

Eco-Cultural Tourism for Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development of remote Ecosystems in the Third World

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Abstract:-

Most of the remote areas such as mountains and islands are characterized by the features such as remoteness, fragility, endemism and upland –low land / island- mainland linkages, besides richer biodiversity/ indigenous knowledge, thus attracting a large number of quality conscious tourists. However, conventional “top-down”, reactive and ad-hock approaches and ill-conceived/unplanned “development” activities such as infrastructure for mass tourism will destroy the very natural /cultural resource base on which the tourism thrives in these areas. These trends have led to the paradigm shifts towards community based, participatory, pro-active management strategies. Appropriate strategies for integrating biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods by regenerating nature and culture for facilitating sustainable development of remote ecosystems in the third world are discussed in this paper.

Key words – Biodiversity, eco-cultural tourism, indigenous knowledge, remote areas, sustainable livelihoods

INTRODUCTION

Remote ecosystems such as mountains and islands are blessed with higher ecological and cultural diversity, but yet are fragile, as they are highly susceptible to natural disturbances and human impacts. Hence, many such areas are declared as protected areas (PAs). A large majority of these areas are territories of indigenous people and characterized by the features such as remoteness, higher bio-diversity (BD), fragility, endemism and upland –low land / island- mainland linkages. By virtue of their scenic beauty and rich cultural heritage, along with racial, religious and linguistic diversity, ethnic cuisine, traditional festivals, etc., they attract an increasing number of tourists, thus earning revenue for the tourism industry, the state and the nation at large. However, in most remote areas of the third world ‘the inviolate space’ for wildlife has been shrinking rapidly during the recent decades due to the expanding human

activities - agriculture, tourism, industries/mining, power generation etc. Though there are few success stories for the integration of BD and cultural conservation with local livelihoods, especially through community based ecotourism (e.g. Christian et.al. 1996; Leitmann 1998; Bok binder et.al. 1998; Weinberg et. al. 2002), there are several avoidable conflicts between development and conservation of PAs in the third world due to the conventional “top-down” bureaucratic, reactive and ad-hock approaches and ill-conceived and unplanned/ unregulated “development” activities such as infrastructure for mass tourism that destroy the very natural /cultural resource base on which tourism thrives (e.g. Singh, et.al. 1989; Roe, et. al. 1997; George and Poyya moli, 2007).

These trends have culminated in the paradigm shifts towards community based, participatory, pro-active, decentralized and adaptive management strategies for conservation of BD. There is a greater unexplored/unexploited potential – the integration of BD conservation with sustainable livelihoods by adopting community based eco-tourism (CBET) or Community based Eco-cultural tourism (CBECT) (e.g. Barbier, 1990; Albert, 1996; Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2004). Even the critics of ET – as there is a possibility for ‘green cloaking’ (e.g. Russel and Wallace, 2004; Wallace and Russel, 2004), support ECT, due to its simultaneous focus on nature, culture and livelihoods. CBECT could play a particularly important role in remote regions because it can create jobs in areas that historically have been benefited less from economic development programs than have the more accessible areas. Even a small number of jobs may be significant in communities where populations are low and livelihood alternatives are few. Though the impacts of globalization on remote areas of the third world from tourism point of view is a contested domain (e.g. Wilson 2003; Azarya, 2004), CBECT opens up the possibilities for integrating conservation with sustainable livelihoods (Louisa & Greathouse-Amador, 1997; Barkin, 2002; Zimmerer, K S.2006; Poyya moli, 2007). Thus, CBECT appears to be the connecting thread for ensuring environmental, cultural, economic and social sustainability in the third world (e.g. Bookbinder, et al. 1998, Gosling,

1999; WWF, 2001; Foucat, 2002; Poyya moli, 2007), while meeting several millennium development goals.

