CHAPTER - 3

ECOTOURISM'S CONCEPT, PRINCIPLES AND INITIATIVES

3.1 Introduction:

Historically, the term ‘ecotourism’ was adopted in order to describe the nature-tourism phenomenon. Researchers have begun in the recent years to study how local populations can direct ecotourism activities and benefit from them. The alternative form of tourism has been attracted the interest of governments, communities and research scholars in the year of 1980s. These were given a bunch of names such as “nature tourism,” “soft tourism,” “responsible tourism,” “Green tourism” and “ecotourism”. Though, all were seen as alternative to mass tourism. Among these various makes, the term ecotourism has become well-known although a consistent definition is by no means found, even among scholars. It has its own concept, idea and principles for development in sustainable way. However, a few countries are developing ecotourism with particular principles in tourism destinations.

3.2 Concept:

The development of the concept of ecotourism grew, according to Hetzer, as a result of dissatisfaction with governments’ and society’s negative approach to development, especially from an ecological point of view (David, A, Fennell, 2002). Nelson (1994) also adopts this particular stand in illustrating that the idea of ecotourism is in fact an old one, which manifested itself during the late 1960s and early 1970s, when researchers became concerned over inappropriate use of natural resources (David, A, Fennell, 2002). Nelson suggests that the term ‘eco-development’ was introduced as a means by which to reduce such development.
Recently, however, the term has been traced further back to the work of Hetzer (1965), who used it to explain the complex relationship between tourists and the environments and cultures in which they interact (David, A, Fennell, 2002). Hetzer identified four fundamental pillars that needed to be followed for a more responsible form of tourism. These included: (1) minimum environmental impact (2) minimum impact on and maximum respect for host cultures (3) maximum economic benefits to the host country’s grassroots and (4) maximum ‘recreational’ satisfaction to participating tourists (David, A, Fennell, 2002).

Until recently, there has been some confusion surrounding the origin of the term ‘ecotourism’, as evident in the tremendous volume of literature on the topic. For example, Orams (1995) and Hvenegaard (1994) write that the term can be traced back only to the late 1980s, while others (Higgins 1996) suggest that it can be traced to the late 1970s, through the work of Miller on eco-development (David, A, Fennell, 2002). One of the consistent themes emergent in the literature supports the fact that Ceballos-Lascurain was the first to coin the phrase in the early 1980s. He defined it as ‘traveling to relatively undisturbed or 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’ (David, A, Fennell, 2002).

However, the dual in the origin of ecotourism, many have tried to given definitions for ecotourism. Ziffer (1989) feels that ecotourism is a form of tourism motivated primarily by the natural history of an area, counting its local cultures. The ecotourism stays relatively undeveloped areas in the strength of appreciation, participation and sensitivity. The ecotourism practices a use of wildlife and natural resources and contributes to the visited area through labor means aimed at directly
benefiting the conservation of the place and the economic well-being of the local residents. The visit should strengthen the ecotourism’s appreciation and dedication to conservation issues in general, and to the specific needs of the locale. Ecotourism also involves a managed approach by the host country or region which commits itself to establishing and maintaining the sites with the participation of local residents, marketing them appropriately, implementing regulations, and using the continues of the endeavor to fund the area’s land management as well as community development (David, A, Fennell, 2002).

Ziffer has understood the ecotourism in broad sense and other scholar like Goodwin, Wallace and Pierce have made definition for ecotourism in their observation. Goodwin (1996) simplifies and state that ecotourism is low impact nature tourism which contributes to the maintenance of species and habitats either directly through a contribution to conservation and/or indirectly by providing revenue to the local community sufficient for local people to value, and therefore protect, their wildlife heritage area as a source of income (David, A, Fennell, 2002).

