

Chapter 8

Tourism

After the British consolidated their hold on India they looked for areas climatically akin to their homeland for rest and recreation. They established mountain resorts such as Nainital, Mussoorie, Dalhousie, Shimla, and Darjeeling. After the British departed, hill tourism began to build a base for mass pilgrimage, recreation, and adventure. With new roads, many areas opened up to tourism. Population increased; so did the number of tourists. However, for local people, the value-added component of tourism did not match the increase in the annual tourist inflow. The average duration of stay of visitors, particularly pilgrims, came down. Resort tourism was replaced by social tourism in which turnover is high, trips are short, and the pace frantic. Thresholds were ignored; capacity levels crossed; and interest and respect for nature and local cultures were substituted by consumerism and disdain for local cultures, values, and lifestyles. Resort towns and pilgrim centres that had been developed for small populations had to bear the 'flocking in' of tourists and pilgrims causing severe strain on local people and limited civic facilities. Few attempts, if any at all, were made to

deconcentrate and disperse tourist destinations.

Growth of Tourism in the NWHRI

Jammu and Kashmir

As a bundle of tourist destinations, Jammu and Kashmir is legendary; the Valley of Kashmir is particularly beautiful. Tourism has become an economic activity of great value and importance. It contributes substantially to the income of the state and its people. It has created employment and given rise to activities in the secondary and tertiary sectors. Tourist traffic to the Kashmir Valley was 184,790 in 1975 rising to a peak of 722,035 in 1988. Since 1990, militancy has caused traffic to fall to only 8,520 in 1995. The picture is quite different for pilgrim traffic. It was 120,000 for the Amarnath shrine in 1996 and over four million for the Vaishno Devi Temple in Jammu Division. Ladakh has been attracting tourist traffic in increasing numbers (about 25,000 in 1997). While employment and incomes have gone up and infrastructure gains have been made, adverse impacts

have also become apparent. Heavy traffic to the Kashmir Valley caused severe pressures on Dal Lake and its environs. Both the Dal and Anchar lakes became turbid and shallow with high concentrations of pollutants; their areas shrank. Land was lost to construction of hotels. Public open spaces were encroached upon to build lodges, restaurants, and tea stalls. In Jammu Division, the trees at the Patni Top area have suffered damage on account of the poor drainage that hotels and lodges provided for effluents. In Ladakh, impacts have been cultural and social. Foreign tourists have plenty of money. This has affected lifestyles, value systems, and people's roots in their own culture and environment. Precious art objects have been lost. Dress habits have changed and pursuit of wants rather than needs has become the objective for many.

Himachal Pradesh

Himachal Pradesh is a region of lofty mountains interspersed by narrow valleys, fringed by low Siwalik hills, and drained by many rivers. It is scenically beautiful and has a rich cultural heritage. There are about 6,000 temples depicting a wide variety of architecture, some more than a thousand years' old. Life without religion, festivals, fairs, dances, magic, and folk singing is unthinkable. Tribal life is rich and varied. The people wear colourful dresses, produce beautiful craftware, and paint artistically. The British built up summer resorts such as Shimla and Dalhousie; some roads were also constructed to interior areas. Kullu Valley became accessible in the 1930s with the opening of the Mandi-Larji gorge road.

Tourism traffic has grown rapidly, and more so since 1990 on account of militancy in the Kashmir Valley. In the early 1980s, visiting tourists numbered about half a million a year and nearly 30,000 were foreigners. This number rose sharply to over 1.8 million in 1994. With more than 50,000 foreign tourists; nearly 60 per cent went to

Shimla and Kullu districts. The contribution of tourism to the state's economy is estimated at Rs 2–2.5 billion (S harma 1997). Annual growth between 1989-90 and 1992-93 was 17 per cent. While there are some pilgrim destinations, recreation, sightseeing, and adventure are the main attractions.

