

Eco-tourism and benefits

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Abstract

Tourism is inherently exploitative in terms of the damaging the local community and the environment. It is a private-sector dominated, resource dependent industry which exports the client rather than a product. Sustainable tourism/ Eco-tourism aims to preserve the natural order of a local community. Tourism accelerates the growth of infrastructure in the tourist area and creates a surplus of waste there. The locals aren't supported and their lives are hampered. Hence, it is very important to focus on Eco-tourism and support the local community and local life. The purview of the idea is to take care to not disturb the integrity of the natural ecosystem and the ethnic culture, while creating economic opportunities that make conservation and protection advantageous to the indigenous, poor people. This can be done by hiring locals to be guides and protectors , living in local huts and houses rather than exploitative 4-5 star hotels and being mindful and aware as a tourist. In Part 1 of this paper, I delve into the power dynamics and in Part 2, I delve into the solution to help preserve the indigenous community. Thus, I hypothesize that practicing Eco-tourism can reverse the impact luxury tourism has had on the environment.

Keywords: Eco- tourism, Sustainable tourism, local community, Indigenous community

Introduction

A number of studies concluded that tourist places had a high inflow of solid waste that was generated from the tourists visiting these places.

- ❖ Pahalgam, Kashmir receives 70% of the tourist inflow in the valley for Amarnath Yatra and Sight seeing. The waste generated by the tourists ends up in the River Lidder thus permanently polluting it.⁽¹⁾
- ❖ This can be viewed as at a detrimental impact of regular luxury tourism.
- ❖ The tourists did not seem to care much about the natural environment and seemed to be oblivious to the harm.
- ❖ The private organizations responsible for managing the tourists seemed to be focused on solely profit making.

Hence, they were nonchalant to the problems that were arising from irresponsible tourist practices. It is to be noted that the environment and local communities face ample damages on the name of tourism.

- In Maharashtra , after the Olive Ridley turtles were on the brink of extinction due to several reasons, the local community stepped in and introduced the concept of Eco tourism. This resulted in the tourism rate increasing and quality of life for the locals improving.⁽²⁾
- Karnataka's tourism is controlled by a government venture called "Jungle Lodges and Resorts" which means the locals have no stake over their own land. They then have limited options to work. Eco-tourism would mean investing in the locals and making sure they own their own land as well as have ample job opportunities there.⁽³⁾

Luxury tourism has been and will always be a problem. We must realize the value of the local community and the scarcity of the natural resources that the tourists feel entitled to use and abuse. They do this much vehemently due to the sum of money they paid to the private co-operations. This somehow gets co-related in the narrative “higher the sum, more the power to abuse the particular place”.

So, we can see that there is a problem. The solution, although is one which has been applied to areas like Tadoba, Velas, Konkan and a number of other areas in Maharashtra and other areas all over India. These areas practice Eco-tourism with the locals being incharge of the tourist activities. This makes them less spiteful and more respectful of the land. They also have a more wholistic and inherent understanding of the land which is why it is a more informative experience for the tourists as well. Let us discuss this further. We might then realize why Eco tourism should be applied everywhere.

1. Konkan is one striking example of Eco-tourism being applied and being successful. There are a number of local ventures in Konkan. This is the area where the pioneering process of Eco-tourism in Maharashtra took place. This was much before the western countries described the concept of Eco-tourism and home stays. ⁽⁴⁾

