Tourism and Ecology in the Gangotri region

The purpose of this chapter is to answer one basic question and a few related questions. From the discussion in the preceding chapters, it becomes obvious that whereas tourism is an effective means of achieving gainful employment and consequently ensuring development, it also results in significant ecological degradation. The question that seeks to be answered therefore is this – can tourism be conducted in a manner such that the activity does not become a burden on the environment? Introducing ecotourism (as discussed in the previous chapter) is a possible solution. Given that ecotourism is introduced, can it lead to sustainable development? ImPLYING that it will involve participation by the local population can it further, lead to empowerment? What role does the state play in ensuring the same? What other agencies can be involved in promoting ecotourism in the Gangotri region?

Drawing upon the suggestions offered by visitors and locals, it highlights gaps in policies and infrastructural facilities that have resulted in serious environmental threats. The study of tourism in the Gangotri region becomes pertinent for two reasons: in the first place, it marks a shift from state aided employment opportunities to self employment by the locals. On the other hand, it also marks a state of co-operation between state and social forces wherein the two try and achieve a balance between an economic activity that brings substantial financial gain and environmental degradation that comes with it. These threats have led to a major debate on whether the region should be closed or restricted to tourism and made a National
Park that has been discussed in the previous chapter. The other conflict that emerges from this debate is that between pilgrims and trekkers. On the basis of these debates and suggestions, the present chapter explores the role of the state, NGOs and people in facilitating ecotourism while at the same time identifying its role in development. This chapter is divided into three parts: in the first, the role of tourism in development is conceptualised as the generating employment to people not merely in the region that is visited but also the areas from where visitors hail (and possibly, the regions where they transit). The second section discusses the role of the tourist industry (with reference to Gangotri) in contributing to environmental degradation. Both these sections take into view the role of the industry as envisaged in the Tenth Five Year Plan of the Government of Uttaranchal and provide a critique of the same. Finally, the last section looks into the possibility of arriving at a balance between economic needs (of earning a livelihood) and environment. Ecotourism can perhaps provide a possible answer to the problem, but it perhaps does not offer a permanent solution to the problem. Strengthening community structures through active participation by members of the society can perhaps ensure sustainable growth and development through the tourist sector.

State and Development: Tourism and Employment

Tourism Development at both the national and international level can make a positive contribution to the life of the nation, provided the supply is well planned and of a high standard and protects and respects the cultural heritage, the values of tourism and the natural, social and human environment.

*Manila Declaration, 1980*
As discussed in the previous chapters, the growth of tourism in the Gangotri region has enabled people to determine their employment pattern and standard as well as plan leisure time due to its seasonality. However, the income generated from this activity is insufficient to maintain a livelihood and people have had to resort to pursuing subsidiary occupations to augment the same. Policy could be formulated in a manner such that subsidiary occupations provide people with enough income rather than offering a mere means of subsistence. In addition, scholars have analysed that the tourist sector seldom ensures equal distribution of income: instead, very little trickles down to the bottom and tourist companies, charters, airlines and travel agents make away with profits. They argue that the tourist industry does not really serve to ensure development; rather it enhances the cleavages between metropolitan countries and developing nations that are visited by tourists.

John Lea (1988) has conceptualised tourism's place in development using three approaches, two of which (Dependency Theory and the Enclave Model) can be characterised as the Political Economy Approach and one as the Functional Approach. Summarised, they are as follows:

- Political Economy Approach: propounded by S. Britton offers two models: the dependency and enclave model that are based on the premise that tourism has evolved in a way which closely matches historical patterns of colonialism and economic dependency. It pays attention to the political and economic determinants of world trade, ignoring all
other features and sees it as a means by which the wealthy metropolitan nations develop at
the expense of the less fortunate. Thus international tourism flourishes in a world
economic system characterised by severe distortions and imbalances. Surplus value is
expropriated or, alternatively, appropriated by internal elites so the benefits of tourism are
unevenly distributed. The industry can be portrayed as a three tiered hierarchy with its
apex in the metropolitan parent companies, connected to an intermediate level of
associated firms in the Third World and having as its base a collection of small-scale local
firms. The relative importance of the three levels can be seen in the diagram where local
firms are shown as receiving only a minor part of the overall financial benefits. The
political economy view dwells on the structural inequalities in world trade and suggests
that international tourism is unlikely to achieve a better balance among its rich and poor
participants until a corresponding shift also occurs in the whole pattern of country to
country relationships. Proponents of this view are most anxious to minimise the worst
examples of exploitation by seeking public ownership of more of the tourist industry in
host countries and direct marketing of the product where this is possible.

(a) Dependency theory highlights unequal relationships. Metropolitan companies, institutions
and governments in the post colonial period have maintained special trading relationships with
certain elite counterparts in Third World countries. These representatives of the ruling classes
gain most benefit from the less-than-equal share of income and profits which remain inside
the peripheral economy. This presents a bleak picture for small local firms without
connections who cannot breakthrough.

(b) Enclave Model: Dependency relations also have a physical, commercial and social
dimension. It traces the primary return flows of tourists from metropolitan countries and
resort enclaves in the periphery. ‘Environmental bubbles’ found in their most extreme form in
the self-contained tourist villages. Best things in life are free - emphasising the comprehensive nature of the tour package where even spending money inside the resorts is replaced by a system of prepaid tokens. The Political Economy view dwells on the structural inequalities in world trade and suggests that international tourism is unlikely to achieve a better balance among its rich and poor participants until a corresponding shift also occurs in the whole pattern of country-to-country relationships.

Functional approach: this subdivides international tourism into three elements: dynamic phase, covering movement to and from destination; static - involving stay; consequential - describing chief economic, physical and social impacts on the environment (Alister Mathieson and Geoffrey Wall, 1982). These categories are illustrated by Alister Mathieson and Geoffrey Wall as a set of interconnected parts with feedback links throughout the system.
FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

Whereas political economists portray international tourism as a means of exploiting Third World societies as described in the operations of transnational companies, distorted expenditure flows and the evolving pattern of resort enclaves; the functional view by contrast does not deal with causal relationships and an apolitical framework reduces its value in analysing the Third World situation. It further, pays little attention to inequalities in the industry, preferring to concentrate on describing the characteristics of the tourists, various impacts and different destinations. Static dynamics – neglects the dynamics of change at tourist destinations. The shape of tourist industry changes over time and can be adversely
affected when increasing popularity threatens the carrying capacity of local attractions. The whole picture emerges when the two perspectives are brought together.

All these approaches can be employed to study the pattern of employment generation and the flow of income to the people directly involved in selling the region as a product. Indeed, as examined in Chapter 3, the amount of money spent by the tourist in Gangotri is a mere fraction of what is spent on bookings and reservations and donations to the ashrams. There is thus a clear discrepancy between the income earned by the people and tourist expenditure. Although travel agencies serve to promote tourist attractions, they also appropriate a large part of tourist budget since they act as middlemen between the tourist and the destination and charge exorbitant rates for preparing itineraries, managing transport, accommodation, and providing other services. Currently, the emphasis is on responsible tourism where the environment is given tremendous importance and being minimalistic is considered proper. Indeed, there are travel agencies and tour operators who often use the rhetoric of ecotourism, but these are few and far between. A traveller from England noted in his account of Gangotri and beyond, “The Company we were trekking with is a London based company called Exodus who lead many trips in the Himalayas and many other parts of the world. The company has a Responsible Tourism Policy, which includes the following. "Our trips are designed to allow a high degree of economic benefit to the local communities: we buy local produce, eat local food, use local services and operators to ensure that as much money as possible is retained in the local economies and with the host communities. We maintain strict policies on water, waste and resource management, support local conservation efforts and believe in allowing wildlife the space it deserves." This trip was organised in India for Exodus by Kim
Butterworth, whose family have lived in Himachal Pradesh for several generations. He has his own team of local guides and cooking staff and on this occasion employed porters from Uttarkhasi (sic.) some of whom were Indians and some Nepalese. At the end of the trip the group tipped the porters but the distribution of the cash was handled by Kim so I do not know how it was divided. Our group of twelve was made up of people from Iceland, Scotland, England, Singapore and Australia... (Michael Brown, Norwich, England, October 2001).

