

CHAPTER: I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to Tourism

Tourism is the activities of people travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for leisure, business or other purposes. Tourism is a dynamic and competitive industry that requires the ability to adapt constantly to customers' changing needs and desires, as the customer's satisfaction, safety and enjoyment are particularly the focus of tour businesses. Assam is the oldest state in the North-East Region of India and serves as the gateway to the rest of the Seven Sister States. The land of Red River and blue hills, Assam comprises three main geographical areas: the Brahmaputra Valley stretching along the length of the Brahmaputra River, the Barak Valley extending like a tail in the south, and the intervening Karbi Plateau and North Cachar Hills. For the purposes of tourism there are wildlife reserves like Kaziranga National Park, Manas National Park, Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, Nameri National Park, Dibru-Saikhowa National Park etc. Assam is also counted as one of the prime Eco-Tourism destinations in India.

Eco tourism in Assam attracts a large number of nature lovers and animal lovers who love to see the colourful wildlife in their natural habitat. Ecotourism is tourism which is conducted responsibly to conserve the environment and sustain the well-being of local people. Ecotourism is catering for tourists wishing to experience the natural environment without damaging it or disturbing its habitats. It is a form of tourism involving responsible travel to natural areas, conserving the environment and improving the well-being of the local people. Its purpose may be to educate the traveller, to provide funds for ecological conservation, to directly benefit the economic development and political empowerment of local communities directly or to foster respect for different cultures and for human rights.

Rani Khamar village is located in Palasbari Tehsil of Kamrup rural district in Assam, India. It is 61.85 hectares village area filled with nature along with beautiful tourist destination and lakes and resorts in Rani Khamar. Rani Khamar is filled with eco-tourism activities to support the development of BORDER ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT. The village locals run an eco-tourism resort called '*Rani Khamar-the Retreat*' where they provide local food, home grown vegetables, accommodation and responsible programmes including those that

minimize the negative aspects of conventional tourism on the environment and enhance the cultural integrity of local people. Hence, the topic aims at studying the village ecotourism in Rani Khamar (Assam).

1.2 Eco-Tourism and its role in Socio-economic development of people

Ecotourism is a sub-component of the field of sustainable tourism. Ecotourism's perceived potential as an effective tool for sustainable development is the main reason why developing countries are now embracing it and including it in their economic development and conservation strategies. Ecotourism, as an alternative tourism, involves visiting natural areas in order to learn, to study, or to carry out activities environmentally sound, that is, a tourism based on the nature experience, which enables the economic and social development of local communities. It focuses primarily on experiencing and learning about nature, its landscape, flora, fauna and their habitats, as well as cultural artifacts from the locality. A symbiotic and complex relationship between the environment and tourist activities is possible when this philosophy can be translated into appropriate policy, careful planning and tactful execution. Carefully planned and operated ecotourism sites, especially if it is village-based and includes local participation, is able to provide direct benefits that might offset pressure from other less sustainable activities that make use of natural and cultural resources. Eco-tourism, natural resources, cultural heritage, rural lifestyle and an integrated tourism is a type of local economic activities. Therefore, ecotourism in natural and cultural areas was carried out with a number of elements in their natural landscape and cultural landscape (water, vista, topography, vegetation, clean air), as well as in the variety of recreational activities suitable for all kinds of environments. Therefore, ecotourism and its natural assets and raw materials creating a culture of travelling is an attractive force.

Ecotourism helps in community development by providing the alternate source of livelihood to local community which is more sustainable. Its aim is to conserve resources, especially biological diversity, and maintain sustainable use of resources, which can bring ecological experience to travelers, conserve the ecological environment and gain economic benefit.

However, achieving the aims in ecotourism depends on whether they are environmentally and ecologically sustainable and economically applicable.

Ecotourism promotes local participation, ownership, and business opportunities, particularly for rural people; and above all includes the learning experiences. The present endeavour seeks to highlight some of these possibilities.

