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## Exploring the potentials for ecotourism and sustainable tourism development in Nagaland India

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### Abstract

Nagaland lies between 25° 60" -27° 40"N latitude and 93° 20" – 95° 15" E longitude in North East India and has an area of 16527 sq km. It is bordered by Myanmar on the east; and by Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur on the north, west and south respectively. Apart from a few hundred sq km. of plains in Dimapur district and in the foothill zones, the entire state is covered with mountain ranges varying in height from 1940m – 3040m, with the highest peak lying in Saramati hills in Tuensang district, bordering Myanmar. These hills exhibit a remarkable topographic diversity with rare and variety of flora and fauna. Nagaland has typical monsoon climate varying from tropical to temperate condition. Average rainfall in the state falls between 2000mm-25000mm (approx). These climatic conditions and altitudinal variations coupled with varied flora and fauna generate a very unique biodiversity in the state, which comes under the Indo-Myanmar Biodiversity hotspot of the world. The state has a population of 1,980,602(2011 census), and is the traditional homeland of 16 tribes, each representing a different culture, preserving unique customs. Despite its richness in terms of natural endowment and gifts, this India's Northeastern state has remained neglected from development point of view. It has a high literacy rate, however, socio-economic development and progress of the state is far behind the mainland. The concept of tourism development is very recent and is in its infancy. Nevertheless, education has broadened the outlook of the people and new concepts are not only accepted but are also being evolved in an innovative way. Many villages have community forests which are conserved in their traditional way without inflicting much harm to the environment. With the realization of the adverse effect of Jhum cultivation Nagas are taking to new and innovative agricultural system. Community participation in tourism development in some villages has already successfully started in Nagaland. However, the tremendous and unique tourism potentials can be tapped mainly through the concept of ecotourism, nature/wildlife tourism etc. Besides, Sustainable Tourism Development can be achieved through integrated approach, involving various government departments, private entrepreneurs, voluntary organizations and local community. This approach will help in evolving local community's perception towards tourism development as a strong tool for socio-economic upliftment, without destroying and degrading the intricate natural environment of the state.

**Keywords:** Nagaland, community participation, community forest, ecotourism, sustainable tourism development

### Introduction

Nagaland, a land of natural beauty and treasures is a state in the North East Region of India (Figure 1). It is bordered by Myanmar on the east; and by Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur on the north, west and south respectively. The state has exciting topography with rich vegetation covered hills, deep valleys, rivers and waterfalls and has an area of 16527 sq km with the population of 1,980,602 (2011 census, provisional) [5]. Tourism in Nagaland is a late starter, which had a subordinate status prior to 1981, when it was a part of the Department of Information and Public Relations. Since then the various activities of tourism development in the state has been looked after by the Department of Tourism. With the passage of time the state government realized tourism development as a tool to cultural and socio-economic development of the state. And so, tourism has been accorded the status of 'Priority Sector' under the State Industrial Policy of Nagaland-2000. Though tourism industry is in its infancy, the state has seen a tremendous growth in the last 5-7 years despite

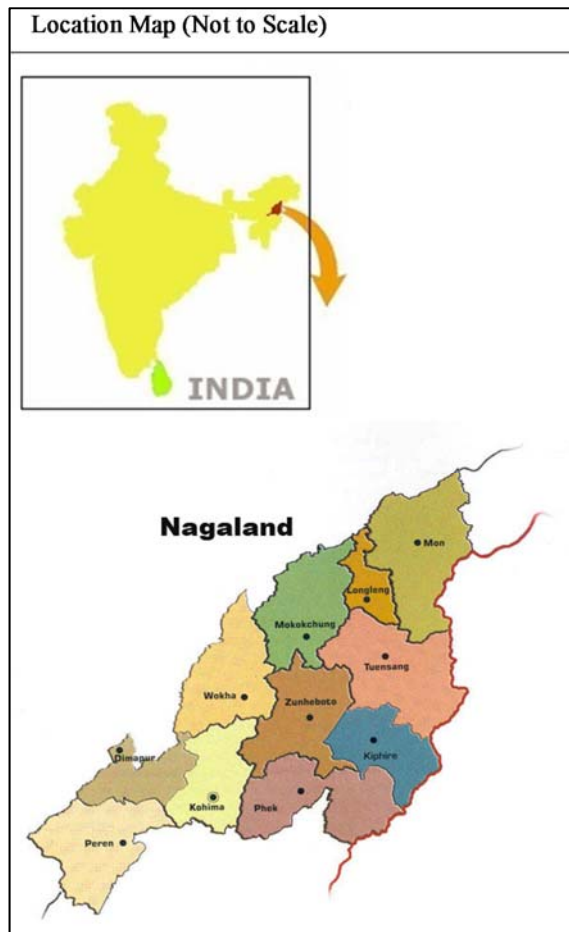
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the threats posed by development activity. Thus there is a need for Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Development as tool for socio-economic empowerment of its people as well as for protecting and conserving the natural environment.

