PREFACE

The present work is an attempt to investigate, analyze and establish ecotourism as a viable tool to promote sustainable development in the small islands viz. Maldives and Fiji. These island countries are the most attractive and best preferred destinations for health resorts, recreation and holidaying. They have remarkable year round salubrious climates, relatively unspoiled beaches, colorful corals, lush and verdant vegetation. The unique handicrafts and social structure of these islands offer a fascinating contrast to a majority of tourists in the world. According to Darwin- "they are little world’s within themselves." These countries, inspite of their small size, vulnerability, delicate and fragile ecosystem with little resource endowment, isolation, inaccessibility, lack of internal transport and communication services and facilities, chronic political and social instability referred as SISODs (small island syndrome of underdevelopment) are successfully operating tourism for a fairly long time. Tourism, in fact, has become the largest contributor to their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and is a leading industry. Tourism has attained an important role and status and brought substantial economic gains to these island countries. Since, they have been under the dominance of multinationals suffering the negative economic consequences that are associated with, low levels of local involvement and high leakage rates of foreign earnings.

An attempt has been made to assess what makes these islands click as tourist "hot-spots" and what underpinnings make them vulnerable. The study explores the visitors profile, what they like about these islands, what the respective governments of these island countries have done to bring tourism industry to this level and what policies have been adopted to promote sustainable development of their available resources. A critical analysis and
assessment of ecotourism, policies and practices in these island countries can
be of help to other island economies in formulating and drafting their own
plans and strategies for ecotourism and sustainable development. Therefore,
the thesis titled "Ecotourism and Sustainable Development of Island
Economies- A Case Study of Maldives and Fiji" has a timely relevance, as the
year 2002 has been declared as "The Year of Ecotourism" by the United
Nations.

The areas of case study selected for the research are the two small
island states* i.e. Maldives and Fiji located in two different geographical
milieus, viz. the Indian and Pacific Oceans respectively. A detailed study of
both the countries has been covered under chapter-II and III. "Small islands
are microcosm for our world we are inhabitants of the global island
surrounded by the limitless ocean of space." Bertram and Walters (1985)
describe the island economies as MIRAB (MI= outward migration, R =
dependency on high level of remittances, A= payments to cover trade deficits
and B= reliance on bureaucracy for job creation) economic structures.

The rationale behind the selection of these two countries was to make
use of ecotourism as an important economic activity through economic and
ecological development. These countries are geographically constrained,
politically unstable, with limited local capital and human resources. These
island economies also represent nations that are struggling (survival of the
fittest) to maintain their identity and image in an increasingly interdependent
world.

Tourism to these countries appears as an alternate source of income
and livelihood and becomes one of the dynamic and fastest growing socio-
economic phenomenons. Tourism as an engine of economic growth
contributes substantially to the Gross Domestic Product, Gross Net Product

* A group of islands under one government with population not exceeding one million has been taken into consideration
as the criteria for defining the small islands.
and National Income of the island countries. The kind of resources these islands have been endowed with makes them the examples for the rest of the world and the way these islands manage their resources will serve as a case for others to follow in future. The impact of government policies and involvement of local inhabitants on making an economy stronger notwithstanding the handicaps they suffer because of their unique nature, location and size can be a lesson for all other countries who share similar geographic, economic and socio-political set-up.

The objectives of the study were manifold. The first and foremost was to study the process of coastal tourism in general and ecotourism in particular in Maldives and Fiji. This objective analyzed the economic contribution of tourism to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Gross Net Product (GNP) and National Income (NI) in both the island states. Second objective dealt with the impact of tourism on physical, socio-cultural and politico-economic milieus in order to know the problems and prospects of the tourism industry and the need of ecotourism for the same. Third objective analyzed the prospects of environmentally sustainable conservation strategies and techniques for the management of the island resources. The fourth objective looked into the conceptually substantiated and standardized form of ecotourism in Maldives and Fiji.

The methodology made use of both primary as well as secondary sources. The primary sources comprised of fieldwork, UN official reports and documents, statistical data prepared by Maldives Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB), Fiji Visitors Bureau (FVB) and World Tourism Organization (WTO). For the fieldwork, data was randomly collected from two places in Fiji viz. Pacific Harbour and Beachcomber Island. The results of fieldwork were further supported with the help of statistics provided by the above mentioned organizations. The fieldwork involved interviews of the tourists on
various aspects of visitation, purpose of visit, nationality, spending, activities preformed etc, for which the questionnaire was circulated (Vide, Appendix-I, for details of the questionnaire). The questionnaire contained both open as well as close ended questions in order to maintain consistency in the responses. The open-ended questions administered to the respondents gave scope for the new outlook and perceptions to be captured. The questions were configured in the following three sections. Section-I: This section consisted of general information about the visitor’s age, nationality, profession, gender, purpose of visit, source of information about the destination and aspects of the country that attracted the tourist the most. Section- II: This section consisted of five questions. a) Mode of transportation (within the island), b) Place of stay, c) Activity performed, d) Duration of stay, e) Safety of tourists. Section- III: This section comprised of questions regarding the improvement desired in the current infrastructure, spending pattern, visitor category and few suggestions, which they would like to add to their responses.

Secondary sources: Books, journals, newspaper, articles, conference reports and web literature have been referred to enrich the literature of the thesis. A select bibliography of all the sources has been enclosed at the end. GIS software arcview and cartographic techniques has been used for making maps.

Data Collection and Analysis: The data was randomly collected from 23 to 30 October 2001 at three places in Fiji. The areas covered during this survey and data collection were- Pacific Harbour (Viti Levu) and the Beachcomber Island (Mamanuca group) and the Abaca Village Visit at Koroyanitu National Heritage Park. Meetings were held with professors, lecturers and scholars at the University of the South Pacific, Suva (Fiji). Views of the officials, tourists, local people on ecotourism have also been rightly included. The first
hand on the spot information regarding ecotourism practices of the Abaca Village was also incorporated in the fieldwork.

Design of Chapters: The research work examined various aspects, which has been divided into five chapters. The first chapter comprises of the genesis of ecotourism, its paradigm, definitions, typology, impacts and the related activities. The second and third chapter presents detailed information about Maldives and Fiji such as location, climate, administrative divisions, social life, economy, overview and performance of tourism industry. A case study from the field trip to Fiji and analysis of questionnaire has been done in the third chapter. The fourth chapter comprises of tourism zones, planning, management, rules and regulations and guidelines in this respect set by both the countries. The fifth chapter comprises of the conclusion.

Limitations of the research work: There were several limitations to the present work. First and the foremost were related to the availability of few grants for the fieldwork. The scholar could get only one field trip grant to Fiji Islands (courtesy School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi), due to the scarcity of funds for field trip Maldives could not be visited for the fieldwork. The second limitation was regarding the duration of stay in the field. Within the stipulated period of thirteen days, it was not possible to cover all the major islands of Fiji for survey, which led to insufficient dataset. Another limitation for the fieldwork was the unavailability of relevant data and the host government's restricted permit to carry out survey in Fiji. A small-scale survey was carried out with the permission of resort owners. Taking all the limitations in stride the research met all the objectives set for the task.