



ECOTOURISM AS AN URGE TO GREEN LIVING

Dr. Lili Kumari Padhy
Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

Abstract

Today's modern lifestyle highly requires a symbiotic relationship with the mother earth's natural ecology for its sustainability. Based on the proverb „simple living, high thinking“ the attempt to reduce the net consumption of natural resources, particularly even during recreation underpin the concept of ecotourism as an urge to „earth harmony living“ or „net zero living“. The practice and general sensitivity towards the environment can be maintained by negotiating the relationships of human requirements within the limits across the interconnected domains like economics, politics, ecology and culture including the consequences for the future generations of both human and non-human generations. Ecotourism is one among such special forms of exploration with ultimate intention of a better living of bliss. With the responsibility of nature conservation and ecological sustainability through constant interactions and tender responses to our loving and beautiful environment, we contribute individual responsibility towards a shift of building an attractive environment necessary for multiple generations. On this basis, the reemphasis of insights regarding the minimal anthropological interventions on environmental habitats advocating the environmental, social and cultural responsibilities of human beings becomes paramount. Thus this presentation attempts an environmentally sustainable lifestyle campaign by a thorough invitation of active tourists to enhance environmental quality through organic sustainable farming, zero waste grocery stores, connecting more time with the green environment, fresh air, organic fertilizer etc.

Key points – **ecotourism, green living, environment, nature, sustainability.**

Introduction

Ecotourism is one among numerous special forms of newly evolved tourisms with ultimate intention of new dimensions for a better living of bliss and peace. This travel pleasure encompasses the responsibility of nature conservation and ecological sustainability through constant interactions and tender responses to our loving and beautiful natural home. Nature being our whole and sole companion from the time immemorial, „green living“ is the only way out to survive and thrive. Visiting this wonderful friend of ours with enormous emotional and strong value commitment reverses us a wide range of precious goods and services for coexistence as a part of each other and not apart from each other. In the scenario of global climate change, ecotourism holds a bunch of philanthropic aspirations, promoting major environmental issues like water conservation, energy efficiency, recycling of natural resources, sustainable use of biodiversity through a creation of awareness urge.

Oxford English Dictionary (2005) defines the word „tourism“ as the business activity with the provision of accommodation, services and entertainment for the people visiting for pleasure. This concept involves other activities such as the business of charming, obliging and entertaining people for pleasure or business going beyond the limitation of holiday activities. The Manila Declaration on World Tourism (1980) highlighted its importance as an activity having large impacts on social, cultural, educational aspects both nationally and internationally. While the intergovernmental organization „League of Nations“ (1936) outlined a foreign tourist travelling abroad at least for 24 hours, „United Nations“ (1945) extended its inclusion up to a stay of six months. From various accepted definitions tourist is a person who travels to another location, away from his own usual social setting, for pleasure, business or any other social reason for minimum 24 hours or maximum one year for example, the long term international students and migrants are not classified technically as tourists. Tourists may be motivated by a range of various motives such as freshness of body and mind, chase of entertainment or excitement being driven by cultural and environmental curiosity, self-advancement, visiting of friends and relatives, formation of new relationships or any business purpose. Smith (1989) defines tourist as a temporarily leisured person who visits another place away from his home in order to experience a change.

In the 1970s and 1980s tourism has earned profuse reputation among development practitioners, environmental conservationist, human rights activists, social scientists, thus giving rise to „community based tourism“ or „alternative tourism“. This kind of tourism includes natural, social and economic values with an opportunity of shared experience among hosts and guests (Eadington & Smith 1992). Some journals like *The Journals of Ecotourism* and *The Journal of Sustainable Tourism* focus on both the sides of this alternate kind of tourism; limitations and possibilities. Ecotourism owns a lion“s share of the total attention projected on the tourism of alternate forms (Stronza, 2001). The U.S. based publication Conservation International by Ziffer (1989) defined ecotourism as a form of tourism primarily inspired by the natural history and indigenous culture of an area“. The International Ecotourism Society (2015) defines ecotourism as a responsible travel to natural

extensions for conservation of the environment, sustenance of local people's well-being entailing interpretation and education of the staff and the tourists as well.

