CHAPTER- I

ECOTOURISM: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
Ecotourism which interchangeably known as nature based tourism is a fraction of international tourism. It is the fastest growing segment of the global tourism industry that promotes less or non-destructive and non-consumptive use of nature. Over the last three decades, there has been a growing debate on quality tourism worldwide. Ecotourism as a result, appeared as an environmentally benign and responsible travel to areas of outstanding beauty and exceptionally pristine places with identity of their own. It is a win-win development strategy especially designed for underdeveloped rural areas. The key considerations of ecotourism value the natural environment, respect of host culture and the local quality of life.

The history of international tourism is evident of mass tourism. Tourism as an inevitable activity has been booming since 1950. In 1950, the international arrival was 25 million. The international arrivals worldwide increased to nearly 70 million in 1960 that grew further to 160 million in 1970. In 1980, international arrivals totalled over 280 million and rose to over 563 million by 1995. Between 1950 and 1999 the number of international arrivals show an evolution from a mere 25 million international arrivals to the current 664 million, corresponding to an average annual growth rate of 7 percent. For the year 2000 World Tourism Organization (WTO) projected worldwide tourist arrivals of around 702 million and over 1 billion by 2010.\(^1\) In 2001, the global international arrivals amounted to more than 700 million. According to WTO study, "Tourism: 2020 Vision" predicts that 1.5 billion tourist will be visiting foreign countries annually by the year 2020, spending more than $2 trillion or 5 billion everyday.\(^2\) This mass movement of tourist flow threatened the quality of natural environment. Therefore, to overcome

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2. Francesco Frangialli., Preserving Paradise, Our Planet (Small Islands) Vol. 10, No.3. UNEP Pub. 1993
the shortcomings of mass tourism, a dynamic model of tourism development i.e. ecotourism with nature as a principle objective came into existence. The model of ecotourism is considered as environmentally sustainable and socio-economically viable phenomenon.

**Evolution of Ecotourism**

The etymology of ecotourism has always been debatable. According to Orams (1980) and Hvenegaard (1994) the origin of ecotourism dates back to 1980. However, Higgins (1996) advocates that this concept is evident through Hetzer's work in 1965 when he explained the intricate relationship between tourists, environment and culture in which they interact. According to Hetzer there are four fundamental pillars that are needed for a more responsible form of tourism. These are:

- Minimum environmental impact.
- Minimum impact and maximum respect for host cultures.
- Maximum 'recreational' satisfaction for tourist's participating in the activity.
- Maximum economic benefits to the host country's grassroots.

According to Hetzer ecotourism grew as a result of dissatisfaction with the conventional forms of tourism which in general sense ignored social and ecological elements of foreign regions in favor of a more anthropocentric and strictly profit centered approach towards the delivery of tourism products.

In the Fennell's (1998) view during the mid-1970's the Trans-Canada highway was differentiated on the basis of different ecological zones. The Canadian government allowed the Canadian and foreign travelers to appreciate man-nature relationship in Canada. Other researches show that the concept of ecozone and ecotours were operational during mid-1970s but was

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focussed at very low pace. These arguments implied that ecotourism was well in practice long before in 1980, but not known by this name. Few observers remarked that "ecotourism is simply a name of an old activity". Ecotourism was viewed in different perspectives by two different schools of thought. One school of thought emphasized that bird-watching wilderness, hiking and nature-walks were part of ecotourism. Whereas, second school of thought, perceived it as an activity related to sunbathing and white water rafting. Both the schools had unresolved ambiguities that generated a high degree of skepticism.

In view of Orams (1995) ecotourism has a wide range of perspectives that varies from the conservative or "active" to moral liberal or "passive" perspectives. The former held that ecotourism involved well-being of the environment and entailed a behavior/lifestyle change in the participants. The latter only talked about the impact on the physical environment.

In 1990, ecotourism emerged as one of the most debated, argued and hyped concept within the contemporary industry. It started with the moral philosophy of sustainability, community development and environmental education. It was considered as an offshoot of the wave of environmental awareness. The idea behind the concept was to make use of tourism as a tool to protect the natural ecosystems by giving them socio-economic values in their original state. Proponents of ecotourism considered it as a potential strategy to form a balance between environment, development and conservation through environmental education programs and campaigns. Ecotourism also stressed greater public participation in planning and decision-

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making concerning resource use (refer to fig-1, showing community participation).

