

Working
Paper Series
2007–2008

Section I

P A P E R S



Equations

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Can we transform tourism?

The elusive quest for justice and humanity in tourism

ECOT's 25th anniversary is a befitting occasion to renew the call for the transformation of tourism. For decades, activist and social justice organisations concerned with how tourism develops, have been influencing the agenda for tourism to be equitable, sustainable and non-exploitative. This has been done through struggles on the ground, interventions in critical national, regional and global spaces, and solidarity actions. Most of the struggles, particularly those in the global south, have been around; the resistance to corporate globalization and corporate impunity, reclaiming the commons, protesting the violence and exploitation that accompany the push for certain kinds of mass-tourism, upholding and securing the values of dialogue, dignity, participation, democratization and self-determination. These campaigns and struggles have forced policy makers, governments and the industry to acknowledge the many problems and concerns attributable to the unfettered and irresponsible growth of tourism. ECOT's 25th anniversary is indeed a time to recognise and celebrate this spirit of solidarity and the many contributions of individuals, communities and organisations all over the world. While we do not recount these efforts in this paper, they provide the backdrop and the inspiration for the renewed demand to policy makers and industry – **Transform Tourism!**

The true essence of humankind is kindness. There are other qualities which come from education or knowledge, but it is essential if one wishes to be a genuine human being and impart satisfying meaning to one's existence, to have a good heart.

The 14th Dalai Lama

The nature of tourism – is it inherently exploitative?

At a recent meeting of global women leaders in tourism on World Tourism Day 2007 in Bentota, Sri Lanka, one of the members of the audience, a Sri Lankan media person, also a woman, exclaimed with great feeling – ‘*what is this term called tourism – I do not know what it means – why do we not call it travel and discovery – maybe that will bring the romance back and make tourism more human*’. In the backdrop of statistics about how tourism was the world's largest and fastest growing industry this seemed like naïve and wishful thinking.

The character of tourism which was of travel and discovery has changed to the economics of leisure. It would be romanticising tourism to believe that tourism was never about economics. Intrepid travellers also took risks because travel was closely linked to trade and promised rich rewards. The spice route, the silk route, the slave trade, as well as the history of colonisation of large parts of the world stand testimony to that reality. Nevertheless the search for the “other”, pilgrimages, the urge to explore new frontiers, to learn and for self-discovery, also motivated the journeys to far away lands.

Leisure travel is first associated with the English middle classes and the growth of industrialisation. With improvements in technology, particularly mass transportation, the modern forms of mass tourism emerged. The concept of paid holidays added to this trend. Initially, most mass tourism was domestic, but with the growth of air travel the international tourism phenomenon took root. The movement of

people from high income countries to destinations with lower costs because of lower standards of living resulted in the exploitative nature of mass tourism. With greater disposable incomes, the demand for more sophisticated options for the traveller, second and even third breaks involving short duration international travel, are on the increase. The travel and tourism trade scrambles to create new demands as well as service them.

So what is the problem? Numerous studies and experiences of tourism particularly in developing countries, (but not restricted to them) and from the perspective of the so called “host” communities, indicate a series of problems that emerge from the prevalent models of mass tourism.

Economic : Big businesses (often, but not always, northern businesses) gain subsidised land, tax concessions, import advantages, leakages in tourist trade leaving very little gain or benefit for local communities. Tourism has not proven its claim of generating quality and secure employment for local communities. Tourism also increases the cost of living for local communities.

Environmental: Ecological damage and losses incurred through environmental destruction as in the case of deforestation to make way for tourism enterprises, golf courses, amusement parks, wildlife safaris, theme parks, ecotourism projects, beach resorts, water sports, mountain tourism etc. The strong links between tourism growth and water scarcity is of serious proportion

Social: Social costs of the abuse of women and children particularly those forced into sex work and trafficking and labour. The growing social and economic aspect of HIV/AIDS is linked to tourism.

Cultural: The impact of drugs and narcotics and its effects on vulnerable populations in the developing countries especially linked to tourism. The commodification of culture to cater to tourists needs and increased consumerism in local populations influenced by the demonstration effect.

Political, Institutional and human rights: This is perhaps the least commented aspect of tourism. The impact of diversion of peoples essential needs like agricultural land and access to natural and common property resources like forests, beaches, ocean and lakes, as well as the diversion or privileging water and electricity supply to tourist enterprises like hotels, amusement parks is least acknowledged in the narratives on tourism’s successes. The social and economic impact of displacement caused by tourism enterprises on livelihood and life. The dilution of the rights of communities and local governments to regulate tourism and to say no to tourism. The dilution of provisions of local ownership, regulation and control and the increasing trend of setting up of centralised supra authorities to determined the pace and direction of tourism development. The rights of workers in tourism. The rights of indigenous people in tourism. The rights of marginalised groups like children and women and dalits. The complex and covert links between tourism and conflict and militarized zones are increasingly visible. Also the impact of local politics and context on the tourism strategies of countries – particularly those whose own cultural –economic and political contexts and human rights record are at variance with the models of tourism they are trying to promote. All these have implications on political and human rights of local people that an unbridled growth of tourism rides on roughshod.

Pathway to prosperity? Or being taken for a ride?

The UNWTO claims that 80% of its efforts are geared towards helping developing economies gain from tourism. As an organisation that is interested foremost in promoting tourism, its claim that tourism is a vehicle for poverty elimination has yet to be substantiated with concrete evidence. Similar claims about initiatives such as pro-poor tourism have proved to be much talk and very little evidence on the ground. The UNWTO’s new found commitment to the Millenium Development Goals (MDG) has only added to the rhetoric of facilitation of infrastructure and markets for tourism and moved it even further away from the possibility of discussing rights, violations and the marginalisation of communities.

The murky history of the World Bank and other international financial agencies and development banks in tourism development in developing countries since the 70’s is well known. Mexico, several Latin American and Caribbean countries, Africa, India, all have their stories to tell. What is evident

both from people's testimonies and research is that this role has been; controversial, non-transparent and unaccountable, has privileged big business, and has left little for communities to gain. They have primarily been neoliberal and neocolonial instruments of developed nation lending to projects that reflect their own ideas about what is the best way forward and serve their interests. In the case of tourism these have been high volume all-inclusive mass tourism with scant regard for environmental, social, economic and cultural consequences on local communities. What is common in the approach of these global institutions, which in turn have heavily loaded the approach and policies of policy makers in developing countries, is the position that "more tourism is a good thing". We question this sacred cow. We also attempt to understand why it is so sacred (and to whom it is sacred) by examining the ideology underlying the models of tourism that are promoted.

The first international seminar on tourism and development (funded by UNESCO and the World Bank) occurred in 1976 in Washington, DC. This led to De Kadt's seminal publication, *Tourism: Passport to Development?* in 1979. De Kadt's work and the research featured in the book spawned two poles of theoretical research around the discourse of tourism and development. It warned that tourism may add to already apparent inequalities between "North and South." It also flagged the wider (and largely negative) social and environmental issues associated with tourism development (later taken up by many authors in the sustainability debate). When tourism is considered primarily as an agent of development (read economic growth) it can only follow the various models of economic development that were applied (foisted) on developing countries by first world nations. The politics of power and control between first and third world in the application of these models cannot be ignored.

As an illustration perhaps, is the fact that in a recent seminar titled "Pathways to Prosperity? Mainstreaming pro-poor approaches in tourism" 15 June 2007 (Overseas Development Institute), all the papers presented and most of the participants were from (and represented the interests of) developed countries. It was fascinating and rather telling that so many years after the initiation of pro-poor approaches in tourism – the "poor" were judged not capable of speaking for themselves!

Tourism embedded in a neo-liberal ethic: the great sell-out by policy makers in tourism

Neo-liberal theory takes the view that individual liberty and freedom are the high point of civilization. It goes on to argue that individual liberty and freedom can best be protected and achieved by an institutional structure, made up of strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The implication of that is that the state should not be involved in the economy too much, but it should use its power to preserve private property rights and the institutions of the market and promote those on the global stage if necessary. The well known Marxist geographer David Harvey described how neo-liberalism functions by redistributing wealth through a process of "capital accumulation by dispossession", rather than generating wealth through processes of accumulation such as by the expansion of wage labour.

The attempt by promoters of tourism to push a neo-liberal agenda is perhaps most starkly illustrated by the refusal to recognise tourism and its development as a factor in social upheavals, conflicts, "terrorist attacks", aftermaths of disasters etc. Tourism behaves as if it has nothing to do with the contexts and realities of places it locates itself in. The Bali bombings in 2002 was a direct attack on tourism. Tourism promotion in Tibet, in Burma, in several parts of sub-Saharan Africa, in Sri Lanka, in the Honduras, in many parts of the Caribbean, in the Middle East, in Jammu and Kashmir, the north-eastern region, the central (and largely tribal) states of India, all carry elements of smouldering tensions – of a trail of human rights violations that tourism brochures, promoters and policy makers refuse to face up to. The recent bombing in the Maldives – an island state known more for its image of being paradise and less for its authoritarian regime and human rights abuses – is another pointer to the fact that if the fault lines between tourism and the aspirations and realities of ordinary people are not resolved, human tragedies unravel – to which one can respond only helplessly and with a sense of incomprehension.

It is the policy makers in developing countries that often are more neo-liberal than their counterparts whose needs they serve in developed countries (who may be seen as more neo-conservative than neo-liberal). In India – in the last few years we have seen a swathe of policy and legislative measures in relation to tourism – the deregulation of environmental checks and clearances, the privatising of land, creating of land banks and special tourism zones, the modification of legislation to declare areas as exclusive for tourism, the creating of “authorities” that have overriding powers over sovereign and constitutional local functions and powers. The legislation against child abuse and for benefits to informal and unorganised sectors in tourism continues to be toothless in spite of concerted struggles and advocacy efforts by civil society organisations. Nearly three years after the devastating tsunami that hit South and South East Asia, case studies continue to point to evidence of how post tsunami reconstruction is being used to dispossess people of houses and livelihoods linked to the sea to make way for businesses like tourism in India, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Indonesia.

Tourism as consumerism; the need for an egalitarian ethic

New forms of tourism are being invented to satisfy one urge – the urge to consume more and more and to consume newer and newer products. Tourism’s particularity is that it is consumed on site and therefore the consumerism of tourism impacts not just the consumer and the supplier, but also to those in the location where the consumption happens. Travel and tourism is also largely understood to be about a one dimensional flow from the rich countries to the developing countries. For obvious economic reasons the reverse flow was not possible. However some of this is changing. The bulk of tourism and tourists are intra region and domestic. While much has been written and critiqued about the ills of international tourism only catering to tourists from first world destinations, which remain unresolved; a growing trend is the middle and upper middle classes in India and China and many other developing nations who are avid consumers and represent “growing markets” in tourism.

Mc Kinsey Global Institute (2005) reported that the average income of the Indian middle class will treble over the next two decades, making it the fifth largest consumer market in the world (currently it ranks 12th). Encouraged by this trend the Luxury Marketing Council – an international consortium of 675 luxury good firms opened its India chapter in October 2006. The Economist’s May 31st 2007 issue reported 70000 recorded cases of civil unrest in China due to a growing sense of inequality created by a growing consumer culture with focus on luxury. Luxury brand conferences are being organised in India by many corporate houses. India Inc is no longer the poor cousin – but it makes waves with aggressive acquisitions globally. Indian tourists are the mainstay of Sri Lankan tourism – with shopping being one of the key attractions. More and more Indians are considering cruises and ‘shop till you drop’ festivals in Dubai and SE Asian countries, and the state of Kerala has just announced a shopping festival not to be far behind.

In the global debate on climate change, into which the travel and tourism industry has also stepped in, the focus is on carbon neutral travel and credits and other market mechanisms. The root of the problem – sustainable and sane levels of consumption is the hardest to face up to.

Tourism Debt: a call for justice, ethical and sustainable tourism

A study of the history of colonisation, and now the period of modern imperialism in the form of economic liberalisation and globalisation, points to one clear trend – the process and the politics of dispossession – which have resulted in injustices against life, nature and culture. The exploitation of southern forests, biodiversity, minerals, oil and traditional knowledge has left environmental destruction and social and cultural upheaval in its wake. Many organisations and social movements are calling for the recognition and repayment of the ecological debt – the cumulative results of decades of resource plundering, destroyed biodiversity, environmental damage, waste dumping and climate change as well as the impacts of colonisation and modern imperialism – owed by industrialized countries to the people of the South. A recent example is of the government of

Ecuador which has undertaken an audit aimed at establishing the illegitimacy of certain loans and debts. Ecuador has taken the position that it will put an end to their service as a step towards ensuring that the full enforcement of human and environmental rights is granted due priority over any financial or economic transaction. In response to this the government of Norway has declared as cancelled all debt in relation to Ecuador.

For decades, northern countries have helped themselves to the natural riches of the global south - Latin America, Asia and Africa- in order to fuel unsustainable economic growth and lifestyles. On the premise that everyone is entitled to a fair share of environmental, economic, and political space, the affluent North (and indeed, now, small sections of the affluent in the south) needs to curb its consumption so that the rest of the world can develop sustainably. The trend within tourism is no different.

The UNWTO World Tourism Barometer has been diligently capturing the growth of international tourism. The writing is on the wall. In the first eight months of 2007, destinations worldwide received 610 million international tourists as compared to 578 million in the corresponding period in 2006. This trend of about 5% annual growth has been consistent in the last few years. What is also important to note is that it is the developing world that are the fastest growth regions – Asia and the Pacific (10%) , Africa, and the Middle East (8 %). It is also important to note that tourists have generally been undeterred by external threats, health and security scares, increased taxation of air transport and tourism and economic uncertainties. The tourism juggernaut rolls on. What are then the implications for developing countries and what are the myths that are being perpetuated?

Perhaps one of the greatest myths that needs to be revisited and exploded is that western tourists are doing developing country poor a service by visiting them. On the contrary those who work to keep the tourism industry going are often exploited, work in poor conditions, live less sustainable and far more vulnerable lives because of an injudicious over-dependence on tourism. Tourism often robs poor communities of their dignity, their traditions, access to common property and natural resources. Medical tourism is a case in point – most countries to which rich developed country tourists go for priority treatment do not offer their own citizens affordable and basic health care. The conflicts between tourism and land, tourism and water, human rights abuse, tourism and displacement, tourism and the exploitation of women and children, all point to the need for facing up to what Leo Hickman terms the “true cost of our holidays”.

But the issues are far more serious than offsetting carbon or feeling good by buying fair-trade products, or even worrying about new fads such as disaster tourism and slum tourism. There is a need to recognise that mere rhetoric about peace and goodwill does not transform inherent power relations – economic, social class and race and neo-colonial. There is a need to recognise that by treating tourism primarily as a commercial and industrial activity, and in addition to this, the lack of regulation and scrutiny around it, tourism’s impunity has only increased. While the environmental costs of tourism are discussed, industry and tourism promoters are unwilling to acknowledge and take a stand on the immense social, cultural, political, and human rights issues that are swept behind tourism’s glossy brochures. It is critical for organisations working on tourism impacts to focus on more research and expose the real costs of tourism – so that communities affected by tourism (not hosts!) can take informed decisions and often say no to tourism. It is equally critical for tourists particularly those from developed countries to recognise that their leisure comes at a price, often times very heavy – and that this is simply not reflected in the cost of their holidays.

Transforming Tourism & Reclaiming humanity: an appeal to tourism and to the tourist

It is argued that tourists often turn up at a destination for purposes of leisure. They want something that is away from the routine of everyday life. They want to recreate themselves and get reinvigorated. A tourist is looking for the ‘other experience’- an experience that gives them things to do they don’t

normally do. Clearly, every tourist does not set out meaning to be exploitative or abusive. But can we look at the nature and models of tourism that are being offered and the messages that the tourist is bombarded with?

A corporatised tourism sector has been created by transnational tourism and travel corporations, professionals in the travel and tourism sector, transnational practices such as the liberalisation being imposed through the General Agreement on Trade in Services negotiations and the culture-ideology of consumerism that the industry has promoted and tourists have adopted. While this reaps profits for this section of industry and ensures exclusive holidays for privileged tourists, it generates social and ecological and human rights costs which inspire vigorous challenges and resistance from activists and organisations concerned with equity and social justice. Alternative tourism niches with a capacity to foster an “eco-humanism” are being attempted in the ecotourism, sustainable tourism, pro-poor tourism, fair trade in tourism, community-based tourism, peace through tourism sectors. volunteer tourism and justice tourism. While each of these in their own ways are trying to explore certain transformative capacities – a lot more needs to be done on the dimensions of people centeredness, equity, and sustainability. Also certain forms like black heritage tourism and slum tourism are quite controversial as some of them are seen to perpetuate the process of making subjects and being voyeuristic and insensitive to local needs

In the many spaces where civil society activists have taken on industry and policy makers we have heard the argument – *the business of tourism is business*. But we ask – what kind of business does tourism wish to be? Do the global leaders of tourism in the WTTC, business councils, the UNWTO and national tourism promotion boards and ministries believe tourism is a beast – a product of the market – that can no longer be reigned in? Are they willing to admit and acknowledge that the marketisation of tourism limits the understanding of the purposes of tourism to its commercial features, thereby marginalising wider understandings of the social and political importance and impacts of tourism? Are they willing to take responsibility for this phenomenon and be willing to engage in serious dialogue with a wide section of civil society actors to transform tourism? This will need much more than platitudes and corporate social responsibility – it will demand courage, a moral-ethical conscience, a commitment to the well being of the world - in other words – a good heart.

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Not in my backyard!

How governments and industry have washed their hands off responsibility in tourism: Exploring Indian realities

Presented by EQUATIONS at the II International Responsible Tourism Conference

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Abstract

Does policy and practise of responsibility in tourism differ in terms of what is stated and what happens on the ground? The idea of responsible tourism seems to have gathered momentum. Is responsible tourism yet another buzz word or are there paradigm shifts in the way tourism planners, policy makers and the industry understand tourism's role, and wish to position it. Going beyond the "feel good" power point presentations, it is important to face the ingredients and promises of responsible tourism and what it really hopes to deliver. The paper also questions if it is adequate to rely on celebrating individual (and no doubt laudable) initiatives or is a larger scaled-up policy and "model" level transformation the only way that tourism can be more responsible. The paper attempts to frame these questions and seek directions from experiences and realities of tourism development and impacts in India.

Making the world a better place by going on a holiday

Tourism, we all know, is the world's fastest growing industry and a significant economic force. Given this, we believe it should carry with its dizzying growth statistics, an equally staggering responsibility. We believe it is time tourism globally stopped making self-congratulatory statements and reflected more soberly and perhaps sombrely on its actual track record. The discussions on sustainability and responsibility of tourism can be traced to the late 1970's, when the World Bank and UNESCO co-organised a seminar to discuss the social and cultural impacts of tourism on developing countries and examine whether its benefits outweighed its costs. The fact that 30 years on, in this conference, we talk about the need for building awareness about responsibility in tourism probably points to lack of willingness rather than a lack of awareness among policy makers and the industry to engage with this fundamental issue. Therefore we wonder if this "new idea" of responsible tourism is in some way a Freudian slip – an acknowledgment that tourism has been rather irresponsible thus far. A pointer perhaps is that tourism is closely linked to 5 of the Vatican's recent list of 7 more deadly sins for modern times – polluting, being obscenely rich, paedophilia, drug dealing and causing social injustice. This is indeed illuminating – either about tourism being very modern or very sinful or both!

The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), which positions itself as the flagship global institution on tourism issues, has announced its unequivocal commitment to sustainable tourism, gearing tourism towards eliminating poverty, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and now, combating climate change. All these goals have two things in common – the poor and the idea of responsibility.

Various policy documents of international bodies on issues of sustainability and responsibility employ the liberal use of noble intentions with very little critical reflection or conceptualisation on the complex relationship between poverty and tourism. Organisations like the UNWTO, WTTC, DFID and ODI have made sweeping claims about tourism's contribution to women's empowerment, fostering global peace and harmony and eliminating poverty without basing these in explicit ideological frameworks and research-based empirical evidence. Unfortunately what this has resulted in is an entrenched myth that more tourism can only be a good thing. The ODI says in the run up to the World Economic Forum Davos 2008 *"You want to make the world a better place in 2008? Then fight poverty by going on a holiday in a developing country. Tourism is the fastest growing economic sector in the world accounting for 1/3rd of the world's services trade. ODI research in Africa and Asia shows that in best cases the poor capture between a fifth and one third of total tourism turnover in a destination."* Pam Muckosy of the Tourism Programme of the ODI almost gushes when she claims that an enabling and equitable environment is created through tourism. *"The good news is that tour operators, hoteliers, governments and tourists can take some very simple and practical steps to enhance the pro-poor tourism impact of a destination without having to cut back on the fun,"* she states. ([http://www.odi.org.uk/odi-on/davos2008/Pam Muckosy: Fight poverty by going on holiday in a developing country](http://www.odi.org.uk/odi-on/davos2008/Pam%20Muckosy%20Fight%20poverty%20by%20going%20on%20holiday%20in%20a%20developing%20country))

Situated where we are, as an organisation researching and advocating for people-centred and equitable tourism in India, we have a few simple and practical questions. Why, alongside tourism's celebrated growth has the situation of the world's poor and those in our country only worsened? Why in the last decade has there been a steep rise in the proportion of undernourished people in rural and urban India? The situation of scheduled castes and tribes is more alarming, as among them extreme poverty has resulted in over three fifths moving under the lowest levels of nutritional intake of 1800 calories in urban areas. Why does the list of India's 100 poorest districts include Bodh Gaya, Nalanda, Darjeeling and Sikkim, all popular halts on India's tourist map? This also begs the question as to why 30 years after the discussions on the tourism and development began; these "simple and practical steps" that the ODI evangelises about are still hard to come by. Our paper will attempt to unravel some dimensions of this mystery.

Situating tourism within today's global political economy – the social justice deficit in the neoliberal world

In the discussions on tourism's responsibility, it is important to situate tourism as a global industry within the current political economy of the world. The global neoliberal economy places us as actors within the market – we are all consumers and there is little place for ethics or for regulation. Neoliberal theory takes the view that individual liberty and freedom are the high point of civilisation and then goes on to argue that these can best be protected and achieved by an institutional structure, made up of strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade: a world in which individual initiative can flourish. The implication of this is that the State withdraws from economic activity and lets "market forces" operate, but instead plays the role of a facilitator i.e. it uses its power to preserve private property rights and the institutions of the market and promote them on the global stage if necessary.

For long the trickle down theory has reigned supreme - as long as the whole region gets wealthier the benefits brought by economic growth will eventually trickle down to the poor through multiple channels. Macro economic indicators, we all know, do not mean anything for the poor – unless we have measures to see how the poor really gain. If the Indian economy is anything to go by, the poor are losing and are far worse off than ever before.

Tourism is a direct beneficiary of neoliberalism as it tends to flourish in an open economic environment with minimal regulation that facilitates the free movement of capital, labour and consumers. The global political economy also goes beyond the relations of trade and finance between countries and includes the drugs trade, trafficking in people, illegal arms and laundering of financial products all of which are in the scale of trillions of dollars. Tourism's links to many of these processes must also be taken into account. There is little questioning of the need to slow down or the need to redirect growth with a scaling down of our hugely consumptive lifestyles. Thus, in the face of climate change - carbon offsetting and more tourism is seen as the way forward rather than reduction in consumption, or drastic shifts in lifestyles or dramatic shifts in the way tourism operates. An illustration of the selfishness with which tourism operates is the rampant fear today among global ski resort operators that climate change will melt the world's snow and put them out of business with no reflection on the role that these massive resorts have played in destroying mountain slopes and contributing to climate change in the first place!

The UNWTO has repeatedly claimed that poverty reduction is an important item on its agenda and that tourism revenues primarily benefit developing countries. This is a claim that needs to be challenged head-on. Along with the WTTC, it has long pushed for a neoliberal agenda – which it calls tourism liberalisation with a “human face”. At the UNCTAD conference in Brazil in 2004, the (UN) WTO advocated for tourism expansion in the least developed countries through a *“visionary focus on this win - win sector by all states as a development tool par excellence.”* Further it sought the *“political will at the national and institutional level to put tourism at the core of policy making”*. All these claims are highly questionable. Firstly tourism can hardly be described as win-win. Secondly with very little to show for its development claims – the demand that it be at the core of policy making is a little extreme. All forms of tourism, given its rather dubious record on environmental and socio-cultural impacts, certainly should not be given policy support. Thirdly, I'm sure we agree that there are more pressing and urgent issues of rising economic inequity, social imbalances, conflict, regional divides and an environment crisis that probably should be made the focal point of global policy-making, over tourism. Only such forms of tourism that can prove that they actually address development issues and poverty issues sustainably should be given policy priority.

The focus on poverty reduction actually received its impetus in the early 1990's when the World Bank declared poverty reduction as a primary objective in its World Development Report 1990. Culpeper (2002) notes that other agencies, notably the principle multilateral development banks and bilateral aid agencies such as DFID (and the ODI) followed suit. Tourism finds mention in an increasing number of the Bank's PRSPs (Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers) for individual member countries – especially in the Africa, Asia and Middle-East. But, even reading the Bank's own literature on the subject does not reflect tangible links between envisioned tourism strategies and poverty reduction. Hawkins and Mann in a recent paper on the role of the World Bank in tourism call for *“a serious inspection and introspection by the Bank of where its interventions in tourism are leading communities and countries. There is a pressing need for the Bank to examine the assumptions that underpin its funding in tourism - **Are the outcomes from the expanding portfolio of tourism related work actually beneficial to the poor, and can they be measured? A crowded craft market may be a visual testament, but how much money is actually being earned and how many are actually employed? Will increased tourism be a threat to the sustainability of natural and cultural protected areas or can safeguards initiated by governments mitigate the potential negative impacts?**”* (Hawkins and Mann, 2007, emphasis added).

Pro-poor tourism, which is promoted in different forms to gain policy support and funding from international development organisations, should be more about the poor and less about tourism – in the sense that this should be a development intervention about the best option to reduce poverty (it has been pointed out that in some third world economies foreign remittances of migrant workers may reduce poverty better than tourism). Lately, the argument of leakages of tourism revenues – which was one of the

strongest and most damning critiques of the trickle down theory is being countered by persuasive arguments by the ODI and DFID that focusing on leakages is “*muddled thinking*”. We are told that if one is really committed to poverty alleviation (as undoubtedly DFID should be) then one must focus on linkages. The rationale they offer, that policy makers can do very little about leakages anyway, is perhaps the most disturbing evidence of the entrenchment of the neoliberal agenda in international development bodies and how these are, in turn, pushed onto national governments and policy makers. Policy makers in India for instance have therefore paid much more attention to the expansion of tourism and much less to the real issue – the extent to which tourism development in practise and in reality contributes to poverty alleviation

So what should we talk about when we demand that tourism be responsible? We believe it is important to talk about development, about poverty and about taking care of the planet. We also believe it is important to talk about ethics, equity, and justice. Responsibility needs to go beyond the 3 R’s (reduce, reuse and recycle) and the current notions of corporate social responsibility. Tourism policy makers and the industry need to demonstrate a willingness and accountability to engage with serious issues that confront current forms of mass tourism particularly when they claim tourism’s credentials as a development tool. In the discourse about equity and justice it is critical to understand the process of valuation – what is valued, how these values are articulated and what frameworks, ideologies and ethical positions they are based on. Without such an articulation it may be very difficult to strive for the changes that we believe are necessary for a better society and for an improved environment. David Harvey explains how neoliberalism functions by redistributing existing wealth (in a pro rich rather than in a pro poor way), rather than generating it in the first place. He terms this “*capital accumulation by dispossession*” rather than accumulation by the expansion of wage labour. There is, therefore, an inherent inability built in the neoliberal system to deal with social justice, equity and environmental sustainability. If current forms and practise of tourism promoted by all shades of organisations - from the industry-led WTTC and UNWTO to the pro-poor World Bank, ADB and ODI, as well as our governments - are clearly committed to neoliberal ideas and ideals, then we need to seriously examine whether tourism can at all hold a claim to be responsible and a credible tool for development.

Responsibility in Tourism – going beyond the 3 R’s

So, what then would social-economic-political-cultural responsibility in tourism entail? That we believe, is for communities to decide rather than corporations and their agents! It must at the very minimum mean not damaging society, responding to critical social problems and acting in social interest. In their paper on “*Tourism and Poverty Alleviation: an integrative research framework*”, Zhao and Ritchie 2007 give us some pointers that are useful in trying to understand tourism and its links to poverty - destination competitiveness, local participation and destination sustainability. Tourism policy continues to be focussed on the short term “increase arrivals; increase tourism revenues” mind-set and this would need to shift to a vision for tourism which is long-term and sustainable, if tourism is to be more responsible. It may be useful to critique the process of formulation of tourism policy and practice in India in the light of these criteria.

In the area of destination competitiveness, the Central Ministry of Tourism in India is focussed excessively on international tourism as the core strategy for tourism development. Seeking competitiveness in a smaller geographical scope and among reachable markets rather than simply targeting at global, national or regional markets may be a more practical or promising strategy for destinations in developing countries (Ghimire, 2001 UNRISD, *The Native Tourist: Mass Tourism within Developing Countries*) has made a persuasive argument to change focus from inbound tourism to developing domestic tourism. Furthermore, commercial viability is paramount – as the poor do not have the luxury to risk engaging in initiatives which do not assure them of returns. However policies and projects on tourism show that it is the assurance of commercial viability and links to markets that

are the weakest, whereas a large proportion of the budgets and energy goes into building infrastructure and in overseas promotional campaigns. This is evident in the Endogenous Tourism Project of the Ministry of Tourism and UNDP that has been in operation for three years now. The project has laudable objectives of addressing poverty by mobilisation of rural communities around income-generation through rural tourism but as to date, while 15 of the project's 36 sites are "ready for tourists" there is no clear conception of business plans, revenue models, commercial viability and established market links for these sites.

The increasing number of policy initiatives towards encouraging private sector investment through tax holidays, facilitating land acquisition and subsidies are visible in tourism policy at the centre, at the states and in the country's development reports and five-year plan documents. We must recognise that the strategy of shifting responsibility for poverty reduction to the private sector may show some success in one-off small scale efforts. But tourism enterprises it seems can and will only marginally contribute to increased rates of equity, within the bounds of what they see as commercial reality.

The second dimension of local participation in Zhao and Ritchie's framework is linked to the notion of empowerment. Empowerment is about enhancing the capacity of the poor to influence the state and social institutions, and thus strengthen their participation in political processes and local decision making. However in most policy documents on tourism in this country, empowerment is reduced to the notion of building capacity of the local community through developing certain knowledge and skills and giving training (many corporate social responsibility initiatives focus on this aspect as well). Worse still, many policies restrict the idea of local participation in tourism processes for employment (either wage work or self employment) and/or local hospitality (the *atithi devo bhava* syndrome).

Tourism policy needs to ensure local community access to credit and access to economic opportunity, building their ability to engage effectively in markets. Capacity must also be seen, in terms of developing the capacity and having the political space to engage in order that they are able to both promote and protect their interests.

The other side of the capacity and participation coin is security – the poor have fewer assets and less diversified sources of income, increasing their vulnerability to disasters and economic shocks. This is a critical aspect especially in the context of tourism where such vulnerabilities are an inherent part of the nature of tourism itself. Given also that the informal sector in tourism is extremely large, this aspect of economic security becomes very important for any serious attempt at impacting poverty.

In order to formulate the XI Five year Plan, the Planning Commission constituted a series of sectoral working and steering groups to provide inputs that would form the basis of India's long term strategy for development for the next five years. In the case of tourism, while bureaucrats and industry representatives were clearly on board, representatives of communities, local governments and civil society organisations working on impacts of tourism were clearly out. The process was centralised and top-down with no design of even regional consultations to allow for a more inclusive and democratic process. Detailed critiques of this process by civil society organisations, in an attempt to tilt this bias towards influential corporations, in favour of a more people-centred tourism policy formulation process, was not even acknowledged by the Ministry of Tourism.

EQUATIONS' research on tourism policy and planning in various parts of India reveals that the idea of community participation has in most cases been paid lip-service. This is often a public relations exercise to minimise adverse community reaction rather than genuine community involvement in determining the role of tourism development in their communities – including their ability to say no to tourism. The ADB South Asian Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Tourism plans for the North East region of India, a product of corporate consultancy, has focused on obtaining and understanding government and industry requirements for tourism in the region. There has been negligible involvement of communities or their elected local representatives both in formulation of this document and its implementation aspects. No consultation or workshop has been held in important 'key areas' identified by the TDP for intensive

tourism development in the North East. Consequently, communities in the region are rejecting the SASEC Tourism Project as a claimed means for their “development” - such experiences only serve to nullify claims policy makers make about tourism development in this country being participatory.

Jharkhand, which was formed on the basis of the struggles of adivasis for their own state – has proudly announced a new product - “mining tourism” claiming this as the first ever in India (IANS 12 March 2007). This is ironical, as long standing struggles of dispossession by these communities against mining and its concomitant, detrimental, social and environmental impacts have reached no resolution.