The Director General of PICE (Program of International Consultancy on Ecotourism) and Special Advisor on Ecotourism to the World Conservation Union, Hector Ceballos states ecotourism is the only type of tourism that ought to be permitted in protected areas. According to him all management plans should incorporate clear guidelines for developing ecotourism activities in national parks and other natural protected areas. Because of its eco-friendliness it is also called as green travelling, sustainable travelling or eco-friendly travelling. Ecotourism is a good mixture of ecological and tourism, but it should be a narrow scope of its definition if it is limited to the visit of natural environment. Rather it is a responsible travel comprising the education of the travelers regarding the conservation of the biodiversity, improvement of the local people's wellness and broadly the empowerment of the culture and human rights. The sole endeavor is to gift our future generation a human undisturbed travel destination. While ecotourism triangle rests on three major foundations like responsible travel, environmental sustainability and personal evolution, the triangle of eco-destination rests on flora, fauna and cultural heritage. Ecotourism is a travel configuration precluding pristine tour experience of composed and serene nature in an intention to protect the natural and cultural heritage of our unique planet.

Ecotourism is a relatively recent term and not yet fully accepted into mainstream language. It is a compound word of eco and tourism. Oxford English dictionary first recorded the term „ecotour“ in 1973 and ecotourism probably in 1982. So the concept of ecotourism seems to be a later development with its broader inclusions. However, the encyclopedia of ecotourism by Weaver (2001) shows the emergence of Ecotour means a visit to an area of ecological interest, often with an educational intention of having little or no harmful effect on ecology, rather helping its conservation. Ecotourism chooses typically exotic and threatened natural areas to observe the bio-diversity and have the least adverse impact on it.

Antiquity

The history of travel account gives a detail account of moving outside of a person's local area to observe distant parts of the world, perceive the arts and architecture, learn new languages, relish new cuisines, and experience new cultures. It was mostly confined to wealthy classes and aristocratic families. As the excerpt from „Lessons from the Frugal Grand Tour“ by Gross published in New York Times (2008) reads;

„Three hundred years ago, wealthy young Englishmen started taking a post-Oxbridge trek through France and Italy in search of art, culture and the roots of western civilization. With nearly unlimited funds, aristocratic connections and months or years to roam, they commissioned paintings, perfected their language skills and mingled with the upper crust of the continent.“

Then the emergence of leisure travel during industrial revolutions came into scene in the new middle class families in the United Kingdom to encourage industrial people like factory owners, economic oligarchy, machinery owners, and traders as stated by Singh (2008). It gradually appeared in many other different places. Then in the second half of the 19th century, the new form of modern tourism called „mass tourism“ emerged in the UK and was pioneered by

Thomas Cook, an English businessman and founder of the travel agency „Thomas Cook and Son“ in (1865). Academics have defined „mass tourism“ as travel by groups of people through a planned procedure under the care of tourism professionals like the tourism company agents, transportation operators, and hotel personals. This is today synonymous with package tourism. Ecotourism is one among many other niche or adjectival tourisms for a specific purpose like agritourism, birth tourism, culinary tourism, cultural tourism, dark tourism, extreme tourism, geotourism, heritage tourism, LGBT tourism, medical tourism, film tourism, nautical tourism, pop culture tourism, religious tourism, sex tourism, slum tourism, virtual tourism, war tourism, wellness tourism, wildlife tourism, textile tourism etc. emerged in the contemporary age (wikipedia.org). Ecotourism is a new paradigm since 1980s and is a responsible program for the wellness of the environment unlike the conventional tourism having many negative aspects on it.

