

Tourism Today In Andaman And Nicobar Islands

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Abstract

The development of tourism has taken different shape and magnitude in different environmental situations. The travellers of the past were a merchant, a pilgrim, a scholar etc. As civilization developed, conscious travel in order to explore and see a world began. Tourism is an economic activity of immense global significance which indirectly benefits the environment and culture and helps to preserve ancient cultures and handicrafts which otherwise would have been lost in the relentless march of industrialization. It depends on the quality of the environment for its success and good tourist development requires the protection and even the improvement of the environment. However tourism relationship with the environment is complex. It involves many activities that can have adverse environmental effects. The open countryside and wide ranging sea coasts have always been the key resources for tourism. The scenic beauty of Andaman and Nicobar Islands is so enchanting that no person can forget its charm. The present paper is an attempt to depict a picture of tourism today in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Keywords: Tourism, Environment, Islands, Ecosystem, Landscape, Biodiversity

Introduction

Tourism is recognised as being one of the world's main economic activities. The tourism industry is probably the single largest vehicle for exchanges and learning between citizens of different nation. Tourism has the potential to transfer large sums of money from relatively wealthy communities to poorer ones and to foster a great deal of intercultural contact (Bhatt & Badan, 2006). Besides the enormous opportunities it provides, tourism also brings serious adverse impact on the environment, physical appearance, economy, health, safety and social values of the destination community.

The origin of the word 'tourism' dates back to the year 1292 AD. Tourism or tourist word is related to the word tour which is derived from the Latin word tornus, means a

tool for describing a circle or a turner's wheel (Bhatia, 1982). It is from the word tornos, the notion of a round tour or a package tour has come in vogue. In 1643, the term was first used in the sense of going round or travelling from places to places in circuit or sequence, circuitous journey, embracing the principal places of a country or region (Negi, 1982).

Tourism is not a new phenomenon in India. Since time immemorial, people of India and abroad were travelling to many parts of India for various purposes like trade, education and pilgrimage. Tourism as modern concept is not very old. We can find its roots in the great industrial revolution of Europe (Kumar, 2011). The increased automation of machines gave more leisure to man. Gradually, the concept of more holidays, less working hours, more facilities and more leisure developed. The process of mechanised industrialisation leads to urbanisation. The heavy urbanisation process changed the villages into towns-cities-metropolis-megalopolis and conurbation etc. The increasing urbanization gave birth to crises, tensions, various environmental, physical and psychological problems. For escaping from these tensions, many began to search different kinds of entertainment. Among all modes of escape, physical departure to any other place is also a good way to relax. This was not just an escape only, but his thirst for knowledge, enthusiasm for adventure, curiosity to know about unknown or less known people and places was also imbibed within his motivation to move from home. So travelling become multi-dimensional and multi-purpose phenomena. Now travelling is not limited to religious places, historical places, beautiful sights and ancient ruins but to high sky, high mountains, roaring rivers like adventurers activities.

Travel is an activity, whether it is domestic or international. Each man has his own expectations, needs and wants. He is motivated by different factors and these factors create different kinds of tourism to satisfy their needs, which have been changed over time. Tourism is basically an economic activity on the part of the host country. Its main advantages are that it generates employment, income and foreign exchange inflows. Economists have for a long time been aware of the large benefits derived by islands from tourism. Many islands, particularly those in the tropics, rely heavily upon natural resources of sea, sun and sand as the attraction upon which their tourism industries are based.

The image of island life and landscape among tourist is certainly very attractive. Butler, in a review of tourism development in small islands, points to a number of features, in

particular, physical separateness, cultural differences and attractive climate and environment, which he believes are most appealing.

One of the main issues for island is the relationship between tourism development and natural environment. This can be a conflict relationship because the natural environment is both a factor of production and a source of attraction for tourists. The relationship is also extractive since tourists require supplies of fresh water, clean air and local produce as a basic ingredient, which can be extracted only from the destination. The relationship is also aesthetic since most types of tourism depend on the environment to give the tourist a pleasing amenity. This aesthetic relationship could be viewed as non-extractive as long as tourism does not degrade the environmental amenity provided to tourists.