The rise in popularity of ecotourism over the past decades has been due to both 'pull' and 'push' factors. While the pull factors include a general

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recognition at all levels (government, community and individuals) of the need to protect and preserve the environment. The push factors have been related to the changing consumer habits, demands and expectations.

Ecotourism struck a responsive and sensible cord among a broad spectrum of stakeholders in the tourism industry. For instance, the tour operators showed strong concern for the environment and the culture of the local people. In recent years ecotourism has been viewed as marketing strategy and also referred as a niche market for environmentally aware tourists who are interested in observing nature.

Berle (1990) considered ecotourism as a big business that attracted lots of investment propositions, provided foreign exchange and economic rewards for the preservation of natural environment. Anderson (1994) also pointed out "ecotourism as a part of tourism must be a viable business concept." According to Anderson ecotourism must provide value for money spent by the ecotourist and money invested by the ecotourism entrepreneurs. From this point ecotourism is more business than the philosophy.

Helu- Thaman in 1992 argued that-

"Ecotourism is fast becoming the modern marketing manager's source of inspiration for the new sale. It has got a lot going for it; it offers pretty much what people want, what they wish to escape from pressured polluted urban living and it offers a sort of moral expiation of guilt for our contribution to the degradation of our planet". 10

Ecotourism apparently has undergone lot of changes over the past few years. Ecotourism was initially viewed as a desire for education and challenging vacations combined with an increased level of awareness and interest in the natural environment. Secondly, the conservation and resource management professional's viewed natural area visitation as an avenue for...
enhancing protected areas providing conservation-related benefits, particularly to the residents living near the protected areas through finance. Thirdly, the economic development professionals viewed natural area visitation as an avenue to provide employment in regions that had experienced declined or lack of economic development in other sectors of the economy. Fourthly, the increased attention to improve the sustainability to all tourism activities, particularly those that occurred in the natural areas. These approaches show a change in the goals that various stakeholders attached to the visitation.

Many countries have seriously considered and incorporated ecotourism in their marketing strategies and product planning for formulating the policies but consensus on a universally accepted definition of ecotourism is yet to be developed. Attempts have been made by various individuals and organization to define ecotourism. These definitions have been described briefly in the following section.

Definitions

Ecotourism does not have an established and universally accepted definition till date. But efforts have been made to define ecotourism by various organizations and individuals in their own ways that shows how they perceive it to be (Appendix-II). The term ecotourism was originally coined in 1987 by Hector Ceballos- Lascuraine of Mexico. He defined ecotourism as-

"Travelling to relatively undisturbed and uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas."  

According to Sir Crispin, ecotourism is defined as-

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"Travel to see the diversity of life and culture without causing damage to either". Many scholars have also stressed that tourism is environment dependent industry and ecotourism is the latest expression of this relationship.

The Additional Inspector General of forest and Director Wildlife Preservation, Minister of Environment and Forests (India) defined ecotourism as-

"Any tourism in which there is least conflict between man and nature, where both the tourists and the managers of tourism promote tourism on a sustainable basis".

This definition implied that ecotourism is a means to promote sustainable development while at the same time it creates an economic benefits/justification for the preservation of natural lands and wildlife.

According to the United Nations and World Tourism Organization-

"Ecotourism is a travel to enjoy and appreciate nature."

In 1991 The Ecotourism Society (TES) defined Ecotourism as-

"A responsible travel that conserves the natural environment and sustains the well being of the local people."

It emphasized that ecotourism is a blend of two elements i.e., ecology and economy. The ecology (conservation) side of suggested conservation benefits in the form of entrance fee that can supplement existing governmental conservation budgets and provide incentive for private sector conservation. The economy side of ecotourism promised to bring job opportunities to remote areas. It is generally assumed that ecotourism requires

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less public sector infrastructure investment than does more traditional tourism.