Wallace and Pierce argued that ecotourism is travel to relatively undisturbed natural areas for study, enjoyment, or volunteer assistance. It is travel that concerns itself with the flora, fauna, geology, and ecosystems of an area, as well as the people (caretakers) who live nearby, their needs, their culture, and their relationship to the land, it views natural areas both as ‘home to all of us’ in a global sense (‘eco’ meaning home) but ‘home to nearby residents’ specifically. It is envisioned as a tool for both conservation and sustainable development especially in areas where local people are asked to forgo the consumptive use of resources for others (David, A, Fennell, 2002).
Components of Ecotourism:

All definitions of ecotourism have stated with experienced and observed by scholar or visitor. It shows that the concept and definition of ecotourism derived from seven components. These are as follows

- Contributes to conservation of biodiversity.
- Sustains the well being of local people.
- Includes an interpretation/learning experience.
- Involves responsible action on the part of tourists and the tourism industry.
- Is delivered primarily to small groups by small-scale businesses.
- Requires lowest possible consumption of non-renewable resources.
- Stresses local participation, ownership and business opportunities, particularly for rural people

3.3 Principles of Ecotourism:

Originally ecotourism just an idea, not a discipline, many businesses and governments promoted it without an understanding of its most basic principles (TIES, 2002). In 1990s, principles, guidelines and certification approaches were establishing and proceeded in national and international level at a modest pace due to involves of stakeholders from many regions, disciplines and backgrounds. Each region affected by ecotourism should develop its own principles, guidelines and certification procedures based on the materials already available internationally (TIES, 2002).

The International Ecotourism Society has tracked the results of stakeholders meetings since 1991 to develop the set of principles for ecotourism. These are as follows
• Minimize the negative impacts on nature and culture that can damage a destination.

• Educate the travellers on the importance of conservation.

• Stress the importance of responsible business, which works cooperatively with local authorities and people to meet local needs and deliver conservation benefits.

• Direct revenues to the conservation and management of natural and protected areas.

• Emphasize the need for regional tourism zoning and for visitor management plans designed for either regions or natural areas that are slated to become eco-destinations.

• Emphasize use of environmental and social base-line studies, as well as long-term monitoring programs, to assess and minimize impacts.

• Strive to maximize economic benefit for the host country, local business and communities, particularly people living in and adjacent to natural and protected areas.

• Seek to ensure that tourism development does not exceed the social and environmental limits of acceptable change as determined by researchers in cooperation with local residents.

• Rely on infrastructure that has been developed in harmony with the environment, minimizing use of fossil fuels, conserving local plants and wildlife, and blending with the natural and cultural environment.
Wallace and Pierce suggested and opined that any tourism will be true ecotourism if it addresses six principles:

1. It entails a type of use that minimizes negative impacts to the environment and to local people.
2. It increases the awareness and understanding of an area’s natural and cultural systems and the subsequent involvement of visitors in issues affecting those systems.
3. It contributes to the conservation and management of legally protected and other natural areas.
4. It maximizes the early and long-term participation of local people in the decision-making process that determines the kind and amount of tourism that should occur.
5. It directs economic and other benefits to local people that complement rather than overwhelm or replace traditional practices (farming, fishing, social systems, etc.).
6. It provides special opportunities for local people and nature tourism employees to utilize and visit natural areas and learn more about the wonders that other visitors come to see.

Other authors like Blamey (2000), Dhakal and Dahal (2000) have described ecotourism principles in different perspectives but the core of these principles is not too different from those mentioned above.

- It should not negatively impact the resource that helps to develop ecotourism in any destination. Rather it should be developed in an environmentally friendly manner.
➢ It should provide benefits to all parties—local natural resources, people and the tourism industry - with a stake in ecotourism.

➢ It should extend first-hand information to visitors.

➢ It should provide educational opportunities for all parties – local communities, government, NGOs, industry and tourists.

➢ It should encourage all-party recognition of the intrinsic values of the resource.

➢ It should involve acceptance of the resource on its own terms, and in recognition of its own limits.

➢ It should promote understanding and partnerships between many players, which could involve government, NGOs, industry, scientists and locals.

➢ It should promote moral and ethical responsibilities and behavior towards the natural and cultural environment by all players.

All ecotourism principles have debated from one and another author or scholar in the view of same as framed by International Ecotourism Society. Ecotourism principles have five main components which are basic to ecotourism such as nature appreciate ecologically sustainable, environment education, locally benefit and generate tourist’s satisfaction (Annamalai Murugan, 2007).