However, in several cases, what few benefits indigenous peoples in remote areas derive from tourism are far outweighed by the damage it has inflicted on them. They have been made to bear the brunt of an omnipresent industry over which they have neither any say nor control (e.g. Buckley, 2005; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005). This paper is an attempt to analyse the policy prescriptions for reviving the vanishing treasures from our remote mountains and islands through an innovative win-win form of alternative tourism, the CBECT.

The accumulating experience indicate that tourism should satisfy conservation & development objectives in order to be consider sustainable in such fragile and sensitive areas. Two of these objectives are that tourism should contribute to:

- 1) generate financial support for protection/conservation and management of natural/ cultural/heritage areas and their resources; and
- 2) Generate economic benefits for local residents.

Although significant resources have been devoted to developing this type of tourism, lessons from the field have begun to highlight proper planning and integration (at various levels – spatial, temporal, policy, sectoral etc.), Individual projects tend to operate in isolation, failing to significantly influence either Conservation or development, nor the policy support necessary to bring their potential to fruition (UN, 1999; Vaughan, 2000; Saberwal et.al. 2001).

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE and CBECT

Ethnic communities in remote areas are endowed with rich indigenous/ traditional knowledge (IK/TK), which is the knowledge that people in a given community have developed over time, and continue to develop. In the context of Ecosystem management, it is also known as Local knowledge and management systems (LKMS) or traditional knowledge and management systems (TKMS). Creative cultural industries, based on IK such as music, the performing arts, cultural arts and crafts, the visual arts, the audio-visual and media sector, the cultural heritage sector along with the emerging multimedia sector can play a vital role in CBECT that integrates conservation of nature and cultural heritage as well as sustainable livelihoods by providing alternative employment and equitable income opportunities based on tourism related micro-enterprises for local communities.

Traditional knowledge (TK) associated with BD use and conservation is an intangible component of the resource itself. TK has the potential of being translated into commercial benefits by providing

leads for development of useful products and processes. Hence, a share of benefits must accrue to creators and holders of TK and should occupy the central position in the future debates /decisions on IPR, WIPO and TRIPS. A new intellectual property protection based on mutual/reciprocal trust and integrated sustainability concepts should be created that allow for maintaining the social, political, cultural and physical environment where indigenous knowledge is created (Gupta, 2002, Kinnane, 2002; Marinova and Raven 2006). While understanding IK is fundamental to participatory development approaches in developing CBECT enterprises, we need to go beyond and actively apply useful IK in the problem identification, planning/project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of CBECT projects.

Integration and Conservation of Bio-diversity with CBECT in remote Ecosystems

Bio-diversity encompasses all species of plants, animals and micro-organisms and the variation between them (genetic level), and the eco-systems of which they form a part. The ecosystem diversity refers to the variety of habitats, biological communities and ecological processes within the ecosystems. It also involves the diversity of people who live there. For remote ecosystems, the diversity of social systems, cultures, economics, gender roles, and daily concerns are far more significant than the diversity of the rest of the natural world. Thus, BD “problem” is in fact a combination of several interrelated issues concerning changes to the world’s BD and how those changes affect people. The PAs that are more prevalent in remote ecosystems are used as a management tool to conserve/manage/restore/revive natural/cultural resources, biodiversity (including key stone/endangered species), reduce user conflicts, provide educational/research/ livelihood opportunities, and enhance commercial and recreational activities through visitor fees, accommodation charges, food bills etc.(e.g.van den Berghe, 1994; Greathouse,1997; Salm et al. 2000; Louisa & Greathouse-Amador, 2005; Tapper & Cochrane, 2005; Spiteri, & Nepal. 2006). Thus they are ideally suited for CBECT in remote ethnic communities of the third world that facilitates a renewed consciousness about their own assets – both tangible and intangible. Besides, it can influence public policy to bring about desirable changes.