According to Hay (1992) tourism industry has designed new forms of tourism that has minimal negative environmental and social effects and generates significant foreign earnings for the host communities. The Canadian wildlife service suggested that ecotourism is a potential tool for protecting wildlife habitat and that involves a broad spectrum of activities related to nature. At the end of one spectrum it has specialized and dedicated ornithologists and on the other end the casual observers who come only to enjoy the scenic beauty while on trips. Ecotourism by its nature provides recreation to the visitors/tourists as well as the residents. WWF publication on ecotourism states that:

"One alternative proposed as a means to link economic incentives with natural resources preservation is the promotion of nature tourism. With increase tourism to parks and reserve, which are often located in the rural areas, population surrounding the protected areas can find employment through small-scale enterprises. Greater level of nature tourism also can have substantial economic multiplier effect for the rest of the country. Therefore tourism to the protected areas demonstrates the value of natural resource to the tourist, rural population, park managers, government officials and tour operators."  

According to Adventure travel society (1995) ecotourism is defined as -

"Environmentally responsible travel to experience the natural and cultural areas of a region while learning about and promoting conservation and economically contributing to local communities" Ecotourism is a buzzword and it embraced "environment friendly", "community friendly" and

18 Opcit. 12
"market friendly tourism". It implied that ecotourism requires a judicious balance between the interests of hosts, visitors and the tourism industry.

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) President Mr. Geoffrey Lipman ecotourism is a "market segment" and as an "environmentally conscientious practice". According to Lindbergh and Mckercher ecotourism is tourism and recreation that is both nature based and sustainable. They emphasized that there are three features that can describe ecotourism. (a) Location and consumer motivation: It reflected the desire and requirements of the people i.e. what they wanted the activity to be? This aspect incorporated environmental, experimental, socio-cultural and economic dimensions. (b) Minimizing the negative impacts: this aspect minimized the environmental and cultural impacts while maximizing positive economic impacts. It aimed at achieving the sustainability. (c) Critical evaluation of ecotourism: According to Lindbergh and Mckercher, ecotourism has two components i.e. the nature (which is descriptive) and sustainability (which is prescriptive).

Ecotourism has been considered as a tool/ strategy for sustainable development. This point of view claimed that ecotourism not only protects the environment but contributes to socio-economic development and strives for sustainability. Components of ecotourism can be explained with the help of following model (fig.2). According to this model local participation, preservation of natural areas and revenue generation are integral components of ecotourism. This concept stresses on environmental education with twin objective of conservation and development to achieve overall sustainability.

19 opcit.7
20 opcit.6
Components of Ecotourism

Ecotourism

- Generation of Revenues
- Preservation of Natural Areas
- Local Involvement

Environmental Education

- Conservation (biological diversity and natural resources)
- Development (economic and infrastructural growth)

Stewardship

Local Control

Sustainability

In 1991 Canadian Environmental Advisory Council at National Workshop on ecotourism defined ecotourism as "Modern Ecotourism" as an enlightening nature travel experience that contributes to conservation of the ecosystem while respecting the integrity of the host communities.21

Ecotourism Paradigm

The ecotourism paradigm represents whatever was ignored in the conventional form of tourism. This model (fig-3) comprises of all the components that are an integral part of the overall strategy and which advocates an integrated sustainable resource use, in its literal meaning i.e. the management/ optimal use.22 The paradigm of ecotourism has an anthropocentric and strictly profits centered approach that shows a blend of both ecology and economy. In this new form of tourism the delivery of tourism products has been taken over by more environment friendly approach.

Fig-3

Ecotourism Paradigm

Environmental Advocacy
Local Communities ——> Biological Diversity
Integrated Sustainable Resource Use

Tourism

Typology of ecotourist

Ecotourists assumed to be anyone who purchases a product from an ecotour operator. For many they may be an ecotourist only during the time they are on an ecotour. Their travel and business behaviour moods may be highly unsustainable when they are more likely to shape tourist behaviour than vice-versa. Ecotourist can be categorize under three headings:

1) Rough ecotourist

This category belongs to the young and middle aged tourists who travels individually or in a small group. They use minimum facilities/services in the destination areas such as travelling by bus and eat locally and stay in cheap hotels. Their main activity is sports and adventure tourism.

2) Smooth ecotourist

This category consists of middle aged and old people who travel in a group arranged by tour operator. They stay in 3-5 star hotels and eat in luxury restaurants, travel by taxi and the main activity is nature and safari tourism.

