CHAPTER -I

1. DESIGN OF THE STUDY

1.1. COMMUNITY TOURISM IN KERALA

Kerala is considered as the land with blue lagoons and pearly beaches, emerald hills, green vales, incomparable charm and elusive beauty. Kerala (or Keralam) is an Indian state, located south most on its west coast. Created on 1 November 1956, by the States Reorganisation Act, combining various Malayalam speaking regions. The area of the state is 38,863 km$^2$ (15,005 sq mi) and shares borders with the state of Karnataka to the north and north east, with the state of Tamil Nadu to the south and southeast and the Arabian Sea towards the west. Thiruvananthapuram is the capital city (Human Development Report, 2009).

Kochi, Kozhikode and Thriuvananthapuram are other major cities. Kerala is also known for its many small towns that are scattered across the state, because of this density of population is high. Stone age carving in Edakkal Caves had pictorial writings believed to be dating to at least 5000 BC, from the Neolithic man, indicating the presence of a prehistoric civilization or settlement in this region. From as early as 3000 BC, Kerala had established itself as a major spice trade center. Kerala is known for its high standards of well-being, gleaned from development indicators, despite very low level of economic development. These development indicators include a 95% literacy rate, high life expectancy, access to health care, a population troubled politics and this is the only state where women out number men and later marriage age for women and low infant mortality rates. The Kerala Model has been glorified by politicians and academicians alike and Scholars including Amartya Sen, (2000).

After independence in 1947, the state of Kerala was created in 1956 from the former state of Travancore-Cochin, the Malabar district of the Madras State, and the Kasaragode taluk of Dakshina Kannada. Kerala is a popular tourist destination famous for its backwaters, ayurvedic treatments and tropical greenery. Kerala has a higher Human Development Index than all other states in India. The state has a literacy rate of 94.59 percent, the highest in India. (Human Development Report, 2009). Kerala has witnessed significant migration of its people, especially to the Persian during the Kerala Gulf boom, and is heavily dependent on remittances from its large Malayali expatriate community. Non resident Keralites contribute large to the
economy. ‘Kerala has suffered from what were until recently fairly anti-market policies, with deep suspicion of market-based economic expansion without control. So its human resources have not been as well used in spreading economic growth as they could have been with a more complementary economic strategy, which is now being attempted in the country’ (Sen 1999). Adopting sustainable practices has become a necessity rather than a choice for the tourism industry of our country, especially after what the global economic downturn has taught us by visibly demonstrating how drastically the tourism industry can be affected with any negative alteration in the economic, environmental, or social scenarios occurring worldwide.

Achieving sustainability tops the list in any strategies that the world economies are adopting to recover from the downturn, and there is an increased level of awareness on the impacts that climate change has on all sectors including tourism. For India, Kerala Tourism should take the lead in actually demonstrating the power of adopting sustainable practices through the proactive steps. Though Responsible Tourism initiatives had embarked since last two years improvement is very slow. The sustainable tourism practices into its travel, tourism and hospitality sector would not only help to remain competitive in the tourism market, but also to achieve the much needed harmony between the industry, the host community and the natural and man made attractions that together make or break a tourism destination. To achieve the objective of sustainable tourism there is a dire need that our tourism businesses, visitors and most importantly our destinations and the host communities should take a well-planned stride towards achieving sustainability in its management, operations and even in the simplest of actions that are taken to support tourism in a destination.

This would only be possible by adopting a higher degree approach to sustainable tourism that includes all aspects such as effective sustainability planning, maximizing social and economic benefits for the local community; enhancing cultural heritage; and reducing negative impacts to the environment. The tourism industry has a major role in achieving the sustainability of a destination ably supported by the government, local administration and the local community. The Kerala tourism department has initiated a novel approach for comprehensive tourism development aimed at planned/regulated development of the sector. Emphasising on local, community-based tourism, pilot projects in four districts -- Kasaragode (Bekal, Valiyaparamba region), Kannur (Meenkunnu Beach, Thalassery region), Kottayam
(Kumarakom, Aimanam region) and Pathanamthitta (Aranmula, Konni region) have already launched.

