CHAPTER-VI

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If tourism has to economically benefit the peripheral local area, promoting linkage between the local economies to tourism industry is crucial (Lacher and Nepal, *Leakages to linkages* 96). Previous studies (Goswami, *Eco-tourism in Kaziranga* 54; Goswami, *Feasibility study*, 15; Borkotoky and Goswami 5) found that the local economy of KNP have enough human and other resources to create linkage with the tourism industry. If the human resources are equipped with required skills, then there will be more opportunities for the local people for employment in the tourism businesses which will ultimately retain tourism revenue within the local economy.

This study has revealed that tourism leakage is not an accurate indicator of sustainability of an economy. Besides leakage, local residents’ involvement and their attitude towards tourism are also to be considered. This study has shown that though local economy around KNP has lost a higher percentage of TR compared to that of MNP, the absolute gain received by locals around KNP is much higher. While the periphery does lose a large proportion to tourism revenues, revenue that does stay should prove beneficial for further development (Lacher and Nepal, *Dependency and Development* 964). This is what we have seen in the local economy of KNP, where local people are getting much more benefits from tourism compared to that of MNP.

Between the two tourism destinations, it was found that leakage was higher in case of KNP compared to that of MNP. Of course, in other national parks situated in other parts of the world, the leakage rate is similar to KNP. Leakage rate were 78.5% and 75% in Bwindi National Park, Uganda (Sandbrook, *Local economic impact* 24; *Putting leakages in its place* 124) and 90% in Komodo National Park, Indonesia (Walpole and Goodwin 568). Dependency of the periphery on core area has been identified as the main cause of leakage by number of scholars like Lacher and Nepal (95), Walpole and Goodwin (561), Meyer (*Caribbean tourism* 562). Likewise KNP is also dependent for most of the commodities on the rural Gateway towns, Bokakhat, Jakhalabodha, and Tezpur. For some commodities the high-end tour camps are dependent on Guwahati, the capital city of Assam. Tour camps contributing more than 74% to the tourism revenue,
depend on core areas for different goods and services. Though 44 tour camps out of a total of 64 are owned by local entrepreneurs, more than 90% revenue are generated by the non-local entrepreneurs and the profits are repatriated to the core areas. The tour camps imported most of the commodities from the rural gateway towns. Even the employees from bottom to top positions were from core areas. The retail outlets show similar situation. The retail outlets have to sell those items which cannot be produced locally because of infrastructural lacks of the local economy. Except one, all the souvenir shops were increasingly selling more and more goods that were manufactured in the core instead of locally manufactured goods, though the local economy has enough potentiality to produce those commodities. The entrepreneurs have more confidence on the core economy for every aspect of running their business. It has siphoned away the profits of the tourism business from the periphery to the core areas. The encouraging fact is that boating service, Jeep safari service and the tour guiding services are run by the local youths. But these three services jointly contributed less than 10% of the total tourism revenue in KNP. However, the local residents have understood that for the sustainability of the tourism of KNP, their active involvement is required. Therefore, the participation of local people in tourism has been increasing over the years at KNP. The situation is not similar at MNP. First tourism is not matured in MNP. Secondly local residents still have not considered tourism as their alternative source of income. There is no entrepreneurial attitude among the local people in MNP. Out of six tour camps, only two are locally owned. Even those two are also not run by individual entrepreneurs, but by two local NGOs. The two NGOs are basically involved in conservation and tourism has been started only to meet the expenditure of conservation activities. Of course, they are generating more than 43% of the total tourism revenue generated by tour camps. The only Elephant safari and Jeep safari are initiated recently by the local youths and each has contributed 19.76% and 1.99% of the total tourism revenue respectively. Though the leakage rate is far low compared to that of KNP, it does not indicate that the tourism in MNP is sustainable. Tourism in MNP has neither provided livelihood to the local residents nor contributed on rural development. Thus, leakage is not necessarily the only indicator for successful economic development. In fact, a destination can get more benefits from tourism within a ‘high revenue-high leakage’ situation than in a ‘low
The involvement of local people in tourism is higher in KNP compared to MNP. Accordingly, the generation of tourism revenue, and the resident per capita income are far higher in KNP compared to MNP. Therefore, the advantage of the opportunity offered by the tourism industry is higher in case of KNP.

