

HORTICULTURE: A SOURCE OF LIVELIHOOD AND ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

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Introduction to Horticultural Issues:

The potential of horticulture in raising agricultural production, value addition, farm income and employment in the country has been recognized long ago. From the fourth five year plan (1969-1974) till to the announcement of the National Horticulture Mission (NHM) in 2001-02, it encompassed through crossroads and is being emphasized. The Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) has classified horticultural crops under two broad heads-i) Condiments and Spices and ii) Fruits and Vegetables, though horticulture includes a large number of crops¹. The post reform period evidenced a rapid diversification in Indian agriculture towards high value crops such as fruits and vegetables. Expansion of horticulture is being influenced by liberalised policy perspectives, crop diversification, changing life style, diet diversification, improved technique of production and processing practices. Agricultural diversification gives a momentum to the growth of fruits and vegetables production in India. Economic reforms and policies adopted since 1990-91, have been fostering rapidly the pace of agricultural diversification in favour of horticulture. The main factor underlying diversification in favour of fruits and vegetables has been higher return relative to other crop groups. India is the largest producer of fruits and ranks second in vegetables in the world. It ranks first in production of certain horticultural crops such as banana and mango though it fails to occupy reckonable position in the world trade. This growth is effected by area expansion and production, rather, productivity remains far below the world average. The growth trend of horticulture in India is reflected in the high growth rate at about 6 per cent in total cropped area and it shares about 32 per cent of the agricultural GDP of the country².

Despite the developmental schemes so far, the state of Assam is observed to perform a very low growth trend in horticulture sector in respect of area, production and productivity. States like Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu experienced higher yield rates of fruits from an average of 17 MT per hectare to 23 MT per hectare during 1991-92 to 2004-05, whereas, Assam experienced only at 12.3 MT per hectare to 13 MT per hectare during the same period³. Similar is the case in respect to crops such as spices and vegetables production in the state. The continuous shrink in the size of operational holdings restricts increase in production through area expansion and it leaves nothing but to raise productivity to sustain the food and nutrition requirement of the growing population. It indicates that productivity enhancement is the most important concern for the farmers, researchers, policy makers and the government.

Golden Revolution and Strategies of Development:

The important issues of horticulture that identified by the tenth plan of India are - improvement of production through productivity enhancement, utilisation of wasteland/surplus land, improve productivity through use of technology, reduce cost of production through efficient use of resources, improve quality production by improved agricultural practices, add value to the produce through improved post-harvest management and processing, promote marketing and export, provide insurance, strengthen the institutional supports, etc. Such policy perspectives make imperative to adopt National Horticulture Mission (NHM) in 2001-02 to implement Hi-tech Horticulture (HTH) and Precision Farming. The HTH is the deployment of modern technology with capital intensive, less environment dependent, having capacity to improve the productivity and quality of produce. Precision Farming involves the application of technologies and principles to manage spatial and temporal variability associated with all the aspects of horticultural activities of improving crop performance and environment quality⁴.

In pursuance to the policy perspectives the central government has launched the Technology Mission under NHM to address the main issue of improving productivity of horticultural crops, and it has been initiating in the North Eastern Region (NER) since 2001-02. The mission has four Mini Missions viz., Mini Mission (i) for research, Mini Mission (ii) for improving production and productivity, Mini Mission (iii) for post-harvest management, marketing and export, and Mini Mission (iv) for processing and marketing of processed products.

Impacts of Development Strategies in Assam and in the District of Goalpara:

Assam is traditionally a horticultural state not only out of its climatic conditions and geophysical structure but also from its socio-economic fabric that people largely constituted by horticultural practices. The horticultural tradition of the people of Assam lies in their mindset that is imbibed from the practices to grow different fruits, flowers, vegetables, spices, plantation crops, root and tuber crops, nuts, medicinal, aromatics, mushroom, bee keeping, etc. This sector is bringing numerous opportunities due to rapid agricultural diversification. Diversification in favour of horticulture is evidenced in a study conducted by Borah, 2007. The study finds that there was a deceleration of rice production in Assam during 1990-2003, whereas, spices, fruits, vegetables experienced accelerated growth⁵. This indicates the future prospect for horticulture as one of the best alternative options.