The fact that communities have much to say about their own experiences, needs and aspirations from tourism is hardly ever recognised or acknowledged. The case of the “*Development Strategy for Environmentally Sustainable Tourism in the Andamans*”, prepared by the UNDP and Ministry of Tourism for the Andaman Islands commissioned in 1997, is evidence of the complete absence of seeking community views and experiences and consulting them on critical tourism development strategies. Thus, in the Andamans, local communities have relatively favourable views about their hopes, aspirations and concerns from tourism and hope to benefit from it. In the more recent case of the UNWTO developing tourism plans for the Sundarbans the situation is fraught with complexity as plans for a mega tourism project proposed by the Sahara group were challenged and protested on grounds of unsustainability and significant environmental impacts. Fisher folk communities in Kerala protested the Kerala Tourism Department’s plan to build an artificial reef in Kovalam as a part of the tsunami rehabilitation plans without any consultation. Fishing communities said such a reef would only add to tourist pleasure but would seriously impact their livelihoods. Thus, we see that the need to consult with communities and their local government about developments that can have huge implications on their lives and livelihoods is most often sidelined in current tourism thinking.

Tourism is a sector that is built and relies on natural capital (both human and ecological) and this makes issues of sustainability very critical. In their first issue of 2008, (Vol 16, No 1) Editors Bramwell and Lane of the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* make a set of critical observations. They point to the renewed interest in tourism environment interrelations particularly notable with rising concerns on the links between tourism and climate change. They however flag off the danger of equating sustainability with green concerns. Quoting Agyman and Evans (2004:157) they argue for a “*move away from the dominant orientation of environmental sustainability towards the idea of a “just sustainability”* - a balanced approach that would imply an explicit focus on justice, equity and environment together. An interesting trend is also when the notions of sustainability leads to the phenomenon of the class dimensions of tourism when, under the banner of sustainability, policy makers clamour for “high-value low-volume” tourists. This is a recurrent theme in several tourism policy and planning documents in India. This suggests a form of neo-colonialism disguised as green, as it links who deserves to travel solely with their ability to spend. In the light of environmental degradation also being a reality, it will be important to deconstruct the implications of these terms and nuance how we use them.

Today, the world’s Protected Areas (PAs) are targets of intensive tourism development. Luxury-oriented and resource intensive accommodation infrastructure is being set up in sensitive and fragile ecosystems, including around many PAs in the country. Tourism, is seen as a softer option than extractives like mining and logging, to provide the rationality and funding for conservation schemes. People are displaced from forests and national parks so that non-indigenous ideas of conservation can be implemented – and tourism comes in supposedly to generate money for conservation.

Regulation is a key step in achieving a power shift in favour of communities. But this will happen only when the governments are increasingly pressured to regulate tourism rather than listen to lobbies that have always pushed for voluntary codes and guidelines and the dilution of regulation. The free market mantra epitomised in Milton Friedman’s oft repeated quote “the business of business is business” epitomises this reality that corporations get away and are getting away with misconduct in example after example of corporate impunity.

It is a well-recorded fact that the first push for dilution of the CRZ (Coastal Regulation Zone) Notification, 1991 in this country came from the tourism industry. In the 1991- 2005 period there have been 20 amendments and 3 corrigenda to the provisions of the Notification diluting and rendering many of the protective clauses meaningless. In the breathtakingly beautiful and ecologically fragile Andaman Islands, the one unifying factor among all tourism establishments along the beach – whether government owned, private owned, big, or small, is that they have with impunity violated the Coastal Zone Regulation. In Kerala the Vigilance wing of the Local Self-Government Department detected 1,500 cases of unauthorized constructions and CRZ violations in Vizhinjam Panchayat where the international beach destination – Kovalam is located. So much so that the Comptroller and Auditor General of India's Report on the country's tsunami relief and rehabilitation plans have clearly implicated the Ministry of Environment and Forests for failing to ensure the strict implementation of this regulation and allowing considerable expansion of industrial activity on the country's coastline, which led to increased losses of life and property as a result of the disaster (CAG, 2006).

In such an environment of complete violation of the CRZ, it is the efforts of vigilant communities, local self governments and watchdog bodies that have to resort to legal action to counter this onslaught on our coasts. As a result of such concerted action, several state High Courts have given landmark verdicts directing state government to demolish tourism establishments that have been constructed in violation of the CRZ Notification. These include; the High Court of Karnataka ordering the demolition of government-run Jungle Lodges and Resorts camp at Devbagh in Karwar, the High Court of Andhra Pradesh ordering the demolition of VUDA (Vishakapatnam Urban Development Authority) established amusement parks and construction by private players in the Vizag-Bheemunipatnam coastal stretch and the High Court of West Bengal upholding the verdict of the district court to demolish illegal hotels and resorts in Midnapore coastal stretch of West Bengal.

In the Indian context as well, impact assessment frameworks and tools, clear regulatory guidelines, safeguarding, enhancing spaces and voice for communities to influence forms of tourism that benefit them are given very little priority. We must acknowledge that there is also a recommendation to create impact assessment frameworks and tourism regulatory authorities in the Reports to the Planning Commission on tourism development in the XI Five Year Plan. We hope, like many other good legislations and regulatory frameworks, they do not remain on paper. We must remember that soft law such as codes of ethics, codes of conducts (including the UNWTO) and declarations have, not surprisingly, shown a poor record of implementation. (Richter 2004:14-15) as neither the tourism industry or interested governments have established a record for self-policing or more regulation.

The Ministry of Tourism as well as the tourism industry in India have been silent spectators to various issues of the exploitation of children - one of the most shameful realities of tourism. The ban on child labour in the hospitality industry in 2006 by the Ministry for Women and Child Development gave tourism the dubious distinction of been categorised as a hazardous industry. However child labour and child sexual abuse continues unabated. The government of Goa remains the only state government that has acknowledged tourism's complicity in denying children their basic right to protection and lack of abuse through the enactment of the Goa Children's Act 2003 after persistent advocacy by child rights groups and civil society. However very little has been done on implementing the provisions of the Act. Recently stringent provisions proposed against child pornography using the internet were dropped in recommendations on the Amendment to the Information Technology Act. Campaigns and protests by civil society organisations seem to fall on deaf ears – and we question why.

With the recent spate of incidents around molestation, rape and murder of foreign women tourists in India, the Ministry of Tourism swung into action. The safety of foreign tourists and NRIs had to be prioritised as the image of our country was at stake. Ex-servicemen are being pressed into action. It is quite unfortunate that there is no outrage when we let our children be sexually abused by tourists. There is, apparently, no question of the image of country in this case! The report of the Planning Commission's Working Group had almost nothing to say about child abuse and exploitation of women

in the context of tourism and offered no clear strategies to resolve to address these issues. This, despite the fact that the report of the Working Group on Development of Child to the XI Five Year Plan clearly identified tourism as a cause for increasing sexual and non-sexual exploitation of children in the country.

Environmental Impact Assessment for projects was made mandatory in India in 1994 with the objective to predict environment impact of projects, find ways and means to reduce adverse impacts and to shape the projects to suit the local environment and present the predictions and options to the decision makers. The Ministry of Environment and Forest's new Notification in 2006, has removed tourism projects from the mandatory list to conduct EIA and clearance from the Central Government. This is a retrograde step and incomprehensible as the negative impacts - not just environmental but social and economic - of tourism projects on local communities is well documented. Attempts by EQUATIONS and many other groups for the last two years to even get an appointment from the Ministry on the rationale for letting tourism go scot-free have not been successful.

Communities from Kulu led by the Him Niti Campaign and Jan Jagran Evam Vikas Samiti, Himachal Pradesh are fighting against the Alfred-Ford owned Himalayan Ski Village project which would have huge implications on their lives, livelihood and against the protection of the environment. The signing of this proposal and the agreement to its terms has been done in complete secrecy. The Government of Himachal Pradesh has flouted its own laws to accord hasty clearance to this project. A cursory reading of the project proposal makes it clear that it is unsuitable, incongruous and detrimental to the lives of the local community and environment of the region. Further, approved without due public consultation, it thereby undermines the rights of local communities to determine what form of development they seek for themselves and the region and is therefore being severely opposed by them.

As we write this, in Kevadia in Gujarat – at the dam site of Sardar Sarovar, the adivasis and peoples movements are still fighting a 40 year struggle against the flawed development ethic of big dams. Having acquired excess land and displaced thousands in Kevadia village on grounds of public purpose, the Government of Gujarat instead of returning the land and offering a just compensation to the displaced adivasis, is promoting mega tourism in Kevadia and handing over land to private companies. While this is in violation of various Constitutional provisions, what is shocking is the disregard for basic principles of human justice in the mindless pursuit of pleasure for a few.

“Not in my backyard!” or “Partnering for change”? The call for a paradigm shift in tourism policy and practise

Since what constitutes responsibility can be decided only by society it is critical that policy makers and industry must be willing to listen, to learn from and partner with local communities, local councils, local governments and a range of civil society organisations.

Working with an active civil society to identify appropriate paths for tourism development, would mean; recognising dissenting voices regarding tourism development, recognising organic struggles such as resistance of communities to ski villages, golf courses, appropriation of beaches and common forests, water bodies and reduced access to basic livelihood resources such as water and the erosion of traditional occupations.

We have many inspiring examples of local communities waking up to the realities of tourism and taking matters into their own hands – people's charters on tourism have been developed in Lata village in Nanda Devi in Uttarakhand, in Jharkhand, in Kumarakom Kerala and by the panchayat in Kolleru in Andhra Pradesh.

The role of civil society organisations such as ours and many others in this country and across the globe is also an important aspect of the commitment to responsibility. We are seen as a nuisance

because we demand accountability from our governments and we campaign for business ethics. We amplify the voice of communities at the policy level and call for democratic, transparent and participatory processes. It is rare that the state or the market have welcomed us or played this role themselves. It is important to ask policy makers and the industry why they have engaged so little with organisations such as ours and in fact mostly refused to engage. We ask why it is left to poorly resourced communities and civil society organisations to constantly work on these issues. We believe this is highly irresponsible.

A quick look at the research by Ministry of Tourism at the centre and the states as well as proposed budgets for the XI plan indicate a singular and consistent lack of interest in research, tools and processes, to understand, evaluate and mitigate the many negative impacts of tourism. Instead the push is for consultancy reports to make the case for and plan for greater expansion and growth of tourism. The push is also for the promotion of tourism with little evidence of the direct return on investment of such promotion (Rs 2000 crores i.e. approximately 45% of central schemes outlay is the earmarked amount for promotional and publicity campaigns in the budget for tourism in the country's XI Five Year Plan).

Information is power. Disinformation pervades our society through the mass media - which tells us that corporations are socially responsible, that consumption will make us happy, that more of something is always good, that going on a holiday to a developing country is an act of charity. Dismantling such myths through research, exposing policy failure and policy bias, corporate misconduct, exploitation and greed are important ways to build awareness about responsibility in tourism.

When our governments aggressively position tourism as a development tool it raises the hopes and aspirations of local communities who believe that tourism is going to be the answer to all their problems – only to see quite soon that they lose more than they gain. It is critical that what can and cannot be achieved under the pro-poor and responsibility rubric must be honestly examined – the “mutually beneficial” and “win-win” argument does not hold much water and neglects the critical dimension of equity. It is perhaps better that the industry moves to an altruistic or moral - ethical principle in being responsible. This is because the argument that responsibility will not dent in anyway their profitability does not seem to be tenable and a reduction in profits is not something they seem to be ready for! Our policy makers and governments of course have no option. Their very mandate demands that they are accountable, ethical and responsible to secure the interests of people.

There is an onus on all of us present at this conference. Tourism today is debated more than it ever was before. Are we willing to work with the fundamental issues that are being raised today and have been raised before? Are we really committed to being responsible? Are we willing to see that this requires a paradigm shift? Is this economic power horse willing to accept its role in perpetuating injustice and poverty? Or is it going to escape into a make-believe world – just like the holidays it sells to millions of tourists who also look for an escape from their reality? The choice is clearly ours – as much of the responsibility also lies on our shoulders.

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Towards Sustainability in Tourism

Nature Tourism: Impacts, Planning & Management

International Seminar organised by School of Business
Studies and Management, St. Xavier's Institute

14–15 February 2008, The International Centre, Goa

Introduction

Nature tourism is a broad categorisation of those tourism activities that primarily depend on attractions and beauty of a natural landscape and its various components like landforms, flora and fauna. It is a niche segment of the tourism sector. Tourism in such landscapes, needs to be planned in a sustainable manner so that unregulated tourism does not destroy the very resources on which it thrives, and upsets the lives of those communities whose lives are also linked to the resources. Therefore, nature tourism may be considered a sub-component of sustainable tourism. It can be classified further into nature-based tourism, wildlife tourism and ecotourism.

Sustainable tourism: Emphasising the need for all kinds of tourism activities to apply sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices, the UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) states that “sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability” (UNWTO, 2004¹).

Nature-based tourism is linked more to the natural attractions of landscapes like snow-capped mountains or the Grand Canyon, while wildlife tourism is more focussed on the fauna, and sometimes the flora, of an area. Wildlife tourism, in some cases, may focus on one flagship specie like the Asian Elephant, Royal Bengal Tiger or One-horned Rhinoceros, or in some cases showcase the entire biodiversity of an area e.g. the African Savannah with its diverse species of mammals, ranging from the largest land mammal, the African Elephant, African Lion, Cheetah, gnus, zebras, giraffes etc.

Ecotourism involves travel to natural areas that helps conservation and benefits local people. As a concept, ecotourism has been classified as a sub-component of sustainable tourism practice by international organisations like the UNEP and UNWTO. Ecotourism is a form of speciality tourism and is an important niche in the tourism sector. Within the fast-paced growth of the tourism industry, speciality travel is the largest area of expansion. Ecotourism is not a homogenous term when it comes to practical application on the ground, and very often it overlaps with nature-based tourism, wildlife tourism, cultural & heritage tourism, rural tourism, adventure tourism and sometimes health tourism when tourists visit say, natural hot springs for health reasons.

Ecotourism promotion and marketing seems to have sidelined nature-based and wildlife tourism. More and more nature-based and wildlife tourism projects are now being propagated as ecotourism. In India, ecotourism has come to be linked with tourism in protected areas and/or areas of significant ecological

values like wildlife; though the kind of tourism being promoted and practised is very much mainstream or mass tourism. Only the locations being targeted are more fragile than the cultural and resort-tourism destinations that have been developed in previous decades.

Spatial distribution of nature tourism and status of the space

The regulatory frameworks comprising of policies, laws, notifications and regulations also reflect the political climate that may affect development of nature tourism.

Legal status

In the discourse on nature tourism, the spatial distribution of nature tourism needs to be understood in relation to its legal & political status. In India, the areas that are being targeted for various forms of nature tourism are either protected by law, or are administered under special arrangements; some are categorised as ecologically fragile.

Protected Areas

The various protected areas in the Indian context are wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, community reserves, conservation reserves, reserved forests, ecologically sensitive areas and coastal areas.

In the conventional sense, protected areas in India are those that are governed by the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. These are wildlife sanctuaries and national parks, both on land and marine areas. The Wild Life Act was amended in 2002 to include two more types of protected areas: community and conservation reserves, in recognition of areas conserved by indigenous and local communities and areas set aside for conservation respectively. Wildlife sanctuaries allow a limited level of “human interference” while national parks will not tolerate any. However, tourism is allowed in both wildlife sanctuaries and national parks, at the discretion of the state chief wildlife warden only. For this purpose, all protected areas have a tourism zone earmarked in the buffer zone.

While it is difficult, or nearly impossible, for a private tourism entrepreneur to commence operations afresh inside protected areas, governments, through their respective forest departments have developed and promoted tourism inside them. The proliferation of private tourism establishments in vicinity of protected areas has also been observed. The International Year of Ecotourism, 2002 has had a larger impetus to the establishment of ecotourism projects in and around protected areas. States like Kerala have prepared wildlife and ecotourism managements for almost all their protected areas (12 wildlife sanctuaries and 2 national parks). Protected areas like Corbett National Park, Periyar Tiger Reserve and Kaziranga National Park have a large number of hotels around their periphery.

All forests in India are governed under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. Any diversion of forest land for “non-forestry purposes” or activities that do not support conservation, or protection of forests requires clearance from the Ministry of Environment & Forests. Reserved forests are administered by the state forest departments under the Indian Forest Act, 1927. Tourism in reserve forest areas would mandate clearances for private players. But government departments and corporations carry out tourism activities without obtaining clearances most of the time. They claim that tourism supports conservation.

Ecologically sensitive areas are areas that are notified as such under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1984. Permissible and non-permissible activities are considered on a case by case basis. But there is generally a regulation on all activities in ecologically sensitive areas, and guidelines are usually formulated for carrying out such activities. Matheran in Maharashtra is an example of an ecologically sensitive area, where tourism was the main factor contributing to the degradation of the area. It is now permitted on a regulated basis.

A notification under the Environment Act, the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification of 1991, governs tourism and other activities in coastal areas and islands. Whereas there is a general rule that areas upto 500m from the high tide line is considered as a no development zone, rarely is tourism seen to abide by this regulation. In many coastal states like Goa and Kerala that have tourism as a significant economic segment, tourism establishments can be seen located as close as a few metres from the high tide line.

Administrative arrangements

Biosphere reserves and tiger reserves are not protected under separate laws. Biosphere reserves are designated areas under UNESCO's Man & Biosphere Programme. Tiger reserves are areas that receive special administrative status and funding. Both types of reserves may comprise different types of protected areas mentioned above along with other areas including non-forest areas. In the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve, comprising of 12 protected areas in the states of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, tourism is an activity that has in fact severely degraded large areas of land e.g. Ooty. Now it is spilling over into surrounding areas; a disproportionate proliferation of tourism resorts is also occurring in the peripheries of protected areas in the biosphere reserve.

Political status

Most areas that are now designated as protected in India are the traditional homelands of many indigenous and local communities. The effect of notifying protected areas has in many instances meant that large populations of indigenous and local communities were displaced when these protected areas were notified². Their control and access to land and natural resources has been taken away from them. They have suffered social degradation brought about by foreign influences and the commercialisation of their culture. The rich biodiversity of their natural resources has suffered from pollution and large scale environmental damage, unable to support activities like mining, industrialisation, submergence from mega hydro-electric projects and urbanisation. In some Indian states, governments have devised policies and laws that facilitate state capture of land and other natural resources like forests, water that are later handed over to corporates at throwaway prices. In the bargain, the indigenous and local communities are given a raw deal, and sometimes they have to lay down their lives while demanding their rights.

Status of regulatory frameworks

At the national level, there exists a legal and policy framework that only supports nature tourism and does little to regulate it or any of its forms. E.g. at the state level, there are several states that have developed their own ecotourism policies, or that have tourism policies with specific reference to ecotourism. There are many variations of state policies. Analysis of these policies reveals that each state seems to interpret ecotourism in its own way.

The National Environment Policy, 2006 recommends ecotourism in all wilderness and ecologically sensitive areas. The Environmental Impact Assessment Notification, 2006 has omitted tourism from the purview of environment impact assessment and clearance. These are a few examples to show the changing face of regulatory frameworks. With newer policies and concepts like special tourism zones (STZ), the tourism industry has been given holiday from accountability.

Drawing from international guidelines³ prepared by tourism industry associations and organisations, the Ecotourism⁴ Policy & Guidelines, 1998 issued by the Ministry of Tourism – Govt. of India, represents interests of global industry players. The policy approach is environmental protection for sake of profits. The policy outlines all ecosystems of India as ecotourism resources and states that these have been well protected and preserved.

Where the policy enlists its principles and elaborates operational aspects for key players in the ecotourism business, the role of communities is considerably reduced to protecting environmental resources and providing services to tourism as the role of 'hosts'. An environment protected by communities is a resource for ecotourism when tourists experience the natural beauty. Indigenous and local communities become important "stakeholders" thereby becoming subservient to a process where environmental protection is vested from their control and is being pursued for the sake of supporting economic enterprise. What the policy fails to realise is the cross linkages between ecotourism and the social, cultural, economic and institutional processes of indigenous and local communities. Their lives are very closely linked to the environment they live in and their customs and traditions bear strong linkages to it.

The state policies focus on ecotourism through private sector investment. The policies lay a thrust on opening naturally important and ecologically sensitive areas for ecotourism. The fact, that, the lives and livelihoods of communities dependent on these natural resources will be impacted, and severely so if ecotourism is unregulated, is hardly acknowledged in the state level policies.

It is the rich natural heritage spread along the forests, mountains, coasts and rivers, all of which are the living spaces of communities, which constitute the 'tourism product'. Even Protected Areas, which have by definition prohibit commercial activities, are now being seen as potential tourism areas⁵. It is the location of tourism, a resource-intensive activity, in these areas that gives rise to a conflict of interests between the needs of local communities and conservation, with the needs of a consumer oriented industry which understands nature as an economic commodity.

Impacts

In nature tourism, the main component that is impacted by tourism activity is the environment. As the lives and livelihoods of indigenous and local communities are closely linked to the environment, they will also be impacted by tourism.

Environmental

The nature and extent of the impact of tourism depends on the intensity of tourism activity, as well as the sensitivity of impacted ecosystems. This must be ascertained on the basis of specifics of ecosystems in consideration. However, a few general statements may be made regarding major impacting factors. Most studies show that more severe impacts of tourism on species and ecosystems arise from infrastructure and building activity it involves, rather than from recreational activities themselves, as in the case of coastal tourism. In contrast, with nature tourism, which needs relatively little infrastructure, tourist activities themselves are more profound in terms of impacts. In places where sites have already been selected and developed for tourism, many conflicts are unavoidable and impacts can only be diffused to a limited degree during the operational phase.

The aspects that need to be looked into for determining the impacts of tourism are:

1. Location and development of tourism areas
2. Location and operation of tourism related infrastructure
3. Tourist activities
4. Indirect impacts

Tourism related facilities are preferred on attractive landscape sites like; coasts, primarily sandy beaches and dunes, in proximity to lakes and rivers, and forest areas in the interior, and in the mountains, exposed mountaintops and slopes. These are often species-rich ecosystems or transitional zones in between ecosystems, i.e. ecotones. Due to establishment of tourism related infrastructure and facilities, the species generally found here are either destroyed or severely affected.

There is also a non-adaptive approach to existing natural site conditions. One example that can be quoted here, is of the coastal wetlands where, for lack of more suitable sites, are drained and filled in for the construction of buildings, roads and other establishments. Sometimes, boat passageways are blasted in the coral reefs situated near the coast. Mangrove forests are a transitional zone between the land and sea, and are particularly impacted by both development types.

Building materials are often removed from ecosystems for tourism related constructions, like hotels and roads, in a non-sustainable manner, e.g., as in the case of extracting the fine sand of beaches, which is used to mix concrete. This increases the danger of erosion on the beaches, so much so that in some cases sand is pumped onshore and coastal-protection steps have to be taken. The use of traditional building materials such as wood or reef limestone for tourism related constructions can also pose problems when the use is from the ecosystems themselves and is excessive.

The most severe destructions are caused by untreated sewage, inadequate garbage removal and excessive water consumption. It is beyond any iota of doubt that pollution from sewage is one of tourism's biggest problems, as it can scarcely be confined spatially, and the changes in the nutrient balance it causes inflict extensive damage on the impacted aquatic habitats. This is particularly true of oligotrophic mountain streams and very sensitive coral reefs. In contrast, naturally nutrient-rich ecosystems such as, mangroves can perform important buffer and filter functions to a limited extent.

Solid waste is another major problem, especially in developing countries where there are hardly any capacities for regulated disposal. The problem is further aggravated by the rampant use of non-biodegradable and toxic wastes like plastics.

Water consumption by tourists and tourism facilities amounts to many times, sometimes upto ten times, the minimum domestic requirement. Only a minimal portion of this amount is taken up by drinking water. Water is used primarily for showers, swimming pools, watering gardens and golf courses etc. The problem primarily occurs in arid climates and on small islands with limited water supply, but also at many destinations with more plentiful precipitation, which are frequented by tourists preferably in the dry season. This results not only in social conflicts but also in the fact that wetlands dry out and salt water intrudes into near-coastal freshwater biotopes.

Many tourism activities are concentrated on traditional tourism locations like sandy beaches. The recent trends show that the inclination now is to move towards more distant locations hitherto untouched by tourism, which are now being made more accessible through developments in transport and transportation related infrastructure. Construction of hotels and other tourism related services are increasingly being set up on the coastal regions especially in states like Goa and Kerala, altering and destroying sandy beaches, sand dunes and coastal vegetation. High concentration of these tourism facilities also cause a major threat to the ground water level, since water consumption is extremely high in tourism. Water sports, adventure sports like snorkelling, scuba diving etc. are currently gaining momentum in our country, especially in places like the Andamans. Speed boats and surfing etc. are found to be obstructing the traditional fishing activities, and also disturbing shoals of fish, their breeding and spawning grounds.

Large-scale tourism projects can have considerable distorting effects on the economies of developing countries, especially when economic systems that are more typical of advanced service economies are introduced into agrarian economies abruptly and in massive form. These have both social and ecological consequences; because of the huge income gradient, displacement of local communities and migration from rural areas to the tourist centres. Thus, increased population density leads to further environmental strain in the affected areas, particularly resource depletion, sewage and garbage.

Water treatment and sewage disposal systems are generally absent in tourist locations. When large scale tourism service providers may skirt around environmental protection norms, the informal sector

like shacks and restaurants also follow suit. The cumulative effect of these complicates matters. With increasing loads of wastes, blames are shifted from one stakeholder to another, responsibility to clean up the wastes is dumped on local governing bodies and eventually everybody washes their hands from the problem. The net result being accumulation of large amounts of solid wastes beyond managing capacities and direct dumping of sewage on land and into water bodies. With degrading environmental conditions, the indigenous and local communities bear the brunt of it while the tourism industry sets out to find greener pastures.

Communities

Indigenous peoples & local communities are paying a high price for tourism. While they were earlier left untouched by conventional tourism activities, they are now being targeted for large scale tourism ventures; their homelands and cultures are now the prime target globally for rapid commercialisation and exploitation by the tourism industry. To start with, governments, especially of the developing and underdeveloped countries, and multinational corporations have disregarded the interests of indigenous peoples & local communities in their desire to cash in on the billion-dollar profits from this industry.

The few benefits that the indigenous peoples & local communities derive from tourism are far outweighed by the damage it has caused to them. They have been made to bear the brunt of an industry over which they have neither say nor control. With globalisation, these threats have been exacerbated. International agreements that open up access to the local tourism industry by multinational tourism corporations will only hasten the exploitation of the natural resources, culture and way of life of indigenous peoples & local communities. Ecotourism, which has been touted as the fastest growing form of tourism in the developing world, has not proven to be sustainable at all. Rather, it has targeted indigenous communities as areas of destination and exploitation in the guise of being environment-friendly.

Moreover, community-owned tourism initiatives are still playing a marginal role compared to the other tourism schemes, which are often labelled as ecotourism and developed by large, often global, tour operators. They consider ecotourism as a source of sustainable livelihood supplement and not to compete for markets. It is extremely hard for communities to compete with a market that is fiercely competitive and which is controlled by financial interests in tourist destinations. Most often, governments have overlooked these initiatives and have extended little support. They have also promoted different versions of tourism as ecotourism with no inkling of conservation. Another worrying factor is that governments have used undemocratic means to assert their roles through policies.

Planning

Since nature tourism is different from mainstream tourism, it is important that there is enough planning for such an initiative at any site. Planning is required to see how feasible nature tourism would be at the site, to see if it would be acceptable to communities and to determine the what potential impacts. Importantly, planning would help define what the community's and other stakeholders' vision of the area and activities is going to be. There are many different methodologies used for such planning. The Dzongu initiative in Sikkim used a methodology called the Appreciative Participatory, Planning and Action (APPA) methodology that finds and builds upon positive attributes and values in local environments.

Security of Tenure

For complete control and management responsibility, ideally, local people should own and manage the area in question. A community-based tourism initiative is one where the community has decision-making powers on the initiative in question, how it must be managed and how the benefits accruing out of it should be used. Roles and responsibilities should also be determined by the community. This is a

rare situation, especially in a country like India. Homestays perhaps come closest to this situation where the community has control over the hospitality related aspect of tourism. This is not possible in protected areas unless communities have tourism initiatives outside the protected area in question. The next best option is to ensure that local people are involved at every level of the enterprise; they are assured a stake in the enterprise and are able to share benefits from it equitably.

Community Institutions

For an ideal ecotourism initiative the presence of a community institution is important. Ideally, it is best to build upon an existing institution. In the Periyar Tiger Reserve for example, ecotourism activities are being handled by the existing Eco Development Committees. In some cases community institutions can emerge as a result of ecotourism initiatives. In Pastanga, Sikkim for example, a local NGO was established with a vision to make Pastanga an ecotourism destination. In Khonoma, the Khonoma Tourism Development Board is a community institution that was established, with one of its objectives to promote ecotourism. If a community institution does not exist, then the process of establishing such an initiative can be facilitated. At Korzok, WWF India has facilitated the establishment of the Tso Moriri Conservation Trust, which will eventually handle ecotourism related activities there. Community institutions would help in the management of the tourism initiative; facilitate the equitable sharing of benefits and also help resolve conflicts, if any.

Vision and strategy

A detailed and participatory visioning and strategising exercise that takes into account perspectives and needs of different stakeholders, that allows varying and even conflicting interests to come into play needs to be done at the very outset. The policy-making process requires inclusion of, and meaningful dialogue between all stakeholders for participatory and people-centred tourism development. To supplement such strategic exercises, detailed technical studies need to be undertaken on carrying capacity, impact assessments and/or limits of acceptable change. These cannot just be commissioned studies (focussing only on a promotion and growth agenda) but need to be designed to take into account the whole range of needs, capacities, opportunities, constraints and aspirations of all stakeholders.

Management

Regulation, rights based approach

In most countries experiencing severe adverse impacts of tourism, regulatory failure has been a main contributing cause to the process. In India, the decimation of the coastline along several stretches is largely attributable to the poor implementation of the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification. The need for regulation is more pressing in the context of social impacts of tourism, which governments are often hesitant even to acknowledge. Problems of child labour and child sexual exploitation in tourism, trafficking of women and children, and gender discrimination can be addressed only through enforcing a strict penal code of justice. Any form of tourism being planned needs to be gender-just and child sensitive.

Bringing in sustainability in tourism involves continuous involvement and integration of all stakeholders who benefit and will be affected by tourism development. This process poses a challenge to governments as they must review not only external influences and policies but also reform and amend their own internal systems to direct tourism development towards sustainability. It also involves challenging mainstream ideas, notions and definitions of tourism advocated by the UNWTO and World Travel and Tourism Council when they are in opposition to grassroots perspectives.

Impact assessment

Social Impact Assessments (SIA)

Social and environmental impact assessments should be the first step in any tourism development process, post the decision making phase. It has been recognized that tourist - local community interactions not only have an effect on the host country and its communities, but also on tourists. The cross pollination of concepts, beliefs and traditions, while conducive to fostering respect and appreciation of diverse cultures, can also be detrimental and insensitive when carried out in an atmosphere which is inherently unequal, both economically and socially. It gives rise to imposition of values and behaviours of the stronger community on the less powerful one and brings with it a host of socio-cultural changes, that are not sustainable. Keeping the adverse impacts of tourism in view, it is important to develop tourism in an appropriate way. Therefore, for minimizing adverse impacts of tourism on local society and economy, impact assessment exercises are suggested.

Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA)

EIA is a tool that uses defined indicators to identify and predict impacts of tourism on the total environment. EIA warns of adverse environmental changes that are always more expensive to correct than prevent. It obtains a comprehensive view of the impact and costs of such projects within the framework of environmental conservation and sustainable development. Thus an EIA serves to:

- identify tourism effects on the bio-geophysical resources, including
 - ◆ flora and fauna
 - ◆ abiotic factors like soil, air etc.
 - ◆ state and natural flux of these natural resources
- identify effects on resources from increased usage
- interpret and communicate information about such impacts
- work out project alternatives involving various stakeholders
- propose measures to mitigate negative consequences on environment and community
- predict probability of significant adverse environmental effects after mitigation measures are implemented
- devise contingency plans for eventualities with unforeseen adverse environmental effects.

The Khonoma Green Valley Project in Nagaland is a good example where comprehensive EIA and SIA exercises have been carried out. It was felt that ecotourism in this area should not even begin before such assessments have been completed.

Carrying Capacity

The assessment of tourism impacts is based on the important concept of carrying capacity. Carrying capacity is defined as the maximum population of species and interacting structures that can be supported indefinitely in a defined habitat without undermining or damaging the functioning and productivity of that habitat.

In forest areas, for example, the introduction and possible growth of tourism would not only affect the local environment but also the social, cultural and economic aspects of communities living in or around the forest area. The carrying capacity concept could then be used as an indicative tool that provides inputs into the overall management of the tourism development and its associated activities.