1. Nature-Based

Ecotourism is based on the natural environment with a focus on its physical, biological and cultural features. Ecotourism depends on and occurs in a natural setting and may include cultural factors where they occur in a natural setting. The
conservation of the natural resource is need to the planning, development and management of ecotourism.

2. Sustainable in Ecological

Ecologically, socially and environmentally all tourism should be sustainable way. Ecotourism is ecologically sustainable tourism commence in a natural setting. The challenge to ecotourism in any country or region is to develop its tourism capacity and the quality of its products without negatively affecting the environment that maintains and take care of it. This involves ensuring that the type, location and level of ecotourism use do not cause damage to natural areas.

3. Educatve on Environment

The educative characteristic of ecotourism is a key aspect which differentiates it from other forms of nature-based tourism. Environmental education and explanation are important tools in creating an enjoyable and meaningful ecotourism experience. Ecotourism attracts tourists who wish to interact with the environment in order to develop their knowledge, awareness and appreciation of it. By extension, ecotourism should ideally lead to positive action for the promotion of environment in improved conservation awareness.

Ecotourism education can pressure tourist, community and industry behavior and support in the longer term sustainability of tourist activity in natural areas. Education can also be valuable as a management tool for natural areas. Interpretation helps tourists to observe the big picture regarding the environment. It recognizes the natural and cultural values of the area visited as well as other issues such as resource management.
4. More Beneficial for Local

The involvement of local communities not only benefits the community and the environment but also improves the quality of the tourist experience. Local communities can become involved in ecotourism operations, and in the provision of knowledge, services, facilities and products. These benefits should outweigh the cost of ecotourism to the host community and environment. Ecotourism can also generate income for resource conservation management in addition to social and cultural benefits. The contribution may be financial with a part of the cost of the tour helping to subsidies a conservation project. Alternatively it could consist of practical help in the field with the tourists being involved in environmental data collection and/or analysis.

5. Visitors Satisfaction

Satisfaction of tourists with the ecotourism experience is essential to long term viability of the ecotourism industry. Included in this concept is the importance of visitor safety in regard to political stability. Information provided about ecotourism opportunities should accurately represent the opportunities offered at particular ecotourism destinations. The ecotourism experience should match or exceed the realistic expectations of the visitor. Client services and satisfaction should be second only to the conservation and protection of what they visit.

3.4 Initiatives:

3.4.1 Global Initiatives of Ecotourism:

The history of ecotourism is deeply rooted in the conservation movement. Ecotourism has provided the revenue in a highly strategic source to natural areas for the protection. The beginning of ecotourism is an untested idea that many hoped could
contribute to the conservation of natural resources worldwide. Research undertaken in Kenya in the 1970s demonstrated that the economic benefits of wildlife tourism for improved on hunting, an activity that was banned in Kenya in 1977. Biologists were interested in biological diversity and of an overabundance of natural film documentaries to innumerable study of rain forests and coral reefs in the early 1980s. This interest helped establish a wide variety of local small businesses specializing in guiding scientist and filmmakers into remote areas. As these small businesses quickly started to grow in countries such as Costa Rica and Ecuador, a more formal industry soon evolved to meet the needs of small tourism groups that were primarily composed of birdwatchers and committed naturalists (Epler Wood, M. 2002). Initially, ecotourism initiatives were started in a few countries such as Australia, Brazil, China, Japan and India. Plan and policies of ecotourism are in these countries as following session.

A. Australia

In fact, initial stage a few countries were interesting to plan for ecotourism. In this way Australia government has prepared national ecotourism plan in 1994, it is the first ecotourism plan in the world. It has strong focus on the development of appropriate tourism infrastructure and capabilities for the development of tourism in natural areas with a high level of commitment to rural people making them classic examples of ecotourism planning. Decision of Australian government to formulate an ecotourism strategy was made in response to growing international interest and the increasing profile of Australia’s natural environment as a tourism attraction. The government of Australia has planned to involving local government agencies, natural resource managers, tour operators, tourism marketers, planners, conservation and community groups, developers and indigenous of Australia.
B. Brazil

In 1994, the government of Brazil has published Guidelines for an Ecotourism National Policy. Brazil has started the ecotourism as a small market niche driven by the demand for school field trips focusing on environmental studies. It rapidly increases of international visitors to the country. Until 1994, Brazil received less than 2 million international visitors annually. But this figure reached 5 million people annually in 1998. The government of Brazil has established the Interministerial Ecotourism Task Force in the early 1990s as a strategy to address the environmental threat of rapid tourism growth.