The prominent challenge of horticulture sector over time since the inception of plan development under the NHM is lying within the productivity concern both in national and regional contexts. Therefore, the aims of the paper are to concern the problems associated with productivity and identify its responsible factors. Though growth issue is concerned with area expansion and

volume of production, the paper seeks for its convenience to relate only to the productivity aspect of horticultural crops. The paper also seeks to highlight the potentiality of unexplored and uncared crops that are enormously grown and consumed in regional perspective which possess prospect for commercialisation. The paper uses secondary published data and qualitatively assesses the phenomena in field level that are well acquainted.

Goalpara district is one of the richest reservoirs of genetic variability in Assam. It is a potent area for certain horticultural crops that bears the same traditional background for horticulture as the state. However, the growth trend in this sector is observed far below the average national standard. It has been evidenced in the productivity situation of some selected horticultural crops, specially, in respect to fruits production. Despite the plans and provisions under NHM and Technology Mission, the state and district performances are not to the tune of national growth level even after about a decade or so since their inception. Table 1 gives a comparative look into the productivity of some selected fruits in India, Assam and Goalpara.

Table 1

Yield Rates (kg/hect) of Some Major Horticultural Crops (2004-05)

Name of crops	India (yield kg/ha)	Assam (yield kg/ha)	Goalpara (yield kg/ha)
Banana	28953	13799	15534
Pineapple	14450	15465	11724
Papaya	16940	14691	15438
Orange	NA	11228	9947
Assam lemon	NA	6819	7681
Guava	10770	15616	18840
Litchi	4870	4860	4458
Jack fruit	NA	9685	9953
Mango	8110	8150	9509
Potato	17323	17200	6019

Source: NEDFi Databank Quarterly (2006), Vol.5, January and National Horticulture Database 2006.

It is seen from the table that except guava and mango, most of the crops in goalpara district exhibit low productivity in comparison to the national and state averages. Not to say about the productivity scenario in the district of Goalpara but most of the horticultural crops in the state show a low productivity compared to the national average.

In respect to the growth aspects associated with area expansion, production and productivity of horticulture in Goalpara, when compared to the state, the district is found to exhibit good performance in many horticultural crops. Table 2 gives the comparative performances in respect to the fruits production in the state and in the district.

Table 2

Area, Production and Productivity of Selected Horticultural Crops in Assam and Goalpara (2004-05)

Name of crops	Assam'			Goalpara		
	Area (Lakh ha)	Production (Lakh MT)	Yield (Kg/ha)	Area (ha)	Production (MT)	Yield (kg/ha)
Banana	0.42	5.8	1725	8058	26796	15534*
Pineapple	0.13	1.99	250	15465	2931	11724
Papaya	0.07	0.99	160	14693	2470	15438*
Orange	0.07	0.82	325	11228	3233	9947
Assam Lemon	0.09	0.09	135	0.61	1037	7681*
Guava	0.04	0.64	125	16780	2412	18840*
Litchi	0.04	0.22	194	4860	865	4458
Jack Fruit	0.18	1.82	1086	9688	10810	9953*
Mango	0.04	0.34	206	8150	1008	9509*
Potato	0.73	5.89	875	8058	5267	6019

Source: NEDFi Databank Quarterly, January 2006.

It is seen that yields of many of the fruits in Goalpara district have higher rates than the state averages as indicated by star marks against the crops in the last column of the table above. This result of the study is indicative to stress more policy interventions to boost the potentiality of fruits

production in the district because still they are found far below the national averages. It also indicates that the so called 'Golden Revolution' has not been effective to boost the growth of horticultural crops in the state and in the district that are taken into discussion in this paper as well as in the policy interventions.

Unexplored Areas of Horticulture:

However, there are a plethora of horticultural crops having immense potentiality, most of which are not brought to table in spite of their economic, commercial, environmental and aesthetic values. The socio-cultural tradition to sustain a homestead garden, popularly known a "Bari" adjacent to the residential houses is also prevalent among the households of Galpara as in the state of Assam. This tradition is inherent to the objective of self sufficiency in family requirements in respect to fruits, vegetables, plant crops including bamboo and wood, medicinal and ornamental crops. The producers of such traditional horticultural practices, consequently, turned to fetch cash earning when they are being marketed enormously, specially, at the era of population explosion and market expansion. In addition to the crops highlighted in the tables and in the text of this paper, certain crops of horticulture, specially, in the district can fetch remunerative prices provided their scientific improvement, access to market, processing practices and dissemination about their economic uses. A number of ethnic types of crops are still in wild stage and uncared in different parts of the state and in Goalpara district. Such crops are usually not brought into table in spite of their immense commercial values. Improvement of such unexplored crops and their commercialised cultivation can benefit the farmers. Hybridization, micropropagation and scientific cultivation of such unexplored crops are need of hours. Fallows, barren lands and unconventional lands can better be used for growing these crops. Such initiatives would not only provide good earning to the farmers but also improve environment and aesthetic quality. Following are some of the crops that are highlighted under different crop groups for their development in commercialised basis, specially, in Goalpara district.

Fruits group: Bogori (Plum/Jujube), Tejfal (Peach), Poniylol (Indian Plum), Kordoi (Star fruit), Amla, Jolfai (Olive), etc.

Citrus Fruits: Leteku, Robab (Shaddok), Ouwtega, Holpoli, etc.

Nuts: Coconut, Areca nut, Ground nut, Cashew nut, etc.

Plantation Crops: Bamboo, Canes, Rubber, Thetches, Sericultural Plants, Zetrofa, different Wood Plants, Medicinal Plants, Ornamentals, Floriculture, etc.

Besides, there are a number of horticultural crops such as **root crops** possessing ethnic features and wilderness such as different varieties of **arum** and **green leaf plants** meant for

vegetables which can be improved for commercial farming. A number of medicinal plants comprised of herbs, shrubs and trees are also been wilderness till date that need scientific search. **Bee keeping, Dairying** along with horticultural activities is also prospective as complementary to agriculture and horticulture in the region particularly to Goalpara district. This district has a fallow land area of 2048 hectare and deforestation is at its climax of its 40540 hectare forests from the total geographical area of 184262 hectare⁶. Hence, horticulture can play important role for improving livelihood and environment of the people. Concentration on suitable horticultural activities, specially, fruits and plantation crops will reap double benefits - proper land use in one hand and compensate deforestation on the other. The Mission activities are suggestive to include all the crops that are usually uncared. Their development would provide regular income to the farmers with less investment, enhance efficient land use and improve the environment.

Factors Responsible for Low Yields of Major Horticultural Crops:

The cultivation practices of horticultural crops in regional perspectives, specially, in Assam and in Goalpara district bear certain uncommon features. Most of the farmers consider horticulture as a subsidiary source of income that restricts required volume of investments. Their agricultural practices are associated with main field crops and have not been diversifying to the level of other agriculturally developed states of the country. It is detrimental to the growth of horticulture sector in this region. The farmers of this region have separate arrangements for field crops and horticultural crops are grown in the homestead gardens adjacent to the residential houses. It causes non impact of the agricultural infrastructure on horticulture whatever is set for the main field crops such as rice culture or so. The farmers use to grow all possible maximum kinds of horticultural crops in their homestead gardens in mixed cropping pattern, preferably in residential high land where irrigation, the most required input becomes a hurdle and also restricts the use of other productive implements. Such mindsets of the farmers lead them to practise simltenously a multiple of cropping in combination, even with dairy, fishery, poultry, etc. without considering the productivity aspect. Such practice in agriculture and in horticulture in this region has been retaining the state as well as the district on food deficit area and perpetuating the vicious cycle of low purchasing power leading to an undiversified agriculture. It effected on the non-adoption of improved agricultural implements leading to a very low productivity of most of the horticultural crops.

The pattern of cultivation stated above is not viable to adopt the HTH and Precision Farming; even it is disadvantageous for using modern productive inputs for specialized farming. The cultivation pattern of horticulture itself is sustaining the following problems in horticulture in this region.

*Modern agricultural tools such as power tiller, pumpsets micro-irrigation potentials, etc. are not used by the farmers.

*Irrigation facility, the precondition for diversification of agriculture, perhaps is the least in this region among the plain states in India even it is more scarce in Goalpara. Farmers are not seen to use irrigation, specially, mean for horticultural crops except few for rubber and certain vegetables.

*The farmers are not found to use high quality seeds, sapling, suckers and stems as planting materials. They are found to prefer to rear and bear the planting materials traditionally in their own gardens.