The general inter-dependent relationship between tourism and the environment indicates the need for a systems approach to the management of economic and environmental resources when deciding development option for island areas. By envisioning tourism as a system, it becomes clear that tourism is an open system that responds to change in the social, economic and natural environment and is evolving towards greater complexity.

The Study Area

As in the rest of the country, there is a mythological interpretation to the raism d'etre of these islands. It is believed that the Andamans were islands inhabited by the Handuman. The first reference to the Andaman Islands is to be found in the great Indian epic the Ramayana. Among western sources, the first reference to the island is in the geographika syntaxis, the most laudable attempt in ancient times to place the study of geography on a scientific basis. Several centuries later, we have the account of the Chinese traveller I'Chang. The truth is that, it was not until the Cape of Good Hope was discovered and ships playing trade route around the cape eastward bound found the Nicobar en route that the world becomes aware of these islands (Kaul, 1989).

Lapped by incessant white foamed crested waves, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands archipelago lies in the centre of the Bay of Bengal. The story of the islands begins when time began. Once the geological forces had created mountains, islands and oceans, living creatures evolved until at last the earth came to be dominated by homosapiens. The rest of the world marched on, the process of evolution halted in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The islands are, therefore, inhabited by aborigines through there are some islands that are quite inhabited. The most geographical description of these islands was written by C.Boden Kloss when he visited the island in 1901. A great part of these

islands are composed of rocks belonging to Eocene period. The Andaman and Nicobar archipelago lies in a crescent that stretches from Cape Wegrails of Myanmar to Bande Arc of Sumatra. Collectively, the entire group of islands is the projection above the sea level of long and narrow submarine range which were formed at the expense of narrow but deep geosynclines against the gondwana land in the west.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands consisting of 306 islands and 206 rocks and rocky outcrops are latitudinally situated between 6° 45'N to 13°41'N and longitudinally 92°12'E to 93°57'E. The total geographical area is 8249 km² with a coast line of 1962km (fig.1).