Carrying capacity can be estimated on the basis of the ecological parameter under stress and the data available on the amount of change it has, and ideally can undergo. For instance if the stress factor is increased visitation in a section of the forest over the year, then the possible stress factors could be the disturbances caused to birds during their daily activities such as feeding or foraging; another impact could be the compaction of soil on the trails that lead to increased erosion.

Determining the carrying capacity of an area is particularly important in areas that are ecologically fragile. Take the case of the Tso Moriri Lake in Ladakh. While tourism in the form of homestays is being promoted at Korzok, it is equally important to determine the carrying capacity of the area since increased tourism will only lead to the degradation of this highly fragile and vulnerable ecosystem. Once the carrying capacity has been determined, the ecotourism guidelines for the area could include a cap on the maximum number of tourist that this area can withstand. Monitoring protocols for this area can also use this as an indicator.

Monitoring and adaptive management

No activity is complete without a monitoring component built into it. Tourism is an activity where constant monitoring is necessary. Monitoring of a nature tourism initiative would involve monitoring of ecological, social, cultural and economic aspects of this activity. Monitoring thus has to be well thought out and managed well. For this, the capacity of the local community will have to be built. Following this will be the development of monitoring protocols for all the aspects in consideration. Adaptive management is an integral part of this plan where results from monitoring are used systematically in management and plans are altered as and when required, based on information from monitoring. If for example at Korzok, it is found through monitoring that the number of tourists has gone beyond the carrying capacity of the area and is leading to the degradation of the lake, then the number of tourist visiting the lake would need to be curtailed.

Code of Conduct / Environmental Guidelines

A nature tourism initiative being different from other tourism endeavours, also has as a component of a 'Code of Conduct' or Guidelines, which dictate tourism development and tourist behaviour at the particular tourist destination. This includes a set of guidelines indicating why the particular place is of interest and reminding tourists of certain 'Dos' and 'Don'ts'. Such guidelines or a Code of Conduct needs to be clearly displayed at the site in question in the form of a poster/ board and also needs to be in more than one language. They could also be in printed form as in a brochure, handout or back of a ticket and distributed to tourists visiting the area.

Training and Capacity Building

Training and capacity building needs to become an inherent part of any ecotourism initiative. It is unfair to expect local communities to handle tourism initiatives without adequate training. Training needs could be varied and very site specific and could range from training in; house keeping, catering, and finally monitoring of tourism related activities. In the Periyar Tiger Reserve local communities were trained by Forest Department personnel on various aspects of wildlife viewing, tracking of wildlife etc. Women of Korzok in Ladakh participated in an interesting training exercise where Ladakhi women from another part of the region who were running homestays successfully shared their experiences.

Cross-Site Visits and Experience Sharing

Stakeholders in any such activity often learn a lot from other sites where similar activities are being carried out and also from other communities who are also involved in such endeavours. There is much to learn from visiting new sites or sharing experiences with others from different regions. This is an important component that needs to be built into the planning exercises for ecotourism. The women of Korzok were probably more comfortable being trained and learning from fellow Ladakhi women from the Markha valley because each identified with the others' needs and were keen to learn as much as possible from the exercise. In the case of Dzongu in Sikkim, there was a lot of learning when some

individuals from the community visited Yuksam, the base camp of the Khangchendzonga National park in West Sikkim, where one of the pioneering exercises in ecotourism had taken place.

Education and Awareness

Important for an ecotourism destination, is the need for good communication to convey to tourists the ecological and cultural significance of the place. This could be done through a variety of communication tools and techniques. Posters, written and audio-visual material are some common tools. Websites are increasingly becoming the single most attractive and effective means of communicating such sites to tourists. The Nanda Devi Campaign for Cultural and Sustainable Livelihoods that runs ecotourism in the Nana Devi Biosphere Reserve, today has its own website. An Interpretation Centre is probably an excellent way to communicate a variety of issues to visitors. Many protected areas in India have interpretation centres that can be used effectively to communicate specific issues relating to ecotourism. Educational material needs to be creative and also attractive. Effective material, besides being educational also helps in marketing the destination to other visitors.

Towards Sustainable Tourism

It is evident that tourism is growing rapidly worldwide, providing economic, environmental and social benefits. Tourism benefits financially through its multiplier effect, creates employment and brings about regional development. It also cultivates tolerance and encourages knowledge of different cultures, while aiding in the preservation of heritage and the environment.

However recent trends within tourism development in the country have raised several concerns about the adverse impacts of tourism. Government policies seldom acknowledge the negative fallouts of tourism development and continue to render an open invitation to tourists and investment in tourism. Tourism depends heavily on natural and human resources and its in-roads into protected areas and untouched zones have often been at high costs. A market-driven model of tourism development that has privileged industry and tourists' needs over local people's interests often leads to privatisation of common property resources for exclusive use by industry and displacement of local communities to make room for tourism establishments. Low levels of participation in the formal, more lucrative tourism industry and reduced access to resources have resulted in paltry benefits to local communities.

Uncontrolled and unregulated tourism growth, often based on short-term priorities, invariably results in unacceptable impacts that harm society and the environment. In essence, tourism development today has raised serious questions as to who its real beneficiaries are. This has led to the emergence of a more sensitive form of tourism, which aims at minimising these costs and maximising benefits.

Principles and Values of Sustainable Tourism

In India, tourism is viewed and promoted as a 'development paradigm' and a major engine for growth. Developmental debate is broadly categorised under economic, environmental and socio-cultural dimensions. In this process, what we often overlook is the political motivation and support that plays a crucial role in achieving developmental goals and objectives. The principles and values of sustainability can be mapped using these five broad categories; Political, Economic, Environmental, Social and Cultural.

Political

Democratisation, decentralisation, participation, decision making, empowerment, local ownership, benefit sharing, equity, justice, public accountability

Democratisation is a process of creating and supporting spaces where informed consensus building and decision-making can materialise. In the realm of collective decision-making in tourism, information collection and sharing, hold the key to making informed decisions. The two components involved in the process include – firstly, information regarding new projects, plans, policies, procedures, legislations and agreements that are directly or indirectly related to tourism development, must be disseminated by the tourism industry and government to local stakeholders; and secondly - information on the impacts and effects of tourism (both positive and negative) that could be researched and monitored collectively (involving industry, government, academia, civil society, local bodies and concerned individuals) must be disseminated to the relevant decision-making bodies at the local, regional, national and international level. Participation in decision-making spaces and seeking accountability are integral part of good governance practices.

As a process, democratisation could be achieved on an issue-specific basis as well, as where the tenets of democratic-decision making and participation are applied to specific areas affected or involved in tourism development. Socially, democratisation could stand for involving vulnerable groups (like women, children, indigenous people) in the decision-making process and empowering them through it.

Sustainable tourism should constitute the components of meaningful and informed participation of local people and institutions of local governance in decision-making spaces that in effect influence the course of functioning of the tourism and related industries.

Building stable partnerships and empowering local communities are prerequisites for tourism. Local self-governments and tourism administrations should engage in dialogue with multi-stakeholder processes and evolve destination management strategies and practical responsible tourism guidelines.

Economic

Revive growth, change quality of growth, address basic needs, small and medium enterprises, responsible action on part of tourists and industry, integration, gender -equality, empowerment

There is a need for governments to set a legislative and regulatory framework, to ensure that the local self-governing institutions as well as the tourism industry meet economic responsibilities. Development of a diverse tourism base needs to be undertaken. One that is well integrated with other local economic activities, in addition to integrating initiatives for small and medium-sized enterprises within overall business support packages (including access to financing, training and marketing). While these are of a general nature the tourism ministry should provide detailed technical guidance to communities, local governments and the industry to practically implement these.

A prerequisite of tourism is to minimise negative economic impacts on local communities, and set in place a model where the main beneficiaries are the local community. This can be realized by ensuring that hotels and related tourism services are encouraged to strengthen the local economy, by training and employing local people and be ecologically sustainable, and source raw materials from the local market. This can be done by promoting linkages between tourism and the other economic sectors (like agriculture and fisheries, hospitality education colleges), promoting a broad network of small and medium-sized local entrepreneurs which multiply the economic spin-offs of tourism, extend the number of available small-scale services, and actively and beneficially integrate the local population. Such yardsticks to measure the economic benefits of tourism are far more useful than the conventional growth in visitor numbers. We also need to ensure responsible actions on the part of the tourists in privileging locally owned and run enterprises.

Excessive reliance on tourism as a 'mono-crop' industry is recognized as a bad strategy. Therefore governments should maintain a balance with other economic activities and natural resource uses in the area, and take into account all costs and benefits.

Environmental

Conserve and enhance resources, optimal utilisation of non-renewable resources, access to common property resources, respect, protection, within capacity limits, responsible action on part of tourists and industry and management of solid waste, pollution

Tourism development incorporates principles of conservation of natural resources and biodiversity; rational utilisation of resources: land, water, conventional and non-conventional energy sources, is required for creation and maintenance of tourism infrastructure and facilities that are in coherence with the needs of local environment and culture. Tourism by definition includes the conservation of biodiversity and natural resources through sustainable resource use and monitoring of impacting factors. Tourism needs to ensure responsible actions on the part of the tourists, as well as responsibility of the tourism industry in working towards the conservation of resources in the regions they visit. The tourism industry needs to be aware of the fact that communities have rights over common property resources which cannot be used without their consent.

To achieve sustainability in tourism, environmental management systems need to be put in place to monitor, evaluate and ensure minimum ecosystem degradation. Requisite regulatory frameworks need to be developed and implemented with local self-governing institutions.

The basis of the participatory approach for the sustainable development of tourism in India is the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution. These amendments accord rights to local self-governing institutions by bringing into their jurisdiction matters related to subjects of land, water, social and urban forestry, waste management and maintenance of community assets. Tourism development falls under the purview of these subjects and therefore participation from the local self-governing institutions is important.

Social and Cultural

Learning experience, respect, protection, responsible action on part of tourists and industry, within capacity limits, empowerment, revival of disappearing folk traditions and art forms

Tourism development has social dimensions and when unregulated its social costs are high. Tourism often commodifies and standardises original forms of music, dance, and ceremonies, adapting to accommodate tourist demands leading to a loss of authenticity of these cultures. Over time, unbridled tourism development can create social change resulting in culture clashes between local communities and the tourists.

Tourism needs to address these adverse impacts by providing a base for social and cultural exchanges to take place between the local communities and the tourists on an equal platform without the former feeling inferior and taking pride in their culture and traditions. Tourists, when visiting places need to be sensitive to local traditions and values, as also the tourism industry when promoting the same by not commodifying art forms.

Reorienting the processes

The way forward is to involve all stakeholders of tourism that include local self-governing institutions, communities, departments of tourism, culture, social welfare, environment and forests, commerce and industry, women and child and, the tourism industry and civil society groups.

Democratisation involves creating spaces for the conduct of such meaningful dialogue and policy-making, is one such space that can be used more effectively to achieve this end. In all sectors, policies are directives that guide and regulate development activities nationally and regionally. In many countries today, policies governing tourism development read more like publicity statements or strategies that market the country/region as a destination worthy of visiting and therefore worthy of investment. Their closed, lopsided and inward-looking nature has prevented governments from utilising tourism policies as tools to foster change in the sector.

Such policies are often the outcome of poor governmental coordination. In India, for instance, the National Tourism Policy is drafted by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture without consultation with other important agencies like the Ministry of Environment and Forests (which is responsible for conservation of biodiversity and pollution control) or even the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (that negotiates the country's position on international trade in all goods and services, including tourism). Inadequate consultation has thus resulted in poor implementation of policy objectives like ensuring environmental protection and the non-inclusion of sustainability concerns in the country's international trade commitments.

For policy to become an effective tool for change, the policy-making process needs to be reformed so that the product is the outcome of a process of consultation. Today, policies are the product of either government deskwork or corporate consultancy, which offer little scope for public debate and discussion. Consequently, communities are at best, vaguely aware and at worst, completely ignorant of existing policies pertaining to tourism development. If principles of participatory decision-making are applied to the policy-making field, the goal of bringing about sustainability in tourism can be achieved sooner rather than later.

Also, through appropriate dialogue, research, policies and plans can become the first tools of information sharing on tourism issues to a wider audience. Governments must recognise that many of the social, cultural and environmental impacts that tourism perpetrates can be best mitigated through appropriate consultation with local communities at the time of project conception itself. Awareness about the implications that may hinder sustainable development, and the strengthening of the institutional frameworks supporting tourism can also be achieved by drafting sound policies.

Endnotes

- ¹ UNWTO, 2004. "Sustainable Development of Tourism - Conceptual Definition" data retrieved from http://www.world-tourism.org/frameset/frame_sustainable.html February 2008.
- ² "Based on a ruling of the Supreme Court of India, the Indian Ministry of Forests and Environment passed an order to evict all encroachments from forested areas by the 30th of September 2002. While it is not clear how and whether this order has really affected the powerful and land hungry encroachers, it has created absolute havoc in the lives of the thousands of forest depended communities. Many of these people being thrown out of their houses and cultivated lands are people who have no other source of revenue and are being called encroachers because of their names having not entered the official land records for no fault of theirs". An e-mail statement issued by Kalpavriksh - Environment and Action Group, India, September 2002.
- ³ The international guidelines are:
 1. Guidelines for the development of National Parks and Protected areas for Tourism of the UN WTO (World Tourism Organization)
 2. PATA Code for Environmentally Responsible Tourism
 3. Environmental Guidelines for the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC)
 4. The Himalayan Code of Conduct prepared by the Himalayan Tourism Advisory Board
 5. Ecotourism Guidelines by The International Ecotourism Society.

- ⁴ The Policy defines ecotourism as drawn up by the UNWTO “tourism that involves traveling to relatively undisturbed natural areas with the specified object of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals as well as any existing cultural aspects (both of the past or present) found in these areas”. The policy enlists the key elements of ecotourism as being: a natural environment as the prime attraction; environment friendly visitors; activities that do not have a serious impact on the ecosystem; and a positive involvement of the local community in maintaining the ecological balance.
- ⁵ The State Tourism Ministers Conference in 1996 that chalked out guidelines for the development of eco-tourism had identified the following resources for tourism development: Biosphere Reserves, Mangroves, Corals and Coral Reefs, Deserts, Mountains and Forests, Flora and Fauna, and Sea, Lakes & Rivers.

Kerala Tourism (Conservation and Preservation of Areas) Act, 2005: A Critique

EQUATIONS, August 2007¹

Kerala Tourism (Conservation and Preservation of Areas) Act, 2005 (herein after referred to as the *Act*) was passed by the State of Kerala in February 2005. The name of the *Act* as well as its preamble clearly lay down that the *Act* is framed "...to make provisions for the conservation and preservation of tourist areas in the State and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto". The *Act* declares certain Areas of the state as Special Tourism Zones (herein after referred as STZ) and lays down the ways and means of developing those areas for tourism exclusively.

Our key points of concern are the following:

- The *Act* usurps powers and mandate of Local Self Governing Institutions that have been bestowed on them by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments of the Constitution of India. The Tourism Conservation and Preservation Committee, its functions and powers as constituted and outlined by the *Act*, clearly bypass the Constitutional mandate and provisions of *Kerala Panchayat Raj Act of 1994* and make them redundant in declared special tourism areas.
- It propagates the model of exclusive "tourism enclaves"- the process of converting tourist locations into exclusive 'islands' where tourism can flourish - thereby isolating tourists from the realities of the local environment, culture and economy – a model that is far from sustainable or beneficial to local communities.
- The *Act* substitutes the general Planning Process (the General Master Plan of any area formulated under the local Town and Country Planning Act) to favour tourism related development process that prioritizes and privileges tourism centric developments through Special Tourism Master Plans.
- This *Act*, in principle, and in operational ways, aims to reestablish the colonial praxis that the State and not the people is competent to be seized with all matters. Given the history of decentralization and devolution of powers to local self governing bodies this certainly seems a retrograde step

The detailed critique of the Act

Against the Constitutional mandate established by the 73rd and 74th Amendments:

Though the Preamble of the *Act* specifically lays down that the legislation is meant for the conservation and preservation of tourist areas in the State. It clearly accords itself overriding powers to declare most profitable zones for expansion of tourism in the State, and in the process usurps constitutionally granted powers of panchayats

Ambiguous Definitions: May lead to less transparency and accountability in processes

Section 3 of the *Act* outlines, “The Government may, by notification in the Gazette declare any area, which have or likely to have the importance of tourism within the State as “Special Tourism Zone” for the conservation, preservation and integrated planned development of such area “. The above definition is ambiguous and does not outline the connotations or circumscribe the definition of “any area”. Whether “any area” means an administrative unit such as district, block, village Panchayat or If it stands for a physical entity like a beach, coast, backwaters, forests, mountains, is not clear from this definition. This definition also does not spell out the nature of ownership (public/ private/ community) of “any area”. Moreover, the *Act* fails to lay down the process involved in declaring any area as STZ. Moreover, the *Act* fails to provide a clear definition of the term “special tourism zones” as stated in *Section 3*.

A quick review of the *Act* gives the idea that the Government has not applied its “all encumbrance right” to declare any area as STZ. It gives the idea that only those areas which have or are likely to have considerable tourism potential, shall be declared as STZ. However, looking into the present map of tourism destinations in Kerala and keeping in mind the policy of the Kerala Government to invest and expand tourism throughout the State, we realize that tourism destinations in Kerala are of high density and spread throughout the state. The ambiguity in the definition, as a result, instead of limiting the process can be used to facilitate the unhindered spread of tourism.

The concept of STZ: Undemocratic and anti-people

It must be noted that identifying specific areas/zones for intensive tourism development is not new. It was first introduced in the National Tourism Policy of 1992 through Special Tourism Areas (hereinafter referred as STAs). When the STA policy was proposed in 1992, some of the identified locations were Bekal (Kerala), Sindhudurg (Maharashtra), Diu, Kancheepuram and Mahabalipuram (all Tamil Nadu). This met with vigorous resistance from communities and the proposals did not make much headway. STZs, STAs and similar models promote “enclavisation”, which in the context of tourism refers to the process of converting tourist locations into exclusive ‘islands’ where elite tourism can flourish - thereby detaching them from the local environment, culture and economy. These enclaves exploit local resources but give back little benefit to the local economy. Enclaves, are also often viewed as safe investments, which would ensure a steady, continuous and reliable, flow of income from tourism through all seasons. The concept of enclavisation can also be interpreted to signify a creation of employment enclaves where tourism development provides certain kinds of employment to certain kinds of labour force, locking the local community out, without providing them a chance to benefit from the “zone”. The “taking away “of the political and developmental role & powers of local authorities and privileging tourism is another fall out of such exclusive zones or areas. There is also a similar move in the establishment of Development Authorities in other states – in tourism intensive areas such as Hampi in Karnataka, Chilka Lake in Orissa, and Kevadia in Gujarat with broad sweeping and overriding powers.

The composition of the Tourism Conservation and Preservation Committee: Centralisation of power and domination of executives over the locally elected people’s representatives

The *Act* also gives provision for constituting *Tourism Conservation and Preservation Committee* (hereinafter referred to as Committee), which has been entrusted to perform the functions pertaining to tourism planning; implementation of plans, evolving the new projects, enforcing the guidelines for the development of STZs, rendering appropriate advice to the local authorities and overall monitoring and regulation of the tourism development. The *Section 4* of the *Act* outlines the composition of the Committee. As per the *Act*, the Committee shall consist of:

- Secretary to Government in charge of Tourism,
- Secretary to Government in charge of Local Self Government Department,
- Director, Department of Tourism,
- Director Department of Archaeology and
- Chief Town Planner.
- An expert in the field of environment, nominated by the Government
- An expert in the field of tourism, nominated by the Government

The Secretary to Government in charge of Tourism shall be the Chairman of the Committee and the Director, Department of Tourism shall be the Convener.

To facilitate conservation and preservation goals, as stated in the preamble of the *Act*, the government provides for inclusion of two experts i.e., one environmental expert and one tourism expert in the Committee. Both these experts shall be nominated candidates of the government

The District Town Planner and President or Chairperson of the Local Authority shall be co-opted members with entitlement to participate and vote on matters prescribed- presumably those pertaining to the areas they are role holders in.

The Powers and Functions of the Committee: The contradictions and violations

A closer look at the powers and functions to be performed by the Committee² reflects the fact that this *Act* is violating the spirit of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act. The *Article 243 G* and the *Article 243 W* of the Indian Constitution, delegates the responsibility with respect to preparation of plans for economic development and social justice and implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice, to Panchayats and Municipalities respectively. The *Eleventh* and *Twelfth Schedule* of the Constitution, outlines the matters to be devolved to Panchayats and Municipalities to enable them to function as institutions of self-government and perform the functions pertaining to planning, implementation and collection of taxes. The *Section 166, 172 and 173 of Kerala Panchayat Raj Act 1994* outlines the functions of the Village Panchayat, Block Panchayat and District Panchayats, respectively which is in accordance with the *Article 243 G* and *Eleventh Schedule* of the Constitution (Refer annexure 1 for details). The Tourism Conservation and Preservation Committee, with its functions and powers as constituted and outlined by the *Act*, clearly bypass the Constitutional mandate and provisions of *Kerala Panchayat Raj Act of 1994*.

Section 5 of the *Act* deals with the functions of the Committee. *Section 5(1)(i)* refers to preparation of a sustainable Tourism Development Plan including guidelines to regulate the developmental activities in the STZs. But the *Act* does not define the term 'developmental activities'. Developmental activity is a broad term and it is important to know what developmental activities would be regulated by the committee and how the developmental priorities of the people in those zones will get addressed. For example, the priority for the local people might be that of new hospitals or schools in the STZ. Will it be considered important by the Committee while deciding upon the developmental activities in the STZ region, as its principle mandate seems to be derived from promoting tourism development. This may lead to conflict of interest, the *Act* does not lay down the possibilities and the modalities to deal with such conflicts or define checks and balances to ensure that one entity does not have over-riding powers.

Section 5(1)(iv) refers to ensuring proper and systematic programming by rendering appropriate advice to the local authorities in regard to formulation of projects and determination of priorities in accordance with the Tourism Development Plan. The provisions in the *Act* promotes centralising powers of decision making on issues such as control of natural resources like water and land (on which the tourism industry is highly dependent), This is coupled with the process of substituting and prioritising tourism development plans over the general development plans in any area that is identified to be

having tourism potential. This is an issue of concern. We believe that tourism development cannot override general planning processes. The Master Plan of any area formulated under the local Town and Country Planning Act has the mandate of overall development of the area? The identity and *raison d'être* of a place cannot be tourism, communities cannot be converted to hosts, and tourism cannot be allowed to dictate the overall development process in any area. It can only be one of the factors in the development and economic process and it is not advisable or prudent for such an Act and its committees to be given such an overriding mandate and powers. The Act, in our opinion should restrict itself to facilitating tourism development and advising local bodies and communities on the same. Should a local community choose other options and not tourism, they should be free to exercise that choice. There is a real danger that this Act leaves communities choiceless once the area is declared a special tourism zone.

Section 5(1)(v) refers to directing the concerned local authority for taking action against any unauthorized construction or land development or encroachment or such other activities inconsistent with or in violation of the Tourism Development Plan. This once again reestablishes the objective of constituting and bestowing power on such Committee. The Plans constituted by them are bound to give tourism all importance over any other development concerns and demands of the local people in the zone. Thus the question arises what would happen to unauthorized construction or land development or encroachment or such other activities which are considered to be illegal according to the local panchayats but have been regularized by the Committee on demand from the tourism industry?

According to Section 5(2) of the Act, the local authorities (i.e. the Panchayat Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies) shall act in accordance with the advice or direction given by the Committee in respect of any area comprised in a STZ, and shall intimate to the Committee such action as taken by it. We wonder then, if the laws under which such Panchayat Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies were formed and delegated powers and functions become defunct in the STZ. This needs to be made explicit, and if so, then justified.

The Act, in the present model, can render the Panchayat Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies obsolete with the seizure of power by the State. According to many social scientists when the 73rd and 74th Amendment was effected, the blocs in developing and transferring power were huge and still exist. This was largely a transfer from executives (bureaucrats) to peoples representatives at the local level. Neo-liberal policies and pressures on “growth” are increasingly making the push for diluting democratic decentralization processes a clear tilt towards more centralized processes.

Section 5(3) refers that the Tourism Development Plan prepared by the Committee shall indicate the manner in which the land within the STZ shall be used, whether by carrying out development therein or by conservation or such other matters as are likely to have any substantial influence on the development of area under the STZ. Land and the manner in which it will be used is a sensitive issue in a country in which a large proportion of the population is linked to land for livelihood either through ownership or indirect agrarian activity. In the declaration of an area (a declared STZ) that may run into thousands of square kilometers, the desirability of land management and land use being primarily determined by tourism needs is questionable. The rights of the people over land and natural resources as is being advocated by the government through various legislations like the Special Economic Zone Act, 2005 as we know has been severely contested not only in other parts of the country, but also in Kerala. We strongly urge a reexamination of this provision.

Section 5(4) says: Every Tourism Development Plan shall contain the following elements which are necessary for the integrated sustainable development of the area with major thrust on tourism development, namely: -

- (i) Policy in relation to the land use plan and allocation of land for tourism purposes;
- (iii) Strategies towards conserving and strengthening existing natural systems and enhancing the visual

qualities of the region. The provision of visual qualities of a region – when used in the context of tourism promotion can have serious implications on the right of the poor (urban semi-urban and rural). Demolition of slums, forced displacement by uprooting of the poor from their homes and lands in the name of beautification and in the service of tourism promotion is not uncommon practice.

Section 6(vi) gives powers to the Committee to conduct or cause to be conducted such surveys and studies, as it may consider necessary, for the sustainable development of Special Tourism Zones. The *Act* quite often refers to sustainable development and sustainable tourism and sustainable tourism development. It however shies away from clearly defining these terms with its parameters. It is important that clear definition of sustainable development and sustainable tourism should be included in the *Act*, as in our opinion these are neither interchangeable, nor necessarily overlapping terms – and a lot depends on how the government chooses to define them.

Section 6 (vii) gives powers to the Committee to take such action as may be prescribed for the preservation of any land or building having any tourist importance and situated in a Special Tourism Zone. The status of such land/building if it belongs to a private party is not clear. Also there needs to be clear distinction between heritage value and those that are considered important for tourism promotion – the term “any tourist importance “ is too general and subject to a wide range of interpretations and action.

Immunity from Democratic and Judicial accountability:

Section 4(7) of the *Act*, provides that the Committee may sue and may be sued in the name of the Convener. This is a good inclusion and makes the Government more accountable to public for their actions. According to *Section 7 (1)* Any person aggrieved by an order passed by the Committee in exercise of its powers under section 6 may, within ninety days from the date of receipt of such order, file an appeal to the Government: However, the *Act* fails to define who in the government will be responsible to respond to such grievances. It also does not say anywhere in clear terms whether such orders passed by the government will have judicial immunity or it can be appealed against in a court of law.

It is important to mention that Section 8 of the Act reads that no suit, prosecution or other legal proceedings shall lie against the Committee or the appellate authority or any other officer in respect of anything which is in good faith done or intended to be done under this Ordinance or any rule made there under. The term ‘in good faith’ has not been qualified in the *Act*. One interpretation can be that thereby the Section bestows on the authorities unlimited, unrestricted, arbitrary and unwarranted power to act in the areas where the legislation is invoked. However, a rational legal interpretation reflects that the Section itself does not put any embargo on the people from initiating a case. Any act or direction given by the Committee is justifiable in the court of law which questions the very essence of whether the direction was given “in good faith” or not.

There lies a possibility that the Committee on getting sued can take the defense of “sovereign immunity”. In the light of the decisions of the Supreme Court on the issue, it would be worth to mention that the doctrine of sovereign immunity has no relevance in the present day. The court observed that no civilised system could permit an executive to play with the customary rights and practices of the people of that country and claim to be sovereign. To place the State above law is unjust and unfair to the citizen. In the modern sense the distinction between sovereign and non-sovereign functions does not exist. There is a need to seriously re-consider recommendations of the Law Commission first Report for statutory recognition of the liability of the State; as had been done in England through the Crown Proceedings Act, 1947 and in the USA through the Federal Torts Claims Act, 1946.

A serious concern as far as dispensation of justice is concerned is that with the expansion of the process of globalisation and liberalisation of economy in the country, economic reform and issues

associated are often privileged – a trend evident in study a range of judicial decisions. In the light of such a trend, it is critical that legislation in clear terms protects the rights of the less powerful and disadvantaged

Conclusion and Recommendations

Tourism is presented as a growth engine for economic and social development. However, experiences on the ground point to the fact that in tourism, industry is usually favored but the needs and aspirations and benefits to local communities are marginalized, including that of local bodies. Tourism also consumes/depends on variety of economic, social, physical resources, which are often in competition with local community needs. The tourism industry uses resources, which fall under jurisdiction of either Panchayat Raj Institutions or Urban Local Bodies. The *Kerala Panchayat Raj Act* as per the constitutional mandate ensures that planning, management, control and regulation over these resources and civic amenities are under appropriate levels of local governance. However the *Kerala Tourism (Conservation and Preservation of Areas) Act, 2005* fails to recognize this fact, by not mentioning the role of institutions of local self-governance in development of tourism in the state of Kerala. Secondly, the *Act*, completely bypasses the powers and functions of institutions of self-governance, as laid down by the *Kerala Panchayat Raj Act*.

The *Act* does not correspond to the philosophy of decentralization and participatory democracy, which is a basic feature of our constitution. In a way, this *Act* is likely to create at best a parallel processes and presents a real danger of substituting already existing structures, powers and mandates of local self-governance in areas where STZ are declared..

In this regard it is important to remember that the “Kerala Vision 2025” states that the participation of local self-government and NGOs are necessary to the process of tourism development in the State. The present *Act* is in complete disregard of this policy and is in clear violation of the statement made in the tourism policy of Kerala and “Kerala Vision 2025³”.

Though the name and the Preamble of the *Act* suggests that the *Act* is meant to provide for the conservation and preservation of tourist areas in the State, for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, reading between the lines it reveals that the objective of conservation and preservation are not very prominent in the principal framework and duties and functions adduced to the bodies formed under the *Act*. For instance the measurement and regulation of negative impacts of tourism are not considered as a non-negotiable part of conservation and preservation duties

A sector like tourism, needs to be localised and site-specific to ensure maximum benefit and least negative impacts, it requires that the consultative, regulatory and implementing powers rest with local governing institutions and tourism cannot be prioritised over or override other developmental requirements of the area. The new mantras of development and growth run the risk of reversing a hard won battle of power to the people to decide their lives and their futures.

EQUATIONS calls upon that the State Legislators, the State Planning Commission, members of Local Self Governing bodies and the Tourism Department pay due attention to these very critical issues highlighted in this document and call for a renewed debate and amendment of the Act before its rules are formulated.

Endnotes

- ¹ An earlier critique of the Act prior to it being passed in 2005 was circulated then by EQUATIONS. This revised (updated) critique elaborates further some aspects of that critique and suggests strongly the need for revisiting the Act in the context of developments in Kerala and the rest of the country as well as the fact that draft rules are in the process of being framed.
- ² Refer Section 5 and 6 of the *Act*.
- ³ Recently in the context of the formulation of Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012), several sector- wise WORKING GROUPS (WG)/STEERING COMMITTEES (SC)/TASK FORCE (TF) have been set up by Planning Commission, to make recommendations on various policy matters. **Tourism** is one such sector. The WG Report has hailed the Kerala Tourism Act as a model and has recommended it to be replicated in all other states in the country.

Enclavisation of Tourism: Special Tourism Zones (STZs) in India¹

EQUATIONS, December 2007

In their insightful book “*Seductions of Place*”, editors Alan Lew and Carolyn Cartier provide a useful interpretation on “touristed landscapes” which could be our starting point to understand enclavisation in tourism.

“Tourism as a phenomenon and set of processes has increasingly become embedded, whether intentionally or unintentionally, in the relationship between modernity and place, in how places are created and how they are experienced.”

The statement embodies the reality of how processes in the modern world have created the demand for tourism and leisure products that are fundamentally transforming the places people live in. Modernity and the economic processes that are supporting such a demand are also simultaneously dictating the form and pace of such tourism developments. Globally, the process of enclavisation in tourism has been as a result of the need to create exclusive centres of tourism. Enclaves are also often viewed as safe investments, which would ensure a steady, continuous and reliable flow of income from tourism through all seasons. However, enclavisation exploits local resources gives back little benefit to the local economy.

This paper argues against the new SEZ Policy of the Government of India and the proposals for setting up of STZs through which it will promote the enclavisation of tourism in India by valorizing and converting lands, landscapes and common property into islands of leisure. It examines the renewed impetus that India’s SEZ policy has given for the creation of “tourism enclaves” – a model of tourism development that has been fought and rejected by many communities around the world.