Not every company that oversees tours in the region would instruct travellers to regard the environment with care or supervise tourists, indeed not every company faithfully observes commitments that it apparently cherishes where profits are concerned. As observed in Chapter 3, most tourism in the Himalayas does not necessarily benefit the local community since the profits are enjoyed by people who organise travel. What trickles down is a tiny drop and does not account for even a fraction of the whole cake. The picture that has emerged so far is one of perpetual poverty in a region that is ironically rich in resources.

Tourism development is not merely checking the flow of cash into a region: it involves to a large extent, creating employment opportunities, packaging the destination to appeal to all age and income groups, creating tourist infrastructure and facilities that enable a visitor to enjoy the destination to the utmost. Indeed such packaging and marketing requires an in depth knowledge of the visitor for whom the tourist packages are created. Robert Britton (1977) suggests seven chief elements in the planning and management of tourism:

1. Zoning to separate tourism from other land uses and minimise its effect on agricultural land values
2. Gradual growth to lessen inflation and social problems
3. Indigenous tourism to maximise participation of local communities
4. Local production of food, furniture and crafts to stimulate the economy and save foreign exchange
5. Indigenous building forms using local materials plus more control over foreign investment
6. Joint ventures between local and foreign investors plus more control over foreign investment
7. Low-cost marketing aimed at reaching a diverse group of potential tourists

Planning for ecotourism also requires taking into consideration different tourist types. As suggested previously, visitors' requirements should also be met. However, these requirements are never consistent, as different people demand different things from the host society. A very broad characterisation of tourist types has been done by Ascher (1985). She holds economic considerations to be pre-eminent in determining the activities of a tourist. Thus, 'luxury' tourists are those tourists for whom economic constraints are not decisive. 'Active' tourists try to adapt their economic means to meet various 'needs' and finally, 'captive' tourists can be identified as those whose practices are strictly determined by their economic and cultural status.

On a somewhat broader scale, taking considerations of economy and activity, Valene Smith (c.f. Lea, 1988: 26-27) has outlined 7 demand categories that identify tourist types:

1. Explorer: such tourists are extremely limited in number and look for discovery and involvement with local people.
2. Elite: this category enjoys special individually tailored visits to exotic places.
3. Off beat: desire to get away from the crowds.
4. Unusual: visit with peculiar objectives such as physical danger or isolation.
5. Incipient mass: steady flow travelling alone or in small organised groups using shared services.
7. Charter: mass travel for relaxation to destinations that incorporate many standardized western facilities as possible.
A cognitive-normative typology suggested by Erik Cohen (c.f. Lea, ibid.) seeks to distinguish visits in terms of what they mean for the traveller. Here the typology covers visits directed at pleasure alone as well as those where there is an emphasis on pilgrimage to some new and personal experience:

(i) Recreational – one of the commonest forms of tourism where the trip is designed to relieve the strains and tensions of work with no deeper significance involved.
(ii) Diversionary – visit is pure escape from the routine and boredom of home life.
(iii) Experiential – tourist seen as the modern pilgrim looking for authenticity in the lives of other societies because he has seemingly lost his own.
(iv) Experimental – traveller experiments with lifestyles other than his own and
(v) Existential – where a tourist actually acquires a new spiritual centre as a result of the travel experience.

These typologies help to view tourism from both personal and host societies enabling managers and planners to formulate tourism policies in a manner such that all interests are taken into consideration. Tourism in Gangotri has neither been organised into various types i.e. pilgrims, mountaineers, hikers and so on; but has also not been adequately sensitised to become more eco-friendly. Another study by Jagdish Kaur (1985) assesses the criteria by which tourist places (or recreational resource areas) can be considered to be attractive to the incipient mass. Modifying the criteria propounded by Gearing et al (1974) she highlights five different considerations: Natural, Social, Historical, Recreation and shopping and Infrastructure (food and shelter). The purpose of this classification is to examine tourism from the demand and supply side. These have been identified in detail in the table below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>CRITERION</th>
<th>CONSIDERATIONS</th>
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| A. Natural Factors | 1. Scenic Beauty | i. mountain scenery: outstanding mountains, snow peaks, black mountains, green slopes, glaciers, snow bridges, vantage points & panoramic views  
ii. Geological features: special rock structures and formations, figurations  
iii. Valley aspects: gorges, glaciated valleys, scenic and wild rivers  
iv. Water bodies, lakes and tarns, water falls, white rivers, river fronts and confluences, natural springs (hot, cold, mineral) |
|       | 2. Flora & fauna | i. Forests: local forest types, primitive strands, largest and oldest trees, unique floral regions  
ii. Meadows: Bugyals and Panyars, flower valleys  
iii. Fauna: popular type, rare wildlife and birdlife areas, insects |
|       | 3. Climate | Temperature, length of sunshine hours, precipitations, atmospheric quality, comfort/ discomfort index |
| B. Social Factors | 4. Religious Significance | i. Pilgrim Centres: national, regional, local significance  
ii. rituals and religious observances |
|       | 5. Fairs and festivals | i. Fairs: religious, religious and cultural, cultural and commercial  
ii. Festivals |
|       | 6. Distinctive local features | i. Ethnicity: tribal groups and settlements, tribal life style, dress and jewellery  
ii. Folk traditions, folk lore/ dances, music and instruments |
|       | 7. Artistic and Architectural features | i. Local architecture  
ii. Temple and sculpture  
iii. Paintings |
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<th>GROUP</th>
<th>CRITERION</th>
<th>CONSIDERATIONS</th>
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| C. Historical Factors        | 8. Historical/ Archaeological sites            | i. Places of historical importance  
                                  |                                 | ii. Ancient ruins               
                                  |                                 | iii. Sites of archaeological significance |
|                              | 9. Historical events                          | i. Legends                                                                       
                                  |                                 | ii. Other historical events     |
| D. Recreation and            | 10. Sports Facilities                         | i. Sports for adventure seekers: mountaineering, rock climbing               
                                  |                                 | ii. Adventure cum pleasure seekers: natural trails, trekking, orienteering, 
                                  |                                 | skiing and outdoor skating, canoeing,  
                                  |                                 | rafting                          |
| Shopping Facilities         | 11. Facilities conducive to health, rest,      | National Parks, Games Sanctuaries;  
                                  | rest, tranquillity and education                                              | Biosphere Reserves; Zoological  
                                  |                                 | Reserves; Botanical Gardens; Recreation  
                                  |                                 | Forests; Orchard Belt; Picnic        
                                  |                                 | grounds and reservoirs            |
|                              | 12. Shopping Opportunities and Auto Service   | i. Groceries and necessities                                                   
                                  | Facilities                      | ii. Souvenirs and Gift Shops                                                  
                                  |                                 | iii. Handicraft Shops            |
|                              |                                               | iv. Petrol Pumps and auto service centres                                     |
| E. Infrastructure and        | 13. Infrastructure above minimal touristic     | Highways and Roads, Electricity and  
                                  | Food and Shelter                 | quality                           | Gas, Safety Services, Communication  
                                  | above minimal touristic quality    | and Public Transportation facilities |
|                              | 14. Food and lodging above minimal touristic  | Hotels, Restaurants, vacation villages,  
                                  | quality                         | bungalows, motels                |
|                              |                                               |                                                                                |

Tourism promotion policy of the state as reflected in the Five Year Plans (Tenth Plan) seeks to address the problem of unemployment by promoting tourism in the hill state and by incorporating the environmental and cultural aspect by envisaging ecotourism as a cherished ideal. Thus, the tourism policy of the Government of Uttaranchal seeks to maximise benefits by highlighting two advantages of the state vis-à-vis other states/regions: natural beauty and religious/cultural significance. The policy is aimed at promoting adventure sports and cultural tourism. Within these broad categories, the proposed Tenth Plan Document seeks to promote the following:

Cultural Tourism: the policy seeks to popularise fairs and festivals of the state such as Surkanda Devi Mela (Tehri), Magh Mela (Uttarkashi), Nanda Devi Mela (Nainital) and so on. Also envisaged is the development of heritage tourism through identification, conservation and preservation of heritage sites such as Sir George Everest Cottage, Rangers College with the co-operation of INTACH. In addition, yoga and meditation centres, herbal treatment, naturopathy centres and traditional Indian system of medicine are receiving special attention.

