

Chapter 4

**Sustainable  
Tourism  
Development**

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# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

### 4.1 Introduction

Globally environmental awareness has been raised to new heights. For tourism, this new wave has been met with a range of reactions - from apathy to enlightenment and conflict. Some tourism leaders preoccupied with promotion have shown no interest in environmental matters, believing these issues are outside the realm of tourism. Others, especially some hoteliers and restaurateurs, have begun recycling waste at their own as well as environmental advantage. Advocates of environmental protection are maligned as emotional "greenies" and obstructionists to progress by some tourism developers. Some even have been known to criticize health departments for closing polluted beaches at the peak of the tourism season (Gunn, 1994).

Confused understanding of tourism's relevance to environmental matters endorses the need for greater enlightenment. Because of the new awareness of many environmental issues, the subject has not been given exhaustive research study, especially for tourism. Sustainable development defined by Rees (1989) in British Columbia, Canada is most suitable for tourism planning. According to Rees, "Sustainable development is positive socioeconomic change that does not undermine the ecological and social systems upon which communities and society are dependent. Its successful implementation requires integrated policy, planning, and social learning processes; its political viability depends on the full support of the people it affects through their governments, their social institutions, and their private activities."

The basic premise of "positive socioeconomic change" as outlined in the definition allows growth but requires that it is positive. This implies that such change must provide social economic betterment.

For the first time an effort was made at the international level in 1990 during the Globe 90 Conference (Vancouver, Canada) to link tourism and travel with sustainable development. The Tourism Stream Action Strategy Commission of the conference prepared an Action Strategy for Sustainable Development. Moreover, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development came with the famous Rio declaration.

At the United National Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in June 1992, 'the Earth Summit', a comprehensive program of action for sustainable

development was adopted by 182 governments, which is known as *Agenda 21*. It identifies the environmental and development issues that threaten our ecological, social and economic future and presents a strategy for transition to more sustainable practices.

Since The Earth Summit there has been a steady increase in awareness of the need to consider environmental and cultural issues in the travel and tourism industry, and not simply its economic returns. There is an increasing sense of urgency and a growing recognition that those who profit from tourism are not always those who have to bear its costs. Hence governments, industry and academia have undertaken research and implemented actions to minimize the negative impacts of the ever increasing travel industry on the natural, human and built environment and to develop sustainable tourism practices.

In 1996 the World Travel and Tourism Council, World Tourism Organization and Earth Council worked together to produce *Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry: Towards Ecologically Sustainable Development*'.

Ecotourism has become a well-known term around the world. Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism are closely related and if anything, ecotourism rests within the scope of sustainable tourism. Ecotourism refers to tourism development which aims to capture a portion of the tourism market that is attracted to areas of natural beauty through providing low impact tourism products, visitor education and contributing funds to local conservation and development efforts. Sustainable tourism refers to a broad range of tourism ventures that take into account ideas of sustainable development. It is argued (Martin Mowforth and Ian Munt, 1998) that the growth of tourism offers a means for third world countries to escape the confines of 'underdevelopment', and that the new forms of tourism allow this transition to be achieved sustainably and equitably. Building upon this fundamental precept, authors Munt and Martin explores and challenges the notion of sustainability and its relationship to contemporary tourism in *The Third World*. It takes examples from throughout the Third World and in particular draws upon primary research from Central America and the Caribbean, regions of prime importance in terms of new forms of tourism.

### *The Rio Summit*

As per Friends of Earth Summit, 1992, in 1989, the United Nations expressed deep concern at the serious degradation of the global life support systems (Resolution 44/228) and convened the **United Nations Conference on Environment and**

**development** in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. It was attended by 178 governments including 120 heads of state.

The purpose and content of the conference were to elaborate strategies and measures to halt and reverse the effects of the environmental degradation in the context of strengthened national and international efforts to promote sustainable and environmentally sound development in all countries. The results of the conference were foreseen in six parts:

- An 'Earth Character' or Declaration of basic principles.
- Agreements on specific legal measures
- An agenda for action — 'Agenda 21' and the means to implement to this agenda through
- Transfer of technology
- Strengthening of institutional capacities and processes

The immediate results - The Rio Declaration, non-binding treaty on climate change and biodiversity, forest principles, Agenda 21 and meager finance commitments - fell far short of the envisaged aims for the conference. Most of the treaties were non-binding, the declarations were vague enough to please every one and the commitment of resources was paltry (\$ 2.5 billion compared with an estimated cost of programmes of \$ 600 billion a year). Despite its size the travel and tourism industry was not included as a separate item on the conference agenda.

