

## ***Eco-Tourism In Emerging Tourism Industry: An Analysis Study Of Indian Economy***

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### **Abstract**

This research indicates that how new trend as eco-tourism is helping to growing Indian tourism industry. There are also written about the development of heritage as tourist spots, natures based activities, conservative education for tour operators and eco-cultural sustainability. Mass tourism could be based on pleasure, relaxation, religion or carnivals. ET enterprises need to be focused on the natural environment. A resort near seashore or inside a protected forest could meet all the four characteristics of ET while the regular mass visitation to a beach or to a forest temple can only be made eco-friendly.

### **Keywords**

Eco-tourism, global market, rural communities, tourist satisfaction, Conservation Education, nature, Mass tourism, foreign tourist, and employment generation.

### **Characteristics of Eco-Tourism (ET)**

The tragedy of mass tourist-spots digging their own graves and the emerging global market for ethnic and unique experience gave rise to enterprises under the banner of eco-tourism (ET) in various parts of the world. In spite of its increasing importance as a business opportunity and its phenomenal growth within the larger tourism industry, the concept of eco-tourism (ET) is not well defined. Used as a tool to harvest consumer's surplus in the context of economic growth and environmental degradation, ET practices vary from wildlife and heritage to health and adventure. ET is generally perceived as 'high value low volume enterprise' depending on a few interested tourists with high willingness to pay. Developing countries are gradually realizing that ET can be a livelihood tool for rural communities and can also result in sustainable management of natural resources. The educational and cultural attributes attached to eco-tourism (ET) add value to the business and also make us think that it may not be the quantity of tourists but the quality that we need to address first. It is also known that in natural environments,

tourist satisfaction is inversely related to the user intensity and well known eco-tourism (ET) destinations (e.g.: Galapagos Islands) face threat due to over visitation.

The challenge lies in reconciling conservation, community benefits and business proposition and these calls for careful planning, implementation, monitoring and regulations.

Existing ET enterprises often highlight some conservation activities like energy saving gadgets or restricted use of plastics, but tend to ignore the overall impact on the natural and cultural integrity of the destination. There are instances where this has either led to eventual degradation of the marketed tourism products themselves or to social unrest. Distinguishing the components of eco-tourism (ET) enterprises can clarify the ambiguity in the concept and practice of ET in the country. In many countries, 'home grown' definitions are in vogue groomed to meet specific needs of the context. Based on various definitions of ET, we can distinguish ET for our context by the following four essential characteristics.

1. Nature based activities
2. Eco-cultural sustainability
3. Conservation Education (for tour operator and the tourist) as a major component
4. Significant involvement of and benefits to local people

Mainstream tourism is geared towards tourist satisfaction and ET on the other hand, has conservation (of nature and culture) and livelihoods (economic and educational benefits) as essential constituents. While it is obvious that tourism should at least be harmless to nature and society, ET needs to be pro-active towards all the four components mentioned above.

Mass tourism could be based on pleasure, relaxation, religion or carnivals. ET enterprises need to be focused on the natural environment. A resort near seashore or inside a protected forest could meet all the four characteristics of ET while the regular mass visitation to a beach or to a forest temple can only be made eco-friendly. Last two components of ET do not prevail as dominant in these as in other ventures located in the same destination. In fact it is often considered desirable to keep mass tourism away from local communities to retain the cultural uniqueness un-invaded.

While cultural nuances evolve in the natural uniqueness of any region, both these together need to be sustained for continued tourist attraction. Natural and cultural sovereignty is crucial in projecting the handicrafts and culinary traditions as vibrant economic products. It is also worth mentioning that tourism in developing economies emerged as an industry in the post-war era due to the adverse terms of trade in agricultural commodities and the major contribution of the sector was perceived as improving the balance of payments situation.

Hence there has been a conventional focus on international tourists, in spite of the environmental costs in long distance travel, leakage of benefits from the destinations and greater uncertainty. In any case, the number of foreign tourists is not a large proportion of the total visitors (Figure-1). ET, led by objectives of nature and culture conservation, livelihoods and education, needs to be different.