Adventure Tourism: the scope of mountaineering, trekking and other adventure sports is limitless in the state. To this end, facilities for the same are sought to be improved to facilitate the same in Bhagirathi, Gaumukh, Nanda Devi, Pindari, Khatling and so on.

Wildlife tourism: Corbett National Park, Rajaji National Park, Govind Pashu Vihar, Chilla and Asan Barrage have been listed among others for the promotion of wildlife tourism.

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1 The District Tourist Authority when interviewed admitted that several individuals were keen on combining Yoga and Ayurveda as projects to attract tourists. It is interesting to note that the government officials consider the propagation of such facilities as furthering Indian culture rather than being exclusively Hindu in nature. In this regard, the role of Ashrams can be seen as vital in encouraging such ‘cultural’ tourism (see section on Ashrams: Promoting Religious and Cultural Tourism).
Ecotourism\textsuperscript{2}: the natural beauty of the state is being marketed for lovers of flora and fauna and jungle safaris, mountain trails, nature walks, angling etc. are activities that are being developed. The activities proposed specifically are:

(a) The establishment of botanical gardens, heritage centres and theme parks to promote the activities mentioned above.

(b) Tree plantation as a tourism-linked activity will be given special attention and promoted. Action will be taken in a planned manner to deal with the problem of non-bio-degradable waste. Intensive campaigns to regulate plastic waste will be launched.

(c) The use of earthquake resistant technology and techniques in construction of buildings and use of local materials will be promoted and encouraged.

(d) Special attention will be given to environmental issues such as waste disposal, carrying capacity and aesthetic issues while framing tourism development plans. The development of pilgrim spots is also envisaged in the plan.

As far as administration and management of tourism is concerned, the thrust is on modernisation of existing infrastructure through increased participation of the private sector, specialists and experts. Also envisaged in the plan is the development of new tourist

\textsuperscript{2} The year 2002 were declared as International Year of the Mountains and International Year for Ecotourism by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Envisaged as an integral facet of Sustainable Tourism, it is hoped that “sustainable development in the tourist industry will ensure that travel and tourism provide a source of income for many people and contribute to conservation, protection and restoration of the Earth’s ecosystem... that environmental protection is an integral part of tourism development” (Resolution 1998/40, 46th Plenary Meeting of the Economic and Social Council of the UN). The UNEP sees the promotion of ecotourism as an adjunct to the objective of development. It is expected to advance the basic goals of conserving biological (and cultural) diversity, by strengthening protected area management systems (public and private) and increasing the value of sound ecosystems; by promoting the sustainable use of biodiversity, by generating income, jobs and business opportunities in ecotourism and related business networks; and sharing the benefits of ecotourism developments equitably with local communities and indigenous people, by obtaining their informed consent and full participation in planning and management of ecotourism businesses. See also www.unep.org
destinations around traditional tourist spots such as Haridwar, Nainital and Mussoorie. New tourist destinations such as New Tehri, Pithoragarh, Munsiyari, Pauri, Khirsu and Lansdowne are also being developed. Perhaps the biggest drawback to the tourist potential in the state is the seasonality of the industry. In order to avoid clustering during the peak season, the plan envisages developing year round/ winter tourism by promoting winter sports such as skiing, ice-skating, ice hockey, water sports and winter trekking.

Thus the plan targets distinct groups of tourists and identify the needs of these categories thereby ensuring that facilities are provided for all in an integrated and comprehensive manner. This is sought to be done by publicity and marketing strategies that include advertisements and promotion of tourism oriented handicraft industry and culture. The establishment of Craft Villages and the marketing of handicrafts through Craft Bazars and souvenir shops within and outside the state has also been envisaged. The Plan seeks to promote tourism in the region through the following publicity strategies:

(a) Posters, pamphlets, guide maps, U matic films and other tourism literature depicting the important tourism attractions in Uttaranchal.

(b) Launching the Uttaranchal Tourism website providing information and reservation facilities.

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3 Thus far, publicity material in the form of pamphlets and guide books is scattered and not easy to procure. Although the GMVN issues pamphlets announcing deals for the Char Dham Yatra, detailed notes on trekking, mountaineering and so on are not readily available. Moreover, scant information is available in printed form on ecological problems in the region. Most of the literature in circulation today precedes the creation of Uttaranchal and therefore needs to be updated.

4 Detailed maps are still unavailable. Tourist maps provide visitors with a basic idea of the location of the place they want to visit and facilities (such as rest houses, petrol pumps and so on) available in the area.

5 The advantage of websites is that information is likely to be more credible (since they are often updated). However, they can only be accessed by the English speaking elite.
(c) Members of the tourism industry will be constantly familiarised and updated on the tourist potential in the state.

(d) Organisation of and participation in tourism conferences, seminars, travel and trade fairs on a regular basis.

(e) Efforts will be made to promote film shooting in the region to give wider publicity to the state. Plans are also being made to establish a film city in the state as well as provide the infrastructure required to facilitate film shooting.

(f) Information centres and other tourist facilities will be provided and developed at railheads and convenient points in highways in Uttaranchal.

(g) A master plan for signages at all appropriate places in the state will be prepared on which international symbols and signs will be displayed.

At the level of infrastructure, accommodation facilities are being increased and augmented. The pilgrim routes to Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamnotri is also being improved and it is estimated that close to 15 lakh pilgrims visit these shrines annually and the numbers are expected to increase. The plan seeks to improve the conditions of roads, lighting arrangements, drinking water, toilets, sewerage; strengthening of medical and telecommunication facilities en route Char Dham as well as lesser known pilgrim destinations such as Chota Kailash, Purnagiri Adibadri and so on. A master plan has been developed to this effect. Wayside amenities are also proposed to be set up at short distances along the Char Dham route starting from Haridwar. Improvement of airstrips, better connectivity by rail and road and development of Haridwar as a gateway to Uttaranchal is also included in the plan.
The proposal to develop tourism villages is yet another creative manner in which tourist facilities are being diversified to attract a broad spectrum of visitors. 33 villages situated on yatra routes have been identified for development that will showcase the unique customs, cuisine and historical tradition of the state. Basic facilities such as clean and healthy food and accommodation are being enhanced. It is hoped that in the next five years, a hundred such villages will be developed. The corporate sector is also being targeted and plans have been drawn to construct convention centres for conferences, seminars, business meets, workshops and so on with a view to encouraging this sector to view Uttaranchal as a business-cum-holiday destination.

The most important component of any planning policy is the emphasis on development of human resources. To this end, the Tenth Plan tourism policy envisages allocating funds for training personnel in hospitality management, hoteliering and catering. Training institutes for specialised activities such as aero sports, mountaineering and so on will also be developed. The plan also states that ‘arrangements will be made for tourism awareness programmes and short term training in specialised tourism related activities and services such as catering, fruit conservation, cookery, running paying guest facilities, managing STD equipped tourism information centres, handicraft/souvenir related activities, guides and porters’. In addition Special Training Programmes will be developed for local women and youth in areas such as adventure sports. To this end, private sector participation will be solicited and encouraged.