Brief history of enclavisation of tourism around the world

A historical analysis of enclavisation in tourism takes us back to the mid-1960s when post World War II, the process of de-colonisation was gaining strength globally. The economic revival of erstwhile colonial powers in Western Europe and the emergence of new economic powers like the US and Japan, created a class of people with high disposable incomes that simultaneously generated a high demand for leisure and holidays. In this scenario, countries across Asia, Africa, the Middle East and South America that were former colonies and had now gained their political, but not their economic freedom became ideal locations for creating tourism enclaves, to specially satisfy the leisure needs of Western tourists. The historic link that erstwhile colonial powers had with their former colonies could have been a possible cultural impetus for creation of tourism enclavisation. This process was abetted by liberal loans from international financial institutions like the World Bank and IMF to newly independent countries for creating such enclaves, on the argument that tourism growth would create jobs and bring in much-needed investment into these nascent economies. Thus, the first tourism enclaves of the world were built in Kenya, Egypt, Gambia, Caribbean Islands like Jamaica, Barbados, the Dominican

Republic and St Lucia; Mexico, Indonesia, Tunisia, Morocco, Tanzania, to cater to tourists from Britain, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Germany and Japan – their former colonial powers.

It did not take long for the first signs of trouble to appear of how such tourism enclaves were impacting the lives of people in these newly created destinations. The intense resource usage by tourism establishments, the resultant environmental pollution, widened income inequalities and socio-cultural effects are some of the adverse impacts that emerged and have been associated with tourism enclaves around the world. Economically, these enclaves were exploitative of the region's natural and labour resources but ended being non-remunerative as communities waited endlessly for some part of what tourists spent on their holidays to 'trickle down' to them. Nothing symbolises the impact of enclavisation in tourism better than the case of the infamous *Zona Hotelera* in Cancun – an artificial creation that transformed a sleepy settlement of fisherfolk and coconut farmers into a banker's dream of 30000 rooms. Between 1971 and 1993, Mexico was granted seven loans for large scale tourism projects totalling 457.5 million USD. In 1973, FONATUR – the national trust fund for tourism development was set up to oversee the development of large-scale tourism projects across the country and to aggressively seek foreign and domestic investors, as well as, secure development loans from international institutions such as the IDB and World Bank.

In the recent past, these experiences have helped highlight the adverse impacts of enclavisation in tourism. But sadly, even with this enlightenment, enclavisation has not stopped but has only assumed new forms and found new locations. But, what is important to consider from historical experiences is that the process of enclavisation in tourism needs a strong economic force and a conducive social climate or impetus that demands for such leisure products.

Enclavisation of tourism: India's earlier experiences and how the SEZ Policy provides fresh impetus

The concept of identifying specific exclusive areas/zones for intensive tourism development is not new in India. It was first introduced in the National Tourism Policy of 1992 through Special Tourism Areas (STAs). When the STA policy was proposed in 1992, some of the identified locations were Bekal (Kerala), Sindhudurg (Maharashtra), Diu, Kanchipuram and Mahabalipuram (all Tamil Nadu). The proposal never took off, probably due to a lack of the necessary economic impetus from the central and state governments. But in some identified areas like Bekal and Sindhudurg, where the government went all out to implement the policy, communities resisted vociferously. Despite the fact that the government's STA policy did not have the intended impact, tourism enclaves nonetheless began developing spontaneously and organically in places like Goa and Kovalam in Kerala. In these cases, enclavisation was a result of the socio-cultural identity that was given to these places as free-for-all tourist destinations, economic incentives were given to boost tourism and especially private investment and a rising domestic and international tourist segment.

It is important to learn from the historical experiences of some of these locations, on what have been the experiences of local communities in those potential STAs.

Let us take the case of Bekal in Kerala and Sindhudurg in Maharashtra. The long-term objective of the government converting the entire Konkan coastal belt into a tourism hub was reflected in the choice of places like Bekal and Sindhudurg that border the Konkan coast, with Goa being right in the centre. Large-scale infrastructure projects like the Konkan Railway and Mangalore Airport were seen to facilitate the movement of tourist traffic. In Bekal, a total area of 1000 acres with 11 km. of beach stretch was acquired through a 'single window clearance' mechanism with an initial investment of 1000 crores for development of the STA. The plan was to construct an International Tourist Village in Bekal – a resort of international standards, cater to the needs of foreign tourists with facilities like adventure sports, golf courses and tennis courts³. For the project to become a reality, 30000 farming and fishing families

covering four fishing panchayats would have to be rendered homeless and they would have lost traditional livelihood⁴. A written appeal petition was filed in the Kerala High court in 1995 highlighting that the project was being planned and pushed ahead with the greatest of secrecy; it would violate coastal zone regulation, had not complied with necessary Environmental Impact Assessment and superseded the rights of the panchayats. Following sustained struggles by the affected communities on the ground supported by larger campaigns against this project, it was finally withdrawn.

In Sindhudurg, a stretch of land of 84 kms long and 1 km in width, situated on the south Konkan coast belt was identified by the central government to be an STA. Large acres of agricultural land were acquired by the government for the construction of 5 star hotels, resorts and the proposed Oros Airport. The tourism development model in the region was to cater specifically to the needs of foreign tourists with the sole intention of bringing in foreign exchange. The image of Sindhudurg as a 'foreign tourist destination' has not only made it completely inaccessible to domestic tourists due to its ultra – expensive nature but has also gradually adulterated its socio – cultural ethos. Tourism activities have caused the displacement of locals from areas like Mithabao, Tarkali, Shiroda and Malwan giving rise to anti – tourism protests and demonstrations in many places. In both the cases, the project failed to understand the ethos and concerns of the local community with respect to issues related to livelihood, the environmental degradation to the region and cultural erosion. The only motive behind the project was generating greater revenue and creating a tourist hub on the lines of Goa.

But what makes the development of tourism through SEZs and STZs much more inimical than any previous government policy is the combination of the economic incentives that the SEZ policy has outlined. The already unregulated and imbalanced structure of India's tourism economy and the transforming socio-cultural processes within urban India that are making specific demands on leisure and tourism products.

SEZs, STZs and Tourism

While the country was already witnessing vibrant and widespread protests against the SEZ Act 2005, the National Tourism Advisory Council (NTAC), a think tank under the Ministry of Tourism (MoT) meant to advise it on policy issues, floated in November 2006 the proposal of establishing Special Tourism Zones (STZs) on the lines of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to boost tourism and increase investment, employment and infrastructure in the country⁵.

NTAC's proposal to MoT suggested that⁶:

- STZs are to be located in tourist destinations, cities, along the coastline
- Government should provide single window clearance for setting up of these zones
- 100% tax exemption for a period of 10 years
- Each STZ should be able to provide 2,000 to 3,000 hotel rooms.
- Facilities for shopping, entertainment
- Exemption from import duty on capital goods
- Withdrawal of luxury tax, lower VAT etc.
- Exclusive NRI tourism zones or elite world tourist zones for high-end global tourists

It is that with these incentives, private investors would come flocking to STZs resulting in improved infrastructure (i.e. improved even beyond infrastructure in existing SEZs), increased economic activities (i.e. providing an enabling environment like hotels, amusement parks, entertainment facilities, shopping malls for business to thrive) and creation of jobs for the "dependent communities" in the STZ area.

The recently released report of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) – Bharat Nirman Plus: Unlocking Rural India's Growth Potential, a report prepared by McKinsey & Company for CII (which was presented to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in June 2007) talks about a series of actions and steps to unlock the potential of rural India. **In particular, it proposes that the central government should establish**

National Special Tourism Zones Authority that identifies areas as Special Tourism Zones (STZs) and enacts a policy to facilitate their establishment and reform. Further, it suggests a **series of policy reforms in five key areas** namely power, water, agriculture, wastelands, and **tourism** at the central and state level and it urges Panchayats and local community organisations to capture opportunities created by the central and state.⁷ Cashing in on this policy initiative and the blitzkrieg approval that the Commerce Ministry has been giving to SEZs, the last 18 months have seen many state governments initiating plans to either set up specific STZs or develop tourism within SEZs. Some of the important proposals have been:

Kerala

In Kerala, the Malabar region, high ranges and Wayanad belt are being proposed for STZs where the stress would be on tourism-related infrastructure development⁸.

Delhi and Haryana

In Delhi, the proposed Commonwealth Games Village is being developed as an STZ. As early as 2004, the PHD Chamber of Commerce (PHDCCI) had submitted a proposal to the Delhi government asking for STZ status for the 250-acre games village as a 'one-stop shop' for all tourists into Delhi. The government estimates that demand for hotel rooms during the CWG is likely to touch 80000. Neighbouring Haryana has also been asked to provide land in Faridabad and Gurgaon areas to build hotels that can cater to the demand during the Games. Haryana is also planning to set up another specific STZ along the 138km Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) highway that is being built around the National Capital Region.

Maharashtra

The Gorai-Manori-Uttan area of Maharashtra has been proposed for a specific Tourism and Entertainment SEZ⁹. The Subhash Chandra promoted Essel Group, which is the developer of this 1000-hectare plan, will invest Rs 500 crore in developing the zone that promises to be Disneyland, Hollywood and Las Vegas rolled into one¹⁰. The land for the venture has been identified near Essel's already existing amusement park near Mumbai.

The tourism infrastructure company, Indian Tourism Infrastructure (ITIL) has drawn-up ambitious plans to create two tourism SEZs in Manadangarh and Sindhudurg. Each SEZ will be spread over 1000 acres of land and will have international standard convention centre and 30 hotels with a total of 20,000 rooms. They have also applied for permission to run a casino.¹¹ The same group has also bought 730 acres of land at Lonavala and has drawn up a blueprint to create a second 'Venice' which will be a township of canals, and boats will be the only means of transport.¹²

Himachal Pradesh

In May 2006, the Himachal Pradesh government gave its nod to a \$250 million tourism-cum-skiing project promoted by Alfred Ford, near the popular resort town of Manali in the high mountains of the Kullu valley, some 280 km from Shimla. The project was described as the largest foreign domestic investment (FDI) in the tourism sector in the country. Work was scheduled to start on the project later that year and was expected to be completed in three years. The investment was expected to take place in three stages, company officials said. The company planned to build 700 five-star rooms, 300 Swiss villas, 2,420 food court-type restaurant seats and a handicrafts village after acquiring the entire village. The base park was proposed to hold 1,000 vehicles and a high-tech gondola to ferry 500 passengers every hour to an altitude of 14,000 feet above sea level. The Colorado-based architect Jack Zehren was reportedly hired to design the resort to merge with the local traditional Himalayan architecture of wood and stone houses with slated roofs.¹³ Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh supported the

project saying it was for the development of Himachal Pradesh. According to him it would lead to more global parties investing in the state, increasing the employment potential of locals and have a ripple effect on the state's economy through tourism.

SEZs and Tourism

In fact, the potential for tourism-related activities being high in all SEZs and not only STZs, will have a high compounded effect on local communities. This is because according to the SEZ Act and the Special Economic Zone Rules 2006 (to be referred as Rule), only 25% (as per the new proposal in case of IT services or SEZ for special products the limit is 35%) of the total area in any SEZ need be statutorily used for developing and setting up of industrial/ manufacturing units for the designated purpose for which the SEZ was created. The rest of the land can be used for developing infrastructure where 'infrastructure' according to the same Rule includes 'social amenities' like roads, housing, hospitals, *hotels, leisure, and recreation and entertainment facilities* (emphasis added). The tourism industry has already begun to make full use of this opportunity and is in the process of building tourism projects, resorts and other establishments within already existing or upcoming SEZs¹⁴. The nature of leisure and entertainment tourism likely to be promoted within STZs and SEZs is not in forms where communities will be benefited or can participate.

Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries Ltd signed a pact with the Haryana government to develop India's largest special economic zone in over 25,000 acres at a cost of Rs. 400 billion (nearly \$9 billion). It will come up near National Highway 8 in Gurgaon – a satellite township off the capital of Haryana – and would extend to Jhajar district adjacent to the proposed Kundli-Manesar-Palwal expressway. About five percent of the area is being earmarked for leisure and recreation. 'A possible tie-up with Disney, Time Warner or Universal could be undertaken. A golf course will also be set up in this special zone.'¹⁵ Hospitality and leisure destinations, educational institutions, offshore banking and insurance, medical tourism figure high on the priority list of the special zone, officials added.

The Bangalore city-based Century Building Industries Pvt. Ltd has charted out a plan to set up a special economic zone (SEZ) for facilitating the establishment of educational, health and hospitality infrastructure. The SEZ would also have a foreign investor as partner. The SEZ, planned on a 2,500-acre land, will come up near the proposed Bangalore International Airport, off Devanahalli Road. According to Mr Pai, the representative of the company the Century group was also engaged in developing hotels with a 75-room new three-star hotel planned in the city.¹⁶

In Bangalore the Karnataka government is spending 20,000 crores for setting up 6 Bangalore SEZs and many prominent corporates and developers have decided to invest on SEZ in Bangalore. To enhance the environment of investment in the city the government plans to enhance connectivity by road, rail and air. The road projects across Bangalore and its outskirts include a four-lane stretch of 74-km Kundapur-Suratkal the 85-km Bangalore-Mulbagal road; the six-lane road between K R Puram and Hoskote; a four-lane 157-km Nelamangala-Hassan road; and a 131-km peripheral ring road, critical to decongesting the city. Moreover, with more investment into the city there has been dearth in lodging facilities in the hospitality sector. Therefore, approximately 7.0 million square feet of commercial space is likely to be absorbed this fiscal year (2005-06) in this sector and Bangalore is expected to have, 27 new hotels, serviced apartments and mixed-use developments with approximately 6,100 rooms in various segments over the next few years.¹⁷

The new enclaves of tourism in India?

The fundamental feature and flaw of the SEZ policy is that it seeks to create enclaves of investment, growth and prosperity. Therefore "enclavisation" is inherent in the SEZ policy and this applies as well to STZs and any tourism development that takes places within SEZs. But to get a more comprehensive

picture of the enclavisation of tourism that will take place through this policy let us examine some characteristic features and commonalities of these tourism proposals:

- They all require high investment and are infrastructure heavy making high demands on air, road connectivity and natural resources like land, water and power
- All such STZs are adopting Urban Imaging Strategies to seduce the tourist. Urban imaging processes include the development of a critical mass of visitor attractions and facilities, including new buildings/flagship centres/shopping malls, stadia, sports complexes, convention centres and the hosting of hallmark events. Urban imaging strategies are therefore conscious efforts by places to seduce. In particular, not only do they seek to develop something which is attractive, but in doing so they aim to package specific representations of a particular way of life or lifestyle of consumption. The tourism products/facilities coming up in these STZs exemplify this feature through the creation of massive accommodation complexes, shopping malls, convention halls, amusement parks, ski-villages, golf courses, recreating “Disney lands” and “Venices” that are culturally incongruous and environmentally damaging¹⁸.
- They are located in suburbs, small townships or rural stretches that are near guaranteed sources of tourists i.e big cities like Bangalore, Delhi, Mumbai or are already part of a standard tourist itinerary (as in the case of Himachal and Kerala)

These characteristics indicate that STZs are coming up to cater to a very specific segment of people namely business travellers and domestic tourists mainly from big metros. The location, nature of products being developed all point in this direction. It is therefore clear that the impetus for developing tourism through STZs and in SEZs comes from the economic processes that the country is witnessing, which includes the increasing visitation by foreign business representatives and the burgeoning disposable incomes of the middle class in big metros that is creating a demand for easy and accessible leisure options.

In this light, as the objective of such tourism development itself is only to cater to the leisure needs of specific segments of the population, and the model is thoroughly enclavised, there is little benefit that such tourism will bring to local communities. On the contrary, the cost of such a form of tourism is indeed going to be high.

Impacts of tourism development through STZs and SEZs

- Valorising of the region as a “tourism destination” – in each of these STZ proposals, the intent is clear of valorising and branding the developed area as a tourism zone. Thus the primary identity of Gorai, Manali, all of the villages being swallowed up in the Commonwealth Games Village is to be as “tourism zones”
- Land grab by STZs and induced displacement – it is now well accepted that tourism has also contributed to the process of land-induced displacement in this country. STZs propose to provide tourism developers with land at subsidized rates on lease for 15 years as per the SEZ model. While it might seem that the land requirements for tourism activities are not high, this is not true. The tourism and entertainment SEZ in Gorai-Manori is acquiring 1000 hectares, the Delhi Commonwealth Games Village STZ requires 250 acres and the Harayana government’s planned Tourism Economic Zone in Gurgaon to build “Disneyland” is going to grab huge tracts of land as well although no official figure on size of this project has yet been quoted. Further, STZs are coming up in coastal and hilly stretches where communities are dependent on natural resources like the coast and forests for livelihoods. The nature of displacement that these tourism project would induce would not only being that of direct physical displacement in the take-over of land by the project but also indirectly the loss of access to natural resources that such projects would bring along. A report of National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), dated Feb 2007 has indicted that the much-hyped

SEZs in and around Bangalore, which are aimed at triggering economic development, will come as a nightmare to thousands of poor Dalit families in Karnataka, according to an expert at the Bangalore University. Jogan Shankar, Director of the Babasaheb Ambedkar Research Institute, says that the SEZ's would result in a sizeable number of Dalits in Karnataka losing their agricultural lands, given to them by the Government some time ago to provide them social and economic security under a welfare scheme

- Employment: What meaningful employment, which is high-end and skill-based can local communities currently living in tourism areas hope for, in shopping malls, amusement parks, spas and luxury business hotels? In an industry that is already biased against local community/ unskilled labour, STZs will only increase the division without integrating capacity-building measures. Generally, it is observed that the employment opportunities have also been limited to low-end jobs like housekeeping and support services like cleaning, gardening, security and the occasional guide services, except in cases where developers have taken special effort to build capacity of the local communities on skills and language¹⁹. There is growing evidence that labour laws and regulation are being significantly diluted by many state governments to benefit “unhampered and even unaccountable” SEZ growth in the country. This too has relevance for tourism, as there are significant issues of labour rights and protection like contract labour, wages of working hours, gender disparity and discrimination, child labour (which is particularly high in hotels and restaurant sector) and even sexual exploitation that arise in tourism and need formal redressal within labour laws. If STZs are to be a leading model for tourism development, there is even less possibility of these issues being addressed. STZs, in fact, are likely to shrink the space for the organised working class. The fate of the large sections of informal and unorganised labour sector, those employed in the tourism industry is thus likely to become even more pitiable.
- Environmental impacts – the location, size and components within STZs are high cause for concern on the environmental fall-outs of these projects. Further, as per the SEZ Act, none of the sections lays down that environmental regulations are applicable on the units within SEZ. Rather the wordings in Section 49 and the SEZ rules categorically state that SEZ areas are outside the purview of the environmental regulations of the country. There are no provisions for monitoring the cumulative environmental impacts of all units coming under one SEZ or periodic review of the ecological effects of functioning of these industries in such zones. Further, large-scale services related activities like tourism, lead to excessive use of water, increased deforestation and environmental pollution in these areas without any regulatory blanket. With respect to STZs, the matter is even more serious with the recent Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification 2006 excluding tourism projects from the requirement of EIA clearances. Thus, the democratic spaces available to communities to decide on tourism development or voice their dissent /consent to projects under the available Environmental Clearance Regulations are not applicable to tourism industries. This change would bring a wider range of projects that are not directly tourism-based but related to it like shopping malls, entertainment facilities and amusements parks within the bracket of tourism to avail of this exemption.
- Institutional hegemony and bypassing democratic processes – One of the most critical aspects of the SEZ policy and cause for serious contention has been the institutional arrangements the Act has made and state governments have set in place to expedite the process of setting up of SEZs. The SEZ Act and its implementation are raising serious concerns about the phenomenon of centralization of power. It is clear that local institutions are going to be bypassed by the proposed “Single Window Clearance” mechanism, which is being stressed for all tourism infrastructure developments. Tourism benefits local communities only if activities undertaken are suited to their abilities, skills and priorities and takes into account regional specificities of ecology, culture and society. Transferring of power from local PRIs to Tourism Development Authorities in such zones as is happening in tourism intensive areas like Kerala and Hampi, Chilka Lake, and Kevadia (Gujarat) have huge implication to local

communities participation in decision making on issues such a control of natural resources like water and land (on which the tourism industry is highly dependent). Of further concern is the issue of substituting and prioritising tourism development plans over the general development plans in any area that is identified to be having tourism potential. The Kerala Conservation and Preservation of Tourism Areas Act 2005 is a case in point, as it gives overriding powers to supra committees to declare areas as special tourism zones, usurping the existing constitutional powers of local bodies to prioritise plan and regulate developmental activities. The recommendation by the Working Group on Tourism in its report to the Planning Commission on the country's XI Five Year Plan to replicate such an Act in other states points to the growing tendency to centralise such decisions.

Campaign efforts to oppose STZs and SEZs in India

- At the national level: the STZ proposal has been seriously contested by the civil society around the country urging the MoT, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture and State Tourism Departments to seriously reconsider this proposal. Under mounting pressure the Minister of Tourism in her statement in the Parliament and letter to the Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture stated that that STZs had only come up as a matter of recommendation from the NTAC and that the Ministry was yet to take any decision with regard to STZs. However, that by no means implied that the matter has been settled. The recent ventures by the state governments are a clear indication that STZs have not been abandoned but are now being pressed and promoted by the state governments in different forms.
- At the local level: In Gorai, the local community has taken serious opposition to the coming up of the SEZ. The Gorai Bachao Sangharsh Samiti Committee has been spreading awareness among the local community on the potential implications of the tourism SEZ in the region. Residents are anxious that Gorai's mangroves and beaches will be destroyed once tourists start arriving. Gorai village residents, all fourth generation fishermen or farmers second this view²⁰. In Himachal, the ski village project has been opposed by the local community. They fear that the ski village would pollute the local culture and sacred spots on hill tops which belonged to the deities, and the traditional lifestyle of villagers in the locality would be affected with the project that would attract a large number of tourists from abroad. Besides, the Jan Jagran Manch (JJM), Kullu, which is opposing the project along with the local community, has stepped up its campaign against the project and have threatened to file a public interest litigation against the project in the high court. According to the locals who are opposing the project since it was floated way back in 2005, say the project would spell disaster in the area as hotels and chalets would be sold to outsiders that would ruin the fragile ecology.²¹

Concluding Remarks

- As has been the case with how tourism enclaves started off historically, in India the setting up of STZs is the result of the strong economic impetus being given to the industry and the need that modern professional life of a certain portion of the country's working class has created for leisure. This is coupled with the availability of disposable incomes that can be expended on leisure options and the economic incentives for investment that the SEZ policy has provided
- The very intent behind creation of STZs being an easy leisure outlet for a certain segment of population when weighed against the costs that these enclaves are bound to have on identity, culture, ethos, environment and livelihoods and political rights of communities living in these areas is the primary and strongest reason for opposing them.
- The identity and *raison d'être* of a place cannot be tourism, communities cannot be converted to hosts, and tourism cannot be allowed to dictate the overall development process in any area. It can

only be one of the factors in the development and economic process and cannot be given such overriding powers. Any such policy move calls for an intense public consultation and debate with the local people and their representatives.

Endnotes

- ¹ This paper has been jointly authored by Ananya Dasgupta and Vidya Rangan. It was presented at the 5th International Critical Geographies Conference, December 2007, Mumbai and has been published in the Nov-Dec 2007 issue of Third World Resurgence (No # 207/208) on “*Rethinking Tourism: An engine for Third World Development?*” Visit <http://www.twinside.org.sg/title2/resurgence/twr207-208.htm>. This paper also draws substantially from an earlier advocacy paper by EQUATIONS titled “*Se(i)zing India! Why the government should reconsider tourism development through SEZs and STZs*”, November 2006.
- ² Law and Cartier define the term “touristed landscapes” as places that are leisure-oriented, places that promise escape from daily life – for a week, day, or even an hour – as they exist in our areas of residence and our regions of work, as well as more distant destinations.
- ³ The Bekal Resorts Development Corporation (BRDC) brochure, states the ‘Bekal Game Plan’ as follows – ‘Identify, acquire and develop potential resort sites, strengthen infrastructure through roads, power, water supply and sewage systems, invite promoters and investors and market Bekal as an international destination’.
- ⁴ Bekal Tourism Project: An SOS call EQUATIONS ANLetter Volume II Issue 4 November 96
- ⁵ Refer “*Borrowing SEZ idea, Centre starts working on Special Tourism Zones*”, 7th November 2006, Indian Express, New Delhi.
- ⁶ *Id.* 2
- ⁷ Refer “*CII Report Presented To The Prime Minister : “India Needs Bharat Nirman Plus for Inclusive Growth”* 01 June, 2007 http://cii.in/full_story.php?menu_id=78&news_id=74
- ⁸ Refer “*Special tourism zones would boost Kerala’s economy*”, 20th September 06, www.domain-b.com http://www.domain-b.com/industry/tourism/20060920_zones.html
- ⁹ As taken from the Mumbai City Development Plan (CDP), ‘the scope of this project could easily extend to establishment of an Entertainment SEZ, with focus on tourism and entertainment. This is based on the fact that substantial potential exists in Mumbai in the form of entertainment industry and the film and television industry. The exports potential in the entertainment sector has been growing and this needs to be tapped and supported through the SEZ. Particularly the animation film industry has potential for development in SEZ’
- ¹⁰ Refer “*Chandra pitches for gaming SEZ*”, Business Standard, 14th March 2006.
- ¹¹ Refer “*ITIL to develop tourism SEZ*”, Express Hospitality, September 16-30th 2007.
- ¹² *Ibid*
- ¹³ Refer “*Himalayan ski village project goes to Ford*”, 25 May 2006, <http://www.gujaratlive.com/viewnews.asp?newsid=814&id=241> also refer to “*It’s God vs man over ski resort*”, Saturday, 18 February 2006, Jyoti Kamal, CNN-IBN, Updated 0911 hrs IST (+GMT 5:30), 18.02.06 http://www.humanrightskerala.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1389&Itemid=4
- ¹⁴ For instance, real-estate giant DLF is tying up with hotel-major Hilton to build hotels across the country for its SEZ business. In line, DLF has already signed a MoU with the Punjab government for an 11000 multi-product SEZ at Amritsar and two others at Ambala and Gurgaon. Refer “*DLF likely to tie up with Hilton*”, Business news of Construction, <http://news.jimtrade.com/200606/1535.htm>
- ¹⁵ Refer “*Reliance Inks Pact for \$9 billion Special Zone in Haryana*” 19th June 2006, Business Monday, Punjab, India, <http://www.indiaenews.com/business/20060619/11934.htm>
- ¹⁶ Refer “*Century Building plans to set up SEZ*”, Business Line, Bangalore, 15.12.06
- ¹⁷ Refer “*Bangalore (Bengaluru) In Future*”, http://www.indianground.com/bangalore/bangalore_in_future.aspx
- ¹⁸ Interestingly, in China, more than 150 billion yuan (Pound sterling 10 billion) has been invested in about 2500 theme parks in China. Of these, 70 percent are in debt, 20 percent in balance and only 10 percent in profit. Changing market demand for freshness, curiosity and strangeness require them to renovate and replace their facilities and create an image to stay young and reach a new climax, Sui Fabo, Director China National Ride Inspection Group said in a speech to the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions 2005 (The Final Call pps 198). The failure of Disney Paris and Hong Kong are cases in point and the company is on the prowl for new pastures.
- ¹⁹ Refer “*A WTO-GATS-Tourism Impact Assessment Framework for Developing Countries*”, EQUATIONS and EED, October 2005.
- ²⁰ “*Should Gorai be a tourist destination?*”, Janaki Fernandes, March 2005
- ²¹ Refer “*Threat to file PIL against ski village*”, Kuldeep Chauhan, Tribune News Service, <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2007/20070417/himachal.htm#6>

The tourist welcomed; The adivasi exiled...

Unmasked: reflections on tourism's
impacts on indigenous communities in India

*Johar for us in Jharkhand is more
than just a word in our language...*

*...Johar is a spirit, an attitude, a feeling
and an expression of welcome, of gratitude,
of praise, of togetherness, a salutation...*

*...It is the word we first use
when we meet one another for the first time...*

*...We said Johar to you,
but our song and dance, our language and folklore
have become just pages in books of libraries
where your anthropologists can debate over.
Thus you have distorted our history.
You have misinterpreted our culture,
and made it a commodity to be marketed
at your universities and seminars.*

We said Johar to you...

[From the poem "JOHAR" – Manifesto of the Jharkhandis
Organisation for Human Rights.]

In Hawaii, Craig Chatman, a native¹ Hawaiian says, *"Indigenous people do not own their own tourism and culture. The big travel corporations have also treated natives like "wind up the Hawaiian and let him play music. We are an Indigenous Zoo and I take extreme offence to that."*

In Bali, Tjokorde Raka Kerthyasa says *"Some tourists and visitors who know nothing (or do not want to know) about the meaning and purpose of our customs and religious practices attend ceremonies just for the sake of taking pictures or proving that they have been on a holiday"*

In the Amazon, tour guides contract out to tourists to take them to into the wilds of the rain forest to "go native". Tourists follow them into indigenous villages, demand to stay with local families, eat their food, expect the locals to entertain them and make only a token payment before moving to the next village.

In New Zealand, Dikihoro Mulligan, a Maori says: *"We are a god-fearing and relaxed community. Maori elders are trying to coax the younger generation to educate themselves in their culture, which has huge potential. Even many Europeans who have lived here for generations don't know about us. Today, tourism is helping to create awareness about the rich Maori culture and traditions"*.

The indigenous peoples of India, who constitute 8.2% of the country's population² and live with great diversity in culture, language, lifestyle and art forms, are also rising to face the new invasion of tourism. This paper contextualises the growing debate on indigenous peoples' struggles in the country by drawing attention to tourism – as a compelling factor that has, in tangible ways contributed to their increasing exploitation, displacement and marginalisation. The paper discusses the issue in three parts – part one details impacts of tourism on indigenous communities along three lines of exploitation, eviction and benefit sharing with examples of community experiences from India as well as other parts of Asia, South America and Africa. Part two presents an overview of significant international guidelines that address the issue of tourism's impacts on indigenous communities and the ensuing debates. Part three analyses the current policy and legal framework in India related to tourism and the extent to which it recognises and addresses these concerns and opportunities.

Part One:

How tourism has impacted indigenous communities around the world

Alerting us to the trend of the targeting of indigenous homelands for tourism, Deborah McLaren wrote a decade back³, "Marketing trends point toward the Amazon, the Himalayas, the hills of Northern Thailand, the tribal areas in Africa, and the aboriginal areas of Canada and Australia. Travel advertisements market the residents of such places as people who are warm, smiling, friendly, unthreatening; who are servile and welcoming; there for the tourist's pleasure... Tourism markets cultures – hula girls, wandering tribesmen, Asian mountain folk and Native Americans. Some critics of tourism suggest that when we travel, we buy a product, a product that includes people."

The Indigenous on Display

"Exotic" tourism and ecotourism have drawn wider attention to the richness and diversity of indigenous peoples' cultures, but frequently engage in "packaging" and marketing strategies which distort cultures, degrade traditional ceremonial practices, and transform indigenous communities into trinket-selling, wage-dependent Hollywood back-lots⁴.

The fact that, tourism in India has put indigenous peoples and their culture on display, for sale, is indisputable. A scrutiny of the colourful and attractive tourist brochures printed by central and state departments provides ample evidence for this.

"Orissa: the Soul of India" - Orissa Tourism (1998)

"The antiquity of Orissa is endorsed by her ancient people who continue to inhabit their traditional dwelling places in remote areas in the deep forests and hilly terrains. Steeped in the mysteries that surround their ancient ways, the Orissan tribals continue to be a source of deep interest not only for anthropologists and sociologists but also for numerous tourists who flock to Orissa, in search of the exotic mystique of this relatively unexplored state...."

...Folk and tribal songs and dances continue to be an integral part of the Fairs and Festivals and village festivities throughout the year in Orissa and visitors can see these performed in their original settings...

...Orissa has 62 distinct tribal groups who continue to live in their traditional dwellings amongst the hills and forests and in a manner they have been accustomed with for centuries. A trip to the tribal areas can be an educative and exciting experience where you share the beauty of their usual customs for that brief moment in time...

“BASTAR: Not Just An Escape – A discovery” - Chhattisgarh Tourism Board (2002)

Bastar – Perfect for camping trips, painting holidays, tribal tours, adventure escapes and motoring tours...

...No matter where in the district you travel you cannot fail to see those elegantly clad tribal people making their way to the local haat (weekly market). Sure-footed, balancing their huge loads, the women walk in a single file, baskets on their heads, child on their hip, heavily-tattooed old ladies, brightly dressed young girls...It's an evocative sight...

...One can combine a trip here with a visit to a Sericulture Farm and the Anthropological Museum to enjoy a slice of Bastar's tribal culture...

(as part of the planned itineraries)

...This is a tribal country and we've arranged for you to meet some of the tribal people in their homes. It will be a wonderful opportunity to interact with them and learn something about their culture...

