

Instigation for New Protocols of Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Wildlife Conservation with students prospective

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Peoples living in forested areas have always been an integral part of ecosystem functioning, living close to Nature and the natural resources. Living within natural resource rich areas, traditional societies have derived many of their livelihood requirements from the rich biodiversity around them. The concept of Ecosystem people has been derived from the same root. The India's forest Ecosystems not only meet a variety of livelihood needs of the forest-dwelling traditional societies, through products such as timber and non-timber forest products, but also sustain traditional agricultural practices through resource flow between the two, contributing to the food security of these ethnic groups. All these forest-linked activities of the traditional societies are mediated through a rich traditional ecological knowledge (TEK). TEK, as elaborated subsequently, has economical, ecological and socio-cultural dimensions. Since a new etiquette of community based conservational loom appeared in continuation with traditional societies which are at varied stages in their social evolution, building upon the TEK with inputs from modern scientific side, to the extent desired becomes critical for ensuring proper input in the conservation of nature and natural resource in the midst of their livelihood needs. However, in recent times, the concept of TEK that covers issues of ethnobiological concern, but extending the scope of it to linkages between ecological and social processes that determine ecosystem and landscape level functions in apprehension of resource utilization pattern of Ecosystem people.

One of the major region behind the partial letdown of conservation and management tools in the protected areas around the country is only due to the expulsion of appropriate perspective from traditional biophysical angle and lack of proper awareness among students of related sectors. Such an ecological analysis of ecosystem structure and functioning is important to design a decentralized ecosystem management plan. Adaptive management strategy demands research analysis at the inter phase of natural and social sciences. It is important to look the wildlife conservation issues in a socio-ecological system, where humans are integrated into ecosystem functioning. Whilst dealing with traditional societies, such an approach becomes critical in sustainable conservation of wildlife. Converting TEK into tool for wildlife conservation still remains a far cry. Such a research orientation alone will enable us to ensure community participation in biodiversity conservation and ecosystem rehabilitation. It must cover the major ecological relation of human and wildlife, degree of human dependency on wildlife and ethnic view point of the particular traditional society towards wildlife conservation both in ecological and religious aspect. These statements can be well established with the concept of Sacred Grove of traditional societies.

The countries in the South and Central Asian region have made great strides in fine-tuning these concepts for linking conservation with sustainable development of local communities, with emphasis on three management arms, namely, research, human resource and biodiversity. Which come to existence as Man and Biosphere (MAB) programme was launched in 1971 by UNESCO, a natural consequence of it was to have BRs, as representative samples of biodiversity conservation, with a variety of natural and

human-managed ecosystems as part of a larger ecological landscape unit. However, we still have to go a long way in achieving these objectives in an integrated manner, involving all the actors in management, namely the scientists, governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with local communities at the grass-root level, and above all the local communities who have always been the custodians of the biodiversity. As far as a student of biological science I would like to totting up that the students community related to life sciences also have a great role in this sectors and they should come forward with new ideas for the conservation of the wild species and the environment shearing their hands through community development works as well as wildlife research. Because this subject is always beyond our syllabus and atleast we should feel that the ecosystem is sustaining due to which the human civilization is also sustaining.

The interplay of ecology, sociology, economics, anthropology and culture is to be tied together to design meaningful biodiversity management strategies in an ecologically and socially heterogeneous environment, with obvious trade-offs. Understanding the functional attributes of ecosystems/landscapes are important for conservation of wildlife. The students should understand these facts from the beginning of their studies in biological science. Though our syllabus is bonded with environmental studies and conservation education but we all know that to what extend students had taken these subjects seriously. These course contents are never more than an exam question or a yearly outing for our students, but exceptions are always there. Some students really take it seriously and started going fields to learn the real facts of natures from their starting. The respective teachers also have a key role to motivate their students. In this context I feel myself lucky enough to start my activities under some of the renowned personalities such as Dr. H.J.Singha, Dr. S. Sengupta, Prof. A. Gupta during my graduate and post graduate years. Further more teachers can give the ideas of the ecologically important keystone species, which often are also socially selected and valued are important for redeveloping ecosystems and rehabilitating degraded systems and the rich traditional ecological knowledge of ethnic peoples to their students with interesting facts. It calls for close interaction between students and the local communities that could trigger peoples' participation. In order to achieve this, conservation-linked developmental strategies have to be based on a value system that both students and people can appreciate and therefore participate. This should be the basis for Instigation a New Protocols of Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Wildlife Conservation in the South and Central Asian context with students prospective, a region which is richly endowed with traditional knowledge and wisdom.

(The author is a Post-graduate student of Ecology and Environmental Science of Assam university and an executive member of Nature's Foster, a conservation activist organization of Assam. He is working in the field of wildlife conservation through scientific research and community developmental activities in parts of western and southern Assam.)