A year before the conference Maurice Strong, the UNCED Chairman appointed Swiss billionaire Stephan Schmidheiny who formed the Business council on Sustainable Development. Carothers describes the council as a coalition of some fifty multinationals, including some of the worst polluters on the planet whose goals were predictable "voluntary" rather than legislated reduction in toxic emissions, the right to corporate privacy and wholesale support for "free trade" (1993, 14-15).

Preferences of the over-consumption of the rich countries were removed from treaties, mention of corporate conduct was watered down, and the poorest countries barely had a say and despite objections from all the environmental groups in attendance the conference was used to endorse the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). As a Friends of the Earth briefing paper (which also gave equal mention to the positive achievements of the conference) described:

“An overwhelming majority of the world’s leading politicians have backed short-term economic expediency business as usual instead of an integration of environment and economy. They have succumbed to lobbying by excessively powerful business groupings intent on safeguarding their narrow vested interests. The North has done little to address the issue of its over-consumption and its unfair share of the limited “ecological space” on this planet. Instead, much of the burden of the environment and development crisis has been left on the shoulders of the world’s poorest countries in the South” (Friends of the Earth, 1992).

### ***The Brundtland Definition of Sustainable Development***

In 1983 the World Commission on Environment and Development was set up, with Gro Harlem Brundtland as its chair, in response to a United Nations General Assembly resolution. The Commission’s report - *Our Common Future* (The Brundtland Report) was submitted to the United Nations in 1987. Its often-quoted definition of sustainable development is: *Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*

Protagonists of the report point out that it incorporates the essential principles of intra-generational and inter-generational equity and that it persuaded many governments to endorse the notion of sustainable development.

Its critics would argue that it contains inbuilt assumptions about the need for continued expansion of the world economy and society that would be required to overcome the problems inherent in the western model of development.

### **4.2 Agenda 21 and Tourism**

Stancliffe (1995) comments that Agenda 21 mostly addresses business, industry and trade unions and it is primarily directed at governments and educators. The action taken by the former in particular has a bearing on the tourism industry, at both national and local levels. International government agreements may also affect certain tourism sectors.

Agenda 21 impinges on tourism in two ways. First, tourism is specifically mentioned as offering sustainable development potential to certain communities, particularly in fragile environments.

Among other priority given in Agenda 21, governments are urged to:

- Improve and reorient pricing and subsidy policies in issues related to tourism;
- Diversify mountain economics by creating and strengthening tourism;
- Provide mechanisms to preserve threatened areas that could protect wildlife, conserve biological diversity or serve as national parks;
- Promote environmentally sound leisure and tourism activities, building on the current programme of the World Tourism Organization.

Business and industry, including transnational corporations, are urged to:

- Adopt codes of conduct promoting best environmental practice.
- Ensure responsible and ethical management of products and processes;
- Increase self-regulation.

Agenda 21 sets out the priorities for sustainable development into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In its widest sense, tourism is a form of trade, not of goods perhaps, although the commodification of tourist destinations and talk of the 'tourist product' is now firmly established and accepted. Mowforth and Munt (1998:114). Arden Clark (1992:13) argued that 'the whole of the Agenda 21 section deals with trade amounted to an evasion of key trade and environment issues, rather than a basis for their solution'.

Arden-Clark's arguments about Agenda 21's treatment of the general area of trade are applicable to the field of tourism. Essentially, his criticism is based on two particular features of the Agenda: *first*, it endorses the *General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)* rules which encourage the externalization of environmental costs; and *second*, it endorses the idea that only trade liberalization will bring about sustainable development.

The first of these endorsements stems from GATT's agreement that the degree to which a country internalizes its costs is left to choice. This effectively fixes the externalization of environmental costs as the norm and makes clear that those countries, which deviate from this, will lose short-term competitiveness.

