

## **ECOTOURISM: FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, tourism has become the largest industry in the world, and this is now considered as the most rapidly growing industry of the world. Ecotourism is also an effective means to achieve sustainable development of local economics by establishment of tourism-related industries such as hotels, restaurants, craft markets, tourist agencies, guides etc. The purpose of ecotourism is to expose the realities of an area to the tourists rather than hiding them, so that they would be aware of the social condition surrounding the travel destination. As per the International Ecotourism Society, the prime principal of ecotourism is developing cultural awareness and respect for local people and their customs and regions.

Ecotourism is now a major growth area in its own right. It is against this backdrop the ASSOCHAM organized and International Conclave on Tourism for Sustainable Development during December 10-11, 1991 at New Delhi.

The United Nations declared year 2002 as the “year of Mountain and Eco-tourism”. The world Tourism organization (WTO) declared the theme of the World Tourism Day to be observed on 27 September 2002 as “Eco-Tourism”, the key to sustainable Development”.

Tourism can be sustainable if development meets the needs of tourists and local residents while protecting future opportunities. Ecotourism offers benefits for local residents, conservation, development and educational experiences. Ecotourism is a sustainable form of

natural resources based tourism. It focuses primarily on experiencing and learning about nature, its landscape, flora, fauna and their habitats, as well as cultural artifacts from the locality.

Ecotourism helps in community development by providing the alternate source of livelihood to local community which is more sustainable. Its aim to conserve resources, especially biological diversity and maintain sustainable use of resources, which bring ecological experience to travelers, conserve the ecological environment and gain economic benefit. Ecotourism contributes to conservation of biodiversity; sustains the well-being of local people; involves responsible action on the part of tourist and the tourism industry; promotes small and medium tourism enterprises; requires lowest possible consumption of natural resources; stresses local participation, ownership, and business opportunities, particularly for rural people; and above all includes the learning experiences.

In conclusion, according to Kipper, Ozdemir and Saglam (2011) Ecotourism activities are not performed according to the purpose, the Principles and the characteristics cause the disturbance in environmental economic and Socio-cultural fields due to over-intensification to be occurred especially in sensitive ecosystems like natural and cultural area.

### **Key Words**

Ecotourism – Sustainable Development – Biodiversity – Conservation – Community – Development.

## **Introduction**

Ecotourism is one of the fastest growing trends in the world-wide tourism industry. It is a form of tourism which fosters environmental principles with a new emphasis and visiting and observing natural area; the emphasis on tourism as much as this can be separated from recreation.

Environmental protection and tourism are closely linked with each other, as vacations and outdoor recreation require a healthy environment. A tourist resort with clean environs - air, water and scenery is most sought after by leisure seekers. According to the World Tourism Organisation (WTO), 'tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed natural areas with the specified object of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural aspects ( both of the past and present) found in these areas is Ecotourism.

By the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century, tourism has become the largest industry in the world, and this is now considered as the most rapidly growing industry of the world. Ecotourism is now a major growth area in its own right. It is against this backdrop, the ASSOCHAM (The Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India) organized and International Conclave on Tourism for Sustainable Development during December 10-11, 1999 at New Delhi. The United Nations declared year 2002 as the “year of mountain and Eco-tourism”. The World Tourism Organization declared the theme of the world tourism on that day and it can be observed 27 September 2002 as “Eco-tourism Day”; the key to Sustainable Development.

## **What is Eco-tourism?**

Ecotourism is considered the fastest growing market in the tourism industry, according to the WTO with an annual growth rate of 5% worldwide and representing 6% of the world gross domestic product; 11.4% of all consumer spending not a market to be taken lightly.

Fundamentally, eco-tourism means making as little environmental impact as possible and helping to sustain the indigenous populace, thereby encouraging the preservation of world life and habitats when visiting a place. This is a responsible form of tourism and

tourism development, which encourages going back to natural products in every aspect of life. It is also the key to sustainable ecological development.

### **Eco-tourism – Definitions**

“Eco-tourism is cultural tourism, natural tourism, a travel – learn experience, a little bit of soft adventure and benefiting the well-being of peoples”.

- **Western Samoa, National Ecotourism Program.**

Eco-tourism is “Responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment and improves the well-being of local people”.

- **International Ecotourism Society**

### **Ecotourism-Sustainable Development**

“Development that meets the needs of the present without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

- **World Commission on Environment**

People concerned about sustainable development suggest that meeting the needs of the future depends on how well we balance social, economical and environmental objective needs when making decisions today.

Ecotourism is also an effective means to achieve sustainable development of local economies by establishment of tourism –related industries such as hotels, restaurants, craft markets, tourist agencies, guides, etc. The purpose of ecotourism is to expose the realities of an area to the tourist rather than hiding them, so that they would be aware of the social conditions surrounding the travel destination. As per the International Ecotourism Society, the prime principle of ecotourism is developing cultural awareness and giving respect for local people and their cultures and religions.