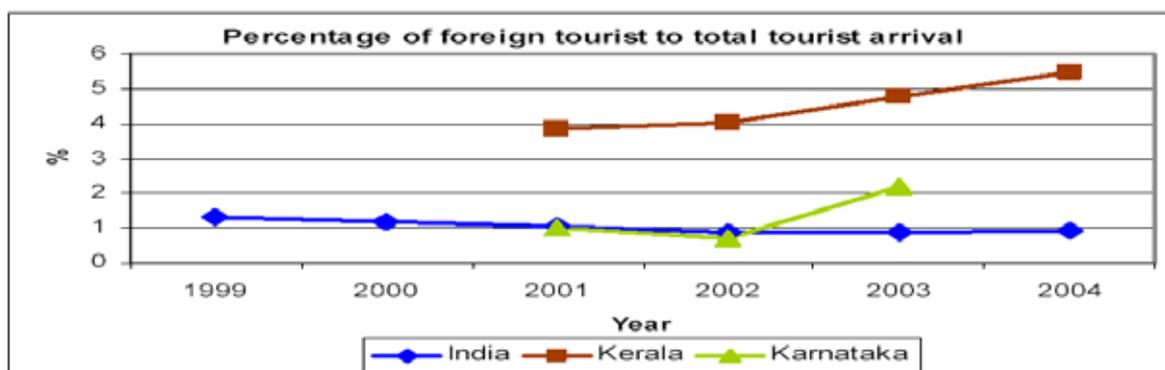


Figure1 :Percentage of foreign tourist to total tourist arrival

Role of participatory tourism initiatives is well laid out in George and Reid (2005). This is envisaged as the most important feature of ET, because it is only a sub sector under the vast tourism arena, focusing on the willingness to pay for certain unique experiences with minimum eco-cultural footprint. Any tourism venture with a potentially large impact or dependence on local ecology and/or culture could be regarded as Eco-tourism.

## ***General Management***

It need not be confined to forests and could include home stays, houseboats, or beach tourism. This realization is based on the understanding that there is increasing willingness to pay for eco-tourism activities and the sector is expanding fast with increasing number and variety of players. Also there are increasing volume of visitors to natural reserves (Li and Han, 2005) that needs to be spread across a wide variety and number of locations.

### **The Process of restructuring policy**

Policies are dynamic in nature reflecting the evolving understanding of the society. Policies may need periodic revisions based on emerging perspectives and techniques. Therefore policy formulation benefits from guidelines brought out at different times, at different governance levels and by different agencies. The policy framework being recommended here, also finds its origin in existing practices, policies and guidelines both within and outside the country. Nevertheless it is realized that eco-tourism is a vast business domain having wide repercussions on the socio-ecological fabric of an economy. Therefore, it is time now to develop these broad guidelines into clearer regulations, strategies and action plans. While guidelines can be national, policies need to reflect state-specific needs and imperatives of ET.

Hence these recommendations provide space for regions and communities to innovate and to retain their ecological and cultural integrity. In terms of the process of policy formulation, there has to be dialogue, consensus, bottom-up approach, decentralized governance and redressal mechanisms. The Quebec declaration (2002) says: “formulate national, regional and local eco-tourism (ET) policies and development strategies that are consistent with the overall objectives of sustainable development, and to do so through a wide consultation process with those who are likely to become involved in, affect, or be affected by eco-tourism (ET) activities;”

Following this process, National and state level institutions and mechanisms should promote and sustain ET in the country as a tool for conservation, livelihood and development.

### **The Emergence of Eco-Tourism**

In the last decade, eco-tourism (ET) has emerged as one of the most important sectors in tourism. During 1998, the Government of India prepared a policy document on eco-tourism (ET). This identifies the eco-tourism (ET) resources of the country and lays down the need for a specialized, participatory, policy planning approach for the development of the eco-tourism (ET) destinations. It also stipulates the roles to be played by the stakeholders such as the government, the tour operators, the destination managers, the tourists, the host community and the voluntary organizations.