(Reference:<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecotourism>)

1.3 Prospects of tourism in relation to Eco-Tourism

Ranikhamar Retreat can play a very crucial role for the upliftment of tourism in Rabha Hasong area near Ranikhamar and boost the tribes living under Palashbari Constituency. With the growth of retreat, people living in the village can be highly benefited in different aspects like labour employment, tours and travel, agriculture, handicraft etc. Some other factors that can boost eco-tourism are-

1. The Kulshi River beach and boating provisions.
2. The presence of confluence of three rivers at Ukiyam which is just 1 km south from the study area. It is the most visited place during winter and spring seasons of Assam during 2018- 2019.
3. The presence of many pristine Water Falls and Orange Orchard.
4. It is also an agricultural hub of organic farming including the tea garden range near Loharghat which is very large and deserves mention and attention. The people of Rani Khamar are mostly engaged in cultivation of betel leaves, betel nuts, banana plantation, pine apple, various indigenous fruits and vegetables like ginger, black pepper, turmeric, papaya, lemon, garlic etc. some of which are recognized as high immunity booster in modern times. Cultivation of Black Rice in some zones is also significant.
5. Ranikhamar hosts different endangered species like Hoolock Gibbon, Hornbill, flying fox, deer, jungle pig and many more birds. The place is also a hotspot for different migratory birds seen in different seasons as well as fishes.
6. Traditional and cultural dance named Bogijari which is a unique folk dance can be seen in Ranikhamar village and the same can be utilized to promote eco-tourism.

1.4 Historical background of Rabha Hasong and Rani Khamar:

According to the 1991 census, the ST population constitutes 22% of the total population of Assam. The tribes of Assam, both in plains and hills, have formed a considerable part of the population of the state ever since the pre-historic time.. Obviously, the development of Assam specially in the field of agriculture is dependent on these people to a great extent. However, due to situational change over the years, the tribals were rushed to backwardness- both economically and politically and thereby developed certain crime traits in them. Among the Mongoloid people in Assam, nine groups have been recognized as scheduled tribes (plain) and Rabha is one of them. This indigenous community is still struggling hard for their existence even after six decades of independence. The people of this community are lagging far behind in comparison to the others tribes of Assam. Despite rich cultural heritage, the Rabhas are in a backward state due to a number of reasons, viz. communication gap, political and ethnic problems, lack of education and developmental projects. They are in the poor state of education, economy and general awareness resulting in the lack of self-confidence which is the key to success. Nothing concrete has been done to improve the condition of the Rabhas despite repeated endeavours. If the Rabhas are provided the best possible facilities, they will prove to be the best human resources of our nation.

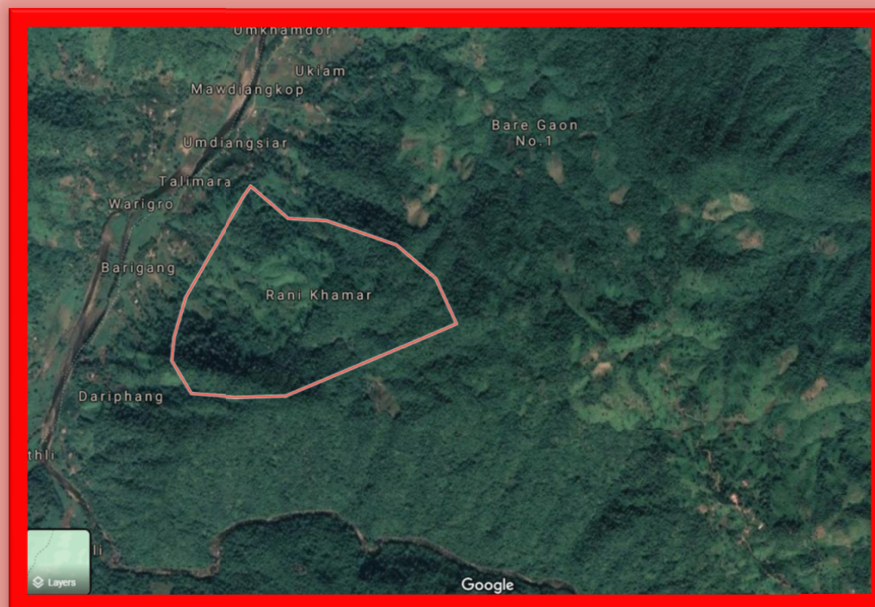
Rabha community, with rich cultural heritage and tradition, are peace loving people choosing to live in the remote villages amidst green forest and thick jungles. As they live in the remote areas, all development measures can not reach them on time. This may be one of the reasons of their backwardness.