Nagaland with mesmerizing landscape; and sociable and hospitable people has a pleasant climate almost throughout the year blessed with huge diversity of flora and fauna. The state is a traditional homeland of 16 tribes having their own distinctive culture, custom and traditions preserved till today, providing it with unlimited opportunities and immense potentials for Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Development.

**Methodology**

The study is based on both secondary and primary data. The secondary data is obtained from different sources such as books, journals, census handbooks, district gazetteer, statistical abstracts, government statistics, newspapers, internet etc. Primary data is collected and obtained through a series of field study, field survey, structured and unstructured interviews, questionnaires, personal observations and formal discussions.



**Fig 1:** Nagaland: Location

**Status of Tourism in Nagaland**

The concept of tourism development in Nagaland is still in its infancy. The tourist inflow to Nagaland is meager comparing to the touristically advanced States of the country. The status of tourism is reflected in the following statistical data of tourist inflow to Nagaland (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Year- wise tourist inflow (2000- 2015)

| Sl. No. | Year | Domestic | Foreign | Total |
|---------|------|----------|---------|-------|
| 1       | 2000 | 13268    | 451     | 13719 |
| 2       | 2001 | 29952    | 920     | 30872 |
| 3       | 2002 | 13543    | 526     | 14069 |
| 4       | 2003 | 14870    | 870     | 15740 |
| 5       | 2004 | 10056    | 1084    | 11140 |
| 6       | 2005 | 17470    | 883     | 18353 |
| 7       | 2006 | 15850    | 576     | 16426 |
| 8       | 2007 | 22085    | 936     | 23021 |
| 9       | 2008 | 21129    | 1219    | 22348 |
| 10      | 2009 | 20953    | 1423    | 22376 |
| 11      | 2010 | 21004    | 1495    | 22499 |
| 12      | 2011 | 25216    | 1941    | 27157 |
| 13      | 2012 | 28945    | 2173    | 31118 |
| 14      | 2013 | 35638    | 3304    | 38942 |
| 15      | 2014 | 58507    | 2585    | 61092 |
| 16      | 2015 | 64616    | 2769    | 67385 |

**Source:** Directorate of Tourism, Govt. of Nagaland.

With nearly 80% of the Nagas living in rural area, the State Tourism Department has been promoting Rural Tourism in the state. Table 2 shows the different villages declared as Tourist Village by the State Tourism Department and maintained jointly by the Department and the village authority. Under the 13<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission, a sum of Rs.875.00 lakhs has been embarked for the development of Rural Tourism.

**Table 2:** Tourist Villages in Nagaland

| Sl. No. | Name of Tourist Village | District   |
|---------|-------------------------|------------|
| 1       | Changtongya Village     | Mokokchung |
| 2       | Chuchuyimlang           | Mokokchung |
| 3       | Mopungchukit            | Mokokchung |
| 4       | Longjang Village        | Mokokchung |
| 5       | Longsa Village          | Mokokchung |
| 6       | Sungratsu Village       | Mokokchung |
| 7       | Khonoma Village         | Kohima     |
| 8       | ToupHEMA Village        | Kohima     |
| 9       | Benreu Village          | Kohima     |
| 10      | Satoi Village           | Zunheboto  |
| 11      | Ghukiye Village         | Zunheboto  |
| 12      | Aizuto Village          | Zunheboto  |
| 13      | Phek Village            | Phek       |
| 14      | Leshemi Village         | Phek       |
| 15      | Thetsumi Village        | Phek       |
| 16      | Chesezu Village         | Phek       |
| 17      | Mathikhru Village       | Phek       |
| 18      | Chui Village            | Mon        |
| 19      | Longwa Village          | Mon        |
| 20      | Riphyim Village         | Wokha      |
| 21      | Yikhum                  | Wokha      |
| 22      | N. Longidong            | Wokha      |

