

AQUA-TOURISM: A NEW VISTA IN ASSAM & THE *JASINGFA*

Angling or recreational fishing has a long tradition and is now enjoyed by millions of people worldwide. It is defined as “Fisheries conducted by individuals primarily for sport but with a possible secondary objective of capturing fish for domestic consumption but not for onward sale.” Fish based eco-tourism is emerging potential area for employment generation too.

Assam is an abode for sport fishing. Angling is one of the most popular hobbies for thousands of people of Assam. Against this backdrop, a group of nature’s lovers young people of Nagaon town came together to do an extraordinary thing in tourism sector and initiated an fish base aqua tourism centre called “*Jasingfa*” under the able leadership of Sri Naba Kumar Gogoi (94350-61818) at Mahrol beel premises which is about 7 km from Nagaon town towards Jorhat near the NH no. 37 and about 130 km from Guwahati. The total 25 bigha area was initially derelict and unutilized water body which they converted to tanks in various shape and size. It was on 2nd October 2010, the centre was earthed in the derelict and unutilized water area near the Maharol Beel in the village Dimaruguri. The project was technically supported by Deptt. of Fisheries.

The word “*Jasingfa*” is a Tai word which means goddess of knowledge like that of Saraswati in Hindu religion. This established fish based aqua tourism spot “*Jasingfa*” in our state which is frequently visited by tourists not only from the state within but also from other parts of the country and including foreign visitors. It is one of the most attractive points for anglers next to Bhalukpong (Nameri) in Sonitpur district of Assam. The centre has regularly organized angling competition annually among the north eastern sport fishery lovers on the next Sunday immediately after 10th July as the date is celebrated National Fish Farmers Day showing its gratitude to Dr. Hiralal Chowdhury, who first successfully able to produce fish seed in our country through induced breeding on that day way back in the year 1957 in Cuttack of Orissa state. The competition has been organized since 2011 in that very locality.

There are a variety of game fishes available in the tanks of *Jasingfa*. The most notable one is **Mahseer**, the king of Game fish and **Pengba**, the endemic fish of Loktok Lake of Manipur, which has been recently introduced in the tanks of *Jasingfa* by the organizers. Deptt. of Fisheries with help of DCFR-ICAR, Bhimtal is rendering technical support to *Jasingfa*.

The event is conducted by *Jasingfa* as per laid down rules and regulation of International Sport Fishery Association which was formed in the year 1939. There is one interesting point that the anglers who catch the fish in the competition is allowed to cook the fish as per their wish and preferably thorough traditional recipe in the most modern and hygienic kitchen available in the sport complex.

The *Jasingfa* has so far contributed a lot towards development of ecotourism in general and aqua tourism in particular by conserving the rich fish diversity in a different way. More than 100 educated unemployed youths directly and several other indirectly getting livelihood through *Jasingfa*.

It is the prime time to explore all the possibility for establishment of fish based eco aqua tourism in our state, as the state is having variety of water resources and fish species. The sector cannot grow and sustain by the efforts of the government alone. It requires private initiatives for promotion. A lot is expected from the private player to change the tide of aqua tourism in our state in the similar manner or better than that of *Jasingfa*.