tourism guidelines soon

POST BUREAU  
GUWAHATI, MAR 23

ASSAM tourism minister Chandan Brahma has said that the state government will make new guidelines on eco-tourism to meet the

as well as network with regional and state players across the country to facilitate and support synergy of policies, initiatives and activities at the national and state levels. "We will make new guidelines on eco-

SEVEN SISTERS, MARCH 23, 2012

## Two-day workshop to help state frame policies Assam boost to eco-tourism

TELEGRAPH GUWAHATI, MARCH 23, 2012

## পর্যটন সম্পর্কীয় কর্মশালা

NIYOMIYA BARTI, MARCH 22, 2012

6 Tourism Today | TRAVEL TRENDS TODAY • APRIL 2012

## ESOI educates North Eastern states to practice 'Responsible Tourism'

The 10th workshop of the Ecotourism Society of India (ESOI), held in Guwahati highlighted 'Responsible Tourism: Issues and Practices'. The workshop also aimed at raising awareness of the fragile ecosystem

TRAVEL TRENDS TODAY, APRIL, 2012







# LESSONS FROM AURANGABAD

April 27 and 28, 2012 – Hotel VITS, Station Road, Aurangabad (Maharashtra)

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## DAY - 1

### Technical Session - 1: Setting the Context

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE WORKSHOP

Rakesh Mathur

The Ecotourism Society of India (ESOI) was founded in 2008, by a group of eminent like-minded professionals from the tourism industry and environmentalists, with the encouragement of Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. It was started as a non-profit organisation to promote and ensure environmentally responsible and sustainable practices in the tourism industry.

ESOI strives to become a nationally recognised apex body, striving to promote responsible and sustainable tourism with strong global linkages and providing comprehensive research support to the government, NGOs, travel service providers and visitors to India.

Some of the chief objectives of the body are to:

- Help develop policies and codes of conduct for the promotion of sustainable tourism
- Encourage low pollution-generating practices and minimise ecological carbon footprint
- Encourage energy saving practices, water harvesting, use of solar and other natural energy sources
- To work extensively with service providers to enhance the quality of their products and services to a level so they can be sustainable and eco-friendly

*Rakesh Mathur is a Founder and Honorary Vice President of the Ecotourism Society of India. He was CEO of BASS Hotel (now IHG) for south and west Asia and President of WelcomHeritage Hotels. Post retirement, he is now Director and Principal Advisor to Zinc Hospitality, Crossroads Hotels and Specialty Restaurants Ltd. Mr. Mathur has been at the forefront of promoting Heritage Tourism in India and has won several awards and recognition for his work. He was awarded the Karmaveer Puraskaar by the Indian Confederation of NGOs – iCONGO - for launching the Concept and Code of Conduct of Safe and Honourable Tourism.*

#### ECOTOURISM: ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Seema Bhatt

Travel and Tourism is a growing industry, which is currently contributing an open 5% to India's GDP which is likely to double in the next 20 years. Tourism is important as it is an age old practice and is being practiced for years for a range of purposes that include religion, recreation, adventure, wildlife viewing and so on. However, unplanned tourism has had adverse impacts. For example, improvement in transportation and communication are affecting the traditional, social and cultural structure of India. The current tourism model is unable to integrate local communities to make tourism an economically and socially viable option for them.

Tourism in places like Goa, Manali and the Andamans, has resulted in problems like children becoming increasingly vulnerable to sexual and nonsexual exploitation, health and drug

related issues, crimes and people trafficking and many others. Economic gains are also questionable. A study shows that out of every US \$100 spent by a developed country, only US \$5 stays with the developing country. Moreover, unregulated tourism is also leading to the destruction of natural resources. The term 'Ecotourism' was first coined by a marketing agency in Costa Rica selling it as a rainforest destination in 1970. The concept came



© Seema Bhatt

into being as a result of the recognition of the ill effects of mass tourism. The first formal definition of 'Ecotourism' was given by IUCN: *"...It 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 socioeconomic involvement of local populations."*

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

© Seema Bhatt



The changing face of tourism has led to the concept of 'responsible tourism'. There are several examples of responsible as well as ecotourism in the country today. In Manas National Park the Bodo community runs a unique ecotourism initiative. Similarly, Ladakh prides itself in offering community-based home-stays that offer an innovative and fresh tourism experience to the tourists, while setting an ideal example of ecotourism. In Periyar

National Park, Kerala, cinnamon poachers have been trained to become nature guides. Their work has helped in the protection of the park and also given them livelihood opportunities. Another example of ecotourism destinations is Hodka in Kutch (Gujarat), which showcases



an example of rural tourism. In the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, Arunachal Pradesh, the indigenous Bugun community members have become expert bird watchers and ably guide tourists. A great source of pride here is the discovery of a new bird species that has been named after the tribe and is called Bugun Liocichla. However, with the growing number of tourists, ecotourism faces many challenges. Key aspects for sustainable or responsible tourism that need to be worked on are studies on carrying capacity of tourist destinations, codes of conduct for tourists, as well as, the local people, and environmental guidelines.