A key objective of the proposed plans elucidated above is the generation of self-employment among local youth. This is amply evident in the proposal to launch the “Uttaranchal Tourism Development Scheme” wherein 300 entrepreneurs will be provided assistance upto Rs. 2 lakh
for purposes such as setting up fast food centres, small motels, garages, STD/ISD booths, taxi services and similar tourism related activities.

At the institutional level, the constitution of a Tourism Development Board replacing the existing Tourism Directorate, through appropriate legislation is envisaged by which it is hoped that there will be greater co-ordination among various government agencies concerned with developing tourism in the state. The responsibilities of the board have been enumerated as follows:

- Formulation of a policy and strategy for the development of tourism in Uttarakhand.
- Preparation of plans and guidelines for developing and strengthening tourism related infrastructure in the state.
- Preparation of plans for various tourism segments and activities, identification and development of projects and ensuring their timely implementation.
- Establishment of standards/norms and framing of policy and guidelines for various tourism activities.
- Formulation of a strategy for mobilising private sector participation and investment in the tourism sector.

Envisaged as the highest body advising the government on all matters relating to tourism in the state, the Board will also function as a regulatory and licensing authority. The institution of this body will also result in minimising bureaucratic loopholes. To this end, the Board will have a Single Window Information/Assistance Centre that will provide tourism related information, sanctions for projects and escort services for obtaining clearances and approvals from other departments. Services of specialists and consultancy agencies will also be
requisitioned for planning, implementation and evaluation of tourism projects. About 300 consultants have been empanelled on the basis of a competitive selection process to advise government on various tourism related activities.

Nina Rao and KT Suresh (2001: 198) comment that the Indian Tourism Policy stresses that tourism process should result in 'outputs'. The output or product of tourism activity is reflected in the course of action to be followed by a destination to allow for the realisation of regional or national goals in the face of competitive pressure. This dimension is therefore concerned with the content of tourism, and the objectives or the goals for which it is being promoted. Also, much like other departmental policy, the tourism policy of the state also suffers from objectives that require conflicting policies for their fulfilment. Thus, in order that ecotourism is promoted, it is essential that the region is visited by a limited number of people. Moreover, the policy aims at providing employment to more people through the tourist sector. A reduction in the number of people visiting the area would not necessarily result in employment generation. Again, although private sector participation is welcome, there is no stipulation as to whether this should involve local participation or whether people from other parts of the country would be gainfully employed in Uttarakhand. Clearly the policy aims at attracting almost every category of tourist (from promoting film shooting, using natural beauty to its advantage; to enticing businesses to organise conferences and seminars). What is apparent is the priority of the state to encourage people to find employment in the tourist sector thereby shifting from traditional farm based occupations. The area available for agriculture, animal husbandry and so on is so greatly limited that it is feared that mass tourism (and the improvement/ upgradation) of facilities would result in low productivity and fragmentation of land since it is assumed that the best tracts would be demarcated for the
development of 'tourism villages', airstrips and so on. The policy although comprehensive, lacks a balanced strategy for the promotion of environmentally sensitive and economically beneficial tourism in the state.

State and Development: Tourism and Environment

The effects of large-scale tourism on the environment can be quite adverse. Cohen has succinctly summarised:

"In the long run, tourism like any other industry contributes to environmental destruction. This holds true in cases where tourist's economics subordinates ecology, a situation demanding planners' innovative skills and creative ideas for environmentally accepted tourist development. Problem/ challenge to planners is how to avoid the noise that goes with any concentration of people, when more concentration is unavoidable and even desirable... how to create possibilities for solitude without creating loneliness..." Erik Cohen (1978).

The World Environment Report (1972-82) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) noted the positive and negative impacts of increased tourism in three spheres: the economic, social and the environmental. Whereas in the economic sphere, tourism brought in foreign exchange, most of it was spent on goods and services to keep the tourists coming. Although it promoted employment, more resources are spent on generating employment and creating jobs. On the social front, it resulted in the dislocation of residents in detriment to economic interests; inflation, changed lifestyles and challenged cultural beliefs. It however, promoted articles with little artistic merit, revitalising dying crafts. Finally, in the environmental sphere, it resulted in the protection of wildlife, historical sites and monuments but at the same time contributed to damaging coastlines, fragile ecosystems on mountains etc.
pollution, litter, erosion, forest fires and so on. The challenge before planners therefore is to ensure that employment through tourism does not result in environmental degradation. This problem is especially compounded when countries divert their valuable natural resources to ensure that the tourists find the same amenities as they do in their home countries.

As discussed in the previous chapter, environmental problems in the Gangotri region abound. Indeed, a major problem is to make the region suitable for all categories of tourists. The Gangotri region witnesses visitors of all kinds: the pilgrim, the explorer elite, the offbeat and the charter as discussed in Chapter 4 where the reasons for visit to the region were solicited by the people (see table on number of tourists visiting the region). The environmental impacts on the region also, consequently vary. Policy on the other hand has to be uniform and yet specific for all tourist types. The dependence of the people on tourism as a means of livelihood is so great that planning and awareness generation form an important part of state policy. Much of the state policy however, aims at improving pilgrim tracks (i.e. providing the visitors with
facilities such as clean water, toilets and so on) and in modernising the region (improving communication facilities and upgrading accommodation standards).

<table>
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<td>970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>158650</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>158925</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>172000</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>172180</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>151449</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>151774</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table showing visitors to Gangotri and beyond
Source: Department of Tourism, Government of UP

State and District authorities have constantly been concerned with improving the pilgrim trail that includes Gangotri, Yamunotri, Badrinath and Kedarnath. In fact, the present government at Uttaranchal is chiefly concerned with the introduction of ecotourism in the region which consists of a standardisation of trekking routes by pilgrims and trekkers and the availability of amenities that would reduce pollution and harassment to tourists. A porter when asked what he thought ailed tourism development in Gangotri said *yahan ke ladke yatriyon ko bahut sate hain* (local boys harass visitors). Also, this plan has an added dimension of providing employment to the local people so as to discourage migration. Indeed, it may be argues that these ambitions have been envisaged in earlier plans and that nothing substantial came out of them. However, the state government has deputed urban planners to formulate a master plan.
for the development of the region as a visitor's paradise. Needless to say, concerns about being self-sufficient have gained primacy as the government is clearly responding to the demands of the people. In 1994, Dr Bisht put forward suggestions about the development of tourist infrastructure. These included co-ordination among various government agencies such as the forest department, the PWD, Tourism Department and the Power sector. Also, suggestions were made for harnessing alternate energy in the form of solar power. Facilities for foreign exchange were required in Dehradun, Uttarkashi and Joshimath. In addition, an integrated view was taken of the tourism potential in the region. It was suggested that alternate places be explored and dried lakes in places such as Ghona and Dharali should be restored. The possibility of encouraging horticulture was also suggested, as was the need to convert the Gangotri-Gaumukh trekking route into a glacial park. Dr Bisht's suggestions focussed more on developing the area as a site for adventure sports and mountaineering such as water skiing, trekking, angling, river rafting and so on. On the religious front, she stressed the need to explore into our cultural resource base and develop yoga, meditation etc. as tourist attractions. The need for an air link was also emphasised.

The Government of Uttar Pradesh has not been impervious to these demands. Taken as a whole, the pilgrim route has been developed and funds have been allocated for various developmental projects. Funds have been consistently allocated for the construction of more amenities for pilgrims, guesthouses, log huts, night shelters and toilets. In 1996-97, the Department of Tourism had initiated a project on 'Development and Beautification' of the Badrinath-Kedarnath pilgrim route with a view to encouraging more pilgrims to visit the area. This work has now been completed. In addition, the Tenth Finance Commission of the
Government of India had allocated Rs 30.50 lakhs for the development of facilities available to pilgrims on these routes.

In 1996-97 the Tourism Department sought to improve the facilities on the Gangotri-Yamunotri pilgrim. On the Gangotri route, the following places on the pilgrim route were earmarked for development: Rishikesh, Narendranagar, Chamba, Chiniyalisaur, Dharasu, Uttarkashi, Bhatwari, Harsil, Gangotri.