*Non use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides is a common feature of the farmers except few that are engaged in intensive commercial farming of certain specific crops.

*Institutional and marketing supports are not viable to encourage the farmers in the horticulture sector. Most of the farmers are not aware of the supportive provisions of the government. There is no separate arrangement specifically for horticulture in the department of agriculture in grassroot level in the region.

*Non-advent of value added and processing industry is prevalent in the region. Hence, the producers are being deprived from remunerative prices of horticultural crops.

*Dissemination, demonstration and expansion activities for thrust horticultural crops are not found to perform positively in the region.

*There is an absence of integrated vertical and horizontal linkage among the farmers, development agencies, researchers, policy makers, market functionaries, and institutional and financial agencies.

Conclusion and Actions Called For:

The discussion brings to light that horticulture is not only a prospective sector for earning but also it has commitment that no other sector may perhaps be able to come up as parallel in terms of importance to achieve nutritional security and as a most viable component of environment friendly industrial base. As one of the best options, no loopholes to be left for raising the productivity of horticultural crops and development of this sector would compensate main crop failure that is often occurring in our state by natural hazards. Not only this, the expected growth of horticulture would pave the way to break the vicious cycle of low purchasing power of the farmers as it is inherent to high value crops requiring less investment with high return.

Therefore, area and commodity specific interventions with big push are called for so as to enable introduction of HTH and Precision Farming. An integrated effort from all the stake holders

for combating the restrictive factors highlighted in the earlier section is suggestive as an urgent action to be pursued. Mini Missions and Technology Missions are to be materialized from all angles so as to achieve the actual benefits of horticulture by the farmers both from production and marketing fronts, specially, in Goalpara district. Besides, special emphasis must be given to the crops which have remained uncared. The uncared crops must get genetic improvement through laboratory research works by the agencies, like, Agricultural Universities and Horticultural Research Centers.

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A comparative study on Folk Beliefs and Customs Associated with child Rearing Practices Among the Rabhas and Bodos of Bikali Area in Goalpara District , Assam.

Dr. Ananya Baruah

Introduction :

An attempt is being made in the present study to describe folk beliefs and practices associated with child rearing practices among the Rabhas and Bodos of Bikali area under Dudhnoi constituency in Goalpara district of Assam.

Assam is the homeland of a large number of population, who came from different directions at different historical times. These populations belong to different racial stocks, speak different languages and have varied socio-cultural traditions.

The study area, that is Bikali area, which covers fifty two villages. The Bikali Gaon Panchayat (old) covers an area of 15411.77 hectares (according to the census report of 1981) The total population of Bikali area is 28,500 (according to the census report of 1991.) of which majority are tribals.

In every society folklore plays an important role in regulating the life of the people from birth to death. One comes across the prevalence of a large number of folk beliefs and customs and various verbal folklore items and the way of child rearing.

The knowledge of relationship between folklore and child rearing practices has great relevance in folkloristic, anthropological and sociological studies. With this view in mind the present study is designed among the Bodos and Rabhas of the Bikali area.

The goal of all child rearing is to develop the capacity for adjustment to the traditional roles prescribed by the cultural groups to which child's family belongs (Henry and Boggs, 1952). Child rearing practices are the product of ideas, beliefs and attitudes prevalent among different groups on how to bring up children through child training and parental care. The whole range of child rearing process essentially refers to all the interactions between parents and children, parents expression of attitudes, values, interests and beliefs and their caretaking and behaviour training modes (Sears et.al. 1955)

Several approaches in anthropological, sociological and psychological studies with regards to child rearing practices and process are evident. Methods of child rearing vary enormously from culture to culture, community to community, social class to social class and from region to region. Social scientists all over the world have always been fascinated by this variety of child rearing mechanisms.

The formal systems of education were little development or lacking entirely among the pre-literate people. In the pre-literate and non-literate societies, most of education of an individual came from his or her interaction with the family members, friends, associations and age mates. Not only in the pre-literate or non-literate societies, but also in the literate or elite societies, we find various kinds of folk-belief and practices as well as other folklore materials intimately connected with child rearing.

There are two categories of persons from whom the child acquires the knowledge of his culture.