1.2. COMMUNITY TOURISM

In modern theories, development was explicitly a process of economic growth that requires industrialisation, urbanisation, nation-state building and an embrace of scientific economic rationality, tourism was of least importance (Willis & Kumar, 2009). In this context, tourism was viewed as a ‘growth pole’ to stimulate economic growth, attract foreign exchange, diversify the economy and generate more employment offers. (Telfer, 2001). It was assumed that advocating tourism in less developed countries would bring national economic growth and modernization in every field (Scheyvens, 2002; Sharpley, 2009). Related to the increased sense of environmental and social responsibility in tourism plus sustainability, Community-based Tourism is also gaining popularity as part of strategies for conservation and development which encouraged the World Bank to invest in tourism projects for the first time (Hawkins & Mann, 2007).

Those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it. This is the message from researchers who warn of negative impacts of tourism. Rothman (1998) relates the disappointment experienced by many small and rural communities. Many local communities are aware of the power of responsible tourism in supporting conservation and local economic development. Sharing the natural resources of a local community with visitors from home and overseas for the sustainable benefit of that local community whilst conserving the natural environment and respecting the way of life.’ Community-based tourism is a growing market, as new generations of travelers worldwide seek more meaningful experiences from their leisure time. Successful community tourism is mutually beneficial for the communities and for the travelers, rural community tourism takes place in already marginalized areas. Created with good intentions, community-based tourism projects are abandoned when political pressures rise, jealousies intensify or the heralded ecotourists don’t arrive. Brown (1998:49) observes unless we have to be prepared to sit back and literally do nothing, expect every that thing we do will have some effect. Policies based on strict enforcement and protection to conserve natural resources has not always been successful, and neither has top down centralized decision-making and management of the development.
process. From an environmental and economic perspective, if local people are not involved, the impact will be negative it is likely over time, the resources on which tourism depends will be destroyed and the investment will be lost for ever. (Brandon, 1996).

1.3. NATURAL RESOURCES

Kerala is rich and well known for its scenic beauty, but the land is has got very poor natural resources. Though Kerala has a variety of mineral deposits, they are not plenteous. The sandy beaches of Kerala contain limonite, the main ore of titanium, and rutile (titanium oxide).The greatest resource of Kerala is her natural beauty with her blue mist capped mountains, undulating hills and valleys of a thousand shades of green, the blue spread of an endless stretch of lagoons and long seacoast blessed by world famous beaches with people of rich culture, and art forms which all together earned for her the sobriquet God's own country. Kerala's forests are rich plenty of flora and fauna. Silent valley and Agasthyavanam biospheres are home to a plethora of rare species of plants and animals making them one of the seven biological hot spots of the world. In terms of its physical features, the land is divided into four distinct types:( i) the highlands vouching the Western Ghats (ii) the midlands (iii) the lowland plains and (iv) the coastal belt. Over 40 rivers feed it. The topography of the state, the tropical climate (high incidence of sunlight, rainfall and warm temperature) as also the cool temperature of the hills generate variety of agro-climatic conditions which lead to the growth of a range of crop species. (K N. Nair, 1994).

Kerala ranks 14th among all the States/Union Territories in respect of the geographical area under forest cover of 15577 sq.km (dense forest 334 sq.km moderate dense forest 9294 sq.km. and open forest 5949 sq.km.) Forest plantation constitutes major source of raw materials to the forest based industries Teak is the major species planted in 75767 ha. Followed by eucalyptus 14274 ha. Softwood species 28832 ha. Bamboo and reeds 5912 ha. Plantation crops 1712 ha. Kerala has 41 west flowing rivers and three east-flowing rivers namely Pambar, Bhavani and Kabani.

