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CHAPTER II

CONCEPT OF THE ECOTOURISM.

2.1 Introduction-

Man has lived in harmony with nature through the ages from time immemorial. Our sages and saints have been moving to mountains, meadows and streams. They understood that man and nature were not two separate entities but they are the part of the same organic entity, the same divine spirit. They propagated that 'The earth is our mother, and we are its children.'

Man is moving around the world to search to learn something from natureas the choice of travel increase, people are increasingly looking beyond the traditional sun, sea and sand for other experiences. Tourism is currently the world's largest industry and source of foreign exchange. Ecotourism is the latest addition in tourism industry represents the growing sector of this market. The term ecotourism first appeared in the 1970s, a decade that saw the rise of a global



environmental movement and a convergence of a demand for sustainable and socially responsible terms of tourism.

The first reference to the idea of eco-tourism in literature appeared in the 1970s. The concept of eco-tourism has had enormous growth since the mid 1980's but what do we mean when we refer to eco-tourism? How do we define it? There is no central governing body or set of official guidelines for sustainable travel.

People travel. It is a means for us to expand our own horizons and to understand the rich natural and cultural heritage our world offers. In turn it hopefully will help us all to realize the importance in concern for other places and other people.

The concept of eco-tourism emerged from the nature based holiday market once the past 20 years or so. Thoughtful nature lovers and tour companies become concerned to ensure that their holidays were not putting environments and species at risk.

Over time a greater emphasis was placed on the impacts of tourism on local people as well as environment and species.

Eco-tourism means different things to the different group involved in the relationship between tourism and the environment. If it is to be recognizing as a legitimate sector of the tourist industry, it must be defined to universal satisfaction. Broadly speaking it refers to tourism that is based on the natural environment but that seeks to minimize the harmful impacts and better still, seeks to promote conservation.

2.2 The emergence of eco-tourism:

As a reaction to the devastating effects of conventional mass tourism and a growing environmental awareness, ecotourism now represents the fastest growing sub sector of the tourism industry, generating billions of dollars annually. Developing nations have taken quickly to the idea of ecotourism, seeking it as the answer to the problems caused by mass tourism and as a way to develop their weak economies.

The term ecotourism is new, but the concept itself dates further back. The first reference to the idea of ecotourism in literature appeared in 1970s. A Mexican environmentalist

H'ector Ceballos -Lascurain in 1983, first coined the term ecotourism.

Much has been written about ecotourism but there is little onsensus about its meaning, due to the many forms in which ecotourism activities are offered by a large and wide variety of operators and practiced by an even large array of tourists. Nature tourism and adventure tourism focus on what the tourist is seeking or doing, ecotourism focuses on the impact of travel on the traveler, the environment and the people in the host country and posits that this impact must be positive.

2.3 What is eco-tourism?

Definition

International eco-tourism society defines- 'Responsible travel to natural places that conserves the environment and sustains the well being of local people is known as eco-tourism'

Eco-tourism means different things to the different groups involved in the relationship between tourism and the environment. It refers to tourism that is based on the natural

environment but that seeks to minimize the harmful impacts and seeks to promote conservation. There can be different view of the concept of eco -tourism:

‘Eco-tourism seeks to, co-ordinate, assist and stimulate cultural and environmental tourist development, recognizing the importance of conservation and maintenance of local cultural heritage and the natural resource of the region for present day generations and generations to come.’

‘Eco-tourism in its purest term, is an industry which claims to make a low impact on the environment and local culture, while helping to generate money, jobs and help the conservations of wildlife and vegetation. It claims to be responsible tourism which is ecologically and culturally sensitive.’

Eco-tourism hopes to change the unequal relationships of conventional tourism. Thus it encourages the use of indigenous guides and local products. It claims to combine environmental education with minimal travel comforts help to protected local flora and provide local people with economic incentives to safeguard their environment.’

The eco-tourism practices a non-consumptive use of wildlife and natural resources and conservation to the visited area through labor or financial means claimed at directly benefiting the conservation of the life.

Above definition means that those who implement and participate in ecotourism 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 benefit 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 labors agreements.

Thus, eco-tourism is least impact nature tourism which contributes to the maintenance of species and habitats either directly though a contribution to conservation and/or indirectly by providing revenue to the local community

sufficient for local people to value, and therefore project, their wildlife heritage area as a source of income.

