



TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA : MYTHS AND REALITIES

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ABSTRACT

Every country is involved in promoting tourism in a big way. Tourism has become a top priority of the economic agenda of all the countries. In India, tourism is slowly getting due focus taking into account the country's rich heritage and cultural tradition.

The paper analyses the social, economic and gender context under which tourism development is taking place and provides a critique of the potentials it has as a tool for development in India. Specifically, it aims at analyzing foreign investments in tourism and the fundamental relationship between social life of the populace and the social, economic, gender, cultural and political transformations taking place in areas where tourism has become a major activity. Fundamental issues problematized are those related questions of overcoming exploitation and domination based on gender, class, race, age, and ethnicity. It is admitted fact that promotion of tourism as one of the globalizing elements and the edifice of the euphoria of globalization itself, are based on fetish zed systems.

INTRODUCTION

India's present economic reforms have given a big push to tourism sector. Tourism is today projected as an engine of economic growth and an instrument for eliminating poverty, solving unemployment problem, opening up new fields of activity. New opportunities are being tapped to promote eco, adventure, rural, spiritual, wildlife and health and herbal including medical tourism.

Tourism, an industry that could offer an alternative to traditional export commodities (coffee, tea, cashew nut, cotton, sisal and cloves) dependency. Tourism had become one of the options to diversify the economy and supplement a declining agricultural sector; create jobs in both rural and urban areas: and, offer entrepreneurial opportunities for small and medium enterprises as well as community cooperatives. In promoting it, the country could earn the badly needed foreign exchange and the government could

increase its tax revenues It was claimed that tourism is sector with significant linkages to other sectors such as agriculture, fishing, retailing and arts and crafts; and that it had economic spin-offs into other sectors such as communication, education, energy, construction and the general development of the infrastructure thereby benefiting the economy as a whole. This could lead to enhanced living standards, economic well-being and human, social and cultural development.

MAJOR PROBLEMS OF THE TOURISM SECTOR

1. Lack of qualified human resources.
2. No reliable database is available.
3. Lack of good infrastructure.
4. Lack of Research & Development.
5. Lack of regulation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is of analytical and exploratory in nature. Therefore, the secondary data collected from various sources such as Annual Reports of Ministry of Tourism, WTO, various journals like Journal of Services Research, Sajops and the Dailies like The Hindustan Times, The Times of India, The Economic Times and the Financial Express have been consulted. The collected data have been analyzed to reach at fruitful conclusions.

IMPERIALISM AND TOURISM

Tourism has historically evolved as a leisure industry in the past 300 years or so reflecting social structural differentiation-social classes, life styles, racial and ethnic groups, gender, age sets/grades (the youth, the aged), political and professional groups- and the mythic representation of the past and the present. During medieval era and also the transition to capitalism in Europe, leisure was mostly associated with rituals, feasts, carnivals and holy days. These involved the putting away of days or even weeks for such activities, but were not associated with travel because work and leisure could not be separated from home in space. Any travel that was undertaken by then was mostly by explorers, crusaders, pilgrims, adventurers and others-basically those with aristocratic backgrounds. These were regarded as courageous.

Travel was more or less part of the pursuit of opportunity for trade and also leisure for aristocrats and the bourgeoisie since 18th Century, when

they began for the first time organizing what were to be popularized by Thomas Cook in 1840s as the 'Grand Tour'. Tourism by the 19th Century was already crystallizing in the form of an ideology for empire-building. This is because alongside the development of tourism as an industry was the development of museums, fairs and travel lectures, which exposed people, including those who were unable to travel, to the "other" parts of the world. "It is estimated that in the United States alone, close to one million people visited world's fairs between 1876 and 1916. World's fairs were designed to be more than popular entertainments.

It was with the organization of package holidays by Thomas Cook and later on American Express in the second half of the 19th Century that even wives and children and eventually women traveling without a male companion in the tours, mainly adventurous middle class women who wanted to travel for pleasure were able to do so.

Increasingly the phenomenon turned into that of travel for pleasure and leisure activities. "Here 'holy days' were transformed into secular 'holidays' during which people became committed to having a good time...-breathing fresh air, eating sweet junk food, riding animals, taking walks for no reason at all, and playing carnival gambling games."

At the turn of the 19th Century, Thomas Cook had become a huge company. Prior to the First World War, Thomas Cook was very much the market leader in organized trips, including those beyond Europe. Foreign travel was the domain of the middle class. Mass tourism in the form of foreign travel was beyond the means of most people. Package tour holidays had become a profitable commodity for some companies which were already acquiring an international character. Holiday camps were already established even in the colonies by 1930s. International tourism was to grow dramatically in the post World War II period, particularly with the expansion of air travel from the late 1950s. The immediate post-World War II holiday boom saw one million British tourists traveling abroad by 1950. It was Victor Raitz a Reuters journalist, who initiated the age of budget holiday travel for the masses.