This plan gave primary importance to the needs of the pilgrims and to that end initiated the construction of accommodation facilities, guesthouses and log huts. It also envisaged the expansion and construction of toilet facilities, parking space and bus stands and the development of fast food centres, modern welcome areas and so on (translated from the original document available in Hindi at the Department of Tourism, Government of Uttaranchal, Dehradun).

(To this effect, the document includes a facility-wise break-up of funds allocated for various projects: construction of rest houses, toilets, night shelters, log huts, parking space and bus stands).

The High Court of Allahabad also expressed an interest in developing organised tourism in the region and directed that facilities available to tourists be extended and pollution on the Gangotri-Gaumukh trekking route be reduced. Recognising that 'several thousands visit the source of the holy Ganga' and that 'the distance from Gangotri to Gaumukh has to be covered on foot. Due to littering of empty cans, cartons etc. by pilgrims and visitors to this region, the problem of pollution is worsening'. the High Court of Allahabad issued a petition
to check pollution in the region and to make amenities available for the use of pilgrims/tourists. With regard to this direction of the High Court, the department of tourism undertook the following tasks for the calendar year 1996-97:

1. Setting up of Hoardings: In order to make the pilgrims aware of environmental threats in the region, the setting up of hoardings at significant parts of the pilgrim route was suggested. The budget allocated for the same was:
   (a) Gangotri: Rs 0.50 lakhs
   (b) Bhojbas: Rs 0.50 lakhs.

2. Painting Ecological messages on rocks: The presence of huge rocks and boulders on the Gangotri-Gaumukh route enabled the painting of ecological messages and directions to pilgrims and mountaineers. In addition, it was recommended that this facility could be utilised by mule owners, transporters traders etc. for the purpose of advertising. The funds apportioned for the purpose were:
   (a) Labour costs for painting between Gangotri and Gaumukh @ 200 per day for 8 days: 0.016 lakh.
   (b) Cost of paint: 0.014 lakh.
   (c) Total cost: 0.030 lakh.

3. Making facilities available for pilgrims/tourists en route: Noting that kiosks and shops en route provided contaminated food to visitors and used firewood for cooking and spread litter all across the pilgrim route, it was recommended that these shops be

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6 In recent times, painting on rocks and similar geological features has been severely criticised by different circles leading to the imposition of heavy fines on Companies that resorted to this practise as a mode of advertising. It was none other than the Supreme Court of India that took serious note of 'defiling of geo-morphological sites' and ancient fossilised rocks by the Coca-Cola Company and Pepsi on the Leh-Manali Highway circumscribing the limits to which commercial advertising could be conducted. The above example also reinforces the fact that very often, the state machinery, given all good intentions, adopts measures that work at cross-purposes and tend to defile the environment rather than protect it.
removed permanently. Instead, some quality/standard fast food centres were inaugurated the estimated costs for which were:

(a) Harsil: Rs 1.8 lakh
(b) Devdar: Rs 1.8 lakh
(c) Gangotri: Rs 1.8 lakh
(d) Chirbas: Rs 1.8 lakh
(e) Bhojbas: Rs 1.8 lakh

Thus, the total cost of the entire project was as follows:

1. Cost of hoardings: Rs 10000.00
2. Graffiti on Rocks and Walls: Rs 3000.00
3. Provision of adequate facilities en route: Rs 980000.00
4. Total cost: Rs 993000.00

(Translated from the original document in Hindi)

An attempt was also made by the administration to learn from the experiences of shrines in other states of the country that were not only generating good income but were also managing tourists very efficiently. A committee formed in 1999 suggested that the Badri-Kedarnath-Gangotri-Yamunotri pilgrim route could emulate the example set by the management committee of the Vaishno Devi Shrine. However, in an extremely lucid and detailed letter to the District Magistrate, the ADM of Rishikesh highlighted the problems of adopting such a pattern. Among these, he stated the inaccessibility of the region (Vaishno Devi on the other hand was between 40-50 km of a rail head) and the resultant dependence of the Temple Committee on the state for income and the parochialism that characterised the committee as impediments. It was also suggested that the existence of different control areas: the District Administration, the Nagar Palika and the Forest Department served to undermine the Temple
Committee which had virtually no jurisdiction. Granting autonomy to the same was a suggestion put forth which would result in development of the region as also developing roadside amenities such as cafeteria and hotels that would result in the employment of local youth. The letter further highlighted the importance of taking local people into confidence while initiating reforms that purported to benefit them and also incorporating local institutions to suit current needs rather than looking at other areas for inspiration.

Col Balwant Sandhu (1985) suggests three ways in which the environment can be preserved on mountaineering trails with special reference to Gangotri. These include minimum impact camping, a national policy of approach to parks, sanctuaries, mountain resorts, recreational areas and shrines to specify what is busable, jeppable, cycleable and motorable (sic); and regulating wilderness area to within regenerative limits. Mehta (2001) suggests a two-way development approach vis-à-vis tourism: developing infrastructural facilities in different tourist areas; and developing various traditional crafts and area-specific productive activities, based on the use of endogenous production technology and family labour including women. Seeing the role of the government as pre-eminent, he calls for the integration of developing tourism with ongoing rural development programmes. Local institutions play an important role in furthering the development of a community and their involvement should also be envisaged. Their involvement would ensure maintenance of infrastructural facilities, management of natural resources and protection of the environment on which tourism is hugely dependent. Planning for tourism should also contain within it elements that ensure gainful employment; production potentials based on comparative advantages and marketing opportunities for local production; skills and capabilities of local communities; accessibility of
local people to basic health and education facilities; economic financial support systems; requisite technology and related extension and credit facilities needed for tourism related activities; and promote women’s involvement in community development (Mehta, ibid: 90).

Indeed, it is very difficult to alter the mode of prevalent tourism that is wasteful and exploitative; however, it is not altogether impossible. The State through its agencies is involved in dissemination of information in an attempt to encourage ecologically viable tourism. The initiative taken by the government towards the development of the Gangotri region is extremely crucial. The local people are still very heavily dependent on the government as the only agency providing subsidies, food, energy and civic amenities. The government undoubtedly scores higher than the NGOs in providing the people with the basic necessities and welfare in an environment that favours seasonal employment and natural disasters. In 2001, conceding to popular demands for autonomy, the Government of India created the new state of Uttaranchal. The hills districts of erstwhile Uttar Pradesh (which included Garhwal) were carved to form the new hill state and hopes among the people soared about their future. However, according to the research conducted in the region, there was greater disillusionment among the people who expected the new state to solve their problems of unemployment and under development overnight. Added infrastructural problems became more glaring and the state government had to face a lot of public embarrassment over issues of employment and education.
Amenities within the township: What is lacking?