3) Specialist ecotourist

This category comprises of young and old independent people who travel individually and are on specialist tours. They have a wide range of hotels and eating-places. Their motive is scientific investigation or pursuit of interest. Lindbergh and Hawkins classified ecotourist under four headings.

1) Hard core: members of tours or groups designed specifically for education and involvement in environmental projects, such as wildlife monitoring.

2) Dedicated: travelers to see protected areas and understand local natural and cultural history.

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23 Alen, A. Lew., The Asia-Pacific Ecotourism Industry: Putting Sustainable Tourism into Practice in "Sustainable Tourism: A Geographical Perspective" (ed.) Michael, H and Alan, A. Lew. Longman Publisher...

3) **Mainstream**: tourists primarily interested in an unusual trip, such as to the Amazon or gorilla viewing in Rwanda.

4) **Casual**: natural and cultural travel as an incidental component of a broader trip

Ecotourists are also classified according to the physical vigor on a trip, such as, 'hard' and 'soft' ecotourism trip. The 'hard' ecotourism trip requires the tourist to "walk miles into undeveloped backlands, sleep in a crude shelter and tolerate primitive sanitary conditions". The backpackers fall under this group. They stay longer than 'soft' tourists and spend money at small, locally-owned and operated enterprises. A 'soft' ecotourism trip consists of those tourists that stay in first-class hotels, eat in good restaurant and commute by comfortable transport.

**Typology of Ecotours and Ecotour Activities**

The 7th PATA Conference on Asia-Pacific Ecotourism Industry in 1995 developed the typology of ecotours and ecotour activities. The ecotours were grouped under three headings. (1) **Nature ecotours**: Includes wildlife, nature, natural history, jungles/ rainforests, science- based nature tours, fossil expeditions, national parks, nature reserves, ornithology, village, wildlife conservation zoos. (2) **Cultural ecotours**: Include culture, agriculture, anthropology, countryside tours, culture exchanges, ethnic area lodge, food, local guides, sustainable technology. 3) **Adventure**: Soft adventure, hard adventure and outdoor adventure.

The ecotours activities have been categorized under three broad headings-

(1) **Physical (land based)**: includes trekking, walking, cycling/ mountain biking, backpacking, bushes walking, day hiking and physical activity.

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26 The Asia-Pacific Ecotourism Industry, 7th PATA Adventure Travel and Ecotourism Conference and Mart. 15-18 Jan, 1995
(2) **Physical (water based):** includes boat rides, diving, rafting, sailing, sea kayaking, whitewater rafting and snorkelling.

(3) **Education:** includes guest scholars/ teachers/ experts/ animal riding safaris, bird watching, local educational programme, photography, safaris and study tours.

**Magnitude of Ecotourism:**

Ecotourism is the fastest growing sectors of the tourism industry worldwide. It has been considered as a type of specialty travel, which include travel for diverse purposes as birdwatching, helping scientists conduct conservation research and photography. As ecotourism is a small segment for international tourism, there are no reliable estimates available for worldwide expenditure on ecotourism. In 1989 the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) estimated that the share of ecotourism market was at $10 billion (EIU, 1992) whereas a study by the Canadian wildlife service suggests that as much as $200 billion in total was spent on ecotourism activities globally in 1990.\(^{27}\) It has been reported that ecotourism has become the most significant market segment for the third world destination. A study of WorldWide Fund for Nature (WWF) estimated that of $55 billion earned by tourism for developing countries in 1988, about $12 billion was the result of ecotourism (EIU, 1992). The magnitude of ecotourism has been estimated by conservative and optimistic views. The conservative view estimated the growth of ecotourism ranging from 10- 15 %.\(^{28}\) The optimistic view forecasted the demand of 30 % for ecotourism. In 1996, the optimistic projections forecast annual global nature-oriented travel at $260 billion (Giannecchini, 1992).

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\(^{27}\) Ceballos-Lascurain, Hector., ecotourism and Protected Areas. Paper presented at the CNPPA, 34th working session, Perth, Australia.1990.