... After breakfast, a well-versed Palace guide will accompany you on an introduction to the secrets of Kawardha's little-known natural and tribal world. You will meet the gentle and friendly Baiga people, the principal indigenous forest tribe. Enjoy picnic lunch with them...

... You will also meet some of the local Bison-Horn Maria tribe, renowned for their spectacular ceremonial dancing. You will be entertained by a performance of the tribal people before returning to your hotel...

“India's Northeast: paradise unexplored” Incredible India – Ministry of Tourism, India (2005)

Arunachal Pradesh: A visit to the Apatani tribal home is a must. The Apatanis are one of the most advanced and intriguing of Arunachal's tribal people. Both men and women tattoo themselves and the women wear great nose plugs made of bamboo and face tattoos.

Nagaland: Grocery shopping in Kohima is a treat, visit the wholesale market for a visual feast of Naga village women wearing their splendid tribal costumes and gathering to sell farm, field, forest and stream products.

These excerpts from material fashioned to attract the tourist eye, are characteristic of how mainstream society, seeking tourism extravaganzas views indigenous people. In addition to the portrayal of indigenous peoples as products, even more disturbing is the way the tribal woman is represented as exotic and desirable. Brochures and promotional materials are replete with phrases such as “a Reang belle with traditional jewellery”, “a smiling young Tripura girl”, “Khasi belle in dance costume” or just “tribal women”. Colourful photographs of women decked in traditional attire accompany these ‘titles’. Tribal villages are depicted as mystical, paradise-like, intriguing places that provide the viewer a glimpse of mystery, a taste of an alien culture. References to tribal culture, folklore, culture and traditional belief systems of these ancient people, often border on the arrogance and sometimes ignorance that typifies mainstream thinking. Commodification is evident – a traditional motif becomes an “artefact” or “souvenir”, traditional dresses and accessories – “costumes” and ancestral traditions – an “experience”.

World over, commodification of indigenous cultures has taken varied forms through tourism. Countries in the global south are not the only ones affected politically by tourism. In the United States, especially in Alaska and Hawaii, indigenous people must confront the political repercussions of the rapid growth of tourism. Jon Goss writes in ‘Seductions of Place’, “‘Aloha’ is perhaps the most complex and certainly the most contested concept attributed to the Hawaiian people. For the visitor, it is typically glossed as simply greeting and leave-taking, or more generally ‘love’, but anthropologists discover deeper meanings...”⁷⁵ With its unwillingness to engage in a society and its meaning with any depth and its need to create consumerist packages of nearly everything, the use, and abuse, of language and dialect and

symbols is inherent in tourism's exploitation of indigenous culture. As tourism makes its presence felt it is likely that '*johar*' as the poem eloquently puts it, has a similar fate in store.

The transformation of Mexico's famed Huichol Art from being a manifestation of religious faith for the Huichol indigenous community to being a source, an economic gain and sale is yet another example (Cruz, 2002). The Huichol believe themselves to be "mirrors of the gods" and their art reflects a sacred vision of the world, but tourism and globalisation have made their art easily available on the internet or reproduced to suit tourists' preferences for souvenirs.

In the Philippines, the mountainous province of Sagada has gained prominence as a tourist spot, threatening the survival of the Kankanaeys. The people of Sagada revere their ancestral lands but curious tourists have invaded the sacredness and solemnity of rituals celebrating the agricultural cycle. Furthermore, their sacred burial sites have been desecrated by tourists taking away bones of their ancestors as souvenirs and freely using coffin covers for graffiti.⁶

In the Andaman Islands in the Indian Ocean, the Jarawas are a dwindling tribe with just 250-odd surviving members living in the Islands. In 2002, the Supreme Court of India passed a set of landmark judgements to protect the Islands' fragile ecology and its tribal communities. One of the orders was the closure of the Andaman Trunk Road (ATR) – an arterial road constructed in the 1950s connecting South to North Andaman passing right through the Jarawa tribal reserve area. But the Islands' Administration and its industrial lobbies have been violating the Court's orders with impunity. Apart from problems of alien food, loss of precious forest cover and exposure to diseases against which Jarawas have no immunity, the ATR had also facilitated the rise of a pernicious endeavour, perversely called 'Jarawa Tourism'⁷. Tourists visiting the Islands were being openly solicited with offers of rides along the ATR and the promise to see stone-age, naked tribes. But, more recently, with greater awareness and rising protests, one at least notices a welcome change in the Administration's attitude and respect for these communities with tourism brochures making mention of them but clearly stating that interaction with or photography of these tribes is prohibited.

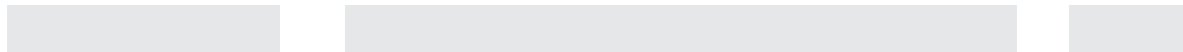
In India, one sees a growing trend of tribal art being "mainstreamed" – as one tourist brochure put it – "...Some of the finest works of Bastar crafts are showcased in some of India's five star hotel lobbies and upmarket urban stores..." While there are efforts to use tourism, also as a means of keeping local art, culture and handicrafts alive by assuring a market for them, the fear of commodification and twisting them out of their intrinsic contexts, meanings and functions is not unfounded. An adivasi woman from Chhattisgarh, India, referring to statues of their deities made from traditional bell metal, spoke of her fear of entering any room in which they were kept! She said she could not face them inside a room as their gods were always kept outside the village to protect them from harm. In making a popular product, no one asked the adivasi what they thought and how they felt.

Displacement of the First People from their lands: Tourism Evicts...

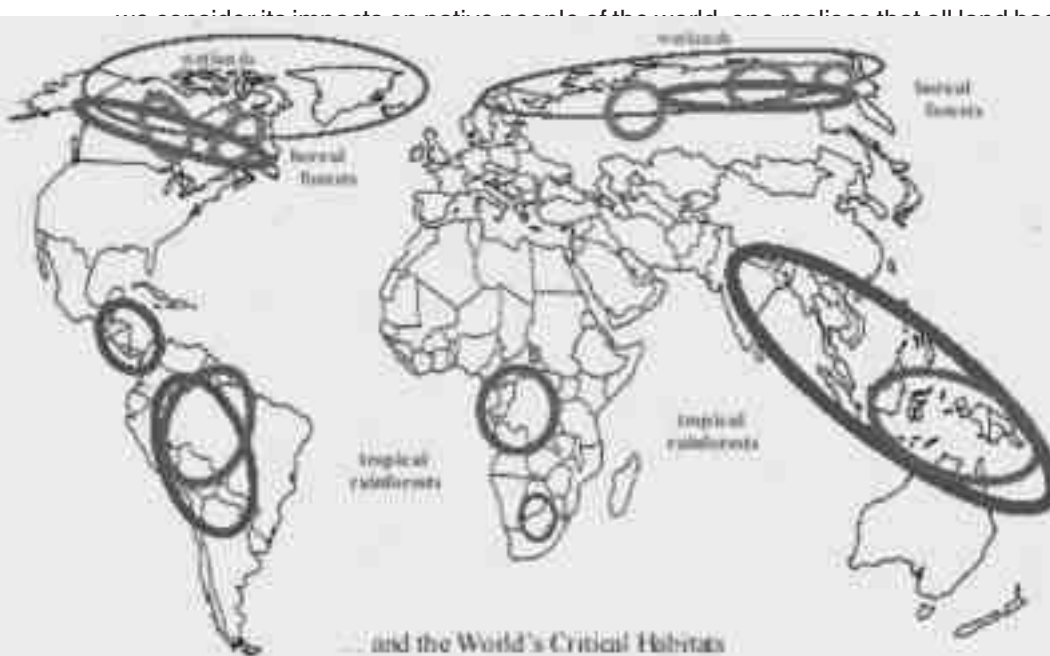
Terri-Lynn Williams-Davidson, an indigenous writer says this of the connection of indigenous people and the land they inhabit – "*For indigenous peoples, the Earth and all of its life forms the fundamental context, the foundation and ultimate source from which culture emerges.*"⁸ For, while the role of big companies in oil, drugs and timber business has pushed people out, the role of global "conservation" efforts in creating millions of "conservation refugees" is equally insidious.⁹

In his aptly titled piece "*Conservation Refugees*", Dowie lucidly observes that with the massive political and financial backing that was given to conservation groups, the process of 'conservation' through creation of Protected Areas (PAs), National Parks and Sanctuaries speeded up globally. In 1962, the world had some 1000 official PAs, today the number is close to 110000. The area under protection has doubled since 1990 with 12% of all the earth's land (nearly as much as the entire land mass of Africa) is under 'conservation'. At a first glance, such land and "nature" conservation seems good, but when

Map: Principal Concentration of indigenous peoples and the world's critical habitats



Source: Russel Barsh, *The World's Indigenous People*



tourists who come on hunting safaris¹¹! It is estimated that well over 50 per cent of indigenous communities in Kenya have experienced some form of land dispossession in the name of ecotourism or other development initiatives (this reaches 60–70 per cent in northern Kenya).¹² Communities affected by exploitation and discrimination, include the Maasai and the Ogiek in the Southern rangelands; the Endorois, Ilchamus, Pokot, Sabaot, Sengwer and Turkana in the Rift Valley; the Borana, Ghabra, Rendille and Somalis in northern Kenya; and the Orma in the wetlands of the Kenyan coast.

India has a total of 650 Protected Areas¹³ (96 National Parks, 508 wildlife sanctuaries, 29 tiger reserves, 14 existing biosphere reserves and 3 conservation reserves) and an estimated 2 million of the world's conservation refugees¹⁴. It comes as no surprise these national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and biosphere reserves are also the homelands of tribal populations for whom the forests are the basis of habitat, survival and history. But British colonisation followed by a colonisation effected by the government of independent India, produced a new understanding of forests, which was to sound the death knell for the country's tribal communities. Firstly this understanding was based on the Western notion of 'wilderness' – an expanse of greenery devoid of all human habitation. The second was a reformulation of 'conservation' which implied the de-legitimisation of forest dwellers and part of the of the forest habitat, de-recognition of traditional rights and exclusion and eviction of tribal communities from forests.¹⁵

In India, national parks and wildlife sanctuaries have been assiduously promoted as ecotourism attractions. The National Tourism Policy of 2002 clearly states – *“wildlife sanctuaries and national parks need to be integrated as an integral part of the India tourism product, and priority needs to be given to the preparation of site and visitor management plans for key parks, after a prioritization of parks.”* The aspect of eviction of indigenous people from their traditional lands for the cause of ecotourism development and its consequent impacts does not find adequate mention in these policies.

The Kanha National Park sprawls over a wide area in Mandla and adjoining Balaghat districts of the state of Madhya Pradesh and is in the forest belt of the Satpuras and the Vindhyas that stretch for almost 500 km east to west. This rich forest is the ancestral home of the Baiga and Gond tribals. The tiger is undoubtedly Kanha's main tourism attraction and in 1974, the government declared the area as a “Tiger Reserve”. Today, tiger conservation efforts have displaced 26 tribal villages (comprising 1217 families covering a displaced area of approximately 5431 sq. kms)¹⁶. Tribal villages that used to sustain life with cultivation and collection of minor forest produce are today displaced and prohibited from collecting forest produce. Efforts have been made to resettle them into nearby areas but without providing adequate title deeds for their lands. While life is tough and sustenance nearly impossible, harassment by forest officers is a common occurrence. But today, Kanha is one of the most popular National Parks of India. An official tourism promotion website claims – *“When you holiday in Kanha you will feel as if you are entering the pages of this unforgettable book and you're likely to hear Sher Khan the tiger roar in the jungle...”*¹⁷ They obviously make no mention of the voices of evicted adivasis.

A similar fate met the tribals living inside the Pench National Park, also situated in the same forest ranges of Madhya Pradesh and declared the country's 19th Project Tiger Reserve in 1992. With the launch of the World Bank's Eco Development Project¹⁸ in 1995, several villages within and in the periphery of the sanctuary began to be systematically displaced. Fifteen Gond families who had traditionally lived on the banks of the Pench River were displaced from their village of Alikatta and forced to resettle in Durgapur.¹⁹ They were told they had to move because a National Park was being created. Villagers, who had fertile, cultivable land in Alikatta, today don't cultivate or go into the forest anymore for fear of being arrested. The Gond culture and identity took a back seat in the face of establishing the Park, and relations between villagers and the Forest Department have deteriorated. It is not even clear if wildlife is being adequately “protected” when the sanctuary was opened to tourists.²⁰

The Nagarhole National Park is located in the Kodagu and Mysore districts of the state of Karnataka. A total of about 32000 adivasis reside in and around the National Park. Tribes of the area are mainly the - Jenukurubas (honey gatherers), Bettakurubas (Hill Kurubas), Yeravas, Soligas and sub castes of Yeravas i.e. Panjeri Yeravas and Pani-Yeravas. The adivasis of Nagarhole were first displaced by the same controversial Eco Development Project of the World Bank, which placed severe restrictions on them including bans on cultivation, hunting and on collection of forest produce. Notwithstanding this injustice, the government of Karnataka awarded a contract in 1994 to Gateway Hotels and Getaway Resorts (a subsidiary of the Taj Hotels group) to run India's first eco-friendly resort within the Nagarhole National Park. Strong resistance to this move by local groups and adivasi rights' organisations, supported by legal interventions that were upheld both at the High

Court and Supreme Court level, finally resulted in stalling construction of the resort and a strong indictment of the role of the state government in this sorry affair. The Nagarhole judgement set precedence for the use of protected areas and national parks for eco-tourism development but the fate of the adivasis continues to hang in balance. The region continues to have a growing number of tourist resorts mushrooming around the Park periphery which have lead neither to protection of forest land nor to adivasi wellbeing.²¹

These cases are emblematic of the growing tension between communities and government policy, privileging a certain understanding of conservation in India. Creation of 'tourism zones' inside PAs further intensifies the seeming contradiction between the aims of conservation and the rights of displaced communities. This has lead to the process of legitimising the functioning presence of a global industry inside an ecologically sensitive region, while indigenous people and local communities have been aggressively ejected from their forests.

When the United Nations declared 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism (IYE), it was met with vociferous protest primarily from the world's indigenous peoples. Indigenous groups, summarised the fundamental problems they face from tourism, they warned against the large scale unrestrained promotion of ecotourism without an adequate assessment of the nature of the industry and its effects on the environment and people.²² It would, they said, lead to disruption of local economies by displacement of activities that previously served to carry self-reliant and sustainable community development. Physical infrastructure to provide tourists access to remote areas would expand and this would lead to increasing damage to the environment and local communities. Several years later, these fears and concerns are proved to be not unfounded.

The preservation of biological diversity is undoubtedly urgent. The point however, is to revisit its fundamental principles.²³ In India, the National Park Management concept is a blind copy of the American experience based on wilderness. Citing studies, Gadgil and Guha in their book – *"This Fissured Land"* state that the – "...highest levels of biological diversity are found in areas with some (though not excessive) human intervention... the dogma of total protection can have tragic consequences." Mark Dowie provides a thought provoking statement that he believes is receiving acceptance, albeit hesitatingly, from various parties to the debate that – *"Indigenous Peoples presence, it turns out, may offer the best protection that protected areas can ever receive"*²⁴. This is, in fact, a position that indigenous people have maintained all along.

Notions of 'conservation' in India have also failed to acknowledge the role that adivasis have played in protection of nature and its diverse forms through the symbiotic relationship they share. Adivasis in various states have religious beliefs, prohibitions and taboos to the access and use of natural resources. In Kalahandi, Orissa, the tiger is treated as a brother and if a tiger dies, the adivasis observe community mourning. Similarly in East Singhbhum in Jharkhand, adivasis worship Gorang, Dorang and Buchiwudi - gods and goddesses whose abode are the hills, rivers and forests, making these sacred.

Moti Ram Baiga from Daldali, Chhattisgarh says:

"We worship our mountains, trees and rivers. Our Devi Devta (deities) "Kher mata", "Khunt Paat", "Thakur devta" or "Nanga Baiga" live in these forests and mountains. They protect us from all evils."

Communities that share such a strong bond with nature, whose religious beliefs and social customs are oriented to protect nature from over exploitation, are now being termed 'encroachers' in their homelands. States like Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Orissa which have abundant forest, water and mineral resources have witnessed several cases of marginalisation of communities by modern development. Industrialisation, mining, dam and other big infrastructure projects have led to large scale displacement of indigenous communities, affecting their livelihood and socio-cultural milieu. Tourism seen as gentler, more sophisticated and green, if not unmasked, can prove to be the uninvited and exploitative guest into their homelands.

Indigenous Communities' share of the pie: Tourism Benefits?

While there is growing resistance by indigenous communities to exploitative forms of tourism, there are many who are keen to explore how they can benefit from tourism. But do current models of tourism development provide scope for community involvement and community control and do they materialise in community benefits? How do current forms of tourism also engage with issues of culture and identity of these communities?

New forms of eco-travel profess to save the planet and create economic advantages for local people. But do they? Research by NGOs and even by the World Bank points to the fact that Park Management strategies have not met with much success in terms of local economic development.²⁵ Even at highly "successful" parks like the Khao Yai National Park in Thailand, where tourists bring in nearly USD 5 million annually, the surrounding communities remain poor. Ecotourism revenues in Rwanda support park management, but have not been able to translate into economic alternatives for local people. Developers often overlook the critical aspect of benefit sharing that is intrinsic to the definition of ecotourism.

The more disturbing issue is the denial of indigenous peoples' rights in the context of tourism. According to International Tourism Rights International, "prior informed consent" is crucial; its absence has been at the heart of most conflicts which indigenous communities face with the outside world. This includes: access to all information (negative and positive) concerning proposed tourism activities as well as access and participation in policy making that affects them, official support for tourism models developed by indigenous people themselves and the absolute right to say "no". Alison Johnston opines – *"If the ecotourism industry wants to engage Indigenous Peoples in a way that naturally draws community support, it must be willing to learn who it is talking to, what these people's experiences and aspirations are and why the right to self-determination is so passionately defended. Companies need to learn how to approach business as a HOLISTIC relationship."*²⁶

Demands for benefit sharing in tourism by indigenous people come in different forms and are not always directly associated with a tourism project. In the Andes, indigenous people demand compensation for having their photographs taken. A woman in Otalavo exclaims – *"We see our and our children's photos on postcards. We do not benefit from our photos being taken, a tourist does. We demand part of the profits."* In the mountainous regions of northern India, hill communities supplement their incomes by allowing tourists to briefly adorn their traditional dress and be photographed. Tribal communities in Mexico are now getting more worldly wise and demanding royalty for use of their motifs and art forms on tourism promotional material.

There are also few international initiatives, which are quoted as having moved from the "community-based" forms of tourism to being genuinely "community-owned" by indigenous people. The Toledo Ecotourism Association (TEA) in Belize— is a community-owned organisation owned and operated by an association of Mopan, Kek'chi and Garifuna villages.²⁷ The objective of TEA is to share the benefits of tourism as widely as possible throughout each participating village. Guides, food providers and entertainers are rotated among seven to nine families in each village. A parallel programme is succeeding in Ecuador. Ricancie (Indigenous Community Network of the Upper Napo for Intercultural Exchange and Ecotourism) was founded in 1993 by several Quichua communities living in the Napo province of Amazonian Ecuador.²⁸ Their goal is to improve the life of nine Quichua villages via a community-based ecotourism project. Prior to this, tours in the region were conducted by foreign tour operating companies, which provided little benefit to the villages. Ricancie has been able to change that by adopting a self-determined path where all decisions are taken by villagers. In Australia, the Mutawintji National Park, Historic Site and Natural Reserve in New South Wales were returned to aboriginal ownership in 1998 and is now run by the Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council.²⁹ The organisation is in charge of all tours to the Park and has licensed their operators. In Africa, to garner greater local benefit from tourism, San community members from Botswana, Namibia and South Africa approached organisations to

support them in initiating community-owned joint venture tourism projects.³⁰ The movement has spread to San communities in other regions who have felt encouraged to start their own tourism ventures, not only for economic gain but also to inform tourists about San culture and traditions.

In few states of India, attempts have been made where civil society and local people have played a role in deciding the nature and form of tourism in their areas. In 2003, a group of people in Jharkhand, mostly belonging to various indigenous communities from different districts of the State, evolved the “Jharkhand Peoples’ Policy on Sustainable Tourism”. The inspiration to develop such a people’s policy came from the people of Pan Sakam, a village near the famous Dasam waterfall of the region, as adivasis of this village had taken control of the waterfall after a prolonged fight with the Forest Department. The peoples’ policy includes benefit sharing of resources, access to natural resources and provision of a core team formed by communities, looking after planning, implementation and monitoring. This policy was presented to the state tourism department, but so far no action has been taken by the government to incorporate its suggestions.

Similarly, in Kataki village of Araku panchayat (Andhra Pradesh), there is a small waterfall on the Gostani River. The Gram Sabha has taken steps to develop this as a tourist attraction and has created basic infrastructure like pathways and stairs and a check post. It also collects toll from tourists and allows them to visit the waterfall. But as this spot has gradually become popular among tourists who visit the nearby Borra caves, realising the revenue potential, the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC) has now planned to develop the waterfall area as a tourism product. If not opposed, such a move will lead to transfer of control and benefits moving from the Gram Sabha to the state owned APTDC.

Experiments and models in India privileging indigenous ownership and control of tourism are yet nascent.³¹ But with growing interest in responsible tourism in India, policy makers need to study these initiatives for promoting a tourism that is community-led, owned, and implemented. Many indigenous communities hope that tourism will offer an alternative to more destructive forms of “development” in their regions such as logging, mining and other extractive industries. They are alert to, and some even welcome ecotourism projects that can help conserve their natural environments and provide alternative sources of livelihood. There are no ready models or easy answers to these aspirations, but what seems essential is that alternatives, best practices and new models be evolved by and with them.

Part two:

International guidelines addressing issues of tourism and indigenous peoples

Recognition of tourism issues in the indigenous peoples’ debate has found place in many international guidelines. Many of these guidelines and codes have developed in response to powerful resistance by indigenous groups to impacts of tourism development on their lives, cultures and regions. While they are not legally binding, they form a useful guiding framework to governments and policy makers on the issue of indigenous people and tourism.

One of the first institutions to put in place progressive conventions respecting indigenous communities’ traditional rights was the International Labour Organisation. The ILO Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Populations, 1957 (No. 107), recognises indigenous peoples’ ownership of the lands they occupy. It was ratified by 27 countries, mainly in Latin America. India has also ratified the Convention. In 1989, the ILO revised this Convention, making it much stronger. ILO Convention No. 169 (1989) provides generally that “special measures shall be adopted as appropriate for safeguarding the persons, institutions, property, labour, cultures and environment” of indigenous peoples, and that “*such measures shall not be contrary to the freely-expressed wishes of the peoples concerned.*” Convention No. 169 is a comprehensive instrument covering a range of issues pertaining to indigenous and tribal peoples, including land rights, access to natural resources, health, education, vocational training, conditions of

employment and contacts across borders.³² It also has strong clauses in relation to seeking prior informed consent from indigenous people before undertaking development activities in their regions. It further states that – *“indigenous peoples concerned shall have the right to decide their own priorities for the process of development as it affects their lives, beliefs, institutions and spiritual well-being and the lands they occupy or otherwise use, and to exercise control, to the extent possible, over their own economic, social and cultural development.”* Only 13 countries have thus far ratified ILO Convention 169; India is not one of them. These ILO clauses have significant implications when applied to tourism and can be effectively used to promote participation of indigenous communities in tourism in deciding its forms and priorities and prevent undesirable forms of its development.

Specifically on tourism, the most universally known set of guidelines for tourism development is the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics that received official recognition by the UN General Assembly on 21 December 2001. Clause 1 of Article 1 of the Code articulates: *“The understanding and promotion of the ethical values common to humanity, with an attitude of tolerance and respect for the diversity of religious, philosophical and moral beliefs, are both the foundation and the consequence of responsible tourism; stakeholders in tourism development and tourists themselves should observe the social and cultural traditions and practices of all peoples, including those of minorities and indigenous peoples and to recognize their worth.”* It further states in Article 2 *“...tourism activities should respect...the individual rights of the most vulnerable groups, notably children, the elderly, the handicapped, ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples.”*

The Oaxaca Declaration of the International Forum on Indigenous Tourism, adopted in 2002 is another landmark declaration recording the impacts of tourism on indigenous communities. Issued by representatives of indigenous communities from 13 Western Hemisphere countries at the time of the IYE, the Declaration stated – *“We register our profound disagreement with the IYE’s and ecotourism’s most basic assumptions that define Indigenous communities as targets to be developed and our lands as commercial resources to be sold on global markets. Under this universalistic economic framework, tourism brings market competition, appropriates our lands and peoples as consumer products, and renders our traditional knowledge vulnerable to bioprospecting and biopiracy.”* It goes on to reject that the IYE be used as a space to legitimise the takeover of indigenous lands by “sustainable development”. The Declaration articulates several pertinent points with regard to how indigenous people are viewed in tourism. Primary among these is the need to recognise that indigenous peoples are not “stakeholders” but *“internationally-recognized holders of collective and human rights, including the rights of self-determination, informed consent, and effective participation.”* It particularly addresses governments, private developers, conservation and ecotourism NGOs, development agencies and specialists. It asserts *“Tourism is beneficial for indigenous communities only when it is based on and enhances our self-determination. Outside “experts and assistance” are useful to us only if they work within frameworks conceptualized and defined by our communities. Therefore, tourism projects must be undertaken only under the guidance and surveillance of an Indigenous Technical Team, and only after a full critical analysis of the long-term pros and cons of tourism development.”* In addressing the United Nations, the Declaration appeals for devising a transparent and honest process that allows for indigenous peoples participation directly in tourism development. It demands that national governments implement laws and regulations pertaining to the environment and indigenous peoples and urges for the development of ecotourism guidelines that can regulate visitation in conformance with local culture and sensitivities.

Another process in motion has been with the Draft UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. On Thursday 29 June 2006, the Human Rights Council adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and recommended its adoption by the General Assembly³³. The Declaration was one of the chief outcomes of the United Nations’ International Decade of the World’s Indigenous People (1995-2004)³⁴ initiative with the main objective of strengthening international cooperation for the solution of problems faced by indigenous people in such areas as human rights, the environment, development, education and health. This Declaration, which is pending adoption by the General Assembly,

it is hoped, gives wider publicity and endorsement to rights of indigenous communities. While it does not mention tourism specifically, its applicability would definitely extend to situations of tourism infringing indigenous rights. In the words of the UN's Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues³⁵ - *"When adopted, it will likely be the most comprehensive statement of the rights of indigenous peoples ever developed: the draft declaration foresees collective rights to a degree unprecedented in international human rights law. Adoption of this instrument will give the clearest indication yet that the international community is committing itself to the protection of the individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples."*

But not all UN processes have received the endorsement of indigenous communities. An intensive debate has been ensuing internationally in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) tourism guidelines. When in 2004, the CBD's seventh Conference of Parties (COP7) planned to finalise and adopt the draft tourism guidelines, many indigenous groups wrote in stressing that the adoption be stalled, as indigenous people had not been party to its formulation. The statement from the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB) to the Chairman of the COP stated - *"We are dismayed to learn that draft guidelines on tourism are being considered for adoption here in Kuala Lumpur. The draft guidelines focus on vulnerable ecosystems. This causes great anxiety. Globally, it is the Indigenous Peoples' ancestral territories that are most vulnerable to the so-called 'eco' tourism industry. This sector has a documented standard of abuse. Again, we must stress that worldwide the vulnerable areas in question are Indigenous territories."*

Additionally, the lack of cultural sustainability and diversity in the Guidelines is an equally serious matter of concern. The IIFB rejected the process and content of the CBD's tourism guidelines on grounds of the disregarding and non-representation of indigenous peoples. Indigenous people's representatives had urged that the matter of adoption of the draft tourism guidelines be deferred to COP 8, two years later in 2006. However, despite these appeals, the CBD went ahead and adopted the Tourism Guidelines that are now formally part of the CBD. For indigenous people, the guidelines continue to disregard issues of cultural sustainability and use of indigenous peoples' ancestral lands by tourism. It is held as a travesty of the process of democratic consultation that institutions like the CBD are meant to stand for. In her analysis of these events surrounding the CBD, Alison Johnston observed - *"In UN forums, Indigenous Peoples have observed mounting apprehension among world governments towards their submissions - particularly on ancestral title, which entails customary law for sustainability. World governments know that Indigenous rights and international environmental standards are routinely overridden. They want to look forward to profit, not become mired in present or past issues like liability and compensation. Thus, as the CBD process on tourism progressed, it became evident that many feared the Indigenous Peoples' analysis. There was a level of protectionism which had no rational explanation other than the corporate bottom line."*³⁶

These international guidelines do provide a useful framework that national governments may choose to adopt. However, processes like the CBD are indicative of the fact that even at the global level, there remains a challenge in ensuring the meaningful and rightful participation of indigenous peoples in processes that deeply impact them.

Part three:

An overview of tourism policies in India in the context of the indigenous peoples' debate

Tourism came on to the radar of Indian policy makers during the sixth five-year plan period (1977-1982) when the country's first tourism policy was introduced. Soon after, in the 1985-90 period, tourism was elevated to the status of an industry that gave it access to institutional financial support, infrastructure support and a rationale for rationalisation of taxes applicable to the sector. The post liberalisation period from 1991 witnessed further opening up of natural and biodiversity-rich areas in the country for

tourism. Ecotourism was the new buzzword and the focus was on forests, coasts, hills, mountains and other biodiversity-rich regions. Many state governments began exploiting the 'market' potential of tourism by actively promoting ecotourism, culture and heritage tourism, deregulating coasts and opening up forests for investment in tourism.

National Policies on Tourism

The National Tourism Policy (NTP) 2002 has identified ecological sustainability, judicious use of natural resources and tourism as a means to alleviate poverty as some of its basic principles. The policy recognises lack of community participation as one of the factors contributing to increasing conflicts in tourism areas and therefore, emphasises greater community participation, role of panchayats and other local bodies especially in ecotourism and adventure tourism activities.

But although certainly progressive compared to earlier policies, the NTP fails to clearly identify and provide guidelines to work with some of tourism's adverse impacts. In relation to indigenous communities, the policy only makes two cursory references to indigenous and tribal communities.³⁷ The policy emphasises ecotourism but yet does not even highlight the need for caution while promoting tourism in areas where indigenous communities live. The adverse impacts of tourism on adivasis including issues of commodification of culture, land alienation, denial of access to resources and exploitation are not acknowledged. Other important policy documents on tourism have also overlooked the critical need to regulate tourism in indigenous areas. The XI Five Year Plan's chapter on tourism does not make any references to concerns regarding indigenous communities but, like the NTP, asks governments to focus on ecotourism promotion. Laying the foundation for the next five years, the report of the Tourism Working Group for the XI Five Year Plan places high emphasis on promotion of heritage and culture tourism along with ecotourism but yet again, fails to take notice of the need to regulate tourism such that indigenous communities are not adversely impacted.³⁸

The Ministry of Tourism (MoT) - Government of India launched its Ecotourism Policy and Guidelines in 1998. These guidelines have been formulated "to ensure regulated growth of ecotourism with its positive impacts of environmental protection & community development". The Ecotourism Policy of 1998, issued by the Ministry of Tourism, is based on several international guidelines and frameworks prepared by various tourism industry associations.³⁹

But with a focus on environmental conservation, the policy fails to acknowledge the cross linkages between ecotourism and the social, cultural, economic and institutional processes of the indigenous and local communities. By identifying indigenous and local communities as "stakeholders" and not "rights holders", who have knowledge of the local environment, the policy makes them subservient to a process where environmental protection is beyond their control and is being pursued for the sake of supporting economic enterprise.⁴⁰

Mentioning the need for involvement of local community, recognition to local livelihood and tourism that is compatible with environmental and socio-economic characteristics of local community gives a false sense that the policy privileges community based and sustainable tourism principles. But when it comes to the actual role to be played by these communities in need-based planning for physical infrastructure, zoning exercises, evolving tourism management plans, and impact assessment, the policy goes silent.⁴¹

State Tourism Policies

Several states have evolved their own policies on tourism, and these have not necessarily been inspired by the broad principles of the national policies. What remains common is that state policies too have failed to address tourism from a peoples' perspective and thus their tourism policies read more like investment and marketing strategy papers.

Madhya Pradesh, one of the first states in the country to announce a tourism policy (1995), has identified promotion of ecotourism and adventure tourism as one of the key objectives. Cashing in on its 31% forest area, in 2001-02, the Department of Tourism, Government of Madhya Pradesh formulated an Eco and Adventure Tourism Policy for the state. The background note to the policy states - *“Today’s tourist is not content with cultural or religious tourism alone- the tourist today looks for some thrill, fun, adventure and something other than routine. In keeping with this change in attitude of tourists, the State Government has decided to actively promote Eco-Tourism and Adventure Tourism. In order to popularize and develop these forms of tourism, Government is for the first time, seeking participation of private investors.”* The other key points of the policy include measures to involve private participation.