*Seema Bhatt is the Honorary Secretary of the Ecotourism Society of India. She is an independent consultant working on issues related to climate change, biodiversity and ecotourism. She has worked extensively with ecotourism projects across India and South Asia. Seema recently co-authored a book on Ecotourism Development in India published by the Cambridge University Press and is currently working on setting standards for ecotourism in India.*

## ROLE OF HOTELS IN ECOTOURISM AND STCI FOR HOTEL SECTOR

Rakesh Mathur

There is a direct link between tourism and environment and hence we need to think of the fundamental concept of perpetual sustainability. Hotels offer a higher experience at a higher cost, involving high consumption of energy and resources leading to wastage and pollution. The ecological balance needs to be preserved through cycle of sustainability.

There are many places

where we have gone wrong

- population growth, human greed, lack of education, awareness and sensitisation, absence of recycling and reusing. We use golf carts powered by coal and not solar energy, offer imported food, airline trays full of disposables, luxury bed cushions and what have you. But there are a few essential elements that every hotel should have. These are:

- Strict conservation enforcement
- No compromise on environment
- Having long term plans for sustainability
- Training of the staff

In terms of infrastructure, it is important to have green buildings and promote green meetings. Hotels should be equipped with solar heaters, rainwater harvesting, grey water recycling



© Ragini Letitia Singh



systems, regular checks on water leakages, biodegradable cleaning products, among other things. For example, 'The House of Managaldas' a heritage hotel in Ahmedabad has an electric meter in every room and discounts are given based on energy consumption. Management of waste is equally important including segregation of waste (wet and dry), reuse and recycling. Some new innovations that can be used in hotels are - having no tubs in the bathrooms, low flow showers, waterless urinals, water and electricity meters in every room, solar reflectors on windows, using cotton mattress, no blankets or duvet, no flowers but potted plants, and using handmade and recycled paper.

The majority of service providers in tourism are in the unorganised sector. There is lack of awareness and education of the service providers and tourists. Nor is there any proper concept of garbage and waste management or controlled energy consumption. People must understand the difference between luxury and comfort in order to lead an eco-friendly lifestyle.

To achieve better results, hoteliers should attempt to give incentives to the staff, as well as, guests, for supporting sustainability initiatives.

## Technical Session - 2: Learning for Local Tourism Industry

### RURAL ECOTOURISM

Rakesh Mathur

It has become necessary to preserve the uniqueness of rural areas, just like Bhutan which has been using its rural heritage for the development of ecotourism. There, the emphasis is laid on the vernacular style of architecture, community skill training, use of rain water harvesting among others. Bhutan has maintained its architectural sanctity and visual beauty which makes it unique. Traditional systems of construction are encouraged by use of local materials, local

cuisine and produce is promoted, every town and village is equipped with a waste management and water harvesting system, every child is taught a local art in the school, all activities revolve around a centre that promotes local value systems, and the national dress is made compulsory for all official purposes. Hence, it is important to maintain cultural uniqueness while keeping away from so-called 'modernisation'.



© Rakesh Mathur

## AN OVERVIEW ON SUCCESSFUL TOURISM PRACTICES – SHARING EXPERIENCES FROM JUNGLE LODGES AND RESORTS IN KARNATAKA

Vinay Luthra

Ecotourism has an identity of its own which can be clearly defined. Responsible tourism and nature or wildlife tourism are not yet equal to ecotourism.

The jungle lodges and resorts established in 1980 by the Government of Karnataka have been successful ventures because of the ecotourism activities undertaken by them. These include giving importance to biodiversity, interpreting nature for tourists and training local people as nature guides, developing interesting tourism activities like fishing, bird watching among others, and discouraging casual tourists.

The term carrying capacity should be used in terms of quality of tourist visiting the site. For example, take Gorilla Tourism in Rwanda, where only 24 tourists are allowed per day at a fee of more than \$200 per hour. In Bhutan, the number of foreign tourists is kept in check with each one having to register with a local tour operator and paying \$200 per day.

Green infrastructure made of local materials should be developed. A green building is one which uses less water, optimises energy usage, conserves natural resources, generates less waste and provides healthier space for occupants, as compared

to a conventional building. Moreover, the local community has to be involved just like the poachers of the past are now working as nature guides.



© Jungle Lodges and Resorts



© Jungle Lodges and Resorts

Ecotourism is beyond large mammal sightings. Community participation is the key to successful ecotourism development. Top priority should be given to the interpretation of nature and interesting activities. Good environmental practices should be encouraged and casual tourists avoided.

*Vinay Luthra IFS, is an officer of the Indian Forest Service from the Karnataka cadre. Besides working in various forest divisions of Karnataka, managing forests and wildlife, he has also worked in the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India. He has almost 8 years of experience in the area of ecotourism as Executive Director and Managing Director of Jungle Lodges and Resorts. Presently he is the Chief Executive Officer of the Karnataka Ecotourism Development Board.*

## THE AJANTA-ELLORA ECOTOURISM MODEL – LESSONS AND NEED FOR REPLICATION

Chandrashekhar S. Jaiswal

Ajanta is one of the first designated world heritage sites in India declared in 1983. It is a remarkable symbol of continental cultural painting and has unique geographical characteristics. The caves are excavated in the horse shoe-shaped valley of the Waghura River, and cover a 30 sq km area having rich biotic and abiotic elements.

