

**MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT
ON
PROSPECTS OF ECO-TOURISM
AT CHAPANALLA**



ज्ञान - विज्ञानं विमुक्तये

**UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION
NORTH EASTERN REGION
GUWAHATI**

INVESTIGATED BY

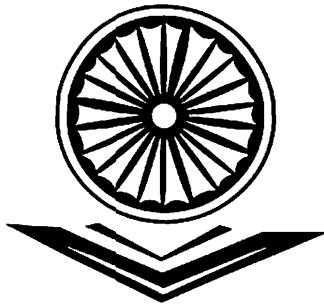
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PURANIGUDAM, NAGAON, ASSAM

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CONTENTS

Title Page

Acknowledgement

Chapter - I

Introduction

Chapter - II

Eco-Tourism: A Theoretical Approach

Chapter - III

**Chapanalla: A SWOT Analysis from the Perspective of
Eco-tourism**

Chapter - IV

**Impacts of Eco-tourism on Natural Environment of
Chapanalla: An Assessment**

Chapter - V

Recommendations and Conclusion

Bibliography

Chapter - I

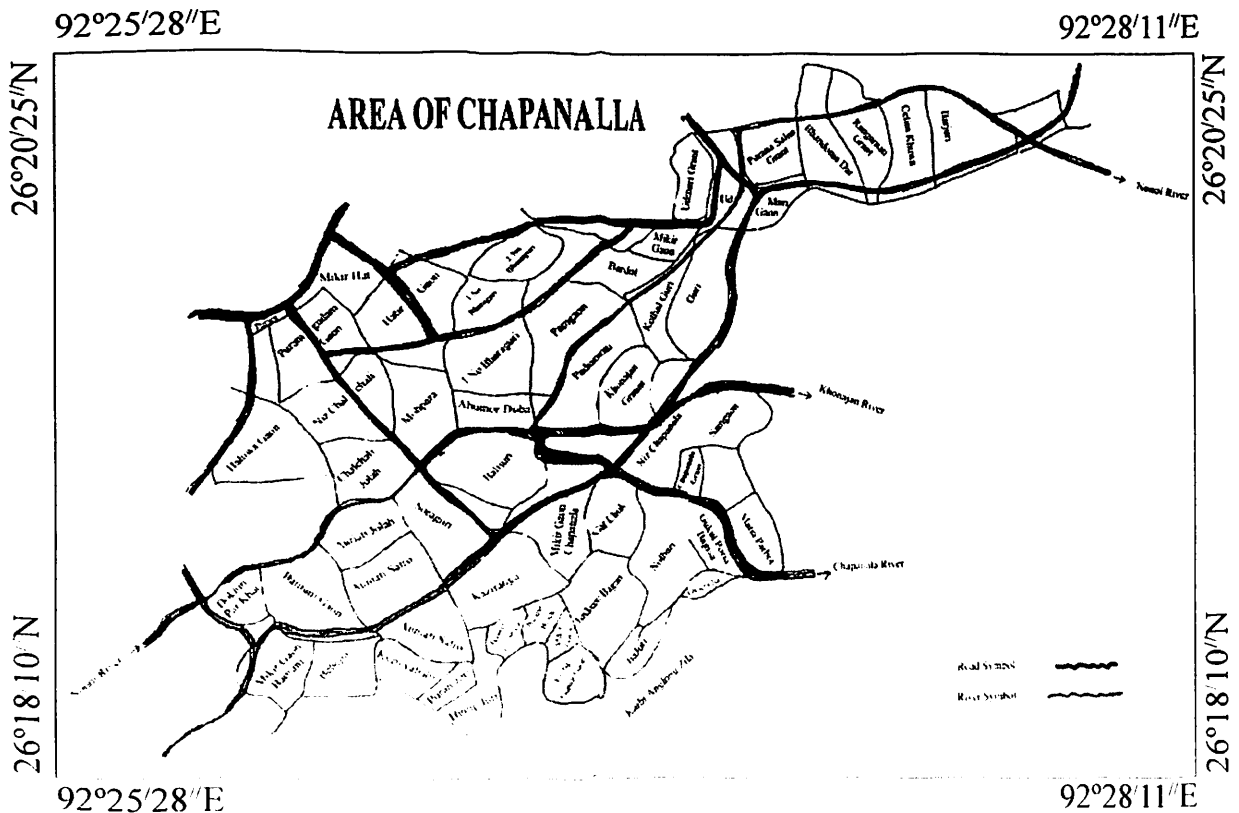
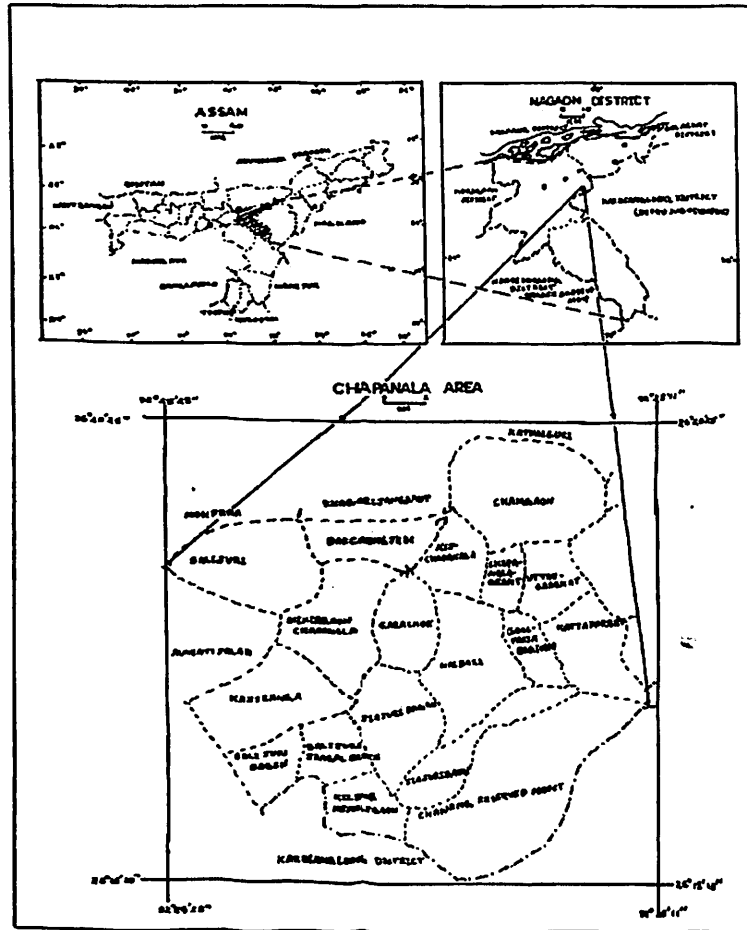
INTRODUCTION

Introduction :

Tourism, though the concept is not a new one, emerged strongly only after the World War II and gets the status of an industry in the 21st century. Now-a-days tourism is considered one of the largest industries in the world with an enormous potential for future growth encouraging employment generation, business receipts and government revenues. India is truly a land of natural beauty, cultural diversity and historical monument and naturally most of the states of India are trying to exploit such resources for the growth of tourism industry. The North-eastern part of India at the foothills of eastern Himalaya including eight states Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim covering approximately 2,65,000 sq. kilometers has been full of potentials from the perspective of tourism industry. The entire region presents a unique natural beauty with bio-diversity, ethnic diversity, historical diversity, cultural diversity and linguistic diversity and has been a source of attraction and curiosity to the people from other parts of the country and abroad. The lush green thick forest, hills and mountains, flora and fauna, diverse folk culture of diverse folk communities, historical components, its rare species etc. contribute to the richness of the land and remain the source of attraction for the tourists. Assam is relatively cool than other parts of the country where clouds float at feet, hills emerge from its bosom and soar high like a chorus and panorama changes with unbelievable frequency and a visitor feels the pristine freshness of nature. Unfortunately, in spite of having all potentials in the region tourism in this part of the country still remains at a stage far away from being satisfactory.

Maps of Chapanalla and its Neighbouring Areas :

LOCATION OF CHAPANALA AREA



Source : SDC Office

Statement of the Problem:

Towards the end of the twentieth century the world community questioned contribution of tourism to development, welfare of people and nature from the perspective of sustainability of natural environment, conservation of biodiversity, benefit to local people and their culture etc. As a result Ecotourism as a part of tourism industry with its own philosophy and objective comes into existence with a view to answering the environment-culture related issues and ensuring sustainable development. The term 'ecotourism' was coined in 1983 by the Mexican environmentalist Herter Caballos Lascurian. The International Ecotourism Society, founded in 1991 with its headquarters at Burlington, defines ecotourism as responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment and sustain the wellbeing of local people. According to the World Tourism organization tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed natural areas with the specified object of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural aspects found in these areas is defined as ecotourism. Recognizing the growing global importance of ecotourism the United Nations declared the year 2002 as the international year of ecotourism.

The conventional tourism industry with its prime focus on infrastructure development and revenue generation exploit the natural resources leading to environmental degradation, loss of bio-diversity and unsustainable development. As a result the world community becomes more and more conscious of sustaining the natural environment and folk culture and gave birth to ecotourism, environmentally-culturally responsible, which is nature based, ecologically sustainable, requires less tourism infrastructure and less support services and leaves minimum negative impact on environment. M.R. Biju, one of the prolific writers on socio-political, environmental, developmental issues in India today, defines ecotourism as a purposeful travel to natural areas to examine the cultural and the natural history of environment, taking care not to alter the integrity of the eco-system while producing economic opportunities that make conservation of natural resources beneficial to local people. (M.R. Biju: 2006) Ecotourism is different from other forms of nature based tourism in the sense that unlike others ecotourism is based on sustainable use of and conservation of nature and culture.

Assam with its national park, sanctuary, wildlife, beautiful natural environment has tremendous potentiality of ecotourism. The major ecotourism sites of Assam are Kaziranga National Park, Dibru Saikhua National Park, Manas National Park, Nameri National Park, Orang National Park, Barnadi

Wildlife Sanctuary, Burha Chapari Wildlife Sanctuary, Bherjan Borjan Padumoni Wildlife Sanctuary, Chakrasila Wildlife Sanctuary, East Karbi Anglong Wildlife Sanctuary, Gibbon or Hollongapar Wildlife Sanctuary, Garampani Wildlife Sanctuary, Karbi Anglong Wildlife Sanctuary, Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary, Nambor Wildlife Sanctuary, Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary, Sonali-Rupa Wildlife Sanctuary, Bordoibum-Billmukh Bird Sanctuary, Deepor Beel Bird Sanctuary and Pani-Dehing Bird Sanctuary (Chutia & Saikia, 2010). Apart from these places there is Chapanalla, a land that lies at a distance of 25 km to the north-east of Nagaon town of the state of Assam, full of natural flora and fauna and historical monuments and cultural diversities, which misses its name so far in the field of tourism proper and sustainable development of the region and its people is far away from being a reality, may be promoted as a new destination of ecotourism in the State of Assam.

Chapanalla, in spite of having enough potentials for the growth of tourism, has been reduced only to be called one of the favourite places of the state for the picnickers resulting in short term benefit to local people, degeneration of natural environment and of course generation of government revenues. Thousands and thousands of local tourists visit the place every year contributing to Government revenue and benefit to a few local boys managing the site and a few local businessmen. A few tourists from other states of the country and even a few foreign tourists visit Chapanalla every year and enjoy its beautiful natural environment. Such travel to the place especially by the people of the same district or the same state in large scale and at the same time does hardly any good to the place but cause only harm to the environment of the destination. With its flora and fauna, waterfalls, beautiful natural landscape, tea-gardens, Suang reserve forest, variety of wildlife and plants, different ethnic communities with their respective folk culture Chapanalla is a hot-spot of biological and cultural diversity. It is also an ideal place for trekking activities and cycling venture for enjoying the beauty of rural and natural landscape. The area can enjoy relatively a long tourist season of over six months and can sustain controlled tourism venture. (P. Bhattacharya: 2004). The natural environment of Chapanalla with its rich natural, historical and cultural texture has lots of potential for the establishment and development of ecotourism industry. No doubt there certain problem may appear on its way of development but proper strategy and policy and involvement of local people can lead the industry to its success. It is expected that the ecotourism industry at Chapanalla would put an end to the present threats to its environment such as picnic, pollution,

environment degradation, poaching of wild animals and birds, smuggling of valuable trees, destruction of natural settings, deforestation, loss of natural habitats etc. and pave the way for the sustainable use of its natural and cultural resources for the socio-economic benefit to the local people and sustainable development of the area.

So, the purpose of our project is to make a study of the prospects and problems of Eco-Tourism at Chapanalla with a view to attracting the attention of the policy makers and concerned authorities to the fact that if properly guided Chapanalla can emerge as one of the resourceful destinations of eco-tourism in Assam and ensure sustainable development of the backward area, benefit to the local people and local culture, conservation and research of the natural, cultural and historical components of the area leading to rewriting the history of the region.

Objectives:

The objectives of the proposed project are as follows:

- i. To make a conceptual study of eco-tourism in the context of greater Chapanalla.
- ii. To make a study of the potentialities of Chapanalla with a view to promoting it as a destination of eco-tourism.
- iii. To make an analysis of the prospects and problems of eco-tourism at Chapanalla.
- iv. To make a critical study of the relationship among environment, tourists and host communities.
- v. To attract the attention of the policy makers and concerned authorities to the fact that Chapanalla can emerge as one of the resourceful destinations of eco-tourism in Assam.
- vi. To help the policy makers and concerned authorities to identify, understand and address the problems and constraints of eco-tourism at chapanalla with a view to attracting more and more tourists towards Chapanalla and developing the socio-economic condition of the host communities.
- vii. To make a study of the possible contribution of eco-tourism to the environment of Chapanalla and to the socio-economic benefit of the host communities.

- viii. To make a critical analysis of the impact of ecotourism on natural and socio-economic, cultural life of Chapanalla and its local people.
- ix. To put an end to the present threats to the environment of Chapanalla such as picnic, pollution, environment degradation, poaching of wild animals and birds, smuggling of valuable trees, destruction of natural settings, deforestation, loss of natural habitats etc.
- x. To see how to make sustainable use of natural, cultural and historical components of greater Chapanalla for the sustainable development of the area and benefit of the local people.
- xi. To see how conservation of natural, cultural and historical components of greater Chapanalla can be ensured and research work on those components can be encouraged.