There is no clear documented History of Rani Khamar.

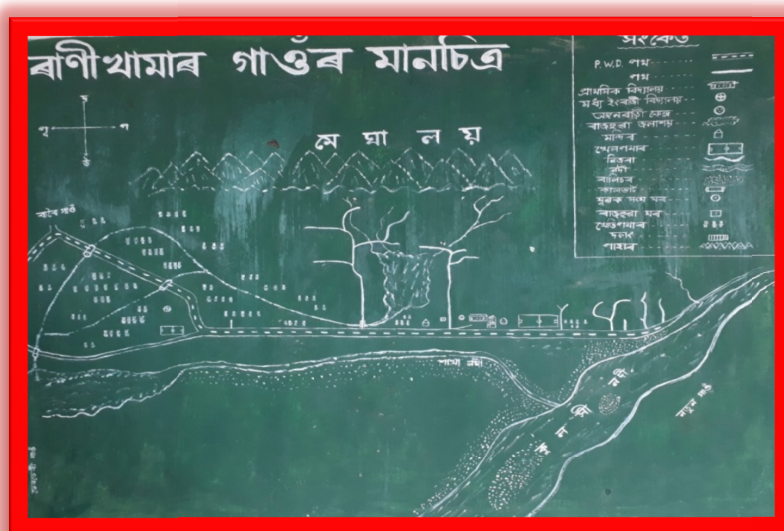
As a Folk Tale the place was renowned from the time of British Raaj. Britishers put lightning arrester in the peak of the hills. However, this was also stolen / smuggled because of high value copper during 1990's. For along time, the place remains a very neglected zone in terms of connectivity. Rani khamar got a new lease of life due to tourism since 2016.

1.5 Map of Ranikhamar Village

Rani Khamar Village is located in Tehsil Palasbari, of Kamrup district in the state of Assam, India. The location of Rani Khamar Village is shown as per Google Map.



Source: <https://etrace.in/census/village/rani-khamar-palasbari-district-kamrup-assam-303251>



1.6 Profile of the study area

Rani Khamar village is situated in Teshil Palasbari, District Kamrup and in State of Assam. The village has a population of 348 as per census data of 2011, in which male population is 166 and female population is 182. Total geographical area of Rani Khamar village is 61.85 Hectares. Population density of Rani Khamar is 6 persons per Hectares. Total number of house hold in the village is 72.

Gram Panchayat name of the Rani Khamar village is Rajapara. CD Block name is Chayani Barduar and Tehsil/Taluk or sub-district is Palasbari. Data reference year is 2009 of Census 2011. Sub District HQ Name is Palasbari and Sub District HQ Distance is 22 Km from the village. District Head quarter name is Amingaon and its distance from the village is 45km. Nearest Town of the Rani Khamar village is Palasbari (MB) and is at a distance of 25 km. As per 2011 census, Village Code of village Rani Khamar is 303251.

Literacy of Rani Khamar Village

Out of total population, 213 people in Rani Khamar Village are literate. Among the literates 123 are male and 90 are female in the village. Total literacy rate of Rani Khamar is 70.53%, Male literacy rate is 83.67% and female literacy rate is 58.06%.

