

ECOTOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT**Dr. Vimmi Behal**

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Abstract :- India, a country situated in South Asia, is of sub continental dimension with a population of over one billion people. Even after completing eleven five year plans and five yearly plans, India is beleaguered with several problems. Agriculture, the primary means of livelihood for millions of people still is in a very bad shape. Even after spending billions of rupees under various names for alleviating poverty, it continues to be very acute. Different estimates of poverty vary—The Planning Commission's estimate is the most conservative and Utsa Patnaik's is the broadest estimate. Utsa Patnaik's study using NSS data vis-a-vis the calorie intake prescribed by the ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research) shows that around 70 percent of the Indian population are living below the poverty line.

1: Introduction

There was lot of controversy about the Planning Commission's estimate of poverty. There are related problems like social and gender inequalities, illiteracy, lack of adequate health facilities, unplanned urbanization, environmental degradation, under nourishment of children and underdevelopment of some areas. From the mountains of the Himalayas in Kashmir to the seacoasts of Kanyakumari and from the Thar deserts of Rajasthan to the humid forests of the northeast, India displays her wealth of diversity in cultures, religious fairs and festivals. Indeed, India follows unity in diversity. The country extends up to 3200km from south to north and 3000km from east to west covering 32,87,263 sq.km. This is divided into 28 states and seven directly administered union territories (including the capital Delhi). The states are further sub-divided into districts. In the global scenario, India has a prime position in the field of tourism among world's Top 50 (Fifty) tourist destination countries. In India, tourism sector is the second largest net foreign exchange earner. This is a country with second largest human resources of the world. Developing economies, particularly the more dynamic emerging economies such as India, have been experiencing an increased demand for travel.

The country has a large treasure of natural beauty, archaeological and architectural

monuments. In addition, there are many hill resorts, beach resorts, mountains and rivers etc. The northern part of India is famous for its hills, plains, rivers, and monuments etc- the Himalayas, Kashmir Valley, the Ganges. The Taj Mahal, the Kutub Minar, religious centers like Varanasi, Badrinath attracts large number of tourists. The western region has tourist centers like Ajantha-Ellora and industrial centre like Mumbai. Goa beach attracts foreign and Indian tourists. The southern region has many temples, beaches, hill resorts, cultural heritage etc. Places like Chennai, Madurai, Bangalore and Thiruvananthapuram are important centers of tourism in South India. The eastern region has tourist attraction like the Gir Forest, pilgrim centers like Konarak and industrial centers like Kolkata. There are colorful tribal life-styles of the North Eastern States of Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura and Manipur with their folk culture is also worth mention. In the central Indian states of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, tribal village life has resulted in a variety of artistically executed handicrafts. India's mountains provide opportunities for mountaineering and trekking. Beaches provide lazy sun bathing as well as wind surfing and snorkeling and its jungles provide shooting wildlife.

India's natural beauty and its geographic location can be compared with that of any other country in the world and its rich heritage makes it unique in the world. India is one of those rare

countries, which has a wonderful blend of all the resources essential to make it as a golden star on the Tourism map of the world. India's glorious tradition and rich cultural heritage are linked with the development of tourism. Its magnificent monuments attract large numbers of visitors from all over the world. India has an exceptionally varied climate ranging from the extreme cold in high altitude and hot summer in the plains. Considering the significance of tourism, 27th September is being observed as the World Tourism Day every year.

Tourism in developing countries mainly depends upon its biodiversity. The quality of their natural environment gives many developing countries a comparative advantage in tourism. Tourism in India is probably as old as its 5000 plus year old culture. The post second world war period saw an unprecedented growth in international tourism. Tourism, unlike other development options such as manufacturing, mining, forestry etc was widely perceived to be a clean and renewable industry. Because it drew upon 'free' natural, historical, social and cultural resources it was thought to be less capital intensive in its requirements for development. Tourism, as it is known today; began in India only after 1946, following the recommendations of the Sergeant Committee. It was only after the 1980's tourism activity gained momentum in India. In India tourism and its development in an organized manner has received attention over 45 years only. The significant development that took place was setting up of the Indian Tourism Development Corporation in 1966 to promote India as a tourist destination and the Tourism Finance Corporation in 1989 to finance tourism projects. Altogether, 21 Government-run hotel management and catering technology institutes and 14 food craft institutes were also established for imparting specialized training in hoteliering. The Ministry of Tourism is the nodal agency for the development and promotion of tourism in India and catering.

