

**ECO TOURISM POTENTIAL IN TEHRI DAM FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD
ENHANCEMENT**

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A great number of alternative forms of tourism have been developed in the last decade not only in India even worldwide. There are various names used to characterize i.e. Nature Based Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Green Tourism, Village Tourism, Responsible Tourism, Adventurous Tourism and Eco-tourism are often used and in line with the general development. As per recent analysis most of the people involved in the local tourism industry have realized that a change in strategy and attitude is long overdue. The general notion of tourism is that it promotes economic activity, boosts and conserves the local production of resources and helps in infrastructure development without paying attention to the negative socio-cultural and socio-economic collision. There are many examples for tourism destination where rapid and unplanned development has produced over-reliance on this industry and environment degradation. Eco-tourism not only offers an alternative livelihood for the communities in a particular region but also preserves the environment and culture of the region through involvement of the civil society. Adventurous Tourism i.e. river rafting, kayaking, paragliding, rock climbing, skiing and more activities are the major part of ecotourism at local areas.

Ecotourism can be defined as travel to relatively intact or historical areas to study, admire, and enjoy sceneries, plants, animals, and cultural heritages (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1986). Eco-tourism originally advocated as a means of promoting both conservation and economic development in developing countries. The benefits of ecotourism include increased foreign exchange receipts, infrastructure development, job creation, new markets for locally produced goods, increased government revenues through fees and taxes paid by visitors, and serves as insurance for the protected areas from being converted to other land use types (Sherman, 1991; Himberg, 2006).

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With a growing concern for the conservation of biological resources through protected areas, coupled with a strong desire to escape from the traditional vacation, many travelers are beginning to discover the benefits and advantages of ecotourism, which has become the fastest growing tourism market in the world (Agrusa and Guidry, 1999). Recent global trends of tourism activities show an increasing fragmentation of the tourist market and an increased demand for specialized types of tourism (Moghal & Agrusa, 1997). Tourists are moving away from the package holiday and instead, they want to engage in ecotourism activities such as recreational and sporting activities, learn about and participate in local cultures, and seek new destinations (Boo, 1990; Inskeep, 1991). Ecotourism is a term that means different things to different people. However, it can best be defined as travel to natural attraction areas that both conserve the culture and the environment while sustaining the wellbeing of the local community. It offers nations the

opportunity to get the most out of their natural attractions and to gain all the economic benefits without losing their rich biological resources (Cater, 1993). Another important aspect of ecotourism is the encouragement of active participation by the local population in the conservation and education dimensions (Hall and Kinnaird, 1994). The other definition of ecotourism is "Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people." (TIES, 1990). Ecotourism is a travel activity that ensures direct financial support to local people where tourism activities are being generated and enjoyed. The following are some component of eco-tourism:

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- Natural Area
 - Contain educational and interpretive feature
 - Generally for small group
 - Minimize negative impact
 - Support the protection areas by generating economic benefits for host communities, organization and authorities managing natural areas with conservation purposes

According to definition of ecotourism it insures direct financial support to local people from tourist with optimum utilization of natural resources. Travel agencies, transporter, porter, tour guides, a range of local businesses (shopkeeper, local fruit seller) benefit from ecotourism. Craftspeople, innkeepers and restaurateurs provide services that help tourists discover local features. Through home stay, village tour and village to village tour local communities can get direct financial benefit from tourists which can generate livelihood opportunity along with sources of employment at local level. Creates an equal relationship and cultural sharing between 'visitors' and 'hosts', achieving balance between conservation and development. The following diagram analyzed the way eco-tourism haw the eco-tourism is beneficial for the people.



Uttarakhand is known all over India and world as a place of breathtaking natural beauty and well known for tourism destination for different type of tourism. One of the important such adventure activities in Ganga basin is white water river rafting and beach camping which is an amazing adventurous as well as major source of income for the locality & revenue generation for forest and Tourism department. Mostly Indian tourists are keenly participation for beach camping and rafting along with flying fox, kayaking and rock climbing. The ratio of visited tourist in rafting and camping site is about 70% of Indian Tourist and 30% of Foreigner tourist up to last year (2013-14). The result indicates that due to improper management and lack of development directional approach from state agencies and relevant department and contribution of these agencies remained quiet for socio-economic development. Eco-tourism shapes as industry and government observed as an appropriate sector to create jobs, international income and to stimulate regional development.