Demographic profile of Rani Khamar Village (based on 2011 Census Data)

Description	Census 2011 Data
Village Name	Rani Khamar
Tehsil Name	Palasbari
District Name	Kamrup
State Name	ASSAM
Total Population	348
Total Area	62 (Hectares)
Total No of House Holds	72
Total Male Population	166
Total Female Population	182
0-6 Age group Total Population	46
0-6 Age group Male Population	19

0-6 Age group Female Population	27
Total LiteratePersons	213
Total Male Literates	123
Total Female Literates	90
Total Persons Illiterates	135
Total Male Illiterates	43
Total Female Illiterates	92
Scheduled Cast Persons	0
Scheduled Cast Males	0
Scheduled Cast Females	0
Scheduled Tribe Persons	182
Scheduled Tribe Males	166
Scheduled Tribe Females	182
Total No. of Houses	72

1.7 Review of Literature

Gupta (1987) made an in-depth study on tourism potential in Northern, Western, Central, Southern and Eastern India. It was found that India had been successful considerably in developing its tourism sector after independence. Efforts were seen in maintaining the well-being of cultural, historical and natural tourist destinations.

Farrell and Runyan (1991) differentiated nature tourism and ecotourism by stating the latter one as particularly more focused towards improving and maintaining the natural ecosystems of the site. The term 'ecotourism' was coined and defined by Ceballos-Lascura'in as travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas to study, admire and enjoy the scenery and its wild flora and fauna, as well as any cultural activity of the area (Ceballos-Lascura'in, 1987).

However, the under-developed or the developing nations might not be able to afford the environmental protection measures required to prevent or restore degradation (Butler, 1991).

Nature-based tourism directly depends on the scenic beauty, topography, water features, vegetation and wildlife of an area. It contributes a lot to the nation's economy but the use of natural resources is neither wise nor sustainable (Butler, 1992; Ceballos-Luscurain, 1986; Healy, 1992, b).

Ecotourism can be better understood by its various components which are expressed in the form of principles, themes and dimensions, etc. Buckley (1994) introduced a dimension-based model of ecotourism that includes conservation, sustainability, environmental education, and nature-based activities. Four principles of tourism were identified which would minimize environmental impacts, maximize benefits to local people, respect local cultures, maximize tourist satisfaction.

Wundar (2000) finds that in Ecuador the encounter with the tourists is mostly considered as a beneficial experience by the local stakeholders.

According to Spencely (2001), there could also be some negative environmental and social effects of tourism on the local community in remote rural set-ups in terms of shock from outsiders. However, the studies have also revealed that the effects are, in general perceived positively by the local inhabitants.

Goodwin (2002) also opines that there is desired optimism about tourism in local communities adjacent to national parks in Indonesia and Zimbabwe.

Gossling (2003) advocates that tourism contributes to the personal economic benefit, encourages improvisation of traditional resource-use system, turns local natural resources to commodities, imparts some negative effects on the local ecosystems and transforms villages into emerging hub of resources allocation.

Tourism industry is conducive to economic growth in medium and low-income countries but not necessarily in developed countries as the former caters a better satisfaction to the tourists' demands in terms of price and quality of goods and services (Eugenio et al. (2004).

Ecotourism is a strategy for reconciling conservation with development in ecologically rich areas (Thampi, 2005).

The purpose of sustainable tourism is to maintain a balance between protection of environment and catering to the needs of tourists and host communities, preserving their cultural values and establishing socio-economic equity in short and long term in both developed and emerging nations (Mitchell & Hall, 2005).

Farooq et al. (2012) finds that tourism has direct positive impact on the livelihood of the people who engage themselves in it. The study has been done in Galliyat where, it is found that local people perceive tourism as beneficial to them.

Anup K.C. et al. (2014) in their study of Manaslu conservation area, Nepal, discovers that tourism participation helps local people to earn more money and improve their standard of living. The study reveals those socio-economic variables like marital status, size of households; education and physical capital have positive effect on tourism. Thus, the available literature advocates that the tourism sector is very important for attaining economic growth and it has emerged as one of the fastest growing and most talked about sector in economic development in the present-day world.