But in a state with 23% proportion of its population as adivasis, the government’s priority seems to be, to satisfy the changing demand of tourists, rather than address the livelihood concerns of local communities. Forest eviction due to declaration of national parks and sanctuaries is rampant in Madhya Pradesh, with Kanha and Bandhavgarh as glaring examples. The state tourism policy does not appear to take cognisance of these problems.

Neighbouring Chhattisgarh is no different. From the 2006 tourism policy, it is clear that tourism promotion and marketing of the state as a tourist destination are the clear focus areas of the state government. It mentions principles like sustainability, community participation and environmental conservation without the wherewithal to ensure that these principles are implemented. It talks of decentralised tourism development and local community participation but these seem merely lip service, as the same policy has made the state-government managed, Chhattisgarh Tourism Board, as the nodal agency for all tourism-related development! The policy also makes some ludicrous propositions to ease tourist connectivity like proposing helicopter facilities into interior inaccessible areas - areas where tribal and indigenous population lives. Its focus on “Ethnic tourism” is strong and the policy states that it will attempt at showcasing the state’s rich cultural heritage and monuments, which will be integrated into the ecotourism circuit.

Orissa launched its tourism policy in 1997, and this is also no different from other state policies. In the state’s tourism policy, Ganjam, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Deogarh, Dhenkanal, Angul, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj proposed for wildlife tourism, all have significant adivasi population. The commodification of adivasi culture is evident through proposals like - “a museum of tribal art and artefacts will be set up in different tribal regions at Bhubaneswar to bring tribal life and culture alive for the tourists.”

Current tourism and ecotourism policies that actively promote forms of tourism in adivasi-populated areas of the country will only intensify inequities. The growing trend towards declaring areas as National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries and up-gradation of forests within the broad category of ‘Protected Areas’ in the country is disturbing from the perspective of adivasis. In 1935, after the enactment of Indian Forest Act 1927, there was only one national park in the country - Jim Corbett National Park. In the 35 years hence, i.e. up till 1970, only 5 more were added to this list. However, the 1972 Wildlife Protection Act, Project Tiger initiated in 1980, Forest Conservation Act 1980 and several legislations have been instrumental in identification and up-gradation of forest areas into protected areas, national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. As a result, by 2004, India had 92 declared national parks and several others are in pipeline. Similarly, the declaration of more areas under reserved and wildlife sanctuary categories means further deprivation of adivasi rights over forests.

Legal Safeguards and provisions that could be applicable to tourism as well

The 73rd and 74th Amendments, 1993 to the Indian Constitution were landmark legal provisions, allowing greater peoples’ participation in planning and decision making. Initially, the Amendment was valid for all parts of India, including Schedule V Areas. But as traditional tribal institutions were still functional and required legal legitimacy to their self-governing systems, several activists and groups challenged the implementation of 73rd Amendment in Schedule Areas. In 1996, based on the Bhuria

Committee's recommendations, the PESA Act was enacted that went one step further to the 73rd Amendment by acknowledging the rights of adivasis to plan and decide the course of development in their regions by empowering the Gram Sabha to have a say in the nature of development, land acquisition and also in resettlement and rehabilitation measures in the region. The Gram Sabha and Panchayat have also been given the power "to prevent alienation of land in the Scheduled areas and to take appropriate action to restore any unlawfully alienated land of Scheduled Tribes"⁴² Along with these important clauses on people's role in decision making, PESA also gives rights over minor water bodies and minor minerals.

Orissa has diluted its Gram Panchayat Act, while Jharkhand's Panchayat Act is not in accordance with the central legislation. States like Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh who adopted PESA provisions are bypassing their own state laws in favour of private companies while in Andhra Pradesh, the government machinery is influencing the gram sabha's decision on transferring land to mining companies. The clause empowering the gram sabha to monitor land acquisition and alienation is particularly important in the light of the nature of tourism development in these areas and the need for regulation. While examples abound of disregard and violation of the PESA in the context of extractives-linked industries, we begin to see a similar trend in the context of tourism. In Anantgiri mandal of Andhra Pradesh, which is a Scheduled Area, the last few years have seen several new resorts and hotels come up in the Araku valley. Similarly, areas around the Kanha National Park in Madhya Pradesh have about 30-35 resorts that have come up. In most of these aforesaid cases, tourism developed mostly without consultation or consent of the grama sabhas.

Another historic development in the legislative space is the Scheduled Tribes and other traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006. Reserved and protected forests, sanctuaries, national parks and other protected areas have been given the status of "community forest resources" by this Act and therefore, rights of tribal and other forest dwelling communities extend over these areas. Important community rights recognised include: the right to live in the forest land, right of ownership; access to collect, use and dispose minor forest produce; rights of fishing and grazing, rights for conversion of pattas or leases, right to conserve and right to enjoy customary rights. While the rules and detailed implementation guidelines of the Act are being negotiated and drafted, it can only be hoped that the principle and spirit of this legislation is retained and that adivasi communities will be able to use it for what it is meant to be – a tool to ensure that their lives, practices and culture are not subservient to the market and to powerful commercial lobbies.

Closing Thoughts

This paper has put forth arguments and cases, drawing from international and national experiences to tourism's increasing role in the indigenous peoples debate. But as we acknowledge that tourism indeed is contributing to the displacement, exploitation and marginalisation of indigenous communities, there is also the hope that it might transform itself into a tool for benefiting these communities – economically and culturally – without being exploitative. When confronted with highly destructive forms of "development" like mining, dams and extractives, indigenous communities are pinning their hopes on tourism – that it can be a tool for their collective economic empowerment, and a means for promoting greater understanding and respect for their identities, culture and traditions. But will tourism development in India respond to this call? Will tourism which by its very nature is a human space - be more human and ethical? Will it be guided by its responsibility to be a steward of the peoples, cultures, and natural environment that it so benefits from? Will its relationship with communities it depends on, be respectful and harmonious or predatory and exploitative? Is it willing to be unmasked and respond to the adivasi's johar?

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9. "*Paradigm Wars: Indigenous Peoples' Resistance to Economic Globalization*", International Forum on Globalization, Committee on Indigenous Peoples, 2005.

Endnotes

- ¹ Usage Note: When used in reference to a member of an indigenous people, the noun native, like its synonym aborigine, can evoke unwelcome stereotypes of primitiveness or cultural backwardness that many people now seek to avoid. Despite its potentially negative connotations, native is enjoying increasing popularity in ethnonyms such as native Australian and Alaska Native, perhaps due to the wide acceptance of Native American as a term of ethnic pride and respect. natives. *www.dictionary.com*. *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/natives> (accessed: July 04, 2007). In this paper we prefer to use the term indigenous people/tribals/ adivasis.
- ² Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2001 census
- ³ "*Rethinking Tourism and Ecotourism: the paving of paradise and what you can do to stop it*," Deborah McLaren, Kumarian Press, 1998.
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- ¹² *Ibid*
- ¹³ Wildlife Institute of India, June 2007, <http://www.wii.gov.in.htm>
- ¹⁴ *Id* 10
- ¹⁵ Pradip Prabhu, "*Tribal Forest Interface – Logic of Survival*", *Combat Law*, Volume 2 Issue 5, December – January 2004, p 5-18.
- ¹⁶ Data collected from primary field investigation by Souparna Lahiri and Devjit Nandi for NFFPFW, India.

- ¹⁷ <http://www.incredibleindiaholiday.com/incredible-india-wildlife-holidays/kanha-wildlife-tour.html>
- ¹⁸ In 1995, the World Bank launched the ecodevelopment project with the Indian government. Pench Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh was eventually selected as one of the loan recipients. The general objectives of the project were to protect biodiversity and ecosystems in India by motivating villagers in the buffer zones around the national parks to reduce their dependence on the forests for survival. The World Bank designed a program based upon an understanding that human populations living in wildlife conservation areas have a negative impact on the delicate plant and animal ecosystems; they must therefore be resettled outside the boundaries of the wildlife reserves and encouraged to survive without entering the forests. This course of action, it was felt, will protect villagers and their crops from wild animals and will protect wild animals and plant species from human encroachment.
- ¹⁹ The park is in a designated V Schedule Area – Areas identified by the Constitution of India with high percentage of tribal populations that are to be administered differently in recognition of tribal institutions and governance.
- ²⁰ *Id 16*
- ²¹ This case is drawn from “*adivasis, rights and tourism: an assertion from Nagarahole*”, EQUATIONS, 2000.
- ²² Refer the Declaration of the *International Forum on Indigenous Tourism, Oaxaca, 2002* issued in response to IYE
- ²³ “*Creating voice for Indigenous People*”, published by National Advocacy Council for Development of Indigenous People (NACDIP) in association with PREM-Orissa and ITWWS – Tamil Nadu, December 2002.
- ²⁴ *Id 12*
- ²⁵ “*People and Parks: Linking Protected Area Management with Local Communities*”, World Bank, 1992.
- ²⁶ Alison M. Johnston, “*Is the Sacred for Sale? Tourism and Indigenous People*”, Earthscan Publication, 2006.
- ²⁷ *Id 11*
- ²⁸ *Id 11*
- ²⁹ *Id 11*
- ³⁰ “*Tourism and the SAN in South Africa*”, Contours, Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism, Volume 8 No ¾ November 1998.
- ³¹ There are a few initiatives in progress in India that are beginning to orient tourism development towards indigenous community needs with some even being community-owned and initiated. These include the UNDP and MoT’s Endogenous Rural Tourism Project where few sites work with indigenous communities, work of NGOs in East and Northeast India towards striking a balance between cultural, ecological conservation and tourism and few village-level initiatives like in Khonoma, Nagaland.
- ³² <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/indigenous/standard/index.htm>
- ³³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: <http://www.ohchr.org/english/issues/indigenous/declaration.htm>
- ³⁴ On 22 December 2004, the General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RES/59/174 for a Second International Decade, which commenced on 1 January 2005. The Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. José Antonio Ocampo was appointed Coordinator for the Second Decade. The goal of the Decade is the further strengthening of international cooperation for the solution of problems faced by indigenous people in such areas as culture, education, health, human rights, the environment and social and economic development, by means of action oriented programmes and specific projects, increased technical assistance and relevant standard setting activities. The theme of the Decade is: “Partnership for Action and Dignity”. <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/second.html>
- ³⁵ The Permanent Forum was established by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 2000/22 on 28 July 2000. In this resolution the UNPFII was given a mandate to “discuss indigenous issues within the mandate of the Council relating to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights.” <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/structure.html>
- ³⁶ *Id 26*
- ³⁷ The two references are: “*The railways have a special fascination for foreign tourists who wish to experience the country both at leisure and close personal contact with the indigenous people...*” and “*...ecotourism must help in... in encouraging tribal and local crafts and in improving overall environment and facilitating growth of a more just and fair social order*”, National Tourism Policy, Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India, 2002.
- ³⁸ XI Five Year Plan, Tourism Working Group Report, 2007
- ³⁹ According to the 1998 Ecotourism Policy, it is based on Guidelines for the development of National Parks and Protected areas for Tourism developed by the UNWTO , PATA Code for Environmentally Responsible Tourism, Environmental Guidelines of the World Travel and Tourism Council , the Himalayan Code of Conduct prepared by the Himalayan Tourism Advisory Board and Ecotourism Guidelines by Ecotourism Society.
- ⁴⁰ Ecotourism as Market Based Conservation Mechanism, briefing paper, EQUATIONS, 2006
- ⁴¹ “Globalisation, Governance & Grassroots: The case of ecotourism and its impacts in tribal dominated areas in India”, EQUATIONS, November 2006.
- ⁴² Section 4 (m (iii)) of PESA

Women in tourism: realities, dilemmas and opportunities¹

EQUATIONS, September 2007

The tourism industry – on a roll

Consistent growth and increasing diversification has given the global tourism industry the reputation of being one of the fastest growing economic sectors worldwide. An ebullient World Tourism Organisation reports (UNWTO) that international tourism is very much on the rise -the number of international arrivals grew from 25 million in 1950 to 842 million in 2006 representing a 4.6% annual growth rate. The income generated by these arrivals surpassed the growth rate of the world economy, grew at a rate of 11.2% during the same period, reaching around US\$ 735 billion in 2006.

While in 1950, the top 15 destinations of the world absorbed 88% of international arrivals, in 1970 this proportion dipped to 75% and even further to 57% in 2005, reflecting the emergence of new destinations, many of them in developing countries. The UNWTO forecasts that international arrivals are expected to reach nearly 1.6 billion by the year 2020. Of these, 1.2 billion will be intraregional and 378 million will be long-haul travellers.

Continuing world prosperity has clearly been the main driver behind this boom. Asia and the Pacific stand out as the motors of international tourism expansion and the tourism juggernaut continues to move notwithstanding manmade and natural crises. Emerging markets and developing economies especially in Asia, tourism promotion by national governments especially in developing regions, increased investment in infrastructure, marketing and advertising, development of domestic markets, liberalisation of air transport, growing intraregional cooperation and a growing number of public-private partnerships are key factors in this expansion in the tourism business.

So what does this growth mean for women – particularly for women in destinations of the global south? To what extent do they benefit from this phenomenon? Has tourism opened doors for women? Has its unstoppable growth contributed to women's empowerment?

Frameworks for Women's Empowerment

The advancement of women and the achievement of equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice. These are essential to build a sustainable, just, secure and developed society. For decades now, through vibrant movements and political struggles, women have challenged existing gender relations and patriarchal systems to reframe the development dialogue. They have placed issues of violence, race, caste and other forms of discrimination that hit women the hardest; and the need for equality and human rights of women - including social, economic, political, legal, sexual and reproductive rights - at the center-stage of this struggle.

Global processes from Rio, Copenhagen, Vienna, Cairo and Beijing to Durban, particularly the CEDAW (Convention for Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women), the UN Fourth World Conference on Women and its subsequent Beijing Platform for Action, have set out critical concerns and strategic action points. The battle for equality, to challenge the status quo, to demand action on women's key concerns, to mobilise civil society in both the global North and South, and to push for a

global reordering of the world's resources, continues with the same intensity, but leaving one with little sense of progress on substantive issues. There has been enormous frustration at the lack of government commitment and accountability to development goals in general and gender equality commitments in particular.

So, what is the role that tourism has played and can play in this important struggle for equality, equity and empowerment of women? In 1996, Vivian Kinnaird and Derek Hall in '*Understanding Tourism Processes: a gender aware framework*'² invite us to understand tourism processes from a framework of social differentiation. Gender is one key component. Kinnaird and Hall argue that tourism involves processes which are constructed out of complex and varied social realities and relations that are often hierarchical and usually unequal. The division of labour, the social constructions of "landscape" - both natural and human - influence how societies construct the cultural "other" and the realities of experiences of tourist and host all show that in examining the issues of relationships; differences, and inequalities exist. They went further to argue that tourism's identification as an industry based on the economic, social and political power relations between nations or groups of people represents the extension of the politics of gender relations.

Margaret Swain³ similarly argues that tourism is built on attractions to sameness and differences. "Is the world's largest industry willing to be feminist?" she asks. A feminist worldview is non-androcentric. It explains phenomena in terms of women's as well as men's experiences. It is political when asking how to promote equity among women and men, based in understandings of the cultural and social positions of women and their subordination in relationship to men. It asks the question "does this work for women?" and seeks the perspective of women, as well in interrogating data, frameworks, experiences and policies.

EQUATIONS has argued that international, national and state level policies on tourism do state a general commitment to women's empowerment but rarely go beyond that to understand and evolve specific measures. The UNWTO's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, for instance, does not specifically address the gendered aspects of tourism although Articles 2, 6 and 9 are linked to some of the issues being debated. Article 2 calls to respect equality between men and women and promote human rights particularly individual rights for marginalised and vulnerable groups. It disapproves of exploitation of human beings, such as sexual exploitation. Article 6 concerns travel-related press material and other media and states that these should contain truthful and balanced information on travel destinations that could influence the flow of tourists. These media should not in any way promote sex tourism, it asserts. Article 9 on Rights of the workers and entrepreneurs in the tourism industry, focusses on the protection of legal rights of workers, their salaries and working conditions and argues that these should be guaranteed under the supervision of the national and local administrations. It also suggests that workers should be given sufficient social protection. Despite these clauses, it seems critical that the Global Code should address issues of the empowerment and exploitation of women more directly, given the significant role that women play in tourism and the significant violations of ethics that are linked to women's experiences in tourism.

Often women are exhorted to subscribe to an individual empowerment ethic - overcome what's in your mind and you can do it! In celebration of World Tourism Day 2007 a leading travel and tourism magazine⁴ ran a lead feature on India's "Incredible Women in Tourism" – profiling a series of urban upper/middle class women who worked in up-market travel agencies, hotels and the government, in the tourism sector. Most subscribed heavily to the individual empowerment ethic. Most felt they were not disadvantaged being a woman and the key to success was hard work and the individual will to achieve. If the magazine had featured local women in tourism destinations struggling in the sector; their perspectives, experiences and realities would have been very different. But apparently these masses of women do not count. This attitude that policy makers, governments and the industry of tourism have adopted of viewing women's empowerment as an individual's challenge can prove to be very dangerous, as it diverts focus away from the need to deal with institutionalized gender discrimination in tourism.

Policies and budgets have the potential both to perpetuate gender bias and blindness, and to transform them. Gender disaggregated data, gender-sensitive policies and indicators are essential to building up a picture of the nature and extent of gender inequality. We need to understand the way institutions with their gendered rules work and we need to develop the political will, processes and tools to challenge and change them. Gender audits and gender budgeting are tools that could be employed meaningfully - particularly at community levels. These in turn, will impact women's political participation and decision making on the forms, impacts, models and pace of tourism in their communities. It is time tourism recognised women's agency and heard their voices in its development.

Womens' status and leadership – participation in decision making and political processes

In India, women have been viewed by governments and policy makers merely as extensions of the traditional roles they play in families and society - that of nurturers and caregivers. The focus was on promoting the welfare of women and thereby, children rather than empowering women to acquire their rights. Schemes and policies for women, therefore, were limited in both vision and approach. Rural India, where two-thirds of India's population resides, faces enormous challenges in health, education, nutrition, employment and environment. Women bear primary responsibility in every one of these areas – day after day. India's rural women have been systematically denied the freedom, resources, information and decision-making power they need to carry out these responsibilities and have been kept in an almost unimaginable state of powerlessness, illiteracy, isolation and malnutrition. The 73rd Amendment of the Indian Constitution mandated an unprecedented transfer of decision-making power and resources in the rural areas to local democratic councils - the *panchayats*. Most revolutionary of all, one-third of all panchayat seats are reserved for women – guaranteeing them a role in determining the future of their communities. If fully implemented, women potentially have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives.

Early advocates of tourism, viewed tourism employment as a positive way of integrating under-privileged subgroups of society into mainstream economy. However these have tended largely to reinforce an existing sexist, ethnic and caste-based system of social stratification. In tourism particularly, women's roles in economic production cannot be understood without reference to the cultural context of women's structural position in society and the home. Kinnaird and Hall⁵ cite the example of tourism-dependent areas of Britain and Ireland to make this point. They argue that innovations like the 'bed and breakfast accommodation' in tourism ghettoize women in ways of work that are an extension of their domestic activities. This is particularly interesting in the context of India's Ministry of Tourism (headed in succession by two very articulate women as Tourism Ministers) showcasing bed and breakfast accommodation schemes as a policy intervention towards women's empowerment. Similarly, the Rural Tourism Project of the Ministry, while having the laudable aim of women's empowerment among other aims, has largely conceptualised empowerment in economic terms without taking into account the social patriarchal structures and roles in which their lives are embedded. These policy initiatives reveal the naiveté of the government in offering simplistic solutions to the need for genuine empowerment of women in tourism.

Often women's economic empowerment programmes, particularly those for poor rural women, focus on micro-credit and self-help groups. This in some ways only increases the burden on women and limits their capacity to leverage productive and scaled up micro-enterprise. An evaluation report of the Rural Tourism Project of the Ministry of Tourism⁶ has more or less equated gender sensitisation to the formation of women's self help groups and seems to believe that this is an adequate indicator of women's empowerment. The focus instead should be on collective enterprise with women's ownership and in order to ensure its success requires significant capacity building and market linkages.

The nature of women's employment in tourism

A very strong argument in favour of tourism development is that it generates employment at different levels due to the wide range of services and products it requires. Undoubtedly, there is truth and merit in this argument. However, it is important to understand what kind of employment local women have access to in tourism, and what happens to men and women then employed in tourism.

Tourism does provide a range of activities where women can participate and also creates opportunities for entrepreneurship development. Global data on numbers of women and men working in tourism-related professions suggests that the organised tourism sector is a particularly important sector where 46 % of the workforce comprises women (in general 30-40% of the workforce is women) (ILO 2007). Of the data available for the years between 1988 and 2005, it appears that there has been a broad increase in the participation of women in the tourism industry at a global level.

However apart from their overall presence in the industry, other factors indicate that women do not seem to benefit and be empowered, particularly from tourism. As in many other sectors, there is significant horizontal and vertical gender segregation of the labour market in tourism. Vertically, the typical "gender pyramid" is prevalent - lower levels and occupations with few career development opportunities being dominated by women and key managerial positions being dominated by men. In India too, women in the organised sector in tourism are relegated to relatively low skill, low paying or stereotypical jobs like front-desk and reception, housekeeping, catering and laundry services. They face very high risks of sexual harassment and exploitation and are discouraged from forming unions or associations to consolidate their strength and influence. The proportion of women's to men's wages is less. Women feature significantly more in part time and/or temporary employment and are typically paid less than men for the same work done.

The feminisation and informalisation of the workforce in tourism, particularly in developing countries, is a matter of concern. Unfortunately, few research studies focus on the gender dimension resulting in little quantitative data on this trend. Women are seen, and hence favoured, as a passive, compliant and sometime invisible workforce that will accept low wages without demanding for their labour and human rights. What remains constant is the low economic value accorded to work performed by women in conditions of exploitation, no job security and violations of human rights. This occurs both directly through prohibitions on labour organisation and indirectly through further abuses where women have claimed rights, such as to organise or to be free from sexual harassment.

Many women workers face difficult, often exploitative conditions. India's national newspapers carried a horrifying story of a woman working in an *ayurvedic* massage parlour in Kerala who was allegedly set on fire by her employer after she refused sexual favours to clients. The International Labour Organisation published a report highlighting the high levels of violence, stress and sexual harassment in hotels, catering and tourism. Unsurprisingly, it is mostly women in junior positions who experience these problems, but unlike in other sectors, women face harassment not only from colleagues and managers but also from clients. Factors such as; late working hours, service of alcohol, dress codes, racism, negative attitudes towards service staff and the uninhibited, sexualised nature of tourism and tourism promotion contribute to a high-risk environment for women and younger workers, as well as ethnic minority, migrant and part-time workers⁷. That these attitudes and difficulties prevail primarily in small scale enterprises is another myth that needs to be exposed. As the case below (see box) highlights it took India's national airline six decades to acknowledge that women can supervise cabin crew as ably as men!

The Maharaja's New Year gift

Air India, India's national airline, has finally decided to catch up with the 21st century and to accept the non-discriminatory provisions in the Constitution that guarantee women equal rights. Incredible as it might seem, it has taken the airline six decades to acknowledge that women can supervise members of the cabin crew as ably as men.

On December 28, 2005, Air India issued a directive stating that women could henceforth be in-flight supervisors. All these years – the airline has been in existence since 1946 – there were different employment conditions that applied to men and women. For example, Air India's female cabin crew were forced to retire many years earlier than their male counterparts. The first age set for retirement for them was 30. Slowly, after many battles, it crept up to 50. Finally, some of these women turned to the Bombay High Court in 2003 and won the right to go on flying until 58, like the men. But the victory could not be savored as within months the Supreme Court overturned the High Court judgment and held that it was not discriminatory to ask women to retire at 50.

The struggle was then taken directly to the Executive and in December 2003, the government of Atal Behari Vajpayee and the Civil Aviation Ministry passed an order asking Air India to allow air hostesses to continue flying until the age of 58.

Kalpana Sharma, India Together January 2006

Sexist and gendered attitudes abound, making it difficult for women at all levels to claim equality and equity. The Chief Justice of Karnataka High Court Cyriac Joseph, speaking to an all-woman audience at the Asia Women Lawyers' Conference⁸ on the theme "*Women's rights are human rights' declared*" "*there was no point in women trying to be men and do all that a man is expected to do.*" Cautioning women, he said, "*Once you lose your womanhood, there is nothing left to be protected.*"

The informal sector⁹ in tourism – invisibilising women's labour

The informal sector is the most direct source of income for local communities in tourism in developing countries. In the developing world 60% of women (in non-agricultural work) work in the informal sector. Much of this is linked directly and indirectly to tourism. The role of women in informal tourism settings such as running home-stay facilities, restaurants and shacks, crafts and handicrafts, handloom, small shops and street vending is significant. But these roles and activities that women perform in tourism are treated as invisible or taken for granted. The need to acknowledge the important economic contribution of women and ensure for them, access to credit, capacity building and enhanced skills, access to the market, encouragement to form unions, associations and cooperatives, to increase their bargaining power and to ensure that their safety health and social security needs are met is critical.

Creating opportunities for income generating activities, effective marketing and integrating women's entrepreneurship with various government schemes to promote women's self employment, would be an important component to promote women's participation in tourism development. The sharing of experiences in tourism, understanding and demystifying complex official documents, such as tourism policies, and master plans, related to the industry, providing information about access to documents are also important steps.

Community based tourism initiatives, particularly of local women's groups and co-operatives can be an accessible and suitable entry point for women's participation in tourism. They seem to generate more long-term motivation than initiatives from outside.¹⁰ These activities help to create financial independence for local women, help them to develop the necessary skills and improve their education, which in turn increase self-esteem and helps create more equitable relationships in families and communities.

Women and natural resources

There is a direct correlation between the depletion of natural resources and increased burden on women in daily work in any region of the world. When tourism restricts community access to, or contributes to the depletion of natural resources, it is women not only as homemakers, but also as community members, who suffer the most. Women's access to and control over forest produce and water comes into sharp conflict when tourism usurps these very resources needed to fulfill their life and livelihood needs. The daily burden on women, of finding water for the household or firewood for cooking is oftentimes doubled or tripled.

When tourism displaces people from traditional livelihoods or worse still, physically displaces them, the worst affected are women who are engaged in the bulk of ancillary occupations like tobacco cultivation, coconut harvesting, fish sorting and processing which are jeopardised through such displacement. Transition from certain activities to others, for example away from agriculture, could have implications for food security. Certain traditional occupations risk being crowded out, that could have an effect on the society as a whole. A study in Kumarakom in Kerala showed that women moved out of agriculture to tourism linked construction work as it paid them better daily wages. But having neglected the fields, they ended up losing on both counts as the construction work was only short-term but they could not return to cultivate fields overgrown with weeds. It becomes the prerogative of governments and the industry to ensure that rather than displace them, tourism should build and bolster supplementary livelihood options that women can choose from.

The demand for water by hotels can mean less local water for nearby farmers, which can affect food production and increase the workload on women in collecting water from other sources. The establishment of golf courses and special tourism zones or enclaves can also put severe constraints on land and water resources for communities burdening the women the most. The incriminating links between tourism and climate change will unfortunately add to the burden women already bear.

Severe abuse of human rights –trafficking of women and sex tourism

The gross violation of human rights due to sex tourism and trafficking of women are the shadow side of the booming tourism industry. Migration and trafficking of women, both from within developing countries and cross border to service the tourist trade is commonplace. Russian women to Thailand and the Philippines and Goa, eastern European women to European countries and women from Nepal and Bangladesh are trafficked to India to service the sex trade. The reports of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women (UNCHR) have highlighted the linkages between countries in economic transition and the increase in trafficking and forced prostitution of women.

Though there are efforts by few tourism service providers to condemn child sex tourism and actively participate in campaigns that combat it, tourism industry bodies have not taken serious action against the exploitation of women in trafficking and sex tourism. In fact, while tourism is celebrated as a globalised and modernised form of development - it is global tourism, globalised crime and technology like the internet that have also given the sex industry new means of exploiting, marketing and supplying women and children as commodities to buyers¹¹.

The representation of women in tourism

The ideological constructs of the advertising industry have infused the tourism, aviation and hospitality industry. In tourism marketing, women are the 'face' of the sector, being the most widely-used objects in tourism promotion after natural beauty and cultural heritage. Women have been objectified and depicted as pleasure providers¹²- their images often exoticised, patronising and misleading.

There is also a strong case for eliminating sexual objectification of women working in the tourism industry. With sex tourism being the most negative and prominent example, there is a significant amount of sexual objectification of women working in the tourism industry. Women are expected to dress in an “attractive” manner, to look beautiful (i.e. slim, young, and pretty) and to “play along” with sexual harassment by customers¹³. Stereotypical and sexist images of women are often part of tourism promotion in brochures and advertisements. Friendly, smiling and pliant women fitting certain standards of attractiveness, attired in traditional costumes, waiting to submissively serve the customer’s every wish, this is the typical portrayal of women in tourism material. The industry however has chosen not to be particularly disturbed by this view of women, of seeing it as a gross violation of their dignity and rights, and believes it to be justified in the sale of a product. It is time the global tourism industry takes responsibility for the way women are used in the selling of tourism and also addresses this in its code of ethics.

Tourism modifies local cultural practices in ways that affect men and women differentially. For example, in Kumarakom, increased houseboat tourism severely restricted privacy of local women who used the same backwaters to bathe and to meet with other women socially. When tourism makes products of culture, it tends to commodify women in particular – although both men and women are impacted by the insensitive selling of culture. Jane Henrici¹⁴ gives an interesting example of women in Peru – *“Before the tourists came, when a woman wore flowers in her hair in public, it meant she was available to enter into a dating relationship. Once the tourists arrived they liked to take pictures of the photogenic women wearing flowers. Soon the pressure built for all women in the market to wear flowers – detaching it from its cultural meaning and becoming a pure aesthetic signifier in a touristic frame.”*

The challenges ahead

The tourism industry and stewards of tourism development face many serious social and human challenges, in the years ahead. The growing links between migration - both voluntary and forced - and tourism needs to take into account the gender dimensions of this global phenomenon. HIV/AIDS is not only driven by gender inequality but entrenches it. Tourism is increasingly seen to have a role in this entrenchment in its links to trafficking, prostitution and sex tourism.

A categorical position condemning the blatant and inhuman exploitation of women in tourism through trafficking and the sex industry is a moral challenge that the global tourism industry needs to respond to. Declaring that the tourism product will not be promoted at the expense of women’s dignity, respect and rights is the other position that the industry needs to endorse and practice.

The increasing trend of promoting tourism in conflict zones and the consequent impacts it has on women who are already battling for survival is another matter of serious concern. Disasters and epidemics have an uneasy relationship with tourism – but gender dimensions are rarely integrated into assistance and reconstruction efforts with the focus being largely on the safety of tourists and revival of tourism infrastructure.

Engendering tourism policy and understanding tourism’s impacts on women will be key steps to combating the feminization and informalisation of the workforce in tourism, particularly in developing countries. Research that focuses on the gender dimension of this process could lead to policy and interventions that can work to the advantage of women. Most policies today focus on and favour large and medium enterprise in tourism. Shifting the focus to privilege small and micro-enterprise will not only lead to sustainable options, but create more viable spaces for women’s engagement in tourism.

Poverty, and in particular urban poverty, which threatens to be an issue of growing magnitude has deep roots in gender injustice. Tourism often wipes out the existence and means of livelihood of the urban poor in an overt manner while continuing to depend covertly on cheap labour and exploitative relationships in order to flourish. Ensuring basic protection in terms of social security, access to information and

credit and market linkages will be critical to enable larger numbers of women in the informal economy - both in rural and urban areas - to gain from tourism.

Women's engagement to assert their rights as stakeholders in all aspects of tourism development (planning, implementation, participation, ownership and monitoring) is also determined by their informed participation in decision making spaces. Facilitating an understanding of tourism and its patterns among women would not only enable them to raise questions about the course of tourism development but also make claims on its outcomes.

