

Tourism and Environmental Degradation

Kanwaljeet Kaur Sahota
Assistant Professor,
Khalsa College Garhdiwala
Affiliated To Panjab University Chandigarh.

Abstract:

Environmental degradation because of fastest growing tourism has become talk of the town in recent years. Developmental activities have taken a toll on the environment and has have resulted in the loss of biodiversity. The unplanned and unchecked developmental activities in tourist destinations are the major cause of environmental degradation. Tourism though beneficial for country's economy harms nature when it is not planned properly. Tourists who come to enjoy the scenic beauty often litter the places with polythene and left over food without thinking about its adverse impact on the environment.

Hotels and resorts are the basic and lucrative element of tourism industry. Environmental norms are often flouted and violated and there are number of cases where hotels and resorts are responsible for Environment degradation. The environment of Islands and beaches is also degraded because of pollution caused by human presence and infrastructural expansion.

Adventure sports, water sports and golf sports which act as a catalyst to tourism are taking place at the cost of hazardous environmental impacts. Disorderly and scattered tourists are not eco-friendly as they lead to aesthetic degradation of landscape, has negative impact on natural resources contribute to soil erosion, increase pollution, natural habitat loss and pressure on endangered species. Tourism increases 50 percent traffic movement which results in emission of green house gases.

So if we want to enjoy nature we must preserve it otherwise all exotic destinations will become extinct and world will not remain a beautiful place to live in. For this eco-friendly tourism [Eco-tourism] should be promoted all over the world.

Keywords; *Aesthetic; concerned with beauty or the appreciation of beauty; Landscape: All the visible features of an area of land often considered in terms of their aesthetic appeal; Infrastructure: Basic structure of an organization or economic system; Heritage hotels: Buildings of historical interest converted into hotels; Recreational: Relating to activity done for enjoyment; Eco- friendly: Not harmful to the environment.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the world's fastest growing enterprises and has acquired the status of an industry with over 500 million travelers and above 3 trillion US dollar earning worldwide. India with such

a diversified physiographic has much to offer by way of tourism the Himalayas, Temples, Forts Palaces Paintings, and Sculptures. Monuments, National parks, Sanctuaries, Beaches and Islands draw million of tourists

II. OBJECTIVE

Tourism has been recognized as a beneficial activity. For most of the people it is an ideal land use activity, a non polluting job generating and foreign exchange earnings. However years of so being, experience and results of researches have shown that if uncontrolled this activity can also be dangerous to our eco-system. So the main objective is to:

- Understand the pressure on the environment of a destination due to tourism.
- Understand the points of threshold caused by tourism.
- Identify the nature of this problem.
- Learn about some solutions which should be practiced while promoting tourism.
- This smokeless industry is reeling under pressure because of environmental degradation caused by its various components:

A. Islands and Beaches

The degradation of the Islands and Beaches caused by tourists is of two types:

Pollution caused by increasing human presence at the sites.

Degradation caused by infrastructural expansion.

1) Pollution caused by Tourists

Leaving behind leftovers bottles cans polythene packs dumping of human waste etc is a problem faced by almost all the places Some of these are biodegradable while others are non-biodegradable and pose a grave threat to the environment. The nature of leftovers varies from place to place. e.g Puri being a place of pilgrimage gets leftovers which are primarily religious in nature, On the other hand, In Goa beer bottles and cans constitute the leftover.

Similarly, Bhelpuri leaflets adorned the chaupati beach at Bombay.

2) Degradation Caused by Infrastructure

This incorporates activities which in some or the other way are related to the promotion of tourism e.g. building resorts, hotels, laying down transportation and communication lines, developing golf courses, setting up small handicraft consumer industries, eating points near the coast. These destroy

not only the physical landscape but also seriously affect the region which is very clearly exemplified at Kovalam where construction activities also had dredging which had disastrous effects on the eco-system. The death of the benthic organisms at the site of dredging is a natural corollary. The after effects of dredging are even more severe as it causes stirring up of sand and its transport downstream results into the death of many filter feeding animals either by clogging their digestive tracts or by their total burial. The drastic change in the eco-system and the mass mortality of these corals due continuous dredging of lagoons and blasting of reef flats enhances the sea erosion. Dredging is done in many atolls in Lakshadweep and other parts of the country once beautiful underwater garden of the atoll with rich and varied fauna and flora is being totally depleted and lagoons found barren.

Another factor which affects the concerned eco-system is deforestation which is closely related with tourism. Removing forests either to develop beach resorts or for other activities affect the eco-system of the Islands and Beaches. Removal of evergreen tropical forests in Andaman and Nicobar Islands by the proponents of timber and plywood industry pose a great threat to the forests of the region. Once the ground is exposed to direct sunlight this will result to depletion of ground water which will further effect the coconut plantation which would ultimately be detrimental to the economy of the local inhabitants. Similarly clearing the coastal mangrove forests in Andhra Pradesh, Kutch and Western coastal region will have long term effects on the ecology of the region.

3) *Adventure Sports*

Natural and Artificial landscape of India are ideally suited for trekking, mountaineering, rock climbing, skiing, hot air ballooning etc. India provides a suitable space for International tourists inclined towards adventure sports not only because of an immense variety of outdoor thrills but also low prices by international standards.