In general, due to the gradual penetration of the market economy and the consequent marginalisation in remote areas, the incidence of poverty and unemployment is high, and sources of income and subsistence are limited. But, these areas often support considerably higher wildlife diversity. Hence, benefit-based approaches/

payments for ecosystem services to community based BD conservation are more relevant in such situations. They are based on the economic rationale that although wildlife has a higher economic value, local communities receive little of this value, and therefore have little incentive to conserve wildlife because they do not economically gain from doing so; they require that wildlife conservation simultaneously generates national benefits (which will justify wildlife conservation overall), government revenues (which will provide funds to distribute to communities) and community benefits; to achieve these multiple goals simultaneously, three important factors must be incorporated into economic approaches to community wildlife conservation because they help to explain the underlying forces motivating wildlife loss at the local level - the nature of livelihood systems in wildlife areas and the form in which wildlife benefits are received by communities, the costs that wildlife incurs on local livelihoods and the broader policy factors which influence local land use and economic activities (Roe and Jack, 2001; Fennel and Weaver, 2005; Ashley et. al. , 2006; Roe et. al. 2006; Mutsuddi & Mutsuddi, 2007; Sekhsaria, 2007).

The Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, widely known as the World Heritage Convention, considered one of the most successful unique legal international instruments for the conservation of heritage sites along with its cultural and natural elements has a key role to play in the CBECT of remote tourist destinations in the third world. It is based on the idea that some cultural and natural heritage sites are of universal and exceptional importance and need to be protected as part of the common heritage of humanity. The emblem of the Convention reflects this intimate link between nature and culture (UNESCO, 2007).

The following three questions provide a framework for further considering the issues associated with the integration of BD conservation and promotion of CBECT in remote ecosystems.

BD conservation in tourism landscapes:

Traditional goals for BD conservation and specifically for ecological restoration have focused on returning a site to some historical condition (Atkinson 1990) or maintaining a current state (if it is in the beginning stages of degradation), particularly through removing all human use. These goals have often included concepts such as representativeness and rarity; the goal being to restore ecosystems that are representative of what might have occurred at the site had it not been disturbed by humans. It is clear from the level of extinctions and invasions that have occurred in several remote ecosystems with human settlements that aiming to restore representative or rare

communities may well be unrealistic, as these areas contribute to the economic well-being of local communities and the country as a whole. We need, therefore, to seek realistic goals for BD conservation in remote tourism landscapes that are compatible with the context within which these landscapes now occur, and simultaneously identify desired future sustainable paths.

Biodiversity conservation and tourism goals :

A key challenge for improving BD values in tourism landscapes is to better understand the area requirements and spatial dependencies of different land uses and to try to optimize landscape use to benefit both tourism and conservation activities. Besides sustainable use, conservation can include protection, maintenance, rehabilitation, restoration and enhancement of populations and ecosystems (IUCN, 1991). Unfortunately conservation as a term has generally been associated with preservationist approaches, while protection is only one form of conservation. Some of this is historic where, for example in India, conservation activities became increasingly concentrated on the alienation and displacement of the local communities, especially the tribals (Kothari, 1999). 'Wild' in the Western world is defined in terms of the absence of human control, 'conservation' in terms of the "maintenance of quantified aggregates of BD and the preservation of natural habitats", and management objectives that relate to species and habitat protection, government control and abstract policy. This is at dissonance with indigenous community's perceptions and practice of 'conservation' and 'wild' where customary property regimes determined what belonged to the household and what was a common pool resource. Natural resources and wildlife were a common pool resource, and conservation for rural people is an investment in the sustainable use of their natural resources (e.g. Bromely and Cernea, 1999; Odero, 2004). Thus, conservation is a means to an end rather than an end-in-itself. For instance, villages may face increased attacks by wild animals, crop damage, resettlement demands and restrictions on the use of natural resources, if conservation planning with/without CBECT fails to take into account the sustainable livelihood issues. Such issues clearly indicate the potential constraints/challenges we have to face for truly integrating conservation, livelihoods and tourism development.

