



EXPLORING THE INTRINSIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BENREU VILLAGE AND THE MT. PAUNA

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Abstract: *The present paper explores the complex and profound link between Benreu Village and the mighty Mt. Pauna, which is situated in Peren District of Nagaland, in the northeastern part of India. Using an interdisciplinary approach that combines environmental, scientific, ethnographic and cultural geographical methods, this paper critically examines the complex interactions between these two entities and the resulting effects on the socio-economic, cultural and ecology of the area. The analysis reveals a mutually beneficial relationship that is ingrained in the culture of the native Naga people living in Benreu Village. The paper throw a light in to how this connection is not just physical but also has spiritual, cultural and utilitarian aspects that influence the people's day-to-day life. This paper also highlights the critical function that indigeneous knowledge systems, ancient traditions and environmental conservation policies play in maintaining this relationship in the face of the unrelenting pressures of globalization and climate change. Another important objective of the paper is to raise awareness on the communities' ability to overcome modern days obstacles without compromising the integrity of their ancestors' connections to the environment.*

Key Words: *Benreu Village, Mt. Pauna, Indigenous Knowledge, Socio-cultural Dynamics, Environmental Stewardship.*

1. INTRODUCTION :

Benreu Village, a haven of cultural diversity and ecological balance, is tucked away in the verdant hills of Nagaland, India. Respected for its rich history, this community is a real example of how humans and environment can coexist peacefully. Standing at the centre of Benreu's identity is Mt. Pauna, a gorgeous peak which stood a tall at 7000 feet above sea level, that the local people admire and respected. Traditions and folklore woven together and create the Benreu Village culture and is home to Zeliangs of Nagaland. The people have preserved aged-old traditions, ceremonies, and oral histories honouring Mt. Pauna's holiness. This mighty mountain is not just a topographical feature; it is also a spiritual haven where the villagers believed to be home to gods and ancestral spirits. The villagers strengthen their sense of community and reverence by honoring the sacred spirit of the mountain.

Benreu Village and Mt. Pauna have a strong stewardship relationship and are interdependent to each other. Mt. Pauna supports the people of Benreu Village with its abundant natural resources. The villagers rely largely on the mountain's woods, streams and varied flora and fauna for their livelihoods.. Indigenous knowledge about traditional farming methods also protects the fragile ecological balance that protects biodiversity. In addition, Mt. Pauna attracts visitors from far and wide, bringing up the prospect for ecotourism and cross-cultural-interactions. Essentially, Benreu Village and Mt. Pauna have a profound relationship which goes beyond a simple cohabitation and deep connection that exists between humans and the nature.

2. METHODOLOGY :

This essay explores the complex relationships that exist between Benreu Village and Mount Pauna, looking at aspects of the relationships that are cultural, ecological, and economic. Moreover, it also aim to create an awareness on the communities' ability to overcome complex modern days problems without affecting the harmonious co-existence between the villagers and their ancestral land. The paper is based on both primary and secondary sources of data- direct interviews with the village elders and on the secondary sources of data comprising mainly journals and bulletins, blog pages and local publications.



3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:

Cultural –Historical Bond

Vibrant oral traditions and customs have woven the village's rich history and has been passed down through the generations. Mt. Pauna is a spectacular peak that dominates the landscape of the area and is deeply respect for it is a fundamental part of Village's cultural character. The community's festivals, rituals and customs commemorate the mountain's sanctity. These festivities and events encompassing dancing, music, and ceremonial activities strengthen their connection and dedication to preserving the sanctity of the Mt. Pauna.

The villagers have profound regard for their natural environment which is demonstrated through their cultural customs that have been harmoniously incorporated into the surrounding natural landscape. Mt. Pauna is more than just a topographical landmark, and is the centre of Benreu Village, representing their way of life and identity. From this perspective, the villagers preserve and enhance their cultural heritage, guaranteeing that the heritage of their forefathers and the sacredness of Mt. Pauna persist for the benefit of forthcoming generations.

Benreu has a vibrant oral culture that has been passed down through the generations, preserving its rich and historical legacy. The persistent veneration for Mt. Pauna, which is believed to be a hallowed residence of gods and ancestor spirits, is a testament that people view the mountain as a symbol of their spiritual connection and cultural legacy, and its majestic presence as a vanguard of the village.

Socio-Economic Dynamics

The region's vicinity and grasslands which is richly endowed with natural resources are closely related to the socioeconomic dynamics of Benreu Village. The resources that Mt. Pauna provides are essential to Benreu Village's socio-economic framework, influencing the subsistence and economic activities. The main pillars of the village economy are forestry, agriculture and animal husbandry, besides subsidiary activities like small business. The hilly terrain's rich soils and grasslands support a variety of agricultural activities, promoting food security and economic well-being for the villagers. Furthermore, Mt. Pauna's forests' vast biodiversity provides an abundance of resources, including timber, medicinal plants, wild fruits and vegetables and herbs that are collected sustainably to meet both commercial and subsistence needs. The favourable topography and climatic atmosphere of the mountain feeds the region's rich soils, which support a wide variety of crops and allow the villages to grow enough food for trade and consumption. Similarly, the mountain's rich grasslands and diverse flora supports cattle, goats, and poultry, which are necessary for the production of meat, milk, and dairy products.