The implementation of the Ajanta Ellora Development Project (AEDP) has brought out some new facilities and ideas. Public transport like pollution-free buses, are now used at Ajanta. The Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) is also planning to start a bicycle path soon. A land bank has been created to stop unplanned development.

The AEDP project has had several positive outcomes. These include:

- Responsible tourism implemented
- Commercial activities restricted
- Pollution free site ensured
- A worldwide image built for Ajanta
- Biodiversity conserved
- Heritage conserved



© Chandrashekhar S. Jaiswal



Along the way, we have learnt crucial lessons like the importance of control and regulation, afforestation, mobile connectivity and disaster management.

*Chandrasekhar S. Jaiswal is a Tourism Specialist and the Senior Regional Manager at the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation, Aurangabad.*

## Technical Session - 3: Greening the Tourism Industry

### MGM'S KHADI INITIATIVE

Shubha Mahajan

MGM has started Khadi and Paithani center to generate employment to local skilled artist along with the principles to say NO to chemicals. We manufacture right from spinning to the end product that garment. The whole unit runs under a solar system. We have to process as per the stages including spinning, warping, weaving, dying, block printing and garment. At MGM we are using natural dyes through-out dying and block printing process. So the garment or fabric manufactured here is eco-friendly. It is healthy for the skin. It helps to maintain body temperature. It is safe for infants and children to wear. Moreover, the dying



process does not pollute the waste water, so it can be used for irrigation.

We collect wasted marigold flowers left by the roadside by farmers during Diwali and Dusshera. These flowers are dried and grinded into powder to make dyes.

In terms of fabric, Khadi is important because of a number of reasons. It provides employment to rural people and artisans, has traditional significance and provides an alternative livelihood for farmer families.



© MGM

© MGM



MGM has laid emphasis on environment conservation and optimised the use of bio-friendly forest refuse. Instead of chemical dyes used by the textile industries, which are major pollutants and also hazardous for the artisans working in these units, MGM has developed 200 hues of organic dyes, most of which are made from unutilised local forest produce like Aam, Palash, Catechu and Behda.

*Shubha Mahajan is the Director at MGM Khadi and Paithani Research Centre, Aurangabad. She has a vast knowledge about the textile industry and is undertaking new experimental projects in the handmade fabric, Khadi. For the first time, khadi is being knitted into fabric and dyed in natural dyes, being one of Shubha's many new innovative ideas for MGM.*



## SHARING ITC'S INITIATIVES ON RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

Niranjan Khatri

The ITC group has taken some strong initiatives towards responsible tourism. We are promoting 'Responsible Luxury' and following the accounting principles interlinked with the new eco principle - 'Internalise environment externality'. We should change our approach towards understanding things by observing and listening.

Our key objectives for implementing initiatives for responsible tourism are:

- Less usage of harmful materials
- To be a nature-sensitive organisation
- Exceed compliance level and avoid adverse regulatory action

Some of the initiatives taken by ITC are:

- To help reduce migration by giving better employment options to the local people
- To promote afforestation by using alternative resources of energy for long and sustainable development
- To catalyse resource efficiency

Green design includes:

- Energy efficiency and renewable energy
- Indoor environmental quality
- Conservation of materials and resources
- Safeguarding water and water efficiency
- Sustainable site planning
- Anticipating and acting towards impending eco-pressures
- Seek everyone's commitment/inputs
- Work towards imbibing environment management system (EMS) and life cycle analysis (LCA)

Tour operators have a large role to play as well. This includes:

- To develop a questionnaire for hotels, restaurants and service providers nudging them towards Triple Bottom Line (TBL) responsible practices
- IATO to invest in afforestation in at least four locations
- To reach out to financially marginalised stakeholders
- To offer tourists to engage in social development as a new niche segment



© ITC Maurya

- To reduce their carbon and water footprint
- To take social responsibility in any small way

*Niranjan Khatri, GM-Environment, ITC WelcomGroup began his career as a management trainee in the hotel industry in the late 1970s. Since then he has had hands on learning from 1988 to 1992 in Port Blair and operational experience as the General Manager in various ITC Welcomgroup hotels around India. He continues to be in the hotel industry having found himself a different job description – that of a self-taught knowledge provider on issues revolving around sustainability across the hotel chain.*

## ALTERNATE ENERGY SOURCES – BATTERY OPERATED VEHICLES

Hyder Ali Khan

Maharashtra is one of the most visited states in India by foreign tourists. It has a large number of popular and revered religious monuments and sites amongst other attractive destinations. Hence, there is a big scope for battery operated vehicles here. Battery operated vehicles can be used at various tourism destinations like caves, hill stations, religious sites, monuments, wildlife sanctuaries among others. These are useful because of several reasons. Firstly, they do not pollute and hence are not hazardous to the health of natural and heritage sites. Secondly, they are ideal for addressing transportation needs at tourist sites and hence can attract more foreign tourists. Other advantages include controlled speed (important from the safety point of view), no vibration, cost effectiveness and low maintenance.