BD to ensure that it is self-sustaining in tourism landscapes:

We need to better understand the optimum way to regenerate/arrange native BD in tourism landscapes in order to ensure that it is itself sustaining. For e.g. what spatial arrangement of different types of revegetation is required to sustain particular bird species? How can we best use shelter plantings to provide habitat or improve

connectivity for species in native forest remnants? How efficient these strategies are to woo the wild life enthusiasts as tourists? How can we restore the lost native cultivated/domesticated plant/animal biodiversity to ensure socioeconomic as well as environmental sustainabilities? Such questions are addressed in the land mark paper from the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2004).

One of the hot debates in the conservation community is whether to focus on individual species (for example, through species recovery plans, or lists of threatened species) or on systems approaches (such as the ecosystem approach advocated by the Convention on Biological Diversity). McNeely (2006) has recently concluded that both approaches are valid and mutually reinforcing, and that the dichotomy is a false one. This conclusion has far reaching consequences for CBECT planning in the third world as it promotes integrated approaches.

COMMUNITY APPROACHED for WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AND ECOTOURISM

Community is one of the most vague and elusive concepts in social science and continues to defy precise definition. Communities may be typified by their variation (between social groups, for instance gender), variegation (within social groups), and stratification (by wealth and power). No community lives in isolation but is connected to others and to society in general. Communities are also dynamic and variable over time, and for different people at different times with varying roles. These facts have to be understood while planning for CBECT.

CBET development is a priority sector in many developing countries. However, tourism in remote regions can involve and affect local communities without being driven and controlled by the local communities. Community based/community run “inclusionary” approaches for wild life conservation/Eco-tourism are emerging as a viable alternative in contrast to the conventional “exclusionary” protected areas concept (Fennell and Weaver, 2005). However, we should remember that the former is not really recent phenomenon, if we recall our ancestral traditions, belief systems, etc, that helped us in protecting special habitats such as sacred groves. The term “community-based” has broader implications and should not be confused with “Community-run.” It may also mean the difference between approaching communities as passive beneficiaries as opposed to active collaborators. Hence, the latter is preferred over the former, wherever it is possible. There can be different forms/degrees of community involvement in BD conservation- sacred groves,

community conserved areas, community/social forestry, joint forest/mangrove management (Roe et.al. 2006). They can be ideally integrated into CBECT at the local level.

Much has been written about ECT, but there is little consensus about its meaning, due to the many forms in which ECT activities are offered by a large and wide variety of operators, and practiced by an even larger array of tourists. While there is no single universal definition for ECT, its general characteristics can be summarized as follows (modified from Wight, 1993, Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996, Zeppel, 1997 and Goodwin *et.al.* 1998; Wallace and Russel, 2004):

- All nature-based forms of tourism in which the main motivation of the tourists is the observation and appreciation for admiring, enjoying and/ or studying nature as well as the traditional cultures and Heritage (both past and present) prevailing in relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas
- It is generally, but not exclusively organized for environmentally /socially conscious small groups by specialized and small, locally owned businesses.
- It minimizes negative impacts upon the natural and socio-cultural environment
- It supports the protection of natural areas and the revival of culture by:
- generating equitable economic benefits for host communities (by providing alternative employment and income opportunities), organizations and authorities managing natural areas with conservation purposes, and adding value to local heritage, cultural and natural resources through sustainable tourist access to those resources, providing incentives for protecting them
- increasing awareness towards the conservation of heritage, natural and cultural assets, both among locals and tourists by participatory, interactive, interpretative, enlightening experiences

Based on the issues discussed in this paper, I suggest the following policy/planning alternatives for promoting CBECT in remote ecosystems, based on best practice case studies (modified from Butler, 1991; Inskeep, 1991; WTTC, WTO and Earth council, 1996; Singh *et.al.* 2000 and Mastny, 2002 as well as Certification Programs for Sustainable Tourism and ET as described by Honey & Rome, 2001; Honey, 2002; Font et.al. 2003; guidelines for sustainable/community based ET as given by WWF International, 2001; Epler Wood, 2002; Burns, 2005; Turton, 2005; Beardsley *et.al.* 2006; CBD/UNEP, 2007; TIES, 2002 & 2007; Eco-lodge guidelines by The Nature Conservancy (undated) and the recently emerging pro-poor tourism

approaches as suggested by Ashley et.al., 2001; Neto, 2003):