The growing tourism sector in the state has given the village's economy a new looked in recent years. The striking splendor of Mt. Pauna and the cultural diversity of the Village have drawn tourists from various places who were looking for exceptional experiences and this trend is increasing in recent years. This pattern of visiting tourists encourages local entrepreneurship and offers immense opportunity for cross-cultural exchanges. The increasing village artisans participation in eco-tourism related activities are being fostered by flourishing tourism sector, which have benefited in both ways. An extra source of income is being generated by the increasing involvement of villagers and local artisans in tourism-related activities including offering guided tours, hospitality service and selling of traditional goods. As more people come to value and respect the distinctive customs and scenery of the area, the village tourism industry will continues to flourish and contributes to the preservation and promotion of the Village's cultural legacy.

Environmental Stewardship

The indigenous knowledge systems of the Naga community include a thorough comprehension of ecological processes and sustainable resource management techniques, which are essential for preservation of the natural environment and to their way of life. Through their combined efforts and observance of customary laws, Benreu people have successfully alleviated environmental damage and maintained the biodiversity of Mt. Pauna. Their concern and dedication to ecological care is clearly demonstrated in a number of facets of their everyday customs and practices. Practicing conventional farming methods, which involve crop rotation, intercropping and the application of organic fertilizers, is one of their core sustainable strategies. This methods increase soil fertility and stop erosion and at the same time ensures high yields and preserve the land's health. Furthermore, dedicated groves and woodlands are set aside and preserve where hunting and tree-felling are strictly prohibited. These groves and woodlands serve as genetic diversity reservoirs for biodiversity, offering habitat for wide range of plant and animal species.

The maintenance and enforcement of these environmental norms lies with the community or village council (traditional governing institutions). In addition to preserving their way of life, the villager's efficient approach to resource management protects Mt. Pauna's ecological balance and thus guarantees the preservation of its abundant



natural resources for coming generations. By encouraging a robust and sustainable ecosystem, the community's commitment to ecological stewardship demonstrates a harmonious relationship with their surroundings.

Prospects and Challenges

In the face of increasing population pressure and external influence, Benreu Village has been facing numerous problems in maintaining the integrity of its natural environment and traditional way of life. Numerous factors are posing as a threat to the harmonious and fragile balance that has been in existence for generations between ecological resilience and human activities. The increasing demand for agricultural land and human habitation drives deforestation, which upsets regional ecosystems and reduces biodiversity leading to the deterioration of natural habitats. Furthermore, the economy and the way of life in the village as well as the ecological balance has been seriously threatened by the climate change which is more and more pronounced in recent years with drastic weather patterns and shifting the agricultural zones.

To counter these challenges and also to manage and preserve the ecology without affecting the natural process of environmental regeneration, the village has adopted various measures. These programs, which are the blend of indigenous knowledge and modern methods, entail group efforts to sustainably manage and safeguard regional resources. Another essential strategy is eco-friendly tourism, which promotes environmental conservation and awareness while providing economic opportunities for the villagers. Eco-tourism has a bright prospect which has been rightly adopted by the villagers which has tremendously helpful in promoting the preservation of the village's cultural legacy and natural beauty. In this way, the villagers have been able to preserve their cultural identity and efficiently managing their resources. These initiatives demonstrate the community's commitment to preserving its way of life and safeguarding the environment for the coming generations.

4. CONCLUSION :

The Benreu Village and Mount Pauna's harmonious relationship serves as an example of how human way of life and their surroundings can survive peacefully. This peaceful co-existence provides an important insight into sustainable development since it is firmly based in indigenous knowledge, cultural practices and environmental protection. The villagers' deep comprehension of ecological processes and their methods for managing resources efficiently has benefited the people. Their customs, which include forest preservation, sacred groves and traditional farming, show how to coexist peacefully and sensibly with the natural environment.

It is our ardent duty to act as custodians of this priceless nature's gift to safeguard this mutually beneficial relationship between human being and our surroundings. This means preserving the indigenous knowledge and cultural practices which upholds the ecological integrity. By doing this, we promote a resilient and sustainable development model by guaranteeing that the advantages of this peaceful cohabitation are experienced by both the current and future generations. This harmonious relationship, which has its roots in ancient customs and values, is a valuable example of how culture, nature and the economy are intertwined. Benreu Village has serve as model of hope and resilience in a fast changing world by embracing indigenous knowledge, community-based conservation, ecotourism and cross-cultural exchange. This has proved that the legacy of Mt. Pauna and the cultural heritage of the community endure for many generations to come.

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