Tourism in the form of the pursuit and killing of animals, which was the predecessor of other forms of tourism, had culminated in the development of ideological overtones expressed in artistic and literally production, was to play a very central part in the process of colonization in the 19th Century.¹

CHANGING TRENDS IN TOURISM ACTIVITIES

A tourist is a consumer of commodity (leisure), which is differentiated in time and space. It exists outside of a daily social space, and like all other commodities, it has value as a social sign in the mind of those who produce it. The economists' assumption that commodities merely satisfy needs is insufficient: they also have a function of social signification. They have the value of an ideological reference. There are hierarchical indications revealed by the model of vacation consumption.

TOURISM GROWTH: DECEPTION AND REALITY

There is no doubt that there has been an increase in the number of investments in tourism conspicuous consumption. It is the dominant classes that define for other classes and subgroups through buying of existing facilities, leasing and direct investments. But, an examination and comparison of the figures of the trends in exports for the country and those of tourism sector specifically makes one cast doubts about the claims made by the government officials, policy makers, politicians and even some academicians who have researched on the sector, on its contribution to the economy, "poverty alleviation" and development in general. It is clear that because the international politics of debt and debt relief have since 1990s been linked to the question of liberalization of the economy and promotion of foreign investments, these policies must be presented in such way that they are made to look as if they are succeeding. Tourism is presented in such a way that its contribution is vital for servicing debt and promotion of the welfare of the poor. Official data furnishes mystified facts to the ideological canons of neo-liberalism, and results into the demeaning of the central role and value of more important sectors such as agriculture, livestock, fishing, mining and industry, by claiming that tourism is one of the leading growth sectors of the economy.²

International tourist arrivals in India are increased from 1.68 million in 1991 to 2.36 million in 1998 at CAGR, of 4.35 percent. On the other hand a CAGR of 7.23% is observed from 1998 to 2006, where tourist arrivals increased from 2.36 million to 5.00 million. However tourist arrivals increased from 1.68 million in 1991 to 4.43 million in 2006 at CAGR of 6.24 percent. On the other hand, the tourist's arrivals increased from 2.38 millions in 2002 to 4.43 million in 2006 after the implementation of incredible India campaign at CAGR of 13.91 percent.

Foreign exchange earnings of India through tourism increased from Rs. 4318 crores in 1991 to Rs. 12150 crores in 1998 at CAGR of 18.85 percent. On the other hand, a CAGR of 10.48 percent is observed from 1998-2006, where earnings increased from Rs. 12150 crores to Rs. 29604 crores. However, the foreign exchange earnings increased from Rs. 4318 crores in 1991 to Rs. 29604 crores in 2006 at CAGR of 12.72 percent. On the other hand, the foreign exchange earnings increased from Rs. 14195 crores in 2002 to Rs. 29604 crores in 2006 after the implementations of incredible India campaign at CAGR of 15.87 percent.³

The tourism industry is often overlooked in trade issues although for 83% of countries in the world it is one of their five top export categories, it accounts for roughly 35% of the exports of services in the world and over 8% of the total world exports of goods (World Tourism Organization), it is classified as an export strategy for debt-ridden countries by the IMF, and many of its components such as air transport, agricultural goods, and communications are important trade issues. Tourism is distinct in that it moves people to the “product” rather than transporting a product to people, and it is dependent and intricately tied to other areas of local economies such as agriculture, land, and labor. It is not possible to analyze tourism’s effects on local communities and its role in globalization without also looking at these other areas. Since liberalization in the tourism sector is dependent on liberalization in other sectors, it is important to realize the effects of policies in many arenas within the WTO: agriculture, intellectual property rights, services, investment, etc. and the ways they may strengthen the global tourism industry’s control over local communities and further erode communities’ abilities to be active agents in the decision-making regarding their own environments and futures.⁴

The ethics of the World Trade Organization - that economic growth and globalization are the utmost priorities - affects every aspect of life: from trees to Indigenous knowledge to labor and sells our traditions and lands.

Commodification is rampant in the tourism industry. Peoples and cultures are put on display on postcards, promotional literature, and in their own homes when tourists arrive. The concept of “the right to a vacation” in industrialized countries creates numerous and serious repercussions for host destinations and their environments. Tourism is deeply rooted in a history of colonization and unequal relations between people and regions. Therefore, the effects of tourism cannot be measured in terms in terms of

employment generation, degree of pollution, infrastructure development, and loss of biodiversity. In addition, there are many societal and psychological effects which are often immeasurable but have grave impacts and must be a part of the critical analysis of tourism and its effects on Indigenous communities.