Methodology:

- i. The research design is descriptive in nature. It describes the concept of eco-tourism and the profile of Chapanalla, Nagaon, Assam in brief and attempts at a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) of Chapanalla from the perspective of ecotourism with a view to understanding and addressing the potentialities, constraints, challenges to the promotion of eco-tourism at the region.
- ii. The primary data for the said project are collected through field study at chapanalla and its adjoining places and forest areas.
- iii. Surveys, interviews etc. are conducted among the stakeholders like tourists, host communities, local organizations, environmental workers etc.
- iv. The field studies, surveys, interviews etc. administered for the collection of data are structured with relevant questions on environment, tourists, security, accommodation, transport, involvement of local communities, role of Government and non-Government agencies, attitude of the tourists to the culture of the host communities etc.
- v. Primary and Secondary information are also obtained from the department of Forestry, Tourism etc., Non-governmental organizations, guide, environmental workers, University and College libraries, Government publications etc.

Review of Literature:

The proposed project on 'Prospects of Eco-tourism at Chapanalla' promoting Chapanalla as a new destination of eco-tourism in Assam with a view to ensuring sustainable development of the backward area, benefit to the local people and local culture, conservation and research of the natural, cultural and historical components of the area is a virgin soil in the field of research. However a few local people and critics have studied Chapanalla with its historical and natural components and extended their views on possibility of development of tourism industry at Chapanalla for the development of the region.

Among the writings on Chapanalla '*Chapanalla: Parjyatar Biral Anandar Bisaran Bhumi Hauk*' by Kandarpa Gogoi, *Champawati*, a book on Chapanalla edited by Dulal Bora and published by Chandrajyoti Prakash, Chalchali, Nagaon in the year 1988 and reprinted in 1990 and 1993, '*Prakritir Ramyabhumi: Chapanallar Champawati aru Lungsungar Hadhadi*' by Ananta Kishore Bhattacharya, '*Prem Aru Satityar Gaurav Champawati*' written by Dipak Bora, published by Tridisha Prakashan Private Limited in the year 1999 and an article '*Prachin Sampad Udhar aru Sangrakhana Prayoujaniata*' by Dr. Bipul Bhattacharya published on 10th February, 1997 in the daily newspaper 'Doinik Asom' etc. are mention worthy. Akashee Bhuyan and Hareshwar Bordoloi, assistant professors of Dr. B.K.B. College, in a research paper entitled '*Strategies to develop prospective resources for sustaining growing population– A case study of Chapanalla area*' searched for the strategies to make sustainable use of the resources of the region to address the demands of the growing population of the region. However it was Prasanta Bhattacharya, professor in the Department of Geography, Gauhati University, who has been thoroughly systematic and scientific in his approach towards Chapanalla in his masterpiece "Tourism In Assam: Trend and potentialities" where, though in brief, Chapanalla is projected as a resourceful destination of tourism with the projection of two trekking routs and a map of chapanalla and its neighbouring areas.

As far as the concept and theories associated with tourism and ecotourism are concerned there are lots of pioneering and genuine literary works which may be vital in understanding a destination and its potentials from the perspective tourism and ecotourism. For example, *The Sociology of Tourism* by Lewadi, *Tourism: Principles and Practices* by C. Cooper, *International Tourism Policy* by L. David, *Heritage and Tourism* by Peter Fowler, *An Introduction to Tourism* by J. Leonard, *Handbook of Tourism* by

A. Bhagnani, *Successful Tourism* by P. N. Seth, *Pro-poverty Tourism* by R.K.Pruthi, *Tourism Development* by J. Aramberri & R. Butler, *Managing Educational Tourism* by B.W. Ritchie, *Hospitality and Tourism Marketing* by Sunil Sharma, *Hotel Industry and Tourism in India* by Pragati Mahanti, *Tourist Behaviour Themes and Conceptual Schemes* by P. L. Pearce, *Recreational Tourism Demand and Impacts* by Chris Ryan, *Hotel and Hospitality Management* by Shambhu Dayal, *The Business of Tourism Concepts and Strategies* by A.K. Bhatia, *Entrepreneurship and Small Scale Industries* by G. Prasain etc. In understanding Environment *British Forest Policy* in Assam by Rajib Handique, *Situating Environmental History* edited by Ranjan Chakrabarty are no doubt useful. To understand philosophy of ecotourism, sustainability of environment, local economy and culture the books like *Ecotourism* by A. Murugan, *Economic Impact of Tourism Development* K.Chattopadhyay, *Tourism in North East India* by Chutia and saikia, *Sustainable Dimensions of Tourism Management* by M.R.Raju, *Biodiversity for Sustainable Development* by P C Trivedi, *Indigenous Science & Technology for Sustainable Development* by V. Subramanyam etc. may provide necessary direction to the promotion of Chapanalla as a new destination of ecotourism for the sustainable development of the region.

Further the works of the noted folklorists of North East India like P.C. Bhattacharya, B.N. Bordoloi, J. Handoo, S.N.Borkakoty, Dr.B.N.Dutta, Verrier Elwin, Lila Gogoi, N.C.Sharma, Dr. Khiangte, Mrinal Miri, Nahendra Padun, Rongbong Teron, Langkam Teron, Dr. Upen Rabha Hakacham, Anil Boro, G. C. Sharma Thakur, G.P. Singh, P. Mishra, Soumen Sen, Prahlad. Kr. Baruah, Sarthak Sengupta etc. are of great help in understanding the tribes of Assam like Karbi, Rabha, Boro, Tiwa, Garo, Tea-tribes etc. in general and the same tribes at Chapanalla in particular. The oral literature, material culture, social custom and performing songs and dance forms of the communities of greater chapanalla, if properly studied, preserved, practiced and performed, may be instrumental in attracting tourists and transforming the place into a resourceful destination of ecotourism ensuring sustainability of local culture in its indigenous form.

Importance of the Study:

Chapanalla has been averaging as an eco-tourism destination with its prolific bounties such as Chapanalla waterfalls and the folk beliefs associated with, Lungsung waterfall, Ghurnibagan, Ram Pathar, Ban Durga, Baduli

Khulung, Hanuman Mandir, Suang forest, wetlands, grasslands, Salbari, varieties of birds, animals, trees, butterfly, snakes etc. and also historical tanks and monuments being surrounded by ethnic villages inhabited by different tribes and communities such as Karbi, Boro, Rabha, Garo, Tiwa, Ahom, tea-tribes, Nepalis etc. and enriched by their respective cultural components. Thus Chapanalla provides the suitable geographical, environmental and cultural setting for the proposed study of eco-tourism potential. The importance of the said study lies in the following:

- i. It will highlight and bring into light the potentialities and attractions of Chapanalla as an eco-tourism destination.
- ii. It will discuss the prospects and problems of eco-tourism at Chapanalla.
- iii. It will make a study of the stakeholders such as host communities, tourists, tourism authorities, Government and non-Government agencies, guides, forest officials etc.
- iv. It will study of the relation and interdependency between the environment and the host communities. Environment related issues will be highlighted.
- v. It will also discuss the problems associated with eco-tourism at Chapanalla such as security, transport, accommodation, negative impact etc.
- vi. It will put an end to the present threats to the environment of Chapanalla.
- vii. The study will help the policy makers and concerned authorities to identify, understand and address the problems and constraints of eco-tourism at chapanalla. As a result more tourists would be attracted towards Chapanalla and the host communities would be socio-economically benefitted.

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Chapter - II

ECOTOURISM: A THEORETICAL APPROACH

Tourism:

The terms 'tourism' and 'tourist' were first officially used by the League of Nation in 1937. Tourism is the act of travel basically meant for recreational value or leisure activities and tourist refers to the people who travel to see the gifts of nature or man-made great works of material achievement of a particular community or country, to experience new cultures or the folk cultures of different communities, to learn new language or new form of art, to taste new culinary art etc. The tourists are in search of art, beauty and pleasure associated with new environment and new people and naturally tourism implies an interest not only on the tourists and the physical environment of the locations visited but also on the ways of life or culture and folk culture of the communities of the locations concerned. According to World Tourism Organisation tourist are the people who 'travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited'. United Nations in its Recommendations on Tourism Statistics in 1994 refers to three forms of tourism namely domestic tourism (involving residents of the given country travelling within), inbound tourism (involving non-residents travelling in the given country) and outbound tourism (involving residents travelling in another country). United Nations also refers to other categories of tourism such as internal tourism (comprising of domestic and inbound tourism), national tourism (comprising of domestic and outbound tourism) and international tourism (comprising of inbound and outbound tourism). Another form of tourism

known as intrabound tourism coined by the Korea tourism organization is coming forward which is more dynamic and comprehensive than domestic tourism and encompasses both tourism policy-making and implementation of tourism policies. Further a good number of special forms of tourism have been growing for the last few decades. For example- mass tourism, health tourism, winter tourism, adventure tourism, agro-tourism, creative tourism, cultural tourism, disaster tourism, drug tourism, educational tourism, heritage tourism, medical tourism, eco-tourism etc.

Now tourism has become a global phenomenon and evolved as a global industry. As an industry, tourism has numerous tangible and intangible elements. Major tangible elements are transportation, accommodation and other components of hospitality while mention worthy intangible elements refer to purpose of a travel such as to see new environment, to experience new culture etc., the motifs of a travel such as adventure, rest, pleasure etc. How tourism could emerge as a global industry with world-wide publicity is not merely for its revenue generative nature but for its contribution to the development of socio-economic status of the people of the locations concerned and the environmental values associated with. So, either for earning revenue or for creating opportunity for employment or for the development of socio-economic condition of the people of the places visited government agencies and non-government organizations are promoting new location(s) as a tourist destination and advocate for the development activities of tourism industry in that area(s). But the point is that the contemporary phenomenon of mass tourism may sometimes result in overdevelopment or development at the cost of environment; however alternative forms of tourism such as ecotourism seek to avoid such outcomes by pursuing tourism in a sustainable way. Here lies the importance of ecotourism when the tourism industry is not to be approached for the sake of the capitalists or just as a revenue earning system for the state, but to be meant for the conservation of bio-diversity, socio-economic welfare of the local people and sustainable development of the location concerned.

Eco-Tourism:

Ecotourism, also known as ecological tourism, is a form of tourism which is conscious of social, cultural, economical and ecological issues, responsible towards conservation of bio-diversity, respectful towards the folklife of the local people and committed to the sustainable use of environment and economic benefit of the local people. According to Hecter Caballos Lascurian,

the Mexican environmentalist who coined the term 'ecotourism' in 1983, ecotourism is that tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed natural areas with the specific object of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural aspects (both past and present) found in these areas. Ecotourism implies a scientific, aesthetic or philosophical approach, although the 'ecotourist' is not required to be a professional scientist, artist or philosopher. The main point is that the person who practices ecotourism has the opportunity of immersing him or herself in nature in a way that most people cannot enjoy in their routine, urban existence. This person will eventually acquire a consciousness and knowledge of the natural environment, together with its cultural aspects, that will convert him into somebody keenly involved in conservation issues.(Elizabeth Boo, 1990). Hecter Caballos Lascurian revised this preliminary definition and said that ecotourism is environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features - both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low negative visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations. (Hecter Caballos Lascurian, 1996). Eco-tourism is about creating and satisfying a hunger for nature, about exploiting tourism's potential for conservation and development, and about averting its negative impact on ecology, culture and aesthetics (David Western, 1993). Ecotourism, According to Minoti Khound, is the management of tourism and conservation of nature in a way so as to maintain the fine balance between the requirements of tourism and ecology on the one hand and the needs of the local communities for jobs, new skills, income generating employment and a better status for women on the other hand (Chutia & Saikia, 2010). In addition to evaluating environmental and cultural factors, an integral part of ecotourism is in the promotion of recycling, energy efficiency, water conservation, and creation of economic opportunities for the local communities (Amrita Bhagnani: 2012). In many countries like Nepal, Kenya, Costa Rica, Antarctica, Ecuador etc. ecotourism appears as a major industry of national economy. Sometimes the investors in tourism industry and even governments misread ecotourism as a money making business based on nature without any liability towards nature and local communities and their culture. In reality, ecotourism proper satisfies the criteria such as conservation of biological and cultural diversity through ecosystem protection, promotion of sustainable use of biodiversity, sharing of socio-economic benefits with local communities through informed consent and participation in the management of ecotourism,

minimization of tourism's own environmental impact, increase in environmental and cultural knowledge etc. In such ways, ecotourism contributes to the long term benefits to both the environmental and local communities. Thus ecotourism proper can be the right way for development of the locations unexplored so far and the local people of those locations, especially in the developing or under developed countries.

What are the sources of prime attraction in ecotourism are the beauties of nature such as flora, fauna etc. and the gifts of folk culture or folklore such as tales, songs, performing arts, material culture, social custom and festivals, indigenous knowledge, dress and food habits etc. Ecotourism encompasses within its territory cultural tourism, folklore tourism, adventure tourism, health tourism, wilderness tourism, agro-tourism, educational tourism, heritage tourism etc. The concept of ecotourism that evolved in the late 1980s has experienced the fastest growth of all sub-sectors in the tourism industry. Considering its great potentiality for environmental protection and sustainable development the United Nations celebrated the 'International Year of Ecotourism' in 2002. The growing popularity of ecotourism gives birth to a new dimension to the tourism industry itself injecting it with socio-cultural, environmental liabilities, influencing the policy making bodies to shift their interest from the capitalists, the investors to the marginalized, local people and inculcating in the eco-tourists and other stakeholders the environmental values and intercultural tolerance. Amrita Bhagnani rightly observes 'The popularity represents a change in tourist perceptions, increased environmental awareness, and a desire to explore natural environments. Such changes have become a statement affirming one's social identity, educational sophistication, and disposable income as it has about preserving the Amazon rainforest or the Caribbean reef for posterity.' (Amrita Bhagnani: 2012). In ecotourism proper, development and preservation of natural environment and indigenous culture are complementary to each other.

Eco tourism is called responsible tourism in the sense that it always keeps a close eye on environmental issues and adopts programme to minimize negative impacts of tourism on environment and enhances cultural integrity of the local people. Ecotourism is responsible towards socio-cultural, economic and environmental balances of the location visited and welfare of the host communities. Eco tourism is also called sustainable tourism in the sense that it ensures sustainability of environment, local culture and economy and sustainable development of the region concerned. It contributes actively to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, includes local and indigenous communities in its planning, development and operation contributing to their economic welfare,

interprets the natural and cultural heritage of the destination to the visitors etc. It is such kind of tourism which sustains environment and culture of the local people in its own spirit and provides economic security to the people of the host communities involved with the industry. Here the tourist known as ecotourists have great role to play. They must own responsibility to reduce tourism's negative impact on environment and location, local people and their culture. They should educate themselves about or respect local faith, belief, custom, culture, religion etc. and inculcate in themselves intercultural understanding and tolerance. They should support the process of integration of local culture and local economy, purchase local goods and encourage local industry and conserve local resources. They should not encourage any form of manipulation and commercialization of local culture. The eco-tourists should never demand for anything which goes against the interest or welfare or tradition of the location and local people. All stakeholders of Ecotourism should remember that the prime motto of ecotourism is to sustain nature and life, sustain culture and development. It never lets nature to be harmed by any means associated with the business, instead protects nature for the sake of the future generation. After all ecotourism ensures sustainable use of tourism resources of a location for its sustainable growth. Ecotourism may be termed as nature tourism, low impact tourism, green tourism, bio-tourism, ecologically responsible tourism etc. but none is synonymous of ecotourism. In simple words, ecotourism can be defined as an ecologically and culturally sensitive travel which contributes to the long term benefits to the environment, local culture and local communities and paves the way for sustainable development.