- Controlling the human numbers / activities / impacts within the regular absorbing / carrying capacities and sustainabilities, so that stability, resilience and biodiversity are not irreversibly affected
- Working towards self – sufficiency/self reliance to meet the local needs of the communities and the needs of the Eco-tourists e.g. produce and supply organic and exotic/ethnic food items, health and spirituality Products
- Catalyze participatory research/planning/implementation/ monitoring strategies for CB ECT - facilitate local institution building and setting up community BD registers; adopt the recently emerging ET planning methods and approaches
- Promote alternative sustainable livelihoods for reducing poverty, while safe guarding the values of BD/ecosystem services, thus facilitating intra and inter-generational equity
- Ensure that the local communities gain rights/ownership and control over resources and hence a sense of responsibility for their management; promote training/institutional capacity building at the community level to enable their empowerment through deliberatively inclusive policies
- Restructure management and operations to accelerate the transfer of environmentally sound technologies, practices, facilities, and management tools, such as green infrastructure (maintaining Ecological corridors while developing the environmentally sound methods of transportation/accommodation networks, construction of board walks at high use sites, permanent closure of severely eroded tracks and trails, using locally available renewable resources in buildings, mooring buoys instead of anchors, waste recycling, water harvesting and reuse, root zone cleaning systems, other phyto-remediation systems, ecological sanitation, installation of adequate/appropriate water supply, drainage, sanitation, solid waste and sewage disposal systems according to national/international standards – eco-lodges/eco-tels, reduction in the consumption of water, energy, and other resources), thus ensuring the protection of life support systems to provide essential ecological services
- Actively address and combat tourism's impact on climate change by encouraging adapted travel patterns (e.g. increase length of stay per trip), promoting more energy-efficient, alternative or non-motorized transport options, utilizing reduced and zero-emission operation technologies, and increasing participation in reliable high-quality carbon offsetting schemes
- Encourage organizations /institutions/ individuals to subscribe to environmental guidelines/ legal mechanisms by a system of incentives/ compensations (e.g. usufructory rights over natural resources for the poorer communities to offset loss of revenue from traditional extractive activities that may be curtailed by the establishment of a protected areas, concessions, subsidies, tax holidays, soft loans and awards for the better economic categories) and disincentives (fines, pollution taxes and in extreme cases-ban/closure). Use voluntary codes of conduct for the same and promote alternate tourism based livelihoods for the weaker sections
- Match the tourism strategies with environmental quality, social equity, community empowerment/responsibility, cultural integrity and economic efficiency by training/awareness programmes using interpretation centers for all the stakeholders; promote Environmentally friendly forms of tourism activities
- Avoid the purchase of souvenirs made from coral or any threatened or endangered species such as turtles, hard woods, shells from beach traders, or ancient artifacts
- Avoid menu items that are caught using destructive processes, such as poisons, explosives or illegal equipment; avoid catching and serving rare, threatened or endangered species for food consumption
- Promote the right to information and facilitate information dissemination by using the recently emerging information and communication technologies (ICTs)
- Local limitations on use/access: Hosts set limits on access to homelands and sacred sites (spatial limitation); Hosts establish preferred or permitted tourist activities (activity limitation - photo restrictions, local guides); Hosts indicate appropriate times for tourist access and use (temporal limitation-breeding season closure of some roads); Hosts set limits on access to cultural knowledge and rituals (cultural limitation) (eg. hear non-sacred stories,

attend only public events, gender specific sites); request tourists to follow local customs

- Integrate conservation and development issues (policies, legislation, implementation, participation etc) based on a gender balanced approach
- Restore lost biodiversity by in situ and ex situ conservation
- Promote sustainable exploitation of biodiversity in general and renewable resources in particular
- Integrate environmental and cultural education into the visitor's experience by onsite interpretation centres
- Revive the creative cultural industries through the facilitation of micro-credits for CBECT Enterprises
- promote adherence to recognized, linked and audited certification schemes/guidelines that help enhance environmental management, assist in minimal impact operations, protect cultural sites and intangible culture, and provide for land/water management strategies
- Strengthen international, including regional, cooperation and coordination for conserving BD in the trans-boundary habitats
- Evolve pluralistic or integrated and strategic tourism policies /planning with special emphasis on community based or community /Govt. or Community /private or Community /private /Govt. partnerships for long-term sustainable development.