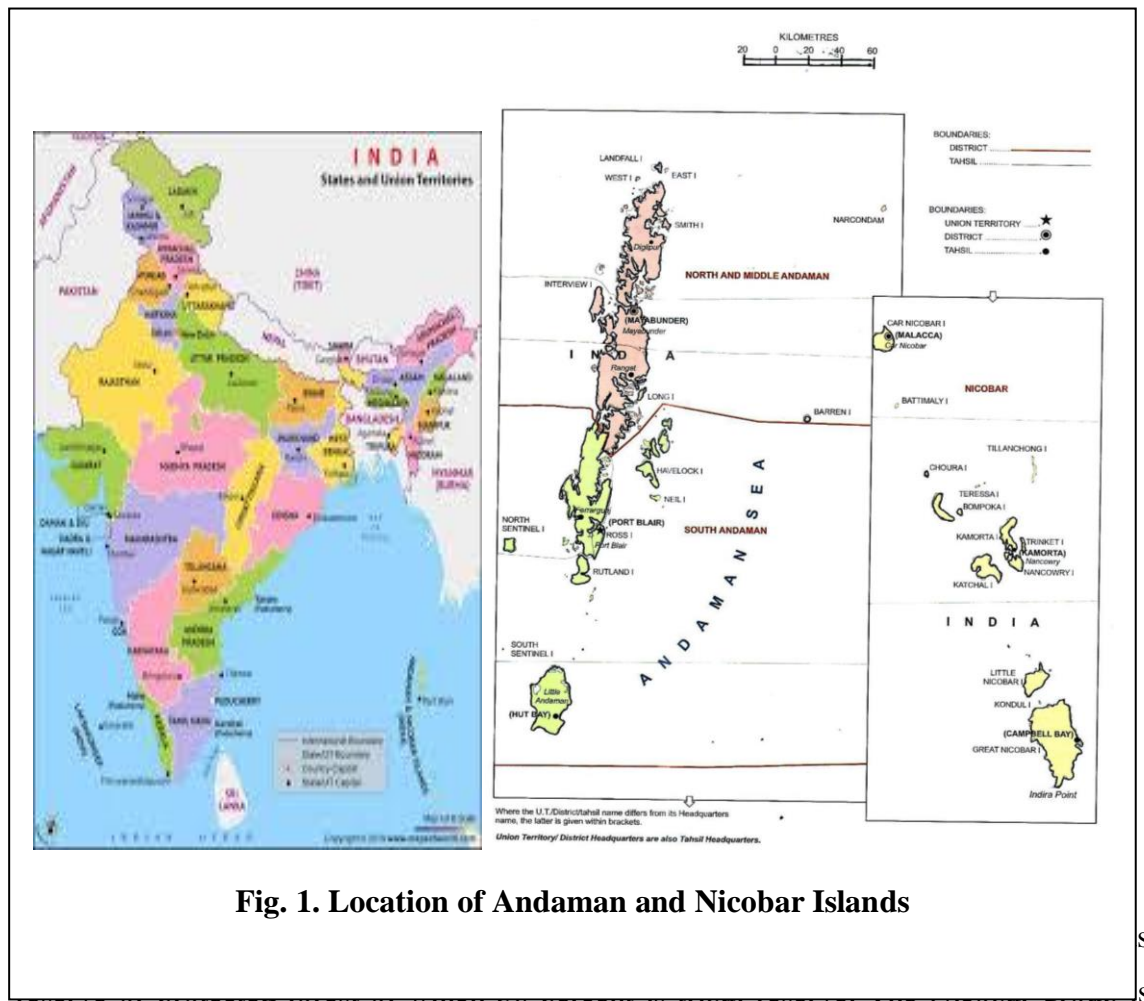


Fig. 1. Location of Andaman and Nicobar Islands

spread over an area of 1841 km² of which 1542 km² are recorded forest. The Nicobars are separated from Andamans by the 10° channel, a wide gap of 160 km with heavy tidal flows, making sea transport by small boats difficult. These islands are situated in the equatorial belt and are exposed to marine influences and had a tropical climate-warm, moist and equable. The temperature ranges from 18° to 35° celsius. The proximity of the sea and the abundant rainfall prevents extremes of heat and these islands experience

both the north east and south west monsoon. The average annual rainfall ranges from 3000 to 3500mm and humidity varies from 66 to 90 percent.

Table-1. Climatic Condition In Andaman And Nicobar Islands (2023)

Month	Rainfall (mm)	Temp(°c)		Relative Humidity		Wind speed (km/ph)		Wind direction	
		Max	Min	0830	1730	0830	1730	0830	1730
				hrs	hrs	hrs	hrs	hrs	hrs
Jan	3.5	30.4	24.0	67	71	6	5	ENE	ENE
Feb	14.9	31.0	24.0	69	73	5	5	NE	ENE
Mar	11.5	31.7	25.0	69	74	5	4	ENE	ENE
Apr	0	33.6	26.0	66	72	2	1	NE	NE
May	100.4	33.2	27.0	72	75	6	5	SW	SW
June	577.8	30.9	25.0	83	87	10	9	SW	SW
July	518.5	30.2	25.0	84	87	14	13	SW	SW
Aug	361.0	30.3	26.0	84	85	12	11	SW	SW
Sep	1060.4	28.9	24.0	89	92	10	10	wsw	wsw
Oct	293.1	30.8	25.0	81	89	3	4	SW	wsw
Nov	269.3	31.0	26.0	77	82	6	5	ENE	ENE
Dec	140.3	31.0	26.0	75	79	7	5	ENE	NE

Source: Directorate Of Economics And Statistics, A& N Adm., Port Blair

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands have a unique tropical ecosystem with a wide range of diversities of a genetic nature in germo plasm and great natural beauty. The biotic conditions and the climate of the islands are congenial to productivity. The mangrove ecosystem, the coral reefs and the inaccessible type of the region along with beaches have allowed the unique ecosystem to be preserved in its pristine form.

The physiography of these islands is striking because no where the height is more than 2402 feet which is the culminating point in the entire Andaman and Nicobar Islands. This height is attained by Saddle peak along the east coast of North Andaman. The general elevation of the hill ranges in these islands varies from 250 to 1250 feet. A number of ridges and spurs projected out from these hill ranges and spurs that enclose narrow and flat valleys and at places have been cut up by streams. It is worth noticing that a major part of these islands comes below 5° of slope where both the rural and urban settlement and agricultural activities are confined.

