



A RESPONSE TO THE REPORT ON
'TOURISM IN GOA: SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT'
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, NEW DELHI

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(Note: Unless cited otherwise, all quotes are from the report under review.)

Introduction

Since I have been restricted to a response of 1000 words to a report exceeding 150,000 words, I shall confine my response to one fundamental area, and also briefly comment on certain other aspects.

I would like to address myself primarily to the question of methodology, upon which rests the validity of any research - whether in social science or in other fields. Moreover, the methodological choices necessarily follow from the objectives of a study.

At the outset, the report professes a methodological bias 'towards the victim...giving us a vantage point amidst the evolving groups and movements' (page 2), obviously referring to the strong anti-tourism wave which Goa has undergone over the last few years. It further cites the existence of activist groups, however mentioning only one, the Jagrut Goankaranch Fauz (JGF, to my knowledge the only state-wide group), and a single reference to the feminist group, Bailancho Saad.

Given the stated methodological bias, the varied references to 'anti-tourism activists' are even handed, at times patronising, even disparaging. They are termed as 'agitationist, disruptive' (p 2); their perspective is 'naive, muddled' (p 45); they are blamed for non-availability of research data (p 75, footnote 2); they are stated to be in collusion with existing hotels (p 74), and this observation is attributed to 'informal interviews' (p 75, footnote 3) in a study which claims a scientific, objective, basis. Finally, and with no explanations offered, they are dismissed as lacking in 'economic and political ideology...carried away by enthusiasm and sincerity rather than any cogent views' (p 141).

Since, as I have earlier stated, the JGF is the only state-wide activist group, the professed methodological bias ought to have led to a detailed analysis of their philosophy and actions, as well as their achievements. As such an attempt was not made, it is my intention to place certain facts on record.

Anti-Tourism Activism in Goa

If an insight into the economic and political ideology of the anti-tourism movement is to be obtained, several documents explicitly stating their position are available. Apart from the Media Backgrounders which the JGF have produced regularly, a few others might be mentioned: 'Appropriation of Goan, Land, Culture and Ecology', Sept 87; 'Why we Goans Oppose Tourism: Statement to Mr Jagdish Tytler', Nov 87; 'Effects on Women in Goa', Feb 88. It is surprising to note that not a single such document finds mention in the report.

Do these then signify the achievements of a sincere but confused group of activists? Or should we conclude that those who have concurred with their perspective, if not their methods - from Charles Correa to the CCAT - are equally naive and muddled?

My difficulty with the professed methodological bias, then, is compounded by the cursory treatment (p 134) given to two of the more well-known local struggles in Goa: that of the people of Val ward, Agonda against the Sima Hotel, and that of the Loliem citizens against the Shah resort in Kendrem, both in Canacona, south Goa. Again, documentation on these is freely available from news and other reports, including the extensive report on Agonda commissioned by EQUATIONS.

This and the issue of land acquisition (touched upon even more briefly on the same page) are taken within the chapter on tourism and ecology, whereas it should be evident that the issues are of much greater import, especially the question of land. The threat of land acquisition for tourism development is a very real one: even before the CHOGM case in 1983, from as far back as 1973, the residents of Baga have been threatened with eviction.

The study is offered to activists and others as 'an extremely valuable weapon in their campaign..to evaluate and reform tourism' (p 3). However, all the achievements cited above took place much before the report was made public.

Allow me to also mention a further basis for anti-tourism activism: an academic one. It may be perhaps stretching the point to quote Horace who berated the leisure-loving Romans, whose recreation resulted in 'man and wife (being) driven forth bearing in their arms their household goods and ragged children'. More recently, Turner and Ash, in their seminal work, *The Golden Hordes* (Constable, 1975) stated: 'Thomas Cook's philanthropic vision has not been fulfilled...mass tourism actively hinders development'. Jafar Jafari, editor of the prestigious journal, *Annals of Tourism Research* wrote in 1974: 'the tourism trade can bring many things...not bargained for: cultural disintegration, cultural lag and social distance, topping (the developing countries) other social problems'. Similar views have been evinced by an array of impressive academics, as listed in the enclosed bibliography: they include the UNEP and UNESCO.

Despite the assertion in the Foreword that the social sciences and sociology have not given serious attention to tourism, it should be noted that these are today acknowledged fields of study internationally, ever since Erik Cohen's first attempt to structure academic perceptions of tourism in 1972.

None of these find mention in the report. Nor even the work of a large network of third world tourism critics, both secular and church-related. Reference to such a formidable body of knowledge which already exists would have greatly contributed to the conceptual and methodological clarity of the study.

General Comments

The report undoubtedly provides an useful background to the development of Goan tourism, and its socio-economic context (ch. 1-4). It also adds to empirical knowledge, uncovered by the various primary surveys conducted.

Nevertheless, the lack of reference to existing literature leads to some fundamental methodological problems: for example, in a study on tourism, it is evident that a taxonomy of tourists is essential. On pages 2 and 25, it is stated that the classification of tourists (and tourism) is very difficult, and also 'not necessary for every practical purpose'.

Cohen (1972), Wahab (1975), Smith (1977), Ritchie & Zins (1983), Leiper (1979) and Dann (1981), to mention a few, have evolved typologies of tourists, on various grounds, ranging from the demographic characteristics, to motivation, to socio-phenomenological. Granted that each tourist destination needs to evolve its own definitions, but a start could have been made from any of these.