1. Persons who hold authority over the child. and
2. Persons who are equal in age, sex etc.

The contents of socialization differ in these two categories of persons. The first category of persons socializes the child to conform to the traditional beliefs and practices and other norms of the society, while the second category of persons socializes the child in co-operative habits. The grand parents, elder brothers, sisters and other elder members of the family teach the child about the norms of their society. According to William R. Bascom, folklore means, "Folk-learning, it comprehends all knowledge i/e transmitted by word of mouth and all crafts and techniques that are learned by imitation or example, as well as the products of these crafts, folk tools, folk-custom, folk-belief, folk-medicine, folk-gestures and folk-speech as well as those verbal forms of expression which have been called literature but which are better described as verbal art." (Bascom 1965,496-497)

The experience of the early years are most important in personality development because the foundations of personality are laid in early during the first five or six years. It means that a child who is likely to grow to be a worthy person shows the indication while it is quite young. In this regard, the family plays the crucial role for the proper care and rearing of children. Different genres of folklore, for example, beliefs and practices, social customs, lullabies, nursery rhymes, games, folktales etc. exerts influence in rearing the children of different societies, specially that of the pre-literate societies and non-literate societies.

SCOPE AND OBJECTIVE OF THE PRESENT STUDY :

Present study limits its scope to study of folk beliefs and customs associated with child rearing practices among the Rabhas and Bodos of Bikali area. This study is designed primarily to describe the various beliefs and customs associated with the child rearing practices of the Rabhas and Bodos inhabiting the villages in Bikali area.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on data collected from Bikali area, which covers fifty two villages. Among these villages, the field area is selected where Rabhas and Bodos occupy the major areas. For the present study the data were collected following different methods and techniques. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. A structured schedule was used to collect

some primary data for the study. During the course of field work a number of male and female were interviewed to collect different data pertaining to the present study. Short geneologies were collected from different households as an when necessary for collecting on child rearing practices. Thus, genealogical method was also employed to collect data to find out relationship among individuals at the household and clan levels.

The following methods are used in order to make a through study of the child rearing practices among the Rabhas and Bodos.

A. Observation method and

B. Interview Techniques.

The term 'observation' as used in this context is not only to visual aspects of the situation, but also involves a full range of sensual experience including hearing, feeling, smelling and testing whenever these may be appropriate.

"Interviewing" is the most common field method. Interview data may include information on what the informant knows, believes, expectes, feels, which explains for any of the proceeding.

There are two basic methods of interview -

i) Directive interview and

ii) Non-directive interview.

Quantitative method is used for fillign up the household servey schedules. What ever information is collected is simply arranged and described through qualitative method. I have capture the significant aspects of child rearing through photography. A tape recorder was also used specially to record folk songs and other verbal expressions which are prevalent among the Rabhas and Bodos and are associated with child rearing parctices.

Every culture has some standard patterns of behaviour and method for rearing a child. Among the Rabhas and Bodos of this area there are some similarties and disimilarities about child rearing habits and practices. The folk beliefs and customs boserved in the various contesets of their child rearing practices are unique in charcter. They celebrate all the ceremonies which are related to child-birth, pregancy, child-care and training, folk-treatment etc, reflect clearly the cultural norms and pattern of both Rabhas and Bodos.

Both these two tribes of the village areas are very religious minded and they perform various rituals connected with child-birth, pregnancy, name-giving ceremony, ear-piercing ceremony, annaprasanna, Churakarana etc. But these ceremonies are not so remarkable and compulsory.

A new born baby is taken care by its mother or other elderly members of the family. Sleeping, bathing, clothing, taking food, and cleanliness of the baby are also looked after by mothers. Mothers take care in regard to bladder control of infants from about five or six months. Toilet training is an important part of child rearing practices. It has been found in the study area that toilet training practices are to a considerable extent is influenced by the socio-economic conditions of the families including occupational patterns of the elder members of the family and their educational background.

Treatment and care of child diseases are another important part of child rearing practices. Among them a few families go to a doctor for consultation in the case of illness of children. Some consult homeopaths for treatment of children. Some families consult their traditional health practitioners known as OJHA or OJHANI and they also perform puja for the welfare of their children.

Both the two tribes of the study villages it has been found that the children are trained from their childhood by their parents to help their parents in various household and agricultural works.