Endnotes

- ¹ The experiences of women as tourists is increasingly a topic for study and research. This paper however focuses on women who live in tourism destinations, particularly destinations in the global South
- ² Tourism Management, Vol 17, No 2 1996
- ³ Gender/Tourism/Fun (?) Eds. Swain and Momsen CCC 2002. Swain (1995) offered the following definition of Gender in tourism : A system of culturally constructed identities, expressed in ideologies of masculinity and femininity, interacting with socially structured relationships in divisions of labour and leisure, sexuality, and power between women and men
- ⁴ Express Travel World September 2007
- ⁵ Kinnard and Hall 1996 ibid
- ⁶ Evaluation study Rural Tourism Scheme Mott MacDonald MoT June 2007
- ⁷ Gender, Globalisation and Tourism Cultures, Presented by Dr. Annette Pritchard at the Special Meeting of Women Ministers of Culture, 2005<http://womenministers.government.is/Programme//nr/3269>
- ⁸ Women must not try to be men: Cyriac Joseph 23/09/2007 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2007/09/23/stories/2007092354980500.htm>
- ⁹ There is no universally accepted upon definition of the "informal sector". However, the interpretation of the term best suited for an understanding of issues referred to in this paper is provided by the ILO in its report – "Decent Work and the Informal Economy" (International Labour Conference, 90th session, 2002). "...These different groups have been termed "informal" because they share one important characteristic: *they are not recognized or protected under the legal and regulatory frameworks. This is not, however, the only defining feature of informality. Informal workers and entrepreneurs are characterized by a high degree of vulnerability.* They are not recognized under the law and therefore receive little or no legal or social protection and are unable to enforce contracts or have security of property rights."
- ¹⁰ Gender & Tourism: Women's Employment and Participation in Tourism, UNED- UK project report summary 1999
- ¹¹ Hughes, M.D., "The Internet and Sex Industries: Partners in Global Sexual Exploitation," Technology and Society Magazine, Spring 2000.
- ¹² Tourism – Its Effects on Women in Goa, a report to the People', Bailancho Saad; Goa, 1987.
- ¹³ Gruetter, K. & Pluess, Ch. (Hg.), 1996. Herrliche Aussichten! Frauen im Tourismus. Zuerich: Rotpunktverlag (Splendid Views! Women in Tourism)
- ¹⁴ Calling to the Money : Gender and Tourism in Peru Jane Henrici Gender/Tourism/Fun (?) Eds Swain and Momsen CCC 2002

Child Labour: An ugly face of Tourism

EQUATIONS Paper for the ILO Karnataka Child Labour Project. State Level Workshop: Role of Employers Associations in Child Labour Elimination

on 11th September 2007 at Bangalore

India has the distinction of the largest number of working children in the world today¹. Indian official statistics speak of about 13 million children, but unofficial estimates vary between 60 and 100 million children. This coincides with estimates of NGO's that around 40% of all 250 million children between 6 and 14 years are not in school on a given day.

Tourism and Child Labour

Tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in India and has received much impetus from the government, as it is seen as a major contributor to the economy. Unfortunately, tourism is also one of the factors responsible for increased trafficking, child labour and sexual exploitation of children. Unregulated and unaccountable tourism development with no protective measures has added to the exploitation of children in tourism. While the debate over the child sexual abuse and trafficking in the context of tourism has been ongoing, child labour undoubtedly exploits a much larger number of children and it has not drawn serious condemnation or concerted action by this image conscious industry. In the tourism sector millions of children around the country are trapped in a world of work, many of them are at risk from hazardous and exploitative labour denying their basic and fundamental right to education, health and childhood.

It is generally agreed that² the children working in factories are vulnerable to sexual abuse by employers or adult co-workers. These children don't live in a zone of constant sexual threats, how ever the deep links of most of the child labour in the services sector with the travel and hotel industry makes them prone to abuse and sexual exploitation much more seriously than in secondary sector. While monitoring of a factory where children work is a partial solution for containing the gravity of the issue, in the secondary sector, such mechanisms are dysfunctional in the spatially de-nucleated travel, tourism and hotel industries with an informally organized nature of work.

It is common to see children working in the service sector working in abysmal conditions³ in small restaurants and shacks, selling curios and trinkets, beach boys and girls, rag pickers, tourist guides, or begging rich tourists for money. In hotels, children work as bell-boys, waiters and waitresses, maids, house keeping workers while in catering, many are kitchen helpers or dish-washers or servers. Children also work as masseurs and prostitutes. In the travel business they work as porters and coolies, cleaners and assistants and for carrying loads on treks.

Children working in unorganized sectors with regard to tourism related activities, too work in extremely bad working conditions where they do not even have protection for their long strained working hours, under unhealthy and dangerous conditions and most often under intimidation.

Initiatives to combat child labour in tourism sector from United Nation World Tourism Organization

- UNWTO established a Task Force⁴ in the year 1997 to Protect Children from Sexual Exploitation in Tourism. This is a global action platform of tourism-related key-players from the government and the tourism industry sectors, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and media associations whose aim is to prevent, uncover, isolate and eradicate the sexual exploitation of children in tourism. In the year 2001, The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET)⁵ was adopted with a comprehensive set of principles that outline to guide tourism development and to serve as a frame of reference for the different stakeholders in the tourism sector, with the objective of minimizing the negative impact of tourism. In the preamble of the global code of ethics, they have very clearly agreed and referred to the conventions and recommendations adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in the area of prohibition of forced labour and child labour. The only mandate of the task force was to look into protection of children from sexual exploitation, but in the year 2007 they agreed to rewrite the objectives of this Task Force to make clear that the sexual abuse would remain the main focus, but with a broader view to include other aspects that could lead to sexual abuse such as child labour⁶. The reason they broadened the scope of the task force was to acknowledge that children working in tourist areas were often invisible and mostly behind the scenes in hazardous conditions to the child and leading to sexual abuse.

Government of India-The government of India announced a ban, effective from 10th October 2006⁷, on the employment of children as domestic servants and workers in roadside eateries, teashops, restaurants, hotels etc. The reason is that many of these children, according to the Ministry of Labour and Employment of the Government of India, are subjected to physical violence, psychological trauma and even sexual abuse. To cite a similar example from another country like Nepal, the Nepal Government in the year 2000 banned child labour in tourism⁸, as they identified children working in the tourism industry as a hazardous occupation and also estimated that out of 2 million child workers in Nepal, a large number of them were identified to be employed in the tourism industry.

It is interesting to note, for instance, in Karnataka, the employment of children in hotels and several other establishments is completely banned under the Karnataka Shops and Commercial Establishments Act 1961 of the State. This is even prior to the Notification issued by the Ministry of Labour, Government of India in the month of August 2007 for banning child labour in the hospitality industry, terming it as a hazardous occupation. It is obvious from these figures that a mere ban does little to change the situation for children on the ground. What is needed is the serious political will to implement such bans and the cooperation and initiative of other stakeholders.

The ban looks at the age of the child as 14, as per the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 but some of the problems noted in enforcement of this ban are that the law provides no protection for children aged 14 to 18, who also face exploitation and abuse from their employers. Illegal employers almost never faced sanction. Money that the government allocates for rehabilitation, which is critical for preventing children from returning to dangerous work, remains unspent.

While the ban evoked responses from a wide range of actors particularly NGO's and civil society organisations working on child rights, the tourism industry was conspicuously silent on the issue. Industry actors and associations who are active at budget time commenting on subsidies and tax cuts, have not taken any responsibility or uttered a word on this ban notification and on their role and responsibility to protection of children.

There is a myth that child labour is a fact of life and that employing a child helps the child and in turn the child's family to get out of poverty. However, years of trying to address the problem of child labour has proven that this is not necessarily so. Rather means of ensuring that adults get work, and get paid fair wages for their work will probably be more helpful and a more fundamental solution. Furthermore, some organisations have also argued that a blanket ban is not feasible and that steps must also be simultaneously taken to protect the rights of working children. Though it is clear that child labour must be fought and ways to ensure that children have access to education, safe and healthy environments and the ability to experience childhood should be the goal of any civilised society.

Work damages a child's physical, mental, social and psychological development. So why do children work?

Children find themselves compelled to work because of situations which are beyond their control. The ILO describes this succinctly when it says "Child Labour is a result of, and contributing factor to entrenched poverty". Some causes that force children into work are

- The socio-economic conditions of families - for poor families' children are a productive resource and needless to say, they have more children.
- Labour economics - Child labour is cheap labour. Children are employed instead of adults to lower the costs of production.

Sudden poverty caused by natural disasters, droughts, forced migrations, the push to urban areas for survival, economic crises, displacement, or armed conflict also lead to situations of increase in child labour.

Tourism related works – risky for the child⁹

- Children involved in tourism related work run the risk of being sexually exploited due to constant exposure and involvement with strangers who intend to exploit children. For instance, children employed in roadside eateries and highway dhabas are highly vulnerable to sexual abuse and drug abuse, to contracting HIV/AIDS as they come in contact with both locals as well as tourists.
- Because of their physical and economic vulnerability many children end up in a life of solitude, suffering mental, as well as physical trauma.
- Long working hours, unstable employment, low pay, cheap labour and extremely poor working and living conditions lead to poor physical and psychological health.

What can Tourism Industry Employers and associations do?

It is very clear that the traditional response of just improvising legislation and a few enforcement measures is not enough:

Business has an indispensable role to play in the growing world-wide movement to effectively abolish child labour. In the case of tourism we have the following suggestions in order that business' can play an important role in the elimination of child labour:

Different sectors and sections in tourism such as Informal sector, unorganised sector, business development sector, industry should formulate a code – "Child Labour free Tourism"

- To adhere strictly to the minimum age provisions of national labour laws and regulations.
- Develop codes of conduct or make it explicit in your company's formal policy that all forms of child labour will be avoided and bring a "No Child Labour" Policy.
- **Pressurise the government to ratify the two 'Conventions'** on child labour of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which has not yet been ratified by India. These conventions are the most explicit in specifying what combating child labour should amount to in practice. These are the **Minimum Age Convention (No.138)** (This has been ratified by over 143 countries) and the **Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (No. 182)**. (This convention has been ratified by 158 countries). These Conventions have been jointly drafted in the ILO by national governments, employer's associations and trade unions. The business community is therefore politically and morally obliged to implement them. The Minimum Age Convention specifies that employment is banned for children under the age of 15. The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention includes a

ban on hazardous work for children under the age of 18. Of course this Convention also bans 'working' as a child soldier, in drugs trafficking, pornography and prostitution, and forced labour. Despite the fact that they are addressed to governments, these instruments can be a useful reference for all who are involved in the elimination of child labour.¹⁰

- The employers and their organization have a great role to play in the broad, grass roots social mobilization, by forming employers federations where they can influence the development of national policies on child labour.
- Assisting in the development of guidelines for sectoral industrial association and small to medium sized enterprises.
- Create awareness among tourism personnel on the rights of the child and to stop child labour.
- Participate in efforts to combat child labour in industries through multi-stakeholder initiatives - collaborative efforts of industries, companies, trade unions, NGOs, Government etc.
- Working with NGO's by assisting the children to go back to school
- Co-opt NGO in advocacy or collaborative role during formation of an alliance of employers organizations to take forward the child labour elimination agenda.

Responsibility of employers in unorganised sector

- Put an immediate stop to the children working with you
- Involve your own staff and your suppliers in combating child labour: inform them and involve them in your company's action plan against child labour.
- Create, independently or working with others, facilities such as crèches and day care centres for employees, to help them keep their children out of child labour.

A case study on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in tourism

CSR will play an important role in combating child labour by bringing together a number of different stakeholders e.g. unions, CSO's, industries and companies around commonly agreed norms through multi-stakeholder approach and to make companies accountable for their impact on society on the basis of agreed international standards like ILO convention.

The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism - a Success Story - The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism was first developed by ECPAT International¹¹, in cooperation with Scandinavian tour operators and the UN World Travel Organization (UNWTO) in 1998. It expanded rapidly, earning a reputation as a strong multi-stakeholder instrument for both child protection and as tool for efficient Corporate Social Responsibility across the tourism sector. Members are all Code of Conduct signatory¹² companies, governmental bodies, international organizations, and child protection organizations. In March 2007, "The Code" organization counted 600 signatory companies.

The Code of Conduct consists of six criteria:

1. Establishment of a corporate ethical policy against commercial sexual exploitation of children
2. Training of personnel in the country of origin and travel destinations
3. Introduction of clauses in contracts with suppliers, stating a common repudiation of sexual exploitation of children
4. Information provision to travellers
5. Information provision to local "key persons" at the destinations
6. Annual reporting to "The Code" organization and ongoing monitoring by the local Code representative.

The signatory companies and its partners show a strong demand for high quality implementation of the Code of Conduct. This new procedure foresees a close cooperation between the signing company and the local Code representatives for the preparation, the implementation and the monitoring phases.

The Code of Conduct is an efficient and appreciated CSR instrument for the protection of children from commercial sexual exploitation in travel and tourism, which reaches yearly already over 35 million international tourists travelling in “hot spots” known for child sex tourism.

The key factors for this successful implementation are follows.

- This initiative has been industry driven since the beginning, but is based on a multi-stakeholder cooperation between the industry, governmental bodies, international organizations and child protection organizations. For the protection of children, competitors commit to cooperate which ensures a high quality in implementation due to peer pressure.
- The Code organization and the annual monitoring done by the local Code representative (usually independent child protection NGOs like ECPAT), should ensure that the signatory company feels a strong accountability also some years after the signature. With the worldwide establishment of the Code of Conduct in the tourism sector an important process for the protection of children against commercial sexual exploitation in travel and tourism could be started.

Inspiration for similar efforts can be taken in the case of child labour by formulating a code of conduct for the tourism industry which will serve as a prevention tool. This must be formulated with initiatives from the industries for protection of children from child labour and to raise awareness among stakeholders in order to strengthen the understanding of the code as part of the corporate social responsibility.

This clearly shows that unless we all work together in combating this form of exploitation of children, the child labour issue cannot be addressed, and the rights of the children cannot be secured, we will continue to deprive millions of children – our tomorrow and their today. It is time for more evident action as we owe this to our children: TO SAY “NO” TO TOURISM THAT EXPLOITS A CHILD.

Endnotes

- ¹ According to ILO’s Global Report released on 4 May 2006 “An end to Child Labour – Within Reach”
- ² Right versus obligations civil society responses to child labour and child abuse in the service industry by T.T. Sreekumar and Gayathri.
- ³ Right of the child in the context of tourism- a compilation, EQUATIONS 2006
- ⁴ The objective of the Task Force was to raise awareness and to improve initiatives collectively and individually on this problem. The Task Force is also an important opportunity to exchange views and experiences and to strengthen the network to better understand what is taking place around the world. It was also very important to cooperate and to build partnerships, and to encourage the use of new methods to deal with the problem at international and national level.
- ⁵ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, 21 December 2001, A/ RES/ 56/ 212 Global Code of Ethics for Tourism: http://www.unwto.org/code_ethics/pdf/languages/Codigo%20Etico%20Ing.pdf
- ⁶ This discussion was done during the 20th task force meeting to protect children from sexual exploitation in tourism which was held in Berlin, 9th march 2007 -The decision of the Executive Committee to broaden the mandate of the Task Force to include all forms of child exploitation in tourism. UNWTO as a UN specialized agency needed a broader agenda to include a broader perspective on the abuse of children. That would lead to include activities in other fields related to child protection. The guiding principle is the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism which covers several dimensions on child exploitation.
- ⁷ Notification banning child labour in Domestic and Hospitality Sector effective from 10th October 2006
- ⁸ BBC news online, Thursday, 22 June, 2000, 10:13 GMT 11:13 UK -Tourism industry is the largest employer of children By Sushil Sharma in Kathmandu
- ⁹ EQUATIONS briefing note on child labour and tourism, November 2006
- ¹⁰ http://www.ioe-emp.org/fileadmin/user_upload/documents_pdf/papers/position_papers/english/pos_2005_may_childlabou.pdf
- ¹¹ ECPAT stands for “End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Child Trafficking for Sexual Purposes” and is the only international NGO exclusively specialized in the prevention of and fight against commercial sexual exploitation of children.
- ¹² In 2004, the Code of Conduct became an international NGO (www.thecode.org).

Say NO to Tourism that Exploits the Child

Trends and Issues on the Protection of Children in the context of Tourism in India

22nd meeting of the UNWTO Task Force for the Protection of Children in Tourism

ITB Berlin – 7th March 2008

The focus of this paper is to highlight the trends, concerns and responses on the issues of child abuse, trafficking and labour in the context of tourism policy and development in India

Tourism is linked to people, environment and natural resources and it directly impacts them. Tourism policies have tended to focus on the unbridled growth and promotion of tourism and hardly ever acknowledge the negative fallouts of tourism development. Tourism development is mostly unregulated and not monitored for its negative impacts. The mitigation of negative impacts therefore is also not on the agenda. In developing countries, tourism development without responsibility, accountability and protective measures has led to sexual exploitation of children in the form of child abuse, child trafficking, child prostitution, pornography and child sex tourism, and increase in child labour. All these in turn increase vulnerability of children to drugs, crimes, HIV/AIDS, and alienation from communities and families.

Part a:

Trends and Issues

Child Sexual Abuse, Trafficking and Tourism

According to International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates, 15 percent of India's estimated 2.3 million commercial sex workers are children¹. They are sexually exploited in brothels, massage parlors, nightclubs, beauty salons, hotels, escort services, private houses as well as at railway stations, bus stations, streets, public parks and more recently in circuses². While child sexual abuse is widespread, the unwillingness of adults to deal with the problem results in it remaining hidden and unreported, allowing offenders to commit the act again and again over long periods of time, with little risk of getting caught. Further anonymity and unaccountability of the tourist make the link between tourism and child sex abuse particularly pernicious. The likelihood that abusers are booked or brought to justice remains low. Legislation also has many loopholes and lacunae that allow traffickers and middlemen go scot-free.

The phenomenon comes to light

In India, the links between tourism and child exploitation came to light through the case of Freddy Peats, a 76 year old man of unknown origin who was arrested on 3rd April 1991 for sex crimes against young boys (as young as 3 years old). Until then, there was little or no awareness of the organised

sexual exploitation of children, particularly trafficking, involving young boys in India, even though the involvement of female minors in prostitution was well known. In March 1996, Freddy Peats was convicted of sex crimes against young boys in Goa. This was the first conviction for running an organised racket in paedophilia in India. But the incident was dismissed as an aberration.

Soon after, the case of Brinkman Helmut, a 57 year old German paedophile was brought to the notice of Calangute Police Station, Goa in 1999. He was found guilty by the assistant sessions judge Panaji under Section 373³ and 377⁴ of Indian Penal Code (IPC) 1860, for hiring a minor for illicit or immoral purpose and for committing unnatural sexual offences. He was awarded six years rigorous imprisonment. However, on 29th September 2000 he was acquitted of the charges by the additional sessions judge Mapusa. In spite of strong evidence against him, the case got dismissed because Helmut's whereabouts were unknown. Not even two months after the case of a "wanted" paedophile fleeing the country come to light, yet another paedophile fled the country, jumping bail in Goa⁵. Dominique Sabire, French national arrested by the Delhi Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the child abuse racket run in Goa by Freddy Peats in the early 90's, also seemed to have disappeared from India possibly due to the loose extradition laws.

A twist in the tale:

The risk to civil society organisation that work to combat and fight child abuse is increasing. In November 2004, Jan Ugahi an organization working on child rights issues in Goa, filed a case against Giorgio Lazini a 59 year old Italian in for allegedly having wrongfully confined a minor girl in his house. He later faced charges of sexually abusing and raping her. The Goa Children's Court however, gave Lazinni the benefit of the doubt and acquitted him. In 2007 Lazinni's lawyer in Goa has given a new twist to the state's intense debate over paedophilia by filing a Rs. 60 million lawsuit against Jan Ugahi stating 'loss of reputation, loss of business, compensation for wrongful detention, and loss of time and money in defending false cases'⁶.

In the case against Werner Wulf Ingo, a 54 year old Australian paedophile, found guilty by the assistant sessions judge Panaji under Section 373 and 377 of the IPC, he fled from India to Australia. In 2005, he was extradited from Australia to India by the Australian Federal Government to face charges over his role in Freddy Peats' paedophile network. He was placed in police custody in Delhi on 4th August 2006. He had made three trips to Goa, in 1987, 1988 and 1989. Bernadette McMenamin⁷, CEO Child Wise, Australia commented "the extradition of an Australian to face child sex charges in a developing country was unprecedented. "I cannot think of any other case when an Australian has been extradited to face charges in a Third World Country", Ms. Mcmenamin observed "there has always been a propensity for these people to believe they won't be charged in these countries, and if they are, then won't be sent back to face prosecution". The case against Wulf Werner Ingo is still going on in the Court of Goa before the additional Sessions Judge.

Acknowledging child abuse and exploitation in tourism

Tourism related child sexual abuse is not a phenomenon limited to Goa and not isolated to foreign tourists alone. A series of studies published by important official agencies and organisations working on protection of children have highlighted the links between tourism and the increase in child sexual abuse. The magnitude of the problem is not known since many of them are unreported or misreported due to the stigma and shame attached to this. Studies by the National Commission for Women⁸, the National Human Rights Commission⁹ and by ECPAT¹⁰ all provide conclusive evidence of the growing phenomena. Child sex Tourism is widespread in pilgrim, coastal tourism and most major tourist destinations like Kerala, Delhi, Agra-U P, Jaipur-Rajasthan, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, and Pondicherry. The National Human Rights Commission and National Commission for Women also identified

Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Orissa and Rajasthan as areas of high human trafficking.

The ECPAT study on “A Situational Analysis of Child Sex Tourism in India” conducted by EQUATIONS in 2003 provided evidence of child sex tourism in Kovalam in Kerala. There are reports of tourists who are moving from Goa to areas of North Karnataka such as Gokarna and Karwar, which are presently being developed for tourism. Tourists have settled in the popular Om and Kudle beaches of these regions, which have become hideouts where sexual exploitation of children is also reported to take place.¹¹ Further the study “Trafficking in Women and Children in India”, by the National Human Rights Commission published in January 2006 also reiterates that the beaches of Goa and Kovalam are increasingly becoming destinations for those seeking child prostitutes. In Orissa, Eastern India, organised child sex crime is taking place with the connivance of tour operator’s hotels and the local people in a village called Pentakota which is on the outskirts of Puri in Orissa¹².

Another study published by ECPAT “The Situation Analysis of prostitution of boys in South Asia” indicated that prostitution of boys is an upcoming problem in tourism destination like India¹³, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh. It states “*Such exploitation occurs in locales such as streets, markets, bus terminals, hotels, restaurants and religious establishments. A large number of boys living on the streets are victims of sexual exploitation, and the average age of boys being forced into exploitation is approximately 12.5 years or younger. The majority of sexually exploited boys have experienced sexual abuse prior to their entrapment into prostitution*”. EQUATIONS is also investigating reports of increasing prostitution of male children in pilgrim tourist destinations in India. New forms of tourism such as houseboats and home stays also increase the vulnerability of children to abuse as discovery of the abuse is more difficult. Before promoting these the Ministry should also devise measures and mechanisms for regulation and protection

Child Labour in Tourism

The government of India announced a ban effective 10th October 2006, on the employment of children as workers in roadside eateries, teashops, restaurants, hotels etc. Many of these children, according to the Ministry of Labour and Employment of the Government of India, are subjected to physical violence, psychological trauma and even sexual abuse. With this step child labour in the hospitality sector is now categorised as hazardous work under the Child Labour Act.

In order to implement the ban, children are picked up from the streets, from small hotels, road side eateries and put in to rehabilitation and juvenile homes. Given the way these homes are run, they are not protected from abuse and in many situations work in abysmal conditions. This makes the child even more vulnerable to exploitation and the problems are pushed underground. It is important that the government has implementable mechanisms where the children can be reunited with communities and families rather than institutionalised mechanisms such as putting them in Juvenile homes and rehabilitation homes and continuing their abuse.

The recognition, that a bulk of tourism services and economy functions in the informal sector which is most vulnerable to child abuse and least protected by regulation and amenities is long overdue. Children work in this sector in large numbers and are particularly vulnerable to harsh working conditions, lack of safety and vulnerability to abuse. This must be recognized by the government and proper monitoring mechanism to give care and protection must be established.

Thus one and a half years down the line, post the ban, enormous challenges remain in translating the law into practice. Civil society organisations fears that a blanket ban without understanding the root causes of child labour would only push the problems into more dangerous ways underground have

unfortunately proved true. Available data and estimates indicate that very few cases have been registered in the past year on account of this ban. Many children are still being seen hard at work in restaurants, hotels, tea stalls, etc. all over the country. While the ban evoked responses from a wide range of actors particularly NGO's and civil society organisations working on child rights, the tourism industry was conspicuously silent.

The landscape of child related legislations

In India, there are a host of related social legislation and criminal laws which have some beneficial provisions for the care, protection and rehabilitation of children. The laws relating to commerce, industry and trade also have some provisions for children, but they provide little protection, or do not cater to the developmental needs of the child. The key bodies concerned with child related laws are the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), the Ministry of Labour (MoL) and the National commission for Children (NCC) and the National human rights Commission (NHRC). There continues to be major gaps in the provisions relating to child abuse particularly in cases of trafficking, sexual and forced labour, child pornography, child sex tourism and sexual assault of male children.

The Offences against Children's Bill¹⁴ proposed by the MWCD which is still in the draft stage, is hoped to address current lacunae such as including the definition of "child in need", ensuring that the age of child is not reduced below 18. The bill it is hoped will also address commercial sexual exploitation (e.g. child sex tourism) and pornography as well consider child abuse and exploitation of children in a context which is commercial as this is a loophole used by offenders.

Offences relating to economic exploitation of a child and child labour must also be recognised and brought into the preview of the law. It is important to include sections on "Employment of children in the Hospitality Sector", "Employment of children in unorganised sector" like selling trinkets, nuts, tea etc on the beaches and roadside, who are also equally vulnerable to various forms of abuse. It is important to note that sex tourism is not the only component of tourism which abuses children. As tourism creates situations which encourages child labour, resulting in trafficking and sexual exploitation, it is important to highlight these inter linkages in the bill to protect children from such forms of exploitation.

Unfortunately, the fight against child pornography and efforts to make it an offence under the Information Technology (IT) Act, received a serious setback as a provision on the same suggested by an expert committee has mysteriously disappeared from the final draft of the IT (Amendment) Bill. The final draft of the Information Technology (Amendment) Bill does not incorporate the recommendations of the Expert Committee to include a provision on child pornography.¹⁷ Instead, the latest draft of the Bill deleted the term "child pornography" and replaced it with terminology of 'sexually explicit act'. This erodes the level of protection offered as the provision does not clearly define and prohibit child pornography. In light of the MWCD report on abuse and violence against children (2006) which has shown that sexual abuse of children has reached alarming proportions in the country, we believe these and other protection initiatives are urgently required.

In the run up to consolidating India's Eleventh Five Year Plan 2007-2012¹⁸, the Planning Commission constituted several working groups to give their inputs. The MWCD in its working groups report mentioned that tourism is known to directly contribute to the exploitation of the child in the form of child labour, child trafficking and the sexual exploitation of children. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Tourism in its Tourism Working Group Report makes no mention of issues related to exploitation of children in the context of tourism development.

The landmark Goa Children's Act 2003 – providing a ray of hope

Intensive lobbying and advocacy by the civil society groups in Goa working on child rights and child protection resulted in the passing of the Goa Children's Act in 2003. This was the first legislation that recognised exploitation of children in tourism as well as incorporates a section that recognizes and deals with the protection of children in the context of tourism.

Within two years of its enactment this Act was amended in 2005¹⁵. The amendment diluted the timelines for implementation without adequate rationale and omitted few important parts sections from the Act. One of the important Section 8 (11) which stated that offences in case of tourism related child sexual abuse shall be non-bailable offence under CrPC¹⁶ was repealed. This makes the Act virtually toothless in relation to sexual exploitation of children by tourist in Goa. After seven years of the enactment of the Act only seven cases have come up before different Courts in Goa in relation to sexual exploitation of children by tourist of which only two offenders have been convicted.

While these amendments are retrograde, it must be noted that the government has also introduced few welcome amendments by adding important definitions on commercial sexual exploitation of children, and child trafficking to the Act and by fixing specific penalty for non-implementation and conferring responsibility of protection of children to various public authorities. Subsequent to it being passed and a set of amendments in 2005, various stakeholders associated with the tourism and travel sector in Goa have engaged in discussion on how to implement the provisions and requirements of the legislation. The Goa Children's Act is unique because it does not merely recommend punitive measures against offenders, but suggests ways and means of dealing with the larger issues of protecting, promoting and preserving the best interest of children in Goa. It attempts to place responsibility on different sections of the society and its institutions to play a role in protecting all children and in preventing the abuse of any child. The hotel owners, the photo studios, cyber care operators, the police, the tourism department, the travel and tourism trade industry are each expected to be alert as well as perform particular roles to achieve this.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) along with National Commission for Women (NCW) and The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) have also come up with guidelines¹⁹ in preventing and combating human trafficking with special focus on children and women. This plan of action also recognized that tourism is a cause for trafficking. In 2007, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights was set up in India to enquire into complaints and take suo motu cognisance of matters relating to deprivation of child rights, non-implementation of laws providing for protection and development of children and non-compliance of policy decisions, guidelines or instructions aimed at their welfare.

Part b: **EQUATIONS Call**

EQUATIONS calls for responsibility in tourism and holds Governments, tourism promoters and the industry accountable for ensuring that tourism is just, non-exploitative and equitable

We call upon various stakeholders to take urgent steps to ensure protection of children in the context of tourism:

The Government of India

- a. Sexual abuse and exploitation of children needs to be considered a very serious crime, and to impose very severe and deterrent punishment to the offenders, Indian and foreign. We call upon the Government to come up with a comprehensive Act which deals with child abuse and exploitation, taking into account the child abuse in the context of tourism. The Government also needs to come up with extradition laws to ensure that perpetrators of crimes who are foreigners are brought to book and to ensure that no foreigner escapes punishment by leaving this country
- b. To agree on a uniform age to define a child in legal terms, as various acts in India concerning children have different age limits allowing for many loopholes. We recommend that “a child means every human being below the age of 18 years as mentioned in the Article 1 of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which is ratified by India.
- c. Instead of simply banning child labour in the hospitality sector, it is critical that the causes for child labour (mostly linked to poverty) are addressed and the implementation of issues such as the rehabilitation of child labourers after their removal from labour, the long-term tracking of these children to prevent their return to labour must also be taken into consideration and addressed simultaneously, for the issue of child labour to be resolved in a meaningful and sustainable manner.
- d. The National and State Tourism Policies need to acknowledge the role of tourism in exploiting children, clearly denounce sexual exploitation of children and commit that tourism will be child exploitation free zones
- e. The Ministry of Tourism in particular needs to be more accountable and evolve a concrete plan of action to counter child abuse in tourism. It needs to put monitoring mechanisms in place with the active participation of stake holders such as industry, tour operators, travel agents, hotels local authorities, the judiciary, the police, child rights and other civil society organisations and communities
- f. Sensitisation and training of authorities who deal with children is particularly important

The Tourism, Travel and Hospitality Industry

We call upon the tourism industry, tour operators, travel agencies, hotels to come up with a Code of conduct related to the protection of children from all forms of exploitation in tourism. They must put in place Reporting and Monitoring Mechanisms and must promote socially responsible tourism. Some protective clauses could be:

- a. All establishments which provide lodging, accommodation, temporary housing, rooms, place to stay, quarters, lodge or any similar facility should ensure that children are safe and not at risk of child abuse within their premises including all adjoining beaches, parks etc.
- b. They must make sure that no child is allowed to enter any such establishment unless the child is registered as staying in the room with family, relatives or person related by blood.
- c. They must ensure that no child has access to any internet facilities which are not fitted with filters and to any objectionable materials including through film, or videos, disc-players, cable or any other medium provided by that establishment.
- d. The owner and the manager of the hotel or establishment should be held solely responsible for any contraventions

In particular we urge the industry to take into account the fact that much of the child abuse is visible (though not restricted to the small, medium and informal sectors). Travel and Tourism linked bodies and associations must reach out to these sectors and not shrug off the problem as being “not in my backyard”.

The UNWTO

We call upon the UNWTO to demonstrate its commitment to address the issue by

- a. Actively working with the tourism industry to develop and implement codes of conduct which will protect children from exploitation in the context of tourism.
- b. To work with various formations of industries, with small and medium scale enterprises, as it is in the informal and the small and medium sectors where a lot of exploitation of children happens.
- c. To hold detailed consultations with multiple stakeholders that aims to understand, intervene and solutions to the problem. This could be done through :
 - i. To encourage and support (including through financial support) organizations in the civil society space to participate in the Task Force meetings (as this is usually beyond their reach) so that their experiences and recommendation find a place in the body of experience that the UNWTO considers to make its policies and plans.
 - ii. To encourage and support research studies and action research to understand the realities on the ground. This will indicate UNWTO's commitment to the issue much more strongly than only organising brief Task Force meetings. Further more, these meetings seem to address the issue at a very general level and it is not at all clear what have been the clear impacts and outcomes of these series of meetings.
 - iii. The task force works with an expanded agenda of engaging in sexual exploitation, trafficking and labour issues. It is critical that in expanding the mandate it does not result in generalised instruments and processes to address each of these issues as this would be self –defeating. The task force may need to appoint specific committees or groups to come up with measures and analysis that address the context and needs of each of these areas with clear focus. We are quite concerned that in the use of terms such as decent opportunities and empowerment of minors in the context of child labour in tourism. We wish to remind the UNWTO of its own commitment in its Global Code of ethics Article 2, which in turn draws in its preamble on universally recognised conventions such as, “Conventions on the Rights of the Child”, “Stockholm Declaration against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children” and the “Convention and recommendation adopted by the International Labour Organization in the areas of collective conventions, prohibition of forced and child labour”. We therefore wonder if the UNWTO has changed its position in relation to the issue of prohibition of child labour.
- d. The UNWTO website has very little material on the issue of exploitation of children in tourism. To our knowledge there have been no World Tourism Day themes or any conference called by the UNWTO on the issue of exploitation of children. We find it surprising that such a serious violation of the right of the most vulnerable should receive so little attention of the UNWTO.
- e. The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism must be expanded on this issue to detail the problems of exploitation of children and to clearly condemn tourism's complicity and role in child trafficking, child labour and sexual exploitation of children.