© Kinetic Engineering

These vehicles have been tried, tested and proved successful at the Taj Mahal and Vaishnodevi, where only battery operated vehicles are allowed. Considering this, battery operated vehicles can be used on a trial basis at Ajanta Caves. The caves are 4km away from the main gate; tourists are usually transported by means of diesel buses and mini buses.

Since the road is good, there is space for setting up a charging station and scope for local involvement, it seems like a feasible option. Even for Ganpatipule, a popular destination, this is a good option. Kinetic intends to develop various applications of the Light Delivery

Soleckshaw and the Soleckshaw Lite Passenger 3 wheeler that will deliver various socio-economic benefits while reducing pollution. We are also working on vehicles for tourism purposes like the 8-seater passenger van that can be used to transport tourists within sensitive eco-zones, with a maximum speed capacity of 28 km per hour; and the 14-seater comfortable passenger carrier that can be used for guided tours. Both can boast of zero air and noise pollution.



Maharashtra tourism stands to gain from these battery operated vehicles for the following reasons:

- These vehicles will help preserve natural and heritage sites, keeping them free from pollution
- It will make the tourism experience unique, especially for foreign tourists
- MTDC will bear a lower operation cost
- Promoting green vehicles at tourist destinations will be a revolutionary step towards making Maharashtra a global ecotourism destination

We at Kinetic are open to promote the green tourism concept through our battery operated vehicles all across India after the pilot in Maharashtra.

*Hyder Ali Khan, Kinetic Engineering, Pune has been a strategic leader for over 18 years, catapulting business growth for renowned automobile organisations. He has been the mastermind behind providing the vision and focus for cutting-edge marketing campaigns and helping products grow into market leaders. He has led several large product management programmes for four/three wheeler and two wheeler brands.*

## **AGRI AND RURAL TOURISM: A SUCCESS STORY**

Pandurang Taware

We started Agri Tourism in 2004 in a village called Malegaon Tal Baramati, and after its success, we wanted to take this concept to other farmers in Maharashtra. So in 2006, we started training farmers who wanted to get involved in Agri Tourism. Further I wanted to get all the Agri Tourism operators and farmers together on one platform, for which we started a co-operative. To address the need for regular training, research and development in the field on Agri and rural Tourism, under the Agri Tourism Development company, we started





the 'Baramati Agri and Rural Tourism Training, Research and Development Centre'.

In 2009 we purchased the barren land in Palshiwadi near Baramati, where the basic occupation of the locals was rearing sheep, and water was very scarce due to scanty rainfall. The three basic things to be considered were environment, economic development and social

development of the local people. The first few measures taken were to build a pond for rainwater harvesting with a capacity of 150 lakh litres, plantation of indigenous species of trees (to attract butterflies, birds and bees), and securing local involvement for infrastructure development using local material.

*"Responsible Tourism is that which generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities. It also makes positive contributions to the conservation of cultural heritage."* Towards this end, local artisans were employed for infrastructure and architectural development and given cash rewards for outstanding work, and local people were empowered to invest in means of motorable transport. Moreover, as part of Agri Tourism, the local people sell fresh farm products to tourists, local youth is part of decision making, local traditions are conserved and traditional food is served to tourists.

*"Responsible Tourism is that which provides enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues."*

Hence tourists were involved in the local kite festival called *Patang Jatra* in 2010 where they took part in kite flying and other activities.

Several initiatives have been taken by the Baramati Agri Tourism Training Research and Development Centre, for example a skill development programme for farmers, through which more than 1,000 farmers have been trained while 300 farmers



have established Agri tourism centres all over Maharashtra. In addition, ADTC is a chief promoter of MART, a cooperative federation to solve problems faced by farmers who run agri tourism centres. Most important ATDC also established May 16 as World Agri Tourism Day, which is recognised by UNWTO.

The Baramati Agri Tourism story has had some proud moments since its inception. These are:

- Recipient, National Tourism Award 2012 by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India for 'Best Responsible Tourism Project'
- Winner, Wild Asia Responsible Tourism Awards 2012, by Wild Asia, Malaysia for 'Community Engagement and Development and Cultural Preservation'
- Winner, Global, Responsible Tourism Award 2011, by Responsible Travel, London in Nov 2011, for 'Conservation of Cultural Heritage'
- Finalist, Global Tourism for Tomorrow Award 2011, by WTTC London at Global Tourism Summit May 2011 Las Vegas, USA for 'Community Benefit Tourism'
- Recipient, National Tourism Award 2008-09, by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India in March 2010, for the 'Most Innovative Tourism Product'

Agri Tourism needs agricultural land, special skills, passion and self involvement of family members. What is most needed in the present scenario is an Agri Tourism policy, marketing support from MTDC, all the facilities provided according to agriculture status and infrastructure support in the form of roads and supply of electricity.