Planning to address the twin issues of participation and distribution of benefits in CBECT enterprises can help resolve many potential problems in anticipation. The following issues are only indicative and suggestive and in no case, exhaustive. Many issues are necessarily site-specific and hence, these questions may be treated as broad guidelines.

Community Participation: How a community chooses to define participation will be important for determining what level of participation will satisfy the CBECT project goals. It's a very tricky subject. For even where attempts at all inclusive community involvement are well thought out, participation has sometimes been decided on the basis of political affiliation, landownership, kinship or gender. Hence, the following questions are important:

Who will be a part of the CBECT enterprise? What will be their specific roles? How will the work be divided? Will participation depend on physical labor? Or, will there be other methods,

such as cash payments or in-kind contributions? Will men and women participate equally? Will there be opportunities for both young and old? Rich and poor? Those with schooling and those without? Will efforts be made to train those without the skills to participate from the beginning?

Decision-making :Active participation would lead to ecological democracy, transparency and decision making. However, the following questions are to be addressed:

Who will be involved with actual decision-making? Will everyone decide everything? Or, will a smaller number of people be given responsibility to decide on behalf of the rest? Will there be a governing committee? How will members of such a committee be determined? Will they be elected or appointed? How many people will be on it? How many are too many? How many are too few? What will be their job titles and duties? Will there be compensation for serving on such a committee? Will there be ways for committee members to be held accountable for their actions?

Benefit sharing mechanisms: Decision making should ensure equal sharing of benefits and this requires answering the following questions:

How will prices for what is to be sold (goods and services) be determined? Who will collect the money? How will the money collected be divided? For instance, how much will the individual or individuals who provide the service or made the craft receive? Will any percentage go into a Forest Departments and the coastal regulation authorities? Non-general fund? How will accounts be maintained? Is anyone trained to keep a record book?

Partnerships : Though local communities could successfully run the CBECT projects if they are properly motivated and empowered, there are essential "partners" in the processes of developing sustainable community run ECT enterprises. They include:

- The established tourism industry, particularly tour operators.
- The Government tourism bureau and natural resource management agencies, especially the government organizations (NGOs) and community based /community run organizations (CBOs) especially those involved with environmental issues, small-business management, and traditional community development.
- Universities and other educational and research organizations.
- Other communities, including those with a history of tourism and those who are also just beginning.

- Additional partners in the process may include other international organizations, public and private funding institutions, national cultural committees and many others.

CONCLUSION

In the face of current human population increases and worldwide ecological degradation, intact and healthy ecosystems are becoming the world's most sought-after tourism destinations. While understanding the urgent necessity for integrating environmental conservation into our tourism promotion strategies, we also have to recognize and respect the inseparable links between poverty, environmental quality and tourism. Hence, the recently emerging pro-poor tourism approaches (Ashley et.al., 2001 and 2006; Kaimowitz and Sheil, 2007), have to be ideally integrated into CBECT for many remote areas in developing country destinations.

