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## Environmental Impact of Tourism in India

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### Development of Tourism in India :

The first conscious and organized efforts to promote tourism in India were made in 1945 when a committee was set up by the Government under the Chairmanship of Sir John Sargent, the then Educational Advisor to the government of India (Krishna, A.G. 1993). Thereafter the development of tourism was taken up in a planned manner in 1956 coinciding with the second five years plan. The approach has evolved from isolated planning of single unit facilities in the second and third five year plans. The sixth plan marked the beginning of a new era when tourism began to be considered a major instrument for social integration and economic development.

But it was only after the 80's that tourism activity gained momentum. The government took several significant steps. A National policy on tourism was announced in 1982. Later in 1988, the National committee on tourism formulated a comprehensive plan for achieving a sustainable growth in tourism. In 1992 a National action plan was prepared and in 1996 the National strategy for promotion of tourism was drafted. In 1997 the New tourism policy recognizes the role of central and state governments, public sector undertaking and the private sector in the development of tourism were. The need for involvement of Panchayati Raj institutions, local bodies, non-governmental organizations and the local youth in the creation of tourism facilities has also been recognized

Today tourism is the largest service industry in India with a contribution of 6.23% to the national GDP providing 8.78% of the total employment. India witnesses more than 5 million annual foreign tourist arrivals and 562 million domestic tourism visits. The tourism industry in India generated about US \$100 billion in 2008 and that is expected to increase to US \$275.5 billion by 2018 at a 9.4% annual growth rate. The ministry of tourism is the nodal agency for the development and promotion of tourism in India and maintains the 'Incredible India' campaign.

According to World Travel and Tourism Council, India will be a tourism hotspot from 2009-2018, having the highest 10 year growth potential. As per the travel and tourism competitiveness report 2009 by the world economic forum, India is ranked 11th in the Asia Pacific region and 62nd overall moving up three places on the list of the world's attractive destinations. It is ranked the 14th best tourist destination for its natural resources and 24th for its cultural resources with many World Heritage Sites both natural and cultural rich fauna and strong creative industries in the country. India also bagged 37th rank for its air transport network. The India travel and tourism industry

ranked 5th in the long term 10 year growth and is expected to be the second largest employer in the world by 2019. The 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi are expected to significantly boost tourism in India further.

The tourism industry in India can have several positive and negative impact on the environment which are discuss below.

### Positive Impacts :

#### 1. Direct Financial Contributions :

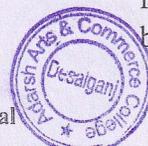
Tourism can contribute directly to the conservation of sensitive areas and habitat. Revenue from park- entrance fees and similar sources can be allocated specifically to pay for the protection and management of environmentally sensitive areas. Special fees for park operations or conservation activities can be collected from tourists or tour operators.

#### 2. Contributions to Government Revenues :

The Indian government through the tourism department also collect money in more far-reaching and indirect ways that are not linked to specific parks or conservation areas. User fees, income taxes, taxes on sales or rental of recreation equipment, and license fees for activities such as rafting and fishing can provide governments with the funds needed to manage natural resources. Such funds can be used for overall conservations programs and activities, such as park ranger salaries and park maintenance.

#### 3. Improved Environment Management and Planning :

Sound environment management of tourism facilities and especially hotels can increase the benefits to natural Environment. By planning



early for tourism development, damaging and expensive mistakes can be prevented, avoiding the gradual deterioration of environmental assets significant to tourism. The development of tourism has moved the Indian government towards this direction leading to improved environment management.

#### 4. Raising Environment Awareness :

Tourism has the potential to increase public appreciation of the environment and to spread awareness of environmental problem when it brings people into closer contact with nature and the environment. This confrontation heightens awareness of the value of nature among the community and lead to environmentally conscious behavior and activities to preserve the environment.

#### 5. Protection and preservation of Environment :

Tourism can significantly contribute to environment protection, conservation and restoration of biological diversity and sustainable use of natural resources. Because of their attractiveness, pristine sites and natural areas are identified as valuable and the need to keep the attraction alive can lead to creation of national parks and wildlife parks.

In India, new laws and regulations have been enacted to preserve the forest and to protect native species. The coral reefs around the coastal areas and the marine life that depend on them for survival are also protected.

#### Negative Impacts :

##### 1. Depletion of Natural Resources :

Tourism development can put pressure on natural resources when it increases consumption in areas where resources are already scarce.