Uttarakhand is a mountainous state having strategic location and is also one of the unique landscapes, with high ecological, cultural, religious, spiritual values, rich in biodiversity and has a long history of attracting nature lovers or eco-tourists in the region. However, the tourism/pilgrimage prevailed in the region at present impacted negatively on environment, socio-economic and bio-cultural set up of the local people. The pressure of tourism has been increasing and the state is in the process of exploring new sites or destinations for eco-friendly tourism or sustainable tourism which must keep the balance between environment, economy and

biocultural aspects. Sustainable tourism is possible when all the stakeholders particularly local communities involved in to understand the threats faced by the area where they plan and operate tours, and products (destinations) are selected on the basis of awareness of sustainable tourism care of the ecosystems services and respect for bio-cultural norms. In this regard, Tehri Dam and adjoining rural landscape is one such potential destination so far not yet given due attention for sustainable tourism development. Therefore, there is need to develop this unique bio-cultural landscape through various tourism related activities which must integrate ecology, economy and social attributes together. Thus, sustainable tourism plans/policies need not only focus on resource conservation but also need to address issues of equity, community development and social harmony. Government institutions with the necessary capacity to plan and implement projects are crucial for the livelihood improvement and overall socio-economic development of the people.

The Tehri dam highest in Asia and 8th highest in the world in term of its altitude. It is built on the confluence of Bhagirathi and Bhilangna rivers near Tehri and is 260.5 meter in height, with surface area of 52 km² and the reservoir has a capacity of 4.0 km³. The hydropower project associated with the dam is expected to generate about 2400 MW of electricity. The Tehri dam authority and state govt. so far have rarely recognized the value of huge water reservoir and its surrounding rural landscape which has great potential for developing unique destination for sustainable eco-tourism while involving local people/villagers through participatory approaches. There are about a total of 88 partially submerged villages located in the periphery of the Tehri dam and adjoining areas having a total population of 32,416 of which 33 villages located on the opposite shore of the dam with approximate population of 19,245 and are totally ignored, isolated as well as marginalized from the mainstream development due to poor transportation facilities and limited boat, road and bridge connectivity. Before dam was commissioned, traditional agriculture and livestock rearing was the main economic activity of the people residing in the villages but now most of their fertile agricultural land along with forest rich in bio-resources are submerged in the reservoir and left the people deprived to meet their day to day requirements. The larger number of the population inhabited in the partially submerged villages and majority of them located on the opposite site of the dam are economically poor since they are totally cut-off from the main developmental activities, have limited access to market, health, quality education, livelihood options and also deprived from various other basic needs, benefits and facilities.

The recently developed adventurous tourism site lunch at Tehri Lake by Govt. of Uttarakhand where villagers of adjoining villages were encourage to participate in different activities for their livelihood. There are 821 villages in the 42 sqs kms. periphery of Tehri dam where one side is headquarter of Tehri district and another side is Pratapnagar Tehsil of Tehri district. It is observed that as much as 27 villages are in risk zone of land slide due to water storage at the bottom/base of the villages. Many villages lost their livelihood because of dam in term of agriculture, daily wage labor, business and after their entire socio-cultural circle. Many are compel to changed their occupation and in transitional phase of economic because of dam. The present study in the surroundings villages of Tehri dam, carried out to link eco-tourism to the introduced adventure tourism by which the local can be benefited. The survey was conducted in 10 villages in the periphery of Tehri Dam. (Five villages has been surveyed in New Tehri site and five villages of Tehsil Pratapnagar site of their participation in the activities of lack) with focused in their socio-economic and cultural impact through Tehri Dam and also find out the possibilities

of ecotourism and home stay at the village level and fully participation of local villagers for the same. The following table shows the tourist flow to Tehri during the year 2007 to 2016.

