



## Eco-Cultural Tourism and Socio-Economic Development: A Case Study of Chandubi Festival of Chandubi Area in South Kamrup, Assam

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Published Online: 13 May 2021	Eco-Cultural Tourism is a new area which emphasizes on the promotion and development of culturally rich and ecologically important sites and locations or places. Through the promotion of this kind of tourism, the inhabitants living in the surrounding and peripheral areas may be socio-economically benefited. The community participation process would have also continued in this eco-cultural tourism. In eco-cultural tourism, the emphasis should be given on conservation of ecological diversity and cultural heritage of the respective community. In eco-cultural tourism, tourists are attracted towards the local culture and flora and fauna constituting the ecology. Chandubi is a well-known natural lake located 64 km away from the Guwahati city and included in the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council area of south kamrup region, Assam. Chandubi Festival has been organized at the bank of the Chandubi Lake for the last 4-5 years. It is a promotional festival for attraction of visitors and tourists to Chandubi. But most prominent objective of Chandubi Festival is to create awareness among the mass for conservation of ecological diversity of the lake as well as to promote folk culture and ethnic tradition of the different communities especially of the Pati Rabha community for domestic and foreign tourists at this place. Through organizing this festival, the organizer tries to draw the attention of the concerned Departments of Government and Non-Government organizations for infrastructural development of the place and the attainment of socio-economic development of the entire community who have been participated in the different process in the promotion of eco-cultural tourism.
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### INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the most important sectors of economy as well as a socio-cultural phenomenon in the modern society. Its development plays an important role for all round socio-cultural and economic development of a region as well as conservation of ecological and cultural diversity. In this regards, eco-cultural tourism is emerging as a new field. It has emphasized on the promotion and development of culturally rich and ecologically important sites and locations or places at the same time.

Through the promotion of this kind of tourism, the inhabitants who have been living in the surrounding or peripheral areas of the Chandubi Lake may be socio-economically benefited. In this eco-cultural tourism, the community participation process may be continued through various stages in the promotion of it.

In eco-cultural tourism, the emphasis should be given on conservation of ecological diversity and cultural heritage of

the respective surrounding communities. In this kind of tourism, tourists are attracted towards the local culture and ethnic tradition as well as flora and fauna constituting the ecology.

Here, Chandubi Festival has been held every year in the winter season especially in the last part of the month of December to first part of the month of January for promotion and development of eco-cultural tourism in the Chandubi area.

Chandubi is a well-known natural lake located 64 km away from the Guwahati city and included in the Rabha-Hasong Autonomous Council Area of south-Kamrup region, Assam. The main objectives of organizing this festival are to attract the visitors and tourists to Chandubi and also to create awareness among the masses for conservation of ecological diversity of the lake as well as to promote folk culture and ethnic tradition of the different communities especially of the

Pati-Rabha community for domestic and foreign tourists at this place.

Through organizing this festival, the eco-cultural tourism may be promoted and then it would provide an ample scope or opportunity for socio-economic development in this Chandubi and surrounding areas.

So, in order to study the eco-cultural tourism at the ground level reality, the Chandubi Festival of Chandubi area is taken here as a case study.

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- a) To review the theoretical aspect of eco-cultural tourism.
- b) To study the ecology and bio-diversity in the surrounding areas of the Chandubi Lake.
- c) To study the prospects of socio-economic development through the development of eco-cultural tourism.
- d) To study the Chandubi Festival and assess how the socio-economic development can be materialized through the promotion of it in the Chandubi area.

#### METHODOLOGY

The study is broad-based on both primary and secondary information and data. Primary data were collected from the field and secondary data from the relevant books, magazines, journals and internet or e-sources. Observation and Interview methods were applied for collection of relevant data and information. Interpretation of the problem is made qualitatively.

##### a) Discussion on Theoretical Aspect of Eco-Cultural Tourism

The concept of eco-cultural tourism is that both ecological and cultural aspects of a landscape are combined to create a site for tourists. It is a way for communities with otherwise marginal cultural or ecological resources to develop. Eco-Cultural tourism reflects present day practice but also acts as a model of how cultural and eco-tourism could be employed by local people to build an empowered, sustainable future in similar settings elsewhere (Wallace & Russell, n.d.)

Eco-Cultural tourism aims to develop and promote potential tourist spots, revive local traditions and preserve ecological diversity as a means of promoting tourism. It is usually defined as a concept in which ecological and cultural aspects of a landscape are combined to create a site for tourists' attraction. (Pociovalisteanu & Niculescu, 2010).