**Source:** Directorate of Tourism, Govt. of Nagaland (2013)

The Tourism Department functions as the Nodal Agency for the development of Tourism in the state. It plays the role for the implementation of infrastructural development, strengthening promotion and marketing efforts and generating Tourism awareness to the general public. The State Department of Tourism, in collaboration with other related Department and NGO's has been celebrating the Annual Hornbill Festival at Kisama, the Heritage Village from 1<sup>st</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> December, which has been extended to 10<sup>th</sup> December from 2013 till now. The Hornbill Festival is celebrated to showcase the cultural heritage of different tribes under one roof. This festival is gradually attracting

both domestic and foreign tourists. At present the state is promoting Cultural Tourism, Rural Tourism, Historical Tourism, and Adventure Tourism. Ecotourism has been recently taken up and plans to continue promoting Ecotourism combined with Rural Tourism.

**Community Participation in Ecotourism Development in Nagaland**

The Naga society is community based. All decisions in the village pertaining to cultivation, preserving of forest, socio-economic issues are collectively made. The success of Tourism Development in the State can, therefore, be tapped through local participation. The state has a strong tradition of Village Councils and Community participatory initiatives. Considering the present Environmental issues and degradation due to Jhum Cultivation and various development activities, the State Tourism Department is encouraging and promoting Community participation in Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Development. The State Tourism Department facilitates the Tourist destination, by providing facilities to the local people in the rural areas. However, the initiatives adopted by the government are not sufficient to cater to the entire streaming in of the tourists. Therefore, the Department is initiating to encourage the villagers to open paying guest accommodations which are also known as ‘Homestays’. This concept is already popular in some villages such as Khonoma, Kigwema, Jakhama, etc.

**Success Stories**

**Community Lead Nature Conservation and Tragopan Sanctuary; and Ecotourism in Khonoma Village**

Community Lead Nature Conservation and Tragopan Sanctuary; and Ecotourism initiatives in Khonoma Village are a great success. Keeping in view of negative impact of logging and hunting, the Village Council and the villagers collectively banned logging and hunting. The efforts towards the conservation are in line with the directives of the Tourism Department. In 2003 Khonoma was selected and started the funding of Green Village project by Tourism Department of Nagaland under the scheme of the Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India. After being initiated and funded from government scheme it is still identified as a community initiative for the following reasons:

- Community members have taken a lead in planning and implementation of the project.
- The sense of ownership in the community is high.
- Ecotourism is flourishing with effort of community, well beyond the budget and period of project.

**Nature Conservation and Eco-Tourism Project in Jotsoma Village**

Jotsoma Village has recently taken up the “Nature Conservation and Eco-Tourism Project” in their Community Reserved Forest under which the Puliebadze Wildlife Sanctuary is situated. It is to be mentioned that Jotsoma youth plays an important role by maintaining vigilance of trekkers and make sure nothing is taken from the reserve. The villagers are of the view that ecotourism industry can boost the village’s economy by generating employment and revenues in the form of tourist guides, tourist transport and lodging place for tourists.

**Amur Falcon Conservation**

Nagaland is declared as the Amur Falcon capital of the world by an international team of Ornithologist from the

Ministry of Environment and Forests, Wildlife Institute of India, Convention of Migratory Species Office, United Nations Environment Programme and Environment Agency. Every year, huge number of migrating Amur Falcons from Siberia stops over in the state, on their way to Africa. It is considered to be one of the biggest falcon roosts in the world. The conservation programme is mainly implemented by a local NGO-Natural Naga, Nagaland Wildlife and Biodiversity Conservation Trust, working with the Nagaland Forest Department along with the village council of Pangti, Ashaa and Sungro village, Wokha district. The village council of the three villages signed a declaration making hunting and killing of Amur Falcons illegal and punishable. This initiative with the positive support from village communities not only helped in reaching a zero mortality rate of the birds during its roosting period in Nagaland, but also has started attracting hundreds of tourists and curious scientists. Pangti village has won the Royal Bank of Scotland Conservation award for its protection and conservation efforts of Amur Falcons that roosts in their village and surrounding villages for two months. The success of such initiatives has opened the eyes of other villages and communities to tap the natural resources for Sustainable development and livelihood.