Reward and punishment are considered as techniques adopted for disciplining the child in some families. The most common forms of punishment are scolding, pulling a child's ear, slapping, beating with stick etc.

Mannerism and moral training are imparted to the children at a very early stage. More or less mannerism depends upon the family traditions.

In some families, the process of learning the way of life is important and marked by association of various social and cultural practices. The initial period of infancy is marked by learning about cleanliness, games, good manners etc. The period of childhood is marked by training in responsibilities and obedience training etc. Girls are found to be more obedient and responsible in comparison to boys.

Both these two tribes of this area follow some processes regarding the child development from infancy to adolescence period. Majority of the parents insist the children to attend school. The parents also make efforts to train up their girls in household work and weaving and boys are engaged to work at the field or other agricultural work.

Lullabies play a significant role in child rearing among them. Bodo lullabies are related to birds, moon, insects, animal kingdom, flowers etc. But one peculiarity is found in Rabha lullabies. Rabha lullabies are generally addressed as sleep-maiden (mind-bali.)

Another important difference is found regarding the ritual and purificatory rites connected with child-birth.

The rituals performed in the Rabhas society is known as 'Pachuti.' This purificatory rite is performed to purify the involved persons and for goodness of the new born child. But in the Bodo society this ceremony is known as "Nari Hanayani Maan Bawnaw" (Means respect to cut the naval cord).

Any child whether illegitimate orphan or physically deformed do not occupy inferior status in their society. Adoption of children is also prevalent in their society.

Barren persons are not looked down by them. Indigenous birth control measure is not practiced by them. But some of them have adopted modern birth control measure as a means of regulate family size.

Among them child rearing practices are to a considerable extent determined by folk beliefs and customs, low income illiteracy of the parents and their present time orientation have sometimes

lowered their aspiration level. Regarding their children, parental disharmony, broken homes, illegitimate births, alcoholism all these realities directly or indirectly have negative effect on a child.

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TOURISM IN GOALPARA DISTRICT OF ASSAM : POTENTIAL AND PROBLEM

Dr. M.Gopal Singha

Introduction :

The concept of "tourism" is derived from the concept of "travel", which is an ancient phenomenon (Bhatia, 1991). The word "tourism" is evolved from the word "tourist". The term was used in the first half of the seventeenth century to denote traveling from place to place, a journey, an excursion touching the important parts of a region or country. Development in the wake of industrial revolution in Western Europe and North America has led to the growth of tourism. Tourism has become the most lucrative and pollution free industry in the world today. It has enormous potential for the socio-economic transformation of a region. Besides, having a great employment generating industry, tourism provides infrastructural and service facilities like transportation, communication, power supplies, piped water, hospital, educational institution, hotel, motel, shop, etc. Of all the modern industries, tourism is the only sector, which has the greatest potentiality to protect environment and ecology of the places of natural and cultural importance (Donald, 1980). The attractions of tourism are to a great extent geographical in their character (Robinson, 1979).

Among the Indian states having tourism potentiality, tourism industry of Assam is in deplorable condition. Though tourism was declared as an industry in Assam way back in 1987 (Economic Survey of Assam, 2001), it has yet to flourish as an important industry. Nestling beneath the foothill of eastern Himalayas, bordered by mighty Brahmaputra and Barak river, Assam has enchanting natural beauties. Her luxuriant green plains, rings of blue hills, exotic flora and fauna, uneven and spectacular landscapes, etc. are undoubtedly a paradise for the tourists.

Study Area :

Goalpara district is located in the South Western margin of the state of Assam. It is flanked by Garo Hills of Meghalaya in the south and the Brahmaputra river in the north. The district is located in between 90°7' E to 91°5' E Longitude and 25° 33' N to 26° 12' N latitude. It has 36915.27 hectares of land under forest .

Objective of the Study :

The objective of the study may be outlined as follows :

- (i) To study the geo-ecological and socio-economic bases for tourism in Goalpara district.
- (ii) To examine various aspects of tourism in the context of emerging socio-economic scenario and
- (iii) To lay out the problems beset with the district in the way of tourism development.

Significance of the Study :

The study is significant from the fact that the district has enormous potential and scope for establishing tourism as an important sector of economy. But despite having such potentiality the district has yet to establish a niche in tourism due to host of myriad problems.