In the year 1986, Tourism has been declared as 'Tourism Industry' by the government of India. On March 4, 1993, the United Nations Statistical Commission adopted WTO's (World Tourism Organization's) recommendations on tourism. Ecotourism has received much attention in recent years especially within the developing world. Ecotourism in simple terms means management of tourism and conservation of nature in a way so as to maintain a fine balance between the requirements of tourism and ecology on the one hand and needs of the local communities for jobs, new skills, income generating employment and a better status for women on the other. Tourism policy provides the guidelines, goals and objectives and tourism planning is the process of identifying objectives and defining evaluations. In India the emergence of alternative tourism promotes natural and cultural events and others. Few promising alternative tourism paths include green tourism, ecotourism, eco cultural tourism, heritage tourism etc. Ecotourism developed in India in 1970s and 1980s. Ecotourism was globally identified as a means of achieving twin goals of bio diversity conservation and sustainable development. Both short-term goals and long term goals can be achieved without sacrificing one's own interests. Sustainable tourism and nature tourism are umbrella concepts that include ecotourism.

2: Literature review

Following are some of the research studies on tourism and ecotourism.

Batra (1990) in his study on 'Tourism in Rajasthan-Problems, Potential and Future Prospects' points out the various snags, impediments and obstacles in the promotion of tourism in the state of Rajasthan in particular and India in general, some of which are in-built in nature. He strongly recommends that, tourism activity in Rajasthan must be taken as a dynamic tool in uplifting the social status of the society. For this he recommends frequent get together of local people with the foreign

tourists. According to him such meetings will help to break some of the age-old rotten social barriers and orthodox systems prevalent in the state.

Sudheer's (1992) study on 'Tourism in Kerala-Problems and Prospects' highlighted the importance of tourism in Kerala and various problems confronting the tourism sector.

According to Santhosh Thampi (2001) ecotourism came into prominence as a strategy for reconciling conservation with development in ecologically rich areas. He points out that ecotourism comprises a number of inter-related components all of which should be present for authentic ecotourism to occur.

Rajakumari (2007) in her study on 'Tourism-An Epitome of Incentives' explains that to decrease financial leakages in tourism, it would be important to increase local ownership of tourism-related business, building up tourism infrastructure using local investors and avoiding purely foreign investment.

Bijender Punia (1999) in his study on 'Problems and Prospects of Tourism in Haryana' has highlighted the importance of elements like climate, seasonality, accessibility, attitude of host population, availability of man-power resources and the planning expertise in tourism development in any area, region, state or country.

Seema and Jojo (2006) in their study hold the view that ecotourism in the Indian context has significant implications for nature and culture conservation,

rural livelihoods and conservation education. Existing documents on ecotourism policy are briefly reviewed in this paper to draw insights for the Indian context.

Poya Moli (2007) in his paper on 'Eco-Cultural Tourism in Indian Islands: Some Implications' attempted to focus on paradigm shifts in tourism and environment management with particular reference to Indian Island eco systems. Sustainable alternatives are suggested to ensure that the tourism in Indian Islands are

not merely financially self-sustainable, but ecologically and socially sustainable as well, besides culturally responsible.

Haque Immanuel and Shanawaz Ahammed Dur (2007) in their study titled 'Dynamics of Tourism Economics: An Indian Perspective', showed the significance of tourism specifically with reference to employment sector, infrastructural facilities and poverty eradication. According to Vijayakumar (1995) "ecotourism implies an enjoyment of nature's bounty as well as understanding the culture and natural history of the environment". His thesis mainly stressed the promotion of ecotourism in Kerala as it cares the conservation of eco-system, while respecting the environment.

Katja Pactz (1997) studied the relationship between sustainable development and tourism and concluded that "sustainable development is to be seen as the way forward to guarantee the long term viability of the tourism business".

Rao (2005) after analysing the relationship between tourism and foreign exchange concluded that tourism is a revenue earner and the most significant source of foreign exchange in several countries. He warns that a badly organized tourism development strategy will have some adverse effects on the country rather than the development of the country.