**Potentials of Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Development in Nagaland**

The hills of Nagaland exhibit a remarkable topographic diversity with rare and variety of flora and fauna. Nagaland has a typical monsoon climate varying from tropical to temperate condition. Here the average rainfall falls between 2000mm-2500mm (approx). These climatic conditions and altitudinal variations coupled with varied flora and fauna generate a very unique biodiversity, and it comes under the Indo-Myanmar Biodiversity hotspot of the world. The state has incredible and rich ethnic tribal traditions, rituals, dances and the people here are warm, hospitable, sociable, happy and self reliant people. As discussed above, the state has a strong philosophy of democratic and participatory approach. One can experience the clean and pollution free environment. Many villages have community forests which are conserved in their traditional way without inflicting much harm on the environment. The area under forest cover is as high as given in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Forest Area Statistics, 2009-2010

| Sl. No.   | Particular          | Forest area in Hectare | % to total forest area |
|-----------|---------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| -         | Legal Status        | -                      | -                      |
| 1         | a)Reserved Forest   | 6226                   | 0.72                   |
| -         | b) Purchased Forest | 19247                  | 2.23                   |
| 2         | Protected Forest    | 51679                  | 5.99                   |
| 3         | Wildlife Sanctuary  | 3469                   | 0.40                   |
| 4         | National Park       | 20202                  | 2.34                   |
| 5         | Village Forest      | -                      |                        |
| (a)       | Accessible Forest   | 477827                 | 55.37                  |
| (b)       | Degraded Forest     | 284280                 | 32.94                  |
| Total     |                     | 862930                 | 100                    |
| Ownership |                     | -                      |                        |
| 1         | State               | 100823                 | 11.76                  |
| 2         | Private             | 762107                 | 88.24                  |
| Total     |                     | 862930                 | 100                    |

**Source:** Statistical Handbook of Nagaland 2011, Directorate of Economics & Statistics Govt. of Nagaland.

**Wildlife and Bird Sanctuaries**

Nagaland does have a number of Wildlife/Bird Sanctuaries that are located and scattered in different parts of the state. The chief ones are:

**Intanki National Park**

This wildlife is spread over 20202 hectares in Peren District. It provides shelter to Hoolock Baboons, Elephant, Mithun, Barking Deer, Sloth Bear, Flying Squirrels, Hornbill, etc. This sanctuary is one of the popular forest reserves in the eastern territory of Nagaland.

**Rangapahar Wildlife Sanctuary**

It is situated in Dimapur District and covers an area of 470 hectares. This sanctuary houses many avifaunas such as Cuckoo, Parrot, Wood-pecker, Hornbill etc. Varieties of animals like Deer, Squirrels, Monkeys, Porcupines, Snakes, etc are also found.

**Fakim Wildlife Sanctuary**

Situated in Tuensang District, and has an area of 642 hectare, housing various flora and fauna, avifauna and plants which have medicinal value. This sanctuary was established in 1983 rising to almost 3000m close to Myanmar border.

**Puliebadze Wildlife Sanctuary**

Covering an area of 923 hectares, it is situated in Kohima District. Wild lives inhabiting this sanctuary are Wild Cat, Asian Black Bear, Wild Boar, Deer, Tragopan, etc.

**Ghosu bird Sanctuary**

Situated in Ghukiye village, 8 km away from Zunheboto District headquarter and it provides habitat to more than twenty species of endangered avifauna. Migratory birds can be sighted in the month of June to September. This bird sanctuary is maintained by the village community with the support from the neighboring villages prohibiting hunting and poaching in this area.

Besides fauna, these sanctuary houses rich flora too, with varieties of exotic and medicinal Orchids, Rhododendrons, Ginseng, etc.