There are five Myths of the Tourism Sector

- Myth 1:** Tourism sector is growing at the cost of the other sector of the Indian economy.
- Myth 2:** The growth of the tourism sector is not sustainable.
- Myth 3:** Tourism services growth is only a short-term phenomenon.
- Myth 4:** Tourism services growth is leading to urban rural divide.
- Myth 5:** Tourism services are promoting non-productive expenditure by encouraging unnecessary competition.

Tourism introduces a consumer culture into communities whose societies and values may not be based on the economic power of the individual. Tourists' quest for "authenticity" often leads to a prostitution of the local culture for the demand and enjoyment of the tourists. The dissemination of Western products and lifestyle has been one result of tourism and is actively promoted by the WTO. If the entertainment and media/communications industries prevail, more fabricated culture, i.e., Hollywood and Disneylands, will be forced on other countries and cultures while their rights to protect their own cultures will erode. The inclusion of cultural products in the elimination of barriers to trade and the increase in tourism will facilitate the growth of a tourist monoculture around the world. Nations, regions, and people must have rights to preserve their cultures from erosion by the dominant consumer culture.

Another threat that the expanding global tourism industry brings to Indigenous communities is biopiracy. Bioprospecting and biopiracy often happen under the guise of ecotourism. There are concerns about numerous "ecotourism" trips where scientists, tourists, students and researchers enter into forests to collect information about local plants and ecosystems, stealing biodiversity and, in some cases, attempting to patent life and the stealing of knowledge developed over centuries. Yet, Indigenous worldviews are not taken into consideration nor consulted as "scientific knowledge" when policies and decision-making regarding bioprospecting are made.

Tourism has often had negative impacts on Indigenous Peoples and other local communities and ecosystems of which they are a part. These communities are a diverse mixture of environments, cultures, religions, spiritualities as well as genders and ethnicities. Unsustainable tourism damages the environment and violates Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' human rights and rights of access and ownership to land and natural resources essential to food security, self-sufficiency and cultural identity. It also commercializes and markets Peoples and their cultural heritage, and sacred sites integral to traditional cultural and knowledge systems. Therefore, Indigenous Peoples and other local communities should enjoy the full measure of human rights, collective rights, and fundamental freedoms without hindrance and discrimination. This includes the right to reject as well as accept tourism. Furthermore, they should be prime decision-makers with regard to tourism that will impact their cultures and environments.

The important role of participatory and community based organisations like cooperatives / panchayats in promoting tourism is beginning to be recognised. As a result, the concepts like "sustainable tourism", "peace through tourism", "poverty reduction through tourism", 'community tourism', etc. which can best be implemented through participatory institutions are being popularised in a big way.

Rural India has much to offer to the world. Rich in traditions of arts, crafts and culture, rural India can emerge as important tourist spot. Amongst the people residing in developed countries there is a growing demand / desire to experience and understand traditional ways of life. Rural Indian with its rich forte of traditions, arts and crafts can become the most desired tourist destination if the concept of rural tourism is marketed well.

Best example in support of this concept is Rajasthan. Despite the absence of strategic promotional activity for rural tourism, thousands of foreign tourists visit rural areas in Rajasthan, Gujarat and south India every year. This in itself is a proof of the viability of the concept of rural tourism.

In fact, many states have on their own initiative have begun promoting rural tourism. For instance the forest department of the Uttaranchal government has set up 'Centre for Ecotourism and Sustainable Livelihoods'. This centre aims at capacity building of local communities and promotion of rural tourism.

Tourism has many potential benefits for rural areas. Tourism can be an important source of jobs for non-metro communities and offer business

opportunities to local residents. It can enhance local quality of life, through tax collection and also support local culture, arts and crafts business of that particular region. Tourism also supports rural areas by encouraging restoration of local and historic sites. Tourism, which is generally considered to be a relatively clean industry, may foster local conservation efforts and development through community involvements.

After adventure sports, beaches, forts, etc. the next big thing to hit tourism in the country is agri and rural tourism. According to an estimate agri and rural tourism is worth Rs. 4,300 crore in the country and has a huge potential to grow with booming tourism industry, crossing 4 million tourist arrivals per year.