The township can be approached by an all-weather metalled road\(^7\). During the season, the state government makes an effort to provide the remote township with adequate LPG, kerosene and even firewood. This has been done to discourage deforestation and to minimise the pollution caused by smoke. There is however, no supply of Hydro Electricity\(^4\) currently, a 15 KW generator installed by UPSEB provides electricity to the township. Due to the altitude however, its capacity has been reduced to 10KW of which 5KW is allocated to the temple and the rest for 2 ashrams. The Mandir Samiti\(^5\) has a 2KW generator that covers the surroundings. Satellite phones were introduced within the township only in 2000. The postal service is the only reliable service available during the tourist season. Medical practitioners are conspicuous by their absence, banking facility is lacking (although an official document communicated to me stated that this facility was available). The township also lacks a petrol pump, tourist

\(^7\) Transport and communication facilities were introduced in Garhwal in 1825. Though construction of cart roads started in 1800, pilgrims used to traverse the region on foot and the well to do employed coolies to carry their luggage and themselves. The entire pilgrimage to Badrinath-Kedarnath, Gangotri-Yamunotri was arduous and time consuming. The bridle paths that existed at the time were extremely poor and were termed courtesy roads. GW Traill, Commissioner of Kumaun and Garhwal, took the first initiative to construct roads. As a result, 500 km length of pilgrim road from Haridwar-Badrinath, Rudraprayag-Kedarnath, Ukhimath-Chamoli, and Karonprayag-Lobha was constructed at his initiative. A road from Rishikesh-Kirtinagar was completed in 1931 and Haridwar-Karanprayag in 1947, but the network of roads and link roads was formed after independence and particularly after the 1962 Chinese War. It is believed that the Chinese conflict resulted in hasty construction of mechanised roads that led to landslides, soil erosion and floods. Whereas the construction of roads made the region accessible, it destroyed the traditional form of pilgrimage to which were allied \textit{padyatra}, \textit{sadarwata}, \textit{chatti} and employment for the local people. The Rishikesh-Uttarkashi-Harsil road is 222.4 km long and is part of the state highway \#53. The second part of the road is the Harisil-Bhaironghati-Nelong road, with a length of 38.12 km. In between Lanka and Bhaironghati there is a 90m long bridge of girders which was constructed in 1985 by the UPPWD. This bridge ensures easy accessibility. At Bhaironghati, the road bifurcates: one for Nelong and the other for Gangotri. Bhaironghati-Gangotri road is with the UPPWD and the Bhaironghati-Nelong road is with DGBR. The foot trek to Gaumukh beyond Gangotri is maintained by the UPPWD.

\(^4\) A hydro power station is currently under construction two kilometres from Gangotri. 250MW in capacity, it has been designed to divert the water from a neighbouring waterfall onto turbines that will then generate electricity. Due to the prolonged winter experienced in the area, it will function for six months each year.

\(^5\) Interview with Pandit Ashok Semwal and Dr Harshwanti Bisht.
information centre, park, art and recreation centre and developed camp-site (Bisht, 1994). Approach to the township is rather precarious and the 900 sq metre parking area can prove to be insufficient during the peak season. Sanitation and hygiene facilities are not spectacular: 10 sweepers are temporarily employed to cater to the needs of a large floating population. The government has also failed to provide basic necessities such as adequate toilets throughout the township. What is even more appalling is that throughout the popular trekking and pilgrim route, there are virtually no toilets and few litterbins. A few dhabas that were permitted by the government function for the benefit of travellers. However, most supplies take a very long time to reach Gangotri and even longer to be transported beyond. The dhabas therefore, run short of stock very often. Facilities for accommodation do not maintain international standards. As discussed in the previous chapter, accommodation is basic, but there are some ashrams that ensure a comfortable stay. Accommodation is one of the more visible and tangible manifestations of tourism. “Facilities may form a part of the attraction of a destination... they may complement the attractions, a well-appointed hotel may enhance the attractiveness of a resort.” (S Medlik & Middleton in Bisht, 1994). In India, the concept of shelter for tourists and pilgrims is not new: there have been historical records of vihars, dharamshalas, sarais, musfirkhanas, chattis (various forms of accommodation for pilgrims, usually run by charitable organisations and hence free of charge) and so on. Commercial hospitality

10 Col Balwant Sandhu (1985) commented on the lack of proper planning in the shrine of Gangotri. The trend to motorise approaches led to environmental destruction. ‘During the season, the hamlet smells of urine all the time when it does not rain. When ten bus loads of pilgrims arrive in a place where hundred people are too many, what happens to its environment?’ The attempts made by the GCP to improve sanitation facilities in the region met with complete failure: two of their pre-fabricated toilets were never used and one was swept away in the floods!

11 Within this category are included hotels, motels, travellers’ lodges, dharamshalas, ashrams, camps and inns. The UN Conference on International Travel and Tourism held in Rome in 1963 acknowledged the essential importance of means of accommodation both traditional and supplementary (camps, youth hostels, tourist villages etc.) as an incentive to international tourism. According to the Development of Tourism Act (Britain) 1969, accommodation means, “hotel or other establishment at which sleeping accommodation is provided by way of trade and business”.

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system, however, is absent in Garhwal. The table below lists the availability of accommodation facilities en route to Gangotri and Gaumukh.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Government accommodation</th>
<th>Additional facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uttarkashi (84)</td>
<td>Forest Rest Houses (FRH), Tourist Bungalows, Travellers lodge, PWD Inspection Bungalow, Kuteti Devi Inspection Bungalow</td>
<td>Hotels, Dharamshalas, Ashram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maneri</td>
<td>FRH, Field Hostel</td>
<td>Hotels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhatwari</td>
<td>FRH</td>
<td>Hotels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganganani</td>
<td>FRH</td>
<td>Hotels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukhi</td>
<td>FRH, Log Cabin</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harsil (32)</td>
<td>FRAH, PWDRH, TRH</td>
<td>Temple Committee accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanka (20)</td>
<td>Allwyn Huts, Travellers Lodge, PWD Inspection House</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhaironghati (32)</td>
<td>TRH, Log Cabin, FRH, PWD Inspection House</td>
<td>Dharamshala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gangotri (92)</td>
<td>FRH, PWDB, TRH, TL</td>
<td>Chatti, hotel, dharamshala, ashram, Panda Samiti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhojbasa (20)</td>
<td>TB</td>
<td>Lal Baba, Private Lodge, Police lines, Tent colony</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: FRH: Forest Rest House, PWDRH: Public Works Department Rest House, TRH: Tourist Rest House, TL: Travellers Lodge, TB: Tourist Bungalow, PWDB: Public Works Department Inspection Bungalow

Figures in parenthesis indicate accommodation capacity in GMVN Forest Tourist Bungalows.

The questionnaire administered to visitors and locals asked them to list the additional facilities that they would want the government to provide. The contrast in the demands between the two categories is clearly visible in the range of responses. The chief concern of the local
people was the provision of basic amenities and a large percentage of the people wanted electricity that would reduce the consumption of kerosene and petrol in the use of heavily polluting generators. A significant number of people wanted toilets, the availability of clean drinking water, basic amenities and heating facilities. Related problems that needed to be addressed were permits for the procurement of kerosene oil adequate means of transport and communication, a check on encroachment and inflation. Very few respondents suggested the availability of competent medical practitioners and hospital facilities as a chief requirement in the township. This also included a need for rescue teams and so on. Security and environmental problems were also envisaged as problem areas that needed to be solved. These problems can be categorised in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems/ facilities required</th>
<th>% of people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>29.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilets/ sanitation</td>
<td>20.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic amenities (water, heating etc)</td>
<td>11.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflation</td>
<td>10.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permits for fuel</td>
<td>7.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport &amp; communication</td>
<td>4.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encroachment</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical aid</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental pollution</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully satisfied</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: Additional facilities required by the local population
In sharp contrast, the main concern of tourists is the improvement of transport and communication facilities and an insistence that the state endeavour to make the region more tourist friendly. Thus, a common grievance is the absence of adequate signposts and posters in English and a tourist information centre. The absence of adequate sanitation is a problem faced by many tourists who demand more toilets and suggest the use of biological toilets for campsites. They also highlight the need for proper sewage disposal and the use of bins as essential in maintaining cleanliness. Like the locals, visitors are also quick to notice the absence of electricity and the use of generators as not only detrimental to the environment but also unnecessary waste of precious fuel. Alternatives such as solar power were suggested by a small minority of those interviewed. Many people opine that the township is poorly planned and badly managed. These are however generalisations that cannot be made by people who visit for a few hours. However, planning is a major problem in the region that needs to be reorganised keeping the increasing tourist inflow in mind. A few tourists admit that many people who visit the region are inadequately informed about the region. They therefore demand an awareness campaign to that effect. Some respondents were quick to observe the limited involvement of locals in the area as far as tourism was concerned. A few environmentally conscious people noted that the erosion in the glacier was significant and that access to Gaumukh therefore restricted. Interestingly, even those who visit the region for the seclusion it provides find it hard to comprehend the absence of television and Internet facilities! A few respondents also demanded that there should be a wine shop! At the same time, there are tourists who feel quite the contrary: they go a step further to insist that non-Hindu people should not be allowed to have a European lifestyle (a concession that is unofficially given to mountaineers who require non-vegetarian meals). Although resentment
among tourists is not evident, there is still an attempt on the part of pilgrims and the ecclesiastical community to keep the region as 'Hindu' as possible.