Secondly, I have serious reservation with the use of the word 'hippie', or 'hippy' as spelt in the report. The hippie movement in the early to mid-70s was a direct result of the breakdown of conventional WASP values in the West, culminating in the Vietnam war. The hippies opted out of their socio-culture seeking a transcendental centre somewhere else, notably India and its spiritual values. Although their methods were unconventional - especially to their elders - they were the precursor of much that is good about the West today: the peace and ecology movements, among others.

I would prefer to use Cohen's more precise term - diversionary, to define the kind of tourists who flock Goa's beaches: rootless, alienated, their life is strictly speaking 'meaningless'. They appear perfectly normal at home, doing boring, routine work: it is only in the third world that they let their hair down.

From the economic analysis (ch. 5-7), it would seem that so far, tourism has not greatly taxed the resources of Goa, nor even access to resources for locals. However, since industry-wide investment patterns or income distribution are not stated (the difficulty of obtaining data is acknowledged), it is difficult to arrive at a conclusive understanding. Lasschuit (1983) makes a perceptive remark in her study of Goan tourism, that although local participation in Goan tourism is relatively high, since it is largely in the small-scale sector, the economic strength and political clout remains limited.

The report places a substantial emphasis on the socio-cultural impacts (ch. 8-10), such as the increasing incidence of drug-addiction, crime, VD, AIDS and prostitution. The curious juxtaposition of cases and commentary makes for difficult reading however. Moreover, at several points it blames Goa's 'degenerate culture' (p 125), and the 'moral laxity' of Goa's women (pp 98, 100, 124), thus failing to rise above moral apprehensions to the level of theory. Clearer perceptions may be obtained from Cohen (1982), Graburn (1983) and Fish (1984).

Conclusion

Any research on an ongoing social process ought to be projective in essence: a clear analysis of present trends and their future implications.

To re, together with the social consequences of tourism, it would be important to extrapolate the economic impacts of future planned (or unplanned) tourism development on the people of Goa. AIDS, VD, crime, drug-running, prostitution, though serious in themselves, can be controlled by effective law and order mechanisms, as other countries with the political will have demonstrated. It is not that easy to remedy the disinheritance of a society from its land and livelihood.

In the last chapter, the report places the blame for the evil of tourism squarely at the door of the 'hippies' and Condor tourists, whereas all the rest of the actors - Indian domestic visitors, the host community, those who offer their bodies for sale - are, willy nilly, the innocent victims of the international visitors. It therefore fails to account for the fact that domestic tourists outnumber the foreigners 10 to 1, and that many Goans benefit from illicit tourist-related trades. The domestics, furthermore, have contributed a fair degree to the pollution and overcrowding and strain on existing resources, especially in the cities.

Recommendations emerging from these, stated briefly in less than 2 pages, would require much more elaboration and specificity. I readily acknowledge that the Gomantak Lok Pokx is the only political formation to have issued regular statements opposing tourism. May I ask, however, where was the political input when the JGF and others were openly protesting against tourism, being incarcerated at all odd hours, putting at risk their liberty and security?

So, when I read about the need of a 'Peoples' Watchdog Committee', I am constrained to proclaim, Goa has that already, in the various anti-tourism activist groups, including the JGF. We may not agree with all their methods, or indeed be willing to adopt such methods, but to speak of establishing a semi-official body smacks of utter disregard for peoples' movements. I would be glad to be informed of any example where such bodies have effected radical change, rather than reform. Goan tourism today calls for radical action.

As a footnote, I once again cite a methodological problem: on page 179, as a preface to the Tourism Policy, 1982, it is stated as being available 'to only a few officials and leaders of the trade', somewhat in contradiction to the earlier clause which states that it was presented 'by the Minister of Tourism in Parliament'. Any parliamentary statement is public knowledge, and available for the asking. In fact, this document is on sale for Rs 20 at the Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi. We have several in our office.

Thank you very much.

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Note: For a concise, yet lucid, example of socio-economic cost-benefit analysis of tourism, see:

Milne, Simon. 1987 The Cooke Islands Tourist Industry; Ownership and Planning, Pacific Viewpoint, 28(2)

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'Annals' indicates the Annals of Tourism Research, edited by Prof Jafar Jafari, Dept of Habitational Resources, University of Wisconsin-Stout, Menomonie WI 54751, USA.

In mid-September, the Police Inspector dealing with this case told this writer that the "medical reports" sent for analysis to neighbouring Maharashtra state were still awaited here.

Cases like those of Freddy Peat, now and then dramatically bring the focus on the question of what's happening in some little-noticed areas of the Third World. But, all too often, these places are simply overlooked. What is usually forgotten is that there are a lot of things happening in the Third World, but these are often very hard to notice. If one comes along and expects something drastic to be happening, one is sadly disappointed. But do we have the patience for a deeper and more-patient study of the lives of so many hundreds of thousands of peoples ?

How do we tackle such cases in the future, as this is obviously definitely not the last ?

One small suggestion could be for an effective exchange of information. In this case, it was really helpful that a few lines of explaining the case drew very useful replies, and many pages of additional material, from as far away as Sri Lanka, Thailand, Germany, Norway, The Netherlands and France, among others.

Information, even if it seems sketchy, dealing with the experiences of other countries, possible links of such rackets, organisation of child pornography, and so on, can not only help make a stronger case when drawing public attention to it but can also keep us adequately forewarned on what to look out for.

Sexual exploitation of innocent children is perhaps something which would draw strong revulsion from most of us. Regardless of whether this concern springs from a humanitarian, religious or any other motivation, this is an issue which needs to be tackled with urgency.

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Also see :

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