

## Environment-friendly tourism for sustainable economic development in India

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Tourism is widely being recognized by the governments the world over as a sector with immense potential for economic development and employment generation. Various international agencies like World Tourism Organization (WTO) have pointed out the vast developmental potential of tourism, particularly with reference to the developing nations, like India. It has been estimated that economies like India and China would emerge as the superpowers in world tourism by the years 2020. Of late, Asia Pacific region is fast growing in tourism though the region as a whole has been rather lagging behind the world. Similarly, India has also been late in encouraging tourism as a means of economic development, but the scenario has changed since the early 2000s. For instance, in the year 2006, the foreign tourists arrivals in India (4.45 million) have been almost double that of 1996 (2.29 million), while the earnings have almost tripled during the period, from Rs. 10046 Crore to Rs. 29604 Crore. Further, in line with the above increasing trend, for the seven months' period January to July 2007 the provisional figures stand at 2.76 million as against 2.47 for the corresponding period of 2006. However, in spite of the appreciable growth in tourism over the last few years and also the excellent prospects that the industry offers for economic development there are growing apprehensions regarding the sustainability of tourism as a development paradigm because of various reasons, but most importantly the adverse impacts of tourism on the environment. Accordingly, it is widely believed that environment friendly tourism alone can be sustainable for development in the long run. In the above context, this paper seeks to (i) make an overall review of the current status of global tourism and its trends and patterns, (ii) make a detailed analysis of Indian tourism, its development over the years, problems and prospects, (iii) strategies for sustainable tourism development in India, with focus on environment friendly tourism. The paper considers,

inter alia, relevant global experiences, ever-growing environmental issues, and after all the peculiar socio-economic, geographic and such other features characteristic of the Indian union.

### **Genesis:**

Word over, particularly among the developing nations, tourism is fast picking up as a tool for economic development and employment generation. However, the question as to the long-term sustainability of tourism is increasingly being recognized as a challenge for all concerned, because of the several adverse effects of tourism, most prominently those on the environment. As such there is added significance for environment-friendly tourism initiatives for long-term sustainability. The case of tourism in the Asia-Pacific region or India in particular may be looked into as a classic example in this regard. Notwithstanding the appreciable growth in different performance parameters of Indian tourism over the last few years, it may be stated that meticulously planned, carefully designed and clearly articulated strategies are essential to maintain and further improve its performance tourism in the days to come. The significance of environment friendly tourism strategies need not be over-emphasized in this regard.

### **Analytical significance:**

The prospects of tourism development appear to be quite promising in many of the developing countries of the world. India and a few other countries in the Asia-Pacific region is no exception in this regard. While the general pattern is that of a fast growing tourism initiatives the world over, the adverse impacts of tourism are dangerously on the rise in many parts of the world, particularly the degradation of the environment, fast depletion of natural resources, adverse effect on biodiversity and ecological balance, and the like. Accordingly, there is an enhanced significance for 'nature friendly' tourism development. For a developing nation like India which has been late in recognizing the developmental potential of tourism, the need for environment. It is in this context that an analysis as to the eco-friendly strategies

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