*Pandurang Taware is a pioneer of the Agri tourism concept in India. He has founded, promoted and managed various Agri tourism businesses and institutions like the Agri Tourism Development Corporation, Agri Tourism Development Organisation, Maharashtra State Agri and Rural Tourism Co-operative Federation Ltd. and so on. Mr. Taware is also the founder of the World Agri Tourism Day, which is celebrated annually on May 14 and is supported by UNWTO.*

## Technical Session - 4: Environment Concerns

### CONSERVING NATURE WITH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Anirudh Chaoji

An important question in the present scenario would be – how can ecotourism benefit both people and wildlife? One probable solution would be to involve the local people and help build their capacity to enable them to become part of the tourism industry. This is more important because they are the primary stakeholders in areas where tourism is conducted. There are many natural skills that they may already possess like trekking, mountaineering, sharp eye sight and knowledge of plants and animals. So how can these skills be utilised by the people to earn a livelihood? Here are a few solutions:

1. Work in the hospitality sector with a scope of capacity building, to become more than just a waiter, gardener or security guard
2. Develop your own home-stay to help tourists experience local culture and flavour, keeping





- in mind that basic and clean facilities attract tourists
3. Train as a safari vehicle operator and learn how to maintain it
  4. Train to be a nature guide to help tourists understand the natural environment and respect it
  5. Acquire added skills as an adventure guide, since there is great demand for them

These solutions also come with several advantages. The local people do not have to leave their villages and migrate

to big towns and cities. It provides opportunities to the local youth to utilise their knowledge and skills, helps them lead a better life and to earn enough for themselves and their families.

At Pugmarks Holidays, we encourage local communities to find their potential and be part of our initiatives and activities. We conduct nature trails and camps for students in national parks and reserved forests. The early guides handling the camps had good jungle skills like wildlife spotting, but were not knowledgeable or could not interpret nature for the students. But Pugmarks has been recruiting local boys and giving them skill-based training to become expert nature guides. These guides can provide details or build up an experience from the pugmarks of an animal or even from its droppings.

Hiring young men from the local communities has a number of advantages. Not only does this prevent migration to bigger towns and cities by creating employment opportunities for the youth where they live, but also enables the local stakeholders to help the cause of wildlife conservation.



**Anirudh Chaoji** is the chief promoter of Pugmarks, which offers camping experience to youngsters in wildlife, trekking and adventure. It covers a mix of heritage sites, wildlife sanctuaries and spectacular landscapes. Anirudh is deeply involved in ecology restoration and environment education.

## CERTIFICATION OF COMMUNITY-BASED HOME-STAYS: EXPERIENCES FROM LADAKH

Seema Bhatt

I would like to start by making clear what certification means. Certification is a procedure that assesses audits and gives written assurances that a facility, product, process or service meets specific standards. Certification of eco-friendly tourism stakeholders could:

- Help raise the international standard for ecotourism in India
- Lend credibility to Indian tour operators
- Ensure that ecological impacts from tourism are monitored in ecologically fragile areas
- Bring credibility to local community-based tourism initiatives
- Help tourists make informed choices

Some of the local certification initiatives in India are:

- Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve: A People's Ecotourism Initiative
- Travel Operators for Tigers (TOFT)
- Green Palm Certification of Boats by Kerala State Tourism Department
- Dos and Don'ts by CGH Earth Group of Hotels (Private Entrepreneur)

Corporate Initiatives towards setting standards and creating certification programmes are by the ITC Welcomgroup and the Ecotel Hotels.

The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria and Indicators are:

- Effective sustainability planning
- Maximising social and economic benefits for the local community
- Enhancing cultural heritage
- Reducing negative impacts to the environment

In Ladakh, there are three agencies that work in the field of community-based ecotourism. These are Snow Leopard Conservancy, WWF-India and the Ladakh Wildlife Department. The certification process in Ladakh has to be based on certain parameters like:

- Demonstration of effective sustainable management
- Periodic training of all personnel regarding their role in the management of environmental, socio-cultural, health and safety practices, and hospitality in general
- Customer satisfaction measured and corrective action taken where appropriate



© Seema Bhatt

- Home-stays designed on the basis of traditional architecture
- Accurate information about and interpretation of the natural surroundings, local culture and cultural heritage made available to customers
- Code of conduct for tourists explaining appropriate behaviour while visiting natural areas, local cultures, cultural heritage sites and while staying in the home-stay made available in every room

Home-stays maximise social and economic benefits for the local community and minimise negative impacts since they are run only by local people. A fixed price for the stay is determined and ensured that it is equitable across the board. A system is established to ensure that each home-stay gets a chance to host an equal number of tourists. This system also ensures that ecological, historical and archaeological wealth is not abused or misused.



