

## **Impact of Neelakurinji on Tourism In Kerala : With Special Reference To Eravikulam National Park (Munnar)**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Kerala Tourism**

Kerala, a state situated on the tropical Malabar coast of south western India and it has been branded as one of the most wanted tourism destinations in India an account of proactive marketing and promotional measures. Now, Kerala is a partner state of the World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC] which is accorded, based on the infrastructure facilities such as tourist accommodation, transport facilities, water and lighting system extended over by Kerala to tourists. Growing at a rate of 13.31% the tourism industry is a major contributor to the state's economy. Eco-tourism is a concept promoting sustainability in tourism. That is the needs of today's visitor should not be met at the expenses of future generation.

#### **Neelakurinji- The Flower of The Blue Mountains**

Neelakurinji (*Strobilanthes kunthiana*) is a shrub that used to grow abundantly in the shola grasslands of western Ghats in India. The Nilgiris, which literally means the Blue Mountains, Neelakurinji that blooms gregariously once in 12 years. Kurinji grows at an altitude of 1300 to 2400 meters. The plant is usually 30 to 60 cm high. They can however grow well beyond 180 cm under congenial conditional. The blossom takes twelve years as the pollination for the Neelakurinji flowers need such a longer period. In Botony, it is referred to as 'Survival Mechanism' of plants. Longer pollination helps the species to escape total destruction by predators or due to climate changes.

Secondly, Neelakurinji is a monocarpic plant, meaning each shrub reproduces once after flowering and then dies, and it takes a particular for the new seeds to bloom. According to Botanical Science, Neelakurinji plant have an internal calendar, that helps them to study the variations or difference in day length. The plants usually record the periodical variations based on the total day length, and managers to count the exact time period for the next blossom. Perhaps even more elusive

than Neelakurinji flowers is the honey derived from them called 'kurinjithen', the mass flowering attracts an increase in bees for pollination, which ultimately leads to this rare honey. Access to the honey is very complex, if not possible only the local tribesmen are allowed to collect it and it hardly

ever reaches the market. The locals believed that this honey has medicinal properties that prevents heart blockages, although no specific study has been done, owing to the rarity of its production.

'Super Bloom' occurring once in every 12 years covers a large area, including its protected area, Rajamala, Eravikulam National Park, Munnar. Munnar is among the crown jewels of the state and the area has attracted visitors and natural splendour. Hidden in this gem of nature is the famous Eravikulam National Park, the home and sanctuary of Nilgiri Thar. The park is spread over 97 square kilometre and has many trekking and hiking trails and fun spots and rare flora and fauna for people of all ages to enjoy. The park is situated in the Kannan Devan hills of the southern western Ghats. The national park is a protected area and is divided into 3 regions,

- ❖ Core area
- ❖ Buffer area
- ❖ Tourism area

Visitors are allowed only to the tourism area that is in Rajamala, the region lying beyond the road entry into Eravikulam.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To understand the growth trend of tourism in the study area.
2. To understand the difference in revenue during season and off-season periods.
3. To examine the income and expenditure pattern of Eravikulam National Park.

### **Methodology**

\* **Objective 1:** The trend of tourism in the study area will be analysed by examining the number of tourist arrivals in the study area in the last 13 years. Secondary data will be used for this purpose.

\* **Objective 2:** In order to understand the difference in season and off-season periods, the number of tourist arrival as well as their revenues will be compared.

\* **Objective 3:** The annual revenue sources and expenditure of the national park will be examined. The profitability of the park will be examined using the revenue and expenditure for the last 13 years.

**ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

**Table -1**

**Visitors details – Rajamala Tourism Zone**

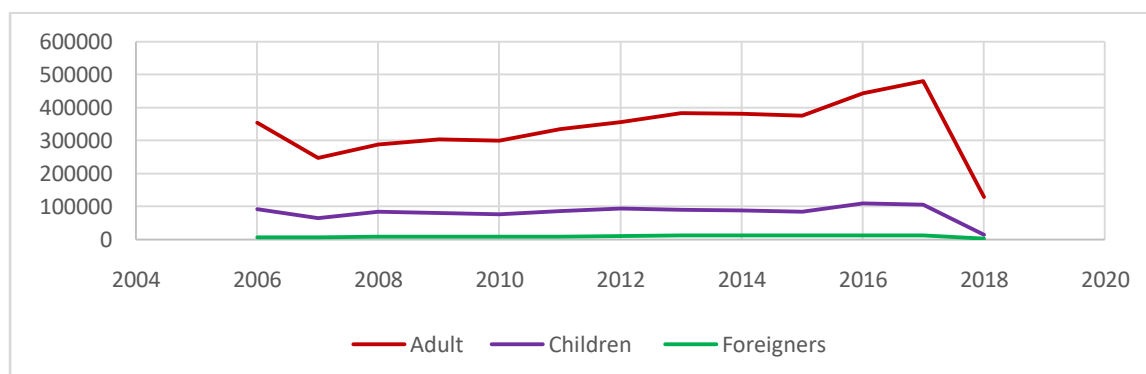
Table 1 shows the Total Number of Tourists and the Revenue earned by the Eravikulam National Park from 2006-2018.

Year	Adult	Children	Foreigners
2006	354885	91603	5940
2007	248238	62944	6661
2008	288448	82390	7581
2009	303650	79338	8163
2010	301214	75497	7122
2011	335867	84660	8576
2012	357110	92764	10230
2013	383949	88499	11329
2014	382217	88083	11248
2015	376192	83577	11050
2016	444120	108603	11712
2017	481698	104145	11449
2018	129152	13380	2459

**Source- Office of Asst.Wildlife Warden (Eravikulam National park)**

**Figure 1.1**

**Visitors Details - Eravikulam National Park(2006-2018)**



## Source - Office of Asst. Wildlife Warden (Eravikulam National park)

Figure 1.1 shows the tourist arrival statistics of Eravikulam National Park from 2006-2018. From the table 1 and figure 1.1, we can understand that in 2006, a Neelakurinji flowering season Eravikulam National Park had witnessed 354885 Indian adults, 91603 Indian and Foreign children and 5940 Foreign tourists. While comparing it to the next year there is a decrease in the number of domestic tourist arrivals. Only 248238 adults and 62944, children visited the park but in case of foreign tourists arrivals, the number of foreigners has been increased than the year 2006.

In 2008, there is an increase in the numbers of both domestic and foreign tourists than 2007. 2009 had witnessed an increasing trend in the case of domestic adults and foreigners but there is a declining trend in the case of children than 2008. But in 2010, the number of domestic and foreign tourists had decreased. Only 30214 domestic adults 75497 children and 7122 foreign tourists had visited Eravikulam National Park. 2011, 2012, and 2013 never tasted a decline in the number of tourists arrivals. But 2014, had witnessed a shortfall in the number of children than 2013. When we compare 2015 with previous year (2014), there is a decline in the number of tourist arrivals. But, 2016 shows an increasing trend. In 2017 there is again a shortfall in the numbers of both children and foreign visitors. By 2018, there is a huge decline of visitors, even though 2018 is a Neelakurinji Flowering Season.