C. China

The China National Tourism Administration has announced that the year 2009 is Chinese ecotourism year with the slogan, ‘‘Be a green traveller and experience eco-civilization (Suosheng Wang et al. 2009).’’ The most recent and comprehensive document on ecotourism is the National Ecotourism Development Plan regulated jointly by the China National Tourism Administration and the Ministry of Environmental Protection (Suosheng Wang et al. 2009). The plan has the mission, goals, and types of ecotourism and roles of ecotourism stakeholders.

The mission of ecotourism is advocating the harmony of the environment and the economy, strengthening construction of ecological environment, improving education, constantly meeting the demand of ecotourism, and ensuring sustainable tourism development (Suosheng Wang et al. 2009). Goals are promoting ecotourism products and the concept of environment-friendly travel, and encouraging resource-saving tourism operations, with the objective of satisfying the new trend of tourism
consumption and building Chinese tourism industry into a green industry with sustainable development (Suosheng Wang et al. 2009).

Types of ecotourism suggested in the policy involve forest recreation ecotourism, prairie ecotourism, wetlands bird-watching ecotourism, desert exploration ecotourism, countryside experience ecotourism, and ocean vacation ecotourism (Suosheng Wang et al. 2009). China sets rules for all stakeholders to follow to ensure a healthy ecotourism development. Also, CNTA is working on creating an accreditation system. What should be mentioned in terms of ecotourism is that other organizations in China may also be developing their own accreditation systems (Suosheng Wang et al. 2009). One example is the National Forestry Bureau. It has so far accredited 31 natural reserves for planning and developing ecotourism. Other international organizations such as World Wide Fund also show interest in promoting the principles of ecotourism in China (Suosheng Wang et al. 2009).

D. Japan

The Ministry of Environment is one of the most important governmental sections responsible for promoting ecotourism in Japan. It defined the foundation to promote ecotourism in the law as follows: ‘‘Ecotourism plays a vital role to conserve the natural environment, facilitate creative tourism that utilizes unique features in a community, and facilitate environmental education through promoting conservation awareness (Suosheng Wang et al. 2009). There is a need to define principles, outlines, and other issues necessary to promote ecotourism, in order to holistically and effectively facilitate relevant actions on ecotourism’’. Hiwasaki (2003) points out that the Ministry of Environment actively promotes ecotourism as an alternative use of national parks. It conducted ecotourism feasibility studies in some parks in 1990 and
selected Iriomote Island in Iriomote Ishigaki National Park, Okinawa, as a model ecotourism development site in 1991 (Suosheng Wang et al. 2009).

The Ministry has published several policy documents for ecotourism promotion since 2004. The latest document was published in March 2008 and outlined an official governmental policy to promote ecotourism (Suosheng Wang et al. 2009). Prior to the policy being publicized, the Ecotourism Law was developed and set aside in 2007. The law required that “the government must establish a policy on promoting ecotourism based on these principles” and that the government “must listen to a diverse opinions” in the process of developing a basic policy (Suosheng Wang et al. 2009). The policy was developed based on these determinants complying with the Ecotourism Promotion Law. Before the law and policy were set in place, the Ministry of Environment (2008) had decided to take five approaches for ecotourism promotion. They involve developing a charter, establishing a Web site for information dissemination on ecotourism, giving best practice awards, preparing a manual for developing ecotourism, and supporting model ecotourism projects (Suosheng Wang et al. 2009). Among these five approaches, the Manual for Developing Ecotourism was published in collaboration with the Ecotourism Promotion Society in 2004. The manual illustrated the general process and considerations of developing an action plan for a new ecotourism project (Suosheng Wang et al. 2009).