Data base and methodology :

In the study available data on geo-ecological components relating to the region and socio-economic parameters have also been used to draw an overall view of tourism potentiality and problems thereof.

Analysis :

Tourism in Goalpara district may be classified into the following types :

- (i) Eco-tourism;
- (ii) Industry based tourism ;
- (iii) Horticulture and plantation farming based tourism and
- (iv) Village and folk-cultural based tourism.

(i) Eco-tourism : Eco-tourism refers to a neo-concept, which has evolved to generate revenue without jeopardizing ecological balance. Ecologically sustainable tourism is the means to keep the natural scenic beauty, exotic flora and fauna and places of historical and religious importance intact. Eco-tourism is the most feasible protective measure for conservation and preservation of natural and heritage sites, provided strict rules and guidelines are followed in maintaining such places of interest.

Eco-tourism in Goalpara district can be grouped into (i) Historical and religious sites having distinctive ecological set-up; (ii) Wetlands or "beel" and (iii) Reserved Forests.

The natural and cultural elements for promotion of tourism are found in this district having sound heritage. Tourism in Goalpara district is based mainly on its natural grandeur, age-old heritage, historical relics, temples, "Satras" and "Mosques". These historical and religious shrines have become the main source of attraction of tourists. Sri Sri Surya temple on Sri Surya hillock is one of the noted world heritage sites. It is located at about 13km South of Goalpara town in Mornai and Dubapara locality. The residual hillock of granite rock basement the Hindu-Budha-Jain religious sects are scattered, especially idols of God and Goddesses like Vishnu, Chhatrabhuja and Shiva Linga have been engraved in stone. Though these historical relics are the main attraction of Sri Surya hillock, the natural attributes like variegated flora and fauna including different species of monkeys, Golden Langur, Snakes along with avifaunal compositions in spring and water bodies and around the hillock together form a pleasant ecosystem. Based on the conducive ecological condition Sri Surya hillock has become an interesting eco-tourism site.

Besides, Sri Surya temple, Goalpara district has a number of temples or "Dewalaya", which have sound bases for eco-tourism. Among these mentioned may be made of Tukreswari Dewalaya near Tukura in Krisnai, Nandeswar Dewalaya on Nandeswar hill in the north of Dudhnoi, Dudhkawar 'Than' on Ambari hill near Dhupdhara, etc.

The Tukreswari temple on hill top and foothills of Tukura hill is a classic example of ecotourism in Goalpara district. The historical and legendary shrine is endowed with rich varieties of flora and fauna. It is the habitat of local species of monkey (Macaque Assamese) and Golden Langur. These holy shrines having distinctive ecological setup are ideal for religious tourism.

Apart from these holy shrines, a number of monuments, temples, cultural and religious fairs and festivals of different ethnic groups are also the components of eco-tourism. The Paglatek, Dargah of Pir (18th century) at Goalpara, Narsingbari at Goalpara, Sri Sri Bhagabati Ai Trithasthan at Bandarshi Mouza in Habraghat, Ma Banabashi Than at Fafal near Dudhnoi, Syam Rai Satra at Goalpara, Dolgoma Satra, Naokata Satra at Ambari-Khekapara near Dhupdhara, Bathau Sali in Bodo inhabited villages, Dodan Mandir and Dodan fair at Baida in Lakhipur, Rabha-Daurshandam (Rabha Museum) at Amguri-Maladhara, Baikho Than and Baikho fair at Nadiapara and a number of places of religious faiths, mythological believes and places of worships scattered in nook and corner of Goalpara district are undoubtedly the resources of tourism.

The wetlands or beels in Goalpara district form another important basis of eco-tourism. These features of geomorphological and ecological importance have high potentiality for eco-tourism. Urpad, Kumri, Hashilla, Nitara-Chautara, Jaligar, Manas, Dakdul, Dighaldubi, Kadamtola, etc. are the wetlands having prospects for tourism. Urpad beel is located at a distance of 10km south east of Goalpara town, Kumri beel at Pancharatna, Naitara-Chautara beel at a distance of 8km from NH-37 to the north near Tiplai may be mentioned as the habitats of avifauna, local and migratory birds.

