PREFACE

Hills have been a source of wonder and inspiration for human societies and cultures since time immemorial. Our fascination for these unique wilderness areas has been partly based on their remoteness and inaccessibility. Yet, today, the elements that attract people to hills – clean air, diverse landscapes, rich biodiversity, and unique cultures – are under threat, partly because of poorly managed and non-sustainable tourism. Travel to hill areas, which already account up to 20 per cent of global tourism, is increasing rapidly. Hills are second only to coasts and islands as popular tourism destinations, generating 20 percent of annual global tourism income. While modern facilities of transportation have made even remote hill areas accessible to increasing numbers of visitors, hill tourism tends to be very unevenly distributed, with a small proportion of locations having significant tourism infrastructure.

Hill tourism is one of the fast growing tourism sectors in Kerala, contributing 30 per cent of the total revenue from tourism sector. Eastern Kerala consists of land encroached upon by the Western Ghats; the region thus includes high mountains, gorges and deep-cut valleys. The Kerala hills offer pleasant and pleasurable diversions that range from going on hiking, biking, trekking and hill climbing tours, wildlife safaris to the numerous wildlife sanctuaries located on the hills. The mist covered Kerala hills with clear blue skies as the perfect background and the evergreen forests that clothe these hills create a visual panorama that heightens the pleasure of all the tourists.

The present study has been undertaken to assess the perception of tourists and host community of hill tourism destination on the facilities provided in the hills and the impact of tourism on the hills. The role played by various promotional agencies on the development of hill as tourism
destinations are also come under the purview of the study. The study covers a ten year period from 2001 to 2010. Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. The primary data were collected from tourists (both foreign and domestic), host community and the officials of promotional agencies. A total of 300 tourists, 250 host community and 28 officials of various promotional agencies were selected conveniently from the selected destinations by giving due weightage to all the categories. The secondary data were collected from books, periodicals, reports of Government of India and Kerala and other agencies and the Internet. For data analysis, statistical and mathematical tools viz. average, percentage, compound annual growth rate (CAGR), chi-square test and binomial test were used.

The study is organised in six chapters. Chapter one gives an introduction which contains review of literature, statement of the problem, significance of the study, objectives of the study, hypotheses, variables used for the study, methodology, period of study, definition of terms used in the study and the limitations of the study. Chapter two contains an overview of tourism industry – types and a detailed explanation of hill tourism. Chapter three presents the perception of tourists and host community about the facilities provided at the hill tourism destinations in Kerala. Chapter four portrays the perception of host community about the benefits and impacts of tourism in the hill destinations in Kerala. Chapter five gives an overall view of the role played by promotional agencies in the development and maintenance of hills as tourism destination. The last chapter (Chapter six) contains a summary of the findings, conclusion and suggestions based on the study.

The findings of the study would hopefully be useful to the Government and other agencies, local community, policy makers, scholars and academicians.