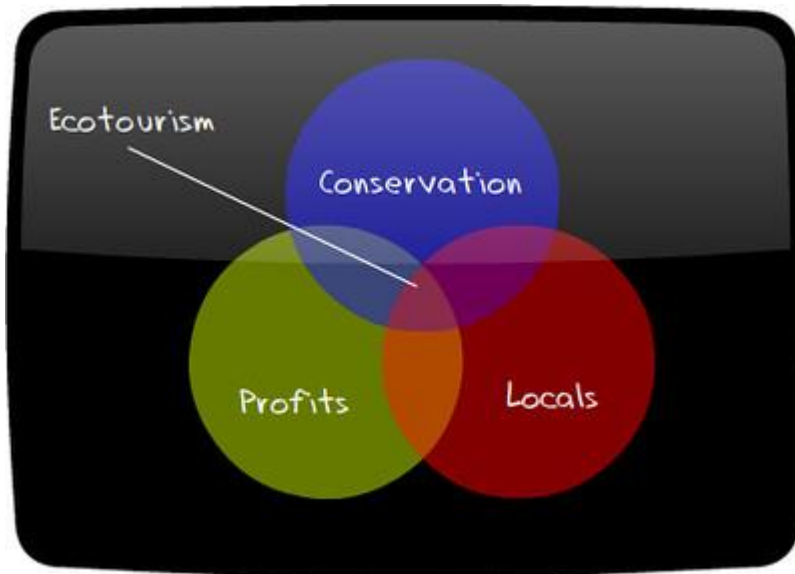
2. Velas in Dapoli, Konkan has also become a place with a generous input of tourists coming to live in the home-stays provided there. This is also a place for the rescue of the Olive Ridley turtle species which was getting extinct due to overfishing . Earlier, the eggs were eaten by humans and jackals alike and the remaining would be sold and eaten. Now, local community profit off the hatching season of the turtles and hence began taking better care of their lives and hatching.⁽⁵⁾
3. A group led by Bhau Katdare started this initiative of releasing the hatch-lings into the sea safely from their nests. In their first effort in 2002, they managed to safely release 2734 Olive Ridley turtle hatch-lings from 50 nests into the sea. Over the years, Maharashtra Forest Department, a number of Environmental Organizations and individuals have pitched in to help ensure that a large number of sea turtle hatch-lings see life in the sea. To ensure that the tourist inflow remains constant, it was necessary to take good care of these turtles. The local community became stakeholders in the conservation project and thus whatever profits that were earned were given directly to the locals.⁽⁵⁾ Thus ,one could say that the locals made sure the tourists were satisfied. Tourists also began looking forward to eating the delicious delicacies that Konkan has to provide like “Sol Kadhi” , “ Ukdiche Modak” , “Tandalachi Bhakari” etc. Thus, this can be pointed out as a success story in Eco-tourism.
4. Amzari, close to the hill station of Chikkhaldara is another shining example. The local forest department introduced the youth to activities like rapelling, rock climbing and flying fox. They were taught safety and conduction of these activities. Thus, over a few years in Chikkaldhara tourists began gathering to do these activities. They stayed in beautiful “*machans*” which are wooden voyeur structures in villages and began sleeping in small huts there. The locals were ensured jobs and thus became stakeholders in preserving the local community and environment.⁽⁶⁾
5. Bhimashankar, being the source of the Bhima river used to attract multitudes of pilgrimage tourists and saturates tons of garbage. The forest department did not have funds to chip in for the cleaning of this waste. This is where Eco-tourism helped. The locals were given the job of cleaning the place and also making sure the tourists did not vandalize the forests or disturb wildlife. They were paid with

the gate money that was collected from the visiting tourists. Thus this turned out to be a successful venture in Eco-tourism.⁽⁷⁾

6. Kaas, in Maharashtra now known as a world heritage site also recently started the practice of Eco-tourism. The motive was to make sure the locals got employed for looking after the flowers that made the area special. Thus, tons of locals got jobs doing this. ⁽⁸⁾
7. The base camp of one of the most challenging treks in Maharashtra , Kalavantin durg is called Yalavali. Eco-tourism is practiced here . it is evident that the facilities on the base camp are jointly managed by a family of people from the village. This gives the travelers a real sense of the nature's prestige without any of the unnecessary exploitative luxury. All this at a very affordable price.
8. Periyar tiger reserve in Kerela, Thekkadi has become a hub of eco-tourism as the locals were given an advantageous position in deciding between holding jobs in the forest or continue illegally exploiting the forest. They chose the previous option and formally pledged allegiance to the forest and as a response the forest department lifted all the charges placed on them for illegal hunting and exploiting the forest. Hence the youth, due to their intimate knowledge of the forest became skilled in conducting activities like Bamboo rafting, Day trekking, Tribal heritage, Bamboo grove, Jungle inn and Wild adventures. This was helpful as the tourists really enjoyed themselves and the bond of the youth to the forest was real. Thus , the western ghats of Kerela became in a true sense zones of eco tourism.⁽⁹⁾

Thus, we can very evidently see higher levels of satisfaction among the tourists is a parameter to maintain to ensure the inflow of tourists in the areas with ecotourism. This ensures that the people having been employed stay employed. The ones who were previously considered threats to the forest now take part in maintaining this .

An example of the protected areas in the Himalayas would be an apt example to look at here. ⁽¹⁰⁾



Eco tourism is on the rise all over the county in many states. It is affordable for the tourist and sustainable in terms of the area being used. It also gives the local community employment. Thus, I conclude, with all the above advantages that supersede the removal of luxury private tourism, Eco-tourism can in fact reduce the harm done to the area by luxury tourism. ⁽¹¹⁾

9. References

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