



Cultural problems seen in the conservation of Bio-diversity;

An anthropological study of Gaindahawa wetland, Bishnupura

1. Background:

Gaindahawa wetland, which is located at the Bishnupura village development committee ward number -3, in Rupandehi district, is the largest wetland of the district. The lake area extended about 65 hectares is 15 KM north from the birth place of Lord Gautam Buddha, Lumbini and at the distance of 30 KM from the city Butwal. Local dwellers know the Gaindahawa wetland as Gaindahawa lake. This lake is very significant for irrigation and bio-diversity. According to the District Agriculture Office Rupandehi this lake provides irrigation facilities for about 5 hectares land of the Bishnupura VDC. Reptiles, birds, amphibians, mammals etc. are dependent in this lake. For examples; wild swans, out of 20 species of fishes now 5, three species of turtles, water snakes etc. are found in this area. There are Crane/saras and seven species of endangered vultures in this place. Endangered

Gobre, dagger, golden vulture, Royalvulture, Brown mountain vulture like various vultures are found in Gaindahawa wetland area.

Siberian birds also come in this place during winter to be escaped from the severe cold of Siberia. This wetland is artificial wetland. There was a deepened land in the past according to the local seniors. Local people used to plant rice in this place before 1961. during raining season. The then VDC chairperson, Baliram Yadhav, constructed dam in the eastern part saying that the landless people (sukumbasi) started encroaching. Then after water started to get collection in the place and slowly farmers used the collected water for irrigation. Irrigation project office Rupandehi has constructed a dam by spending Rs. 1 crore (10 millions) in the eastern part of the lake for the purpose of irrigation. Farmers now use the water of the lake for irrigation as per their need.

Few efforts were taken at local level in order to conserve the lake from last few times. But, due to various reasons the lake has not been conserved. Government of Nepal, District development committee like agencies have been allocated small amount of budget for the development of the lake but that is not well utilized. District Forest office has also mentioned for the conservation, development and management of the lake in the five years forest management program of the district but in reality no efforts have been observed since there is no designing of the programs and allocation of the budget accordingly.

There is no conservation of the lake due to various problems like lack of knowledge of multiple benefits except fish keeping and

irrigation from the wet land to the local consumers of that area, lack of coordination among the agencies of the district regarding the conservation of the lake, lack of accountability of the concerned authority. Due to these all reasons the bio-diversity of this lake are disappearing.

The community forests surrounding to the North, West and South of the Lake has not paid that much attention in the protection, development and management of the lake. Village Development Committee has earned 5 lakhs (Five Hundred Thousands) by the tender of fish keeping but spending no amount for the conservation of the lake. Until and unless the local people understand the direct, indirect and environmental importance of the lake, local people will not take any initiation for the conservation of the lake. Local people do not involve for the conservation of bio-diversity and they have no any concern regarding it. But, the conservational works can be carried out and beauty of the lake can be maintained by showing the possible benefits from the lake to the local people. It can also generate employment at the local level. The insure of benefits from lake will drive the local people in the conservation of the wetland so that the bio diversity can also be conserved.

condition/ Status:

Although the Gaindahawa wetland is rich in bio-diversity but due to lack of its conservation bio diversity is deteriorating. The water of lake has been utilized for irrigation by the local people. The lake gets dry due to unwise use of irrigation so that the bio diversity has not been conserved. There are two contradictory opinions regarding

the conservation of the lake. The local dwellers from hilly origin of Bishnupura are at the side of its conservation. They believe that the conservation of lake will have positive impact on human life and in the livelihood of the people as well as support in the conservation of the biodiversity. During the study questions were asked to 50 people and they all answered that there should be the conservation of the lake. Their reply was that the conservation supports in the livelihood and bio diversity will also be protected.

But, during the question-answer among 100 people from Terai origin (Madheshi community) 40 people who were above 60 years of age replied that lake should be used for irrigation and they have no any concern about bio diversity. They also expressed their concern that the campaign of biodiversity conservation might create problem in irrigation. But, the people below 60 years of age replied that they do not have knowledge regarding the wet land and biodiversity. They said that they had no knowledge regarding the benefits from the wet land and biodiversity. They further added that it will be better to conserve the lake if it creates opportunity of income. They also suggested that the conservation of lake should be managed without creating negative impact to the irrigation.

Out of the 11 thousands population of Bishnupura there are 10 thousand people from Terai origin (Medheshi community) and only 1 thousand people from hilly origin (Pahadiya community) who say that lake should be conserved . The voice of those minorities is not listened there. There is no any representative from that community in the local committee formed in order to conserve of the lake. Due to this factor the work of conservation has not been forwarded.

Problems

Gaindahawa Lake has not been conserved because of the following problems;

1. Lack of knowledge regarding the importance of lake for the local people.
2. Lack of interaction and coordination among District Development Committee, District forest office, irrigation office, District Agricultural office and Village Development Committee regarding the Gaindahawa Lake conservation and development.
3. Lack of coordination at local level due to the vested interest of demanding budget in the name of lake and utilizing it for self benefit by few local seniors.
4. Lack of proper planning regarding the conservation, development and management of the lake.
5. Unrestricted use for fish keeping but no spend of any income for the conservation and development of the lake.
6. Unwise use of the water from lake for irrigation by making it dry.