The potential cost of ecotourism has not been monitored as it has several dimensions that vary dramatically, which leads to many contradictions while collecting data. For instance, the importance of the nature in trip motivation, the level of learning desired and the amount of spending, level of physical effort and comfort, distance travelled and the length of stay. USA based companies indicated that the prime ecotourism market comprised of 45-65 years of age, mostly from North America, Europe and Japan. Countries engaged in ecotourism cater to different groups such as backpackers, student holidays, single vacations, package tours of long duration etc.

**Scale of Ecotourism**

Scale is one of the most important factors in managing ecotourism that separates ecotourism from mass tourism. The appropriate scale of tourism to an area is a function of three components i.e. size of the area, local population and the sensitivity of ecosystems. Scale is the most important factors in managing the ecotourism. There are 5 levels in ecotourism scale that set standards for the tourists.29

Level 5 has been considered as the ultimate goal for ecotourism supporters and stakeholders whether they are tour operators, the tourists or the resource management agencies. According to Shores, in the scale of ecotourism all the activities must be environmentally benign such as, for transportation solar and animal transport should be given the priority (no Concorde's, limited use of petroleum products). On-site accommodations and facilities such as heating and air-conditioning would be solar and low-impact. Food and souvenirs would be produced in sustainable ways. All residual and used products would be recycled. Soaps and cleaning solutions

would be biodegradable. Sewage containment and treatment must be handled in a benign way.

Table-1

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<th>The Ecotourism Levels</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EL 0</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The beginning (zero) level of ecotourism requires that the travelers be exposed to or made aware of the fragility of the ecosystems that they have come to enjoy. This is the very lowest &quot;awareness&quot; threshold. Incidental nature travel usually qualifies at this level.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EL 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 1, ecotourism requires that a net positive flow of monetary support occur between the travelling ecotourist and the ecosystems visited. Financial earmarks, such as airport departure taxes or designations of a portion of land travel costs qualifies at this level.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EL 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 2, requires that the ecotourist engage in a personal way in supporting the environment. For example, few ecotourists have planted trees and few participated in the little cleanups.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EL 3</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 3, requires the certification that the specific tour system is benign to the environment. The system includes the international air travel as well as on-site transport and accommodation. Level 3 stresses on the neutral or positive net demonstrating effect of the traveler's presence in the area visited.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EL 4</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 4, requires positive net effect of the travelers. It includes on-site efforts to use appropriate technology, low energy consumption, recycling, organic agriculture. These technologies are use to balance the less environmentally benign aspects of the larger travel system such as, air travel, stay in luxury hotels and excessive energy consumption.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EL 5</strong></td>
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<td>Level 5 refers to a perfect ecotourism trip where the entire system is operating in an environmentally sound way. This system also consider the type of travel advertisement, transportation, accommodation and treatment of residual product.</td>
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Source: www.planeta.com

Ecotourism and Sustainable Development

"Every generation receives a natural and cultural legacy in trust from its ancestors and holds it in trust for its descendants. This trust imposes upon each other generation the obligation to conserve the environment, cultural and natural resources for future generations. The trust also gives each generation the right to use and benefit from the natural and cultural legacy of its ancestors. These rights and
obligations, from the corpus of a proposed new doctrine of intergenerational equity in international environmental law. The idea of 'sustainable development' produced by the World Commission on Environment and Development in Our Common Future published in 1987 (generally known as the Brundtland Report). The report suggested that development must meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In essence a definition was put forward by Globe 90 'meeting the needs of present tourists and hosts while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. Sustainability as applied to tourism means regulating the use of tourist resources so that they are not consumed, depleted or polluted in such a way as to be unavailable for use by future generations of tourists. Sustainability is an integral part of ecotourism, which holds the promise of fairness to the future generation. It necessitates the consideration of four different types of sustainability. These are- (a) economic sustainability (b) environmental sustainability (c) social sustainability (d) cultural sustainability. These four components of sustainability include the strategies for common property resources and participation of indigenous people in decision making process.

