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## RESPONSIBLE TOURISM IN KUMARAKOM OF KERALA STATE



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### ABSTRACT

Responsible Tourism in India was first implemented in Kumarakom, Kerala on December 2007 and officially inaugurated on March 2008. The Responsible Tourism project helps the natives reap the benefits of the tourism industry by offering their products and services to visitors. It provides opportunities for interaction with tourists, giving the natives exposure to new ideas and cultures. It also gives them a platform for showcasing their talents. Responsible Tourism minimizes negative, social, economical and environmental impacts. It helps the local people to enhance their economical benefits. The project has positively impacted more

than 2,000 members of the local community across the tourism value chain in Kumarakom. It ensures the involvement in different manufacturing units like, vegetable cultivation, paper bags, local snacks, handicrafts etc. Community Tourism Safety Committee takes care of local resources management, tourism related social issues, health management and conservation. Environmental activities help to make eco friendly bags with non woven fabrics and paper, which makes Kumarakom a plastic free zone area. Responsible Tourism helps to set up sewage plant in Kumarakom. Bird sanctuary is declared as plastic free zone area, made uncultivated land in fruitful manner by helping to develop infrastructure like walk way project, drinking water scheme etc. Role of Kudumashree and local groups helps Responsible Tourism to reach into highest point. Responsible Tourism contributes to human well being, maintaining harmony with environment as it implies preservation and conservation of tourist resources. The Responsible Tourism project helps the natives reap the benefits of the tourism industry by offering their products and services to visitors. It provides opportunities for interaction with tourists giving the natives exposure to new ideas and cultures, and gives them a platform for showcasing their talents Responsible tourism tremendous change in the field of tourism.

**KEYWORDS :** *Responsible Tourism , tourism industry , social, economical and environmental .*

### INTRODUCTION :

Responsible tourism is one which minimizes negative aspects of social, economic and environmental impacts, generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well

being of host. Communities improve working condition and access to the industry. The main attraction of Kumarakom is the backwaters of the Vembanadu Lake. Luxury and budget resorts on the shores of the lake provide tourists the facilities for boating, yachting & fishing. Other major attraction in Kumarakom is the bird sanctuary which can be visited by canoes arranged by local fisherman at the entrance of the sanctuary. Understanding the future and need of responsible tourism, Kumarakom Grama Panchayat came forward to run the project on their land. The hurdles of the initial stage were solved and now it is a big success.

Kumarakom is an example of public or private partnership in tourism that works towards to attain the objective of responsible tourism. Responsible tourism includes three kinds of responsibilities namely economic responsibility, social responsibility and environmental responsibility. Responsible tourism encompasses all forms of tourism and seeks to minimize the negative impacts. It increases the economic benefits of local people and enhances the well being of local communities. It makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage.

The economic, social and environmental aspects of the destination are the main three areas where responsible tourism mainly focuses. Responsible tourism authority are planning and implementing many projects for these.

### ECONOMIC RESPONSIBILITY OF RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

To upgrade the standard of living of the local people, it was imperative that a major part of revenue generate from tourism and reach to them. Ensuring the participation of the local community in the supply of goods and services is one of the ways to reach the goal. The responsible tourism initiative was kicked off with vegetable cultivation, procurement, supply and delivery, produce paper bags, processed food, local snacks, rice powder and handicrafts. Farmers and self-help groups were encouraged to rear fish and poultry and grow agricultural product and they began to involve tourism relative services that bring to them an extra earning.

### SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

Kumarakom has set up a Community Tourism Safety Committee part of the social responsibility component of Responsible Tourism. A vigilant community adds to the tourism prospects. Safety, security measures and tourism-related social issues are taken care of by this committee. Local resource management, training the local people on tourism-related activities, health management, conservation and popularization of local art and culture were also undertaken by the Responsible Tourism. Apart from that as the part of social responsibility a cultural group called Suvarna, involving the housewives of the locality, was formed to perform traditional dance forms like Thiruvathira, Kolkali and Vattakkali for the tourists. Handicraft and painting units are also encouraged. Children perform shinkarimelam an exclusive entertainer for the enjoyment of tourist formed by Suvarna.