While community based approaches have their relative advantages, the past experiences reveal that we cannot have any romantic ideas about them as we are dealing with the highly sensitive issue- the conservation of BD in ecologically/culturally sensitive areas. If local communities are enabled, motivated and empowered, they can act more efficiently as custodians of local BD. However, history has taught us many bitter lessons when the local communities are entrusted with absolute, unmediated and entirely unregulated control over BD resources. For instance, issues of fairness, transparency, jealousies and exclusion have already confronted many CBET ventures (e.g. Sheyvens, 1999; Ashley et. al., 2001; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005). Hence, they may fail miserably, if they are not appropriately conceived and executed and in turn may spread the wrong message that such approaches always fail, resulting in re-establishing the conventional "top-down" bureaucratic, centralized approaches. This will inadvertently further degrade the ecologically and culturally fragile regions of the remote ecosystems beyond recovery. Hence we have to be extremely careful in initiating such projects. Thus, this paper does not seek to claim that involvement in tourism is always preferable for local communities in the remote ecosystems. In most of the cases, the contrary is true – uncontrolled and ill-planned mass tourism can create far more negative impacts – several of them being irreversible.

Tourism's effects on indigenous peoples have been profound: wide scale eviction from their lands, economic dislocation, breakdown/loss of traditional values, prostitution, production, distribution and use of prohibited drugs such as marijuana, hashish and ganja and the spread of AIDS. There is rarely an acknowledgement - much

less support - of indigenous people's struggle for cultural survival, self-determination, freedom of cultural expression, rights to ancestral lands, and control over land use and resource management. The tourism industry has facilitated the further disintegration of the peoples' indigenous way of life. Cash production for the tourism industry has led to commercialism and individualism in contrast to the indigenous ways of simple living and mutual cooperation. Likewise, the commodification of their culture has led to undignified ways of seeking a livelihood such as allowing them to be photographed as souvenirs or to do their indigenous dance for a fee. This practice was never part of their culture (TWN, 1999).

In their mad rush to cash in on the billion-dollar profits from the booming ET industry, the third world governments, and transnational corporations have totally disregarded the interests of indigenous peoples, who have been evicted from their traditional lands, their control and access to their natural resources compromised (e.g. Lindberg, et. al. 1996; Novelli, et. al., 2006; Cater, 2006). Besides, there is a hidden danger that the 'pseudo eco tourists' or vested funding agencies could use ECT as a gullible option to resort to 'bio-piracy' – to illegally extract information especially on ethno botany of the tribal communities in order to commercialise them or hunt for 'wild genes' that can later be used without compensating the tribal communities (eg. Harry, 2001; Schuler, 2004). Recent development policy/planning approaches in several third world countries have only confirmed these trends. For instance, the scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, India that came into being in January 2007, if implemented strictly, has the potential to provide livelihood security and secure land tenure to a multitude of people from the most marginalized and vulnerable sections of Indian society. It can only be considered a welcome and desirable step in the context of CBECT. On the contrary, it is rightfully opposed by the wildlife conservationists and the forest bureaucracy since they are apprehensive that the large network of PAs, numbering nearly 600 wildlife sanctuaries and national parks, covering an area of about 4.5 % of the country's landmass, created over the last four decades would be seriously affected by the Act. It will accelerate the destruction of the already fast declining forest cover, and at worst it could become another convenient cover for vested interests (including land and timber mafias in collaboration with political forces) to capture large resources of land, forests, and timber. Tourism projects are being proposed in the name of wildlife conservation in lands where traditional communities are being displaced (Sekhsaria, 2007). Hence, a balanced integrated/inclusive/eco-centric approach is called for.

Unless indigenous communities in remote areas have a direct participation in the planning, implementation, and regulation of tourism activities that affect them, unless benefit-sharing mechanisms are put in place, and unless economic, social, and political factors are in unison, tourism can never redound to their interest. As a consequence, they will continue to be mere cogs in the wheel of this billion-dollar industry (e.g. Equations, 1995; Seely et.al. 2003; TWN, undated). In spite of these limitations, properly planned/implemented CBECT strives to merge the sustainability and conservation essential to ET with the benefits, control, involvement, and welfare that underpin community development (e.g. Woodley, 1993; Ashley et. al., 2001 and 2006; Weinberg et. al. 2002; Weaver, 2002). Thus, CBECT will be instrumental for integrating BD conservation and sustainable development in remote ecosystems, provided we strictly adhere to the basic principles of CBD and ET (CBD/UNEP, 2007).

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