Anil Reddy (2000) in his paper holds the view that ecotourism is entirely a new approach in tourism. It is reserving travel to natural areas to appreciate the cultural and natural history of the environment. He reviews various issues and information about ecotourism.

Manonmoney (1995) in her study highlighted the benefits and problems encountered while framing and implementing ecotourism measures. According to her the three main aspects to be emphasized under ecotourism are prevention of pollution, carrying capacity based tourism and tourist environmental policy.

According to Dhanasekaran (2005) "protection, development and improvement of the various constituents of the environment are among the basic conditions for the harmonious

development of tourism". Similarly intelligent tourism management can contribute in large measure to the protection and development of the physical environment and cultural heritage of mankind as well as the improvement of the quality of human life. It is therefore advisable that tourism development and sound environmental management should be integral concerns of national development policies.

Syamala (2002) believes that ecotourism has become a need for everyone who wants to refresh from the routine fast city life. Ecotourism provides many interesting tours to the heart of Mother Nature. Ecotourism in India is about taking a break from the busy life and leading a slow paced life in the midst of greenery. In her words, instead of waking up with the alarm we can wake up with the chirping of birds, we can have healthy and timely food rather than having fast food-fried stuffs. India offers many ecotourism spots, which are safe.

3: Ecotourism and Development

3.1 PRINCIPLES OF ECOTOURISM

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

The International Eco-tourism Society defines eco-tourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people." This means that those who implement and participate in Eco-tourism activities should follow the following principles:

- Minimize impact
- Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect
- Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts

- Provide direct financial benefits for conservation
- Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people
- Raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climate
- Support international human rights and labor agreements.

3.2 IMPORTANCE OF ECO-TOURISM IN INDIA

The traditional treatment of a visitor in India is based on the mythological concept of Atidhi Devo Bhavah (Guest is God). This was the mantra of the Indian tourism sector. The Tourism Ministry has launched the "Atithi Devo Bhavah" campaign under an ambitious programme to attract more tourists. The concept is aimed at capacity building for service providers and stakeholders in the tourism sector to make the tourists aware of the benefits in India and the need to treat them with traditional care and utmost courtesy. This has been further boosted by the New National Tourism Policy, which revolves round a framework-Government led, private sector driven and community welfare oriented. The tenth plan approach to the sector was also aimed at ensuring that the tourist to India gets "physically invigorated, mentally rejuvenated, culturally enriched, spiritually elevated and feels India within him". A countrywide awareness campaign for sensitizing the public against Garbage and Graffiti at monuments has been launched under the title "Atidhi Devo Bhavah" for preservation and protection of heritage monuments and tourist sites in the country.

3.2.1 Market Potential of Indian Tourism Industry vis-a-vis Global Perspectives

India has a significant potential for becoming a major global tourist destination. Tourism industry in India witnessed a remarkable growth over a period of time. Since

Independence, the country is stepping slowly and attracting more foreign and domestic tourists from 15,000 in 1950 reached to more than 5 million foreign tourist arrivals with the growth rate of 9.9 percent during 2010.

The following achievements and contributions are enough to prove India's tourism potential in the global world:

_ Travel and tourism is the second highest foreign exchange earner for India, and the government has given organizations in this industry export house status.

_ The industry is waking up to the potential of domestic tourism as well, with a 582.1 million domestic trips in 2009 as against 236.5 millions domestic trips in 2003.

_ Export earnings from international visitors and tourism goods are expected to generate 6.7% of total exports (INR 718.2 billion or US\$ 18.5 billion in 2008 growing to INR 2,750.2 billion or US\$51.6 billion (4.4% of total) in 2018.

_ The contribution of the travel and tourism economy to employment is expected to rise from 30,491,000 jobs in 2008 (6.4% of total employment or 1 in every 15.6 jobs) to 39,615,000 jobs (7.2% of total employment or 1 in every 13.8 jobs) by 2018.

_ Incoming foreign tourist arrivals have shown a 6% compound annual growth rate over the last 10 years. Real GDP growth for travel and tourism economy is expected to be 7.9% in 2008 and to grow at 8.6% per annum over the coming 10 years.

3.2.2 India the 4th Most Favored Country for Holidays

India has been ranked as the 4th most favored country for holidays, above South Africa and Switzerland, as per a survey undertaken by Conde Nast Traveller Magazine. A reputed Consultant has been assigned the job to examine the various aspects of tourism including existing policies, infrastructure, and marketing strategies and prepare a plan for increasing the flow of foreign tourists.