Many impacts can be witnessed. Transport and the hospitality industry have benefitted from increasing inflows. The income multiplier factor is estimated at 2.5–3. However, pressure on hill towns, such as Shimla, is acute, with mounting congestion and construction of multistoreyed buildings. Manali and Kyelong have experienced a tourist boom. There is increasing non-biodegradable garbage and inappropriate waste disposal. The demand for fuelwood has increased causing stress on forests; the tree line is reportedly receding.

Uttar Pradesh Hills

Uttarakhand (12 hill districts of Uttar Pradesh) is a rich tourism resource area. In the past, it was mainly pilgrim and trade-related tourism. With the opening up of the area, it has also become a destination for recreation, leisure, adventure, and sports' tourism. It is scenically well endowed. Two of the most sacred rivers of India, the Ganga and Yamuna, drain it. Some of the highest Himalayan peaks (Nanda Devi, Kamet, Chaukhamba, and Trishul) are located here. There are glaciers, lakes, alpine meadows, forest stands, sculpted terraces, and wide as well as narrow valleys. Numerous religious shrines of national importance dot the land (Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, Yamotri, and Rishikesh). The mosaic of cultures is rich and colourful — including tribal communities such as Bhotia, Tharu, Busa, Jaunsarie, and Raji. The people of Garhwal and Kumaon are well known for their arts and crafts, rituals, folk dances, and festivals. In its earlier form, pilgrim traffic, which used trekking or riding for movement, ensured eco-friendly benefits to local peo-

ple. There are many summer resorts such as Nainital, Mussoorie, Ranikhet, Almora, and Landsdowne.

Tourism is an economically important activity that contributes substantially to the region's income. Tourist traffic is heavy and growing. In 1984, the number was 9.5 million — including 25,000 foreigners. The inflow rose to 14 million in 1995 with foreign tourists numbering 41,000. Rishikesh received over four million visitors in 1991, Nainital 1.1 million in 1993, and Mussoorie 1.5 million in 1993. Half a million went to Badrinath and 119,000 to Kedarnath in 1993. Tourist numbers are seasonal; summer and autumn arrivals are high causing acute pressure on areas of concentration.

Economic advantages and additions to infrastructure can be traced to growing tourism. However, social impacts have been harmful to local cultures and traditions. Environmental impacts on land use, water bodies, and fauna and flora have been negative. For example, in Mussoorie, 5,000 ha of land was used for construction in a period of eight years between 1990 and 1997 (LBS National Academy of Administration 1998). Highly sloping land was used for construction and practically no gently sloping land is available for future development. Land degradation has caused landslides along the frequently used Mussoorie–Dehradun road. Land values have shot up making it difficult for local, permanent residents to own housing. A similar situation can be found in Nainital where the Supreme Court had to intervene to put restrictions on improvident and environmentally dangerous land use for construction purposes. The lake of Nainital has deteriorated and, even now, part of the town's sewerage finds its way to this water body.

Another example of development leading to degradation can be found at Gangotri and Gaumukh, the origin of the Ganges. The opening of the bridge at Lanka in-

creased the number of visiting pilgrims. This put pressure on adjoining forests for fuel and construction purposes. Large quantities of garbage litter the paths and trails. The Gangotri Conservation Project was launched in 1994 by the Himalayan Environment Trust to provide environmental rehabilitation. The State Government has set up the Greater Gangotri Special Development Authority to regulate development of the area. The Sikh Gurdwara at Govind Ghat in Chamoli district had been persuaded to shift from using fuelwood for its large free kitchen to alternative fuels, either coal or liquid petroleum gas.

The Uttar Pradesh Government announced a new Tourism Policy in 1991 and declared tourism an industry. The main policy thrust was deconcentration of tourism through development of new tourism towns/villages, giving preference to locations that had potential and where some basic infrastructure was available, and providing encouragement to private investment.