The State of Kerala (“gods own country”) has taken a pioneering step in this regard by creating a separate directorate for eco-tourism (ET). Some other states have public sector corporations to promote eco-tourism (ET), for example, Jungle Lodges and Resorts Limited of Karnataka State. The Wildlife Institute of India, which is a national institute, has got a separate wing to consider various issues related to eco-tourism (ET). This institute and others like the Kerala Forest Research Institute, and the Indian Institute of Forest Management, provide technical support by way of consultancies in preparing environmental impact assessments for eco-tourism (ET) projects. Recently the national government has taken over eight sanctuaries for eco-development projects, with the support of the United Nations Global Environment Facility. In all, these eight “project tiger reserves”, eco-tourism (ET) has been visualized as an important component to provide employment opportunities for the local people, without having adverse impacts on the delicate ecosystems.

The tourism destinations of India present a wide range of natural and cultural products. These include beaches, hill stations, wildlife sanctuaries, mountain regions, archaeological monuments, religious monuments, fairs and festivals, amusement parks etc. The government has taken several policy amusement parks etc. The government has taken several policy initiatives including providing incentives for promoting tourism in these areas, and also for developing new destinations and products. The incentives are given by way of interest subsidies, allocation of funds to state governments for unique schemes, classification of hotels, and awards for the best hotels, tour companies, destination managers etc.

In the eco-tourism (ET) program, the Government of India supports state governments in the purchase of trekking and camping equipment, and also helps projects which use renewable energy resources. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) work as watchdogs to see that the tourism activities are managed on sustainable principles. NGOs also help the government and private sector in feasibility studies, development of strategies etc.

Eco-tourism (ET) lies mostly in the public sector and projects are being developed by government, but private sector support is expected by way of provision of accommodation, conduct of tours etc. There are not many eco-tourism (ET) projects financed by international funding agencies.

**Major Issues in Eco-Tourism**

As explained earlier, the majority of the eco-tourism (ET) resources are to be managed on internationally accepted principles, which ensures ecological sustainability of natural areas, with adequate provision for learning by the visitor, and with a strong component of local participation. Economic benefits should accrue to the local population as local people develop a stake in the conservation of the natural resource.

To make eco-tourism (ET) successful, there is a need for policy and institutional changes in the decision-making systems. Since the majority of the potential eco-tourism (ET) sites are not with the Tourism Department, interdepartmental coordination and cooperation is crucial for their success. Community awareness issues related to the empowerment of the local people and the creation of adequate eco-tourism (ET) interpretation are some of the major challenges.

Establishment of scientific parameters of sustainability, continuous monitoring and making the data available to stakeholders needs to be done, and in a transparent way. There needs to be significant attitudinal changes among the policy makers, the private entrepreneurs, tour operators, destination managers, the visitors, and the local community in order to make eco-tourism (ET) happens the way it should. The Government of India, the state governments, the trade bodies and the NGOs are all fully aware of the problems and issues of resistance to change. Earnest efforts are being taken to formulate strategies to overcome negative influences and to prepare India to attract a large portion of this fastest growing segment of the international tourism sector.

**ET as it is practiced in India**

Table 1 provides an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of existing policy documents related to ET in the country at national and state levels. The only document available with regard to eco-tourism (ET) policy at national level is the eco-tourism (ET) Policy and Guidelines 1998 which identifies key players in eco-tourism (ET) as: Government, Developers/operators & suppliers, Visitors, Host community, NGOs & Research Institutions. It also prescribes operational guidelines for these key players. The policy defines and hence approaches ET with a clear conservation bias. It lays out cardinal principles suggesting the importance of involvement of local communities, minimizing the conflicts between livelihoods and tourism, environmental and socio-cultural carrying capacities.