The entry of low-cost airlines has provided a fillip to tourism industry. The other catalyst is medical tourism. The number of foreigners visiting India to avail quality and inexpensive medical treatment is growing day by day.

As per the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2009 by the World Economic Forum, India is ranked 11th in the Asia Pacific Region and 62nd overall, moving up three places on the list of the world's attractive destinations. It is ranked the 14th best tourist destinations for the natural resources and 24th for its cultural resources with many world heritage sites, both natural and cultural rich fauna, and strong creative industries in the country. India also bagged 37th rank for its air transport network. The India travel and tourism industry is ranked 5th in the long term (10 years) growth and is expected to be the second largest employer in the world by 2019.

3.2.3 Hospitality

According to tourism industry, the country has about 1.2 million hotel rooms of which only 7 percent or about 80,000 are star category. It is interesting to note that the average duration of the stay of a tourist in Singapore is about 5 days as against 26 days in India, because of the vast tourist potentials that country offers. The Tourism Ministry has proposed to create a "Land Bank" by acquiring land for building hotels in public-private partnership on a build-operate and transfer basis. The Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation are planning to set up 100 budget hotels across the country within the next two years.

3.2.4 The Five-year Plans and Indian Tourism

Tourism has been denied the priority it deserves over the successive five-year plan periods because its potential as an engine of economic growth has not been recognized. In the successive plans, the tourism sector was considered very lightly and the government initiated not much effort and steps. It was only in 2002 that the New National Tourism Policy was formulated with very vast objectives;

mission and strategies. The New National Tourism Policy is based upon the objectives:

- o Generating awareness about the benefits of tourism for the host population.
- o Mobilize state governments to use tourism as a means for achieving their socio- economic objectives.
- o Encourage the private sector to enhance investment in tourism.
- o Provide legislative and regulatory support for sustainable tourism.
- o Protect the interests of tourism industry and consumers.
- o Develop and promote rural/farm tourism on priority along with other forms of tourism.

In the Tenth Five Year Plan, various factors responsible for the inadequate growth of tourism sector, i.e., barriers related to approach, barriers that discourage private investment, absence of legislative support, unprofessional and adhoc approach etc. needs to be removed. The effective and early removal of these barriers during the tenth plan is urgently required for the successful implementation of new tourism policy and for the speedy growth of tourism. It

was only during the 7th plan that the tourism promotion activities found a place in the functioning of the department of Tourism. The 10th and 11th plan laid much emphasis to tourism. The country witnessed a Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 3.18% in FTAs (Foreign Tourist Arrival) during 2007-2010, as against a 16.93% growth during the 10th Plan period.

The 11th five-year plan outlines six key strategic objectives for Indian tourism sector and they are follows: -

- _ Positioning and maintaining tourism development as National Priority Activity.
- _ Enhancing and maintaining the competitiveness of India as a tourist destination.

_ Improving India's tourism products and further expanding these.

- _ Creating world-class infrastructure.
- _ Developing strategies for sustained and effective marketing plan and programmes.
- _ Developing human resources and capacity building of service.

The approach paper of the 12th five-year plan prepared by the Planning Commission highlights the need to adopt "pro-poor tourism" for increasing net benefits to the poor and ensuring that tourism growth contributes to poverty reduction. There is a significant shift in the strategies of the 12th five-year plan for deriving maximum returns from proposed investments in the tourism sector based on the approach Paper of the Planning Commission.

3.2.5 Tourism in India-Emerging Trends

Tourism is the largest service industry in India, with a contribution of 6.23% to the national GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and 8.78% of the total employment in India. India witnessed more than 5 million annual foreign tourist arrivals and 562 million domestic tourist visits. The tourism industry in India

generated about US \$275.5 billion by 2018 at a 9.4% annual growth rate. By 2020

tourism in India could contribute Rs 8,50,0000 million to the GDP (Source:

WTTC). Domestic and foreign tourist arrivals have increased substantially from 2000 onwards. In the year 2009, 5.11 million foreign tourists visited India.

Majority of foreign tourists come from USA and UK. Tamilnadu, Maharashtra, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh were the top four states to receive inbound tourists.