### ENVIRONMENT RESPONSIBILITY OF RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

Many environmental activities have been taken up by the Responsible Tourism, making eco-friendly bags with non-woven fabric and paper and efforts are on to make Kumarakom plastic-free zone. Parisarasevikas, destination cleaning groups of women have been set up in the village. Waste from hotels and resorts are collected by Parisarasevikas and disposed it through eco-friendly methods using biogas or vermin compost plants. Grama Panchayat takes initiative to eliminate the use of plastic bags from Kumarakom. Studies and surveys related to the environment in Kumarakom are supported by responsible authority. These surveys help check the status of the ecological balance and act

accordingly. Organic farming, green practices, Bicycle tourism are another novel attempt in Kumarakom. Strict rules have been implemented for the preservation of the beautiful environment in and around Kumarakom. Energy management and waste management for all the commercial establishments in the area, including the houseboats, have been made more eco-friendly. Special attention is given to the protection of mangrove forests and the efforts of those who try to preserve them are recognized.

### Social, Environmental and Economic Benefits to the local community

The following measures are taken by the Grama Panchayat in order to control the pollution in Kumarakom.

- ✦ The sewage plant set up at Kumarakom is intended to control the pollution of the Vembanadu Lake by the house boat.
- ✦ The uses of plastic items are strictly controlled. As a result, the bird sanctuary zone is declared as plastic free zone.
- ✦ The responsible tourism movements have changed uncultivated land into fruitful ones.
- ✦ A walk way project provides the tourist and the local residents to get access to the lake. The residents guard women against immoral activities.
- ✦ Responsible tourism also promote to the development of infrastructure.
- ✦ A drinking water scheme is set up with the cooperation of the hotel industry. Due to the effort of the responsible tourism cell, the Panchayathu's street lighting in Kumarakom is improved.

The responsible tourism in Kumarakom has helped in the development of entrepreneurs with the help of Kerala Tourism. Responsible Kumarakom has developed three levels of souvenirs:-a house boat model, a snake boat model and depiction of traditional angling of the fisherman in Kumarakom. All three souvenirs are available at all the resort in Kumarakom crafted by the local entrepreneurs. Two house boat model varieties are provided at Rs.500/- and Rs.1100/-, snake boat mode priced at Rs.4000/- per piece and the model of traditional angling priced at Rs.800/- per piece. Entrepreneurs are earning minimum of Rs.20000/-per month by making model of Kettuvalloms and houseboats. Handcrafts units and individual makes about 30 models in a month, Responsible Tourism hopes to double the production with the help of machines.

Responsible tourism cells packages like village life experience and "A day with farmers" the new experience to the tourist on the village life. Many people in these destinations in Kumarakom are actually associated with responsible tourism cell. All participants of these two packages are the direct beneficiaries; the benefits of responsible tourism movement go straight to the local community who produce perishable and nonperishable item for tourism enterprises. In Kumarakom several units are working with the help of responsible tourism. One of the largest suppliers of vegetables in Kumarakom is Geethabhari unit. These units are engaged in homestead farming for growing vegetable and poultry, around seven acres they are cultivating paddy. All of these products are sold to Samrduhi undertaken by Kudumbasree, Grama Panchayat. The remaining items are sold to local people from their own shops. Erumattom is another women entrepreneur, consist of 20 members. Activities are vegetable growing, catering, tailoring, and performing cultural shows.

Organic farming is practiced to earn more profit for all these units. Responsible tourism co-ordinator arranges for stage performance for unit by women entrepreneurs engaged in various cultural shows. Members of these groups are engaged with other actives like making mats and brooms

on their daily activity. All these items are supplied to Samrduhi.

### ROLE OF KUDUMBHASHREE

Kudumbhashree is launched by Govt. of Kerala in 1998 for wiping out absolute poverty from state through concerted community action under the leadership of locals self governments. Now it is one of the largest women empowering project in India. It comes 4100000 members and 50% of household in Kerala. Literal meaning of Kudumbasree is prosperity (shree) of family (Kudumbham).

Total women population in Kumarakom Panchayat is around 5000. 301 Kudumbasree units and 4500 women memberships have a strong foot hold in Kumarakom Panchayat.