The second endorsements on the trade liberalization depends on the trickle-down mechanism to solve environmental problems - free trade leads to increase in per capita income through the economic growth it engenders, which in turn creates wealth, some parts of which can then be invested in environmental protection. The argument essentially says that - you must first dirty your own to generate the wealth to clean it up. It ignores the fact that:

- a. There is no automatic mechanism which guarantees that 'trickle-down' weather is invested in the environment;
- b. Environmental damage is cheaper to prevent than cure, and in many cases is irreversible.

The flaws in this argument are being learned painfully around the world, but most notably in developing countries (Arden- Clarke, 1992:14).

Arden-Clarke's critique highlights the ideological values, which underpin the priorities of Agenda 21, and reinforces the arguments about the importance of relationship of power. The principles of sustainability are not absolute and immutable. In any tourism analysis there is a need to examine the questions of who is stating the principles, priorities and policies, who will benefit from related action and who will lose.

### *The Tools of Sustainability*

Mowforth and Munt (1998:116) suggested certain technique/tool of sustainability as applied in the field of tourism. Even the designation of an area of land as a national park or as some other category of protected area can be seen as a tool of sustainable tourism. Those countries with high proportion of their land area under some form of legislated protection might be considered as practicing more suitable tourism than those with low proportions of their land protected. This assumption can of course be questioned. Some government, for instance, has designated large areas of land as national parks or wildlife reserves but has failed to provide the resources required to afford an appropriate level of protection on the ground. Guatemala and Brazil can be taken as example here, but they are not only the one. It is quite difficult to blame such governments—they simply do not have the capital resources to pay.

### *Commission on Sustainable Development*

The Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) is the principal entity for international political follow-up to the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development (UNCED) and the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Its mandate is:

- to co-ordinate the activities of other UN bodies as they relate to issues of sustainable development;
- to analyse progress at national, regional and international levels and
- to promote the implementation of Agenda 21.

53 countries are elected to membership in the CSD, which meet annually since 1993. In 1997 a special session of the General Assembly reviewed progress in the implementation of Agenda 21, and adopted a further five-year programme of work, which culminated in another review in 2002.

The overarching themes that the CSD will consider in the next five years are poverty and consumption patterns. These themes will be applied to the different issues being discussed each year. The CSD also monitors the implementation of Agenda 21 and its future development.

CSD is primarily a forum for encouraging discussion between governments and other stakeholders on the multitude of issues involved in sustainable development. But the outcomes of the CSD prove that this talking can lead to significant action. For example, at the first Earth Summit in 1992, heads of states agreed to:

- Agenda 21, an Agenda on sustainable development for the twenty-first century;
- The Rio Declaration - a set of 27 principles for governments and others to use;
- The Forestry Principles - unable to agree to a forest convention instead agreed guiding principles on how to manage forests sustainably;
- The bio-diversity conservation;
- The establishment of the new UN Commission, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD);
- The Climate Change Convention.

By the second Earth Summit in 1997 the Rio Agenda had reached the following milestones:

- The Biodiversity Convention had become international law, ratified by over 120 countries (the US still has not ratified it);
- The Climate Change Convention had become international law, ratified by over 120 countries;
- Desertification Convention had entered into international law;
- Over 3000 Local Agenda 21s around the globe;
- The Straddling Fish Stocks Agreement had been negotiated;
- Over 120 National Council of Sustainable Development had been formed;

- Over 120 National Strategies for Sustainable Development had been drawn up; and the
- Inter-Governmental Panel on Forests had been created

The CSD is one of the most open and participatory UN bodies. Recognizing that the achievement of sustainable development will require more political will, energy and creativity than governments can provide, the CSD has deliberately sought the involvement of 'all sectors of society'. The major groups involved in the CSD include NGOs, women, youth, indigenous peoples, local authorities, trade unions, business and industry, scientists and farmers.

Through their participation at the CSD, NGOs have been able to stimulate significant developments in the debate. NGOs participate primarily through the preparation of position papers, lobbying, making statements to intergovernmental working groups, and more recently, taking part in the official Dialogue Sessions between governments, NGOs and other major groups.

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In order to facilitate the preparation of the NGOs before CSD meetings and the involvement of the NGOs at the meetings, a CSD NGO Steering Committee was established in 1994. This non-political umbrella structure is charged with disseminating information and co-ordination of NGO activities at the CSD.