The abundance of rain and natural fertility of the soil have made kerala an essentially agricultural region. (Kerala State Gazetteer, vol.iii). The biggest river system among the west flowing rivers is Bharatapuzha with most of its water impounded in the Parambikulam- Aliyar dam providing irrigation to Tamilnadu and its tributary
Siruvani providing drinking water to Coimbatore. The major portion of water of the second biggest river system Periyar is impounded in the Mullaperiyar dam providing water for irrigation in the neighboring districts of Tamil Nadu. Other important river systems are the Chaliyar, Pamba etc. Kerala also has constructed a number of irrigation dams like Malampuzha for irrigation purposes. There are 25 hydel projects owned by Kerala State Electricity Board with an installed capacity of more than 1884.60 M.W.

1.4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This proposed research aspires to explore options for a new system in community tourism and protection of natural resources that would focus on consistency. Many local communities are unaware of the power of responsible tourism in supporting conservation and local economic development. To do this, the researcher will carry out a detailed analysis and use it to propose appropriate policy interventions. Based in areas of outstanding, natural and cultural heritage, communities should take on the challenge of setting up community based tourism enterprises, usually in partnership with local and/or international NGOs. Developing a more informed community development system and to better implement the consistency and at the same time help to monitor and evaluate its opportunities. The intention of this research is to establish the purposes for which community tourism is to empower different communities, and, further, to give ideas to expand and protect natural resources.

1.5. RATIONALE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

Community-based Tourism is used to describe a variety of activities that encourage and support a wide range of objectives in economic and social development and conservation. Responsible travel and Conservation groups have begun to create marketing networks to help raise the profile of these community based tourism projects and open them up to tourists all over the world. Tourism industry generates employment directly and indirectly, for almost more than 14 million people. Employment opportunities if possible should be doubled of the present level before the turn of the century. The rationale for carrying out this research project lies in the well documented findings about the topic. This is due to the conceptually demanding nature of the community tourism and involvement of communities in tourism. The aim of this
research is to develop an intervention programme to help communities to cope with NGO’s, Politics and other such institutions to develop a new trend in community tourism. It is hoped that this intervention programme would improve the cognitive development of the communities and thus enable them to cope more readily with certain difficulties that they have to face in promoting and protecting community tourism and natural resources. Community-based Tourism has to contribute to ever increasing and improving conservation of natural and cultural resources, including biological diversity, water, forests, cultural landscapes, monuments, etc

1.6. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1) To find out the awareness of commonality (ies) within a community as a basis of cooperation.

2) To find out whether the community itself is to be more directly involved in tourism, entrepreneurship, conservation and development of self.

3) To find out the employment and self-employment opportunities for the poor and disadvantaged section of the community by involving them directly in tourism services.

4) To find out whether there is any assistance from the government and public sources for the promotion of responsible tourism.

5) To find out the community awareness about environmental awareness, conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in Ernakulam, Kottayam & Thrissur Districts.

1.7. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

There is a wide scope of community tourism. With the rapid development of tourism, more and more communities become stakeholders of tourism, either because they are affected by tourism development passively, or because they are using tourism as a tool for their development. As a matter of fact, most communities can use tourism as a development tool to some extent. Also all the community may be influenced by the tourism directly or indirectly.
A spectrum of community tourism can be recognized based on the importance of the tourism to the host and the importance of the host to the tourism product. The two may not overlap. Some of the tourism activities rely on host communities, such as village tourism, while others can survive without communities’ support even though these activities have impacts on the communities. For example, some enclave resorts can attract foreign investment because foreign tourists sometimes are interested in having little contact with the local communities. There is limited opportunity for local communities to participate and many such developments will tend to be exploitable and not necessarily sustainable.

Most community based tourism indicates a close relationship between tourism and community. Communities use tourism as a development tool and tourism activities rely very much on communities. Community based tourism product often refers to village tourism, rural tourism, ecotourism and protection of natural resources etc. However, it needs to be understood that community based tourism so defined is a niche market and only covers a limited segment of community tourism. To fully use tourism development opportunities to achieve sustainable development, a broader and wider scope of community tourism should be considered.