Carrying-capacity Approach

Three components of the carrying-capacity theory are the bio-physical environment, socioeconomic and cultural environment, and infrastructure. Broadly it implies a search for balance; for ascertaining the limit to physical and other resources that may be used without causing lasting damage to land, water, biomass or other life forms, and the assimilative capacity that enables the environment to absorb, without unacceptable consequences or ill effects, the impacts of development. Tourism carrying-capacity analysis criteria should include the following aspects.

- Visual impact: scenic beauty, good air and water, low noise levels
- Land, water, and biomass conservation needs
- Protection of biodiversity (including

wildlife)

- Value-additions, incomes, and turnover
- Local employment and skill development
- Broaden access to tourism by extending facilities to middle and lower income groups
- Tourism volume and quality that can be absorbed without jeopardising local cultures, social mores, and lifestyles
- Tourist education
- Protection of cultural forms and traditions and uniqueness of structures, buildings, monuments, temples, and shrines
- Utilities, water, power, accommodation, catering and wayside facilities
- Transportation and communication
- Other facilities such as health cover, markets, service centres, and skilled manpower

The concept of carrying capacity is complex and fraught with operational difficulties. It is dependent upon a host of parameters, many of which are not easily quantifiable. The cause-effect relations are multi-dimensional, and cost-effective, sustainable trade-offs are often subjective and uncertain. However, certain fundamentals are perhaps unexceptionable. There has to be compatibility between tourism growth and ecological, social, cultural, and economic support systems. The aim should be not only to maintain, but also to enhance ecological balance, land capability, biodiversity, water regimes, and quality of life. Also, importantly, community cultures and identities should not be meddled with, acculturation should be shunned and local peoples' control over their lives ensured.

National Tourism Policy

The last National Tourism Policy was announced by the Central Government in 1982. A new policy has been drafted, and was circulated in June 1998. The document states, 'The emergence of tourism as an important instrument for sustainable human development including poverty alleviation,

employment generation, and environmental regeneration necessitated the enunciation of a new tourism policy. The solemn mission is to promote tourism and to sustain economic development and positive social change through development of tourism while preserving and protecting the environment and heritage.' The government would essentially assume a facilitating/enabling role, encourage the private sector, and introduce regulatory measures to ensure 'social, cultural and environmental sustainability, involvement of local communities and benefits to them'. The states of the Himalayan region would be regions of special interest where a judicious balance between conservation and development would be sought and eco-tourism promoted. Tourism as a subject would be included in the Concurrent List of the Constitution and a Tourist Development Fund would be set up to 'bridge critical infrastructural gaps'. The new policy is expected to receive approval in the near future.

Steps for Tourism Development

- Match infrastructure to tourist load and vice versa
- Deconcentrate tourism by developing new urban and rural locations
- Shift mountain tourism from its skewed urban orientation to its rural, decentralized aspect
- Adopt a proactive alternative energy (fuel) policy to reduce pressure on forests — ban use of wood as fuel for hotels, restaurants, expeditions, etc and provide a choice of other sources of energy
- Emphasise tourist education and education of host communities for eco-friendly tourism
- Mobilise social action through people's institutions for conservation-oriented tourism
- Encourage training/skill development for sustainable tourism and ensure that employment and income benefits flow to

local people

- Work towards reducing acute seasonality in tourist traffic through an appropriate set of incentives and disincentives
- Build consensus amongst stakeholders and promote community participation at all levels (Stakeholders would be the Central and State Governments, hill people, visiting tourists, tour operators, hospitality industry, adventure and sports' clubs, financing institutions, and community institutions)
- Preserve biodiversity
- Promote biospheres, national parks, and sanctuaries to protect flora and fauna

Benign tourism is difficult to achieve, much more so in mountain environments. However, it is possible. If appropriate considerations are kept in mind, mountain tourism can be moulded to become an instrument of sustained hill development in which local people thrive and visiting tourists can enjoy beautiful and soul-lifting environments.