Human Resource

During the last few decades, tourism has moved towards the forefront of environmental, cultural and social concerns on a global scale. The magnitude and intensity of visitors able and willing to visit all corners of the earth has resulted in tourism being regarded as a seriously destructive power.

The survival and degradation of ecosystem depends largely on man. Within the confines of an island ecosystem the arrival of human, especially in large number, can bring about great change. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands shows the impact of such intervention. The man power resource of Andaman and Nicobar Islands is characterised by the presence of 380581 persons in 2011. The population growth rate remains 6.86 in 2000-2011 periods. Density is generally high in the plain longitudinal valleys. The overall density being 46 persons per km², male out number females in the region with the sex ratio being 876 females/1000 males.

Table-2. Growth Of Population In Andaman And Nicobar Islands

Census Year	A & N Islands	% Decadal variation	Sex ratio	Density
1901	24649	-	318	3
1911	26459	7.34	352	3
1921	27086	2.37	303	3
1931	29463	8.78	495	4
1941	33768	14.61	574	4
1951	30971	-8.28	625	4
1961	63548	105.19	617	8
1971	115133	81.17	644	14
1981	188741	63.93	760	23
1991	280661	48.70	820	34
2001	356152	26.90	846	43
2011	380581	6.86	876	46
2020(P)*	623110	-	-	76
2025(P)*	716576	-	-	87

Source: Directorate of Economics And statistics, A& N Adm., Port Blair (* Draft, State Development Report, A & N Islands)

Tourism In Andaman And Nicobar Islands

Tourism is often identified as a promising growth sector in small Island. The most important tourism resources are the natural beauty of the island, their distinctive or exotic character, their recreational possibilities and the cultural interest of the people. Tourism plays a dominant role in the economic well being and tourism earning account for a significant proportion of the value added in their natural product.

Andaman and Nicobar group of islands are unique for its natural landscape and scenic beauty. It has good tourism potential which attracts both domestic and international tourism every year. Andaman and Nicobar Islands have vital resources and potentials for the development of tourism because of their unique geographical location, lush green scenic beauty, historical importance etc.

Table-3: Places Of Tourist Interest In Andaman And Nicobar Islands

<p>I. <u>Places of Historical interest-</u> 1) Cellular Jail, Atlanta Point, Port Blair 2) Shahid Bedi, Humphrygunj 3) Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Island, South Andaman 4) Viper Island, South Andaman</p>	<p>III. <u>Trekking-</u> 1) Saddle Peak, North Andaman 2) Mount Harriet, South Andaman 3) Mount Divalvo, Middle Andaman 4) Mount Ford, Rut Land Island 5) Madhuban, South Andaman 6) Shoal Bay, South Andaman 7) Wandoor, South Andaman 8) Munda Pahar, Chidiyatapu 9) Wimberlygunj, South Andaman 10) Rut Land Island, South Andaman</p>
<p>II. <u>Creek-</u> 1) Kalighat, North & Middle Andaman 2) Parangara, North & Middle Andaman 3) Uttara, North & Middle Andaman 4) Yeratta, North & Middle Andaman 5) Baratang, North & Middle Andaman 6) Wright Myo, South Andaman</p>	
<p>IV. <u>Beaches-</u> 1) Carbyns Cove, Port Blair 2) Munda Pahar, Chidiyatapu, South Andaman 3) Cinque Island, South Andaman 4) North Bay, South Andaman 5) Wandoor, South Andaman 6) Jolly Buoy, South Andaman 7) Red Skin, South Andaman 8) Rut Land, South Andaman 9) Collinpur, South Andaman 10) Merk Bay(North Passage Island) 11) Sitapur, Shaheed Dweep 12) Radha Nagar, Swaraj Dweep 13) Vijay Nagar, Swaraj Dweep 14) Buttler Bay, Little Andaman 15) Amkunj, Rangat, Middle Andaman 16) Cutbert Bay, Rangat, Middle Andaman 17) Karmatang, Mayabunder, Middla Andaman 18) Lalaji Bay, Long island, Middle Andaman 19) Avis, Middle Andaman 20) Kalipur, Diglipur, North Andaman 21) Ramnagar, North Andaman 22) Sand Bar Joining(Ross/Smith Island) 23) Table Island, North Andaman 24) Guitar Island, Middle Andaman 25) Harminder Bay, Little Andaman 26) Netaji Subash Chandra Bose Island 27) Bharatpur, Shaheed Dweep 28) Laxmanpur, Shaheed Dweep 29) Elephant Beach Swaraj Dweep 30) Kala Pathar Beach, Swaraj Dweep</p>	<p>V. <u>Museum/Emporium-</u> 1) Anthropological Museum, Port Blair 2) Cottage Industries Emporium, Middle Point, Port Blair 3) Khadi Gramodyog Emporium, Port Blair 4) Fisheries Museum, Port Blair 5) Forest Museum, Haddo, Port Blair 6) Naval Marine Museum, Port Blair 7) Smrithika Museum, Netaji Subash Chandra Bose Island 8) Fine Art Gallery, Gandhi Park, Port Blair 9) Geological Survey of India Museum, Port Blair 10) Art Gallery, Cellular Jail, Port Blair 11) Kalapani Museum, Port Blair</p> <p>VI. <u>Garden/Park-</u> 1) Joggers Park, Port Blair 2) Marina Park, Port Blair 3) Gandhi Park, Port Blair 4) Zoological Garden, Port Blair 5) Dr. Radha Krishna Park, Port Blair 6) Botanical Garden, Port Blair 7) Biological Park, Chidiyatapu, Port Blair</p> <p>VII. <u>Other Attraction-</u> 1) Sound & Light show(Cellular Jail) Port Blair 2) Sound & Light show(Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Island) Port Blair 3) Rajiv Gandhi Water Sports Complex, Port Blair 4) Children Traffic Park, Port Blair</p>

