ROLE OF COMMUNITY IN ECO TOURISM PROJECTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION:
The participation of the community for the implementation of the tourism projects is essential. The local people should be aware about the role of the community in the implementation of the tourism projects and its development.

The rural development was not absent before the independence. There were district Boards, Panchayati Raj systems and schemes like grow more food campaigns, adult education etc. even before the independence, but these programmes were initiated by fits and starts and the final outcome was very discouraging. After independence new destinations in the field of development were explored on a continuous sustaining basis. The experiments on the community development lent new horizons to the concept of planning and implementation. The planning was done at the national or state level which was symptomatic treatment and not a cure on permanent basis. It was felt necessary to plan from below making every village citizen a participant in the process of planning and development. This gave grassroot/ground oriented approach. The community development was launched to awaken the dormant forces of progress, when the people were involved at all levels of planning and execution this restored a spirit to every citizen, who started taking pride by saying that this is our programme and we have executed it. When it becomes peoples programme, the
execution of the programme by the people, for the people and of the people became the vital nerve of the whole concept of planning and development.

5.1.1 Community:
Great emphasis has been laid on the term ‘community’. The following are the definition of the community:

"The community is a group of person hailing from various social groups living in a particular area or a village having common problems and interests."

"A community can represent a geographic region such as a neighbourhood or a village."

"Community might be a group of citizens that are in an environmentally contaminated area that crosses government boundaries or share a watershed",

'A community can simply be a group of citizens that care about a given issue such as a church group, service club, or an environmental group."

Community involvement is essential to the success of environmental projects. By becoming knowledgeable about environmental projects, people can become more actively involved in the process and have an effective voice in determining how the community should respond to the problem. As vested participants in the process, rather than bystanders, citizens are more likely to actively support a remediation plan that they understand and have helped to develop. Therefore, identifying the community is the first step towards active involvement.

5.1.2 Community Participation Approach in India
The country had the alien rule for about two centuries and the people were ignorant about usefulness of development immediately after independence and partition of the country. They were suffering from the evils of illiteracy, unemployment and economic ill health. The people did not have the urge to step into the new era of development. Poverty was being treated as 'a gift of
nature'. Therefore, immediately after the independence the Planning Commission was set by the Government of India and the first Five-Year Plan was launched in 1951. Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru the then Prime Minister of India realised that no amount of planning and fiscal development was going to help the poor unless we think in terms of the community who are actual recipients of development fruit and unless they were to be trained and educated to develop themselves the entire attempt to develop the country would go waste. Hence in 1952 the Community Development Programme was launched in a big way. Later finding the encouraging results, the programme came in a big way and the entire community covered under the national extension programme. The main content of this programme was people's participation based on self-help and self-reliance. The results were found to be magical and the government programme was owned and accepted by the community as its own. This was a great psychological transformation in the minds of the community. There were some shortcomings either on the parts of administration level or at the level of the community. But the benefits were far more than the lapses.

The people for whom the economic revolution was designed were conferred formal role when the three tier system of Panchayati Raj was created during 1957 on the recommendation of Mehta Balwant Rai committee report. The transfer of authority to the people although suffered in the earlier stage because of the apathy on the part of the state governments and also the public servants, yet with the passage of time the doubts about the community competence to take up the responsibility was gradually softened. As compared to the fifties and sixties the things have improved considerably and the people have been attuned to the modalities and niceties of planning and development and
they are now raising the voice to make them the biggest player in the art of planning and implementation. They have acquired the necessary know how and the competence to accept the responsibility. The public servants who at one time were apprehensive of the ability of the people to accept new responsibilities are also convinced that the community through the instrument of Panchayati Raj have come of age to shoulder the responsibility.

5.1.3 Community Participation for Development in Himachal Pradesh
The era of planning started in Himachal in 1948 along with the rest of India. The First Five Year Plan allocated Rs. 5.27 crores to Himachal. More than 50 per cent of this expenditure was incurred on road construction since it was felt that without proper transport facilities, the process of planning and development could not be carried to the people, who mostly lived an isolated existence in far away areas. Efforts were also made to involve people more in the process of economic and social advancement.