Tourism in national parks is initiated for conservation purpose (Walpole and Goodwin 560). The dependency of the local residents on protected areas can be changed if they are provided alternative source of livelihood (Sekhar 340). Tourism is regarded as an important source of livelihood for the people living across national parks and hence can be used as a strategy for biodiversity conservation (Kiss 232). Tourism is successfully implemented as a strategy of conservation in KNP. It is renowned for its conservation records (Saikia, Arupjyoti 113). Tourism has provided considerable revenue and employment to the local residents which in turn have motivated local people to work for conservation of the national park. On the other hand the conservation history of MNP is not good. It was declared as World Heritage Site in Danger by UNESCO in 1989. Of course, the situation has changed. People are becoming aware regarding conservation. Besides, local residents started to realize that tourism may be the alternative source of livelihood for them. The NGOs working in MNP have played an important role in creating awareness regarding conservation and tourism.

For reducing dependency of the local economy on core areas, the control over the tourism should be shifted to the local residents. This is possible when the local economy can meet the demand of the tourism industry and reduce the reliance on core areas for resources. The local economy is rich enough but the issue is that there is no linkage between the local resources with the tourism industry. Besides, the local entrepreneur should be sensitized to engage only local people. They should be made to realize that it is their social responsibility to think about the benefits of the local people.

Tourism businesses can survive in these areas as long as the national parks are conserved so that they can attract visitors. Conservation of national parks is an extremely difficult task without the involvement of the local people. And local people will be motivated to get involved in conservation activities only when they receive benefits from...
the national park in the form of remuneration for their services used by the tourism industry. The entrepreneurs in the areas, including the non-local ones, should understand this and start relying more on the local resources, including human resource for running their business ventures.

This study puts forward a number of strategies to increase local residents’ participation and increase linkage between tourism industry and local resources. The strategies suggested for KNP cannot be replicated in MNP because the strategies are developed on the basis of the availability of resources in the fringe villages of the respective national parks. Though most of the people are dependent on agriculture in KNP, the local people have the capacity to provide home-stay accommodation to the tourists. It was found during the survey that the demand for accommodation has been rising and all tourists cannot afford high-end tour camps. This situation provides an opportunities for the local residents to start this activity. The demographical pattern of the people living around KNP is suitable for adopting specific strategy. Different ethnic tribes viz. Mishing, Karbi, Adibasi (tea tribe) are living around KNP. Their traditional food and beverages can be promoted to the tourists. This will not only increase local participation in tourism, but also enhance the economic benefits to the people. The tribes have unique culture and tradition. Now-a-days demand for cultural tourism has been increasing. By taking this advantage, the ethnic villages can be centre for cultural activities for tourists to experience unique culture. Around KNP, only one souvenir shop is there which purchases all its items from local craftsmen and hand-loom workers and have been sustaining by generating considerable income. People are skilled in wood carving, bamboo work, and handloom work. These skills can be linked up with the souvenir shops. Besides, the local residents can be motivated to sell local fruits, vegetables, and local tea. There is also potentiality of starting bullock cart safari outside KNP by which tourists can enjoy the beauty of ethnic villages and tea gardens scattered around the national park.

The situation is not similar in MNP. The demographic pattern of the people, the natural and scenic beauty of MNP and its surrounding areas are very suitable for developing rural tourism. The adjoining villages of MNP are dominated by Bodo tribe. They are very rich in their ethnic culture and tradition. Their uniqueness can be
positioned as a tourism product. The economic condition of the people living in the villages around MNP is not sound. Besides, they are not aware towards tourism. Therefore, it is not possible for them to start tourism businesses individually. In such a situation, local NGOs specially the tour camps can start tourism business. Already two NGOs have started it and been successful. This activity can be started by other NGOs also. Besides, the Manas River is very suitable for kayaking, boating, and rafting. The local youths can start these activities after proper training.

Thus, it has been found that though there is very high amount of leakage in tourism revenue in KNP and MNP, the leakage can be manageable. There is potentiality to reduce leakage by adopting destination level strategies. Where as other studies quantified leakage from local economy (Sandbrook, *Putting leakages in its place* 130-131; Walpole and Goodwin 569; Lacher and Nepal, *From leakages to linkages* 89; *Dependency and development* 959), the present study has not only quantified leakage from local economy but also developed some local level strategies those are based on the resources available in the local economy. The uniqueness of these strategies is that these can be controlled by the local stakeholders only. Thus the strategies neither destroy biodiversity or environment nor need any external assistance to implement those strategies. The strategies will make the tourism more sustainable.