Principles of Ecotourism:

There are certain key principles which are considered to be fundamental to ecotourism proper. The fundamental principles of ecotourism are that it is nature-based, ecologically sustainable, environmentally educative, and locally beneficial and generates tourist satisfaction (Annamalai Murugan: 2012). Ecotourism is nature based in the sense that it is based on the natural environment with prime focus on its biological and cultural features and conservation of the environment with its indigenous features. This principle plays the vital role in planning, management and development of ecotourism. Ecotourism is ecologically sustainable in the sense that it by no means harms the natural environment and advocates for long-term conservation of ecology, natural resources and appropriate economic and cultural benefit to the local

communities. Ecotourism is environmentally educative which saves itself from being merely nature based tourism. Ecotourism education, meant for all stakeholders to ecotourism, refers to awareness on environmental issues, conservation of natural environment and local culture, sustainable use of natural resources and its management, sustainable development of the location, mutual understanding, intercultural tolerance and promotion of local culture etc. Ecotourism education can transform a tourist into a ecotourist, can influence the policy makers and management to stick on conservation and sustainable development, can teach the host communities to assist other stakeholders and to make sustainable use of natural resources along with their cultural components for the uplift of their socio-economic condition. Ecotourism is locally beneficial in the sense that it causes the direct involvement of the local communities in all sorts of ecotourism operations right from planning, management, and execution to production of indigenous materials, control over the market, and promotion of local culture which makes them economically, socio-culturally, environmentally benefitted. Another principal of ecotourism is safety and satisfaction of the tourists which is also essential to long term viability of the industry. Proper ecotourism occurs when such interrelated principles are strictly followed. Otherwise ecotourism is reduced to a tourism based on nature. Environmentalist Wight also puts forward a few ethic-based principles which are also considered to be fundamental to authentic ecotourism. These principles are that ecotourism should not degrade resource, should develop resource in an environmentally sound manner, should provide first-hand, participatory and enlightening experiences, should educate all parties associated with such as local communities, government, non-governmental organizations, industry and tourist (before, during and after the trip), should encourage all-party recognition of the intrinsic value of the resources, should promote understanding and partnership among the players or stakeholders, should inculcate in all parties concerned moral and ethical responsibilities toward the natural and cultural environment, should provide long-term benefits in terms of conservation, scientific, social, cultural or economic to the resources, local community and industry (Wight: 1993). It is also necessary to have certain principles or values to be inculcated in the ecotourists with a view to making them responsible towards environment, natural and cultural biodiversity, welfare of the local people and thus attaining greater degree of sustainability in ecotourism. The American Society of Travel Agent recommends Ten Commandments or principles for the ecotourists. These principles are that an ecotourist should respect the frailty of the earth, leave the

footprint and take only photographs, educate himself/herself about geography, customs, manners and culture of the location, do not buy any product made from endangered species, follow designated trail, support conservation-oriented programmes and organizations, use environment friendly way of transportation, patronize hotels, airlines, resorts, tour operators etc. who advocate environmental conservation programmes related with water and air quality, safe waste management, recycling, noise abatement and community involvement etc. (ASTA, 1995).

Types of Ecotourism:

There are different types or styles of ecotourism such as frontier ecotourism, small group ecotourism, popular ecotourism etc. Frontier ecotourism involves individuals or small groups consisting of a few ecotourists who utilize non-motorised forms of transportation such as walking or canoeing to visit relatively remote and less used natural area with limited support services and infrastructure. This type of ecotourism is characterized with high degree of challenge, first-hand experience and knowledge of outdoor skills such as trekking, rafting etc. In small group ecotourism the areas of special interest are visited through motorized forms of transport by individuals or small groups. Such type of ecotourism hardly involves high level of challenge as the ecotourists in such cases are not required to acquire any special outdoor skills. Popular ecotourism involves large number of travelers visiting to popular natural destination. Here degree of challenge involved is relatively low and support services and infrastructure are up to the mark. On the other hand visit to zoo, botanical garden, aquaria etc. though may have substantial educational values but are not exclusively the subject of ecotourism because such destinations neither occur in nor depend on natural environment (A. Murugan: 2012).

Stakeholders of Ecotourism:

The stakeholders in ecotourism industry are as follows:

- Ministry of Tourism, Planning, Finance, Forest and Environment, Resource Management, Transport etc.
- Government Departments concerned with the ecotourism industry.
- Land owners around the destination.
- Ecotourists

- Local or host communities.
- Tour Operators, Guide etc.
- Local Ecotourism Society or Local Management body.
- Anyone associated with conservation, management, infrastructure, local production and market, promotion of culture etc.
- Non-Government organizations.
- Investors.

Benefits of Ecotourism:

Ecotourism with its focus on conservation of natural and cultural diversity and sustainable development extends notable contribution to the betterment of local, national and global scenario. The benefits of ecotourism in present day context can be stated as follows -

- Ecotourism ensures sustainable development through sustainable use of natural resources, environment and local culture.
- Ecotourism ensures conservation of natural environment, bio-diversity and local culture.
- Ecotourism generates funds from Government and other sources for growth of infrastructure, conservation of natural environment and cultural components, realization of facilities for satisfaction of tourist such as transport, sanitation, disposal of sewage, electricity, quality food, lodging, community centre, cultural centre, production of local materials and availability of market, economic benefit to local people etc. pave the way for development.
- Ecotourism increases employment opportunities to local communities and makes them economically benefitted.
- Ecotourism uplifts socio-cultural status of the local people.
- Ecotourism increases mutual understanding and intercultural tolerance among stakeholders, especially between tourists and host communities.
- Ecotourism stimulates infrastructural growth of rural areas around destination of ecotourism.
- Ecotourism transforms the tourist into an ecotourist encouraging his/ her role in conservation of natural environment and biodiversity,

sustainable use of natural resources, respecting and promoting local culture etc.

- Ecotourism increases awareness on environmental issues and encourages the stakeholder to take environment protective measures.
- Generates foreign exchange.

Risks of Ecotourism:

The risk factors or the problems associated with ecotourism may be summarized as follows:

- In the name of development of ecotourism industry consumption of forest land, agricultural land, lands of the poor local people may result in deforestation, permanent loss of land, pollution, disruption of ecological life systems, displacement of local people etc. contributing to deterioration of the natural environment of the region concerned. Further construction of roads and buildings within or around the destinations, excessive use of motor vehicles, commodification of plants, illegal harvesting, poaching, hike in number of traffic and tourist, dissatisfaction on the part of local people etc. also disturb the environment and accelerate its degradation. Even the image of indigenous people and their culture may be turned into commodities for providing pleasure to tourists and making money leading to degradation of cultural environment and values of life of the host communities.
- Ecotourism may fail to do justice to the ideals of conservation of natural environment, biodiversity and local culture. Ecotourism may appear a highly consumer centered business in which environmental conservation is only a means for making money.
- The infrastructure growth in ecotourism industry such as construction of roads, buildings, hotels and lodges, bridges, water treatment plants, sanitation facilities etc. cause exploitation of non-renewable energy sources and local natural resources, deforestation, loss of biodiversity etc.
- Lack of adequate sanitation facility results in disposal of sewage in rivers which contaminates wildlife, drinking water resource etc.
- Green washing, a trend towards commercialization of tourism schemes

in disguise of sustainable, environment friendly ecotourism is another threat to the industry itself. There is every possibility that such schemes commercially dealt with may be environmentally destructive, economically exploitative and culturally insensitive. (A. Bhagnani: 2012)

- The ecotourist though expected to be educationally matured and environmentally concerned, in reality may disturb flora and fauna, birds and animals, local people and their culture etc. and thus their activities instead of going for conservation of natural environment 'leave only negative impacts on environment.
- Socio-political instability, terrorism, local risings, social tensions, problems of the host communities, misappropriation of funds, uneven development, corporatization of ecotourism, exploitation of poor local people for the sake of investors, misuse of local natural environment, displacement of local people, violation of human rights etc. are also the constraints to the development of ecotourism proper.
- Misrepresentation, maltreatment and commercialization of local culture or folk culture done for cheap enjoyment on the part of the tourist and making money is one of the possible demerits of ecotourism.
- Change in the taste of the tourists and their possible undue demands cause problem to ecotourism.
- In the name of ecotourism undue use of indigenous knowledge of the host communities in terms of medicine, food, dress, craft etc. for commercial purpose especially by tourist or other concerned agencies will certainly cause threat to ecotourism.
- Involvement of local communities in policy making, management, execution etc. may be overshadowed by strong political leaders and investors.
- The local poor ethnic people may be reduced to mere tool in the hands of the relatively powerful stakeholders and investors.
- Money making tendency, reducing expenditure, corruption etc. may harm the process of conservation of natural environment and local culture and lead to unsustainable growth.
- Ecotourism may appear a source of conflict over distribution of profits, control of lands and use of resources.

- Ecotourism may be owned by multinational companies or capitalist investors who put into their pockets majority of profits instead of providing little benefit to local communities or reinvesting into the local economy or going for environmental protection. In such cases the local people employed in the industry are limited in number and allowed to be involved only at its lowest level.
- The affluent ecotourist encourage the development of destructive markets in wildlife souvenirs, such as the sale of coral trinkets on tropical islands and animal products in Asia, contributing to illegal harvesting and poaching from the environment. (A. Bhagnani: 2012)
- Mismanagement of ecotourism sites, lack of commitment to conservation of natural environment, lack of capability to handle stakeholders by concerned authorities, inefficiency of government regulatory bodies, interference of political leaders, decision taken or scheme approved or disapproved in political interest are also the problems associated with ecotourism development.

Suggestions for Development of Ecotourism:

1. Before promoting a natural environment as a destination for ecotourism the potentials of the area for the industry should be objectively assessed, objectives should be determined, possible risks and benefits should be impartially analysed, the voice of the local communities should be listened to. There should be proper planning in maintaining sustainability of natural environment, conservation of biological and cultural diversity, prospects of industry and market, benefit to local people, promotion of local culture in its original form etc.
2. In the name of infrastructural growth or economic benefit or for any cause ideals of ecotourism such as sustainability, conservation of natural environment along with cultural components cannot be compromised.
3. There should be a strong or apex local management body along with a few sub-committees comprising of representatives from every group of stakeholders associated with the destination with proper local strategies, policies and executive and supervising mechanism.
4. Only environmentally sound infrastructure should be developed in the natural settings or around and in such cases the skills and crafts associated with local folk material culture should be adopted.

5. Small scale industry based on sustainable use of local natural resources should be established, promoted and necessary market with hundred percent involvements of local people should be ensured.
6. There should be a national or global standard of accreditation board differentiating ecotourism in different destinations sponsored by different agencies based on their commitment to the natural environment concerned. A national or international regulatory board should enforce accreditation procedure with representatives from stakeholders.
7. All stakeholders should be imparted education on the ideals of ideals of ecotourism such as sustainability, conservation of natural environment, intercultural tolerance etc. Every ecotourism destination should prescribe certain guidelines to ecotourists and others associated with to be followed strictly with a view to protect the environment or the ideals of ecotourism. Tour guides, operators, hotel officials, local people should be trained how to deal with the tourists, their demands and environmental threats.
8. Tourists must be protected.
9. Promotion of unsustainable ecotourism projects should be prohibited.
10. Propagation of false image of a destination demeaning local culture and indigenous people should be stopped.
11. Instead of large scale ecotourism locally managed ecotourism should be encouraged which create viable economic opportunities including high level management positions, and reduce environmental issues associated with poverty and unemployment. (A. Bhagnani: 2012)
12. Multinational corporations should not be allowed to have control over ecotourism resources. The profit making policies of these corporations 'causes excessive environmental degradation, loss of traditional culture and way of life, and exploitation of local labor'. (A. Bhagnani: 2012). The local management body free from any political or unfair interference should take strong resolution in such respect.
13. If necessary Government should enact law ensuring conservation of natural environment, benefits to local people and sustainable development.

Conclusion:

Ecotourism rests on the concept of sustainability, conservation of natural environment, promotion of local culture in its original form and socio-economic benefit to the local people at the cost of which no ecotourism but a money making nature based tourism can be realized leading only to degradation on environment, culture, standard of living of the local people etc. Ecotourism proper can be achieved if the suggestions mentioned above are strictly followed and only the environmentally best practices in planning, design, management and operation are promoted. If properly guided ecotourism exposes the true picture natural environment of the destination along with its original cultural properties for appreciation and at the same time develops on the part of each and every stakeholder a sense of awareness of environmental and cultural issues and the threats coming forward to and commitment to the conservation of environmental and cultural diversity of the location. Thus it is clear that ecotourism, a part of tourism industry itself, is dependent on sustainable use of natural environment for sustainable development of the particular destination.

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Chapter 3

CHAPANALLA: A SWOT ANALYSIS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ECO-TOURISM

Chapanalla, one of the most favorite places for the picnickers of the state of Assam, lies at a distance of about 25 kms to the direction of North-east from the Nagaon town. This spot of rare scenic beauty lying at the feet of Karbi hill, Chapanalla hill and Gobar hill posses a rich natural environment along with historical monuments and biological and cultural diversity. A SWOT analysis of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas is carried out with a view to understanding the inherent strengths or potentials, weaknesses of the region from the perspective of promoting the region as a new destination of Eco-tourism. The analysis also aims at an understanding of the possible opportunities that the proposed eco-tourism industry may provide to the conservation of natural environment, biological and cultural diversity of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas, promotion of local culture and benefit to the local people. The threats that may appear as constraints to the promotion of the proposed industry and also the threats may come into force to the natural environment of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas and its local people owing to the development of eco-tourism industry are also analyzed.

