

People's Participation and Awareness in Developing Eco-Restoration and Sustainable Development

(A Case Study Based on Historic Jhanjimukh Area of Jorhat District, Assam)

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Introduction:

Earth has an unlimited supply of resources to us. Life on this earth depends upon a large number of things and services provided by the nature. These natural things and services which we may call natural resources are various types like water, air, soil, minerals, coal, forests, crops, wild life etc. Our eco-system is naturally balanced and it helps not only human beings but all the plants and animals of the earth. It is no doubt that the natural resources like forest, water, soil, food, minerals, energy resources plays a vital role in the development of a nation. It is the human being which success depend upon how best they can cooperate with the rest of the nature for their benefit. Moreover, it is also worth mentioning that future life in earth will survive smoothly only in a healthy and sustainable environment. Our day to day life is always closely related with surrounding ecology. But the over uses of the resources in our modern society is resulting in fast depletion of these resources and several related problems. Nature's precious resources are gradually degrading and this degrading environment creating an ecological crisis, which is serious threat to the survival of human race. Basically, the degraded ecology adversely affected those people who depend upon the resources of their immediate surroundings. Not only ecology, it also creating a lot of problems to the society on the youth category of the society.

It should be protected the natural and social environmental from degradation for smooth running of the society as well as the social condition. We must aware and conscious for the development of ecology and sustainability of our locality. We are coming to realise that nature's gift can be restor not only for our present time but for future generation also. Therefore ecological restoration is a key component in present situation for sustainable development. The

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responsibility of every human being of the society is needed regarding the protection and restoration of the ecology of an area. Because 'small drops lets of water together form a big ocean'. In this way, with our small individual efforts we can together help in restoring our natural resources to a large extent.

The broader concept of sustainable development is a balancing concept between ecology and development. It refers to the importance of meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs. This aspect of sustainable development raised by the Brundlant commission. The Brundlant definition emphasizes on protecting the future generation. We have moral obligation to handover the planet in good order to future generation.

The social dimension of sustainable development is built on the twin principles of justice and equality. For a development path to be sustainable over a long period of time, wealth, resources and opportunity should be equitably shared. All citizens should have access to minimum standards of security, human rights and social benefits such as food, health, education shelter and opportunities of self-development.

Social equality implies equal opportunities to all for education and for making productive contribution to society. These have to be ensured to achieve the social goals of-

a) Cultural diversity b) Social Justice c) Gender equality d) Public Participation etc. On the other hand, ecological dimension of sustainable development requires sustainable resources use, efficient sink function and maintenance of stock natural capital.

Objectives of the Study:

It is already mentioned that the degradation of eco- system in the area and which also threatens to sustainable development of the local community. Therefore, the chief objectives of the study is to find out the eco-restoration policies and technologies for sustainable livelihood development of local communities. The objectives of the present study are as under.

- i. To examine the ecological degradation like deforestation, soil erosion, haphazard over grazing land, encroachment etc. and its remedial steps taken by different communities and NGOs.
- ii. To analyse the available resources in the area like the valuable trees, endemic fishes, visiting and local birds, animals etc. which helps to

- sustainable development.
- iii. To analyse the opinion of the local people, local NGOs about the role of government towards eco-restoration in the area and justify their suggestion, comments regarding this field.
 - iv. Environmental awareness is one of the main concern in the present time. The study also aims to see what type of steps taken by the different agencies for people awareness.

Field and Methodology:

The river Jhanji is one of the tributary of the river Brahmaputra of northern part merged with Brahmaputra and this river linkage place is known as Jhanjimukh. It is situated in north part of Jorhat district and distance from the NH-37 only with 10KM.. This area spread from Kakilamukh to Bonai with more than twenty swamp land and many natural resources have seen in this area. The ecological surrounding of Jhanjimukh is very fine with river Brahmaputra and many plants, valuable fishes, animals etc. The bio-diversity aspects of this area also contributed its natural beauty. The inhabitant of this area are heterogeneous type. The different type of religious group, caste, ethnic people has been seen in this area. The dominant ethnic group of this area are Mishings which are basically lives near river Brahmaputra.

The ecology of Jhanjimukh is more or less balanced form upto middle part of 20th century. But unfortunately due to several causes, the ecology of the area is degraded gradually. The basic causes of degradation ecology in the of this area are flood and soil erosion, because, river Brahmaputra which turned the ethnic people to nomadic life of degradation of eco-system of this area.

The study is mainly based on case study method. In this study, different facts and findings are taken from local people and local NGOs. The study involved in the primary data which are found through questionnaire and interview with local people and officials of local NGO named Katekee. Some Assam based relevance secondary data are taken from news papers and books.

Findings and Discussion:

During recent years it is found that there has been tremendous pressure on forest to fulfillment of human needs. In the field it is seen that some local people and illegal trafficker cut down the valuable trees like Chagun, Sal, Simalu, Agar etc. It is theaters areas the existence of many wild life species due to

destruction of their natural habitat. It also creates problems of soil erosion and many other problem. Due to deforestation of particular tree Simalu in the riverside, certain birds like vulture decreases from the area.