Though these sports are certainly a catalyst to tourism and tourism is a very important contributor to the economy, they are also proving hazardous to the environment in many ways. The most negative aspect of these sports is pollution environmental injury, degradation of the landscape and more often a disturbance in the eco-system. Trekking mountaineering rock climbing and skiing effect the environment of the mountainous regions, because they all destroy the flora and fauna of the area by trampling. The growing number of such tourists can also lead to erosions in the regions. Littering of wastes canes broken glasses by such people is a serious threat to the environment. South col near the Mount Everest has been declared as the highest dustbin because of these sports. Skiing in India is

done mainly on natural landscapes but sometimes artificial landscapes are also prepared for different levels of skiing by drilling and blasting of rocks and destroying the natural flora and fauna. For better skiing the bulldozing of banks to encourage snow accumulation may accelerate erosion and cause damage to the environment

Golf also cause severe damage to the environment because making of a golf course needs vast track of land and for that sometimes fertile land is used, hilly areas, mountains are blasted off for landscaping. Artificial hill, slope, pond, sand area creates an artificial environment at the cost of natural flora and fauna. To make turf of international standard sometimes exotic grass and foliage is used which require chemical fertilizers, insecticides pesticides, herbicides and hormones which on percolation affect the adjoining land and water systems by polluting it thus harming the environment.

Water sports such as sailing, canoeing, river rafting, scuba diving etc affect seacoasts, rivers and other island waters. These sports also cause littering erosion of banks disturbance of birds noise and oil pollution etc. Making of hotels, resorts and camping in these areas where sports are played are the factors which harm the environment, making of roads to promote these sports add vehicular pollution.

4) *Hotels and Resorts*

Hotels and Resorts can be seen as the basic element of tourism industry. All the national scenery, all its climatic virtues and all the sporting and recreational facilities of a country cannot suffice to sustain a good volume of tourist trade without an adequate development of hotels and resort resources. They can be Resort hotels, Transient hotels, Residential hotels, international hotels commercial hotels motels or floating hotels. Hoteliering is a lucrative industry but has its responsibilities too; their development should be environment friendly. Hotel buildings are often built in haphazard unplanned and congested manner which destroy the scenic beauty and already constrained hill resources. The construction material ,waste and sewage is all dumped in the near river banks thus polluting water and kill water life. Unplanned hotels may have a serious ecological repercussions, certain areas are reserved as no construction zones because construction may activate soil erosion but environmental norms are often flouted and violated as in case of Hotel Bagor in HP. Govt. has also reserved certain areas where any encroachment or any kind of adventurism is prohibited, Sariska is one such area reserved for tigers but Rajasthan Govt. has allotted land to a private company to build hotel in this protected area.

B. Lakes and Wetlands

They have a vital potential for tourism pose a serious threat to their existence because of above mentioned problems, Dal Lake, Ooty Lake and Kodai-Kanal Lake are the live examples. The factors responsible include uncontrolled tourism, unrestricted development, population increase, new buildings, destruction of tree cover etc. Regarding Dal Lake, the water expanse has shrunk from 24 square kilometer to 15 square kilometer and it is also contaminated by bacteria. The basic reason of this environment degradation is encroachment and continuous, unabated reclamation. The whole eco-system of the lake has suffered a setback. House boats which form a major type of accommodation for tourists are largely responsible for this. They also disturb the aquatic vegetation of the lake. The mushrooming hotels and residences dump untreated sewage and solid waste into these lakes. Besides this, the pressure of urban inhabitation and improper agricultural practices has also contributed to the degradation of these lakes. The lake of Ooty has suffered from uncontrolled tourism and the depth of Kodai-Kanal lake has also been reported to be reduced to 1/3 of its actual depth and also reported to have harmful Coli form bacteria. Therefore, Development of unhygienic conditions, Ugly structures and congestion Decline in occupancy curve, environment degradation, soil loss, deforestation, Climatic change and aridity, Loss of aquatic vegetation and cultural loss are all related and add to the overall degradation.

III. CONCLUSION

A lot is being talked about Eco-tourism, sustainable tourism and controlled tourism these days that should be followed.

First thing is to control the number of tourists visiting any place. Controlled tourism is the healthy way of doing tourism.

Strict rules and regulations should be made and followed to deal with the threat to the environment of Islands beaches e.g. the rules regarding distance from tide line and heights of construction should be followed strictly.

There should be some sort of planning to cope up with over expanding traffic.

In India diving people are indulging in coral smuggling which causes immense damage to the marine life there should be some rules for it.

Govt. hotelier, Media, NGO, City planner and Administration should work that no harm is done to the environment by way of tourism and Sariska like incidence should not be repeated.

Hotels should be planned in an area where there is no threat to natural landscape of the area, soil, flora and fauna, hotels should install pollution control devices to check the emission.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Author with a deep sense of gratitude and regard acknowledge the editors of SSRG ijaes for accepting my paper. The author is greatly indebted to her son for encouraging to write this paper and to her husband for rendering the cordial atmosphere. The author is highly thankful to her colleagues of agriculture department especially Prof. Manpreet Kaur for helping me to bring out this paper.

REFERENCES

- [1] Laeeq Fatehally, "Our Environment" National book trust, India.
- [2] Laeeq Fatehally, "The State of India's Environment", the first citizens report, Centre for Science and Environment.
- [3] Suhita Chopra, "Tourism development in India, New Delhi, 1993.
- [4] Virendra Kaul, "Tourism and Economy", New Delhi, 1994.