Tourism represents a prolific new approach to the knowledge of contemporary tourism in its global perspective because it has emerged as the biggest industry of the new millennium. It has gained importance today because it has assumed importance as an instrument for economic development, foreign exchange earning and employment generation with several linkages. There also arose some social and ecological problems during the emergence of this activity at global level. A more environmentally aware society is beginning to manifest concern about the effects of tourism on environment, nature and society.

A small country like Thailand received by far the largest share of international tourists’ arrival and foreign exchange earnings among the Asian nations. In terms of relative impact, however, the socio-economic significance of tourism industry is much higher in this country. Earning from tourism related activities in Thailand rank on the top and tourism is considered as the second leg of the national economy.

There are innumerable factors that have made Thailand the most attractive tourist destination in Asia and the Pacific region. Every year millions of people arrive here for sight-seeing, business, holidaying, conventions and various other purposes. The whole of Thailand is favourite for tourists but Bangkok, Pattaya, Phuket, Ko Samui, Hat Hai and Chiang Mai are main tourist destinations in the country.

This thesis is an attempt to analyze role of tourism in economic and social development of Thailand and methodologies adopted are analytical and historical. The emphasis on analytical method has led to survey the gap between the rich and poor with the help of country’s statistical data on increased GDP. The qualitative as well as quantitative methods of data analysis have also been adopted. The historical method in this work was necessitated which has been drawn from the Thai history and also from the origin of Thailand tourism. The analytical and descriptive approach has covered the entire gamut of Thailand’s economic and social phenomena and its realities. Through these approaches it became easy to analyze about the displacement which is taking place due to tourism development in the country. It also helped in discussing that how the development of tourism has violated the laws, social values and dislocated environment. This study is an attempt to look into all these factors as
well as its causes and try to find out as to whether there can be any solution to overcome the problems.

The main objective of the study is to trace and analyze the impact of tourism on economic, social, cultural and environmental facet of the country during the period 1997-2004. The financial upsurge was healed by the tourism industry of the country from which foreign exchange grew in the fastest pace ever before. The study have also tried to elucidate on the issues which are in limelight due to tourism as how tourism as a vehicle alleviate poverty in rural communities, to examine tourism as a means of building and strengthening local communities, to know the impact of tourism development on the sex ratio of the country. The studies have also tried to locate the impact of tourism on the status and the livelihood of the women in the urban society in general and rural society in particular. The study also revealed the vision of Thai tourism as sustainable industry and how the government, of the country has tackled the problems which are emerging from tourism. The thesis has dealt with all the pros and cons of the tourism industry in Thailand and it's implications in terms of economic and social development in the country.

The whole study has been divided into five chapters:

The first chapter is the introductory chapter which gives a brief account of tourism, its meaning and definition and its development in the country as well as in the world. It also examines the lay-out and the salient features of tourism in Thailand in terms of its growth, trends and patterns, various structure as well as spatial distribution patterns.

The second chapter throws light on the impact of tourism on the economy of the country. Both positive and negative impacts of tourism have been experienced by the country. The positive economic impacts include an impressive growth of GDP and GNP, foreign exchange earning, national income generation, employment, balance of payments, poverty alleviation and other economic benefits. Another important economic factor enabling tourism development in most parts of the country is its infrastructure, primarily in the form of accommodation, transportation, communications, services and utilities which have brought a revolution and new meaning to tourism in this country. But with all these positive things, tourism has also put increasing pressure on tourist areas, putting strain on infrastructure and resources.

Chapter three deals with tourism impact on socio-cultural aspects of Thailand. The development of the country’s handicrafts, cottage and small-scale industries has
registered a positive impact because of the tourism development in the country. While excessive growth of tourism has sealed negative impact too, tourism development and its rapid growth have damaged the country's social and cultural norms and values by indulging itself more into sex tourism and prostitution. Crime rate has also enhanced.

Fourth chapter explores tourism and environmental factors in the country. The relationship between tourism and environment is not only fundamental but a mutually dependent. The environment generates influence on tourism of the country but in the same way it is tourism which also affects the existing environment of the country. The country 's environment and many forms of infrastructures are basic facilities and criteria and both are known as life supporters for a steady tourism development, especially the exotic physical environment as well as socio- culture environment. Tourism has damaged the country's environment by encroaching natural and historical sites and threatening the existing ecosystem. Fifth chapter has the concluding observations. This chapter has summarized the main findings of research.