Chapanalla, at present, its natural resources, its scenic beauty, historical monuments and cultural diversity are at a great risk. The picnickers with their anti-social and anti-environment activities are reducing Chapanalla to a place of satisfying their cheap pleasure at the cost of social-natural environment of greater Chapanalla. The region has also been suffering from environmental imbalance caused by shortage of animal food in the forest,

human-elephant conflict, destruction of human life and property by wild animals, deforestation owing to illegal trade on woods, bamboos etc., loss of biodiversity, illegal trade on wild animal's flesh, loss of forest land owing to illegal occupation by outsiders, growing of tea-plantation and use of limitless manures and pesticides, kuries of stone breaking and soil cutting, import of firewood from Chapanalla (more than full of 100 tempos daily) and cutting of trees for the business with the help of local forest office and political leaders etc. The historical places, tanks, gate, idols of stone, cave etc. have been neglected so far and are now reduced to be private property. Similarly multiculturalism of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas with different folk culture belonging to its different folk communities no longer holds colour as it did before. The ancient lore, life and harmony are at the risk of being replaced by growing materialism, terrorism, religious and cultural intolerance, money-making tendency at the cost of anything etc. Such growing degeneration of natural, social environment of greater Chapanalla projects an alarming scenario of the region and is a matter of concern for the thinking community, NGOs and the Government to look for a remedy which can ensure conservation of natural environment, historical components, and bio-cultural diversity of the region and pave the way for long-term benefit to the local communities. Here lies the relevance of promoting Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas as a new destination of Eco-tourism. In response to this proposed programme the SWOT analysis is carried out with the purpose of highlighting the natural, historical, cultural potentials of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas from the perspective of eco-tourism along with its weaknesses, opportunities and threats and it is expected that the outcome of the analysis will be treated as a part of the strategy to the policy-making, planning, execution etc. for promoting and establishing greater Chapanalla as a new destination of eco-tourism.

The SWOT analysis of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas is carried out depending on the data collected from the first hand experiences gathered at greater Chapanalla for long, survey of its natural environment, its historical and cultural components, feedback from local communities, tourists and other stakeholders, interview of Knowledgeable stakeholders, working NGOs like Green Gourd, Chapanalla Ecotourism Society, Chapanalla Prative Vikash Gosthi, local environmental and social workers, consult with secondary sources on Chapanalla, representative of different communities, government departments such as Tourism, Forest etc. The analysis can be summed up as follows.

(A) Historical Importance of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas:

This parameter is rated as 'strength' by the respondents involved in the survey of the historical components of the region, knowledgeable persons interviewed and the cause is well supported by the secondary sources available. Some of the respondents qualify the factor as the 'major strength' while others call it 'minor strength'. However it is certain that the historical background of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas with its mythical base and living monuments, if properly guided, is potential enough to attract tourists and to lead to archeological survey, systematic and scientific historical research. Kandarpa Gogoi, a local scholar, is of the view that Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas were inhabited by Kiratas and ruled by a tribal king who maintained good relation with the mighty Ahom Dynesty (K.Gogoi, 1999). A few of the components constituting the historical texture of the region are as follows:

- i. An ancient entrance gate made up of stone with the images of Hindu gods and goddesses cut on it is the burning example of a rich sculpture of an unknown kingdom of an unknown date which unfortunately is at present reduced to add beauty to the bungalow of the manager of a private tea garden 'Jiajuri Tea Estate', Chapanalla.
- ii. Within the campus of the bungalow of the manager of 'Jiajuri Tea Estate', Chapanalla There also lie two images of stone belonging to material culture of an unknown community. In one of the images an animal is trapping another while the other image of stone was probably used as sitting arrangement for royal figure.
- iii. There are two historical tanks at Jiajuri of which the banks are prepared with stones beautifully cut. The bigger one is equipped with a big iron chain.
- iv. There is one such historical tank at Changsaki, Chapanalla.
- v. Idols of stone with the images of Hindu gods and goddesses imprinted on those are seen in the temples of the region. For example Ganesh Temple within the campus of Karuna Sharma has a small image of Ganesh beautifully cut on stone.
- vi. Stone with human image is also available in the region. One such stone with the image of a woman is seen in the house of Reisul Hoque, a local social worker.
- vii. Burha-Burhir Garh at Garachuk, Chapanalla.

- viii. One document signed by the then Assistant District Commissioner Late Anandaram Dhekial Phukon, the noted Assamese scholar, which is seen at the hands of local social worker Reisul Hoque, may be a source of attraction for the tourists.
- ix. Old manuscripts, ancient war weapons, ancient carriage used in marriage, ancient bricks etc. are seen in the houses of local people which if collected, preserved and highlighted in a proper way, may be the subjects of a local museum and a vital source of attraction for the tourists.
- x. The great cave inhabited by bats known as 'Baduli Khurung', Shiva-Parboti of stone, boat of stone etc. at Kondoli are of historical importance.
- xi. Hanuman temple at Jiajuri, Bamuni Gosai Than at Kondoli and the other temples of the region too and Chalchali Sanskrit Tol may have some historical past.
- xii. What J.M.Mekin the then manager of Lungsung tea estate did to beautify the Lungsung waterfall may be a source of historical study.
- xiii. Kondoli, neighbouring place of Chapanalla, is considered by a few respondents the birth place of the eminent ancient Assamese epic poet Madhab Kondoli who translated Ramayana into Assamese under the supervision of tribal king Mahamanikya and thus it deserves the attention of the historians.
- xiv. A few respondents believe that the names Kaziranga, Mikir-hut (Puranigudam), Lungsung and Linglang Bagar (greater Chapanalla) are derived from Karbi folklore and karbi language and suggest a connection, a geographical area inhabited and ruled by Karbi community who in course of time probably stepped back for the aggression of Ahoms and non-Karbi, non-tribal communities and finally settled in Chapanalla, Kathalguri and at the foot of the Karbi hills.

(B) Folkloristic and Cultural Diversity of Chapanalla and Its Neighbouring Areas:

This parameter is considered 'strength' from the perspective of eco-tourism by all respondents taking part in the survey and the stakeholders giving feedback on this factor of the region. The tourists who are interested in the

study of folklore and culture consider the factor major ecotourism potential which may lead to research on folklife of the region at past and present. No doubt the myths and legends associated with the historical background of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas may be taken as historical resources leading the historians to rewrite the history of the region which has been neglected so far. G.P.Singh, on historical importance of folklore, says 'Folklore of North-East India indisputably forms an invaluable part of the literary, cultural and historical tradition of our country. The historical value of recorded and unrecorded folklore of both the Aryans and non-Aryans of North-East India can neither be belittled nor wholly dismissed. It is the repository of simple truth, high ideas, grand imagery, naïve and unsophisticated expression, delicate ideas, ethical conceptions of the people of the region. It radiates light on the cosmological, philosophical, artistic and aesthetic aspects of the lives of the people. The correct understanding of the history and culture complex of the different communities of this region demands an intensive study of their folklore'(Soumen Sen, 1985). The folklore and cultural elements of Chapanalla and its folk communities may be summarized as follows:

- i. Legend of King Hangsadhaj: According to the legend, current in the mouth of the people of the region being transmitted orally from generation to generation, Chapanalla was the capital of Champak Kingdom ruled by king Hangsadhaj, a devotee to God Bishnu. Local people believe that the gate of stone found at Jiajuri was the entrance gate to the capital of Champak Kingdom. king Hangsadhaj gave capital punishment to his two sons at the tanks still found at Jiajuri for the sake of thuth.
- ii. Myth of Champawati: According to the myth Champawati, the beautiful princess of Champak kingdom, was the daughter of King Hangsadhaj and queen Pravawati. Her two great warrior brothers Sudhana and Surath fought with Arjuna in the question of respect and sovereignty of Indraprastha and were killed by Krishna with his magical power. Pravawati sacrificed her life in weeping and in the process gave birth to a river. Both the son of Brahma and Krishna fell in love with Champawati but no one could have her. She petrified herself into a stone over which a rich rivulet flew from the high hill giving birth to a waterfall known as Champawati Kunda, a holy place for the Hindus. Local people still believe that the river was named after the name of the princess of Champak Nagar Champawati and the name of the place 'Chapanalla' was derived from the name of the river.

- iii. According to popular variety of the Champawati myth the river Brahmaputra, the son of Brahma, in course of time will take different direction and meet Champawati river.
- iv. Myth with Baduli Khurung, the cave inhabited by the bats: The Baduli Khurung, the big long cave basically inhabited by bats, is at Kondoli which was a women kingdom and naturally was ruled by a woman. According to the myth, it was the cave of that women kingdom where the spies and soldiers of the kingdom who were no doubt women hid themselves and entrance to the cave of any male was strictly prohibited. Once a sage in disguise entered into the cave who was caught by the women soldiers and was kept in hanging position as a punishment from the roof of the cave. The sage in anger and anguish cursed the women soldiers to be bats and they became bats accordingly and remained hanging forever in the cave. Thus the bat cave came into existence.
- v. According to a variety of the myth narrated above Kondoli Kingdom was inhabited and ruled by the Brahmans. Once a boy with heavenly power known as Guraksha Nath cursed the Brahmans to be bats and local people still believe that the Brahmans have been still remaining in the cave hanging in the form of bats.
- vi. According to another variety of the myth with Bat Cave the local Tiwa people living near to the cave were provided with necessary dress for their spring festival from the cave. (Dipak Bora,)
- vii. Myth with the Stone to be Covered(Sopa Diya Shill): There is a big stone at Udmari which has been known as the stone to be covered and accordingly the local people have been covering the stone with leaves or whatever they find. According the the myth, once Shiva, the most favoured god of the Kiratas, while going to visit his devotee, found his carriage the bull Rishava asleep at Udmari and cursed him to be a stone. Since then the bull has been there in the form of a stone and the local people believe that the bull would be free from the curse when Brahmaputra would come to meet the Champawati river at Chapanalla.
- viii. Metafolklore, multiculturalism, multilingualism, multireligion but one identity which is the characteristic feature of the cultural diversity of the region and considered ecotourism potential by the respondents. The folk communities like Karbi, Bodo, Rabha, Garo, Tiwa, Tea-tribes, Ahom, Koch(Mahangia) etc. have been living with their own

folklore at their own villages in greater Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas peacefully for a long time giving birth to metafolklore of the region keeping alive respective folklore of every folk community. Similarly, the socio-cultural phenomenon of greater Chapanalla may be said to be characterized with multiculturalism where with their own respective culture every community tribal and non-tribal, Aryan or non-Aryan, folk or elite, belonging to hill or plain, speaking different language, believing in different religion have been living together peacefully in the region for long years with mutual intercultural interreligious tolerance, understanding and respect.

- ix. Folk Villages and Societies: The folk societies of greater Chapanalla belonging to different folk communities seen in the folk villages such as Khanajan Karbigaon, Borghat Karbigaon, Boghat Mahangial gaon, Bochungjar gaon, Rabhagaon, Borbari, Garachuk Uriagaon, Various Adivashi villages, Lungsung Garogaon, Ahom villages etc. are the living museum of their respective oral literature, social custom, material culture and performing arts and are considered potential for folk or rural or culture tourism as a part of ecotourism. The region is rich in performing arts such as Karbi folk dance forms associated with songs, Adivashi's Jhumur, Lathikhel etc. Every community has its own traditional rice bear being capable of attracting the tourists. The popular folk food item of Chapanalla is anything prepared in bamboo pipe, for example - pork or mutton roasted in bamboo pipe, any vegetable boiled in bamboo pipe or even curd in bamboo pipe.

(C) Scenic Beauty of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas:

This parameter is rated a major strength by the stakeholders and persons interviewed for the promotion of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas as the destination of eco-tourism. The matter of concern is that the rare scenic beauty of greater Chapanalla and its natural resources as well are at a state of gradual degeneration. It is believed that only proper eco-tourism at Chapanalla can pave the way for sustainable use of the resources without disturbing the bio-diversity and can keep intact the scenic beauty of the region. Apart from Suang Reserve Forest the other components contributing to the scenic beauty of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas are as follows:

- i. **Champawati Kunda:** The three layered waterfall at Chapanalla, popularly known as Champawati Kunda, is the rich treasure house of

natural beauty, bio-diversity and spiritual serenity and thus remains the prime source of attraction for the tourists like nature lover, environmentalist, pilgrim, adventurous etc. The Kunda has three layers - upper kunda, middle kunda and lower kunda. It can be reached by two ways - upper kunda path and lower kunda path. By the upper kunda path which is comparatively a longer but better way one arrives at the top layer of the water fall from which the tourist has to get down towards the middle and the bottom layer of the water fall in an adventurous way. The waterfall in the middle kunda is of about 10 meter in height while in the lower kunda the water fall is of about 70 meter in height. This part of the water fall is reached first if a tourist goes by the lower kunda path which involves a little bit of trekking and lots of adventure on the part of common tourists.

- ii. **Lungsung Hadhati:** This is a water fall of small size of about 60 feet in height at Lungsung at a distance of about 3 km to the east from Chapanalla which is reached by a tourist enjoying the beautiful scenario of Lungsung tea estate. This is essentially a spot of scenic beauty which is if properly guided can be a source of attraction for the eco-tourists.
- iii. **Jiajuri-Garachuk:** The Jiajuri-Garachuk area with tea garden at the foot of the hills, Hanuman temple, Ram Stone, Historical gate, historical tanks, Mrityunjay Temple, Switch gate, Burha-Burhi Garh, Adivashi villages with often religious festivals is known for its beautiful natural scenario.
- iv. **Folk Societies:** Borchunjar, Rabhagaon, Borbari Kachari gaon, Borghat Mahangial gaon, Borghat karbi gaon, Khanajan Karbi gaon, Lungsung Adivashi villages, Kathalguri Garo gaon etc. may provide the tourists exposure to folk societies in natural settings and if properly planned it may pave the way for rural and folklore tourism.
- v. **Khanajan Area:** This area is also known for its scenic beauties with tea garden, rubber plantation, Kathalguri Pahar, ancient lotus tank, Adivashi and Karbi folk villages etc.
- vi. **Hatibandha, Changsaki Areas:** These areas especially wetlands, swamp areas are known for its beautiful views with local and migratory birds.
- vii. **Bamuni, Kondoli areas:** These hill areas with natural flora and fauna, tea garden, marsh and wet lands, deep forest, wild animals, local and

migratory birds, Bat Cave, Bamuni Goshai Than, Boat of Stone, Shiv-Parvoti of Stone etc. poses rare scenic beauty to attract the tourists.

(D) Existing Festivals, Melas, Events etc.:

This parameter is considered a 'strength' by most of the respondents who believe that the significant traditional festivals of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas especially 'Kunda Mela' and 'Baduli Khurung Mela' have the potential to be exploited for promotion of eco-tourism in the region. Kunda mela is celebrated on the Maghi Saptami Tithi (the day after Saraswati Puja) every year and more than fifty thousand people coming from different parts of the state visit Champawati water fall. The local communities irrespective of caste, creed and religion host the festival and take every care to help the tourists. Similarly, Baduli Khurung Mela celebrated on the day after Shiva Ratri and thousands of devotees and adventurous tourists visit Kondoli. Hanuman Mela is another celebrated festival of the region held at Jiajuri Hanuman Temple which continues for five days and thousands of religious tourists visit the place. The matter of concern in case of such melas is that overcrowding creates much chaos, disturbances to natural habitats and pollutes the natural atmosphere. Neither they can enjoy the scenic beauty of the region peacefully nor can they admire local culture. The economic benefit too goes basically to the outsider businessmen who temporarily set up their stalls at the foot of the hill.