© Seema Bhatt

The next steps that I propose are:

- Establishment of a certification body
- Implementation
- Marketing of the scheme

## HERITAGE AND TOURISM – SHARING EXPERIENCES

Supriya Goturkar-Mahabaleshwarkar

For the sake of urban tourism, Pune does not have many great heritage sites or monuments to showcase. However, urban tourism can flourish if its existing heritage is used as a resource for tourism. That is what INTACH has been trying to do in Pune by conserving prominent heritage buildings, bringing together stakeholders and making heritage available and accessible to people. For instance, Shaniwarwada and environs, a palatial residence of the Peshwas was encroached and was in dire need of conservation. INTACH took over



© Sandesh Bhandare





the project to conserve and revitalise it, and now the place is well-known as a socio-cultural attraction and is a popular venue for cultural performances in the city.

INTACH has also taken up the following initiatives in Pune:

- Conservation of the 'core city' and streetscapes in Pune
- Heritage walks and tours to unveil the city and its various facets through historic and anecdotal narration and draw the tourists' attention to unnoticed architectural delights. This also gives them an insight into the social and cultural life of the people
- Promotion of issue-based tourism, which includes informed tourism, infotainment, inquisitiveness and helps visitors or citizens to make an attempt to understand their own city
- Craft revival and conservation, for example, showcasing a 400 year old craft called 'Tambat Ali'

Through our group walks, we try to bring out the various historical, cultural and social facets of a city and help people experience it. It is important to link heritage and sustainability.

The identity of any city is often decided by what in it attracts tourists. We conserved a small building with its unique features and it has contributed to tourism.

*Supriya Goturkar-Mahabaleshwarkar, an environmentalist by profession, works as Coordinator for INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) Pune Chapter. She has completed her Master's in Biodiversity from MES Abasaheb Garware College, Pune University. Biodiversity assessment in Sacred Groves and Community Conserved Areas are some of her areas of interest. She has conducted many workshops for spreading heritage and environmental awareness among school and college students.*

## HOME-STAY MODEL FOR CONSERVATION – VELAS TURTLE EXPERIENCE

Ramashish Joshi

There is a pressing need to save the endangered Olive Ridley Turtle and ensure its healthy growth. The turtle goes through various stages from nesting to hatching and needs a protected environment to do so. At Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra (SNM), we are training the local people to help us achieve this. They are trained to identify the pugmarks of turtles and trace their eggs, which are then collected and taken to the hatchery. When the nestlings are ready,



they are released with care into their natural habitat after counting. Not surprisingly, this process draws tourists who want to be part of the experience.

At Velas Chiplun for example, we inform tourists about the dates of the release through daily updates on the website which ensures a good number of conservation supporters at Velas. A turtle festival is organised and this provides livelihood to



© Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra

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the local people who have now become a part and parcel of this eco project. Since 2002 almost 52 villages have been included in this project and almost 35,000 hatchlings have been successfully released.

The important fact is that 40% of the total nests are in Maharashtra are found in Velas. This small village in district Ratnagiri has an excellent biodiversity and it is in proximity to major cities like Pune and Mumbai. However, what we need to be wary of are the casual tourists and try to keep them away. The groups that are genuinely interested should be encouraged. It is very important to include local leaders, key personnel and team of volunteers to carry out conservation activities and communicating project related information to the media. Meeting the tourists' expectations to see/feel the outcome of the conservation project through direct results is very essential.

Our future plans are to get the certification of the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) for the local home-stay owners, explore avenues to develop an association with corporate houses, and to use information technology for the benefit of the local people.

*Ramashish Joshi is an entrepreneur with more than 20 years of experience in Information Technology. He has been associated with Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra (SNM) for more than 2 years through various workshops and conservation projects and has represented it at various events. Currently, he is working on SNM's Marine Turtle Conservation project in the Konkan region.*

## CHECKS AND BALANCES IN ECOTOURISM PRACTICES

Swathi Sheshadri

According to the tourism industry, ecotourism has several advantages. The industry claims that it provides livelihood and employment to local communities, helps generate funds for conservation related activities, creates awareness among visiting tourists about wildlife therefore building public support for conservation measures, and enables tourists entering forests to act as watchdogs both for the forest staff and for poachers. It also has some key components. These are:

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

However, the real situation is very different. Let's take into consideration the tourism establishments on the fringes of Kanha and Bandhavgarh National Parks. The tourism market is over saturated, travel agents and tour operators call the shots without much consultation with the local people or paying attention to environmental responsibility, and there is loud marketing and competition to lure tourists on the basis of comforts and luxuries offered. The demands of tourists include facilities like air conditioners, swimming pools, spas, pool tables and gymnasiums. Almost all linen goes for washing with detergents in the local rivers in Kanha and Bandhavgarh.