**Table 1. Status of existing policy initiatives in the ET sector, India**

Region	Policy Title	Objectives	Strengths	Weakness
India	Ecotourism in India: Policy and Guidelines 1998	Same as general tourism; to be a unifying force, preserving natural and cultural heritage	Identified key players in Ecotourism	No institutional set-up, fiscal incentives or community ownership.
Karnataka	Wilderness Tourism Policy 2003	Opening up forest areas for ecotourism	A beginning	Public sector gets priority/Monopoly access to forest areas

Kerala	Kerala Tourism Eco initiative 2004	Eco-Certification Scheme to make each sub-sector within the tourism sector to be eco-friendly	One of the first standards issued by a state, intends to cover all sectors of tourism	Less stress on socio-cultural aspects including local employment, insufficient incentives for achieving the standards
	Conservation and Preservation of Areas Act 2005	Avoid unsustainable tourism	Regulates unplanned growth of tourism	In conflict with the expected powers and rights of 'panchayati raj' institutions
	Participatory Ecotourism programme of Forest Dept 2005	Promotes participatory Ecotourism programme through EDC/VSS	Inter-departmental cooperation, financial assistance for establishing community ecotourism	Difficult procedural formalities involving many sanctioning authorities
Sikkim	Sikkim wildlife (Regulation of Trekking) Rules, 2005	To regulate trekking activities in the state	Prescribes penalties for offences and rewards for reporting offences	Confines only to trekking activities
	Singalila Ecotourism Promotion Zone, 2006	To promote sustainable community based ecotourism with minimum negative impacts	Participatory enforcement of tourism regulations	Clearcut monitoring methods need to emerge
Madhya Pradesh (MP)	Eco & Adventure Tourism Policy 2002	Opening up forest areas for eco/adventure	A beginning	Stresses on adventure tourism and private sector. Lack of community involvement
Himachal Pradesh (HP)	Policy on Development of Ecotourism 2001	Opening up of forest areas for community based ecotourism	Community involvement, well detailed institutional set up	Too much stress on trekking and less on other ecotourism activities

It also perceives that ET should be part of integrated development of the area. It emphasizes the role of careful planning in infrastructure development and a detailed benefit cost analysis prior to implementation. It talks about standards, continuous monitoring and codes of conduct for visitors. The way to go ahead is to develop these guidelines into action plans, incorporating the missing components: institutional support, monitoring criteria, incentives and regulations.

Table 1 brings out the need for broad comparability of policies across states, even allowing for contexts to determine this to a great extent (mountains, coast, wildlife rich, etc). There is a clear picture of the confusion that surrounds the states' definition of ET and their articulation of what they want to achieve—ET as purely business proposition in MP privileged access to public sector in Karnataka, to detailed institutional set up in HP and enabling decentralization in Kerala and Sikkim. Identified policy gaps in Indian ET sector are the following:

### **Policy gaps**

- ET policies often conflict with policies of the Tourism sector. Tourism policies promote infrastructure development and recommend simplification of environmental regulations to attract large capital inflows. ET objective is to minimize new infrastructures and comply with

all environmental regulations.

- Role of Government and other institutions not specified except in Kerala, there has been no attempt to craft a Nodal agency for ET, where the roles of different government departments are specified in any policy document.
- Conservation - heavy and local benefits not emphasized  
Due to the conceptual ambiguity in defining ET, most of the stakeholders, except forest department have not taken a proactive role. The result is an apparent conservation bias at the cost of local stakes.  
Lack of community involvement  
Even in cases where local community is projected as beneficiaries, benefits mostly confine to employment of a few locals as guides and cooks. Other forms of benefit sharing are nearly absent in the sector. Even the employment benefit could be higher if capacity building was considered as a prerequisite for assessing the eligibility of locals for different jobs.
- Lacks clear and measurable indicators to monitor  
Except for self imposed regulations in specific activities (e.g.: picking up waste thrown around while trekking, checking the number of plastic articles etc) there are no clear guidelines for monitoring even the environmental impact. Impact on socio-cultural parameters so far remain ignored.
- Absence of links between monitoring and Regulations or incentives.  
Wherever some regulations exist, they are not linked to continuous monitoring  
Well-laid out incentives linked to regular monitoring and standards can streamline the connectivity between practices and policy.