New inventions and processes have been continuously developed to improve our way of life but must of the technological advances was made without have on environment. Just as it is accepted that a recognized definition must be adopted. It is also necessary to establish certain ground rules and objectives for eco-tourism development. First and foremost tourist development of this nature should not destroy the resource upon which it is based. Development should be of a sound ecological and cultural nature, meeting the needs of the host community about improving the standard of living for the majority, in both the short and long term. Further, the needs and demands of the cultural and potential tourist must be satisfied in order for the industry to develop. "Properly implemented, nature tourism can integrate conservation and rural development by helping to protect valuable natural areas by providing reserves for planning and management, stimulating economic development though

tourism expenditures and providing jobs and market for locals.”

Before going for the aims/objectives, principles and significance of eco-tourism, we have to understand what the difference between eco-tourism and nature based travel?

while nature based tourism is just travel to natural places, eco-tourism provides local benefits environmentally culturally and economically, and nature based tourist may just go bird watching, an eco-tourist goes bird watching with a local guide, stays in a locally operated eco lodge and contributes to the local economy.

2.4 Eco-tourism benefits:

Following are some of the benefits of ecotourism:

1. Conversion of conventional tourist to eco-tourism.
2. Attracts desirable clientele.
3. Increases employment and income to the local people.
4. Stimulates rural infrastructure level, while safeguarding environmental aspects.
5. Earn funds for natural resource conservation and development.

6. Builds political support for nature conservation.
7. It increases awareness of environmental issues.
8. Generates foreign exchange.
9. Increase in foreign exchange.
10. Least investment is required.

Eco-tourism is more than travel to enjoy or appreciate nature it also includes minimization of environmental and cultural consequences, contributes to conservation and community projects in developing countries and environmental education and political consciousness rising such as establishment of code of conduct for travelers as well as various components of travel industry.

2.5 Aims / objectives of eco-tourism:

The aim of ecotourism is that it should provide an opportunity to develop tourism in the ways to minimize the industry's negative impact and a ways to actively promote the conservation of earth's unique biodiversity.

2.6 Principles of eco- tourism

1. Eco- tourism should be initiated with the help of broad based community inputs and community should maintain control of tourism development
2. Culturally, environmentally and economically sensitive community development.
3. It should lead to nature conservation and local economic benefit.
4. Promotion of high quality information, well educated guides and effective service delivery.
5. Education and traveling programs to improve and manage heritage and natural resources should be established for long term success.
6. A code of practice should be established for tourism at all levels – national regional, local based on internationally accepted standards. Guidelines for tourism operations impact assessment, monitoring of cumulative impacts and limits to acceptable change should be established.

2.7 Significance of eco-tourism

1. To protect the rapidly disappearing eco-tourism that house most of the remaining biodiversity on earth.
2. It is one of the few feasible economic tools to finance conservation of sensitive eco system.
3. It ensures that local communities have a voice in sustainable development and that they benefit from revenue flows.

Eco-tourism is a niche within natural resources based tourism that focuses on education about the resources, environmental responsibility and bringing financial benefits to local communities.

In the world of tourism the concept of eco-tourism is also known by other trendy names such as “nature travel”, “green travel”, “responsible travel”, “low impact travel”, “village based tourism”, and “sustainable tourism.”

In a report on culture and tourism in South East Asia, The UNESCO Notes: “tourism can be a positive and powerful tool to protect and sustain the cultural and natural resources

on which the tourism industry itself is ultimately based while simultaneously serving as a forceful agent for employment generation and poverty reduction in affected communities.

2.8 Eco-tourism: A Booming Industry.

1. Rising Numbers:

The eco-tourism industry which is growing rapidly, has emerged as one of the most important sector of the inter tourism industry making up 7% of the world tourism market. In Asia pacific region alone eco tours operates growth rates of 10% to 25% a year. Demand for quality ecotourism destination pollution crowding and concerns for the natural environment increases.

2. More money:

Many developing countries with established ecotourism destinations have been the member of eco- tourism and the money they spend during their visits, dramatically increase over the last several years.

In Costa Rica, the number of foreign tourist visiting national parks rose 330% in the six years between 1985-91.

3. New investments:

Many countries are investing in ecotourism as a means of attracting foreign capital for economic development.

