

# Ecology vs. Tourism

- **Dhawal G. Shah**

**Y**ear 2020, Welcome to Garbagia Resort. Be mesmerised by the acid rains. Enjoy swimming? Try the oil spilled lagoons. Hungry? After the tiring activity, try the local specialty, roasted lobsters, garnished with glass cullents in special air-conditioned atmosphere decorated with coloured plastic balloons.

What was all that about? Was it another nature lover's plight? No, it was about the murky future of tourist spots experiencing mass tourism.

Such an unstable future is an environmentalist's nightmare, in fact every individual's nightmare. No one desires piles of junk, gallons of acid rain, tonnes of solid waste. It is high time, we fellow earthlings woke up and paid attention to the disastrous repercussions of tourism.

Did someone say TOURISM? YES, TOURISM. Isn't tourism the prime contributor of employment, revenue and GDP for countries like Seychelles, Maldives, Kiribati, Belize, Haiti (Over 80%)? Globally, tourism contributes 11% of GDP on an average. It provides direct and indirect employment to 200 million people, which is 8% of the global work force. Tourism will continue to create 5.5 million new jobs per annum, till 2010.

Won't pursuing any activity, which leads to curbing tourism adversely, affect the economy, which translates into hardships for the people? In a worst-case scenario it might even cause a recession.

We have damaged mangroves, burned forests, deforested them, drained wetlands, leading to large-scale soil erosions and innumerable other environmental tragedies, all in our pursuit for material wealth.

We should not allow local and physical degradation, deforestation, landslides or be the cause for the extinction of rare flora and fauna, as we need to protect, preserve and enrich the legacy passed on by our ancestors and we also need to answer tomorrow's generation, but at the same time, we cannot arrest tourism, as people can't survive on sparkling clean water and tingling fresh air.

So, what is the solution? Are there any alternatives? Fortunately, YES.

ECO-TOURISM: The word Eco comes from

ecology, Eco-tourism means environmentally conscious sensitive and friendly tourism. It deals with applying the question of sustainability to tourism. It leads to the implementation of high levels of environmental ethical standards, which includes the libertarian extension (The concept of individual rights is extended to wildlife and possible inanimate entities) High standards of precaution and safety are implemented for example restricting entry to biologically sensitive and bio diverse areas, promoting use of ozone and environmentally friendly products, banning use and promotion of CFCs and goods difficult to recycle or dispose off. Human beings and animals are regularly checked so that tourism does not lead to genesis and spread of diseases (foot and mouth disease, the mad cow disease and the latest being SARS)

An extremely vital element in eco-tourism is that outsiders be restricted from littering. Littering is one of the major problems, extremely difficult to tackle. Litter comprises solid and liquid waste. In small islands, management of solid waste is extremely difficult, as it requires a considerable amount of investment and technological know-how, which is not possible to implement everywhere. However, liquid and semi-liquid waste can be treated indigenously or by using sewage plants.

However, eco-tourism has drawbacks, and its policies cannot be universally implemented, especially in countries where tourist inflows are very high (million +), like the US, UK, France, India, etc, as it is practically not feasible to scrutinise every activity of every individual.

In such situations, the judiciary system can play an extremely important role, the role of a sustainer nation to enact laws against environmental exploitation. However, the pre-requisite to achieving success in this sphere is having adequate legal and implementation infrastructure.

Some well-thought-out and enacted laws: in the US, to use water for commercial purposes, permission is required from the local governing body; water is graded weekly on various factors like purity, softness, cleanliness etc. If a hotel uses water, it recycles it regularly and replenishes the lake. An officer assesses the water after confirming its quality allows it to be replaced. Thus the ambient water quality always

improves, according to various factors: purity, hardness etc. Water from reservoirs is used for commercial purposes in hotels, factories, agriculture etc. However, the water used needs to be replaced by similar or better quality water. This maintains and improves water quality; each and every time water is used. Instead of having dozens of taxes like utility tax, water tax and others, this works better. As more and more water is used, the quality of the water keeps on improving rather than deteriorating in most cases.

**POLLUTER PAYS**

Principle:

The principle requires that those dispersing damage wastes to the environment should bear the costs of avoiding, or containing the damage within acceptable limits, according to environmental standards.

The principle is universally applicable, it has been successful in all European States, damage in the form of Social Marginal Cost is borne by the polluter.

One of the problems faced by the 'Polluter Pays' principle is valuing the environmental resources that are being damaged and subsequently being able to estimate the cost of pollution.

A small movement, THE GREEN MOVEMENT has been picking speed in the past decade changing people's attitude towards consumerism. The demand

for 'environmentally friendly' and 'ethically correct' products is increasing.

A new breed of tourist is emerging known as GREEN TOURIST. Travelling independently or in small groups, living as locals and caring for the country's resources. This definitely is the POLLUTION AGE, but also the era of GREEN AREAS.

Changes in consumer behaviour and values are a driving force for tourism. Today's tourist is more

experienced, more quality conscious, more independent, more discerning, and therefore difficult to please.

However, not only

the tourist is becoming more sophisticated, experienced and quality conscious, but also more active on holidaying, reflecting the growing awareness of healthy lifestyles and the increasing importance of active relaxation.

The future does seem less bleak, though still gloomy. However, if we take proper care and precaution, we can save the planet. So, the next time you go on a trek to Matheran, don't litter just throw that empty packet of Lay's wafers or Bisleri bottle into the bin and not any place else, don't play loud music and care for the environment which inevitably cares for you. ■

**3 - dimensional Eco-tourism**  
**Activity:** Tourism, Which Is Based Upon Experiencing Natural Cultural Resources  
**Business:** Tour Operators Who Provide Eco-tourism Tours  
**Philosophy:** Respect For Land, Nature, People, Culture And Environment