### **Way ahead:**

Objectives as mentioned in section I, of eco-tourism cannot be met without a focused and concerted approach. The identified gaps are interconnected and are the consequence of the absence of a commonly accepted definition of ET. National policies and guidelines should be drawn for the proposed components of ET, within the purview of international environmental treaties and related Indian legislations, incorporating equity and fair Trade principles. State wise regulatory institutions and regulations can be based on these guidelines but should reflect grassroots ecological and cultural integrity. While all environmental legislations apply to these enterprises, the sector cannot sustain without targeted regulations, as it's potentially significant impacts on environment and social fabric. Extensive decision making powers of Panchayati Raj Institutions under schedule XI of constitution could be made use of to ensure realization of important aspects of ET: nature and culture conservation, generating livelihood opportunities and regular monitoring. These constitutional rights need to be taken into account for negotiations under international agreements like GATS.

**Existing ET enterprises in India vary in nature of origins and scale of operations can be categorized into the following:**

#### **1. Government**

- a. Government initiated and managed e.g. Thenmala, Kerala
- b. Public sector corporate; e.g. Jungle Lodges and Resorts, Karnataka.

#### **2. Private**

- a. Small-scale, e.g. House boats (Kerala) and Home stays (Kerala and Karnataka)
- b. Corporate, e.g. The Blue Yonder, Kerala

#### **3. Community**

- a. Self- Initiated and community managed, e.g. Kokkrellur, Karnataka
- b. NGO Initiated and community owned, e.g. Rampuria, Darjeeling; Pastanga, Sikkim

#### **4. Co-managed**

#### **5. Community Managed and Government Supported, e.g. Bamboo Groves, Kerala**

The policy needs in terms of monitoring and regulations may differ for these models. An attempt has been made

## ***General Management***

in section VII to demonstrate the utility of a set of criteria and concerned indicators for all ET models in general. Scoring of criteria, based on quantification of indicators, needs more research and participation from stakeholder groups. A nodal agency can articulate process for monitored promotion of these models in proposed destinations and also correct the imbalance brought out in Table 1, by setting broad basic operational guidelines for all.

### **Economics of Eco-Tourism:**

Eco-tourism in developing countries with tropical forests has become a big business. Tourism in natural areas, especially in mountains, forests, hills, wildlife, national parks, lakes etc face a dual problem of ensuring the survival of plants and animals while providing opportunities for tourism activities. The development of tourism in these areas, therefore, relates to the economics of ecosystems, the economic importance of eco tourism is justified on the ground that it brings income and employment to remote areas having little economic opportunity. In contrast, the integration of these areas with other geographical plains of the nation in pursuit of employment will destabilize both the economy and the ecology. As eco tourism is small scale, a more diversified innovative and stable economy can emerge from the needs, requirements and interests connected with it in local areas. By and large, eco tourism projects are less capital intensive.

The basic tenet of successful economic activity is maximization of benefits and minimization of costs. Eco-tourism involves direct, indirect as well as opportunity costs. While the expense for establishing and maintaining a nature tourism site are direct, the damages caused by nature tourism to society are indirect. If no profitable alternative exists for an area, the opportunity cost may be very low. A well-planned nature tourism scheme can minimize all these costs considerably. Several experts have discussed the benefits of eco tourism in detail (eg. Boo 1999, Lindberg 1991, Ziffer 1989). They include:

- Economic diversification especially in rural and non-industrial areas.
- Long term economic stability
- The tendency for higher expenditure and length of stay.
- Demand for local goods and services.
- Infrastructure development
- Increase of foreign exchange earnings.

Several studies and estimates show that eco tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry. An estimate made by WTO (2001) shows that the global spending on eco-tourism (ET) increased by 20 per cent per year, about five times the average rate of growth in the tourism industry as a whole. It is also revealed that 50 per cent of all tourists would like to visit natural areas. Natural resource provides the basis of eco tourism.