Ecotourism holds a deeper meaning of sustainability within itself and it is an imperative to incorporate ecological principles of sustainability given by world conservation society. They are- (a) maintenance of essential ecological processes and life-supporting system (b) to preserve the genetic diversity of fragile ecosystem and (c) sustainable utilization of species and resources. In order to form a sound base for ecotourism the principles of sustainable development should be seen as an opportunity as well as a challenge. The principles of sustainable development, which has been cited by Brundtland Report (1980), can be incorporated as principles of sustainable

31 Ibid.
ecotourism development. There are nine principles of sustainable development. They are: (1) *Reviving growth* - this being the first principle of sustainable development when incorporated into ecotourism can form objectives namely, (a) limiting the percentage of tourists in ecologically sensitive areas and (b) ensuring the reduction of economic (revenue) leakage's. (2) *Changing the quality of growth* - this principle can be viewed as an improvement in the quality of environment, people and tour-operators through awareness and (b) in terms of world economy by doing so they can stay in the race of the competitive world. (3) *Meeting essential needs for jobs, energy, water and sanitation* can be incorporated into ecotourism by providing hygienic conditions through improved standards of the destination areas. (4) This principle of sustainable development, which states the importance of *sustainable level of population* can be made part of ecotourism development to ensure the carrying capacity of the destination area does not exceed and the resource base is not over-strained. By promoting awareness programs about the rational and optimal utilization of resources the fifth principle of sustainable development i.e. *conserving and enhancing the resource base* can be made the part of ecotourism development. *Reorienting technologies and managing risks* - this principle when placed into ecotourism can be put into function by adopting scientific and eco-friendly technologies i.e. (a) by monitoring the various risks and disaster through remote-sensing techniques and (b) by using wise management practices and conservation projects for risk and disaster management. The principle of *merging the environment and economics in decision-making* can be incorporated to achieve (a) a state of equilibrium in the delicate relationship between man and nature. *Reorienting International economic relations* by local, regional, national and international cooperation and (b) by promoting linkages (friendly relationships) among developing and developed countries. Lastly, the principle that deals with *making development participatory* can be made as an integral part of ecotourism so as to get grass root participation in decision making process to form a sustainable society. Finally, the resultant feature of the principle of sustainable development will be a dynamic form of
Sustainable ecotourism. The model of Sustainable Ecotourism pictorially describes the dynamic interplay of various elements.

Sustainable development of an area seeks to provide goods and services, curtail the negative effects of change, hold open the options for ecosystem recovery, preserve the free services of natural ecosystems, and do all the foregoing in a way that maintains the major attributes of the area for future generations to use and enjoy.
Impacts

According to Cohen the sociological research on tourism "falls naturally" into four principal issue areas: the tourists, relations between tourists and locals, the structure and functioning of the tourist system and the consequences of tourism. Although many small island developing states (SIDS) have captured a good amount of share of world tourism market, but the unchecked number of tourists have mounted the pressure on their land resources. The scarcity of freshwater resources, coastal area degradation affecting beaches, mangrove forests and coral reefs, limited infrastructural facilities to deal with solid and liquid waste generated has posed serious environmental difficulties. Dredging or 'quarrying' corals for building purposes as well as the sedimentation by eroded soil kills the reef. This reduces the local food base, encourages outbreaks of ciguatera (fish poisoning) and weakens the remarkable storm buffer reefs constitute. The place to which the tourists travel are inhabited by people who have different values expressed in their lifestyles of work, dress, architecture and in many other artifacts and modes of behavior. The tourists behaviour impinges upon host values and fundamentally alters the lifestyle and culture of hosts. The impacts of tourism can be studied in accordance with Butler's (1980, refer to fig, 5) "Tourism Area Cycle of Evolution."

(Fig. 5)

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In the initial stage of tourism cycle a destination area is discovered that is known as 'exploration' stage and its resources are perceived to be valuable assets for tourism development and promotion. With growing number of tourists, the 'involvement' of local small-scale entrepreneurs increases. In these two stages, destination offers attractive pristine natural environment with authentic culture. As a result the volume of tourist begins to trickle into the destination area and demand grows. But then follows a 'development' phases, in which tourism business from outside get involved. The 'consolidation' phase is reached when large-scale development for mass tourism takes place and subsequently, its well-known social and environmental impacts become visible. The destination booms and the involvement of local entrepreneurs increases and in the process resources are maximally exploited and the resources becomes less competitive/attractive and valuable. This leads to the stage of 'stagnation' since the destination loses its attractiveness within the mass tourism market. Eventually the destination ends in a 'decline' when the demand disappears or the resource is exhausted and tourists begin to stay away.