The four hallmarks of ecotourism projects should have:

- Be designed built and operated so that they leave a “soft imprint.”
- To contribute money to the local economy and community services
- To contribute financially to environmental protection.
- To educate visitors and members to the local community.

As the development tool, ecotourism can advance the three basic goals of the convention on Biological Diversity.

- Conserve biological (and cultural) diversity, by strengthening protected area management systems (Public or Private) and increasing the value of sound ecosystem;
- Promote the sustainable use of biodiversity by generating income, jobs and business opportunities in ecotourism and related business networks;
- Share the benefits of ecotourism developments equitably with local communities and indigenous people by obtaining their informal consent and full participation in planning and management of ecotourism business.
- The ecotourism industry is a boom as the concept is getting much popular with each passing day, more and more job opportunities are opening up as a result of the increasing demand of local hotels, resorts and other accommodations equipped with skilled and trained professionals, experienced tour guides, merchandise retailers and selling lots of necessary items. Restaurants are offering a variety of tasty foods and soon it is a great way to boost the local business and local development.

Tourism can be sustainable if development meets the needs of tourists and local residents while protecting future opportunities. Ecotourism is largely perceived to safeguard natural areas and thereby contributes to the conservation of biodiversity. It focuses primarily on experiencing and learning about nature, its landscape, flora, fauna and their habitats as well as cultural artifacts from the locality. Ecotourism has been regarded as panacea for solving many of the environmental and economic problems of less developed nations. Ecotourism encompasses a spectrum of nature-based activities that fosters visitor's appreciation and understanding of natural and cultural heritage and are managed to be ecologically, economically and socially sustainable. Therefore ecotourism is accepted as an alternative type of sustainable development. Ecotourism is increasingly being landed as a sustainable development option for rural communities, one that is able to spur economic development and instill environmental protection at the same time (Cater, 2002). If the environment has not at least achieved a net benefit towards its sustainability and ecological integrity, then the activity is not ecotourism.

Eco-tourism contributes to lasting local economic development and creates permanent jobs for local people. It drives the development of other related industries and upgrades local infrastructure. Profit earned can be retained within local communities; equal distribution of revenues; promotes consumption and production; finances the establishment and maintenance

of protected areas, uses natural resources efficiently. The quality of agriculture production rises and it supplements women employment generation.

### **Some Ecotourism Places in Andhra Pradesh**

Andhra Pradesh has 13 wildlife sanctuaries and three National Parks covering an area of around 4% of the total geographical area. Among them Sri Venkateswara Sanctuary and National Park, Nagarjuna Sagar - Srisailam [project tiger], Pulicat, Papikonda, Eturnagaram wildlife sanctuary and Kolleru are so popular. AP tourism is taking all the steps to promote ecotourism in all these places by providing accommodation organizing eco trails. In this Paper I am going to provide some information about some ecotourism places in Andhra Pradesh.

#### **Talakona**

Talakona waterfalls amidst the Sheshachalam range of Venkateswara reserve forest is just 50km from Tirupati, and is almost equi-distant from Chennai 220km and Bangalore (300Km). Talakona waterfall is the highest waterfalls in Andhra Pradesh and best time to visit is from October to February.

#### **Tyda-Jungle Bells**

Tyda Is a small village in Visakapatnam district, about 75km from Vizag. It is located in the midst of beautiful Eastern Ghats, on the way to Araku from Vizag. Jungie-Bells provide the best environment for birds watching forest treks and coming closer to nature wildlife.

#### **Maredumilli**

Maredumilli in East Godavari district is the heart of undisturbed patch of Eastern Ghat forest, which is home for bison, sambar, spotted deer and tigers

#### **Mamandur**

Mamandur in Chittoor district is 20km from Tirupati. Mamandur boasts of unique fauna like slender loris the golden geko (a reptile) which is found only in these hills.

#### **Pulicat Sanctuary**

Pulicat Sanctuary is located in Nellore district, 500sqkm flora and fauna, the backwaters of Pulicat Lake attracts large congregation of flamings. Heron, Stork etc. It is 10km from Sullurpet railway station and 50km by road from Chennai. Nelapattu bird sanctuary is also located near Pulicat Sanctuary, which is 23km from Sullurpet railway station and 80km from Chennai.

## **Conclusion**

Various tendencies also occur in understanding the tourism upon changing living conditions. More tranquil, nature and original spaces are preferred to ordinary tourism centres. Likewise, individuals have begun to prefer activities, which they can particularly perform in natural and cultural area and with which they can learn original cultural values and be within the nature, instead of Sea-Sand-Sun tourism. In conclusion, according to Kipper, Ozdemir and Saglam (2001) "Ecotourism activities which are not performed according to the purpose the principles and the characteristics cause the disturbance in environmental, economic and Socio-cultural fields due to over-intensification to be occurred especially in sensitive ecosystems like natural and cultural area. Therefore in order to provide sustainability in the ecotourism, it is necessary to know environmental, social and economical effects of ecotourism activities and to consider these effects during planning. Successful interpretive components of ecotourism products will foster appreciation and support for conservation efforts, local communities and culture.

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