The community development and its participation programme launched in 1952, in certain selected areas of Himachal were later extended to the entire rural area. New ideas and forming techniques suitable to different areas and climatic zones were introduced bringing a new awareness amongst the people about the production possibilities of their respective lands which for centuries were using the ancient time worn out methods. In Mandi and Kangra districts, package programmes were undertaken in collaboration with the West German Government for popularizing modern techniques of cultivation among the farmers. Suitable agricultural machinery and good breeds of cattle, sheep and poultry were introduced in these areas. Well equipped soil testing laboratories, dairy farms and agricultural workshops were established at various
centres, besides an Agriculture University at Palampur.

Himachal is one of the classic examples of rapid transformation from the worst form of feudalism to democracy and from the most backward part of the country to one of its most advanced states. Himachal now ranks fourth in respect of per capita income among the states of the Indian Union. Himachal has an impressive record to look back upon and there are wide opening vistas ahead. Its education system is well established, its agriculture reaching near self-sufficiency, its horticulture making a name in the country and even abroad, its road system having emerged as the best in the hills, the infrastructure for its industrial development well laid out, its rich forests being augmented and above all, the increasing attention of the nation towards exploiting its hydel resources are the guarantees for its bright future. It has already become the ideal in respect of development for the hill areas of the country. *(Economic Survey, 2005-06).*

### 5.1.4 Community and Tourism

Tourism is an economic activity so it becomes necessary to spread its benefits to the community. At the time of planning one must think for the community. The environment is an integral part of the development, in their improvised state; the community depends on environment for their livelihood and substance. Communities have to meet their urgent short-term needs by preying upon natural resources available in their surrounding. They care more about extracting what they can today from the environmental resources than about conserving them for tomorrow. The result is often very opposite of sustainability, with excessive exploitation of natural habitat. To make development sustainable, what is therefore required are strong poverty alleviation strategies that meet the basic needs of the community, and empower
them in a manner which reduces their direct dependence on natural resources. So the option of the usage is of resource but for this calculate the extent of benefit that can be taken from the resources without harming them or we need to find out the limits or the economic efficiency of the resources. Community participation as described is central to the alternative ecotourism concept, with proponents arguing that participation in planning is necessary to ensure that benefits reach residents in destination areas and that ecotourism, which encourages local employment and small business development promotes higher economic multipliers, and that a community approach to decision-making helps to ensure traditional lifestyles and that community values are respected. A close working relationship between the local community and the industry will provide the means to support conservation efforts.

There is a close link between the community and the tourism. Tourism helps a community and its resources to become more attractive and prosperous. It is more attractive because a community must be appealing to draw and satisfy visitors, and it is more prosperous because these visitors spend money. With this money spent in community, the community gets the development. Many factors need to be evaluated when community leaders design their master plan for local development. These factors include land use, transportation, education, utilities, fire and police protection, government regulations, labour, housing and commercial and industrial activity. Participation of people in the development of rural tourism is of utmost importance to educate the masses about the benefits of rural tourism, otherwise if the tourists are taken to the villages they will be strangers and people will look upon them with a suspicious eye. People will have to be
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acquainted with the benefits of arrival of tourists in the villages and educated that there visits will lead to economic and social development. Therefore, before launching the tourism in the villages it is very essential to make people receptive to the programme. They should interact freely and set up cottage industry keeping in view the needs of the tourists and promote the local skills and know how. The Department of Tourism will coordinate with the other relevant departments to help the people as per their needs. The core fact has to be brought home to all stakeholders, the industry find the people is that there can not be any impairment in physical or social environment. The traditions, customs, and social institutions which give the hill people a special status have to be retained.

5.1.5 Tourism, the Environment and the Community

Tourism and environment are closely interrelated. The natural and built environment provides many of the attractions for tourists and coupled with this tourism development can have both positive and negative impact on the environment. Sustainable tourism development depends on protecting the environmental resources for tourism. The partners for sustainable tourism development are the tourism industry-owners and managers of tourism commercial enterprises, the environment supporters-advocates for environmental conservation, and the community-residents, community groups and leaders and the local authorities. Typically some members of the community will also be involved in the tourism industry or be environment supporters.