A village called Banjar Tola, at Mukki gate, Kanha has become prime tourist property. The villagers sold large chunks of their land to builders which were also acquired through other means. Now the access to the river is reduced to one point especially



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## EXISTING POLICIES ON ECOTOURISM

- Wildlife Protection Act, 1972
- Forest Conservation Act, 1980
- Environmental Protection Act, 1986
- Panchayati Raj Act - 73rd amendment
- Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996
- National Ecotourism Policy, 1998
- National Tourism Policy, 2002
- Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006
- Guidelines for declaration of Eco Sensitive Zones around National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries, 2011
- Directives of the Supreme Court
- (Draft) Guidelines for Ecotourism In and Around Protected Areas issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forests on June 2, 2011
- Other central and state legislations and policies with respect to the North East, Western Ghats
- Lower Himalaya, Upper Himalaya and the Shivaliks

since a company catering to high end clients has erected large tent-like structures at the river's edge. Local villagers are of the opinion that since their river-based activities (bathing, washing, bathing buffaloes) might disturb the tourists staying in these tents they will not be able to use the river as they used to. Even in terms of electricity, for all establishments (except two), the source of electricity is the state grid. They are equipped with a generator for power back up for air conditioners and filtration plants. Despite high commercial rates, resorts would like the state to provide them more electricity; all this, while BanjarTola does not even receive regular electrical supply.

According to a key player in the Kanha area, *"the last five years business has changed. It is changing from wildlife to luxury and leisure."*

In order to ensure that the guidelines are followed, it is necessary to educate tourists, to prepare them for the tourism experience, which goes a long way in aligning their expectations closer to the actual and available experience. Reconceptualising tourism as a cultural exchange and enabling mutually rewarding interactions between tourists and local communities can be beneficial to both.

There are checks and balances in ecotourism that need to be maintained at all times. These would include adherence to legislations, establishment of stringent mechanisms that prevent exploitation and negative impacts on the society and ecology, tourism impact assessments, community involvement, conceptualisation of ecotourism keeping with the cultural and social practices of the communities of the region, a model of benefit sharing and a monitoring group comprising stakeholders to conduct external reviews every three years.

I would like to conclude putting a few basic points into perspective. Turning forests and ecosystems into tourism products makes them vulnerable to demand and supply. Hence, it is necessary to take into consideration Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest



Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (Forests Rights Act (FRA)) and Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA) while planning tourism development in forested areas. If practised correctly, ecotourism can be an important economic and educational activity, the first benefits of which should go to the local community. However, there is an urgent need for an ecotourism policy for the country. Tourism in forest areas is an equal responsibility of the Ministry of Environment and Forests and the Ministry of Tourism.

*Swathi Sheshadri works with EQUATIONS as an overall in-charge of the networking programme, especially in the central, eastern and north eastern regions of India. She has a Masters in Social Work and comes with many years of experience working with people's movements and community-based struggles for social justice. She has also headed an organisation called National Youth Foundation, done extensive research and has taught social work students. Swathi is also responsible for EQUATION's work on studying the economic impacts of tourism.*

## DAY - 2

### Technical Session - 5: Strategies for Wildlife Tourism

#### BALANCING WILDLIFE AND TOURISM NEEDS

Dr. H.S. Pabla IFS (Retd.)

We protect and conserve our wildlife for several reasons. Not only do wild animals maintain the balance of nature and act as a futuristic gene bank, but they are also part of our heritage, safeguarding which is a moral and religious responsibility. However, we are protecting wild animals also because the public wants to see them in their natural environments and want to enjoy wild and open spaces. Incidentally, wildlife has survived where tourism has flourished and vice versa. Nature tourism, including wildlife tourism, is the fastest growing segment of tourism, globally.



Wildlife tourism protects wildlife in several ways. It generates resources for conservation agencies and job opportunities, and incomes, for remote communities; tourists act as additional ears and eyes for anti poaching agencies; tourism builds public support for



conservation, enhances self-respect of staff and helps educate the public. Unfortunately, wildlife tourism comes with some challenges. Unregulated and excessive tourism disturbs and scares animals, leads to the problem of garbage, has social impacts and destroys natural habitats to make way for infrastructure.

Fortunately, wildlife tourism and wild animals have similar requirements and can grow symbiotically. Visitors want to see large open spaces, minimal pollution and disturbance, unspoilt scenery, good guiding or interpretation, and, above all, lots and lots of animals, and few humans. Production of wild animals also requires good habitat (large open spaces with food, water and cover), low density of human presence, low impact infrastructure and support of local communities. Thus there is no contradiction between good, sustainable, wildlife tourism and good wildlife management.

The kind of tourism that has minimal impact on the forests and wildlife is of low density, brings significant returns to the park and the local people, has a diversity of options (vehicle safaris, elephant safaris, walking, biking, bird watching) and low impact infrastructure. The tourism industry has a responsibility to make wildlife tourism environmentally sustainable and socio-economically acceptable. It should enable local communities to benefit from tourism and take responsibility for community infrastructure; it should prefer locals for employment and keep human density low, while encouraging donations for communities and conservation.