**Festivals**

Different tribal groups in Nagaland have their own festivals which are always celebrated in consonance with the change of seasons. The celebration of the festivals is deeply rooted to their attachment to their environment and it makes the landscape of the land more attractive and colourful. Rightly, the state has been called the ‘Land of Festivals’, therefore. Major festivals observed by various tribal groups and their timing or season for celebration is as under:

**Table 5:** Important Festivals and Time of Celebration

| Festival                 | Associated with | Month in which Celebrated |
|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Sekrenyi                 | Angami          | February                  |
| Moatsu                   | Ao              | May                       |
| Suhkruhnye<br>Tsukhenyie | Chakhesang      | January<br>May            |
| Naknyulem                | Chang           | July                      |
| Tsokum                   | Khiamniungan    | October                   |
| Aoleang Monyu            | Konyak          | April                     |
| Tokhu Emong              | Lotha           | November                  |
| Monyu                    | Phom            | April                     |
| Yemshe                   | Pochury         | October                   |
| Ngada                    | Rengma          | November                  |
| Tuluni                   | Sumi            | July                      |
| Amongmong                | Sangtam         | September                 |
| Metemniu                 | Yimchunger      | August                    |
| Hega/Chega gadi          | Zeliang         | February/October          |

From the above, one can aptly ascertain that Nagaland with its scenic beauty coupled with socio-economic ethos has a great potential for improving upon the development of tourism. Sensitizing the people to the potential along with the measures from the side of government definitely will go a long way.

**Challenges**

In spite of huge potentials for ecotourism and sustainable tourism development in the state, there are, however, a number of factors that come in the way of smooth and desired development. These are:

- Peace and security is one of the important factors for any kind of development. The entire North East states of India are known for insurgency problems. Though the situation has improved tremendously in Nagaland, with the signing of ceasefire agreement between the Government of India and the insurgency groups, fear and insecurity still exists in the minds of tourists.
- Poor connectivity, communication facilities, infrastructure and entry formalities i.e. ILP/RAP have

also been a hindrance to the inflow of tourists to the state.

- The state government’s outlook towards tourism development in the present scenario is of total dependence on central assistance. There is a need for proper roadmap and strategies to make tourism development in the state a self – sustaining one.
- It has been observed in last two three years that much emphasis has been on formulating sustainable tourism strategies rather than on its implementation. This is a global phenomenon in which Nagaland is no exception. The challenge of implement ting the strategies are crucial for sustainable tourism development.
- In tourism, a good partnership and understanding between the stakeholders is important. Nagaland being a state where about 88% of forest is under private ownership, the state government faces the challenge of working in partnership with the village/private communities as most of the time they have conflicting ideas and views.

## Results and Findings

- Jhuming/Shifting Cultivation, from very ancient times has made the state difficult to have vast virgin forest. Moreover, the yields from jhum cultivation cannot cope with the increasing demand of the district. Therefore, there is a need for new sustainable alternatives such as Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Development for sustainable livelihood of the Nagas.
- Though some villages have successfully started and achieved better livelihood and sustainable tourism, many are unaware of the potentials. In course of field work and interviews many villagers are not aware of the environmental issues as well as the importance of conservation.
- Hunting is considered as one of the reasons for decline in wildlife in the state, but in the course of field work, it was learned that every villages visited maintains the tradition of allowing every wildlife to breed without disturbance or killing, during their breeding season.
- Number of the visited communities lamented that in spite of their awareness on the potentials and benefits of tourism, initiatives on such field does not get any help from the state government. Most lament that, since the village communities depend on the forest and its produce for their daily need, it is not easy to force the villagers to stop collecting from the forest. Therefore, at least in the initial stage of tourism development state government assistance should be given.
- The various Non-Governmental Organizations can play a more vital role in educating and encouraging Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism.
- There is a need for more research on ecotourism and sustainable tourism so as to be able to implement the concept in different areas and destinations of the state.

## Conclusions

Since the ancient times, the Nagas in their traditional homeland are known to live in harmony with their natural environment and the forests are eternally sacred to them. The advent of Christianity and modern education has also played a role in shaping the present Naga society. Thus, the young Nagas equipped with the old traditional values and modern education can play significantly for Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Development. As discussed above, Nagaland has enormous prospects for ecotourism and it can act as one of the driving force for overall socio-economic development of the state. Nagaland being a state that is undergoing tremendous development, there is a need to start seeing sustainable tourism as part of larger sustainable development system. Any well managed development is sustainable; therefore more concentration should be given to approach of tourism management.

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