### Table -2

#### Income and Expenditure Pattern of Eravikulam National Park ( 2006-2018)

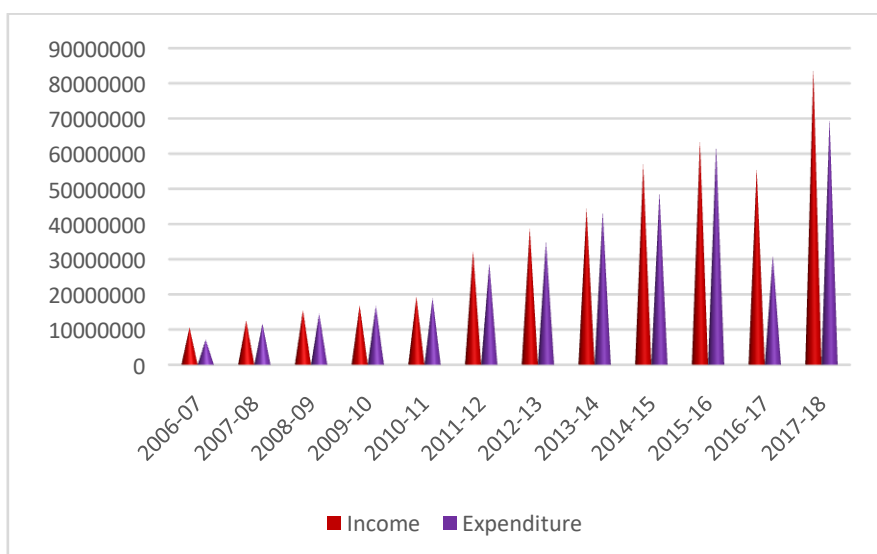
Year	Income	Expenditure
2006-07	10664908	7128149
2007-08	12536488	11680164
2008-09	15556609	14614698
2009-10	16883994	16780032
2010-11	19353908	19003649
2011-12	32417077	28866945
2012-13	38804290	35169846
2013-14	44497210	43616356
2014-15	57189617	49154205
2015-16	63744446	62338132

2016-17	55831052	31123664
2017-18	84310298	70108346

Source- Office of Wildlife warden(Munnar){Official Records}

**Figure 2.1**

**Income & Expenditure pattern of Eravikulam National Park (2006-2018)**



Source- Office of Wildlife warden(Munnar){Official Records}

Figure 2.1 shows the total income & expenditure of Eravikulam National Park. The major revenue sources of Eravikulam national park are :Sale of tickets, Funds received from central and state governments, Shops run by the park authorities inside the park etc & the major Expenditures of Eravikulam National Park are :Advertisements and other promotional works, Maintenance works of the park, Maintenance of shops run by the park itself inside the park, Wages given to the Daily wage's staffs etc.

When we go through the figure 2.1, In 2006-07 the park earned a total revenue of Rs 10664908 cr. It was one of the flowering season. After 2006-07, In 2007-08, total revenue was Rs 12536448 cr. And in 2009-10, the revenue was Rs 15556609. 2011-12 had witnessed Rs 32471077 cr and 2012-13 also witnessed a huge rise in the income level. In 2013-14 there is again a huge raise of Rs 44497210 cr. In 2014-2015, Rs 51789617 cr was the annual turnover. In 2015-16, revenue recorded Rs 63744446 cr. In 2016-17, the total revenue decreased to Rs 55831052 cr. Comparing 2015-16 with 2016-17, there is a decline in the annual turnover of the park in 2016-17 because, park had different total revenue sources beyond sale of tickets as we discussed earlier. In 2016, park earned Rs 50543595 as revenue from sale of tickets only. There by, no further Government fund is added to this. But, in 2015, Only Rs 42604785 were earned from sale of tickets. So, Rs 21139661 cr were further

added as Government fund and revenue earned from different shops inside the park. In 2017, Rs 84310298 were considered as the total revenue. For meeting the coming expenses in 2018 (Another Neelakurinji Flowering Season) more Government funds are offered by the State and Central Governments.

When gone through the Expenditure pattern of Eravikulam National Park from 2017-18. Total Expenditure of 2006-07 was recorded as Rs 7128149 cr. In 2007-08 expenditure increased to Rs 11680164 cr. In 2009-10, Total Expenditure was recorded as Rs 16780032 cr. In 2010-11 total expenditure was Rs 19003649 cr. In 2011-12, the total expenditure rose to Rs 28866945 cr. In 2015-16, it was Rs 62338132 cr and In 2017-18, the total expenditure of the park was recorded as Rs 70108346 cr. Financial years 2015-16 & 2017-18 have more revenue than 2016-17 period. (fig-7.1) There was neither any modifications nor any renovation activities actually took place in 2016-17. A hike in the expenditure pattern in 2017-18 financial year is because, 2018-19 is considered to be another Neelakurinji flowering season. In order to meet with the season, there should be some pre-arrangements have to be done like, appointments of daily wage staffs, promotional activities etc. Thereby, park had an expenditure of Rs 70108346 cr in 2017-18.