***Dr. H.S. Pabla** retired as the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) and Chief Wildlife Warden of Madhya Pradesh in February 2012. He has been a strong votary of active wildlife management, beyond classical antipoaching measures, and has been advocating the use of wildlife tourism as a conservation tool. He guided the reintroduction of tigers in Panna, gaur in Bandhavgarh and blackbuck in Kanha, after these species became locally extinct, and laid the foundation of a new culture of active wildlife management in the country. Wildlife tourism in Madhya Pradesh grew to unprecedented levels during his years at the helm and resulted in huge benefits to conservation and communities. Post retirement from IFS, he was appointed as an advisor to the MP Ecotourism Development Board and is now a consultant on wildlife management on a World Bank funded project in Bangladesh.*

## QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

- Q.** In Ladakh there are home-stays that are owned and run by people from outside. What type of training do they receive and by whom?
- A.** The local women who are already running their home-stays are training them to run home-stays. (By Seema Bhatt)
- Q.** How do you market Agri Tourism? (To Pandurang Taware)
- A.** We are marketing through our website and word of mouth. In fact, we would like MTDC to give us a table's space in their office for a farmer to sit and give out information to tourists about Agri Tourism.
- Q.** How should tourists be informed about the dos and don'ts?
- A.** Tourists can be sent an email at the time of booking informing them. In addition, they can be pasted on every room of the home-stay.
- Q.** What are the impacts of AEDP Project implementation on the local people of Ajanta and Ellora? (To Chandrashekhar Jaiswal)
- A.** The AEDP Project has helped reduce poverty in the region due to the large scale employment of local people in tourism. A micro economic system has been developed and at least 400 households depend on tourism in the area.
- Q.** What are the forestation measures that have been implemented by ITC? (To Niranjan Khatri)
- A.** We at ITC purchase wood and related material from certified sources which cut one tree and plant 20 in place. Moreover, the farmers are provided information regarding the market and agriculture, which has helped them attain 10% increase in their income. These are some of the benefits that ITC has provided out of its social responsibility.
- Q.** Is ESOI planning to reach out to schools with the concept of ecotourism? (To Rakesh Mathur)
- A.** There are various other institutions that can approach schools. In fact, this education should be made compulsory for children. (Added this Niranjan Khatri) There is an 'eco-rating' system specially developed for schools, and hence many schools are already auditing their waste generation and disposal.
- Q.** The buses running at Ajanta are not eco friendly, so is MTDC thinking of some ideas like bullock carts to carry the tourists? (To Chandrashekhar Jaiswal)
- A.** The MTDC is ready to launch a bicycle path in Ajanta.
- Q.** Aren't architects a missing link in this workshop?
- A.** Engineers and architects are not aware of what is going on in tourism. Tourism Engineering is a new concept in tourism. Architects need to go beyond their regular practice to understand tourism. (By Chandrashekhar Jaiswal)

# PHOTO GALLERY



# IN THE MEDIA

EVENT ROUNDUP

## Aligning natural heritage with tourism

In a series of workshops organised by the Ecotourism Society of India, the effort has been to create awareness and preserve the fast vanishing natural heritage that the country has. The 11th ESOI workshop, held at Aurangabad, Maharashtra brought together the fraternity from the town and surrounding areas to discuss issues, challenges and the way forward. By Sayoni Bhaduri

EXPRESS TRAVEL WORLD, JUNE, 2012

विचारमंच | इको टुरिझम आणि तात्मानवदत्तत्वा तज्ज्ञ सीमा भट यांचे आवाहन, कर्नाटकचे विनव लुकरा खोनी त्रिकुट्टी मने

## इको टुरिझमबाबत संवेदनशील व्हा

CITYACTIVITY, APRIL 27, 2012

## पर्यटनस्थळी पर्यावरण रक्षणासाठी उद्यापासून दोनदिवसीय कार्यशाळा

HELLOAURANGABAD, APRIL 26, 2012

## 2-day workshop on ecotourism

LOKMAT TIMES AURANGABAD, APRIL 26, 2012

## पर्यटन संस्कृती रुजवण्याची आवश्यकता



DIVYA CITY, APRIL 29, 2012







# MEET THE SPEAKERS

NAME	ORGANISATION	LOCATION
Dr. S. Anbalagan	Divisional Forest Officer (Ecotourism), Sikkim Biodiversity Conservation and Forest Management Project	Gangtok
Ms. Seema Bhatt	Independent Consultant - Biodiversity	New Delhi
Dr. Ajoy Bhattacharya	Former CEO, Madhya Pradesh Ecotourism Development Board	Bhopal
Mr. Nima Tashi Bhutia	Khangchendzonga Conservation Committee	Siliguri
Mr. Anirudh Chaoji	Pugmarks Eco Tours P. Ltd.	Pune
Mr. Shivumso Chikro	Wakro Ecotourism Project, Arunachal Pradesh	Wakro
Mr. Mrinal Choudhary	Asst. Director, Assam Energy Development Agency	Guwahati
Ms. Supriya Goturkar	INTACH	Pune
Mr. Chandrashekhar S. Jaiswal	Regional Director, MTDC	Aurangabad
Mr. Ramashish Joshi	Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra	Chiplun
Mr. Hyder Ali Khan	Kinetic Engineering	Pune
Mr. Niranjana Khatri	GM Environment, Welcomgroup	New Delhi
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Ms. Shubha Mahajan	Director, MGM Khadi and Paithani Research Centre	Aurangabad
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