Domestic tourism in the same year was massive at 650 million. Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Tamilnadu received the big share of these visitors. The following table shows the advance estimates of Indian tourism.

| | |
|--|----------------|
| No. of foreign tourist arrivals in India | 5.58 Million |
| No. of Indian nationals departures from India | 12.07 Million |
| No. of domestic tourist visits to all States/UTS | 740.21 Million |
| Foreign exchange earnings from tourism | Rs.64889Crore |

Table: Trend of Indian Tourism in 2010**4: Challenges to ecotourism**

Eco-tourism in India is facing various challenges mainly due to lack of infrastructural facilities such as roads and accommodation, strategic business plans, well-trained nature guides, methods of gaining community consensus and awareness programmes etc. . To attract eco-tourists, many terms such as nature tourism, green tourism and bio-tourism etc., are used in the name of eco-tourism although they are not synonymous with eco-tourism.

Some of the different kinds of impacts that ecotourism development

and operational activities can have include;

- **Threats to ecosystems and biodiversity** :e.g. loss of wildlife and rare species ,habitat loss and degradation,

- **Disruption of coasts:** e.g. shoreline erosion and pollution, impact to coral reefs and fish spawning grounds,

- **Deforestation:** loss of forests for fuel wood and timber by the tourist industry also impact on soil and water quality, biodiversity integrity, reducing the collection of forest products by local communities,

- **Water overuse:** as a result of tourist recreational activities e.g. golf courses, swimming pools , and tourist consumption in hotels,

- **Urban problems:** Congestion and overcrowding, increased vehicle traffic and resultant environmental impacts, including air and noise pollution, and health impacts,

- **Exacerbate climate change:** from fossil fuel energy consumption for travel , hotel and recreational requirements,

- **Unsustainable and inequitable resource use:** Energy and water over consumption, excessive production of wastes, are all common impacts.

4.1 IMPROVING SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPMENT

Ecotourism has become one of the fastest-growing sectors of the tourism industry, growing annually by 10–15% in India. One definition of ecotourism is “**the practice of low-impact, educational, ecologically and culturally sensitive travel that benefits local communities and host countries**”. The sustainable development of tourism has the following responsible factors.

Regulation and Accreditation

This is suggests a management plan, benefit for the local community, small group interaction, education value and staff training. The ecotourists who consider their choices would be confident of a genuine ecotourism experience when they see the higher star rating.

In addition, **environmental impact assessments** could be used as a form of accreditation. Feasibility is evaluated from a scientific basis, and recommendations could be made to optimally plan infrastructure, set tourist capacity, and manage the ecology. This form of accreditation is more sensitive to site specific conditions.

Guidelines and Education

The ecotourism experience is marketed to a different lifestyle from large scale ecotourism, the development of facilities and infrastructure does not need to conform to corporate Western tourism standards, and can be much simpler and less expensive. There is a greater **multiplier form of effect** on the economy, because local products, materials, and labor are

used. Profits accrue locally and **import** leakages are reduced. The basic assumption of the multiplier effect is that the economy starts off with unused resources, for example, that many workers are cyclically unemployed and much of industrial capacity is sitting idle or incompletely utilized.

The **multiplier form of effect** arises because of the induced increases in consumer spending which occur due to the increased incomes and because of the feedback into increasing business revenues, jobs, and income again. This process does not lead to an economic explosion not only because of the supply-side barriers at potential output but because at each “round”, the increase in consumer spending is less than the increase in consumer incomes. Each increase in spending is thus smaller than that of the previous round, preventing an explosion.

5: Conclusion

Ecotourism is defined as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people”. A several strategy for conservation and development studies are being done on ways to improve the ecotourism structure. As stated, the ecotourism structure must be improved to direct more money into host communities by reducing leakages for the industry to be successful in alleviating poverty in developing regions, but it provides a promising opportunity. Any form of tourism that does not reduce the availability of resources and does not inhibit future travelers from enjoying the same experience. Some Indian school on a free flowing river is an example of sustainable tourism. Although ecotourists claim to be educationally sophisticated and environmentally concerned, they rarely understand the ecological consequences of their visits and how their day-today activities append physical impacts on the environment. Eco-tourism is considered the fastest growing market in the tourism industry of various states in India.

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