### *CSD Agenda and Tourism*

There was a formal governmental negotiation on tourism between governments, NGOs, industry, trade unions and local authorities on tourism. Similar dialogue sessions were held on tourism industry in 1994 CSD and were considered to be a great success. The Industry dialogues generated substantial outcomes for sustainable development.

The Tourism Dialogues have the potential towards the sustainable development. The topic areas are:

- Industry initiatives for sustainable tourism;
- Influencing consumer behavior to promote sustainable tourism; and

- Promoting broad-based sustainable development through tourism while safeguarding the integrity of local cultures and protecting the environment.

The first stage of this process involves identifying the main issues and the level of progress achieved to date.

#### **4.3 Sustainable Tourism and Development**

The subject has become a fundamental issue in tourism development and the popularity had grown after the debate at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. Seeing the rapid changes in tourism and the world trends, experts are now examining geopolitical, socio-economic, technological and environmental impacts of contemporary tourism. It was realised that tourism requires an agenda of its own, and not as a part of the overall post structural adjustment process. This was reflected in the 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development in 1999, which was devoted to tourism impacts around the world. This was due to large extent, to the effect of NGOs working in different parts of the world coming together to speak one voice on what their experience had been through grass root interaction, in the course of the phenomenal growth of tourism in the last two decades. It is therefore, become a part of the evaluation of the implementation of the Agenda 21 set at Rio.

The concept of sustainability when applied to tourism can be perceived and interpreted in various ways. Sustainability for attractions (both natural and manmade), infrastructure, cultures, environment, economy, etc. will have different meaning for different disciplines and the methodologies adopted also may not be the same. For example, a sociologist might be interested in retaining the authenticity of customs rituals or other aspect of culture that are now being packaged as tourism products or attractions. In this case sustainability can be achieved by retaining the authenticity and hence, both the concepts are inter-lined. Similarly, in the case of natural resources (water, forests, hills, etc.) it would be linked to consumption patterns and levels; in case of historical buildings and monuments it would be linked to conservation aspects; for a destination it would mean sustaining its attraction and so on (Middleton and Hawkins, 1998)

As per Middleton and Hawkins, "Sustainable tourism means achieving a particular combination of numbers and types of visitors, the cumulative effect of whose activities at a given destination, together with the actions of servicing businesses, can

continue into the foreseeable future with damaging the quality of the employment on which the activities are based”.

The scope of environment in this definition is quite large and according to them for all practical decisions as far as tourism is concerned environment means the :

“Quality of natural resources such as landscape, air, sea water, fresh water, flora and fauna; and the quality of built and cultural resources judged to have intrinsic value and be worthy of conservation.”

Achieving sustainability for tourism, according to them requires that “the cumulative volume of visitor usage of a destination and the associated activities and impacts of servicing business should be managed below the threshold level at which the regenerative resources available locally become incapable of maintaining the environment.”

There is a difference between sustainable tourism and sustainable development in the context of tourism. Sustainable Tourism is a tourism that can maintain its viability in a area for a indefinite period of time, whereas sustainable development in the context of tourism is tourism that is developed and maintained in an area in such a manner and at such a scale, that it remains viable over an indefinite period and does not degrade or alter the environment in which it exists to such a degree that it prohibits the successful development and well being of other activities and processes.

For sustainable tourism development, environment conservation and management of visitor usage and servicing businesses are interlinked. They are susceptible to the impacts of:

- Tourist/ host behaviour and attitudes
- The policies of the servicing businesses,
- The government policies, and
- The changes in technology.

Management of sustainable tourism is a dynamic activity, and the above said impacts cannot be considered as static. While applying the sustainability criteria to the way in which the tourism industry operates and the way tourism products are consumed by the tourists (international as well as domestic), attention is immediately drawn to the tourism impacts on the destinations:

- Natural resources and attractions (including man-made),
- Economy

- Society, and
- Culture, etc.

Tourism is also an economic activity like any other sector, although it has a glamorized image. It involves international forces that work according to global laws. This means that the development debate has to come to terms with the sustainability of international tourism, despite its complexities. Tourism has a variety of products to offer, from low impact products to high impact products. These can be delivered by the organised sector, but in small and developing countries the unorganised sector plays an important role in delivering these products. The tourism products have several components, which are supplied by a variety of suppliers, all of who do not have common standards. Tourism represents variety of interests. At the destination are the local people who are divided by the costs and benefits of tourism. Then there is the industry, where the organised and unorganised sectors can have a conflict of interests. Governments tend to promote tourism for economic reasons without looking at impacts and costs. Then there are the tourists who have different pattern of consumption and expect different levels of service. For the developmental purpose, there is a need to engage in a multi-stakeholder process to see how to resolve genuine conflicts and respect the aspirations of the stakeholders who are involved in similar activities.