5.2 DEVELOPMENT IN THE HILL AREA:

World Bank (1992) defines development as about improving the well-being of the people. Raising living standards and improving education, health and equality of opportunity are all essential components of development.
Though development can raise living standards, improve education, health and bring economic benefits to the country, yet it is not without negative effects. The policy options therefore can be either to develop and tolerate environmental degradation or not to have development at all. The compromise solution has to be worked out. Formulation of appropriate development strategy for achieving environmentally sustainable development is the right choice (Batta R.N 2000). In today’s context Sustainable development has become a ubiquitous phrase. Politicians mouth it; Planners state it as their objective, developers lay their claim on it. Architects, Planners and Designers of this era often talk about sustainable cities, developments, urban forms, housing, buildings and even sustainable future. The concept of sustainable development is an assimilation of the following elements.

5.2.1 Concerns and issues of sustainable development:
The central concern of Sustainable development is the all time well being of the people and is dependent upon the needs and aspiration of the people and the carrying capacity of the area. It is in fact a complex question that how much the present and the future societies would like to have and how much that land holds or possesses to cater to them. (www.enwikipedia.org) A five level hierarchy of human needs viz. Physiological needs (Food, shelter and clothing), Security needs (protection of life, assurance of continuing income), Social needs (Acceptance by other people), Self esteem needs (achievement of independence) and self fulfillment needs (job satisfaction). The fulfillment of these needs require both natural and man made resources. They include (i) the resources involving conversion of natural resources such as land, water and vegetation. (ii) socio-economic and socio-cultural resources such as household, livestock, agriculture and industries. (iii) the
infrastructural resources comprising of social, physical and economic infrastructure. It is the natural components of the earth which directly or indirectly meet the material needs of the human beings. All these components are inseparable and collectively serve as the supporting parameters affecting the economic base, quality of life and eventually the sustainability (Maslow, A. 1954).

Many of the man made system such as agriculture, transport, physical infrastructure tend to alter and sometimes even damage the balancing
process of nature. For sustainability thus there is a need to identify factors which cause the damage to the system and analyse the degree of interdependency of the natural resources, population and environment.

Flow Chart no. 5.2 Sustainable development process

This implies the fulfilment of basic requirements with due consideration to the natural resources (Carrying capacity of the environment) shall subsequently lead to the sustainable development in the area. In the case of hills, as is evident from the literature survey, the increase in population and attempts of meeting the needs of the people result in uncoordinated developmental activities. The disregard to objective conditions of hills and other political preferences cause unprecedented degradation and depletion of natural resources. The landuse pattern/ physical pattern of the area is ultimately affected, which leads to environmental concern. The complex interdependencies and the interlinkages between the various subsystems and the environmental implications pose the basic challenge for planning in
the hills. Parameters, which give a holistic view of several sub systems, their interdependencies and interactions; and also suggest guidelines for suitable development are best defined by the Carrying capacity of the area (Bishop, A. B. 1992)

