1. Statement/presentation title and thematic area addressed

**Ecotourism – the Prospects and Problems**

2. Name, contact info, title of presentation, country of origin

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Title of presentation: Ecotourism – the Prospects and Problems
Country of Origin: India

3. Abstract

Ecotourism as the fastest growing sector in the International Tourism. The problem of ecolabeling to market tourism products. The absence of co-coordinated effort and guidelines to support standardisation of facilities. Ecotourism practices ultimately lead to sustainability of the environment. It is the future of modern day tourism. As tourism is emerging only, it can be monitored to attain its natural growth by having various discussions with the stakeholders all over the world.

4. Statement/Presentation

**Ecotourism – the Prospects and Problems**

Ecotourism the fastest growing segment of International tourism scene urgently needs proper guidelines & directions of international standards to sustain its natural growth. In each country many products are developed without any general standards, to suit their own interest. This will lead into major problems in the future.

As ecolabeling is becoming a very important marketing tool in selling of tourism products all over the world, a conscientious effort from all the concerned in developing management and marketing of ecotourism products is the need of the hour. The ecotourism products should be diverse as each country has its own needs and requirements, but it should have a pattern.
The various standards introduced by numerous organisations in conceptualising, developing and sustainably managing and marketing ecotourism products should have a common direction. The chances of ecotourism practitioners all over the world over to come together and interact together to solve their management problems should be made frequently and more effectively through various organisations. It should be planned regionwise, countrywise as well as globally, both at micro level and macro level during these interactions.

The numerous problems arising during the ecotourism development and management should be brought to the notice of all the concerned and serious discussion and interactions followed, will be of great help to all. The experiences at micro level lead to answers to the questions of macro level.

**Ecotourism as the future of modern day tourism:**

As the future of tourism depends on sustainability ecotourism has all the prospects to become very popular among the travelers. Mass tourism and tourism in general damages the mother nature in many ways. More travellers in future will opt for ecotourism.

An awareness should be created among the travelers in opting a tour, which is sustaining mother nature, supporting local community, their culture, traditional ways of life and not exploiting them in any way. Only then the damages created by mass tourism should be reversed.

The ultimate aim of tourism should be while attaining mental and physical happiness by experiencing varied environments, way of life style, cuisine, culture etc without causing much damages to the visiting population and contributing to the economic, mental, physical characteristic of them. Thus ecotourism will benefit both the visitors as well as the host community.

Thus ecotourism should be the role model in popularizing the responsible tourism and fair trade in tourism. Ecotourism should help the visitors for a learning experience of a diverse environment, ambience causing minimum damages to mother nature and its various components.
**Need versus greed:**

Like all business activity, tourism is centered around economics, more money with less expenses. But careful strategies are essential to control the needs of the people than their greeds. Once measures are taken to look after the needs, then sustainability could be attained. On the other hand, if the greed of the people became prominent, the end result will be disastrous like killing a goose laying golden eggs.

Thus ecotourism practitioners all over the world has to come together and evolve a methodology, look after the needs and not greeds for the sustainance of themselves as well as mother nature.

**Ecotourism as a philosophy and way of life:**

Practitioners of serious ecotourism has to develop a separate mind set other than normal tourism professionals as ecotourism is a way of life in itself. A serious ecotourism practitioner has to look into the possibilities of always choosing for the right things. Their practice has to be routine for day to day life conducting of business in a ecotourism resort. They are the honorary emissaries to function as a role model for the sustainable ecotourism practices.

They should also try their best to promote the philosophy to all others. Thus preaching and practice should go together. Successful ecotourism practitioners are always not prophets of doom, but are glittering rays of hope for the betterment humanity as well as mother nature.

As tourism is becoming the biggest economic activity in the world in the 21st century, ecotourism practices and principles has more relevance than ever.

Let us hope by working together, we could hope for a better world where all are equally important.
5. Biographical note

Babu Varghese, aged 51 years presently the Managing Director of TOURINDIA with almost 30 years of experience in the field of tourism in the southern state of India called Kerala. With a Masters Degree in Zoology and M.Phil in Behavioral Science, started Tourindia as a tourists guidance bureau way back in early seventies, when tourism was only emerging as a business. In the course of many years learned the needs of the tourism industry by introducing Kettuvallam Houseboats for comfortable cruise in canals, converting the traditional cargo boats. Thus saving the traditional boats and offering a livelihood for the boat men and adding a new tourism product for Kerala. After the runaway success of Kettuvallam Houseboats, introduced TreeHouses in the Green Magic Nature Resort for serious ecotourists using local men, materials and indigenous techniques in northern Kerala. The Treehouse and Ecolodges has won many international prizes including the DRV from Germany for Tourism and Environment in 1998.

Later introduced modified Bullock-carts for rural and ethnic tours and Marine Sports Fishing at Kovalam for the anglers around the world. Presently involved in marketing the “Periyar Tiger Trail” - a protection oriented adventurous trekking programme involving the former poachers. Conservation will have double effect when the former poachers are entrusted the job of protectors. The nature is protected and growing back its lost glory as poachers are not poaching. The negative dependency of the poachers are made into positive dependency as they are helping to arrest other poachers, while attempting to poach.