For proper implementation of the above strategies, it is important to train local people. Areas in which the local population are to be trained have been identified and listed. The identified areas are on the basis of literature review and discussion with various experts and stakeholders. They are discussed below:

1. **Communication skill including knowledge of spoken English:** The tourism industry is basically a service based industry and it needs constant interaction between the service provider and the service taker. Lack of communication skill may lead to dissatisfaction among the tourists. Moreover, English is a language that is understood to some extent by foreign tourists coming from any country. Therefore, language training is must for the local residents (Walpole and Goodwin 573).
2. **Tourist handling:** The local people should be trained so that they can properly handle tourists. They have to be alert all the time so that tourists do not feel any kind of dissatisfaction. This should include training of special needs of the tourists, customer care, nature of problem encountered by tourists, practical tips for resolving problems, dissemination of information to the tourists etc.

3. **Soft skill:** Soft skills are the general skills, qualities, knowledge, abilities and traits that a person should possess in this career (Hassan et al. *Soft skills of tourism* 58, Hassan et al. *The importance of soft skills* 40). It enables a person to function and contribute effectively in solving problems, communicating effectively, thinking critically and creatively and acting as effective team members at workplace. Code of conduct, etiquette, gesture should be such that tourists feel comfortable in the destination. The local residents should speak and act cautiously, discreetly and be positive in their attitude. They should be knowledgeable about the history of the locality. Hassan et. al. (58) mentioned ten types of soft skills the local resident has to achieve. These are:

- Proficiency in language such as English and other foreign languages
- Oral skills, written and body language
- Dress and attire
- Appearance
- Manner of communication
- Knowledge pertaining to the local culture and common courtesy
- General knowledge and professional protocol
- Proficiency in formal and informal protocol
- Skills of delivery or relaying information to tourists, and
- Work ethics such as honesty, willingness to help without conditions

Through training, all these kinds of soft skills can be acquired. The local residents should be trained up on all these soft skills so that they can provide quality service to the tourists.
4. **Food preparation:** The people living in the fringe village of KNP and MNP are skilled in preparation of ethnic food. For generating and maintaining tourists’ demand, it is necessary to train up the local people so that the quality and the standard of the products are maintained. They should be given training on exploiting smells, flavours, taste of the meal. Besides, they can be trained on how to mix the continental food preparation with the locals’ ethnic food (Ashley, Goodwin, McNab, Scott and Chaves).

5. **Presentation skill:** It is important to know how food should be presented to the tourists. Presentation skill is regarded as an important factor that encourage sale of local foods (Ashley, Goodwin, McNab, Scott and Chaves).

6. **Handlooms and Craft working:** The local youths should be trained up in craft work, textile work and weaving so that they can produce attractive souvenir items. They should be trained up on product innovation: combining local skills with modern preferences. KNP is famous for its one horned rhinoceros. Likewise, MNP is famous for Pygmy hog, Bengal Florican, Pangolin and Assam roofed turtle. Therefore, training in woodcarving technique should be provided to the local youths so that they can produce models of Rhinoceros, Pygmy hog, Bengal Florican, Pangolin, Assam roofed turtle and other endangered species. Such kind of training scheme was implemented in a village, *Kampung Komodo*, adjoined to Komodo National Park, Indonesia, where a group of villagers were trained in woodcarving technique to supply the demand for dragon carving (Walpole and Goodwin 573).

7. **Packaging:** In case of the locally produced souvenir items and agro-based food items, packaging is an integral part. Therefore, the local producers should be trained on packaging. Packaging is regarded as one of the important factors that encourages purchase of local craft, food, and other products (Ashley, Goodwin, McNab, Scott and Chaves).
Contribution of the study to existing body of knowledge:

Literature survey revealed that the studies undertaken on leakage were theoretical rather than empirical and most of the studies were based on either international scale or national scale. Of course a few studies on small scale village level economy are available. Addition to those studies, the present study has been carried out in two tourism destinations giving emphasis on the adjoining villages of two National Parks of Assam, Kaziranga and Manas National Parks. Like other local level studies undertaken by Walpole and Goodwin (563-565), Lacher and Nepal (From leakages to linkages 87-88; Dependency and Development 954-956), Lacher (12-15), and Sandbrook (Putting leakages in its place 127-129), the present study also estimated TR, LR, RR and leakage rate by doing census survey of tourism businesses. This study has extended itself to identify the causes of leakage in the local level economy separately for KNP and MNP. Besides, on the basis of availability of resources in the concerned economy, the present study developed some local level strategies that are compatible to the local situation. The strategies developed for KNP cannot be replicated at MNP. These strategies are tailor made to the destination concerned. This study suggests such kind of strategies that rely less on the support of external stakeholders. This is the novelty of the study and is the most vital contribution of the study to the existing body of knowledge. While the other studies quantified leakage in a single national park, this study has compared and contrasted two national parks of Assam. Comparing the leakage rate of two national parks at two different stages of the destination lifecycle is a major contribution to the existing body of knowledge.