5.2.2 Development and Environment:

Achievement of sustained and equitable development is the main goal of planning. The World Development Strategy advanced the idea that development and environment must be integrated to 'discharge our responsibilities as trustees of natural resources for the generations to come.' A more specific definition focused on the physical aspect of SD stresses using renewable natural resources in a manner that does not eliminate or degrade them. The three major aspects of sustainable development (SD) are environment, economy and community (Goodland, R. & Leedec, G. 1987). Environmental problems are inseparable from those of human welfare and from the process of economic development in general. The Human Development Report 1991 (www.undp.org.in) has added a human dimension to SD by suggesting that development must be woven around people i.e., development must be participatory and must involve local peoples in decisions that affect their lives. Agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry and many other economic activities depend simultaneously on both the exploitation and conservation of natural resources. In most of the developing areas in general and the hilly areas in particular, the resources essential to economic growth are threatened by rapid population growth, extreme poverty, loss of biodiversity, pollution of air and water, soil toxicity and erosion, and short-sighted economic policies (Bhati. J.P. and Zingel, 1987). Therefore, SD has emerged as a key issue in economic development planning. Dependence on natural resources and biodiversity for maintaining essential ecological processes and life-support systems is crucial (IUCN 1980, www.iucn.org).
5.3 CARRYING CAPACITY:
The concept of carrying capacity is often mentioned in the ecotourism literature. Carrying capacity is the maximum number of visitors who can visit an area without leading to severe environmental degradation or serious decline in the quality of the experience gained by visitors (Aylward et al. 1996, Mandziuk 1995). Carrying capacity can be measured in terms of the natural environment, the host community and the visitor. Factors measured are ecological (e.g., ecosystem health, ecosystem integrity), physical (trail areas, water quality and availability, lodging, sewer systems), social (e.g., overcrowding, traffic, pollution, waste disposal), and economic and managerial (e.g., locally owned enterprises, trained personnel) (Mandziuk 1995). Determining carrying capacity limits of increasingly popular destinations is important for the success of ecotourism because this form of tourism promotes conservation and sustainability principles.

5.3.1 Tourism Carrying Capacity
The aim to have sustainable Eco Tourism development is to attain economic development while protecting natural environment, will remain unachievable if negative aspects are not taken care off. Carrying capacity definition as provided by (Hunter & Green 1995 to estimate tourist carrying capacity of a given area is an area used by tourists divided by average individual standard.

Standard according to him is $M_2 / \text{person}$

\[
\text{Carrying Capacity} = \frac{\text{Area used by Tourists}}{\text{Average Individual Standard}}
\]

The total number of daily visits is obtained by the following formula:

Total number = Carrying Capacity x Rotation coefficient of Daily Tourists
And the rotation coefficient can be calculated as:

\[
\text{Number of Daily hours areas is open for Tourists} \times \text{Average time of Visit}
\]

According to O'Reilly (1986) there are two facts to tourism carrying capacity. The first deals with the ability of the destination area to absorb the impacts of tourism development. The second relates to the tourists' perceptions of environmental quality, i.e., the risk that tourist numbers will decline because perceived capacities have been exceeded. Prior to him Mathieson & Wall (1982) provided a simple definition of carrying capacity, which depends on the numeric number. For them carrying capacity is the maximum number of people who can use the site without unacceptable effects on the physical environment and or without unacceptable decline in the quality of experience gained by visitors. The concept of carrying capacity is however not limited within the periphery of physical environment. O'Reilly (1986) describes the various carrying capacities like:

5.3.2 Physical Carrying Capacity: which relates with limit of a site beyond which wear and tear will start taking place or environmental problem will arise.

5.3.3 Psychological Carrying Capacity: the lowest degree of enjoyment tourists are prepared to accept before they start seeking alternative destination.

5.3.4 Social Carrying Capacity: the level of tolerance of host population for the presence and behavior of tourists and/or degree of crowding, users (tourists) are prepared to accept by others.

5.3.5 Economic Carrying Capacity: relates to the ability to absorb tourism activities without displacing or disrupting desirable local activities.

As per WTO or UNEP's (1992) definition "the level of visitor use of an area
can accommodate with high level of satisfaction for visitors and few impacts on resources.”

5.4 CONDITIONS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF ECOTOURISM

To ensure maximising benefits from ecotourism and minimising negative impacts on mountain environments and communities, all stakeholders must commit themselves to following some principles and guidelines in their operations, in a concerted effort. WTO has identified the following principles and guidelines for ecotourism in general, also valid for mountain areas:

a. Ecotourism must contribute to the conservation and improvement of natural areas and to the sustainable development of adjacent areas and communities.

b. Ecotourism requires specific policies, strategies and programmes for each nation, region and area; it cannot be sustainably developed by simply copying what has been done elsewhere, let alone be left to grow in a disorderly and anarchic manner.