#### **4.4 Responsible / Alternative Tourism**

Tourism is an activity generating a number of social and economic benefits, but on the other hand it has negative impacts too. These can be curbed if we instill a sense of responsibility in the tourism sector. This approach can be termed as Responsible or Alternative Tourism. Uncontrolled flood of tourists from the alien industrialized nations into the developing world raises the problem of environmental destruction, cultural differences and social tensions. Not many policies are formulated to resolve the negative impacts of tourism and there has been even little actual development of these policies in reality. Yet, the policies did not fail completely as they raised the level of awareness and generated a debate among the environmentalists. But the solutions remain essentially theoretical and not a practical answer for the future. To overcome this problem the concept of responsible tourism has come into practice.

Alternative tourism is a kind of tourism which, while safeguarding the experience of travel, would also further mutual understanding between people, prevent

environmental and cultural degradation and, most of all, exploitation of the local population. Because of these features it is also termed as responsible tourism.

Alternative tourism is thus a synonym of responsible tourism. It is argued that with the help of alternative tourism one can overcome the problems raised by tourism industry. Responsible tourism can be interpreted as an umbrella term embracing supposedly more caring and aware form of tourism. Its prefixes include alternative, appropriate, sustainable, soft, green, etc. In responsible tourism the host community plays a very crucial role in the decision-making on tourism and tourism development. The hosts also control the pace of development, which is vital. Raising the awareness of the traveler prior to the arrival at the destination and sensitizing him to the local environment is very important. Hence, destination plays the key role in this form of tourism.

The idea of alternative tourism has its source in two contemporary ideological pre-occupations:

- First is the counter-cultural rejection of modern mass consumerism,
- A concern for the impact of the modern industrial development on the third world societies.

Each of these pre-occupations raises the problems of conventional tourism and criticizes it, though from different angles. It therefore proposes different conceptions of alternative tourism.

### ***Benefits of Alternative Tourism***

As compared to mass tourism or tailor-made tour packages, alternative tours are different in many aspects such as:

- Length of visit,
- Size of the group,
- The kind of budget they have, and
- Most important of all the purpose of the visit.

These tours can also be classified in the following ways:

- Study tours,
- Cultural event tour,
- Development project tour, and
- Village visits and stay programme.

But all these tours are closely related and it is not easy to distinguish between them. Sometimes it is a combination of some of these or perhaps all of these themes put together. In these tours there is an effort to encourage and facilitate people encounters in an atmosphere where the visitors and the hosts can sit and interact under the same roof.

The tour is arranged with a positive purpose and includes the orientation lecture in which the visitors sit and listen to what the hosts have to tell about their locality's unique culture, environment and social and economic problems so that the visitors are turned to the same wavelength. The role of slide projectors, audio-visual aids and the university intellectuals, experienced development workers and people related or specialized in specific issues is very crucial in making the orientation lectures more informative and interesting.

All the contact and arrangements are done through the local partner concerning accommodation, local transport, food, village activities as well as financial part. They are in a better position to understand the local situation than the professional organizations; and it is through them that one learns about the feedback from the village host, who are linked to the grass root people. A situation is created and offered where the local people can meet and sit under the same roof as the tourists on equal terms. The entire tour is packaged and marketed on these lines.

In this type of tourism, visitors have the opportunity to meet and interact with people other than those who are involved only in providing tourism services - as is the case in conventional tourism. Such tourists include development workers, university intellectuals, environmentalists and nature lovers, etc. The local people too have the opportunity to meet them as friends from outside who express an intention to jump across the cultural barrier as well as the traditional structure of tourism. Tourism has been the best potential to bridge the gap, and can provide a flow of information between people. In such a way, the alternative tourism provides a lot of scope of being closer to the environment. It also helps in retaining the intrinsic cultural values of the communities where such visits are made. At the same time this form of tourism acts as the real instrument for international and national brotherhood, peace and harmonious co-existence.