Need of ecotourism

The principles of this decent concept adhere to three main aspects such as conservation, communities and a cordial sustainable travel. A sustainable travel or a sustainable living causes a very less or no damage to the environment, hence it continues for a longer period of time. A sustainable thing has depth and timelessness. Ecotourism, from that point of view, intends to generate minimum of physical, social, psychological and behavioral influences on the environment and maximize benefits to visitors and the host country, especially people having eco-destination. Respecting the nature and making the visitors aware about the local, political, environmental and social climate may enrich the memorable experiences. Every specific area is characterized by its own spiritual and ritual processes. The exchange of the ceremonial activities will empower the mutual understanding and sensitivity for our nature. Along with these lasting benefits, the local people and the private industries also get some pecuniary advantages. It also promotes sensitivity to the political, environmental and social climates of the host countries. Various studies on ecotourism show a picture of inclination to all living components during a socially responsible travel for a sustainable environment. The destination of this travel is flora, fauna and other legacy of physical artifacts and attributes of past generations. It may intensely transform the mental and spiritual concerns and commitments of a tourist with a staunch inclination towards the ecological harmony. Save soil, the global movement launched by Indian spiritual leader Sadguru has massive impact on the youth today, which brings together people from around the world for enhancing the organic content in the soil. The spiritual guru embarked on a 100 day motorcycle tour passing through 100 countries campaigning revitalization of soil health. Kerala, one of the southern states of India, is the first state to execute planned

ecotourism in India. The nature enthusiasts love to spend time in the lap of Western Ghats here with profound cultural excursions and wildlife photography.

According to Albert Einstein the significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them. Today's scenario witnesses the destruction of ecosystem, restructure of communities, and struggle for existence. The key approach to ecotourism is sensible treatment of animals, land, water, and air- every component of the environment in course of any action related to tourism. With the extensive advance in science and technology and growing insatiable demand of modern men humans confront some critical situations to tackle with. Numerous environmental hazards emerge from the vast usage and disposal of plastic materials mostly used for packing, shipping and containing purposes. Plastic being a non-corrosive, inexpensive and lightweight substance, invites increasing demand on itself. The disposal thus increased more than ever. Plastic pollution causes drastic climate change by emitting greenhouse gases, damage soil and water by releasing harmful chemicals, pollutes ocean life through toxic carcinogen- throwing our own lives into destruction.

Today's major concerns like industrialization, urbanization, technical appliances, and agricultural practices of modern men play vital roles in environmental depletion. Be it any kind of tourism, it always engenders different kinds of pollutions, disruption of balanced ecological systems, depletion of resources as a result of large human congregation and transportation. Considering present-day depleting environmental conditions, application of post war production technology and inexhaustible population growth Barry Commoner, Paul R. Ehrlich and John Holdren (1970) deduced the mathematical notation $I=P*A*T$, where I stands for „human Impact on the environment“, P for „Population“ A for „Affluence“, T for „Technology“. Though this equation was criticized by Neal Koblitz (1981) in his article „Mathematics as Propaganda“ for misusing mathematics in the social sciences, it resembles with the „Kaya Identity“ developed by Japanese energy economist Yoichi Kaya (1993) in his book „Environment, Energy, and Economy: Strategies for sustainability“ which states that the total amount of green house gas carbon dioxide emission is the product of four factors like human population, GDP (Gross Domestic Product i.e. monetary measure of the market value of all the final goods and services produced in a particular time period) per capita (for each person), energy intensity (units of energy output per unit of GDP) and carbon intensity (emission rate of greenhouse gas per GDP). This calculations project a future prediction of Carbon Dioxide emissions and climate change, where tourism industry has growing contribution, since it encompasses hotel industry, hospitality industry, transport industry, airline industry and many other activities related to tourist trade.

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Benefits of ecotourism

Having discussed many things about ecotourism the genuine question which haunts our mind is what real contribution it will have for our economic, social and environmental sake. The triangle of sustainability is built on the three vital points; economic vitality, environmental integrity and social equity. In ecotourism the motivation for travel are natural scenery, new places and experiences.

The specific characteristic of eco-destination is that area should be with natural setting within a protected region. The particular space should cover a lot of land with less constructions for free movement i.e. having a low density development. The most desirable virtue of a tourist is the ability not to harm natural systems. Designated outdoor recreation zones may involve the provision of activities like enjoying the local events, interaction between host communities and tourists, tree planting, exploitation and commercialization of local culture, local custom exhibition, exchange with the locals, rejoice in cooking classes, deeper understanding of different cultural aspects etc. The provision of a lot of accomplishments like exercise, spiritual rejuvenation, camaraderie, physical challenge, rock climbing, cycling may entertain the tourists. Eco-lodge will solely take care of the conservation of the surrounding environment exerting minimal impact on nature. It highlights reduced water consumption, reduced pollution and waste, promotes energy efficiency, education of employees and guests on the surrounding environment, and contribution of sustainable local development.