Visitors were also asked to grade the amenities available in Uttarkashi and Gangotri. These included food, accommodation, supplies, information, services and communications. On a scale of 1-5 (where 1 was very good and 5 very poor) visitors could grade the services they used. The discrepancy in numbers occurs due to the fact that many services were not used by the visitors. Also, since few visitors halted in both places (fewer halted in Uttarkashi than in Gangotri) not everyone could comment specifically on all facilities. They however provide a useful insight into the services that could be stepped up if the region were to boost its tourist potential. The perceptions of visitors on the facilities available at both places can be classified in the following tables:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>18 (27.69)</td>
<td>16 (24.61)</td>
<td>15 (23.07)</td>
<td>6 (9.23)</td>
<td>2 (3.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>13 (20)</td>
<td>24 (36.92)</td>
<td>23 (35.38)</td>
<td>5 (7.69)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>12 (18.46)</td>
<td>29 (44.61)</td>
<td>15 (23.07)</td>
<td>4 (6.15)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>9 (13.84)</td>
<td>21 (32.3)</td>
<td>19 (29.23)</td>
<td>5 (7.69)</td>
<td>4 (5.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplies</td>
<td>4 (6.15)</td>
<td>15 (23.07)</td>
<td>21 (32.3)</td>
<td>10 (15.38)</td>
<td>2 (3.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>6 (9.23)</td>
<td>19 (29.23)</td>
<td>19 (29.23)</td>
<td>9 (13.84)</td>
<td>2 (3.07)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2: Facilities in Gangotri as perceived by visitors
Note: Figures in parenthesis represent percentage of total sample
Table 5.3: Facilities in Uttarkashi as perceived by visitors
Note: Figures in parenthesis represent percentage of total sample

As can be seen in the figures represented above, most people who stayed in Gangotri were fairly satisfied with the provisions of accommodation and food. However, other facilities such as markets, information and communication did not register a similar degree of satisfaction. In Uttarkashi again, even though very few people stay for long periods, the satisfaction levels with facilities are not spectacular. A point worth noting is that high levels of satisfaction with accommodation and food are registered by people who stay in ashrams rather than those who stay in lodges, dharamshalas and hotels. This is probably due to the levels of hygiene that are maintained in the ashrams and the facilities (milk, butter etc.) that are available in these places by their patrons. Given the resourcefulness of the sadhus who run ashrams in Gangotri, it is possible that they are used as an important facet in marketing and promoting tourism in the region.

Ashrams: Promoting Religious and Cultural Ecotourism

The banks of the river Ganga from the township of Gangotri to Haridwar, where the river is considered to leave her childhood in the hills and head towards maturity in the plains, are dotted with innumerable ashrams. Ashrams initially began as retreats where saints lived a life.
of seclusion and austerity. They were situated on the banks of rivers amid forests and appealed to the pilgrim. As the pilgrim progressed towards the hills, these saints provided shelter and their familiarity with nature was seen as an effective support system. Indeed, these ashrams kept the pilgrim routes alive and also served as guiding points towards the destination. Interestingly, any deviation from the path prescribed by the ashram saints would tantamount to sacrilege (Singh & Kaur: 1983). A fear of having violated the religious code at disobeying the prescribed route also served the purpose of preservation. The forests and their wealth remained unexplored, access to forest produce was minimal and settlement was limited to areas determined by the saints. With the passage of time, however, they have effectively transformed into semi commercial enterprises that offer shelter and discourses on religion to the pilgrim and the tourist. The saints running these retreats often offer courses in yoga and traditional medicine. For the western tourist, the novelty of staying in austerity has a special charm leading to the popularity of ashrams as rest houses. Most ashrams also provide shelter free of cost and often settle on a donation depending on the financial capability of the tourist. They provide simple food that is grown on the grounds of the retreat and discourage long-term visitors. Even to this day, they function as transit zones between pilgrim places. With the increase in tourism, there has been a rise in the number of ashrams providing cultural retreats leading to a cluster within a limited area. Today, it is not uncommon to find recluse/hermits encroaching on forest property to build concrete little dwellings for themselves that subsequently often expand into ashrams after the surrounding hillside has been blasted. The ecological impacts have also been severe. In Gangotri, demands for fuel have to be met with and not all ashrams have gas connections. In Tapovan, a high altitude meadow across the Gangotri glacier, where construction of huts and settlement of any kind is prohibited, many saints continue to defy these injunctions. Several ashrams have been held responsible for
illegal deforestation. Also, the spirit with which ashrams were originally established has not been honoured. They have ceased to be transit areas and instead encourage long-term guests who range from the disenchanted western traveller searching for truth to the retired householder seeking detachment. To hold the ashrams as directly responsible for the increase in environmental threats would not be entirely true; they however, provide an interesting study as to how ecotourism can still be practised within the confines of culture, provided their growth is controlled. They are also representative of how every section of modern society responds to needs of the hour and moulds itself in a manner so that traditional structures can be sustained.

A change in the nature of ashrams has come about due to the change in the nature of modern day pilgrimages with the improvement of transport and communication. Contemporary scholarship maintains that pilgrim places were characterised by their unique geographical features such as banks of rivers, hot springs, snout of glaciers etc. (Kaur: 1985). A pilgrimage was undertaken for the expiation of sins in order to achieve salvation. The intensity of hardship during the journey implied superior reward and hence simplicity and detachment during the journey was recommended. Viewed in this light, pilgrimages were equivalent to modern day ecotourism since access to these locales was limited due to the hardship associated with the journey. Pilgrimages in the present day are less strenuous and the novelty and achievement associated with the successful completion of a pilgrimage has worn out. Today, ashrams in Gangotri cater to every possible need of the pilgrim. An ashram was undergoing expansion to include en suite bathrooms and insulation. People in the township feel that ashram gurus contribute to maximum environmental pollution by hosting people who are ecologically insensitive and consumerist in nature. They also feel that there is
competition among ashrams and commercial hotels as places providing accommodation. The modern pilgrim often makes heavy demands on the environment and does not accord pilgrimage the sacrosanct status that it once occupied. In fact, on the Gaumukh trek, a family suffering from altitude sickness and fatigue demanded that the Department of Tourism install a ropeway between Gangotri and Gaumukh so that they are not put to the strain of having to trek all the way! Pilgrims now demand luxury and have little time to spend by way of travel.

The need for Community based Ecotourism

Tourism in the Gangotri region is a management issue that can be handled by careful planning. This requires collaborative efforts by the local community, NGOs, the State and visitors; and co-ordination among actors providing services. This planning and monitoring cannot only come from outside agencies: NGOs and the State; but has to be delegated to the people who arguably, are the best judges of their future. However, the managerial aspect of this activity involves the highly specialised nature of ecotourism that has so far systematically

12 KT Lampe (1982) put forward five postulates in enabling planning to take place successfully in mountain regions: (i) minimise the extent of project planning (ii) minimum data planning and minimum outside influence (iii) and evolving system of planning and implementation (iv) minimise capital inputs and maximise manpower use and (v) social services promotion.