(E) Rich Bio-diversity of Suang Reserve Forest:

Almost all the respondents are of the view that the Suwang Reserve Forest of Chapanalla, Nagaon covering an area of measuring 2645 hector square kilometer, with its rich bio-diversity is the real identity of Chapanalla and the major strength from the perspective of promoting the region as a new destination of ecotourism. As far as major vegetation types are concerned the forest is characterized with Indo-Chinese moist deciduous semi evergreen formations, alluvial grasslands etc. The forest is known for various types of birds, mammals, reptiles, insects, snakes, butterflies, medicinal trees, fruit trees, wild flowers etc. The rare and endangered species of Suwang Reserve Forest are elephant, Swamp deer, Royal Bengal tiger, Leopard, Gaur, White winged wood duck, Langure capped, King Cobra, grater adjutant strock, Hornbill, aquatic birds, Gibbon, Hoolock gibbon, migratory birds, wood land, wet land, Cero, Water monitor lizard, Slow Loris etc. The stakeholders, and the environmentalists are of the view that proper ecotourism will ensure sustainable use of the forest without

causing any harm to its living beings and environment and will pave the way for conservation of the biodiversity of the Suwang Reseve Forest.

(F) Tourist Season and Climatic factors:

Most of the stakeholders and frequent visitors to greater Chapanalla are of the view that the region has an excellent weather with a comparatively shorter strong summer and a longer rainy season. Even in the season of hot summer the surroundings of champawati water fall and semi-evergreen Suang reserve forest may appear the most soothing place for the hot-ridden tired tourists. About the nature of raining at Chapanalla people say that it may come and go at any moment and generally it never lasts for long. Prasanta Bhattacharya about the tourist season of chapanalla says - 'The area can enjoy relatively a long tourist season of over six months, from September to March. Considering the fragile nature of resources, the area can sustain controlled tourism venture.'(P.Bhattacharya, 2004) But the matter of concern today is that the seasonality and the climate of Chapanalla is now suffering from negative impacts of deforestation, pollution and degeneration of natural environment.

(G) Existing Infrastructure for Accommodation of Tourists in the Region:

All the respondents are of the view that the existing infrastructure for accommodation of tourists in the region is a major weakness for promotion of the region as the eco-tourism destination. Except an old guest house(Duk Bangala) there is nothing at chapanalla to accommodate a tourist for a night. Prasanta Bhattacharya too says that due to lack of adequate tourist infrastructure, the area is not in a position as yet to attract foreign tourists. (P.Bhattacharya, 2004)

(H) Existing Infrastructure in Terms of Roads, Transportation, Communication, Health, Waste Disposal, Drinking Water, Restaurants, Education, Civic Amenities etc.:

This factor of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas is considered by all respondents a major weakness for the promotion of eco-tourism in the region. The condition of the roads is poor and so the transport facility is not up to the mark. There is no police station, no railway, no ATM booth, no banking facility, no station for fax nor any shopping facility or any hotel and restaurant etc.

(I) Accessibility to Town or City:

This parameter is rated a weakness considering the fact that the region is at a distance of almost 150 Km from Guwahati and 22 Km from Nagaon town and what is more the condition of road from nagaon to Chapanalla is poor.

(j) Connectivity other Eco-tourism Sites:

This parameter is considered a minor strength by lots of respondents taking into consideration the connection of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas with its nearby ecotourism sites such as Hahnla lake, Laukhua Century, Puranigudam, Borjuri Forest area, Samaguri lake and finally Kaziranga Century. The condition is that the transport facility and the condition of the roads must be improved. The connection can also be read as - from Nagaon to Kaziranga via Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas. The connection within Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas and with other ecotourism sites outside the region can be drawn thus—

Nagaon-Hahnla lake (migratory birds); **Lawkhowa Wildlife Sanctuary– Puranigudam** (Wooden Goddess, Kolong Kola Kendra, Bortukula bird etc.); **Hatibandha Swamp** (Shamukbhanga and other local and migratory birds); **Kondoli** (Baduli Khurung, stone items and others); **Borbari Bodo Village – Changsaki** (historical tank, birds etc.); **Garachuk** (historical components, tea garden); **Jiajuri** (historical components, tea garden, tribal village); **Borghat Karbi Village– Chapanalla** (Picnic spot, Water fall, Suang Reserve Forest, bio-diversity, Milk production Khuti, tea gardens, folk societies, historical and cultural components); **Borchungjar and Rabhagaon Tribal Villages– Khanajan** (tea garden, Rubber plantation, historical lotus tank); **Lungsung Hadhadi** (Water fall, tea garden); **Udmari** (Tea garden, Stone to be covered); **Borjuri** (Picnic spot, Forest area); **Samaguri lake** (migratory birds, indigenous fish, tea garden); **Silghat** (Historical Kamakhya Temple); **Kaziranga National Park**.

(K) Dominance of Religious Undertone:

The responses for this parameter range from strength to major weakness considering the fact that though the religious motive invites a good number of tourists every year but at the same time highlights only one sided picture of the region and hides its historical components and cultural diversity. It is right that lot of tourists come on the day of the Kunda mela but apart from the few

pilgrim tourists others who come only to enjoy the scenic beauty of the region prefer the day on security ground. The perception needs to be changed and Chapanalla cannot be reduced to religious undertone.

(L) Safety of the Tourists:

This factor is rated a major weakness by the stakeholders for the promotion of eco-tourism in greater Chapanalla. The reason is the absence of Police Station in the region to address the law and order situation and to ensure the much needed safety of the tourists in the region known for the presence of ULFA and Karbi outfits. The Samaguri Police Station which is situated at a distance of 15 km from Chapanalla is to take care of the area.

(M) Perception of the Region as merely a Picnic Spot or Weekend or Day Visit destination:

This factor, no doubt attracts lots of tourists from the neighbouring districts on Sundays and holidays, is considered by majority of the stakeholders a weakness for the promotion of eco-tourism in the region. The picnickers, without any commitment to the environment of Chapanalla, its local people and local culture, have been contributing to the degeneration of the natural environment of the region. They are hardly concerned with its bio-diversity, nor try to understand its historical components in proper way. They simply take the place as a free bar and take alcohol freely, cause nuisance and pollute the social natural atmosphere of the region.

(N) Human-Animal Conflict, Illegal Trade on Trees, Sand, Stone, Soil, Animal's Flesh, Parts etc.:

This factor, contributing a lot to the loss of natural resources and degeneration of natural environment of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas, is considered a major weakness and it is believed that promotion of eco-tourism in the region may put an end to such threats to its environment. Human-elephant conflict has become a common phenomenon in the region resulting in losses of human lives, property and unending sufferings on the part of the elephants who are compelled to come to the plains in search of food. If illegal trades on trees, sand, soil, stone, birds and animals are not stopped the scenic beauty of Chapanalla and its bio-diversity will be finished in near future.

(O) Occasional Flood:

This factor, a recent phenomenon in Chapanalla, is considered a minor weakness by the stakeholders consulted with.

(P) Local Products of Chapanalla and its neighbouring area:

This parameter is rated as a 'strength' by all stakeholders who believe that the local products of the region especially tea has the scope to be exploited for tea-tourism under the umbrella of Eco-tourism. However the Local Products of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas are as follows:

- i. There are twelve big tea gardens in Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas such as Jiajuri Tea Estate, Chapanalla Bagan, Lungsung Tea State, Matia Pahar Tea Estate, Khanajan Chah Bagisha, Udmari Tea Estate, Nonoi Tea Estate, Kondoli Tea Estate etc. producing a huge amount of tea and giving employment to many educated youths. Similarly there are more than one hundred small tea growers in the region producing more than seven lakh kilograms raw tea leaves every year contributing a lot to the socio-economic development of the region. A few of the growers are also thinking about to produce 'Organic Tea' and 'Green Tea' and also to start a 'tea village' where international or special tourists will get the opportunity to own a part of a plantation and produce the kind of tea of their choice for themselves.
- ii. Folk Garment Weaving Centre: There are a few Weaving Centers in the region at Borchunjar, Lungsung, Borbari etc. producing folk garments for men and women, 'Chadar-mekhela', 'Gamocha', traditional bags, towels etc for commercial purpose but are not enough to meet the demands of the tourists. Apart from that almost every tribal family of the region has the culture of weaving their necessary folk dresses by themselves. Such folk garments have great demand from the women tourists. Further a few local skilled persons produce hand-made bamboo-based articles such as furniture, ornaments, kitchen articles, images of war weapons, tools of cultivation etc. which undoubtedly attract the tourists. If this local potential is exploited in an organized way and transformed into a small scale industry with a market centrally provided such a shopping facility of local handicrafts will surely attract the tourists and provide economic benefit to the local communities, especially the women. For

the conservation of such folk material culture, arts and crafts, attraction of tourists and economic benefit to the local people first of all these local entrepreneurs must be provided with raw materials at a subsidized rate and a market with good price.

- iii. Milk Production Unit and Curd in Bamboo Pipe: There is a big milk production unit with more than hundred and fifty buffello and cows near the Champawati Kunda known as 'Khoraka Khuti' owned by a local Nepali family contributing to the economy of the region. This milk production centre at natural setting is considered a source of attraction for the tourists. Further curd in bamboo pipe sold by the karbi people of the hill attracts the tourists.
- iv. Cultivation of Broom: Cultivation of broomstick is a common practice by the Karbi people in the hills which has been not simply a source of attraction for the local tourists but exported to other parts of the state or country.
- v. Other Products: Among the other local products popular with the tourists are Karbi pumpkin, ginger, turmeric, white pumpkin (joha), chili, vot chili, local pork, local fish etc.

From the above analysis the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with the promotion of ecotourism industry at Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas may be summerised as follows:

Strengths:

1. Historical Importance of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas.
2. Folkloristic and Cultural Diversity of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas.
3. Metafolklore, multiculturalism, multilingualism, multireligion but one identity.
4. Scenic Beauty and Resources of Natural Environment of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas.
5. Rich Bio-diversity of Suang Reserve Forest.
6. Seasonality and Climatic factors of the target region.
7. Local Products of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas: Big tea gardens, Small scale tea plantation, rubber plantation, broomstick

cultivation, milk production, production of folk garments, bags, folklore items etc.

8. Scope of Different type of tourism under the umbrella of Eco-tourism such as - Rural tourism, Adventurous tourism, Health tourism, Folklore and Culture tourism, Tea tourism, etc.
9. Availability of land for the growth of infrastructure.
10. Scope for angling, cycling, trekking, walking, connoying, ropeway, rock climbing, bird watching, human-animal conflict etc.
11. Scope for the growth of industry based on local products such as tea, bamboo, jinjar, milk etc.
12. Showcase of multiculturalism, multi tribes, multi languages, multi religions etc.
13. Strong tourist traffic especially on Sundays, holidays from September to March with heavy inflows on the local festivals such as Kunda Mela, Hanuman Mela, Baduli Khurung Mela and celebration of Karbi festivals, Adivashi festivals etc.

Weaknesses:

1. Existing infrastructure for accommodation of tourists in the region.
2. Existing infrastructure in terms of roads, transportation, communication, health, waste disposal, drinking water, restaurants, education, civic amenities etc.
3. Accessibility and connectivity to town or other eco-tourism sites.
4. Dominance of religious undertone.
5. Perception of the region as merely a picnic spot or weekend or day visit destination.
6. Human-animal conflict, illegal trade on trees, sand, stone, soil, animal's flesh, parts etc. projecting a negative image of the region.
7. No connectivity to any major city.
8. Growing degeneration of natural environment of the region.
9. Local products are not in an organized way, similarly there is no market, no shopping facility especially for local products and handicrafts to attract the tourists.

10. Insecurity of the tourists in the context of the presence of armed revolutionaries, dacoit and absence of Police Station.
11. Unfair and unexpected good relation among illegal traders on natural resources, local forest office and political leaders and most unfortunately use of local people for the business.
12. Lack of awareness on environmental issues, its degeneration and adverse effects on the part of the majority of the local people.
13. Poor medical facility, absence of doctor for long, lots of casualties on account of malaria and snake bite every year.
14. Overcrowding on the day of Kunda Mela.
15. Occasional flood(though never lasts long)

Opportunities:

1. Eco-tourism will ensure the growth of infrastructure and facility in terms of roads, buildings, bridges, hotels, restaurants, health, sports, transport, communication, education, electricity and thus will pave the way for all-round development of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas.
2. Socio-economic cultural benefit to the local people and promotion of local culture.
3. Re-establishment of a police station and a better law and order situation.
4. Establishment of a mini Civil hospital with medical officers, assistants, medicine, oxygen, blood bank, anti-snake bite vaccine, cerebral malaria vaccine etc.
5. Establishment of restaurants, hotels etc.
6. Establishment of market or shopping facility or stalls especially for the local products, handicrafts.
7. Establishment of small scale industry on local products such as tea, green tea, rubber, broomstick, folk garments, bags, rice-bear, folk medicine or any folk items, milk, bamboo etc.
8. Establishment of Folk Community and Culture Centre for conservation of cultural diversity of the region in its original form.

9. Preservation of indigenous knowledge of the local people greater Chapanalla.
10. Establishment of medicinal and botanical garden.
11. Establishment of a Research centre encouraging publications and study on the region from the perspectives like historical, folkloristic, sociological, anthropological etc.
12. Would make the people of greater Chapanalla environmentally conscious and lead them to fight for its conservation.
13. Would put an end to degeneration of natural environment of greater Chapanalla, deforestation, illegal trade on natural resources, misuse and occupation of government lands, forest lands, wetlands etc.
14. Will easily attract the eyes of media, government and its departments.
15. Establishment of Recreational Centre, Amusement Park, Theme Park, Sports Complex etc.

Threats:

1. Expected development in response to the proposed eco-tourism industry at Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas may not be sustainable. It may cause harm to local environment, bio-diversity and cultural field of the region.
2. The developmental activities may cause noise pollution, soil pollution, water pollution, air pollution leading to health hazards on the part of the local people and disturbance to and destruction of the habitats of the forest.
3. Eco-tourism at Chapanalla, if not properly guided, may be reduced to a money-making business based on exploitation of natural resources which will accelerate degeneration of the natural environment of the region and loss of bio-diversity.
4. Indiscriminate waste disposal will lead to environmental hazards.
5. Occupation or misuse of forest land, government land and home land of the poor local people in the name of infrastructure growth and for the benefit of the outsider investors.
6. Undue political interference in the planning and execution of eco-tourism schemes.

