



A STUDY ON INADEQUATE SANITATION MEASURES – A THREAT TO DESTINATION MUNNAR, KERALA

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Abstract

As per the description of World Health Organization, the term Sanitation is defined as the provision of facilities and services of safe disposal of human urine and faeces. Also refers to the maintenance of hygienic conditions through services such as garbage collection and waste water disposal. Destination Munnar is witnessing the flow of tourists all around the year regardless of the tourism season in other destinations of Kerala. This scenario has been exploiting the destination to an extreme level in which no carrying capacity of the above has been taken care of. Along with tourism the destination has become a dumping yard of the tourists leftover which is being escalating day by day due to lack of sanitation measures.

Keywords: *Environment, Waste management, Hygiene promotion, Upgrading facility, Stake holders.*

Introduction

Munnar, which is also known as the Kashmir of the south is situated around 1600M above from sea level in the Western Ghats mountain range in Kerala State. The name Munnar means three rivers viz. Muthirapuzha, Nallathanni and Kundalay. There are various factors which make the place a destination of tourists from all around the globe. The rolling hills dotted with tea plantation, the climate which is 5°C – 25°C in winter and 15°C – 25°C in summer, the flora and fauna, various waterfalls etc. are the few to be mentioned. The destination is a hot choice for honey moon travellers of India. The destination also caters for the needs of other form of tourists too viz. adventure, leisure, educational etc. The major tourists' season starts in November and remains till February. Monsoon is very strong in the area which brings a huge number of Arab tourists in the month of July and August. All the tourism activities have exploited the destination more than its carrying capacity, which may result in the destruction of a very beautiful gift of nature.

Review of Literature

D. Radhakrishnan (2013) in his article on The Hindu has mentioned that the discarded waste damages the ecology of the hills. The destination he has chosen was Nilgiri Hills and the article also states the tourists cause pollution problems in the district. The vehicles emit air polluting carbon and most of the leisure travellers play the music in high volume and also the air horn becomes the reason for noise pollution. The unawareness of ecological impacts from tourists leftover like disposable plates, cups, packets etc. is escalating day by day. The district authorities have taken adequate actions against the above stated activities and also promoting the responsible tourism in large scale. This has made big impact to the regions environment positively and the threat of being ruined has been vanished.

Manasi Karandikar in his journal Planning and Managing Hill Stations in the North Western Ghats described about both solid and liquid wastes have increased causing permanent damage to the eco system and aesthetics of Matheran Hills. He also conducted a study in the Charlottee lake catchment area and the result showed the BOD and COD levels were higher due to the sewage of resorts in the upper areas. Since the region doesn't have any system of water treatment all the waste water been directed to either forest or the cliff area and the same system is practiced with solid waste as well. This is a severe issue which may cause threat to the existence of the destination.

Transparency International Georgia have interpreted in Sanitation problems at tourist destinations in Khoni, Senaki, Martvili and Zugdidi as the tourism is a major revenue generator for Georgia and the country has taken several measures to promote tourism. As a result the large number of tourists generated and the tourism destination started to become covered with litter and chaotic. In order to fight this scenario millions of money been spent on maintaining and upgrading the facilities for the protection of destinations.

Subzar Bashir & Subhrangsu Goswami have mentioned in Tourism Induced Challenges in Municipal Solid Waste Management in Hill Towns: Case of Pahalgam about the challenges faced by hill stations due to lack of infrastructure, unfavorable climate conditions, difficult terrain and public apathy towards waste management. The tourism sector regardless of leisure or pilgrimage contributes a major share of solid wastes to the respective area. The local body too can't act well due to lack of capacity to collect the waste and also of land for the disposals.



Objectives of the Study

1. To study the cause of sanitation problems in Munnar
2. To evaluate and suggest effective measures to eliminate the sanitation problems in Munnar

Research Methodology

Munnar and nearby two other villages i.e.: Pallivasal and Marayur have been selected for the study. The Hotels, Restaurants and other outlets which generate the wastes brought under the scanner. The primary data gathered with questionnaire from the tourism stakeholders of the region personally. The sanitation reports from the local bodies also been obtained.