Communities Participation, Awareness and the Role of Local NGOs:

It is seen in the field that the local community of the area are interested and aware of their eco-system. Though the government participation is very poor regarding preservation in its valuable trees, animals, birds, fishes etc. but the local people of the area trying to protect from illegal trafficker themselves.

Environmental awareness is the main concern in the present day world. In the present time, to make a sustainable development the growing environmental degradation should be controlled by making the people conscious enough towards environment. From the field it is found that this can be done by the local people and local based NGOs. It is significant aspect we have found that NGOs plan an important role in the total development of the region. The local NGO of the Jhanjimukh Katekee has been working successfully since 2002. The two important project has taken by Katekee for eco-restoration and awareness among the local community. The name of the project of Katekee's are "Katekee Plantation project" and "Katekee Awareness project". This local based NGO planted many traditional trees like Agar, Segun, Mango tree etc in place of various ornamental trees. We may called it good step not only for local people but all of us also.

In the area apart from the local birds many visiting birds comes to its different marchy, swap and boggies. With the help of local people, the members of NGOs identifying various types of birds, fishes and trees to preserve its spontaneously. They identifying 109 various type of birds , 73 nos of various endemic and traditional fishes, 12 nos of forest animals etc. Some of them are greater Adjutant stork, Lesser Adjutant stork, White back Vulture, River Dolphin, three different racial Tortoise, Weasel etc. These activities are not only important from eco-restoration point of view, but also important from eco-tourism aspect.

Another significant point mentionable here that the local youth and NGO members has given medical treatment to the injurious birds and animals. They also censuses the visiting and local birds yearly. The local people and NGO members also preserve the River Dolphin in the outlet of the river.

Suggestions:

The government and different national and international based NGOs has

taken many steps to restore the eco-system for sustainable development. The central government and various foreign funding agencies provides funds for conservation and development activities of Assam. There is an act in the international community to maintain sustainable development to protect environmental pollution. Such type of act are Legal Principles for Environment, Pollution and Sustainable Development Act 1983, National Green Corps (NGO) etc. which are initiated by Ministry of Environment and Forest for spreading environmental awareness among school children through eco-clubs in the country.

In Assam, the Joint Forest Management Committee (JFMC) are performing well in restoring the green cover to the state. The primary objectives of the committee is to ensure that the bio-diversity of the forest is maintained commercial plantation of medicinal and timber wood. It gives financial returns to the growers. It is also true that joint forest management and social security is the basic solution for sustainable development.

The above mentioned suggestion and solution can be taken in the field regarding eco-restoration and sustainable development of the local community. On the basis of the experience in the field some suggestions mentioned below:-

1. Evergreen fruits bearing tree like Mango, Jack fruit, Olive burry, Black berry etc should be planted at all the public places, Such type of plants will not only provide fruits but also help to purifying air as to do the Neem trees. Valuable trees like Agar, Sal, Sagun etc should be designed as part of strategy too increase renewable natural resources and plantation should be undertaken as a measures for survival of the humanity as well as other species.
2. Due to flood of Brahmaputra and Jhanji, soil erosion is regular seen in the area. Soil erosion greatly effected the tribal people. The major issues related to displacement and rehabilitation of tribals are increases of poverty, break up of families, social and cultural functions etc. These are the some socio-cultural issues related to ecological degradation. So ensuring protection of environment, new policies and technologies should taken by the government.
3. Eco- friendly trees has stressed in the area of Jhanjimukh. The traditional forests of the state has all trees, which could give the people to the food, flowers, fuel shade, cloths, wood etc. and above all a pollution free environment. These trees were also the answers to the eroding rivers binding

4. There are many endemic fishes in various marshes, boggies and ponds. These fishes fishing by local fishermen. So, the Government and the NGOs can taken proper steps to stop the killing of fishes in young stages for the sustainable development of the local communities. It is also needed to restore different kinds of birds, tortoise, weasel, dolphins etc.
5. For eco restoration, it is essential to minimize the use of fertilizer in the agricultural fields. Due to exercise use of fertilizers in the agricultural fields the eco-system gets degraded. This shows how an unmindful action can have far reaching impacts. The fishes worm and other necessary organism also killed and there is a lot of dead matter that starts getting decomposed due to heavily use of fertilizers in agricultural fields.
6. The existing policy on environment lacks in the direction of education the masses about the need for preserving the environment. It has been seen that the local NGOs take some steps to aware the people in this aspect from two years. It feels that government should also take some steps through its different own department like forest department, social forestry department. etc.

Conclusion:

Our future generation depends on us . If the present generation cannot take necessary steps to restore the ecology of any area, sustainable development could not be possible. The vast majority of the people are directly dependent on natural resources for their basic needs for food , fuel, shelter and fodder. It is true that eco - restoration is must to survive the future life in the earth. There should be taken some appropriate policies and restoration technologies to sustainable livelihood development of local community.

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