7. Water of Chapanalla river, which has been used by majority of local people as drinking water or in their household activities, if polluted with waste disposals or in the process of infrastructure growth it may lead to adverse effects on the health of the local people.
8. Majority of the local people are poor and unskilled and there is every possibility of using them as cheap labour in the proposed industry reflecting another picture of exploitation.
9. Misuse and patent of indigenous knowledge.

Conclusion:

The growing natural, social, cultural and environmental degeneration of Chapanalla caused by various factors like picnickers, human-elephant conflict, deforestation, illegal trade on its resources, loss of bio-diversity etc. projects an alarming scenario of the region and is a high time to look for a remedy which would put an end to such threats and ensure conservation of natural, environment, historical components and bio-cultural diversity of the region and pave the way for long-term benefit to the local communities. Here lies the relevance of promoting Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas as a new destination of Eco-tourism. The SWOT analysis projects Chapanalla with its ecotourism potentials such as historical components, cultural diversities of diverse local ethnic groups, rare scenic beauty, natural flora and fauna, rich bio-diversity of Suang Reserve forest, healthy climate, long seasonality, local products like tea, rubber, broom, milk, folk garments etc., local festivals with strong tourist traffic, scope for angling, cycling, trekking, walking, connoying, ropeway, rock climbing, bird watching etc., availability of land for the growth of infrastructure etc. which can be capitalized for the promotion ecotourism industry in the region. There are lots of weaknesses on its way which need to be transformed into potential. The analysis also shows that ecotourism itself may cause negative impacts on and invite threats to socio-environmental life of Chapanalla which are to be mitigated with appropriate measures. The project shows that Ecotourism at Chapanalla, if properly guided, will provide opportunities for development and ensure growth of infrastructure, facility and service in terms of roads, buildings, bridges, hotels, restaurants, health, sports, transport, communication, education, electricity and thus will pave the way for all-round development of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas. Re-establishment of a police station and a better law and order situation, establishment of a Civil hospital, market or shopping facility, small scale

industry on local products, establishment of Community and Culture Centre for conservation, promotion of diverse local cultural of the region in its original form, establishment of medicinal and botanical garden, a Research Centre, establishment of Recreational Centre, Amusement Park, Sports Complex etc. Thus the SWOT analysis carried out showing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Chapanalla from the perspective of ecotourism may be treated as a part of the strategy to the policy-making, planning, execution etc. for promoting and establishing greater Chapanalla as a new destination of eco-tourism.

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Chapter - 4

IMPACTS OF ECO-TOURISM ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENT OF CHAPANALLA: AN ASSESSMENT

It is a humble attempt of understanding Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas, its natural environment along with its historical and cultural components from the perspective of eco-tourism and introducing the region as a new destination of eco-tourism in Assam. The SWOT analysis shows clearly that Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas has rich treasure of ecotourism strength or potential which if properly addressed can be the source of promoting the place as a eco-tourism site. The analysis also shows weakness, opportunities and threats which need to be properly addressed for promotion of eco-tourism in the region. This chapter aims at understanding of the of the region in terms of eco-tourism potential, weakness, opportunities and threats and searches for proper policy with a view to making sustainable use of the eco-tourism potentials, getting rid of the weaknesses or transforming the weaknesses into strength, exploiting the opportunities for the benefit of the local people, local culture and conservation of natural environment and above all searching for the mitigating measures to get rid of the threats.

Sustainable use of the potentials for the promotion of Eco-tourism:

The objective of proposed eco-tourism in Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas is not to exploit the natural resources of the region for the business of money-making on the part of investors involving a few local people in the bottom line of the industry and without any commitment to the conservation of natural environment and historical and cultural components, but to ensure a sustainable development of the region by making sustainable use of its natural

environment and natural resources and its historical and cultural components. A Central Eco-tourism Society with a few sub-committees constituting of representative stakeholders from local people to policy makers, from every local folk community, every local area of the greater region, environment concerned NGOs, concerned departments of Government etc. should be formed with the motto of conservation of local natural environment and benefit to local people and with commitment to the philosophy of eco-tourism proper. The State Government should take the initiative; take a cabinet decision declaring greater Chapanalla as the new destination of eco-tourism and with the help of the concerned departments especially the Tourism department of the state frame the proper policy with the involvement of stakeholders, local and knowledgeable people, environmentalists etc. The Government with the help of its branches for execution and with the Central Eco-tourism Society of the ecotourism site as the prime operator and monitoring mechanism execute the policies and projects in the approved way of sustainable development. The society with the help of Government policy, agencies and financial package ensure that the historical components of the region shown by the SWOT analysis will be made free from illegal occupation done till date by any individual or farm, archeologically surveyed, scientifically studied, preserved and protected and will be highlighted in its sustainable form with a view to attracting the tourists and encouraging research on those chapters kept neglected so far. A historical research centre and a historical museum may be options for the society. Similarly appropriate measures should be taken and facility to be provided for protection, practice, performance and promotion of diverse culture of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas and folklore and folk culture of every folk community of the region in its original form in an organized way with a view to attracting the tourists and encouraging research on folklore and folklife of the greater region suggesting sustainable use of local culture in its indigenous form for promotion of eco-tourism in greater Chapanalla resulting in benefit to the local people and local culture of Chapanalla and pleasure on the part of the tourists. The Suang Reserve Forest, the hot-spot of bio-diversity and prime source of attraction for the tourist, should be declared a protected area and its bio-diversity should be conserved at any cost and appropriate measures should be taken for realization of the same. The more protected the forest the more eco-tourists will be attracted. Appropriate measures are to be taken by the society with the help of concerned agencies to protect, preserve in its original form and develop with eco-friendly infrastructure the natural environment of the region especially the two waterfalls, natural scenery with evergreen or semi-evergreen trees, sal bari, wetlands, swamp lands with

migratory birds, lotus tank, bat cave, temples, tea and rubber plantation, folk societies etc. with a view to attracting the tourists using the natural environment and resources in a sustainable way. The society, as far as establishment of industry is concerned, should always vote for the establishment of only small scale industry based on local products or local raw materials ensuring control of the local communities over the management of the industry, production and the market. While exploiting the opportunities the society consulting with other agencies and stakeholders should utmost care of the environment with its historical and cultural components. For example the growth of infrastructure and establishment of support services in terms of roads, transport, communication, hospital, amusement park, buildings, hotels, restaurants etc. should be made eco-friendly or should not be done at the cost of the environment. Such facilities and eco-friendly atmosphere will make most of the weaknesses disappear from the destination. The society with sufficient infrastructure, facility and commitment to the philosophy of eco-tourism proper in Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas will no longer need the eco-destructive drugs addicted picnickers known for creating nuisance but look for eco-tourist and will provide necessary awareness of environmental issues to the tourists and local people and if necessary will train them to do their duties for the conservation of natural environment, biological and cultural diversity and thus will ensure sustainable use of the eco-tourism potentials of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas for the promotion of eco-tourism industry and sustainable development of the region.

Social and Environmental Impacts of Eco-tourism on Chapanalla:

Unlike tourism eco-tourism is proposed in Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas for its commitment to conservation and sustainable use of natural environment and resources and socio-economic benefit to the local communities. Lots of benefits are expected by the local communities of greater Chapanalla from the proposed eco-tourism industry in the region right from protection of its environment to the growth of infrastructure and economic benefit to the local people. Of course there may be a few negative impacts of eco-tourism on social and environmental selves of the region. However, it is the duty of the policy makers, operators and the local management body of the eco-tourism society to ensure positive impacts in terms of social, environmental and economic aspects of local environment and local people. The positive and negative impacts on or benefits and threats to social and environmental phenomena of the greater region of the proposed eco-tourism are as follows:

Benefits:

1. Protection from gradual degeneration and conservation of natural environment of Chapanalla and its neighbouring area.
2. The whole area should be declared a protected area and naturally cutting of trees and bamboos as firewood and any sort of illegal trades on trees, bamboos, soil, sands, stones, birds, animals etc. will come to an end.
3. Control over the picnickers who should be provided a place away from the forest area will be a benefit.
4. Eco-tourism will not allow the picnickers or any tourist to pollute and harm the environment.
5. The waterfalls, the Suang forest and its bio-diversity, bat cave, wetlands, swamplands, migratory birds, any natural scenario of the region will be protected at any cost.
6. Forest lands will be protected.
7. The region, its river and its water, soil, air etc. will be kept free from pollution.
8. Conservation of historical components and research on historical aspects of the region will be a reality.
9. Practice, performance and promotion of folk culture of the region in its indigenous form as a means of development of eco-tourism will ensure conservation of cultural diversity of the region.
10. Ensured involvement of the local communities right from policy making to execution, monitoring, operation and management of the site will provide the poor people of greater Chapanalla much needed social position and economic benefit.
11. There should not be an industry in Chapanalla only to see the local environment at risk and the local people working only in the bottom line of the industry. So, only small scale industry based on sustainable use of local products or local raw materials should be allowed ensuring full control of the local communities over the management of the industry, production and the market. In fact most of the economic benefits must go the local communities and that benefit should be ensured for a long time.
12. Eco-tourism in the region will ensure generation of employment in all related fields and engagement of local people to most of the jobs will surely provide socio-economic benefits to the local communities.

13. The easy access of the local communities to the new infrastructure, support services and facilities of at least national standard will uplift the standard of living of the local communities and provide the next generation of the backward region much better opportunities in every field.
14. Ecotourism development in the region ensures local communities better facility in terms of transport, communication, banking, health, security, sports, education etc.

Threats and mitigating measures:

Hunter and Green, commenting on pollution caused by tourism industry, are of the view that the tourism industry itself has been and still is a major contributor to environmental pollution in many parts of the world (Hunter and Green, 1995). For the promotion of Eco-tourism in Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas growth of infrastructure and developmental measures must be initiated and executed which may give birth not simply to pollution but lots of environmental issues threatening the environment itself. These environmental issues and threats whenever arise or wherever there is possibility of experiencing, need to be addressed immediately or precaution should be taken to avoid those issues. The possible threats and necessary mitigating measures to get rid of those threats may be summerised as follows:

Developmental Measures	Social and Environmental issues	Negative impacts on society and environment	Mitigating measures
* Construction of roads, buildings, hotels, restaurants, park, community hall, research centre, hospital, sports complex, bridges, way to waterfalls, museum, ropeway, etc.	* Use of forest land. * Occupation of land of poor local people. * Noise pollution owing to operation of machinery. * Increase in Suspended Particle Matter (SPM) and air pollution. * Water pollution and soil pollution due to disposal of wastes. * Loss of bio-diversity. * Ecological disturbances.	* Loss of forest land, wet lands. * Loss of agricultural land and home land may cause permanent loss and sufferings to poor local people. * Noise pollution will cause inconvenience to the functioning of local institutions. * Air pollution will cause breathing and other health problems to local people. * Water pollution especially of Champawati river which has been used by many local people as drinking water and also in household activities will cause health hazards. * Disturbance to and destruction of natural habitats. * Degeneration of Natural environment.	* Use of forest and wet lands should be banned. * Careful scheduling of construction, use of sprinklers and screens at the site. * Local management body must ensure that the water of Champawati river will not be polluted by any means. * Eco-friendly infrastructure should be preferred. * In many respects Folk traditional house 'Changghar' may be an option. * Growth of vegetation should be planned wherever necessary. * Plantation should be a common feature. * Infrastructure should be outside forest area. * A proper waste management plan should be implemented to dispose wastes at a place far away from the site. * Garbage bins at appropriate intervals.

Developmental Measures	Social and Environmental issues	Negative impacts on society and environment	Mitigating measures
* Tourists, resorts, Hotels, Restaurants.	* Benefit to outside investors. * Practice of anti-social activities to attract tourists * Waste disposal.	* Local people reduced to labour class. * Pollute the social atmosphere. * Littering of the site with biodegradable and non biodegradable wastes.	* Ensure full control of the local communities over the Tourists resorts, Hotels, and Restaurants. * Eco-friendly infrastructure should be preferred. * 'Changghar' may be an option. * Anti-social activities should be addressed harshly. * Should have a proper waste management plan.
* Unequal economic benefit to local people, unequal access of local people to support services and facilities.	* Social tension and rift. * Higher cost of living * Growth of materialism. * Loss of values of life. * Loss of folk culture.	* The poor will be poorer. * Conflicts on use of facilities, sharing of resources, enjoying the benefits. * Conflicts within the local communities. * New generation will not get interest in inculcation of traditional values of life of the region. * Indigenous knowledge, vernacular language may suffer.	* Any political interference local or outside should not be allowed. * More and more coverage in terms of local villages, folk communities, local families etc. * More benefit to the local marginalized groups. * Mother-tongue should not be replaced by English language. * Traditional values, practices, indigenous knowledge, art and craft, culture etc. should be inculcated in new generation.
* Use of more and more vehicles, motor, machine etc.	* Noise pollution * Air pollution	* Disturbances to natural habitats.	* Use of vehicles in the protected area should not be allowed. * Elephant ride may be preferred. * Natural habitats are not to be disturbed.
* Establishment of industry	* Investment by outsider. * Use of land. * Unsustainable use of natural resources. * Pollution.	* Loss of natural resources and degeneration of natural environment. * Forest land, wetland, agricultural land may be lost. * Poor local people may lose their land for the sake of the outside investors. * Benefit will go to outside investors. * Involvement of local people will be reduced to the bottom line of the industry as cheap labour.	* Only small scale industry. * Forest land, wetland, agricultural land should not be used at any cost. * Sustainable use of local products and natural resources. * Should be made eco-friendly. * Ensure full control of the local communities over the management of the industry, production and the market.
* Pilgrimage tourism, Festival, Mela, holiday celebration etc.	* Overcrowding * Pollution. * Religious undertone. * Picnic.	* Disturbances to and destruction of natural habitats. * Degeneration of natural environment. * Highlights only one sided picture of the site.	* The place of rare scenic beauty cannot be reduced to only religious image or as picnic spot. * Celebration of Kunda mela should run at least for one week. * Definite place at a good distance from forest area should be provided for picnic, mela etc. * Local management body will take appropriate measure to highlight the real image of the region with its diverse components, to control crowding and to keep the environment free from pollution and disturbances.