Besides, quantifying leakage at the local level economy based on national park, this study has examined how tourism revenue is distributed within different tourism businesses operational in local economy. Previous studies (Sandbrook, Putting leakages in its place 131; Walpole and Goodwin 569) estimated leakage for the local economy as a whole. The present study, besides quantifying leakage as a whole for the local economy, quantified leakage separately for each categories of tourism business, viz. tour camps, restaurants, souvenir shops, jeep safari, elephant safari, wine shops, retail outlets, boating, tour guide etc. This distributional assessment of leakage is another contribution to the existing body of the knowledge.
It is widely argued that high level of revenue leakages make tourism an inappropriate tool for economic development in a poor economy (Lacher and Nepal, *From leakages to linkages* 79; Linderberg, Enriquez and Sproule 559; Khan 990; Weaver, *Peripheries of the Periphery* 305; Mbaïwa 165; Nyaupane, Morais, and Dowler 1375). The result found in KNP and MNP has showed the same proposition. Due to very high amount of leakage in KNP and MNP, the economic benefits the local people received from tourism are not satisfactory. The resident per capita income was only INR 1222.92 per annum and INR 121.20 per annum in KNP and MNP respectively. Of course, the leakage rate is higher in KNP compared to that of MNP. This is because, tourism is matured in KNP whereas tourism is in still at nascent stage in MNP. At the initial stage of tourism, leakage is found minimum. But as it becomes mature, leakage is started to rise.

It is already mentioned in Chapter I that tourism in national parks is encouraged for the conservation purpose so that local people living in the fringe villages of national parks are benefited by tourism (Archabald and Treves 135; Sekhar 339; Walpole, Goodwin and Ward 219; Walpole and Goodwin 560; Scheyvens, *Ecotourism* 246). Only then the local community will protect the wild animals and other resources. If tourism does not help the local community, they may not reduce their dependency on forest resources and, therefore, conservation may be affected. Though tourism of KNP has contributed a lot to the local economy, there is a huge gap where the local residents still have to work for their own benefits. Though the number of tour camps owned by local residents was higher than the number of tour camps owned by the non-local actors in KNP, the share of the total tourism revenue generated by the non-local farm was much higher. During the interaction with the managers and owners of the tour camps owned by local actors, it has been found in both the study areas that they have poor network with the tour operators and tour agents. Of course, in case of the restaurants, boating service, and jeep safari service, the local actors were playing the dominant role. But, the tourism revenue generated by these services is far below the tourism revenue generated by the tour camps owned by the non-local.
Contribution in policy making:

The results of the study will be beneficial to policy makers. They can utilize the findings of the study for future tourism planning and local area development. Already the government has spent huge amount of money for tourism development at KNP and MNP with the intention of providing benefits to local people and thereby strengthening the conservation effort. For conservation of protected areas like national parks, local community’s benefit is must. But, investment in tourism does not mean that it will benefit local community. The study has highlighted the area on which the policy makers should concentrate to achieve this goal. Besides, the study has identified some important areas where the local residents and entrepreneurs should concentrate.

Scope for further research:

Further research may be undertaken on the consecutive rounds of leakage on the local level economy. As the present study is exploratory research, only first round of economic impact has been assessed. Through multiplier analysis leakage can be estimated in different rounds in stead of in only one round.

While the present study quantified leakage in local economy, further research can be undertaken to determine the extent of revenue leakage at regional, national, and international scale which would be an interesting research topic in the future. Several studies viz. Lacher and Nepal (Dependency and development; From leakages to linkages) have emphasized the importance of distributingof tourism income amongst the entire economy of a village. Additionally, the distribution of tourism revenue between the genders could be checked.

Further research should focus on the sustainability of local culture. The heavy dependency on tourism may affect the local culture and customs, and local natural environment of the destinations. These may be another area of further research.

If tourism has to economically benefit the peripheral local area, promoting linkage between the local economies to tourism industry is crucial (Lacher and Nepal, Leakages to linkages 96). Of course, this is usually difficult as the periphery normally does not produce the superior quality goods and proficient services that the tourism industry
demands. However this study shows how the local level strategies compatible to fringe villages of a National Park can be developed to minimize leakage.