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WILD LIFE TOURISM AND ECOTOURISM IN UTTARAKHAND

Rakhi Upadhyay and J. V. S. Rauthan

Associate Professor, Department of Hindi D.A.V. (P.G.) College, Dehradun
Associate Professor, Department of Zoology D.A.V. (P.G.) College, Dehradun

Abstract:-Ecotourism has been defined as tourism with the aim of viewing and enjoying the plants and animals as well as only indigenous culture. World Tourism organization has defined ecotourism as 'tourism that involves traveling to relatively undisturbed natural areas with specified object to studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild animals and plants.

Keywords: Wild life, Tourism, Ecotourism, protected areas.

INTRODUCTION

Uttarakhand the 27th State of Indian Union, came into existence on 9th November 2000. Located in Central Himalayas, Uttarakhand is the true representative of the Himalaya in its Majesty and Grandeur. With a total areas of 53483 Km² the state is inhabited by 8.5 million persons living in 16583 villages and 86 urban centres in 159 density per sq. km. Uttarakhand lying between latitudes 28° 7' – 31° 04' N and longitudes river Yamuna in the west to river Kali in the east, with its northern limit demarcated by India-Tibet water divide the Southern by Ganga plains of Uttar Pradesh.

Uttarakhand is largely a rugged mountainous region where the altitudes dramatically fluctuate between 300 m to 1817 m (Nanda Devi) its a result high mountain ridges and deep river valleys are the common features in the mountain area and great plain in the southern part of the state. This abrupt altitudinal variation has obviously resulted in a complex but interesting diversity in topography, meteorology, flora, fauna etc.

The state has 12 National Parks and Wildlife sanctuaries – Corbett National Parks, Rajaji National Parks, Nanda Devi National Parks and Wildlife sanctuaries the valley of flowers national parks, Gangotri National Parks, Kedarnath Musk deer sanctuary, Govind Wild Life Sanctuary and National Parks.

Ecotourism involves travel for the discovery of learning about wild natural environment. Wilderness travel is the personnel re-creation through traveling in nature. The term eco-tourism is of comparatively recent origin and term was first used to describe nature based travel. The ecotourism includes the some important components like nature based, involved plants, animals, ecosystems geographical, archaeological and culture sites, ecologically sustainable, conservation education and awareness, local community participation and tourist satisfaction. Ecotourism aiming at using natural resources and minimizing the use of fossil fuels and other energy based systems. It can be developed as a sustainable tourism and for well being of the local people. It involves conservation, development educational and local control. There are some of the activities relating to ecotourism –

Protected areas : Animal sightings, study of animals and their behaviour, animal ecology, bird watching, interpretation centre or awareness.

Mountains : Trekking, mountaineering, rock climbing

Desert : Bird watching, desert animal study, sand dune enjoyment.

Lakes : Fishing, rowing, boating, swimming, bird watching, parasailing

Rivers and Streams : bird watching, fishing, swimming, sightings of aquatic animals, rafting, kayaking.

Caves : Cave sighting, animal sighting

Hot Spring : bathing

Coral Reef : sighting, fishing

Beaches : fishing, beach sporting, sea bathing, sun bathing.

Festival, Tribal culture crafts : Treatment of certain ailments participation in festivals.

ESSENTIAL OF TOURISM IN PROTECTED AREAS

In recent years, tourism has emerged as a major economic activity with high degree of employment and earns a good amount of foreign exchange. The World Trade Tourism estimates that tourism is the world's largest industry, generating a gross output of US 350 billion dollars, which is more than petroleum, automotive or electronic industries. India has immense tourism potential. It has several world renowned historical religious, many hill stations, mountains, sea beaches and highly diverse and exquisite fauna and flora. Different parts of the country have varied cultural and architectural heritage unique fairs, festivals, folk dances, crafts etc. which provide delightful experience to the tourists. However tourist arrival in India is poor, it receives over around 0.5 percent of the world tourist traffic. During the year 2000 India received 5.5 million tourists, which has been 55.6 percent increases in the tourist traffic and 66.4 percent increases. There has been additional earning of Rs. 8580 crores.

The protected areas are highly sensitive areas. Utilization of protected area for tourism has to be done carefully without causing any disturbance to the ecosystem and more importantly to the animals and plants. Increasing trend of tourism in protected areas for wild life viewing and enjoyment of nature is both an opportunity and a challenge for the managers. Increasing tourist visitation in protected areas has led to mushrooming of tourist facilities around protected areas, increasing pollution levels, creating disturbance in the buffer and corridor areas and leading other problems like waste disposal, water management, energy usage etc. In order to make tourism in protected areas as sustainable activity, it should have the following essential components.

1. Tourism must be limited carrying capacity : World tourism organization (1993) defines carrying capacity as the level of visitors use an area can accommodate with high levels of satisfaction of visitors and a few impact on resource. McIntyre (1993) defines carrying capacity as the maximum use of any site without causing negative effects on resources, reducing visitors satisfaction or exerting adverse impact on the society, economy and culture of the area. The number of visitors in different protected areas has been increasing and causing adverse effects. Tourism capacity of the area can be decided taking all physical and ecological factors into consideration. There are several pressures inside and outside protected areas, which should be known before fixing the carrying capacity. Some of these are :-

(i) Condition of Road : If road is good vehicles can move without creating noise and chemical pollution. If road has lot of dust, it creates problem. The physiography of the area plays important role in the nature of road. Hilly and Ghat sections of the roads are difficult to maintain. Driving also has to be carefully done with slow speed. The condition of road also decides the type of vehicles and its speed.