Developmental Measures	Social and Environmental issues	Negative impacts on society and environment	Mitigating measures
* Promotion of local culture	* Commercialization of culture and distortion of folk culture for the cheap pleasure and attraction of tourists.	* Local culture may be reduced to a commodity. * Loss of indigenous folk culture and its originality.	* Local culture should not be treated like a commodity for earning money. * Local belief, custom, institutions should not be corrupted at any cost and run traditionally. * Local folk songs, dance forms, performing arts etc. should be practiced and performed in its indigenous form to attract the tourists and should never be commercially dealt with.
* Availability of Rice-beer	* Drunken tourists * Anti-social activity * Chaos and conflict in local society	* May pollute the social atmosphere. * The site may be reduced to a free-alcohol zone	* Only traditional rice-beer belonging to various local communities to be manufactured, such as – horlang, rahi etc. * License system: only the license holder can buy. * License to be issued to tourists above 20 years. * Some strict rules ensuring social stability and peace to be laid to the use of rice-beer.

Conclusion:

Chapanalla has a strong touristic value with its rich natural, historical and cultural environment. Initially a group of local people may be critical to the promotion of the region as a destination of ecotourism. However with the growing infrastructure development, employment opportunities and long term benefit to the local people and their culture the attitude of the local people of all sections towards ecotourism will get changing from resistance to adoption. It should be remembered that tourism once started with its development its negative effects will start surfacing interacting with natural, historical and cultural environment of Chapanalla and then a significant portion of the local population will start getting hostile towards tourism and the tourists. Transformation of Chapanalla and its adjoining areas into a destination of ecotourism industry will produce a variety of unwanted by-products to be disposed off into the environment of the region resulting in degeneration of the indigenous potentials and loss of bio-diversity, cultural diversity etc. Among the possible negative impacts caused by ecotourism are generation of waste products and pollution of water, air, noise; unwanted social change and undesirable change in local value system, tradition, lifestyle, expression, language, behavior etc.; crime, disregard of nature and to historical past, looking for easy money, commercialization of local culture etc. Hence it is a great responsibility on the part of the Chapanalla Ecotourism Society or its apex body or the sub committees or the concerned authorities to sustain the sense of adoption in the local people throughout towards the growth of ecotourism in the region providing them long term socio-economic benefit and mitigating the negative impacts with appropriate scientific measures.

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Chapter - 5

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Eco-tourism is an upcoming industry in the present world with its commitment to conservation of natural environment, promotion of local culture and long-term benefit to the local communities. Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas with its rich scenic beauty, natural flora and fauna, waterfalls and bat cave, historical background and cultural diversity can be promoted as a new destination of eco-tourism in the state of Assam. The SWOT analysis shows the ecotourism potential in the said region along with its weaknesses and also the opportunities and threats from the perspective of eco-tourism development in the region. While making an assessment of the possible impacts of the development of eco-tourism industry in the social and environmental aspects of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas it is discussed how to exploit the eco-tourism potential of the region and how to address the weaknesses and if possible how to transform those into potential for the promotion of the said industry without causing any permanent harm to its environment and local people. Similarly the opportunities that the site is to avail are also discussed with a view to bringing about a positive change to the socio-cultural economic life of the local people preserving the natural environment along with its historical and cultural components intact and paving the way for research on those components. The mitigating measures are also shown addressing the possible threats that may come forward to the natural environment of the region owing to the promotion of eco-tourism industry. A few suggestions and recommendations are forwarded here with a hope that the proposed eco-tourism industry in the greater region becomes a reality.

Name of the Eco-tourism site and Society:

Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas such as Chalchali, Hatibandha, Changsaki, Borbari, Bamuni, Kondoli, Garachuk, Jiajuri, Lungsung, Udmari, Borjurii etc. in an all inclusive way may be named 'Champawati Eco-tourism Site', the new destination of Eco-tourism in the State of Assam. Similarly, a strong management body with a few locally constructed sub-committees is to be constituted with representatives from its stakeholders with a view to making policy, planning, executing, operating, monitoring, evaluating, managing and administering the eco-tourism site smoothly. This apex body of the eco-tourism site may be named 'Champawati Eco-tourism Society'.

Policy and Planning:

The National Eco-tourism Policy and guidelines (1998) identified the following principles for the development of eco-tourism which should be followed by the State Government of Assam and Champawati Eco-tourism society while making policy and planning for promotion and development of eco-tourism in the region. The principles are—

- i. It should involve the local community and lead to the overall economic development of the area.
- ii. It should identify the likely conflicts between resource use for tourism and the livelihood of local inhabitants and attempt to minimize such conflicts.
- iii. The type and scale of tourism development should be compatible with the environment and socio-cultural characteristics of the local community and
- iv. It should be planned as a part of the overall area development strategy, guided by an integrated land-use plan while avoiding intersectional conflicts and ensuring sectoral integration, associated with commensurate expansion of public services. (A.Murugan, 2012)

Apart from these principles the Champawati Eco-tourism Society and its stakeholders should always remember the following points which can be considered for success of eco-tourism in a region and must have mechanism for ensuring the same. These basic points are—

- i. Systematic and scientific planning.
- ii. Proper execution and utilization with expected outcome without causing any disturbance to environment.

- iii. Effective control and management.
- iv. Continuous monitoring and assessment.

The Champawati Eco-tourism Society should adopt a proper strategy to deal with the proposed industry which incorporates the following elements -

- i. Local participation.
- ii. Sound environmental design.
- iii. Visitor management.
- iv. Conservation education.
- v. Training.
- vi. Financial sustainability.
- vii. Monitoring and evaluation.

Cabinet Decision and Financial Support:

The State Government of Assam should take a cabinet decision declaring Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas as a new destination of Eco-tourism in the state, constitute an Eco-tourism Society and sanction a good amount of money for realization of the proposed proposal. Further the State Government of Assam may send proposal to Central Government and Ministry of Tourism for financial package. The State Government of Assam should try to address the proposed developmental activities of the site through various developmental schemes announced by the Government. The local people should always be encouraged and preferred to have loans with much subsidy for realization of support services and money making businesses necessary for promotion of the eco-tourism industry in the region. Moreover with condition private entrepreneurs may be invited to invest in the region for the development of eco-tourism.

Stakeholders of Champawati Eco-tourism Site:

The Stakeholders of Champawati Eco-tourism are -

- i. The State Government of Assam.
- ii. Tourism Department of Assam.
- iii. Forest and Environment Department of Assam.
- iv. PWD Department of Assam.

- v. State Electricity Board, Assam.
- vi. Irrigation Department, Assam.
- vii. Department of Health, Assam.
- viii. Department of Sports, Assam.
- ix. Department of Home, Assam.
- x. Private Entrepreneurs, investors etc.
- xi. Local Ecotourism or any Nature based Society.
- xii. Local Panchayats.
- xiii. Local District Administration.
- xiv. Local Hospital Authority.
- xv. Local Forest Office.
- xvi. Local Village Heads.
- xvii. Local Branch of Recognized bank.
- xviii. Representative of Each Local Community.
- xix. Representative from each area of the greater region.
- xx. Representative from tea gardens.
- xxi. Local socio-cultural, educational, nature-based organizations.
- xxii. NGOs concerned with the site.
- xxiii. Knowledgeable persons of the district associated with conservation of natural, historical and cultural components.
- xxiv. Tourists: Tourists of the same district, other districts of the same state, other states and International tourists.

Tour to Champawati Eco-tourism Site:

Apart from the day-visit, holiday-visit and pilgrim tourists of the site the Champawati Eco-tourism Society should try to target the international tourists or the tourists coming from other states to visit Kaziranga and try to attract them towards Champawati Eco-tourism Site with proper publicity, verities of facilities. Such tourists should be communicated by the Champawati Eco-tourism Society and interested parties should be received with traditional hospitality at least for one day and night with systematic exposure to its natural,

historical and cultural components, local folk culture and village life in an enjoyable way. Initially it would be challenging for the society but it is certain that the site has enough potential to please the tourists if those are exploited in a sustainable and presented in an interesting way. A few package tours may be launched such as—

- i. One Day and Night at Champawati Site: Sight-seeing at day, folk cultural function in the evening and the night to be spent at a folk village with a particular community.
- ii. One Week at Folk Village: With folk communities and their social custom and culture.
- iii. Kunda Fair Week, Hanuman Fair Week, Bat Cave fair Week etc.
- iv. Holiday Visit, Sunday Special etc.

Attractions of the Site:

The Champawati Eco-tourism Society should take necessary steps for sustainable use of the potential of the following spots and transforming those into the attractions of the site—

- i. Champawati waterfalls.
- ii. Lungsung waterfall.
- iii. Suang Reserve Forest and its natural flora and fauna.
- iv. Hatibandha - Wetland, Local and Migratory birds.
- v. Changsaki - Wetlands, Local and Migratory birds.
- vi. Kondoli - Bat Cave, Boat of Stone, Shiv-Parvoti of Stone.
- vii. Jiajui- Gate of Stone, Historical Tanks, Ram Pathar, Hanuman Temple etc.
- viii. Garachuk- Burha-Burhir Garh, Mrityunjoy Temple.
- ix. Khanajan - Lotus tank, rubber plantation.
- x. Borjuri and Udmari - Stone to be covered, natural flora and fauna.
- xi. Folk Villages - Karbi, Boro, Rabha, Garo, Tiwa, Adivashi, Ahom etc.
- xii. Big tea gardens, small scale tea plantations, broomstick cultivation, milk production unit in natural setting etc.

Attractive Activities for the Tourists:

The Champawati Eco-tourism Society should take necessary steps for realization of the following facilities in the site to be called the Attractive Activities meant for the tourists and surely those are to be provided in a pleasant manner. While providing the facilities to attract and please the tourists it must be remembered that natural environment of the region, its flora and fauna or any component will not be disturbed by such activities.

- i. Walking.
- ii. Cycling.
- iii. Cafeteria
- iv. Road-side exhibits.
- v. Road-side markets.
- vi. Literature such as brochures, leaflets, souvenir, books on local natural, historical and cultural components, myths and legends associated with, local folklore, local freedom fighters etc.
- vii. Museum and exposure to local historical, cultural and natural objects and its images.
- viii. Library and Research Centre.
- ix. Sports Complex and facilities of indoor games, swimming pool etc.
- x. Canoeing.
- xi. Trekking.
- xii. Caving.
- xiii. Angling.
- xiv. Rock Climbing.
- xv. Horse Riding.
- xvi. Elephant safari.
- xvii. Zip Safari connecting the spots within.
- xviii. Rope way.
- xix. Bird Watching or View Point.
- xx. Champawati Tower.
- xxi. Photography.

- xxii. Local and Migratory bird watching.
- xxiii. Visit to typical host community villages and exposure to different folk culture, festivals, and religious functions of different host communities.
- xxiv. Community Hall and Cultural function in the evening giving exposure to folk performing arts, their songs, dance, arts, crafts etc.
- xxv. Amphitheatre and folk and modern dramatic performance.
- xxvi. Wild Elephant especially at night.
- xxvii. Different types of rice-beer for the license holders.
- xxviii. Taste folk food especially meat or vegetable in bamboo pipe.
- xxix. Buy local products such as folk garments, bamboo based furniture and ornaments, tea, broomstick, local fruits, vegetables etc.
- xxx. Visitor information and Orientation centre.
- xxxi. Restaurants, hotels and paying guest accommodation at folk village etc.

Different Types of Tourism under Eco-tourism:

In the Champawati Eco-tourism Site there is scope for other types of tourism under the umbrella of Eco-tourism and the Champawati Eco-tourism Society may try to give the taste of such verities to the eco-tourists. For example—

- i. Pilgrimage Tourism
- ii. Rural Tourism
- iii. Culture Tourism
- iv. Adventure Tourism
- v. Tea tourism

Growth of Infrastructure for the Development of Eco-tourism:

There must be a good amount of growth in infrastructure in Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas for its promotion as a destination of eco-tourism which will support facilities concerned with transport, communication, accommodation, safety, health, sports, recreation, academic, creative and cultural faculties etc.

- i. Repairing and construction of main roads: From Nagaon to Kondoli via Bamuni, From Bamuni to Chapanalla, from Puranigudam to Chapanalla waterfall via Chalchali, from Samaguri to Chapanalla etc.
- ii. Repairing and construction of sub roads or intrasite roads connecting the spots within the region.
- iii. Construction of multi-storied complex with Community Hall, Seminar or Conference Hall, Amphitheatre, Information centre, recreational centre, Art and Craft centre etc.
- iv. Construction of Sports complex with indoor games, swimming pools etc.
- v. Construction of Amusement park or theme park.
- vi. Construction of Museum cum Library and research centre.
- vii. Infrastructure supporting Civil Hospital with facilities such as a few beds, oxygen, anti-snake vaccine etc.
- viii. Infrastructure supporting picnic spot and its beautification.
- ix. Construction of hotel, restaurant, tourist resort and paying guest house at folk village.
- x. Digging of historical tanks and keeping its water clean.
- xi. Constructions of Champawati Tower, bird watching point, view point etc.
- xii. Construction of ropeway, way to waterfalls, way through cave, Suang reserve forest etc.
- xiii. Construction of Police station, Check point etc.
- xiv. Construction of a hanging bridge in the approach of the waterfall beautifying the picnic spot.
- xv. Construction of a few bridges connecting the spots within the region.
- xvi. Construction of traditional houses preferably Chang ghars in the folk villages with sanitation, drinking water and waste disposal facilities.
- xvii. Infrastructure for pure drinking water facility, sanitation facility, waste disposal system, shopping facilities.
- xviii. Construction of the existing temples and beautification of the surroundings - Hanuman temple, Mrityunjoy temple, Bishnu Temple, Shiv-Parvati temple etc encouraging pilgrim tourism.

- xix. Transformation of existing tribal villages into ideal or model folk villages according to folk material culture and social custom of the respective folk communities.
- xx. Infrastructure supporting establishment and development of industry.
- xxi. Infrastructure supporting protection and conservation of natural environment, historical components etc.
- xxii. Small Dam producing electricity if the environment is not at the risk.
- xxiii. Solar Energy encouraging use of solar light, solar lamp etc.
- xxiv. Plantation on street, Neem garden, botanical and medicinal garden etc.
- xxv. Street light, light at the tourist spots etc.
- xxvi. Garbage bins separately for biodegradable and non-biodegradable at regular intervals.
- xxvii. Drainage system.
- xxviii. Infrastructure supporting Waste Disposal System.
- xxix. Office of Champawati Eco-tourism Society, Record keeping system etc.
- xxx. Development of infrastructure of Assamese medium schools and introduction of language subjects such as Karbi, Boro, Rabha, Adivashi etc.

Establishment of Small Scale Industry:

Establishment of small scale industry and market in the region making sustainable use of natural resources and products of the region will attract the tourists and ensure economic development of the local people.

- i. Folk Garment Weaving Centre producing folk dresses of the local folk communities, Assamese gamocha, sadar-mekhela etc.
- ii. Bag Manufacturing Industry producing traditional cloth bags, Jute bags, fancy bags with pat silk and muga and paper bags of various sizes.
- iii. Tea Based Industry such as manufacture of Green tea, Organic tea and Tea Packetting Farm buying and selling of local tea under a particular brand.