Eco-tourism is a form of tourism that appeals to the ecologically and socially conscious individuals. Generally speaking eco-tourism focuses on volunteering personal growth and learning new ways to live on the planet, typically involving travel to destinations where flora, fauna and cultural heritage are the primary attractions (Dhar, 2008).

According to Wikipedia, cultural tourism is the subset of tourism concerned with a country or region's culture,

especially its arts. It generally focuses on traditional communities who have diverse customs, unique forms of arts and distinct social practices, which basically distinguishes it from other types and forms of culture. Cultural tourism that is found in the urban areas, particularly includes historic or large cities and their cultural facilities such as museums and theatres, archaeological sites and structures. It can also include tourism in rural areas showcasing the traditions of indigenous cultural communities (i, e, festivals, rituals) and their values and lifestyle (Wikipedia).

From the above discussion, it is known that eco tourism and cultural tourism or eco-cultural tourism is a best instrument for development of a tourist site along with socio-cultural and more specifically, the socio-economic benefit of a particular community living in surrounding places or areas of the particular sites or spots. It has been able to preserve the traditional cultural heritage and flora, fauna and other ecological important features of particular site.

Community development is the prime objective of the eco-cultural tourism. Through the promotion of eco-cultural tourism, an ecologically important site is developed, along with traditional cultural heritage of the local community and the improvement of basic infrastructure of the particular area as well as socio-economic development of the local communities living in the surrounding areas.

##### b) Ecological and Bio-Diversity in the surrounding areas of the Chandubi lake

The Chandubi Lake is nestled in the Meghalaya hills being surrounded by tall hills and wetland covering an area of 190.00 hectares with an abundance of scenic grandeur. It has the distinction of the featuring the prestigious Birdlife International's", Important Bird Area List" and also the Chandubi lake itself and its adjoining areas of 2000 hectares fulfilling the criteria '2' of Ramsar Convention's Ramsar Site( A Wetland of International Importance).

A lot of rare animals are found around the Chandubi like barking deer, common leopard cat, jungle-cat, Assamese macaque, flying squirrel, common mongoose, bamboo rat, Indian Pangoline and wild elephants.

Around the Chandubi, a lot of rare plant species and orchid species are found. It is also the abode of various phyto-planktons. A lot of migratory birds have been coming also in the winter season to this lake. The birds like moor heron, pond heron, little cormorant, darter, cattle, egret, night heron, adjutant stork, white breasted water hen, small blue king fisher are generally found here. So, such a rich ecological as well as bio-diversity in the Chandubi area has tremendous potentiality for development of ecotourism. If ecotourism is promoted here, then the ecology and bio-diversity would be conserved to a greater extent.

##### c) Promotion of Eco-Cultural Tourism and Prospects of socio-Economic Development

## “Evaluation of Three Covid-19 Antigen Assay Versus PCR Detection in Routine Practice”

In the 1980's studies of tourist interests in the United states, it was clearly identified that tourists were interested in Canadian heritage and communities and their ways of life, values and traditions. It was felt that this interest would translate into economic development using the heritage and community resources often cultural in nature, as the way to develop a tourism product (Bhatt & Badan, 2006).

Through promoting eco-cultural tourism, the natural scenic beauty as well as natural heritage and diversity would be conserved and on the other hand cultural and folklore heritage would also be focused and preserved. As a result, there is ample opportunity for socio-economic development of the community and infrastructural improvement of the region.

The Chandubi Lake is located within the Rabha-Hasong Autonomous Council in the South-Kamrup region of Kamrup(rural) district. The rabha hasong Autonomous council is constituted with its head quarters at Dudhnoi town. The Jurisdiction of this council extends up to Rani Area of Kamrup District and some parts of matia, Balijan and Lakhipur revenue circles; it embraces almost the entire district of Goalpara.

The Chandubi Lake is associated with various myths, legends and folk beliefs. According to a folk legend, in Khasi language, *Chan* means five. There are five hills located in this particular area. They are *Bagasila*, *Chagalsari*, *Maya*, *Champe*, and *Nachausila*. Chandubi was created as a result of sinking of the parts of these five hills, i.e. *Chan* hills(Kalita, 2013).

According to historical fact, Chandubi Lake was formed during the Great Assam Earthquake, 1897 during which the forest went down and became the lake.