2.9 International year of Eco-tourism: IYE

Eco-Tourism activities have been expanding rapidly over the past two decades worldwide and further growth is expected in the future. Recognising its global importance the UN designated the year 2002 as the international year of Ecotourism and its commission on sustainable development requested international agencies, government and the private sector to undertake support line activities. The WTO and UNEP have joined forces to take the leading role in the preparation and co-ordination of activities to be undertaken at the international level during the International year of Eco-tourism

In May 2002, the world the Eco-Tourism summit took place in the city of Quebec. The major object of this summit was to reviews the potentials countries of Eco-tourism .To sustainable development the summit was expected to be



largest ever meeting between all stakeholders involved in or affected by Eco-Tourism.

Eco-Tourism is getting more precise meaning according to UNEP and WTO. The term Eco-Tourism has two dimensions-

- Eco-Tourism is sustainable development tool.
- Eco-Tourism is a form alternative nature based tourism

There are 3 rare characteristics that are usually associated with the concept of eco-tourism.

1. Relation to the national environment.
2. Educational and appreciative motive.
3. sustainability.

2.10 Sustainable Development and Eco-tourism

Like all terms of development 'development of eco-tourism has its new concept sustainable development.' The world commission on Environment and Development (WCED)- popularly knows as the Brundtland commission 1987, laid down the foundation for a debate on the meaning of 'Sustainable Development .' and the role of environment on

development . No single definition is yet available which everybody accepts. Most of the definitions are built upon the view expressed by The Brundtland commission which defines-

“Sustainable development in any field should take place in such a manner as to meet the need and aspirations of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs.”

What is Sustainable Tourism?

It is informative -

Travelers not only learn about the destination, they learn how to help to sustain its character while deepening their own travel experiences. Residents learn that ordinary and familiar may be of interest and value to outsiders.

It supports integrity of place

Destinations travelers seek out business that emphasizes the character of the locale in terms of architecture, heritage, aesthetics, and ecology. Tourism revenues in turn raise local perceived value of these assets.

It benefits residents-

Travel businesses do their best to employ and train local people, buy local supplies, and use local services.

It conserves resources-

Environmentally aware travelers favor businesses that minimize pollution, waste energy consumptions, water usage, landscaping chemicals, and unnecessary nighttime lighting.

It respects local culture and tradition –

Foreign visitors learn about and observe local etiquette, including using at least a few courtesy words in the local language. Residents learn how to deal with foreign expectations that may differ from their own.

It does not abuse its product-

Stakeholders anticipate development pressure and apply limits and management techniques to prevent the 'loved to death.' Syndrome. Businesses cooperate to sustain natural habitats, heritage sites , scenic appeal, and local culture.

It strives for quality, not quantity-

Communities measure tourism success not by sheer numbers of visitors, but by length of stay, money spent and quality of experience.

It means great trips –

Satisfied, excited visitors bring new knowledge hence and send friends off to experience the same thing which provides continuing business for the destination.

The sustainable tourism that respect local people, the traveler, cultural heritage and environment. It promises employment (Job creation) and income to the local community, foreign exchange and new infrastructure while safeguarding cultural heritage, natural resources, living culture and minimizing negative environmental and social impacts.

Sustainable eco-tourism is thus;

- Minimizes environmental impacts using bench work
- Improve contribution to local sustainable development.
- Requires lowest possible consumption of nonrenewable resources.
- Sustains the well being of local people.

- Stresses local ownership.
- Supports efforts to conserve the environment.
- Contributes to bio-diversity.

Sustainable developments meet the needs of presents tourists and hosts regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to managements of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes and biodiversity and life support system (World Tourism Organization).

Sustainable Tourism as by Hunter (1995) on the basis of sustainability in the Brundtland Report as follows:-

Sustainable tourism development shpuld:

- Meet the needs and wants of local host community in terms of improving living standards and quality of life.
- Satisfy the demands of tourists and the tourism industry and continue to attract them in order to meet the first aims.

-Safeguard the environment resources base for tourism, encompassing natural and cultural components in order to achieve both the preceding aims.

-Sustainable tourism product which are operated in harmony with the local environment, community and cultures, so that these become the permanent beneficiaries not the victims of tourism development.

2.11 Is Sustainable Tourism Is Same Thing as Eco-Tourism-

The distinction between two is, the term eco-tourism refers to a segment within the tourism sector, while the sustainability principles should apply to all types of tourism activities, operations, establishments and projects including conventional alternative terms.

The International Year of Eco-tourism will offer an opportunity to review eco-tourism experiences worldwide, in order to consolidate tools and institutional frameworks. That ensures its sustainable development in the future. This means maximizing the economic, environmental and social benefits

from eco-tourism, while avoiding its past shortcomings and negative impacts.