Naitara-Chautara is one of the largest wetlands in Goalpara district. The wetland lies immediately to the north of Shitolmari Hillocks. The beel is one of the most picturesque and resourceful ecological setting with vast water reserve, plenty of plant, micro-organisms, water hyacinth, lily, lotus, indigeneous and exotic birds, rare species of fishes, leeches and other aquatic components.

Reserved forests in the district have variegated flora and fauna for eco-tourism importance. These forest will become more attractive if proper conservation measures are taken.

(ii) Industry based tourism : Industry based tourism is also another prospect of tourism. A number of village industries are localized in some specific geographical areas. Among these mention may be made of Patidoi industry of Dubapara area near Sri Surya hill; Pottery industries in Mornoi, Shimlitola, Dolgaon; weaving and sericulture especially in practice among the Rabhas and the Bodo's; crafts and artifacts of bamboo, cane wooden of rural artisans, etc.

(iii) Horticulture and plantation farming based tourism : Horticulture and plantation farming based tourism can also be a highly prospective tourism of Goalpara district. Horticulture occupies a significant place so far as agriculture sector in Assam is concerned. The district besides, being a large producer of paddy, jute, mustard and other agricultural products has also rich horticulture and plantation farming. Horticulture has become an important economic activity for the people of the district, more particularly for those who inhabit the south eastern part. The geo-ecological location of foothill areas ranging from Lakhipur, Agia, Krisnai in the west upto Dhupdhara in the east is quite favourable for horticultural products. Darranggiri market on N.H.-37 has the distinction

of repeat having the biggest banana market in N.E. region. Based on these favourable horticulture and plantation farming special horticulture fair may be organized to attract tourist.

(iv) **Village and Folk-culture based tourism** : Folk-culture, custom and tradition of colourful ethnic communities of Goalpara district is another prospect of tourism. The rich cultural components such as traditional dress, ornaments, traditional weapons, musical instruments, food habits, folk dances, fairs and festivals, songs, artifacts, handloom and handicrafts, etc. of tribal communities like Rabha, Bodo, Garo, Hajong and other ethnic groups and their way of living in different ecological settings are the sources of tourist attraction.

Problem of tourism in Goalpara district : It is pity to note that in spite of having immense tourism potentiality, the district has taken an insignificant place in the map of tourism development in Assam. Several factors are responsible for such state of affair. Transport and communication is one of the major constraints. Besides, inadequate facilities in historical and religious sites, lack of proper conservation and maintenance of places of tourist interest have caused degradation to a great extent, especially the important cultural ingredients, flora and fauna. So far the development of tourism as a concept is concerned, the district is far lagging behind. The new concept of projection prospective model village (Kurukshetra, 2004) for tourism development is yet to come in the district. The Government and Non-Government organisations have yet to come forward in involving the rural people in developing tourism so that they may reap the socio-economic benefits. Apart from these, lack of consciousness among the people for such concept of tourism and hosts of other reasons pose problems for tourism in Goalpara district.

Suggestion : Several measures may be considered for the rapid stride of tourism in Goalpara district. The concerned authorities should take necessary steps for identification and introduction of feasible places of tourists interest. In this connection aquatic cum bird sanctuary be opened in Urapad beel and Naitara-Chautara beel, as the habitats are immensely suitable for the purpose. Sri Surya Pahar and Trukeswari Pahar should be conserved as a tourism oriented hill resort. The site will be more attractive if the nearby Dubapara and Matia villages are declared and developed as model village for sustainable development based on local village industries. Horticulture being a leading subsidiary agricultural sector, Horticulture festival should be organized yearly in eastern Goalpara. More particularly in and around Darranggiri. Arrangement should also be made for organizing different cultural festival to attract tourist.

Finding and Conclusion : After discussing the multifarious facets of tourism, it has been able to draw an overall view that Goalpara district has immense potentiality for tourism. But the district has to remain at a low bracket in tourism development due to lack of Government patronage, exploitation of tourist places by communities over the years, lack of consciousness among the people, etc. In order to stimulate the growth of tourism industry extensive awareness campaign should be launched by the district authority. Besides, active participation of private entrepreneurs should also be encouraged. Hence, it is high time for the district authority, people in general, socio-cultural organizations, N.G.O's including the students' organizations in particular to embark upon way and means for the development of tourism as an important sector of economy.