Michel (1989) stated that natural resources are identified by human perception and attitudes, wants, technological skills, legal, financial and institutional arrangements as well as by political system. Natural attraction from the primary commodity in eco-tourism (ET) is fixed in supply. Using the classification by Hufbauer and Chilas (1974) of traded goods, tourist attraction can be divided into two groups-Heckscher-Ohlin and Ricardian type. Basically, Heckscher-Ohlin tourist attraction is man made, relying heavily on labour and capital for their provision, which could be reproduced in almost any part of the world. Ricardian type of tourist attractions, on the other hand, is unique or relatively unique and cannot be reproduced. Their supply and original properties are essentially fixed. In Ricardo's sense they are the gift of nature. Owing to their uniqueness and in elasticity of supply, Ricardian type of attractions - Natural - is the potential sources of surplus from tourists. In this context, it may be noted that value of land is most important. The total economic value of land can be of personal use value and non-use value. Any discussion on personal use value should take into account direct use value, indirect use value and option value. Output that can be consumed directly like food, biomes, recreation, health etc fall under direct use value. Functional benefits like ecological function, flood control, storm protection etc comes under indirect value. Non-use value may be option, bequest and existence value. Biodiversity, conserved habitat" irreversible changes, endangered species etc form the subject matter of non-use value. Maximizing the economic benefit without degrading this resource would enable sustainable use of resources for eco-tourism (ET). Once decision on how to use resources for eco tourism is taken, a plan of action can be prepared for eco tourism project.

However, the economic benefit is largely decided by the flow of money. A major component of this flow is direct

income, which is the tourism receipt. There can be several leakages from the direct income like taxes, profits and wages paid out side and imports. Money after these leakages is called secondary income, which circulates successively in the economy creating multiplier effects. Concurrently the effect is reflected in generating direct, indirect and induced types of employment in the economy. While this is a macro picture of the economic benefit, the eco tourism destination in particular derives income from other sources also. User free, concession fee, royal ties, and donation are peculiar to eco tourism destination. Last but not least, community participation is the hallmark of eco-tourism. It works as a tool for ensuring regional development from a sustainable perspective.

As eco-tourism becomes more important economically, ensuring that it follows a truly sustainable path will require cooperation among the tourism industry, governments, local people and, above all, tourists themselves. To address these issues, the United Nations has designated 2002 as the International year of Eco-tourism and today national economies are designing strategies for promoting eco tourism for sustainable development.

### **Some Eco-Tourism Destinations:**

The most popular destinations of eco-tourism include Kenya, Tanzania, Nepal, China, Mexico, United States, Costa Rica, Belize, Ecuador and Caribbean. Even countries like West Indies and Thailand, which once promoted mass tourism, have changed their course of action and specifically designed and promoted eco tourism projects. Kenya is the world's foremost eco tourist attraction. The total number of visitors to Kenya's Park and protected areas is about 650 thousand every year, bringing home around \$350 million. The eco tourism products of Kenya include its biodiversity, wild life, unique ecosystem, breathtaking scenery and sunny beaches. Specialized tours are also arranged for small groups like botanists and ornithologists.

Costa Rica is bestowed with a variety plant and animal life. Many of the natural attractions, which play an increasingly major role in the development of tourism in Costa Rica, are under some form of protection. The national park system covers nearly 20 per cent of the country. In addition to government initiative, private sector also plays a crucial role in the promotion of eco tourism. Private resources and parks attract large number of visitors of Costa Rica. Since 1986 the government has been committed to developing tourism as a priority area and encouraging 'soft nature tourism'.

The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem is another major centre of attraction to eco tourists. An aerial view provides an image of vast island of mountains and plateaus, rising from the high plains to form one of the most extensive tracts of wild lands. The ecosystem encompasses two national parks; portions of seven national forests, three national wild life refuges, Bureau of land Management lands, and state and private properties. Today efforts are being taken both at the private and public levels to manage eco tourism more effectively.

Most of the tourism attractions of Dominica are natural areas. The island has two national parks and two forest reserves to its credit. Boo has identified the major obstacles to further growth of nature tourism in Dominica, which include inadequate funding for park maintenance, poor tourism infrastructure in parks, lack of trained guides and inadequate promotional facilities.