***Ten guiding principles of Sustainable Tourism**

Development with the help of nature tourism:-

1. Using Resources Sustainable:-

The conservation and sustainable use of resources natural, social and cultural is crucial and makes long term business sense

2. Reducing over consumption and waste:-

Reduction of over consumption and waste avoids the cost of restoring long term environmental damage and contributes to the quality of tourism.

3. Maintaining Diversity:-

Maintaining and promoting natural, social and cultural diversity is essential for long term sustainable tourism and creates a resilient base for the industry

4. Integrating Tourism into planning:-

Tourism development which is integrated into a national and local strategic planning framework and which undertakes

EIA- environmental impact assessment increases the long term viability of tourism.

5. Supporting local economics:-

Tourism that supports a wide range of local economic activities, and which takes environmental costs/values into account both protects these economics and avoids environmental damage.

6. Involving local communities:-

The full involvement of local communities in the tourism sector not only benefits them and the environment in general but also improves the tourism experience.

7. Consulting stakeholder and the public:

Consultation between the tourism industry and local communities, organization and institutions is essential if they are to work alongside each other and resolve potential conflicts of interest.

8. Staff Training:-

Staff training, which integrates sustainable tourism into work practices, along with recruitment of local personnel at all levels, improves the quality of the tourism product.

9. Responsible Marketing tourism:

Marketing that provides tourists with full and responsible information increases respect for the natural, social and cultural environments of destinations areas and enhances customer satisfaction.

10. Undertaking research activities:-

Ongoing research and monitoring by the industry using effective data collection and analysis is essential in solving problems and bringing benefits to destinations.

The draft tourism policy 1997 states that “in the context of economic liberalization and globalization being pursued by the country, the development policies of no sector can remain static” the policy further states that “the emergence of tourism as an important instrument for sustainable human development including poverty alleviation, employment generation, environmental regeneration and advancement of women and other disadvantaged group in the country” requires support to realize these goals. India’s tourism resources have always been considered immense, in a tourism

audit. The geographical features are diverse, colorful and varied. The coastline offers opportunities for developing the best beaches in the world. There is a wealth of eco-system including bio sphere reserves, mangroves, coral reefs, deserts mountains and forests as well as an equally wide range of flora and fauna.

The policy further states that “international tourists visiting interiors of the country for reasons of purity of the environment and nature contributes to the development of these areas particularly backward regions.” Thus, tourism should also become a reason for better preservation and protection of our natural resources, environment and ecology.

The strategy for development should take into consideration the carrying capacity, local aspirations and benefits likely to accrue to the community.

The following draft guidelines have been approved at a state minister conference and have circulated to various trade and industry bodies. The guidelines draw a distinction between mass or resort tourism and nature or ecotourism, as

the kind of tourism that has a lower impact on the environment and requires less infrastructural development.

• **Draft guidelines include:**

1. To create a tourist as a product that is desirable and supported by an integrated infrastructure.
2. To involve all agencies, public, private, and government departments in tourism development.
3. to create synergy between departments and agencies that have to deliver the composite tourist product.
4. to use both the circuit and scheme approach so that people participation through panchayats, local bodies, NGO's and youth organizations will create a greater awareness of tourism. The Central Government can thus concentrate on larger investment oriented projects.
5. To create direct access for destinations off the beaten track.
6. To diversify the product with new option like adventure tourism. Forest, wildlife, landscape. Beach tourism, farm and health tourism.

7. To ensure that development does not exceed sustainable levels.
8. to develop the seven north eastern states. The Himalayan region and island for tourism.
9. to maintain balance between the negative and positive impact of tourism through planning restrictions and through education of the people for conservation and development.

We believe that the true meaning of ecotourism is to go back to nature, accept simplicity and be content with a clear, simple but comfortable room and facilities and accept for a while the convenience of a dirt road, a muddy rail through the lush rain forest and some rain too. As a reward you will be overwhelmed by the beauty and the experience of nature, instead of the noisy and overcrowded places one finds in every big city. Some thing has to be done to reorient tourists to the true ecolodges to enjoy the wonders of nature and if the so called ecotourism agencies stick to their logo, they should also include in their programme true ecolodges in isolated areas.

Efforts to better understand ecotourism, as well improve its planning, management and marketing techniques have been conducted by many ecotourism companies and practitioners, governments and research people throughout the world.