

Conservation, Development & Cultural Tourism; Case Study of Muziris Heritage Project

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History, conservation and heritage can be linked with development and they can form potential resources and assets for promoting non-formal education and tourism. The focus should be on the local economy generating local employment, promoting traditional industries, art and craft activities. Tourism and heritage management are integrated in this approach. One of the mistakes made in the case of some of the cultural tourism projects is the lack of co-ordination between the tourism administrators and the custodians of monuments. Economic value of heritage, which is sustainable, is important for the state of Kerala.

Ancient Kerala, renowned as the spice coast of India, was a major hub in the spice route trade, between South East Asia, Africa, Arab States and even Europe. At the centre of this spice trade was for centuries the ancient port of Muziris that has a history of 3000 years.

In, 2009, the Government of Kerala initiated the ambitious heritage project encompassing an area of 150 sq.km., which have various monuments and historic buildings today. The project is seen primarily as a conservation project. There is a major thrust on non-formal education and it is being seen as a model for sustainable tourism where the local community benefits. Kerala has so far marketed only its beaches, backwaters and forests and to some extent its monsoon. The project is influenced by the tourism considerations, but managed by the principles and conventions of the international guidelines on cultural heritage management. There is a strong academic and research component to the project and convergence of funds from different departments.

The presentation will focus on the Muziris Heritage Project as a case study.