31) Hut Bay Beach	5) New Amusement Park, Port Blair
32) Balu Dera Beach, Mayabunder	6) Amusement Park, Gandhi Park, Port Blair
33) Pokadera, Mayabunder	7) Agricultural Farm, Sippighat, Port Blair
34) Rampur, Mayabunder	8) Agricultural Farm, Hut Bay
35) Smith Island, North Andaman	9) Mud Volcano, Diglipur
	10) Mud Volcano, Baratang
	11) Lime Stone Cave, Baratang
	12) Science Centre
	13) Chatham Saw Mill

Source: Basic Statistics Of Andaman And Nicobar Islands

Since 1980s, tourism has been one of the main focus areas of development in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It was first promoted to reduce dependence on forest resources such as timber and later due to direct economic benefits such as increased revenue and employment. In recent years, the NITI Aayog has identified tourism in Andaman and Nicobar Islands as a key economic driver. Some of the recent efforts to promote tourism include development of 5 star resorts in selected locations, relaxation of certain regulations for foreign tourists and improved inter-island connectivity.

As one of the most popular tourist destinations in the country, Andaman and Nicobar Islands attract thousands of tourists to its clear waters and white sandy beaches each year. The number of tourists visiting these islands has been steadily increasing over the past ten years. The only exception was in 2020, when the number of tourists dropped due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, tourism has since recovered and is now at an all time high.

There are a number of reasons for the popularity of Andaman and Nicobar Islands as a tourist destination. The islands are known for their beautiful beaches, clear water and lush forest. They are also home to a variety of wild life and the islands also offer a variety of water sports activity for the tourists.

Table-4: Arrival Of Tourists In Andaman And Nicobar Islands

Year	Foreign	Domestic	Total	% increase over previous year
2010-11	14615	180781	195396	-
2011-12	15814	202221	218035	11.59
2012-13	14981	230733	245714	12.69
2013-14	24507	315910	340417	38.54
2014-15	15581	292233	307814	(-) 9.58
2015-16	12553	313265	325818	5.85
2016-17	16012	421846	437858	34.39
2017-18	15766	498473	514239	17.44
2018-19	16439	498784	515223	0.19
2019-20	13221	507528	520749	1.07

2020-21	968	80326	81294	(-) 84.39
2021-22	1504	82429	83933	3.24
2022-23	7166	301943	309109	268.24