During responsible tourism implementation Kudumbasree was the main stockholder group. After the implementation of responsible tourism trend shows that enrolment of women in Kudumbasree has increased. Now 15 units are concentrating in cultivating vegetables, supply to hotels and resorts in Kumarakom. 2014 Kudumbasree units use 20.13 acres of land for cultivating vegetables to meet the demands. Samrduhi units, undertaken by Kudumbasree, are taking care of the collection and distribution of the products, Samrudhi units is not engaged in any production. The activities of Samrduhi are governed by law under Kudumbasree. Financial assistance in Accounts is audited by C D S, Govt. of Kerala. Samrudhi shop is provided by the Panchayat free of cost and their outlets are open for sale to the local community.

Climate changes, low price and preservation are the main challenges found by production units. Demand is higher than production these days. Units fail to achieve the target demand by the hotels and resorts. State Bank of Travancore extends financial supports. Units need help from agricultural department for the large scale of production. Marketing and planning on capacity building production need large scale financial assistance.

### LOCAL AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT

Local community awareness on responsible tourism concept in Kumarakom is widely accepted. National, level award creates a wide range in all age category people. Training in every month based on the level of Panchayat ward will be more helpful to the people.

### OWNERSHIP BY INDUSTRY

Department of Tourism, Govt. of Kerala conducted destination level work shop at Kumarakom on 16th May 2007, headed by Secretary Tourism, Govt. of Kerala. During the meeting Panchayat represents local community raised that tourism industry was a business of outsiders who exploit the local resources. Three hoteliers signed an agreement and their cooperation resulted in the implementation of Responsible Tourism in Kumarakom. In 2014, all the hotels joined in this group and purchased product from local supply groups. From September 2008 to January 2012, 55 lakhs worth of local products were included under perishable and non perishable items.

Most of the hotels have employed minimum 28 to 30 people for works associated with gardening from local community. Mostly all unskilled staff in kitchen and housekeeping are from local community. The Kumarakom Lake Resort, the biggest procurer in responsible tourism movement, encourages development of entrepreneurship. The hotels presently participating in the Responsible Tourism movements are ready to procure more items if it meets quality, standard and required volume. Organic farming has made a drastic change, a great achievement in local people. Hotels are ready to accept the product from local market reason being of standardization and quality maintenance. Media support and financial support from government creates positive changes in local entrepreneurs.

Geographical diversity and culture of India makes a great picture in the world tourism map. Professional statistics shows that in 2013, 6.96 million tourists arrived in India it was increased to 7.4 in 2014. Domestic tourist visits raised every year.

The ministry of tourism designs natural policies for the development and promotion of tourism for the proper implementation of these policies. The ministry seeks help from various sectors like central ministries, agencies, state governments, union territories and the representatives of private sectors. Rural, cruise, medical and eco-tourism are promoted with great effort. The World Travel and Tourism Council calculated that tourism generated 6.4 trillion or 6.6% of the nations GDP in 2012. It supported 39.5 million jobs, 707 % of its total employment. This sector is predicted to grow at an average annual rate of 7.7% from 2013 to 2023. This gives India the third rank among fast growing counties in tourism Industry.

Kerala is famous for its eco- tourism initiatives. The unique culture, tradition and varied demography make Kerala, one of the most popular tourist centers in India. Growing at a rate 13.31 %, the tourism industry significantly contributes to the state economy. Kerala is well known for its tropical backwaters and pristine beaches.

Kerala tourist agenda promotes ecologically sustained tourism and focuses on local culture and adventures, volunteering and personal growth of the local people. Great efforts are taken in order to reduce the negative effects of traditional tourism on the natural environment and enhance the cultural integrity of local people.

### CONCLUSION

Responsible Tourism is a positive approach intended to reduce the tension and friction created by the complex interactions between the tourism industry, the visitors, the environment and the host community. It involves working for the long term availability and quality of both natural and human resources. Sustainable tourism department contribute to human well being while maintaining the harmony with environment as it involves preservation and conservation of tourist resources. Hence the authorities have to take necessary measures to promote responsible tourism programs in Kumarakom and to launch projects in other areas introduce this in tourist spot areas that would help to in the growth of economy in terms of income, employment and development.

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