3.4.2 Ecotourism Initiatives in India:

Mohan Krishan Khanna has identified ecotourism resources of India in his book ‘Ecotourism in India’. In his opinion the geographical diversity of India makes it home to a wealth of ecosystems which are well protected and preserved. These ecosystems have become the major resources for ecotourism. The following aspects are ecosystems of India.
• Biosphere Reserves
• Mangroves
• Coral Reefs
• Deserts
• Mountains and Forests
• Flora and Fauna
• Seas, Lakes and Rivers
• Caves

Biosphere reserves of India are multi-purpose protected areas, for conservation of the genetic diversity and the integrity of plants, animals and micro-organisms in representative ecosystems. These biospheres are Nilgiri, Nandadevi, Nokrek, Great Nicobar, Gulf of Mannar, Manas and Sundarbans. They have helpful to growth and potential of ecotourism. In other side Mangroves have major role in the development of ecotourism in the country, such as Northern Adaman and Nicolar islands, Sunderbans (West Bengal), Bhitaranika and Mahanadi Delta (Orissa), Coringa, Godavari Delta and Kristna Estuary (Andhra Pradesh), Pichavaram and Point Calimere (Tamil Nadu), Goa, Gulf of Kutch (Gajarat), Coondapur (Karnataka), Achra/Ratnagiri (Maharashtra), Vembanand (Kerala)

Coral Reef Ecosystems like Gulf of Mannar, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep Islands and Gulf of Kutch are the main resources of ecotourism in India. The Great Thar Desert and the little deserts in the North Western Region of the country are distinct ecosystems which have fascinated tourists from all over the world. Ladakh is a cold desert with high, snow-clad mountains, fast rivers, and the people have a distinctive Buddhist culture. The great Himalayas and other mountain ranges in the country, along with the snow-clad slopes, forests and rivers have also
become important attractions for eco-tourists. The country has an area of about 752.3 lakh hectares designated as forest land and of this about 406.1 lakh hectares are classified as Reserve Forests and 215.1 lakh hectares as Protected Forests. India is very rich in biotic as well as abiotic resources. It has about 45000 species of plants. The country also has a great variety of fauna, numbering a little over 65000 known species, including 1228 bird, 428 reptiles, 372 mammal, 204 amphibian and 2546 fish species.

In order to protect and preserve these genetic resources, India has created a number of National Parks and 421 Wildlife Sanctuaries in different parts of the country. Those which have already become popular with tourists are Kaziranga and Manas in Assam; Jim Corbett in Uttar Pradesh; Keoladeo, Ghana, Ranthambore and Sariska in Rajasthan; Kanha and Bandhavgarh in Madhya Pradesh; Bandipour in Karnataka and Similipal in Orissa. The Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal brace the sides of the Indian subcontinent, except for the landlocked northern boundary. The land mass of India is crossed by several rivers and dotted by lakes at many places. These water bodies provide attractive opportunities for water sports.

In the 1990s, ecotourism has emerged as one of the most important sectors in tourism in India. During 1998, the Government of India prepared a policy document on ecotourism. This identifies the ecotourism resources of the country and lays down the need for a specialized, participatory, policy planning approach for the development of the ecotourism destinations. It also stipulates the roles to be played by the stakeholders such as the government, the tour operators, the destination managers, the tourists, the host community and the voluntary organizations.

The government of India has initiated vital role on ecotourism in 2002 tourism policy. The explanation of nature and strength could be seen in the sixth principle of
2002 tourism policy. This principle describes that ecotourism is a broader sense than those of nature tourism; it helps to eliminating poverty, generating employment even for the unskilled people, increasing the economic status of woman. Preserving local culture and encouraging tribal and local crafts.

The tourism policy of 2002 has identified main tourism product of the country. Some of the products are directly or indirectly related to ecotourism. In this context the following section has tourism product of India which are form of ecotourism or an activity of it. India has 22 world heritage sites (16 are monuments). The conservation, preservation and integrated development of the area around these monuments provide a rare opportunity for growth and expansion of cultural tourism in India (GOI, 2002). Actively promote the development of village tourism as the primary tourism product to spread tourism and its socio-economic benefits to rural and new geographic areas (GOI, 2002).