There is an immense opportunity for tourism industry to join hands with panchayats / villages to develop required infrastructure and provide forward linkages in terms of marketing.⁵



A View of Rural Tourism

The very existence of community based tourism is dependent on the existence of poor people. Community-based tourism's most popular image is that of a rural village far from the beaten path. It is about conservation of large tracts of virgin rainforest, reforestation work and organic agriculture. Tourism is supposed to be the "Band Aid" to help "alleviate poverty." As far as the fees are concerned, investors, tour operators and tourists pay various fees and taxes to the parastatals that manage the national parks. These include gate entry fees, resident permits, motor vehicle permits, filming and photographing, hotel concession fees, hire of motor vehicles, landing fees, camping fees and leather craft sales.⁶

The tourist companies and hotels/lodges pay taxes and fees of various types per annum. The government also gets revenues from tourism through visa charges, a number of taxes and levies, charges of one form or another (e.g. hunting, trophy, etc), etc, which are paid to various authorities. Hunting companies are also supposed to contribute to the development of the villages in the areas they operate.

Further, unskilled jobs-waiters, room cleaners and kitchen keepers do not require skills/training; these are also the lowest paid jobs. In the hotels/lodges, the front offices-i.e. reception of customers, room sales and bookings, hotel communication, public relations (where they exist—in big hotels), almost 65 percent of the employees are women and the remaining are men and the sections are dominantly headed by men. These are workers with secondary and sometimes post-secondary education. The numerical dominance of women in the front offices is due to the belief among employers that customers prefer to be received by women than men; that their attractiveness, tolerance, politeness and charm is part of what entertains customers, especially male ones. These women are expected to dress in an 'attractive' manner, to look beautiful (i.e. slim, young and pretty) and even to 'play along' with sexual harassment by customers. In sum, they are supposed to be friendly smiling women, fitting certain standards of attractiveness; waiting to submissively serve the customer's every wish.⁷

Souvenir vending and handcrafts sells are not informal activities, as it is often claimed by economists and those who espouse the virtues of the 'informal sector' or 'self-employment', since, just like the big shops, they involve the renting of the area for conducting business, obtaining a license, a substantial amount of investment for purchasing their merchandise from the artisans, craftsmen and other producers of products that may attract tourists and employment of one or two workers as sales people—mostly women and children. Most of the owners of these small enterprises are male, while a substantial number of employees mainly consist of female because there is a belief that they are fairer in their negotiations than men.

CREATION OF ATTRACTION

The creation, expansion and maintenance of conservation and other attractions, such as beach areas, have always resulted into conflicts between the state and the rural dwellers, since the process has always deprived people of resources and means to subsistence. Land, wildlife and other resources that support rural people are critical to small holder agriculture, animal husbandry, subsistence hunting, fishing and other economic activities.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The tendency of large-scale tourism to dominate a whole regional economic base can be observed in many areas throughout the world.

Tourism threatens and often destroys locals' traditional means of livelihood, or local self-reliance, and can ruin local industries with its build-up of transportation, communications, and economic infrastructure. Liberalization in economic sectors such as agriculture, or expansion of other industries such as logging or mining, also create conditions ripe for tourism development since they help to erode a community's self-sufficiency and create dependency upon a market over which locals have no control. For instance, the concentration in agribusinesses and free trade agreements such as NAFTA have left local communities with little food security and searching for a way to survive. It is no coincidence that those who have lost their lands or have no market for their crops are forced into service-sector employment in the tourism industry and are increasingly dependent on the whims of the global market and the corporations which run it.

Tourism is the world's largest employer according to estimates of the World Travel and Tourism Council. It is often touted as a creator of employment and a mechanism of development for the communities where it imposes itself. Often, however, the jobs that tourism creates are not adequate living-wage, secure jobs with benefits, jobs where people can develop skills, and they usually do not comply with labor standards. WTO rulings regarding labor standards as "barriers to free trade" are threats for workers in the tourism industry who already have little job security and labor rights and who have few, if any, other options for employment.

Another serious threat to sustainable tourism projects is the WTO's prioritization of global commerce over everything: self-reliance of communities, environment, human rights, health and safety. New issues such as investment, government procurement, and competition policy will severely limit the opportunities for communities to create sustainable, tourism alternatives.

Rules on investment and competition policy will make it virtually impossible to ensure Indigenous and local control over tourism projects. Foreign direct investment will limit countries' abilities to put conditions on the type of investment they receive, will give more rights to foreign investors and will only increase the leakage of profits out of the host country. For the tourism industry, where up to 90% of profits leave the host country, this would be a disaster. Communities will have no rights to regulate which companies set up businesses on their lands. Competition policy would make it virtually impossible for communities and small

businesses to develop their own tourism alternatives in a protected environment community.

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