Tourism Data of Tehri District:

Year	Domestic tourist	Foreign tourist	Total
2007	851237	14389	865626
2008	867869	14793	882662
2009	871827	15629	887156
2010	898505	16103	914608
2011	912909	20533	933442
2012	964380	15899	980279
2013	482865	13108	465973
2014	553329	17718	571047
2015	1056886	16712	1073598
2016 (Upto June)	505784	14449	520233

Tourism Data at Dam site during last 2 years:

Year	Domestic tourist	Foreign tourist	Total
2015	8330	36	8366
2016	9439	41	9480

With this much of tourist flows there are two indentified areas with the opportunities and involvement of eco-tourism activities in Tehri Garhwal region for the present study i.e one is Kaudiyala-Tapovan Eco-tourism zone which is situated along the Badrinath Highway (NH58), other is Tehri Lake and its surrounding villages which has high potential of various adventurous activities like boating, rafting, paragliding, kayaking, rock climbing, jumping fox, parasailing and many more like bird watching, angling etc. The Tehri Dam could be focus in their socio-economic and cultural impact and could be the possibilities of ecotourism and home stay at the surrounding villages with fully participation of villagers for the ongoing tourist activities. In this context, the people who lost their livelihood because of dam in term of agriculture, daily wage labor, business and after their entire socio-cultural boundary & those are compel to changed their occupation and in transitional phase of economic because of dam were consulted and motivated for engagement in various eco-tourism activities in and around the dam which can be reciprocated in their livelihood. That who displaced and rehabilitated far away from the dam site with hefty amount as compensation were became prospers and most of the people staying in the periphery of dam facing hurdle for livelihood in new circumstances which could be re-establish by introducing eco-tourism activities. Though the Govt. of Uttarakhand boosting tourism programs to overcome the livelihood security of the people based in the dam like boating, water game, house boat etc, by which the local can get benefits out of these activities but the ecotourism based

program on Tehri dam is still in distress as the local were not properly trained for these activities. Since the people were solely agrarian by nature with minor scale petty business in addition, the introduced eco-tourism activities may be very useful for the local for livelihood enhancement. In the present study the surroundings villages of Tehri dam was links eco-tourism to the introduced adventure tourism by which the local can be benefited. During the field survey of adjoining villages of Tehri Lake it was found that the perceptions of the villagers for the eco- tourism activities was neglected and most of the people are demanding for resettlement & relocation due to gradually land slide around the dam. Though there are vast water resources around them still they were far away for its use and their land is still remained un-irrigated for agriculture or fishing activities. Youth brigade are demanding to capacity building & training program for adventurous and hospitality training for home stay based activities. In one studied site Kaudiyala-Tapovan zone, the socio-economic impact has increased due to tourist activities through river-rafting and camping on the river Ganga. The participation of local people on this eco-tourism activity has increased in just few years back and about 85-90% local people are involve in such activities with different position (according to their skill quality) directly and indirectly at present. Meanwhile, they have improved their lifestyle and income sources at local level through fully participation and involvement on river rafting activity. While another studied site Tehri Lake and their surrounded villages are facing lots of basic problem due to the Tehri dam. No road connectivity, no more livelihood option for surviving better life and more cause at local village level moving towards for migration and poverty but it could be reduce through operate eco-tourism activity at village level. There are lots of possibilities for adventure, water sports, eco-tourism activities as well as village tourism scheme and it can be adopted and implemented at village level through capacity building with proper skill development training of youth of local people.

Conclusion:

As per the ground observation and analysis, river rafting and beach camping at Kaudiyala-Tapovan Ecotourism zone is growing rapidly and also arriving of tourists are increasing every year wherein about 20-30% foreigner tourists and 70-80% Indian tourists participates every season of river rafting and beach camping. Tourism department is directly responsible for operating and managing to all companies but their involvement is not seem properly because from Shivpuri to Kaudiyala there is only 02 public toilet on road head and there is no changing room, disposable dustbin, garbage pit available between Shivpuri to Kaudiyala road head. There is no control of Tourism Department for fix rate price of rafting and beach camping and also there is no check point between Kaudiyala-Tapovan during rafting and kayaking because some companies operate rafting illegal way. While the other site, The Terhi Lake the eco-tourism potential of the lake is yet to recognize for eco-tourim destination of the state. The people in the periphery of lake are still facing many problems despite huge water resources in the lake around them which can be develop into various eco- tourism activities. River Rafting and beach camping should be operate by tourism department and fully involve in all adventurous activities, tourist facilitation, garbage management and proper monitoring to each camp site and raft areas. Renewal processing for beach camp and rafting should be through single window. Generally three departments i.e. Forestry, Tourism, Revenue department are involve in operating and monitoring to rafting and camping site therefore every company owner has to face three stage for renewal licenses of rafting and camping. Government should organize a capacity building and awareness program among the local people about how they can reduce environmental impact along with

increasing tourist on Ganga River and alongside areas. Government should focus on these villages as a priority base for the development and employment resources at local level.

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