### *Hurdles of Alternative Tourism*

The validity of Alternative tourism, though seen as a solution by many, is being questioned also. B. Wheeler (1990) has observed:

“Currently ecotourism seems to be neatly, and conveniently, side stepping the critical issues of volume, of mass. As projections for increased participation in tourism, including ecotourism, are realized then the futility of eco/sustainable tourism will, I believe, become painfully apparent”.

The number of tourists is to go up and up and Wheeler maintains, “Eco tourism is not immune from this explosion”. This means that as the volume of eco-tourists goes up all the problems related to mass tourism will affect this area also. Many in the tourism industry are already using it as a market ploy.

Another point raised by wheeler is in relation to tourist behavior. There is no guarantee that the eco-tourist or alternative “tourist will always include an element of exploitation” as it is a “human activity” and

- The commercial provider is motivated by profit,
- The tourist is motivated by self interest i.e., ‘what is in it for me’ type of an attitude, and
- The host community likes to extract something from the tourists.

These traits will be present in any form of tourism leave aside alternative tourism.

Similarly the emphasis on interaction and direct experience between the visitor and the host does not take away the possibilities of negative cultural impacts. The indigenous people of local community welcome the visitors in the spirit of hospitality that adopts western ways in the process. In this way they are increasingly adversely affected by the massive scale and intrusive character of tourism.

For a caring tourism the watchword is slow, steady development at a small scale. But there are fundamental economic dilemmas in converting this ideal into reality. If tourism is to generate income and significant number of jobs in relation to the economy of the area, then how can one limit the size of development? The result is that “tourism developments have frequently operated ahead of the regions’ ability to provide infrastructure and sound management” as stated by Robinson, (1996). Citing the example of Khumbu (the Sagarmatha National Park, Nepal) Robinson mentions that the region’s most pressing environmental problems that have been associated with tourism include forest degradation, competing land uses on fragile land surfaces and waste disposal”. The economic multiplier impact has enriched the locals and they themselves are exploiting the natural resources like cutting forests for constructing new forest lodges or bigger homes for wealthy families. Litter along the trekking routes, indiscriminate disposal of human

waste etc. poses serious threat to the destination. And all this environmental degradation is taking place at a destination, which is promoted as and known for alternative tourism.

Developing countries have weak economy and are in greater need for foreign exchange. They, therefore, prove sometimes weaker in terms of controls on tourism development. Thus, notions of community-based approaches to tourism decision making seem fine to those communities where there is a cohesive, established network based on economic viability. They can afford to become selective. But at the micro-level this will not stop 'unsuitable' development. It will merely transfer it to another area, another community, less able to have a constructive say in its own destiny. 'Community approach' appears to be that the strongest remain strong.

Responsible tourism is increasingly being adopted more as a marketing tool than as a sensitive planning mechanism. Tourism on a micro-level can perhaps be sensitively planned, but at the macro-level because of the enormity and complexity of the task, it becomes cumbersome, uncontrollable and not plannable.

The ideology of alternative tourism rejects conventional tourism in toto. It strives to be a full-fledged alternative to it. This precludes it from seeking a chance to reform the tourist establishment and mass tourism from within. For years tourism industry and pro-tourism lobby have welcomed planning policies. But the irony is that responsible tourism's very ineffectiveness is likely to see its overt acceptance as global tourism strategy by an industry eager to foster a better image and keen to be seen to be green. Even more than other industries, the tourism industry can now see profit in ostensibly becoming green. Responsible tourism appeases the guilt of the 'thinking tourist' while providing the holiday experience. The industry is happy because the more discerning range of market can be catered for by 'legitimately' opening up new areas to tourism and the overall demand for and growth of tourism, on a global basis, continues unabated. This makes the idea of responsible tourism superficial in practice. In spite of these problematic issues opinions have been expressed that every step, no matter how small, adds to the sum of the over all responsible effect. This makes the idea of responsible tourism superficial in practice. In spite of these problematic issues opinions have been expressed that "every step, no matter how small, adds to the sum of the over all responsible effect" as stated by Wood and House, in *The Good Tourist*, (1991).