It leads to the question that whether there is future after this? Butler considered the possibility of a 'rejuvenation' phase that can change the cycle of development, if specific steps and effective measures would be taken, by diversifying tourist products. Another view that showed the possibility of 'rejuvenation' suggested ecotourism as a new consumer demand. According to a Commonwealth official "the orthodox view that tourism destroys the environment is going out of fashion. The new view is bringing awareness to governments and the private sector about the value of their resources."

**Impacts of Ecotourism**

Ecotourism is an industry with many pros and cons. There is a continuum of ecotourism activities and impacts. Tourists from industrialized countries impose, by their very presence, a way of life and a level of
consumption, which can often offend local sensibilities. According to Voigt (1981)- "While economic and social consequences are repairable, these cultural consequences are irreparable.\textsuperscript{34}"

Ecotourism impacts can be categorized as 'direct' and 'indirect' or 'on-site' and 'off-site' impacts.

The On-site impacts are 1) Soil erosion and compaction, 2) Disturbance of wildlife, 3) Trampling of corals, 4) Removal of vegetation, 5) Accidental introduction of toxic species, 6) Increased frequency of fire, 7) Litter and vandalism. The off-site impact are 1) Reclamation of land for infrastructure (e.g. coastal hotels for marine ecotourism) 2) Water and air pollution, 3) Purchase of souvenirs reutilising threatened or endangered species (e.g. black coral).

**Benefits and Risks of Ecotourism**

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<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Risks</th>
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<tr>
<td>Increases income and employment</td>
<td>Environmental degradation</td>
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<td>Generates foreign exchange</td>
<td>Cultural pollution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourages dispersed rural development</td>
<td>Social tensions and disruptions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stimulates rural infrastructure development</td>
<td>'Runaway' development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provides funds for natural resource conservation</td>
<td>Economic leakage's and distortions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Builds political support for nature conservation</td>
<td>Seasonal and Cyclical trends</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increases awareness of environmental issues</td>
<td>Sensitivity to ecoterrorism, instability and changing consumer tastes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attracts desirable clientele</td>
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Ecologically, most of the island economies are fragile and vulnerable in nature. The development issues related to tourism in a geographical setting

like coastal areas and islands introduce widespread geographical impacts, as the human interactions are direct and most intense.

The natural and anthropogenic impacts of tourism raise serious question over the sustainable development and sustainability of resources in these countries. Various International Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations and Governments introduced sound, safe and wise tourism practices to promote awareness among all the stakeholders involved in this activity. The awareness about the negative environmental impact leads to the adoption of ecotourism that promises minimal environmental degradation, optimal utilization of natural resources on one hand and income to local people on the other hand. "The World Ecotourism Summit" (Quebec -Canada, 19- 22 May 2002)\textsuperscript{35} was one of the largest and key global events in this direction to integrate environment, conservation and development to promote awareness through environmental education. But the question remains whether the model of ecotourism will lead to the sustainable development of these economies or not?

Over the past few years, geographers have focussed largely at the regional scale of development and management. The management aspect has become an important theme of political geographic inquiry that deals with the complex spatial settings of the coastal areas and islands. For an effective management of socio-ecological aspects in a geopolitical area, geographers have desired and developed methodologically attractive approaches with regard to the spatial pattern, scale and variation. An incompatible geographical patrimony of regional theories administered by geographers in case study investigation with relevant methodological frameworks have provided a substantial base for the spatial analysis of coastal and island countries. They have made a valuable distinction between activity and impact at different levels i.e. global, international, national, regional and local. Therefore, the field of political geography dealing with ecotourism in islands focuses upon the spatial paradigm of the discipline. Ecotourism is an area of

\textsuperscript{35} \url{http://www.world-tourism.org/omt/wtich.htm}
research in political geography and deserves special attention and intense research from the academic experts and tourism authorities as when practiced truly it can yield sustainable economic growth and conservation of natural resources. The concept "Ecotourism" and "Sustainable Development" are complex in nature therefore it is necessary for all the stakeholders to understand the philosophy of these concepts to implement and manage them in real life.