There are many villages surrounding the Chandubi Lake. In ancient period, the surrounding area of Chandubi was covered by deep forest. In the North-Western direction, the *Chagalsari*, hill is stretching for a length of 32 kms. From *Kala Gosain* hill to *Kundaiburha* to *Mayong*, all these hills have a lot of different animals and birds. In the western part, there is a hill called *Mayong* which connects Assam and Meghalaya, Rajapara village was established by the Rabha community in the remoter past on the bank of Chandubi. There are many villages located around the Chandubi Lake. The villages are namely Baregaon(Garo community inhabited), Rani-Khamer and Bher-Bheri,. Khopadia, Jhoramukhuria and Chaparkata. Most of the villages are inhabited by the Rabhas especially the Pati-Rabha, a sub-group of the Rabha community.

The Pati-Rabhas have rich ethnic and folk culture and tradition that inhabit mainly at Rajapara, Jhoramukhuria and Aliha village. The entire traditional life- style and agrarian based economy have

tremendous potential to attract tourists. But against the growing impact of modernization and globalization, the different folk cultural forms essentially need systematic conservation. So, maintaining its authentic values, these should be showcased for other people.

The promotion of eco-cultural tourism is highly essential for this area because through promoting it, the villagers may have chance to participate in various ways for their socio-economic development. Infrastructural development including road networks and connectivity, transportation and communication, accommodations including hotel and restaurants, availability of pure drinking water, food stuff including folk and ethnic food recipes, knowledgeable and skilled guides must be made adequately available at this site or spot.

### d) Chandubi Festival and Promotion of Eco-Cultural Tourism

The Chandubi Festival is a well-organized festival for the promotion of eco-cultural tourism in the greater Chandubi region. It is a good step that during the last 4-5 years, a local based organizing committee has been holding the “Chandubi Festival” at Rajapara, on the bank of the Chandubi Lake. The major objective of this festival is to create awareness among the masses for conservation of ecological diversity of the lake as well as to promote folk culture and ethnic tradition of the different communities especially of Pati-Rabha community for domestic and foreign tourists at this place. There a lot of performing arts like Hana-Ghora, hamzar and Bagejori dances of Pati-Rabhas as well as Rabhas which are performed for visitors and tourists. Not only these performances but also the traditional life-style of the Rabhas is showcased here. Their ethnic food recipes are also available here and various colourful and decorative ethnic dresses are presented and showcased. The country liquor is also available. Traditional agricultural implements and house types, *Changghar* of Rabhas are also exhibited.

So, the tourists both domestic and foreign as well as local visitors have been visiting this place largely during the festival days and see and experience folk culture and ethnic heritage of local communities and natural beauty of the lake.

So, Chandubi Festival is a part of form of Eco-Cultural Tourism at Chandubi region. To promote this type of tourism in which the local community participates in various ways as mentioned above, it is highly essential to develop the infrastructural facilities of the entire areas which are at present not so much developed.

The roads, transport and communication, electric supply, the accommodation facilities for both tourists and local communities, pure drinking water, a rural auditorium and museum must be made available. The cleaning of the exact location and picnic spot, the boat cruises on the lake and local tourist guides are

necessary for promotion of eco-cultural tourism and socio-economic development of Chandubi.

## CONCLUSION

The paper is concluded with the following observations and findings and a few suggestions there on.

- i. In spite of having potentiality, development of eco-cultural tourism in Chandubi area has been constrained by the poor infrastructural facilities like transport and communication, tourist accommodation, restaurant, hotel or cuisine for providing standard food including ethnic food, pure drinking water, etc.
- ii. There are no standard boat cruises and no spot tourist guides are available for demonstrating and presenting information regarding ecological background, importance of the Chandubi Lake and ethnic culture and folk heritage of the tribes living in the surrounding area.
- iii. The Chandubi Festival is only promotional facility for showcasing systematically the folk culture and traditions comprising performing arts, ethnic foods and dress –pattern as well as fairs and festivals. But it can play a complete role to develop the Chandubi area as an eco-tourism place of tourist attraction for the whole year.

## Suggestions

Even though, tourism facilities are not available at Chandubi Lake and adjacent areas, the domestic and foreign tourists have been visiting this place which is not far away from the Guwahati City, the central hub of the entire North-East India particularly at the time of the Chandubi Festival. All kinds of infrastructural facilities already mentioned should be provided in order to attract more domestic and foreign tourists.

Besides, propagation of adventure tourism, improvement of communication network and organization of cultural programmes may be worked out and materialized as measures for conservation of ecological and bio-diversity as well as folk culture and tradition of the communities living around the Chandubi Lake. Through participation of the

community in the various steps, socio-economic development as well as regional development of the entire Chandubi Area may be achieved

-8-

If the Government of Assam promotes eco-cultural tourism with a well-planned strategy of its development, then there is no doubt that a large amount of revenues could be earned as tourism is a low investment-high profit industry. It is not only higher income generation, but also a source of higher employment generation sector.

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