- i. **Water resources :** Water, especially fresh water, is one of the most critical natural resources. The tourism industry generally overuses water resources for hotels, swimming pools, golf courses and personal use of water by tourists. This can result in water shortages and degradation of water supplies, as well as generating a greater volume of waste water. In dryer regions like Rajasthan, the issue of water scarcity is of particular concern.
- ii. **Local resources :** Tourism can create great pressure on local resources like energy, food, and other raw materials that may already be in short supply. Greater extraction and transport of these resources exacerbates the physical impacts associated with their exploitation. Because of the seasonal character of the

industry, many destinations have ten times more inhabitants in the high season as in the low season. A high demand is placed upon these resources to meet the high expectations tourists often have (proper heating, hot water, etc)

- iii. **Land degradation :** Important land resources include minerals, fossil fuels, fertile soil, forests, wetland and wildlife. Increased construction of tourism and recreational facilities has increased the pressure on these resource and on scenic landscapes. Direct impact on natural resources, both renewable and nonrenewable, in the provision of tourist facilities is caused by the use of land for accommodation and other infrastructure provision, and the use of building materials. Forests often suffer negative impacts of tourism in the form of deforestation caused by fuel wood collection and land clearing e.g. the trekking in the Himalayan region, Sikkim and Assam.

#### 2. Pollution :

##### i. Tourism can cause the same forms of pollution as any other industry :

Air emissions, noise, solid waste and littering, releases of sewage, oil and chemicals, even architectural/visual pollution. i) Air and Noise Pollution: Transport by air, road, and rail is continuously increasing in response to the rising number of tourist activities in India. Transport emissions and emissions from energy production and use are linked to acid rain, global warming and photochemical pollution. Air pollution from tourist transportation has impacts on the global level, especially from carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions related to transportation energy use. And it can contribute to severe local air pollution. Some of these impacts are quite specific to tourist activities where the sites are like Ajanta and Ellora temple. For example, tour buses often leave their motors running for hours while the tourists go out for and excursion because they want to return to a comfortably air-conditioned bus.

- ii. Noise pollution from airplanes, cars, and buses, as well as recreational vehicles is and ever-growing problem of modern life. In addition to causing annoyance, stress, and even hearing loss for humans, it causes distress to wildlife, especially if sensitive

areas. ii) Solid waste and littering : In areas with high concentrations of tourist activities and appealing natural attractions, waste disposal is a serious problem and improper disposal can be a major despoiler of the natural environment-river scenic areas, and roadsides.

In mountain areas of the Himalayas and Darjeeling, trekking tourists generate a great deal of waste. Tourists on expedition leave behind their garbage, oxygen cylinders and even camping equipment. Such practices degrade the environment particularly in remote areas because they have few garbage collection or disposal facilities.

iii) Sewage : Construction of hotels, recreation and other facilities often leads to increased sewage pollution. Wastewater has polluted seas and lakes surrounding tourist attractions, damaging the flora and fauna. Sewage runoff causes serious damage to coral reefs because it stimulates the growth of algae, which cover the filter feeding corals, hindering their ability to survive. Changes in salinity and siltation can have wide ranging impacts on coastal environments. And sewage pollution can threaten the health of humans and animals. Examples of such pollution can be seen in the coastal states of Goa, Kerela, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu etc.

### 3. Destruction and Alteration of Ecosystem :

An ecosystem is a geographic area including all the living organisms (people, plants, animals and micro organisms), their physical surroundings such as soil, water and air and the natural cycles that sustain them. Attractive landscape sites, such as sandy beaches in Goa, Maharashtra, Kerela, Tamil Nadu; lakes, riversides and mountain tops and slopes are often transitional zones, characterized by species rich ecosystems. The threats to and pressures on these ecosystems are often severe because such places are very attractive to both tourists and developers. Examples may be cited from Krushedei Island near Rameshwaram. What was once called paradise for marine biologists has

been abandoned due to massive destruction of coral and other marine life. Another area of concern which emerged at Jaisalmer is regarding the deterioration of the desert ecology due to increased tourist activities in the desert.

Moreover, habitat can be degraded by tourism leisure activities. For example, wildlife viewing can bring about stress for the animals and alter their natural behavior when tourists come too close. Safaris and wildlife watching activities have a degrading effect on habitat as they often are accompanied by the noise and commotion created by tourists.

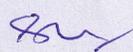
### Conclusion :

Tourism industry in India is growing and it has vast potential for generating employment and earning large amount of foreign exchange besides giving a fillip to the country's overall economic and social development. But much more remains to be done. Eco-tourism needs to be promoted so that tourism in India helps in preserving and sustaining the diversity of the India's natural and cultural environments. Tourism in India should be developed in such a way that it accommodates and entertains visitors in a way that is minimally intrusive or destructive to the environment and sustains and support the native cultures in the locations it is operating in. Moreover since tourism is a multi-dimensional activity and basically a service industry it would be necessary that all wings of the Central and State governments, private sector and voluntary organizations become active partners in the Endeavour to attain sustainable growth in tourism if India is to become a world player in the tourism industry.

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