**Table -3**

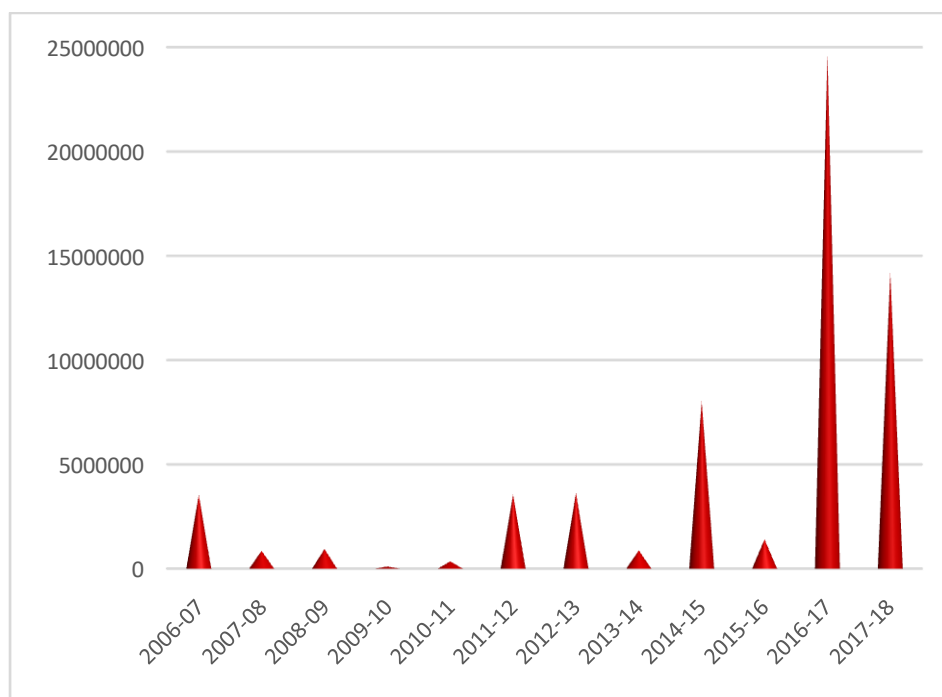
**Profitability of Eravikulam National Park.**

Year	Profitability
2006-07	3536759
2007-08	856324
2008-09	941911
2009-10	103962
2010-11	350259
2011-12	3550132
2012-13	3634444
2013-14	880854
2014-15	8035412
2015-16	1406314
2016-17	24707388
2017-18	14201952

**Source- Office of Wildlife Warden (Munnar)**

**Figure 3.1**

**Profitability of Eravikulam National Park**



**Source- Office of Wildlife warden(Munnar){Official Records}**

Figure 3.1 shows the level of profitability graphically. In 2006-07, Park had a profit of Rs 3536759 lakh. In 2007-08, profit margin decreased as Rs 856324 lakh. In 2008-09, there is a slight increase in the profit when compared to 2007-08. In 2010-11, profit margin was Rs 350259 lakh. In 2011-12, again there is an increase and profit rose to Rs 3550132 lakh. In 2012-13, total profit recorded as Rs 3634444 lakhs. Again in 2013-14, profit margin decreased as Rs 880854 lakhs. In 2014-15, there is an increase in the profit level to Rs 8035412 lakhs. Then in 2015-16, again the profit margin decreased to Rs 1406314 lakhs. But, In 2016-17, there is a huge rise in the profit of the park than ever recorded. The profit level of the park in 2016-17 was Rs 2,47,07,388 cr. As compared to 2016-17, the profit margin of 2017-18 of the park is quite low. park had recorded a profit of Rs 14201952 cr. As stated above, there shouldn't be any modifications or any renovation activities took place in 2016-17. Therefore, 2016-17 has a huge profit of Rs 24707388 cr.

## **Conclusion:**

It can be concluded that, Neelakurinji have big impact on Kerala tourism.shurb that brings an increase in the total number of tourists in every 12 years. However, social evils, cultural degradation and environmental degradation resulting from the increased interaction with tourists, purposive construction etc. destruct the forest and commercialise the culture, emerged as a danger to the Eravikulam National park. By considering the above facts the authorities should ensure proper utilisation of this precious natural resources.

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