- iv. Bamboo Based Industry manufacturing bamboo furniture, ornaments, container, kitchen tool, image of tools used in cultivation, weaving etc.
- v. Food Processing Unit producing prickles of local vegetables and fruits, meat in bamboo pipe, curd in bamboo pipe etc.
- vi. Broom Centre producing brooms of various designs.
- vii. Ornament Centre producing ornaments of dry rice, dry leaf, dry fruit, bamboo etc.
- viii. Milk Production Centre producing milk based items such as packet milk, curd, ghee, butter etc.
- ix. Earthen Material Production centre producing earthen lamp, flower base, curd pot, kitchen item etc.

Guidelines to Stakeholders:

Each one of the stakeholders, whether government or local people or tourist, has to be sensitive to the natural environment of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas and its historical and cultural components and must follow the strategy of the site and a set of guidelines fixed for each group of the stakeholders for the successful development of eco-tourism in the region. The guidelines fixed for the stakeholders may incorporate the following -

- a) **For the Government, Champawati Eco-tourism Management Societies, Operators etc.:**
 - i. It should always be remembered that Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas is promoted as a destination of eco-tourism not for revenue generation on the part of Government agencies or economic benefit of the investors but for the sake of the region itself. Eco-tourism on one hand must ensure protection and conservation of natural environment, cultural and bio-diversity, research on its historical components and sustainable use of such resources of the region by means of eco-tourism will ensure socio-economic benefit of the local communities.
 - ii. The local natural resources along with its historical and cultural components and socio-economic factors associated with should be properly studied and strategy and planning should be prepared accordingly for promotion and development of eco-tourism in the region.

- iii. The master plan of the site should be prepared by professional architects and planners in consultation with local people, environmentalists, knowledgeable persons and others concerned with.
- iv. An integrated comprehensive resource management plan for the site founded on sound ecological principles must be adopted and the planning made for the promotion of eco-tourism in the site should be taken as a part of the integrated resource management plan of the site.
- v. Integrated planning adopted is also to avoid possible intersectional or inter-community conflict and appropriate measures to be included to address uneven development in the region among the communities or the areas.
- vi. The local people of all sections, knowledgeable people of the district and environmentalists of the state must be involved in the process of development of eco-tourism in the region.
- vii. The Government should own the responsibility of providing and generating finance for the growth of infrastructure in the eco-tourism site.
- viii. Any developmental work should not be at the cost of the natural environment and local people of the site.
- ix. Regular awareness camp, training and workshop on environmental issues, threats and legal procedures to deal with, philosophy of eco-tourism etc. to stakeholders especially to host communities.
- x. Pollution of soil, air, water and sound degenerating natural environment of the region especially by the big tea gardens, small tea growers, picnickers, illegal traders and developmental activities should be addressed with appropriate mitigating measures and legal action.
- xi. Supply of firewood from the region, cutting of trees, any trade on natural resources of the region such as soil, sand, stone, tree, animal, birds etc., selling of land to outsiders, use of agricultural land for other means, misuse of forestland, wetland etc. should be banned.

- xii. Plantation of trees should be a regular phenomenon of the site. For example Neem tree and shade tree on the sides of the roads, banana and bamboo trees at the foothills and Sal-Sagun trees in the hills should be planted.
- xiii. Separate Neem garden, Botanical garden and Medicinal garden using vacant Government lands should be established.
- xiv. Use of polythene bags should be banned; instead paper bags and cloth bags should be used.
- xv. There should be 'no horn zone', 'no vehicle zone', 'tobacco free zone' etc.
- xvi. There should be place fixed for picnic, car parking, boating, angling, etc.
- xvii. Practice and performance of local performing arts, folk songs and dance in its indigenous forms should be sponsored and made a regular feature of the site.
- xviii. Protection of historical components from any farm or individual or from illegal users, preservation of those in a scientific manner and encouraging research on those elements of historical importance.
- xix. Ensure pure drinking water, scientific sanitation system etc.
- xx. Ensure full-fledged police station, forest office, electricity to the spots, use of solar energy, garbage bins separately for biodegradable and non-biodegradable at regular intervals, scientific drainage system, and waste disposal system.
- xxi. Ensure good infrastructure in terms of accommodation, transport, communication etc.
- xxii. Ensure community hall, seminar or conference hall, amphitheatre, information centre, recreational centre, art and craft centre, sports complex, amusement park, museum cum library and research centre, civil hospital, hotel, restaurant, tourist resort and paying guest, champawati tower, bird watching point, view point etc.
- xxiii. Ensure digging of historical tanks and keep its water clean.
- xxiv. Provide market for the local products and shopping facilities for the tourists.

- xxv. Take steps for beautification of picnic spots and keeping those spots clean and pollution free.
- xxvi. Take necessary step to put an end to flood the recent phenomenon of the region.
- xxvii. There must be Building Code and certain Rules and Regulations to be imposed in planning, execution, operation etc.
- xxviii. Buildings should be designed on functional and environmental considerations and over construction should be avoided. The structures are not to interfere with the natural ecosystem to the extent of damaging the system. To avoid such damage local materials and designs should be used and in this respect traditional home 'Cang ghar' may be an option.
- xxix. Ensure adequate opportunities to tourists for communion with nature and local culture.
- xxx. Ensure enough facilities and support services to the tourists.
- xxxi. Continuous monitoring of the developmental activities, evaluation and appropriate mitigating measures should be taken to address the threats to or negative impacts of the developmental measures on socio-cultural environmental aspects of the region.
- xxxii. Visitor information and interpretation services by means of brochures, leaflets, guides etc. should be provided.
- xxxiii. Register record of every tourist in detail.
- xxxiv. Codes of Conduct suggesting what to do and not to do should be widely distributed to the tourists.
- xxxv. Awareness Camps and Training programmes on eco-tourism and environmental issues should be regularly launched for the stakeholders of the Champawati eco-tourism Site.
- xxxvi. Environmental impact assessment should be made mandatory and strictly and meticulously carried out for any industry sought to be newly established in Assam (Rajib Handique, 2004). That is why environment impact Assessment (EIA) should be carried out before and after each and every developmental work in the region.

- xxxvii. Visitor Management System (VMS) should be formulated for attracting tourists to the site.

Guidelines to the Tourists:

- i. Do not do anything which may pollute and harm the environment.
- ii. Go through the guidelines carefully and understand what to do and not to do.
- iii. Be committed to conservation of natural environment of the region with its historical and cultural components and help in the process of doing the same.
- iv. Develop inter-cultural tolerance and try to understand and respect the local culture and the values associated with.
- v. Keep local water especially the river clean and avoid using pollutants.
- vi. Use restraint in taking photographs of local people.
- vii. Follow the safety measures.

Guidelines to the Host Communities:

- i. Realise that the host communities are not the commodities of the ecotourism industry but the backbone of the industry.
- ii. Try to understand the philosophy of eco-tourism and sustainable development of a region.
- iii. Realise that eco-tourism is meant for their benefit and conservation of environment.
- iv. Realise that since eco-tourism makes them benefitted by making use of natural environment and its resources hence the use of the natural resources must be sustainable and the environment must be protected, otherwise their benefit would not be a long-term one and the life of their new generation would be at risk.
- v. Be conscious of environmental issues and threats and be committed to conservation of rich bio-diversity of the region.
- vi. Do not look forward to any development which is at the cost of the environment.
- vii. Realise the importance and values of the historical components and cultural diversity of the region and be committed to conservation of those elements.

- viii. The host communities are not to play merely the role of cheap labour in the industry but to be involved in policy making, execution, operation, monitoring, evaluation etc.
- ix. Follow the code of conduct and try to understand what to do and not to do.
- x. Attend the awareness programmes, training and workshop.
- xi. Be friendly with the visitors and concerned with their safety.

Findings and Conclusion:

The growing natural, social, cultural and environmental degeneration of Chapanalla caused by various factors like picnickers, human-elephant conflict, deforestation, illegal trade on its resources, loss of bio-diversity etc. projects an alarming scenario of the region and is a high time to look for a remedy which would put an end to such threats and ensure conservation of natural, environment, historical components and bio-cultural diversity of the region and pave the way for long-term benefit to the local communities. Here lies the relevance of promoting Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas as a new destination of Eco-tourism. The Minor Research Project entitled 'Prospects of Ecotourism at Chapanalla' is undertaken with a view to making a critical study of the potentialities of Chapanalla from the perspective of eco-tourism, to identify, understand and address the problems and constraints of eco-tourism at chapanalla, to make a critical analysis of the impact of ecotourism on natural and socio-economic, cultural life of Chapanalla and its local people, to put an end to the present threats to the environment of Chapanalla, to ensure research work on and conservation of natural, cultural and historical components of greater Chapanalla and thus to make sustainable use of natural, cultural and historical components of greater Chapanalla through ecotourism industry for the sustainable development of the area and benefit of the local people. The project shows that Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas with its rich scenic beauty, natural flora and fauna, waterfalls and bat cave, historical background and cultural diversity can be promoted as a new destination of eco-tourism in the state of Assam. The SWOT analysis carried out with the purpose of understanding the ecotourism potential in the said region along with its weaknesses and also the opportunities and threats from the perspective of eco-tourism development in the region may be treated as a part of the strategy to the policy-making, planning, execution etc. for promoting and establishing

greater Chapanalla as a new destination of eco-tourism. The SWOT analysis projects Chapanalla with its ecotourism potentials such as historical components, cultural diversities of diverse local ethnic groups, rare scenic beauty, natural flora and fauna, rich bio-diversity of Suang Reserve forest, healthy climate, long seasonality, local products like tea, rubber, broom, milk, folk garments etc., local festivals with strong tourist traffic, scope for angling, cycling, trekking, walking, connoying, ropeway, rock climbing, bird watching etc., availability of land for the growth of infrastructure etc. which can be capitalized for the promotion ecotourism industry in the region. While making an assessment of the possible impacts of the development of eco-tourism industry on the social and environmental aspects of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas it is discussed how to exploit the eco-tourism potential of the region and how to address the weaknesses and if possible how to transform those into potential for the promotion of the said industry without causing any permanent harm to its environment and local people. The analysis also shows that ecotourism itself may cause negative impacts on and invite threats to socio-environmental life of Chapanalla which are to be mitigated with appropriate measures. The project shows that Ecotourism at Chapanalla, if properly guided, will provide opportunities for development and ensure growth of infrastructure, facility and service in terms of roads, buildings, bridges, hotels, restaurants, health, sports, transport, communication, education, electricity and thus will pave the way for all-round development of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas. Re-establishment of a police station and a better law and order situation, establishment of a Civil hospital, market or shopping facility, small scale industry on local products, establishment of Community and Culture Centre for conservation, promotion of diverse local cultural of the region in its original form, establishment of medicinal and botanical garden, a Research Centre, establishment of Recreational Centre, Amusement Park, Sports Complex etc. A few suggestions and recommendations are also forwarded with a hope that the proposed eco-tourism industry in the greater region becomes a reality.

Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas such as Chalchali, Hatibandha, Changsaki, Borbari, Bamuni, Kondoli, Garachuk, Jiajuri, Lungsung, Udmari, Borjurii etc. in an all inclusive way may be named 'Champawati Eco-tourism Site', the new destination of Eco-tourism in the State of Assam. Similarly, a strong management body with a few locally constructed sub-committees is to be constituted with representatives from its stakeholders with a view to making policy, planning, executing, operating, monitoring, evaluating, managing and administering the eco-tourism site smoothly. This apex body of the eco-tourism

site may be named 'Champawati Eco-tourism Society'. The Society should take necessary steps for sustainable use of the potential of the tourist spots and transforming those into prime attractions for the tourists, should provide attractive facilities to attract and please the tourists and remember that natural environment of the region, its flora and fauna or any component will not be disturbed by such activities. Each one of the stakeholders, whether government or local people or tourist, has to be sensitive to the natural environment of Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas and its historical and cultural components and must follow the strategy of the site and a set of guidelines fixed for each group of the stakeholders for the successful development of eco-tourism in the region.

Thus the region is promoted as a destination of eco-tourism with a critical analysis of the relevant aspects associated with the industry with a view to attracting the attention of the concerned departments of Assam Government. It is expected that the State Government will take a serious notice of the recommendations made and take necessary action plan for promotion of Eco-tourism industry in Chapanalla and its neighbouring areas and ensure conservation and sustainable use of its natural, historical and cultural components, promotion of local culture in its indigenous form, research on local historical components and folklore materials, long-term socio-economic benefit to local people thus will pave the way for sustainable development of the region.

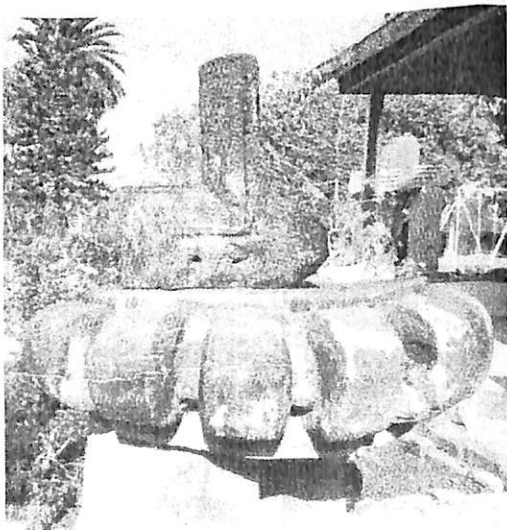
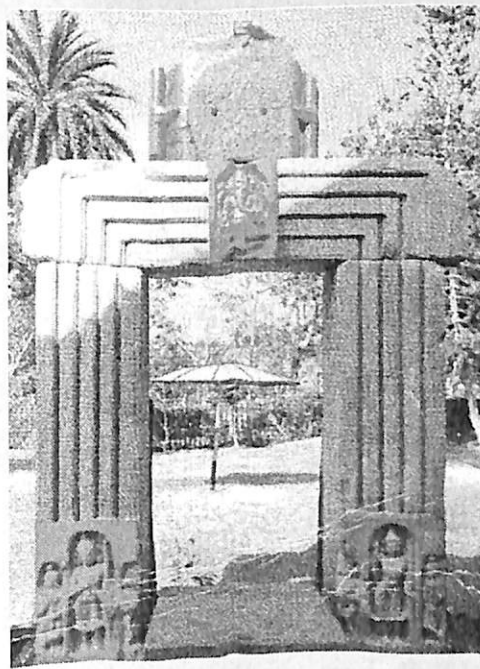
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Photos of a few Natural, Historical and Cultural Components of Chapanalla and its Adjourning Areas:

a) Champawati Waterfall and Lungsung Hadhadi:



b) Historical Monuments:



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