(ii) Number and Size of Vehicles : How many vehicles and what type of vehicles are allowed to move in the protected areas. A small vehicle like jeep, gipsy, car etc. are larger vehicle like bus, truck etc. or both are moving in the protected area. There should be a limit on the number of vehicles which have to be allowed in the protected areas.

(iii) Noise, Dust and Chemical Pollution : Chemical and noise pollutions depend upon the type and condition of the vehicle. New and Small vehicle produce comparatively less noise and chemical pollution. Dust production depends upon the condition of road and type of surface. These types of pollution adversely affect the flora and fauna upto about one kilometer on each side of the road, the adverse effects are more pronounced near the road.

(iv) Garbage collection and disposal : There should be an efficient system of garbage collection and disposal in the protected areas. More people more garbage. Firstly, there should be sufficient garbage collection points and efficient collection method. There garbage should not get distributed in the area it should be finally disposed by burning.

(v) Day visitors or stay visitors : The proportion of day and stay visitors should be known so that some arrangement can be made to regulate the visitors. Day visitors may be local visitors. The stay visitors may have come from outside. If there are more visitors, some mechanism have to be developed so that both group of visitors get entry into the protected areas.

(vi) Staff and other resources : For management of tourism, protected area sufficient staff. Staff is required for manning gate, checking vehicles and their movement, ticketing, interpretation and orientation centres etc. If staff is not sufficient, carrying capacity gets reduced. The other sources such as number of entry gates area of tourism zone, roads, camping places etc. also govern the carrying capacity of protected area.

2. Regular monitoring of tourism impact : The National Wild Life Action Plan has strongly recommended regular monitoring of direct and negative impacts of tourism of protected areas. The tourism effects on soil and water resources vegetation, animal life sanitation and cultural life of local population should be evaluated at least after five years. These impact evaluation need to be started immediately in those protected areas which have more tourist visitors. The effect of tourism on vegetation is more pronounced along roads usually up to One Km. on either side of the road. The emissions of dust and other pollutants adversely affect flowering and fruiting of plants. The Effects on animals have to be carefully evaluated particularly the effect on endangered and rare species. The most important evaluation study will include the effect on animal behaviour, breeding, feeding, human imprinting etc. The tourism create waste disposal problem which needs to be regularly monitored.

3. Wild life tourism must be transformed to ecotourism : Wild life tourism is highly specialized and focused tourism. Though there are a large number of species of wild animals but people visit long distances to see animals like tiger, lion, one horned rhino, elephant, bison, wild buffalo, etc. These animals as and sighted complete the visit of the tourists. This may happen within a few hours to a few days. There is always a mad rush to see these animals. It is therefore necessary that

opportunity for other nature based tourism is created to see that visit to protected areas become more satisfying and fulfilling. A number of nature tourism can be undertaken in and outside the protected areas in a planned manner. These activities may include bird watching nature's trail, trekking, botanizing, camping etc. if there is a water body, outside, the protected area, water sports like swimming, rowing, boating can be undertaken. There is a need to develop several kinds of spots for eco-tourism. These may include archaeological sites, water bodies, nature's traits, etc. Along with important animals these spots should also be visited by tourists. This will diversify the wild life focused tourism to a broad based eco-tourism.

4. The surround of the protected area must be declared eco-sensitive zone – The protected area is affected by the activities in the surround. The land use of the surround has to be carefully planned that it has little or no effect on protected areas. Industrial development, mining, mushrooming of resorts, and their polluting activities should not be allowed in the surround.

5. Degraded forests may be used for life conservation and tourism development – India has large area under degraded forests. These forest can be utilized for conservation of wild life and tourism development by the government or private agencies. This kind of arrangement exists in South Africa.

Guidelines to visitors – Protected area have been established primarily for the conservation and protection of flora and fauna. More and more people have been visiting the wild life protected area. More facilities are being created by way tourism development to attract more people. The school and college students, members of eco-clubs and some other groups of people are provided free entry into protected area. The people visiting protected area have responsibility for causing least or no adverse impact on protected areas and its flora and fauna. The people visiting protected areas and are required to observe some guidelines which will help in protection of the area, its habitat and wildlife. Some important guidelines are as :-

1. While planning for visiting a protected area, one must arrange reservation for the stay and collect as much information about protected area as possible.
2. When tourists are in a protected area they should wear khaki or olive green coloured clothes. They should avoid wearing bright coloured clothes.
3. It must be compulsory for the tourist to take a guide because he knows the protected areas very well, and guide will help in getting more information about the area.
4. Every protected area has a fixed visitory hour. Therefore the tourists should plan their visit according to visiting hours.
5. When tourists are moving in protected area they should remain in the vehicle.
6. Movement in the area has to be without any noise.
7. While taking photographs of animals always maintain a safe distance.
8. When tourists are in forest, they must always avoid smoking.
9. Generally early morning and late afternoons are the best parts of the day for lighting wild animals.
10. The visitors must be advised not get disheartened if they do not see any specific animals like tiger, leopard etc.
11. Collection of any materials organic or inorganic from the protected area is prohibited.

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