Source: Basic Statistics Of Andaman And Nicobar Islands

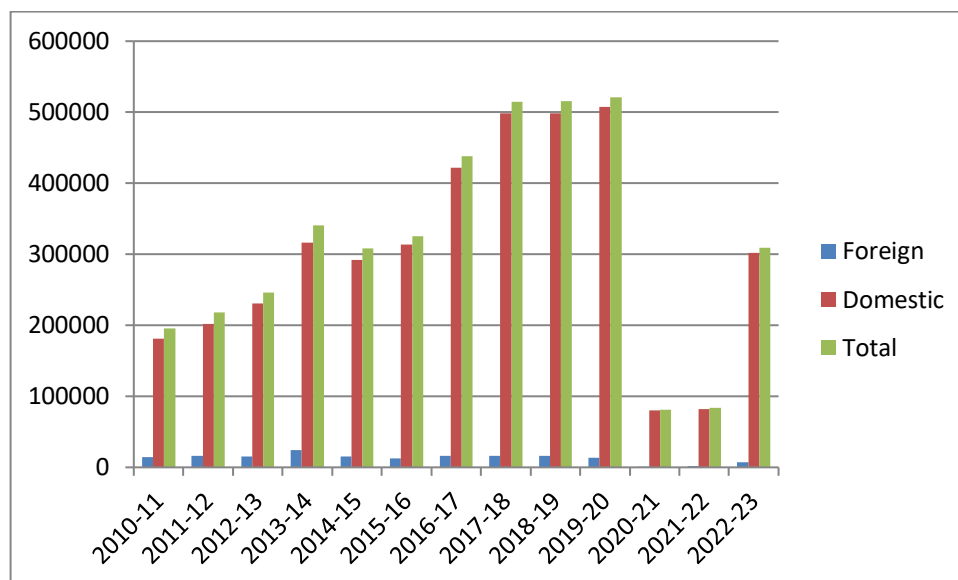


Fig.2. Arrival Of Tourist In Andaman And Nicobar Islands

Challenges In Managing Tourism

Island tourism has contributed significantly to economies worldwide and the natural environment of islands plays a key distinguishing features that attract tourists to these places. The economic impact of tourism activity on the host economy is well recognised. Tourism is looked upon as a means to increase economic activity in the host country. The direct contribution can be seen in creation of employment opportunities, foreign exchange generation, infrastructure development, market development, local employment and other activities in the destination area in the interrelated sectors. Tourism development can put pressure on natural resources when it increases consumption in areas where resources are already scared. Water and especially fresh water is one of the most critical natural resource. The tourism industry generally over use water resources for various purposes. This can result in water shortage and degradation of water supplies in drier seasons. The issue of water scarcity is particular concern especially in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Tourism also creates great pressure on local resources like energy, food and other raw materials. Greater extraction and transport of these resources exacerbates the physical impacts associated with their exploitation (Murugan, 2015). Construction of hotels, recreations and other facilities often leads to increased sewage pollution. Waste water has polluted seas surrounding tourist attraction, damaging the flora and fauna. Sewage

runs off causes serious damage to coral reefs because it stimulates the growth of algae, which covers the filter feeding corals, hindering their ability to survive. Sewage problem can also threaten the health of human and animals.

Impact Of Tourism

Tourism, is an important activity, has made a remarkable impact on many aspects. Socio cultural and economic effects of tourism can be seen directly on host communities. Further, tourism brings about change in value system and behaviour and threatens indigenous identity (Murugan, 2015). Concern about the impacts on the physical environment and host population was first voiced in the literature in the early 1960s, while soon afterwards the rapid urbanization and absence of co-ordinated physical planning in coastal areas of the Mediterranean began to be monitored (Sethi, 1999). The increased number of visitors also translates to increase visitor impact on the fragile ecosystem in marine parks, particularly mangroves and coral reefs. Tourism impacts are well documented in Malaysia and point to potential conflicts between tourism and nature conservation. These conflicts could ultimately lead to either the collapse of the tourism industry or the marine park system (Bhatt, 2006).