India has some of the greatest variety of fauna in the world that has perhaps not been exploited to its full potential for tourism (GOI, 2002). In this context, india has famous wildlife sanctuaries and beautiful national parks are the part of the India tourism product (GOI, 2002). Tentatively, those would be: Corbett National Park, Kanha National Park, Bharatpur, Little Rann of Kutch, Chilika and Sundarbans. The quality of tourist facilities available at the parks should be enhanced, in particular, improves visitor information/interpretation centers and the tiger and the elephant should be the brands in Indian wildlife tourism (GOI, 2002). India perhaps has one of the greatest adventure tourism assets in the world in the form of the Himalayas, as well as in its mighty rivers. Mountain based adventure (soft and hard) activities in the Himalayas, creating the Himalayas as the brand and icon of Indian adventure tourism, should be developed and promoted (GOI, 2002). White water and more sedate great
river rafting offer a unique tourism product, while regulations and certification for adventure tourism operators should be introduced so they meet minimum safety and conservation standards (GOI, 2002).

India is a region of the world’s greatest bio-diversity, with a variety of unique natural locales, and is therefore, a perfect candidate for ecotourism (GOI, 2002). In this context, ecotourism should be made a priority tourism product for India with the focal points located in the Himalayas, North-Eastern states, Western Ghats, Jharkhand, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the Lakshadweep Islands (GOI, 2002). Tour operators need to be encouraged to promote ecotourism, which should also be made a grassroots, community based movement, though awareness, education and training of the local community as guides and interpreters (GOI, 2002).

The tourism destinations of India present a wide range of natural and cultural products. These include beaches, hill stations, wildlife sanctuaries, mountain regions, archaeological monuments, religious monuments, fairs and festivals, amusement parks etc. The government has taken several policies initiatives including providing incentives for promoting tourism in these areas, and also for developing new destinations and products. The incentives are given by way of interest subsidies, allocation of funds to state governments for unique schemes, classification of hotels, and awards for the best hotels, tour companies, destination managers etc.

In the ecotourism program, the Government of India supports state governments in the purchase of trekking and camping equipment, and also helps projects which use renewable energy resources. Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) work as watchdogs to see that the tourism activities are managed on sustainable principles. NGOs also help the government and private sector in feasibility studies, development of strategies etc. Ecotourism lies mostly in the public
sector and projects are being developed by government, but private sector support is expected by way of provision of accommodation, conduct of tours etc. There are not many ecotourism projects financed by international funding agencies.

3.4.3 Ecotourism initiative in Karnataka:

Karnataka is a little India because it has everything as India like, world heritage sites, breathtaking hill station, spectacular waterfalls, exotic wildlife, gripping adventure options, sensational beaches, renowned pilgrim centers, colorful festivals, throbbing nightlife etc. India's most well kept secret so far as tourism goes; Karnataka is all set to draw the customer on a mind-boggling spread of experiences (GoK, 2002-2007). The state provides varied nature of tourist attractions, wildlife sanctuaries at Bandipur and Nagarhole, the turbulent leap of Sharavathi at Jogfalls, the myriad coloured fountains of the picturesque Brindavan Garden at Mysore, the beaches of Karwar, the sun setting scene at Agumbe, the famous architectural beauty at Badami, Aihole and Pattadakal, the tall monolithic Gometeshwar statue at Shravanabelagola and Karkal, the devastating ruins of Hampi, the world famous Hoysala temples at Belur and Halebidu, dome of Golgumbaz at Bijapur and bird sanctuary at Ranganatittu, etc.

The Jungle Lodges Resorts Limited is a public sector corporation promoted by the government of Karnataka. This corporation has four destinations in the state which promote ecotourism. Each of these resorts has a unique specialization. At K. Gudi there is a wildlife adventure resort with travel in the wilderness on elephant back and camping in the forest. Another resort is at Bimeshawri which is a Mahseer anglers’ paradise, a fishing camp. There is also a resort called Kabini River Lodge in the Rajeev Gandhi National Park which offers a variety of ecotourism products. And there are similar resorts at Dandeli and Karwar.