### *Different Attempts*

In many countries non-governmental organizations (NGO's), governments, tourism bodies, etc. have initiated efforts towards sustainable development and for responsible/alternative tourism. These have been discussed and debated upon in a number of conferences, workshops or seminars and the emerging issues in this regard have also generated research and impact as well as feasibility studies at both micro and macro levels. For example, McGregor in his paper *Sustainable Development* (1994) has touched upon these issues at length. He has cited the seven principles that guided the *Tourism Sector Study* in Canada:

1. Limit human impact on the planet (global) and on the regional (local) to a level that is within its carrying capacity.
2. Maintaining the stock of biological wealth in this region. This should include:
  - Conserving the life support services,
  - Conserving the diversity of nature, and
  - Ensuring that all resource impacts are sustainable.
3. Minimize the depletion of non-renewable resources like the use of plastics, metals, fossil fuels, etc.
4. Promote long-term economic development that increases the benefits from a given stock of reserve and maintains natural wealth. This can include promoting the use of solar energy, waste recycling, etc.
5. Provide for an equal distribution of the benefits and costs of resource use and environmental management.
6. Provide for effective participation of communities and interest groups in the decisions that most affect them.
7. Promote the values that encourage others to achieve sustainability.

### *Role of Government*

It is the Government's responsibility in making the idea of responsible tourism a success. It is to be taken into consideration that environmental issues cannot be tackled merely by passing laws. Very often there is no coordination among the various government departments. This not only leads to confusion but provides loopholes for flouting laws and regulations.

Well-drafted laws, with a minimum number of loopholes, can make a difference, particularly in ensuring that those deliberately destroying the environment through the acts of omission or commission are deterred. Such laws also provide public-spirited citizens and environmental groups an opportunity to fight for their implementation. However, bad laws, particularly those which are loosely framed, can do more harm than good, for they provide a legal basis for flouting environmental standards. They also create an illusion of legal remedies being provided when, in fact, they are of little use. Often public debate on a draft Bill can ensure that some of the more obvious loopholes are plugged.

Moreover, whether the law is adequate or not, its effectiveness is entirely dependent on the political will of the authorities who implement it. Many good laws have been wasted because they have not backed by political will. The performance of the Ministry of Environment and Forests at the Center, which has been instrumental in introducing several environmental laws, has been mixed. While in some cases it has been entirely consistent in demonstrating its determination to implement the laws, in other cases it showed lax.

Thus, the Government policies have a crucial role to play in decreasing the problems of tourism industry, as well as of environment as government has the power of making things run. A positive support from Government would result in a positive development of responsible tourism. Certain measures must be initiated and implemented by the Government. For example:

- *Carrying capacity* of each destination must be defined and there should be specific guidelines in this regard.
- It must be ensured that tourism is considered integral to land use planning at the destination and environment friendly construction guidelines are there.
- *Offenders should be punished* and there should be no political pressures used for flouting the laws or regulations. Rather, the law enforcing agencies should be so empowered that they carry out their duties meaningfully.
- All types of media should be used extensively for creating environment awareness.

### ***Role of the Tourism Industry***

Eco-tourism or Alternative /Responsible Tourism is often used by the Tourism Industry just as a slogan or market ploy to maximize its profits. This is not to say that

there are none in the industry who are bothered about ecological destruction or environment degradation, though the voices may be few. Next to the government the industry has a major role to play in this regard if those managing the industry want their future generations to be in the same business. The government frames laws and regulations and it is for the industry to implement them. The role that the industry should play includes:

- Sensitizing their customers (tourists) on environmental issues and providing them all types of information regarding rules, etc. at the time of selling their package.
- Educating and training their own staff and employees towards responsible tourism. Tourism sector being one of the largest employer (120 million employees of the world over), by doing so a strong movement for responsible tourism will emerge on its own,
- Ensuring that their own construction or other infrastructure development activities will be governed by environment friendly attitude. For example eco-friendly architecture, waste recycling, use of renewable energy, etc. can be inbuilt in a resort development or any project plan,
- Undertaking environmental audits for assessing their own business performance in that area, and
- Having business relations with those who adopt similar approaches towards environment, etc.

MacGregor has suggested, "Environmental responsibility can become a common goal that reflects all participants in the travel industry (clients, managers, investors, shareholders, employees, policy makers). This will result in a sustainable resource base that will remain intact for future generations of tourists and travel industry operators, as well as improved bottom line for the individual business".