Endnotes

- ¹ U.S. Department of States, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, South Asia, India” 2006
- ² Global Monitoring Report on the Status of action against commercial sexual exploitation of children in India, 2006 by End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT International)
- ³ Section 373 of IPC states -Buying Minors for purpose of prostitution, etc. – Whoever buys, hires or otherwise obtains possession of any person under the age of eighteen years with intent that such person shall at any age be employed or used for the purpose of prostitution or illicit intercourse with any person or for any unlawful and immoral purpose, or knowing it to be likely that such person will at any age be employed or used for any purpose, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine.
- ⁴ Section 377 of IPC states Unnatural Offences- Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years and shall also be liable to fine.
- ⁵ Sandesh Prabhudesai, “Another paedophile goes scot free”. The Pioneer, Goa, 14th April 2002
- ⁶ NGO face rs. 60 mn suit over paedophilia charges, dated 26th July 2007: | <http://www.nerve.in/news:25350077125>
- ⁷ Child Sexual Abuse in Goa: A Case Analysis by Nishtha Desai, Emidio Pinho, Audrey Pinto, July 2006
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- ¹⁰ EQUATIONS is a member of End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography, and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purpose (ECPAT) International
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- ¹² 10th November 2006, The Outlook: HIV @rs100- Off Puri's holy precinct, u nholy sex tourism has made Pentakota, a small fishing hamlet, paradise for paedophiles.
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- ¹⁵ The Goa Children's (Amendment) Act, 2005, amendment enforced from 15.12.2005
- ¹⁶ The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973
- ¹⁷ Department of Information Technology. Ministry of Communications & Information Technology. Government of India, New Delhi. Report of the Expert Committee, Proposed Amendments to Information Technology Act 200, proposed section 67(2).
- ¹⁸ Report on the working group on development of children for the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012), by Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India
- ¹⁹ Integrated Plan of Action on Trafficking in Human Beings with special focus on children and women, by Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, 2007

A Closer Look at Rural Tourism

EQUATIONS, June 2007

*Riding on their imperial horses,
Flying like kings,
Thinking that they've understood everything.
Do they not realise that even birds fly?*

– Tashi Rabgyas, angered by tourists, 1980 (Hodge, 1991: 91)¹

Tashi Rabgyas, a resident of Ladakh, expressing his feelings on tourists who have invaded the town of Ladakh, located in the northern most state of Jammu & Kashmir. This growing tension between the tourists and the local community in rural areas is becoming more apparent by the day.

Key parameters that usually define rural tourism are: about it being located in rural areas, functionally rural; based on small-scale and traditional activities and enterprises (rural in scale), relies on the traditional qualities of the countryside, develops slowly under the control of local people and is non-uniform (reflecting the complexity of the rural environment). It is a form of tourism that extends itself to all senses, touching on the physical and psychological level.

Visits to rural areas are becoming extremely popular, especially among the urban masses because of which some visible trends are emerging. Tourism if appropriately planned and regulated, benefits the local community financially, through employment generation and the development of a region by broadening the economic base, establishing inter-sectoral linkages, creating the multiplier effect and improving infrastructure. It also cultivates sensitivity to different cultures, while aiding in the preservation of heritage and the environment. However tourism brings with it a form of urbanisation, which, in principle, is in conflict with the idea of rural tourism. With growing visitations to rural areas, the rurality of the place and its people will change, moving closer towards urbanisation. Secondly tourism in these places will increasingly be viewed as a commodity that can be marketed by the tourism industry and consumed by the tourist. Thirdly, while planning a tourism project care must be taken to ensure the protection and participation of the more vulnerable within society, particularly women, children, indigenous people and those marginalised on the basis of caste. The challenge of developing tourism in a rural area is to find the right balance.

Background on Rural Tourism in India

The recognition of rural tourism as a form traces itself to an International Conference and Exhibition on Rural Tourism in India organised by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in association with the Udaipur Chambers of Commerce and Industry in 2001². The basic concept of rural tourism was envisaged with benefit accruing to local community through entrepreneurial opportunities, income generation, employment opportunities, conservation and development of rural arts and crafts, investment for infrastructure development and preservation of the environment and heritage. Early movers in adopting the concept of developing and promoting rural tourism have been Haryana, Rajasthan and Kerala³, who have later been followed by Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Karnataka among other states.

In the National Tourism Policy of 2002, the Ministry of Tourism (MoT) announced its plans of spreading tourism development to rural areas: *'village tourism will be promoted as the primary tourism product of India; to spread tourism and its socio-economic benefits to rural areas'* is what it stated. One of the outcomes of this was the Endogenous Tourism Project between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of Tourism in 2003. The project focuses on "initiating and building upon a number of community-level initiatives to address issues of poverty, through group mobilisation, around income-generation activities buttressed by skill endowment and credit/ resource support issues". This project is being implemented across 36 sites in 20 states of India⁴. Apart from this project, the Ministry of Tourism in the last five-year plan has funded 43 more sites, with state governments and even banks such as NABARD, State Cooperative Bank, Syndicate Bank willing to invest and loan towards rural tourism.

Rural tourism, as an option to be further explored and developed, finds a clear impetus in the Report of the Working Group on Tourism for the 11th five-year plan. The working group broadly recommends a panel of professionals to be identified for selecting rural sites, interacting with the community and preparing projects based on tourism potential of the rural site. The recommendation is that no rural tourism project is to be sanctioned without prior approval of the software (capacity building) component so as to ensure that the host rural community plays a critical role in project implementation and monitoring in the existing rural sites with the objective of ensuring success⁵.

The recognition of rural tourism as an alternative to mainstream mass tourism is a recent concept. The government (at centre, state and local level), the tourism industry, as well as local groups/ organisations are putting in concerted efforts to see that these models of community-based tourism find success. However, caution must be heeded in relation to impacts that this form of tourism may have on the environment, its people and on the institutional structures of the region. Therefore the need is to anticipate and plan, so as to mitigate these negative impacts.

Economic

Tourism has the ability to generate high income, employment benefits for the local economy, empowering women and in improving livelihoods of local people through its multiplier effects. Yet other less favourable effects such as inflation, leakages out of the local economy and dependency often accompany these positive effects. These need to be weighed carefully, based on accurate assessments of the actual economic effects.

Increasing the percentage of tourism revenues retained within the local economy by reducing leakages

The economic rationale behind encouraging tourism is that through its linkages with other sectors of economy, revenues generated can increase the economic prosperity of the local people. This argument would not hold if revenue generated from tourism were not retained within the local economy but lost in the form of leakages⁶, out through repatriation or other means thereby nullifying the potential gains to the local economy. For example, if a hotel is owned by an investor from outside, the percentage of benefits derived by locals from tourism will never be as high as the investors. The same will be the case if the hotel imports consumables thinking that there is demand for them or that their quality would be superior. Recognising this possibility, when planning for tourism, one becomes more conscious towards strengthening local sourcing of materials required by tourism. The ideal situation would, of course, be if all of tourism's requirements were met by the local economy. But until such a stage is reached, the endeavour should be to reduce importing from outside the region/state as far as possible.

For instance, the experience of Coorg in Karnataka illustrates the case of local linkages in home stay tourism. With the fall in coffee prices in the mid-1990s, the local community in Coorg turned to tourism

to support the local economy. The concept of homestays picked up quite rapidly and was a form that established strong linkages with existing sectors thereby retaining a large volume of the revenue earned within the local economy. With the raw material to sustain tourism activity already existing in the form of estate bungalows, the plantations, road connectivity and other civic amenities, owners needed to invest only moderately in inception costs. Since the guests stay in the homes of people, they are taken around the coffee and spice estates, encouraged to try local cuisine and to learn about the cultures and customs of the place. This form also benefits the economy as the coffee, fruits, vegetables are grown and procured locally and the guest is encouraged to purchase from shops selling locally grown coffee, cardamom, honey and cinnamon.

Supporting small, medium enterprises (SMEs) and informal sector initiatives in tourism

In order to allow tourism to benefit and sustain the local economy, mechanisms must be developed to encourage and support small and medium enterprises that require low levels of investment but provide high levels employment to the local labour force. This would help assess the extent of local participation in the tourism industry, the benefits that the local industry derives from it, and how sustainable tourism is for the local economy.

Strengthening local ownership of tourism

Tourism can play a meaningful role in increasing the ownership of local communities in tourism. The question of ownership is linked to communities' bargaining power in the industry, range of jobs they have access to, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the economy itself.

For example, in the village of Khonoma, located in the state of Nagaland, North-Eastern India, an alternative model of community-led tourism development is taking shape. It was the community, which took a decision to bring in tourism and improve the living conditions of the people. The thrust is on training local people, supporting alternative technologies based on intrinsic conservation properties; planning better utilisation of energy, conducting an environmental impact assessment including social aspects and open specific areas for tourism purposes with limited access. As tourism in Khonoma has emerged from a need expressed by the community, the chances that it will be developed on the basis of guidelines, regulations and priorities decided by them are much higher. The community has clearly stated that the tourist flow has to be regulated. The village suggested facilitating accommodation for 20 tourists and to gradually increase the numbers. Considering the environmental and social sensitivity of the region, several pertinent regulations like regulating traffic in the forests, limiting cooking to designated places with proper waste disposal mechanisms and even guidelines to regulate the noise level in the forests have been developed.

Providing access to participate and influence the project

Tourism planners and implementers while planning a rural tourism project must ensure that all members of the community have access to participate and influence the direction of the project. Rural Indian society is particularly stratified on the lines of caste, class, traditional occupation and gender roles resulting in differential access to voice, resources and power. A positive example is illustrated by the National Institute of Women Child and Youth Development, the implementing agency for an endogenous tourism project at Chougan, points that caste based stigma prevalent among the Gond, Baiga groups have considerably reduced. During the cultural performances, members of the communities are forgetting their hierarchy. The Chougan Utsav had provided an opportunity for nearly 10 cultural groups to perform in one major event.⁷ Until specific processes are set in place to work on social structures such as caste, it must be recognised that the entry of tourism may well work in the opposite direction - with perpetuating the status quo in terms of access and occupation. Caution

must be taken to ensure that a wide group of people representing different sections and interests are able to influence and therefore benefit from the project. Imbalanced benefit sharing may increase the gap between the poor and rich creating a situation of intra-community competition that may unintentionally accentuate existing inequities and divides.

Evaluating dependency of the local economy on tourism

Tourism is seasonal and vulnerable to external and internal impacts. These could include disasters (like the tsunami, earthquakes), health epidemics (SARS, chikungunya), political tensions (riots and terror threats) and factors in tourist source regions (inflation, airline strikes). In such circumstances, while the entire industry suffers, often it is the local people who are the most vulnerable either by a loss of employment or steep income reductions. Given this, it becomes important to regulate the dependency of local livelihoods and income on tourism. While planning, diversifying the local economy base and strengthening linkages with other primary sources of income like; fisheries, agriculture and local handicrafts,^z are critical elements to reduce the vulnerability of these communities.

Social

Article V of the WTO Global Code of Ethics states that the local population should be associated with tourism activities and share equitably in the economic, social and cultural benefits they generate. They must benefit from the direct and indirect jobs created by tourism and tourism policies should be oriented towards improving their standard of living. The need to stress the role that the local communities play in tourism destinations arises from the variety of ways in which tourism affects their lives and livelihoods. Tourism needs to provide a base for social and cultural exchanges to take place between the local communities and the tourists on an equal platform without the former feeling inferior and they should take pride in their culture and traditions. When local communities respect and protect their social and cultural values, others too learn to respect it.

Efforts at sensitising tourists to local culture, social norms and customs

Tourism is an excellent opportunity to learn about other societies, their culture, traditions and lifestyles. The impacts of culture can be positive - through fostering an exchange of cultures and cultural enhancement. The nature of tourism is that it gives the tourist the opportunity to be transported into a different, often exotic socio-cultural ambience and a chance to appreciate the unique cultural, traditional lifestyles and tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the region. It is important for tourists to have greater sensitisation of local norms and customs. Along with this comes the understanding that local communities are not just 'host communities' but local residents who have an identity and own the space that is visited. This highlights the need to regulate tourist behaviour when such norms are violated.

There have been initiatives to achieve such sensitisation. The Ministry of Tourism on its website has put out a statement asking travellers to "learn about your destination before you get there. Read guidebooks, travel articles, histories, and/or novels by local authors and pay particular attention to customs such as greetings, appropriate dress, eating behaviours, etc. Being sensitive to these customs will increase local acceptance of you as a tourist and enrich your trip; follow established guidelines by staying on trails, packing up your trash, and remaining set distances away from wildlife are a few ways to minimize your impact in sensitive areas and to seek out and support locally owned businesses as supporting local businesses during your eco-travels to ensure maximum community and conservation benefit from your spending".⁸

The local administration of Ajmer (Rajasthan) came out with basic guidelines following a series of incidents of insensitive and inappropriate tourist behaviour. These guidelines are 'to educate and sensitise

foreign tourists about local culture and sensibilities.’ The booklet has been disseminated widely among hotels and restaurants that have been asked to give copies of the same to the tourists. It advises tourists on cultural and religious sensibilities like not to drink alcohol, smoke, and embrace in public.⁹

Strengthening social infrastructure and basic amenities

Tourism can make significant differences to lives of local communities by contributing to social infrastructure like health and supporting supply of basic amenities like drinking water, electricity and communication. These facilities will benefit both local communities and tourists but for the former it will mean an improvement in standard of living and building capacity for future generations. A less studied area is the links between tourism and increase in crime, which are often the result of the demonstration effect of increased consumerism. The growing alarming links between tourism and issues relating to drugs, trafficking and HIV/AIDS need to be kept in mind.

Minimising exploitation and strengthening the decision-making role of women in tourism

Tourism impacts women in diverse ways and is reflective of the larger economic, social, political and cultural roles played by them in the society. Prostitution, misrepresentation, trafficking and sex tourism are some of the directly visible forms of exploitation of women in tourism. A gender bias also persists in the industry with regard to women employees in service provision either through wage discrimination or the type of job they have access to, relative to men. Women are also more impacted than men by the adverse socio-cultural impacts of tourism and denial of access to basic resources to run households. Improving the role of women in decision-making in tourism can help strengthen their role in society and mitigate adverse impacts in a better way. Supporting women’s entrepreneurship especially in SME and cottage industries in tourism and ancillary activities can greatly improve the economic benefit they derive.

Cultural

The impacts of culture can be both positive - through fostering an exchange of cultures and cultural enhancement or negative through commodification of culture, deterioration in traditional systems and loss of cultural identity. The nature of tourism is that it gives the tourist the opportunity to be transported into an alien socio-cultural ambience and a chance to appreciate the unique cultural, traditional lifestyles and tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the region. The WTO Global Code of Ethics has recognized that cultural resources used by tourists belong to the entire mankind but that community in whose territories they are situated have particular rights and obligations, that while planning a rural tourism project, one must endeavour to protect and preserve tangible heritage and that tourism must allow cultures to flourish rather than get standardized and die out.

Broadening our understanding of local ‘culture’

Culture is an experience, not a product. Local culture comprises more than just costumes and dancing – it includes food, architectural style, language, local arts and handicrafts and all else that constitutes a way of life. At times, tourism provides an opportunity to revive dying arts, crafts and art forms – but it also runs the risk of infusing commercialisation, standardisation, adaptation of tourist demands and monotony into such aspects of local culture. When the artist becomes the artisan, something is wrong in the way culture and tourism interact. Tourism must be an opportunity to instil pride within communities on the richness and diversity of their culture – it must never become a medium to exhibit or showcase culture. This calls for sensitivity in what tourism promotes, how tourists behave and how the destination

is portrayed. Tourism, if promoted sensitively, can also help bring back old-world charms of community cultural activities.

Environment

Rural tourism must incorporate principles of conservation of natural resources and biodiversity; rational utilisation of resources, creation and maintenance of tourism infrastructure and facilities that are in coherence with the needs of local environment and culture. Also, with increase in tourist activity caution must be heeded that access to and use of common property resources by the local community are not being restricted to benefit the tourists / industry.

Judicious use of natural resources

Tourism enterprises like most others need to use resources like land, water and energy. But this needs to be accompanied by sensitisation towards over-consumption, wastage and over-utilisation of resources. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has recommended that tourism must be undertaken keeping in mind the land use patterns. Water is a particularly useful case study given its ubiquitous scarcity. Some tourism enterprises have begun mainstreaming water conservation principles into their daily practices. They vary from advising the tourist to go easy on water consumption within the rooms, help reclamation of local drying water bodies, investing in rain harvesting and recycling sewage and waste water for other uses. The use of energy efficient practices particularly in construction (local materials) and in day to day operating such as alternatives to air-conditioning is a critical factor.

Controlling pollution and adopting effective waste-management practices

Like all other development activities, tourism has a challenge to control pollution and adopt effective waste-management practices. The advantage is dual – not just that the environmental and ecological balance is maintained but that the beauty and pristine nature of the destination remain as an attraction. The World Bank has a useful publication called the ‘Pollution Prevention and Abatement Handbook’,¹⁰ which addresses tourism and hospitality as well. It has useful tips on how developers can control pollution by careful choice of materials in the construction stage, water management and effluent reduction, emission testing indicators and treatment and control technologies even for noise pollution.

Some of the activities that could be explored within rural tourism are:

- Encouraging tourism enterprises to adopt recycling, composting as a means of treating solid and non-solid wastes
- Discouraging the use of non-biodegradable materials like plastic as far as possible
- Giving tourists/residents tips on garbage segregation which makes recycling a faster and more effective task
- Setting up mechanisms of monitoring pollution levels
- Ensuring a good availability of dustbins at around the tourist spots and the village!

Institutional

A process of democratic decision-making must be created within the structures that support spaces where informed consensus building and decision-making can materialise, where components of meaningful and informed participation of local people and local political institutions in decision-making spaces that in effect influence the course of functioning of the tourism and related industries.

Also caution must be observed to not create parallel structures and bodies, but to work with the 73rd and 74th Amendment to the Constitution of India, which accords rights and legal powers to local governing

bodies. The panchayats, can bring into their jurisdiction matters related to subjects of land, water, socio-economic development, infrastructure development, social welfare, social and urban forestry, waste management and maintenance of community assets. Tourism development falls under the purview of these subjects and therefore participation from the Panchayats is important. The Panchayats should be involved in all level of tourism development from approval of the tourism project, to planning, implementing, development, marketing, evaluating, monitoring and research. The Panchayats have the right to formulate regulatory frameworks and the onus of ensuring this and its compliance from the tourism industry would rest on the State government.

Conclusion

The concept of rural tourism is still in its nascent stage with explorations to shape the most appropriate models that can be adapted across different contexts/regions in the country. Tourism is emblematic of the paradoxes and challenges of modern development. It has the potential to be an intensely human experience and equally the potential to be an extremely consumerist one. The need of the hour is to align rural tourism under the broad ambit of sustainable development. Essentially, the basis of sustainable tourism development is a conscious recognition of the relationship that exists between the three key components of tourism – the environment, the local community who are impacted by tourism, and the operating tourism enterprises. Finding a balanced approach amongst the three is the perennial challenge.

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Call for Action Climate Change, Biodiversity and Tourism

EQUATIONS Statement on International Biodiversity
Day, 22nd May 2007

Global climate change is probably the most severe environmental threat in the 21st century. Alarm bells have started to ring worldwide for many important aspects of life like access to water, food production, health, extreme weather conditions and abrupt and irreversible environmental changes.

In 2003, the UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) held its first Summit on Climate Change and Tourism in Djerba, Tunisia, which set a proactive call for response from different sectors such as national governments, tourism companies, academic institutions, NGOs and private and public sectors in the form of the Djerba Declaration. It recognised the complex relationship between tourism and climate change, the existing and rapidly worsening impact of climate change on tourism development in sensitive ecosystems and also the contribution of tourism industry to climate change. Today climate change is a top issue for policymakers around the world, and tourism is becoming an important element of the discussions. This is because climate represents a key resource for tourism and climate related risks in the form of changing weather patterns and extreme conditions can have a serious impact on travel patterns.

On the other hand the tourism industry itself is a contributor to climate change by generating greenhouse gas emissions through travellers' consumption of transport services, notably road and air transport, and high levels of energy consumption like air conditioning, heating and lighting in tourism establishments. The aviation industry is the biggest threat as it is the fastest growing source of greenhouse gases, growing at a rate of 5% per year and contributing to 3% of global emissions. Air travel, particularly long haul international flights emitting greenhouse gases at high cruising altitudes, adds substantially to climate change effects.

The earth's biodiversity has also not been spared. There is a two way relationship between biodiversity and climate: biodiversity is threatened by human-induced climate change and climate change is already forcing biodiversity to adapt either through shifting habitat or changing life cycles.

The relentless expansion of the tourism industry is a major cause for concern. Tourism continues to pervade coasts and islands, especially in the developing nations leading to undesirable impacts on ecosystems and biodiversity. Even Multilateral Environmental Agreements like the Convention on Biological Diversity also continue to promote tourism as a market based conservation scheme in coastal and island ecosystems without application of the precautionary principle, as suggested by the Indigenous Peoples' Caucus in the Eight Conference of Parties to the Convention.

Communities that live in coastal areas and small island states face serious risks due to sea level rise. They face the brunt of displacement through expansion of tourism facilities and establishments on the one hand. On the other, their livelihoods such as fishing are affected due to the fact that ecosystems like coral reefs that support fish populations are dying as a result of climate change impacts. In mountainous regions melting of glaciers pose the risk of floods and threatens the lives and livelihoods

of communities which are dependent on agriculture. Forest diversity is also threatened by climate change which in turn threatens the livelihood of forest dependent communities. A significant stretch of the Mediterranean coast faces desertification due to decrease in rain and rise in temperatures over long periods of time, posing a threat to tourism and thus impacting local communities reliant on tourism.

EQUATIONS calls upon governments to take serious and urgent steps for the implementation of conventions, protocols and resolutions related to climate change. We urge them to take cognisance of the tourism and linked transportation and aviation industries as a significant factors contributing to climate change. Therefore to formulate international and domestic environmental and tourism policies and regulatory mechanisms, to adapt and mitigate climate change impacts.

The tourism industry is notorious for high per capita consumption of water, poor energy efficiency, waste management issues and serious negative environmental impacts. We call upon the tourism industry to take on the challenge of an authentic response to the climate change crisis by implementing measures to reduce energy consumption in tourism establishments by employing energy-efficient and appropriate green technologies. We recognise that this may require a significant transformation of current forms of mass tourism. We urge a serious engagement on this issue to reduce tourism's climate change footprint.

We question corporations and international financial institutions like the World Bank who promote market based measures such as carbon trading and carbon sinks which we believe are unsustainable and false measures. We seek a complete halt to financing fossil fuel exploration and demand serious investment in alternative sustainable energy options. Along with peoples movements all over the world, we condemn the rush into biofuels and carbon sinks as these lead to destruction of forests, increase monoculture, promote large agribusiness and pose serious threats to subsistence agriculture and food security

We call for climate justice and the need to recognise that the single minded pursuance of unsustainable growth strategies puts our common future at peril.

The responsibility of seeking viable and sustainable solutions to avert the climate crisis must take into account particularly the plight of the most vulnerable communities around the world.

Opening Doors is not enough – EQUALITY, EQUITY and EMPOWERMENT is what Women seek in Tourism

Statement issued on 27th September 2007 – World Tourism Day

This is a joint statement released by **Alternatives (Goa), Council for Social Justice and Peace (Goa), EQUATIONS (Bangalore) and Sakhi Resource Centre for Women (Kerala)** – organisations that have come together to debate issues of women and tourism on the occasion of World Tourism Day.

“When I decided to launch my small tourism business – a small guest house in Goa - I was deceived by what I saw around me. I saw how huge concessions were given to the 5-star hotels- whether of Indian or foreign origin and land and credit at subsidized rates. Access roads, electricity, water supplies, garbage disposal etc were all made easy for them. The government invested in their needs and demands. On the contrary, we the small entrepreneurs had to cope with virtually impossible travails if we started out on a business. My story perhaps illustrates how the system works against the small entrepreneur and weighs heavily in favour of big business. Now I ask – “Is small entrepreneurship welcome or is it not?”

- Geraldine Fernandes, a local entrepreneur who runs a small guest house in Benaulim, Goa, India questioning whether tourism has in fact opened doors for women.

The World Tourism Organisation, in choosing the theme of women and tourism for the year 2007, has focused its attention on this issue for the first time since 1980 – a welcome move indeed! *“Tourism is a sector of the economy that not only employs significant numbers of women, but provides enormous opportunities for their advancement”* states Secretary General Francesco Frangialli, in his customary message on World Tourism Day - 27 September 2007.

The Secretary General's statement has focused on the potential for women to gain from tourism through employment. Tourism does indeed employ many women. But as experiences like those of Geraldine highlight, the odds against women benefiting are extremely high. The UNWTO must go beyond a position of approbation and look at tourism's record thus far, both in the empowerment of women and in the exploitation of women. This is essential if there is a serious intent, as we hope there is, in the UNWTO and indeed the tourism industry world wide, to go beyond the rhetoric of women's empowerment, towards serious engagement and committed action.

The UN, Women's Empowerment and MDGs

The advancement of women and the achievement of equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice. These are essential to build a sustainable, just, secure

and developed society. For decades now, through vibrant movements and political struggles, women have challenged existing gender relations and patriarchal systems to reframe the development dialogue. They have placed issues of violence, race, caste and other forms of discrimination that hit women the hardest; and the need for equality and human rights of women - including social, economic, political, legal, sexual and reproductive rights at the center-stage of this struggle.

Global processes from Rio, Copenhagen, Vienna, Cairo and Beijing to Durban, particularly the CEDAW (Convention for Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women), the UN Fourth World Conference on Women and its subsequent Beijing Platform for Action, have set out critical concerns and strategic action points. Decades later, the battle for equality, to challenge the status quo, to demand action on women's key concerns, to mobilize civil society in both the global North and South, and to push for a global reordering of the world's resources continues with the same intensity but leaving one with little sense of progress on substantive issues. There has been enormous frustration at the lack of government commitment and accountability to both development goals in general and gender equality commitments in particular.

In one way, the emergence of the MDGs marks the success of global women's movements and broader civil society, which had made the creation of time-bound targets and indicators a key demand for measuring progress on development and rights commitments. However it is accompanied by a concern that the MDGs have met the letter of civil society demands for accountability, but not the spirit. They seek to solve critical problems with measurable targets, without adequately addressing the roots of these problems. Many gender advocates argue that despite being an important tool to measure progress, the MDGs are a far too narrow set of indicators and targets. Their watering down of a human rights framework is another serious matter of concern. The UNWTO Secretary General's statement that seems to simplistically equate women's employment to women's empowerment is a reflection of the dangers of such a watering down.

The Doors that Tourism can and should open for Women

What is the role that tourism has played and can play in this important struggle for equality, equity and empowerment that involves half the world? We have argued that international, national and state level policies on tourism do state a general commitment to women's empowerment but rarely go beyond that to understand and evolve specific measures. Policies and budgets have the potential both to perpetuate gender bias and blindness, and to transform them. Gender disaggregated data, gender-sensitive policies and indicators are essential to building up a picture of the nature and extent of gender inequality. We need to understand the way institutions with their gendered rules work and we need to develop the political will, processes and tools to challenge and change them. Gender audits and gender budgeting are tools that could be employed meaningfully - particularly at community levels. These in turn will impact women's political participation and decision making in the forms of tourism, impacts of tourism, models of tourism and pace of tourism in their communities. It is time tourism recognized women's agency and heard their voices in its development.

Tourism does provide a range of activities where women can participate and also creates opportunities for entrepreneurship development in tourist destinations. Global data on numbers of women and men working in tourism related professions suggests that the organised tourism sector is a particularly important sector where 46 % of the workforce is women (in general 30-40% of the workforce is women) (ILO 2007). Of the data available for the years between 1988 and 2005, it appears that there has been a broad increase in the participation of women in the tourism industry at a global level.

However apart from the larger overall presence in the industry, which has grown exponentially, many other factors sadly follow the trend of the overall labour market and women do not seem to benefit and be empowered particularly from tourism. As in many other sectors, there is a significant horizontal and vertical gender segregation of the labour market in tourism. Vertically, the typical "gender pyramid" is

prevalent in the tourism sector - lower levels and occupations with few career development opportunities being dominated by women and key managerial positions being dominated by men.

In India, women in the organised sector in tourism are relegated to relatively low skill and low paying or stereotypical jobs like housekeeping, front-desk and reception, catering and laundry services. They face very high risks of sexual harassment and exploitation and are discouraged from forming unions or associations to consolidate their strength and influence. The proportion of women's to men's wages is less. Women feature significantly more in part time and/or temporary employment and are typically paid less than men for the same work done.

In the developing world 60% of women who work (in non-agricultural work) are in the informal sector. Much of this is linked directly and indirectly to tourism. The role of women in informal tourism settings such as running home-stay facilities, restaurants and shacks, crafts and handicrafts, handloom, small shops and street vending is significant. But these roles and activities that women perform in tourism are treated as invisible or taken for granted. The need to acknowledge the important economic contribution of women and ensure for them, access to credit, capacity building and enhanced skills, access to the market, encouragement to form unions, associations and cooperatives to increase their bargaining power and to ensure that their safety, health and social security needs are met is critical.

Community-based tourism initiatives, particular of local women's groups and co-operatives, are an important way by which women can control and benefit from tourism. There are numerous examples where women and women's groups have started income-generating activities on their own which then feed into or become part of the formal tourism sector. These activities help to create financial independence for local women and motivate them to develop necessary skills and improve their education.

It is also important to note that when tourism displaces people from traditional livelihoods or worse still physically displaces them, the worst affected are women who are engaged in the bulk of ancillary occupations like tobacco cultivation, coconut harvesting, fish sorting and processing which are jeopardized through such displacement. It becomes the prerogative of governments and the industry to ensure that rather than displace them, tourism should build and bolster supplementary livelihood options that women can choose from.

Some Doors that need to close – Exploitation of Women in Tourism

There is a direct correlation between the depletion of natural resources and increased burden on women in daily work in any region of the world. When tourism restricts community access to or contributes to the depletion of natural resources, it is the women, not only as homemakers, but also as community members who suffer the most. Women's access to and control over forest produce and water come into sharp conflict when tourism usurps these very resources needed to fulfill their life and livelihood needs. The daily burden on women of finding water for the household or firewood for cooking is oftentimes doubled or tripled. The links between tourism and climate change will unfortunately add to the burden women already bear.

When tourism makes products of culture, it tends to commodify women in particular – although both men and women are impacted by the insensitive selling of culture. With sex tourism being the most negative and prominent example, there is a significant amount of sexual objectification of women working in the tourism industry. Women are expected to dress in an "attractive" manner, to look beautiful (i.e. slim, young, and pretty) and to "play along" with sexual harassment by customers. Stereotypical and sexist images of women are often part of tourism promotion in brochures and advertisements. Friendly, smiling and pliant women fitting certain standards of attractiveness, attired in traditional costumes, waiting to submissively serve the customer's every wish is the typical portrayal of women in tourism material. We ask that the international community and UNWTO draw attention to the way women are represented in the selling of tourism by addressing this in the code of ethics.

The tourism industry and stewards of tourism development face many serious social and human challenges in the years ahead. The growing links between migration - both voluntary and forced - and tourism needs to take into account the gender dimensions of this global phenomenon. HIV/AIDS not only is driven by gender inequality but entrenches it. Tourism is increasingly seen to have a role in this entrenchment in its links to trafficking, prostitution and sex tourism. Poverty, and in particular urban poverty, which threatens to be an issue of growing magnitude has deep roots in gender injustice. Tourism often wipes out the existence and means of livelihood of the urban poor in an overt manner while continuing to depend covertly on cheap labour and exploitative relationships in order to flourish. The trend of development of tourism in conflict zones and the consequent impacts it has on women who are already battling for survival is another matter of serious concern. Disasters and epidemics have an uneasy relationship with tourism – but gender dimensions are rarely integrated into assistance and reconstruction efforts with the focus being largely on the safety of tourists and revival of tourism infrastructure.

We call upon governments, policy makers, industry, civil society and the UNWTO to engage in more systemic ways with the challenge of women's empowerment in tourism. Perhaps it is time for the UNWTO to declare Tourism's Decade for Women's Rights and Empowerment as a move towards opening the doors to a more just and equitable world for women and men.