Tourism occupies a significant position in the Ecuadorian economy over the last 15 years. The industry is founded on the cultural folklore attraction as well as those associated with nature and adventure. Boo has stated that tourism has a fluctuating trend in the Ecuadorian economy with positive and negative impacts.

The Mexican tourist industry is well established with constant growth in arrivals from 20,000 in 1929 to more than 54, 00,000 in 1987. About 0.8 per cent of the country is protected. The great variety of categories for protected natural areas in the country includes parks, reserves and protected zones. The country's natural attractions include beautiful beaches, colorful villages, outstanding archaeological heritage and spectacular natural attractions.

Tourism is the largest single industry in the Caribbean with a new emphasis on parks and protected areas. The small island Saba, part of the Netherlands Antilles, is an excellent example of mutually beneficial interaction of nature tourism and eco-system protection.

Maldives and Bhutan in South Asia are regarded as successful examples of sustainable tourism development. In both these countries tourism has been planned and developed as a major economic component. The establishment of tourist facilities in the form of island hotels has influenced to a large extent the overall geographic, economic, socio-cultural and ecological environment. Steps have been taken to increase earnings from tourism while minimizing the import requirements for tourism activities. Strict environment standards and controls are also

## **General Management**

applied in Maldives.

The Government of Bhutan is following a policy of controlled tourism development in its mountain ecosystem. The overriding aim of Bhutan is to ensure that the type and rate of growth of tourism which do not damage the natural environment and cultural heritage.

Tourism business in Kashmir in India is largely eco based. But mass tourism in this area has created several environmental problems. Ruza has undertaken a case study on the ecological burden of tourism in Dal Lake. The study reveals that the carrying capacity of the Lake has exceeded and a moratorium should be imposed on all kinds of infrastructure.

The Annapurna region in Nepal attracts large number of visitors to its mountain ecosystem. But the increasing number of tourists has upset the delicate ecological balance between life and land in the Himalayas. The Annapurna Conservation Area Project, an innovative scheme, has been launched to balance the needs of the local people, trekkers and the natural environment.

India, with its geographical diversity, natural attractions and rich cultural heritage, provides a fertile ground for eco tourism. Many protected areas in the country contain structures of religious significance and are sites of pilgrimage. Tourism management in protected areas is the responsibility of the Forest Department, which has marked tourism zones in the forest. Of the project sites Ranthambhore, Gir and Periyar are the most popular destinations. Most of the visitors are domestic tourists. Giving emphasis to protected areas the eco-development programme in India aims at providing strong incentive to conserve the environmental and cultural heritage through the extensive re-distribution of decision making and economic benefits to local communities.

### **Problems of Eco-Tourism:**

Despite planning, local participation and conservation measures, the unintended negative effects of wildlife tourism have been pointed out by several writers. The influx of tourists is followed by the need for more accommodation, roads, parking lots and services such as water, water disposal and power. These can have significant impact on natural areas and their eco-system. Other impacts such as development of rural slums, noise and air pollution, litter destruction, loss of habitat, disturbance to wild life etc. may also follow. The physical and social carrying capacities of many areas place constraints on eco tourism. Serious conflicts between nature based tourists and the particular aspect of nature they seek are also reported.

How the community reacts to tourism in general and eco tourism in particular is another major problem. Changes in local prices and employment generation may not be as favorable as expected. The poor local people may view tourism with resentment, and this is particularly true in developing countries. Quite often local participation will not be forthcoming as expected.

Studies also show that little of tourism money directly benefits the local population. Outsiders often dominate nature tourism with the consequence that money flows outside. The World Bank estimates that even in the best of the circumstances 55 per cent of every tourist dollar spent in developing countries leaks back to developed countries.

With the influence of foreign capital, experts and thinking, there is a trend for promoting mass eco tourism as a development package. If this is cherished, the old tourism will re-appear in green disguise and sustainable development will be the casualty. Hence the need of the hour is to put emphasis on the sustainable development of eco tourism.

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