### ***Role of Local Community***

Apart from the industry and government, the local residents at a destination must also share the responsibility for promoting responsible / alternative tourism. This is more so because ultimately it is the locals only who tend to lose because of negative impacts or wrong policies. Generally it has been observed that the locals in order to have a share in

tourism profits tend to ignore or damage their own environment. At many destinations, where the economic condition of the locals has improved they have utilized the money for development without evaluating the negative impacts. For example a person had a small lounge having 10 rooms. As more profits came in the person started adding more floors to the building in order to expand his business without any consideration for the ambiance of local architecture or environment. Similarly, the locals do not bother about the garbage disposal etc. this kind of development brings immediate profits but shortens the life of a destination resulting in long term losses. Hence, it is necessary that the local residents play a crucial role for sustainable/ alternative tourism development. Some of the steps to be taken in this regard may include:

- Creating environmental awareness among the fellow locals,
- Keeping a strict watch over the construction and building activities, land use, etc.
- Adoption of the use of non-conventional energy resources,
- Having a say in the determination of the carrying capacity of the destination, and
- If necessary, protesting against misuse of the natural resources for tourism development and so on.

It is through constant interaction between the Government, tourism industry and the local residents that efforts initiated for responsible tourism can become a success.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

Sustainable development, which is becoming a more recognized term as concern for the environmental future spreads and the topic receives more attention via the media. What is not so clear is what the concept involves and how it can be applied to tackle the perceived problems. However, with the growing sense of urgency and recognition that something must be done to balance our growth and conservation objectives, more effort is being put into identifying the different dimensions of the concept and ways in which they can be operationalized (Peter E. Murphy, 1995). It is in this regard that tourism and tourism research can play a significant role, for future growth of the tourism industry that depends on a healthy and continuous physical and human environment. As a part of the growing popularity of the sustainability concept, research and development on tourism, should explore ways in which to combine environmental and business considerations so

that synergistic relationships can emerge. There are couple of cases, which have been demonstrated some constant characteristics and these, along with the present research priorities, could guide future tourism Endeavours.

Sustainable development can be regarded as a philosophy. It has received support because it reflects the growing popular understanding and awareness of the scientific investigation of our socio-political and environmental reality that should be the basis of our economic and leisure activity in the future. It looks at the needs of the world's poor and the limitations which nature has to impose on the consumption of the world's rich nations. It offers an opportunity for action for all levels, which will give rise to new ways of doing things. However, it also gives legitimacy to market capitalism and the trickle down economy, because it aims to reform the western capitalist form of consumption and production, and not to change it.

One has to keep sustainable tourism developments in view while planning for tourism. Similarly, these concepts have to be practiced in business operations also along with making the consumers aware of their significance. Though each player in tourism has a role in this regard it is the NGO's who have come forward to play the role of watchmen.

A gathering of 64 nations at Milan in 1997 undertook the task to be more responsible with the phenomenal growth of tourism. Drug abuse, sex tour, child exploitation, crime and environmental degradation were among the social costs of tourism that were addressed by them. Legal framework should be put in place to curb and to eliminate problems that are serious enough to threatened social cohesion and the ecological equilibrium of the communities visited by tourists.

Since tourism is a form of consumption, and therefore, a product of economic development, it is clear that a balance to be created so that the benefit will flow to all countries rather than the social costs of the evils of tourism being borne by the poor, the small and the less developed countries. With million of tourists estimated to be on the move in the year 2000 and earned more than US\$ 625 billions, the challenge before us to control mass tourism in the interests of the resident communities and service providers, so that they are not left to pick up ills of tourism after the tourists have gone home. Moreover, it should be kept in the mind that the argument or the discussion for sustainable development is an ongoing process and every one has a stake in it.

The combination of business and environmental objective in a *company* or *destination* development strategy can bring out the comparative advantages of the local

area. It is instructive to observe that the business researchers are coming to similar conclusions and concepts as the environmentalists. Moore (1992) has shown how Porter's "value chain" concept can provide a good illustration of how to integrate environmental inputs and outputs into a business, overall strategic planning and positioning. It shows that companies can be held responsible for the impacts of their raw material collection and their product's final disposal and given the appropriate legislative guidelines, operates in a profitable manner.

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