While tourism has undoubtedly brought substantial rewards to small islands, it has often been accompanied by negative economic consequences. Islands that have built up major tourism industries may also have experienced considerable social and environmental problems. The environmental problems of tourism usually relate to the concentration of tourism activity on coast land and in the absence of rigorous planning system, this has resulted various ecological and environmental problems in the host destination. As Andaman and Nicobar Islands opened her gate towards a more open economy, tourism has evolved into a highly structured industry with the potential to earn immense revenue. Tourism has a multiplier effect on the supporting activities. Andaman and Nicobar Islands are blessed with good climate and bio diversity resulted thousands of tourist arriving annually here and plays an important role in the development of the region. Intensive tourism development and tourism activities particularly, if not properly planned and managed, can very quickly cause environmental damage. The most notable impacts are land degradation and loss of terrestrial and marine biodiversity, coastal zone degradation, increase level of pollution destruction of coral reefs etc.

Tourism Today In Andaman And Nicobar Islands

Andaman and Nicobar Islands are attracting lakhs of tourist every year. These islands are also important sites for the conservation of biodiversity. The limited scope for

industrial activity in the region coupled with the decline in the wood based industry has led to tourism being identified as a thrust sector for economic development, revenue and employment generation in the islands. Keeping in view the fragile ecosystem and limited carrying capacity of the islands, the objectives of Andaman and Nicobar Administration is to strike for sustainable tourism. The very basic vision of the Andaman and Nicobar Administration is to develop Andaman and Nicobar Islands as an upmarket island destination for eco tourist through environmentally sustainable development of infrastructure without disturbing the natural ecosystem with the objective of generating revenue, creating more employment opportunities and synergise socio economic development of the islands.

Tourism depends on the quality of the environment for its success and good tourist development requires the protection and even the improvement of the environment. The most important tourism resources are the natural beauty in these islands, their exotic character, their recreational possibilities and the cultural interest of the people. The Andaman and Nicobar Administration has adopted eco-tourism model to promote tourism and conserving the biodiversity of the islands. It has issued eco-tourism guidelines to ensure the protection of natural and cultural heritage of the islands which has also been incorporated into the planning documents of protected area. Speaking in the Tourism Minister's conference held in Shillong on September 02, 2024, the Hon'ble Lt. Governor, Andaman and Nicobar Islands highlighted the proactive steps taken by UT Administration to promote sustainable tourism in the islands (The Daily Telegrams, 3 September, 2024). He said a single window clearance system for all tourism related activities has been made fully functional under the tourism department of Andaman and Nicobar Islands Administration to facilitate potential investors and stakeholders in the tourism sector. They further stated that tourism foot fall has increased manifold except during COVID-19 in the islands. Post COVID tourism activities are gradually gaining momentum. The Hon'ble Lt. Governor also mentioned that Air Asia will be commencing international flight operation between Port Blair and Kuala Lumpur. The commencement of this flight will give a phenomenal boost to tourism and export of marine products. An effort is also being done about the early operationalisation of sea plane in the islands. Apart from this, to promote the islands as a premier diving destination and put the islands on the world diving map, plans are being made to create multiple Guinness world record by forming the largest human chain etc. He also

elaborated various strategies for boosting tourism while preserving the unique cultural and ecological heritage of the islands. Emphasis is also being given on heritage tourism, eco tourism, water sports, bird watching and national memorials etc.

Conclusion

Tourism is often identified as a promising growth sector in island states. It offers one of the few opportunities for economic diversification in small islands. Tourism has many linkages with other economic sectors and if integrated into national development plan with adequate provisions for inter sectoral linkages, it can contribute to the growth of all tourism related activities in the entire major economic sector (Bhatt & Badan, 2006).

Tourism must be sustainable and integrated with the natural, cultural and human environment. Islands are a natural attraction for tourists and this in turn generates jobs and much needed revenue. But the tourism industry has reached such a scale that it can endanger those very ecosystems and cultures that attracts tourists. Tourism needs to be made more sustainable to better benefits small islands while protecting their culture and traditions to effectively conserve other natural resources. Careful planning and assessment are important part of sustainable tourism development. The practice of sustainable tourism development is based on management of capacities and sites. Carrying capacity is one of them which measure the level of use that is sustainable. Carrying capacity can be useful because it draws attention to limit and thresh holds beyond which a site should not be developed. The tourism paradigm that focus on tourist needs and want has undergone major changes in recent time. The community based ecotourism is an area which needs to propagate that communities should increase their welfare through sustainable community development. For it is necessary to increase their participation.

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