c. Ecotourism needs practical and effective systems of coordination between all the players involved, including governments, private enterprises and the local community.

d. The planning of ecotourism must include strict criteria for territorial zoning, including reserves, low and medium-impact areas. These criteria should be strictly enforced and respected by all parties.

e. The physical planning and design of ecotourist facilities – especially hotels and other means of accommodation, restaurants, information centres in national parks and the like– should be carried out in a manner to avoid or minimise any negative impact they may have upon the natural and cultural environment. Building materials, architectural
styles, furniture and decor should ideally be local, while low pollution energy sources should be used.

f. Similarly, the means of transport and communications to be used in ecotourism areas should be low contaminating. Sports involving noisy or highly polluting means of transport should definitely be prohibited in these areas.

g. The practice of ecotourism in national parks and protected areas should strictly comply with the management rules governing such areas.

h. Reciprocally, these management plans should take into account the fact that they will be used by tourists, and make suitable provisions for a sustainable use and visitation.

i. Appropriate legal and institutional mechanisms should be established to facilitate and make effective the orderly participation of the local communities in the entire ecotourism process, including policy definition, planning, management and monitoring.

j. In line with this, institutional, financial, fiscal or other mechanisms should also be established to ensure that a significant proportion of the income generated from ecotourism remains with the local community or serves conservation purposes.

k. It is however important to ensure that ecotourism is a good, economically sustainable business and that profits are generated from it. If there are no prospects for profit, then private entrepreneurs will not invest and there will be no benefits to distribute for local communities or conservation purposes.

l. All those concerned with the ecotourism business must be aware of the costs of mitigating any possible negative impacts, and such costs must be incorporated in the pre-investment cost-benefit analyses of any
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m. Compliance with general tourism regulations and codes should be stricter in the case of ecotourism, combining supervision and monitoring, with awareness raising campaigns among business people and tourists, training of service suppliers, and eventually sanctions against those who do not comply. Self regulation and voluntary initiatives related to the environmental and socio-cultural sustainability of ecotourism should be encouraged but duly checked.

n. Consideration should be given to the prospects of establishing the obligation of certification systems for ecotourism facilities and operations, at least at regional

o. and possibly at pan-European level, to guarantee that their quality is consistent with the principles of sustainability. Accreditation of existing local certification systems should also be considered, as a means to give them higher credibility in the eyes of consumers and foreign tour operators.

p. Education and training are prerequisites for sustainable ecotourism development and management. Company managers and employees, as well as the local population need training on general and specific aspects of ecotourism, tailored to the needs of each. In particular, ecotourism needs highly qualified guides, who should ideally be natives from the area.

q. Ecotourists need detailed and specialised information, both before and during the trip. The provision of complete information is precisely one of the elements that differentiate the ecotourism experience from traditional tourism, and it can take various forms, such as brochures, guide-books, leaflets, maps, interpretation centres, ecomuseums,
signposted nature trails, and, of course the guides themselves.

Promotional material for ecotourism should contain substantial information on the experience to which potential tourists are invited, including details on flora, fauna, orography, geology and in general on the ecosystem to be visited. It should also include truthful information about the accommodation and catering services, as well as recommendations on what may and may not be done at the destination. All this information before the purchase will help the potential clients to discriminate between genuine ecotourism operators and others that only seek to take advantage of a fashion.

5.5 CONCLUSION:
The concept of carrying capacity is an important tool in planning the development of a tourist destination. However, it is not to be used in a mechanical way rather it is useful in a comprehensive systematic planning process as a means to identify thresholds which require policy decision. However, as also argued by Wall (1982), capacity cannot be used as an absolute limit, but as a means to identify critical thresholds which need attention and removing the obstacles by applying controls where possible. It should be considered as a part of overall staging plan for development of tourism. However, it has to be kept in mind that carrying capacity analysis does not replace environmental and socio-economic impact assessment of destination areas. Impact assessment should still be carried out as a complementary action for ensuring that capacities are not exceeded and especially to detect specific impact problems that may have been overlooked in carrying capacity analysis.