Small community provision of accommodation and establishments for meals and entertainment, clean basic public facilities, sun and fun, friendly atmosphere for outdoor enthusiast may be the simple attraction for the eco-destinations. These businesses can be run by the locals benefiting themselves financially. The future of tourism is not only destination but emotions, expectations and experiences. For the world's 40 poorest countries, tourism is the second largest source of foreign exchange, after oil.

The profusely available natural resources in several places of the world have been encroached and intruded by humans. Preservation of bio-diversity has been an extraordinary challenge today because of many unregulated human behavior and reckless treatment with the nature. Active legislations; be it international treaties or national/state laws provide a legal framework to pull the strings of anthropogenic activities. So that the process of habitat restoration will be ensured and the beautiful bio-diversity may be conserved and maintained. Ecotourism, being a non-destructive human recreation concerns the conservation considerations and acts as an awareness initiative for sustainable living. It creates jobs locally, increases shared income in the community. Everyone can participate in this program irrespective of age, religion or status as it is affordable for everyone.

Green living

Green living is a philosophy that motivates one to make choices to optimize the health of a person, community and the planet as well. It prescribes the avoidance of toxic chemical products, use of durable products, and production of one's own food, purchase of organic food, consumption of natural products for nourishment of body, skin, hair etc. For instance use of certain sunscreen products and rinsing the body off causes the death of certain coral reef in the ocean because of its carcinogenic nature. So each and every product which impacts adversely on or in the body also impacts the planet badly. This is the shift of living for sustainable intention and is termed as „green living“, „earth harmony living“, „net zero living“ etc. The varied travel experience may include local integration of different natural bio solutions such as bio stimulants, bio protection and bio nutrition with conventional crop protection products. Package free stores and zero waste supermarkets have a very bulk impact worldwide and the tourists may enjoy the interaction with the local unpacked, unsealed fresh products and the people behind the operations.

The most relevant idea associated with ecotourism is zero waste management. It focuses on waste prevention that stimulates the redesign of resources for the reuse of all products. The respectful practice and ideal philosophy of earth's natural ecology will gradually lead towards sustainable development required for multiple generations. For a sustainable living system organic sustainable farming, zero waste grocery stores, connecting more time with the green environment, fresh air, organic fertilizer and educating younger generation regarding that is the need of the hour.

Conclusion

Having discussed various reasons of ecotourism it is noticed that its association with green living is relevant both theoretically and practically. People in the host destinations enrich themselves socially, economically and culturally. Ecotourism can act as a cross cultural communication among the guest and host localities in an eco-friendly manner leaving an authentic experience. It can further be used as a lens to explore the issues of biodiversity, environmental conservation, political economy, consumer's education and resolve them. Some popular destinations for ecotourism are; Blue Mountain in Australia, the Amazon Rainforest in Brazil, the Himalayas in Nepal, Antarctica, Alaska, Cost Rica, Dominica, Kenya, Norway, Palau etc. so it is suggested to enjoy the unspoiled nature, taking a break from car and crowd cities may provide certain scope for natural resource management. The goal of future research in tourism should be to explore the details of both the benefits of the hosts and the transformative gain of the guests as well with a balance to environmental ethics following the overall principles of sustainable development.

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Dr. Lili Kumari Padhy



Lili Kumari Padhy has completed her PhD in English from KIIT University Bhubaneswar in 2019. Besides having 22 years of varied teaching experiences from elementary to higher secondary levels, she contributes to many national and international publications. Her research interests incorporate English language teaching, second language acquisition, language skills, learning styles and strategies, multiculturalism and teaching methods. Her major work of interest includes activity based learning and composing poems on spiritual aspect.