Research Design

Descriptive research design was applied on the basis of objectives. It is description of a situation as it exists at present. It just involves data gathering.

Limitations of the Study

1. The data collection was done through structured questionnaire, it may have disadvantage or not being to probe deep into the respondents thought.
2. The quantity of the waste may vary as per the tourism season; the current month is an off season which may not bring the actual effect of the sanitation problems.

Waste disposals in Munnar

Munnar comprises of more than 93 large, medium and small Hotels and Resorts, 168 Guest Houses, 126 Specialty Lodgings and plenty of standalone Restaurants as per Trip Advisor website. Tons of Solid and Wet wastes been produced by these establishments on daily basis. Most of them directed their sewage towards the Muthirapuzhayar, the river which goes through the destination. Apart from these hospitality establishments few of the tea factories too spoil the river. The solid wastes are collected by the local bodies and dumped in the yard called Kallar where the wastes being segregated. Most of the wet wastes are collected by private parties who own pig farms. The lack of adequate soaking facilities for waste water leaves it to join either ground water or the river, thus result in the pollution procedure. The excursionists play significant role in spoiling the Munnar destination. They come for the day visit and mostly in groups carrying food along with disposable plates and glasses. They choose the best places which are meant only to enjoy responsibly for their edible purposes and the whole left over will be their contribution along with the carbon footprints from the emission of their vehicles. The concerned authorities are unable to do the waste management process properly since they are not well versed academically or have the technical knowledge about the waste management procedures.

Waste Management Initiatives

The foremost step should be separating Wet and Dry waste at the source itself, which will be helpful to further segregate the Solid waste and less load could be sent to the dumping ground. The current practice of handling the solid waste either burning or directing to the dumping ground is not a permanent solution. Instead the awareness of the same has to be taken to the public as well as the authorities who handle it. The rag pickers can be used if trained and managed properly to collect the wastes regularly. There should be steps taken to encourage the stakeholders not to throw waste on the ground instead it has to go to larger bags as per the type of the wastes. Though the establishments have STP (Sewage Treatment Plants) the sludge which accumulates over a period of time at the bottom of the septic tanks has to be moved according to the desired intervals. The tourists have to be given adequate information about not polluting the destination with their disposals. This can be done by the awareness message from the tour operators and the hotels in order to maintain the high sanitation standards of the destination. The authorities should put proper bins to collect the wastes from the people and maintain the collection process efficiently and effectively. The authorities should check the proper functioning of the STP units fixed in hospitality establishments. There should be adequate soakpits in order to stop the drain water to mix with any other water sources. Sufficient check posts to be started in all the entry points to the destinations in order to check the plastic and other polluting materials and their proper disposal activities.

Hygiene Promotion.

Effective hygiene promotion to achieve the positive impact in Munnar is a complex challenge especially in the tourism sector. It has to be a planned approach which encourages the tourism stakeholders and others to adopt safe hygiene practices and behaviors. The success of the promotion cannot be assured as the above activity has several constraints though it could be tried with Public and Private Partnership efforts. Targeting the specified group, the appropriate modes to communicate with the people from poor background, proper planning, executing and monitoring could bring down the risk factors of the failure of the promotion activities.



Suggestions

The President of MEETS (Munnar Emerging Eco-Tourism Society) Mr. V.V. George has given several requests to the local as well as the state governing body regarding a new waste management program with new incinerator for proper disposal in a new location and that too very efficient and effective manner. The carbon footprint could be minimized if the countless numbers of diesel vehicles could be controlled at least in the city area as the traffic make the vehicle to ride on lower gears and thus produce more emission. This could be made by providing government green fuel vehicles inside the city for sightseeing activities in a particular interval of time. The local body should properly collect the wastes and assure the effective disposals along with an eye on the people who don't abide with the hygiene measures. The tourism stake holders should make sure none of their activities may affect the hygiene standard of the destination and also extend support for the same.

Conclusion

Munnar is a gift of nature and the pride and beauty of our tourism industry. The life of the beauty of the destination rely on the hands of the people indulging in various activities with it so lets take all necessary actions and planning to work for the conservation of it. It's our duty to save the destination for the future as well. It can be done with compliance of our tradition in which we consider the Mother Nature as god.

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