1.8 Socio-Economic impacts of Ecotourism

Ecotourism is a multi-level process socially as well as economically involving people all along the ladder from the higher most government authorities to local and tribal communities which have a crucial role to play in tourism development.

Wearing et al. (1996) defined socio-cultural impacts of tourism as the different ways in which tourism contributes towards the value systems, lifestyles, safety levels, individual moral conduct and family behaviour, creative expression, cultural and traditional ceremonies and community organizations.

For the past few years, the role of local communities has been acknowledged in conservation, management and development of biodiversity and landscape of the tourist site. Government is seen as an appropriate sector which creates jobs, institutional income to stimulate regional development (Hall, 1991).

Ecotourism generates new employment opportunities for the natives. It helps in infrastructural development of the area like transportation and health services. Along with aesthetic pleasure, ecotourism provides a fair opportunity to tourists to learn from different

traditional cultures and at the same time, it boosts up the self-esteem of the tribal communities. On the other hand, it can cause social instability among the host communities as the tourists with different beliefs and cultures might create negative inter-relationships.

Gibson (2010) argued that tourists spend strong currencies on their tours without the realization that the tribal/local communities of the remote areas might not get the same opportunities. This creates envy which can lead to social instability.

Howitt (2005) has focused on how western culture perceived environment just as a recreational site compared to the indigenous view of nature as hunting, gathering grounds, that harms its aesthetic value. As the number of tourist visits increase, it builds up more pressure on nature, resource use and social capital. This can cause disturbance in the serenity of the quiet and less populated areas. Economically, tourism only benefits those classes of people who are engaged in tourism related businesses like accommodation, food, guiding services and local market activities while people who are involved in agricultural, cattle rearing still depend on natural resources. Since tourism is seasonal, it provides seasonal employment only.

Dieke (2003) emphasizes the increase in foreign exchange at the macro level and employment generation at the micro level benefiting ecotourism.

1.9 Importance of the study

The study will basically provide an insight into the concept of Eco-Tourism in the rural areas in Rani Khamar under Rabha Hasong Zone.

It also gives an analytical vision of the household towards upliftment of their socio-economic development in relation to Eco-Tourism.

1.10 Objectives

1. To make a conceptual analysis of Eco-Tourism in the study area.
2. To study the Ecology and Bio-diversity in surrounding areas of Rani Khamar Range.
3. To analyze the socio-economic condition of household under Rani Khamar Range and ascertain the prospect of village Eco-Tourism towards upliftment of the same.

4. To share the prospects of Eco- Tourism with the local people and also give them some preliminary idea of Geo -Tourism.

1.11 Research Methodology

“Eco-Tourism play a very significant impact in the current scenario for the upliftment of rural village area.”

Considering the above fact, an extended study has been conducted in Rani Khamar area under Rabha Hasong zone. As a part of the study different natural sites of the surrounding villages were visited. Considering the socio-economic factors based on the demographic profile of the village, different households are recognized as our respondents for the further study.

No of Household	Total Population	Male Population	Female Population
72	348	166	182

The village consists of total 72 households (according to 2011 census report). Out of the total households a sample size of 50 household are surveyed which is nearly 70% of the total households. The sample households are selected on the basis of Convenience Sampling technique. A total of 100 respondents were interviewed for data collection in order to study the impact of Eco-tourism towards development of their socio-economic condition.

For collecting the primary data, a structured questionnaire cum schedule has been designed and data are collected through personal interview by visiting their selected household.

1.12 Limitations of the study

1. Since, eco-tourism is a new and evolving concept, therefore it is difficult to make a conclusion just by studying in a confined zone where local people need to be taken into confidence
2. Field investigation in a temporal scale in the first phase of field work was hampered due to Covid pandemic.