13 Sharma (1997) maintains that 'the problem is that people upstream are the cause of effects downstream. The opposing point of view is that people downstream are creating problems for those upstream in terms of their one-sided developmental projects. In all the integrated projects, if anything is not included it is the people.' Stating further, he adds:

- A villager has clear understanding of the concept of need and adjustment. He switches options till he has exhausted all and finally migrates. This is when the ecologist steps in.
- Biologists and ecologists have considered human economics to be out of their domain and even an obstacle to their entire effort. In the whole development game, there are three interlinked factors: to give, to receive, to reciprocate. It is the last that is missing. Technologies are pushed into a society without adequate feedback.

The total environment he adds should be viewed at three levels: the bio-physical, micro-social and the macro-social. At the first level, the scientist will focus his attention on the natural and physical forces that must be handled to restore ecological balance. At the second, it is the socio-cultural perspective of the man which is to be considered, and the last is at a much higher level of policy making.
excluded locals. Even in cases where there is some local involvement, they are regarded merely as junior partners and learners in the project of implementing ecotourism. Another point worth reiterating is that ecotourism has not succeeded in doing away with commercialisation. It might be a low impact activity in theory, but the costs incurred in maintaining standards, monitoring and creating awareness are extremely high. Ecotourism is a saleable quality and different areas are in competition with one another to attract visitors. Although this ensures that certain standards of purity are maintained, it does not harbour well for those regions that do not subscribe to the competitive spirit generated by the market. Moreover, any ecotourism project demands constant re-evaluation since both the environment and human aspect are changing variables. Erosion and decay is inevitable and standards and norms have to be continually revised and reformulated. These costs should be borne in mind while introducing the practise of ecotourism in third world countries where employment and income generation is uncertain, seasonal and dependent on external factors such as a fluctuating tourist inflow. The current trend is to insist that the visitor to an ecologically threatened ecosystem pay for the visit, no matter how careful s/he is about environmental degradation. Thus, entry to National Parks is hiked so that it becomes prohibitively expensive; subsidised institutions that offer adventure training courses such as hiking, mountaineering, para-gliding and so on, are either forced to shut down or become profit making organisations. The point suggested here is that any increase in cost will not simultaneously repair any ecological damage; in fact, it might, on the contrary, discourage environmentally sensitive travellers from visiting the area. Also, the sites earmarked for ecotourism might eventually lead to mass tourism, resulting in greater environmental damage. Ecotourism also serves to redefine land use patterns since zones have to be demarcated for tourism. This in effect results in displacement of farmers and herdsmen and restricts their activity to areas that are not always fertile. In the Himalayas, this
often results in farmers being pushed to unproductive areas as 'prime' lands (areas beside picturesque rivers with views of mountain ranges and so on) are converted into tourist villages. The current brand of ecotourism ignores this fact and instead encourages the extravagant (and often wasteful) traveller, one who is prepared to pay for what appears to be 'pristine' and 'authentic'. In fact these are value laden variables and superficial to say the least.

In the case of the Garhwal Himalayas where cultural authenticity is the catch phrase, one finds that modernisation has been deliberately delayed so that the 'charm' associated with mountain pilgrim sites is maintained. There is also a tendency to emphasise that ecotourism can only take place in areas that are pristine: in fact, that is not always so. Ecotourism can benefit the hosts and visitors immensely especially if it is promoted in areas where there are large tourist arrivals and where the environment has greatly degenerated. Ecotourism implies tourism with a conscience, something that can hardly be supervised by anyone other than the traveller; freedom and the feeling of being one with Nature; instead, it is the concept of monitoring and guidelines that rob the sense of freedom altogether. The emphasis is not that ecotourism should become such a puritanical activity that it becomes time consuming; it is the paucity of time that has encouraged modern travellers to spend large resources in the pursuit of authenticity. What then, should ecotourism entail so that it benefits both the hosts and the visitors?

An answer to the problem has been provided by scholars and International NGOs who have attempted to define the term. In 1991, the International Ecotourism Society attempted to define it as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people." Subsequently, in 1996, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN, now World Conservation Unit), stated that ecotourism is "...
environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural area, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features – both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low negative visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local population”. It has also been defined as a symbiotic relationship between tourism and the environment which benefits the socio-economic conditions of local inhabitants through the promotion of tourism and protection of the environment. All definitions suggest a confluence of two activities: one that is ecological and the other that involves active participation involving two sets of actors: visitors and locals who constitute the human aspect of ecotourism (Chaturvedi, 2002: 41). Bhartiari holds that ecotourism should make a positive contribution towards conserving natural and cultural resources. It should further, encourage participation by the private sector and promote local development through sharing of economic benefits in a fair manner. The issue of empowering local communities is also vital and to that end, ecotourism should take this factor into consideration. Ecotourism should also provide the visitor with ‘a personal experience of nature in ways that lead to greater understanding and experience’ (Bhartiari, 2002: 136). At the planning and policy implementation level, Bhartiari says that to be meaningful, ecotourism activities should incorporate policies that encourage the reinvestment of revenues and profits into conservation and community development. These policies should have an added component that ensures the establishment of standards and codes of conduct for self-regulation by the industry and the consumer. It should also lead to the development of new institutions that can facilitate linkages between various stakeholders particularly from the conservation community and the tourism industry (Bhartiari, ibid: 136-7). On the cultural front, ecotourism should be sensitive to local traditions and involve other cultures in non-invasive ways. Bhartiari adds further that domestic visitors should also be given importance as
they are also affected by issues of sustainability and are likely to make greater contribution to conservation in the long run. This statement holds especially true for the Gangotri region where three successive bad tourist years would have ruined the economy. However, the religious significance of the township ensured a steady arrival of domestic visitors, cushioning the impact that could otherwise have been adverse. Listed in the table are the key elements of an ecotourism strategy in a given region as outlined by Mc Cooter:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environmental Protection</th>
<th>Product Development</th>
<th>Infrastructure Development</th>
<th>Marketing &amp; Promotion</th>
<th>Industry Involvement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protection of natural assets</td>
<td>Identification of resource settings</td>
<td>Development of appropriate accommodation facilities</td>
<td>Identification of target markets</td>
<td>Assist tourism industry with knowledge of ecotourism niche</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservation of resources</td>
<td>Identification of existing and potential products</td>
<td>Development of new and existing access points - airports, railways, roads</td>
<td>Promotion of products to key market segments</td>
<td>Establishing industry networks and information and developing a strong partnership between government and industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance of cultural assets</td>
<td>Development of new products</td>
<td>Development of related facilities - signage and visitor centres</td>
<td>Development of an efficient and effective delivery system</td>
<td>Development and implementation of appropriate industry standards and accreditation</td>
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<tr>
<th>Environmental Protection</th>
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<th>Infrastructure Development</th>
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<th>Industry Involvement</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Protection of lifestyle</td>
<td>Identification and establishment of gateways, destination zones, touring circuits</td>
<td>Developing infrastructure which will also provide benefits to the host community</td>
<td>Position the region as a major area of ecotourism opportunities</td>
<td>Involvement of international promotion through known channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring of impacts</td>
<td>Development of appropriate product packages</td>
<td>Consider alternative technologies in infrastructure development</td>
<td>Developing a coordinating body for marketing and promotion</td>
<td>Develop effective training programmes for persons involved in the ecotourism industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting of limits to change</td>
<td>Establishment of links with other industries</td>
<td>Ensure infrastructure developments are of a high standard</td>
<td>Evaluate marketing and promotion and efforts</td>
<td>Encourage industry to be involved in research</td>
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Key elements of an ecotourism strategy

Whereas ecotourism is desirable, it can only take place if there is co-operation and coordination between different departments of the government. The planning required to implement ecotourism policies is tremendous since land-use has to be redefined and demarcated, access circumscribed and prices fixed. In addition, in the special case of Gangotri, there has to be coordination between the Nagar Palika, the Nagar Panchayat, the Forest...
Department, the PWD, the District Administration and the Department of Tourism. Very often, departments work to undermine one another in a bid to assume more power! Such inter-departmental rivalry needs to be transformed into cooperation and camaraderie. Each of these departments has some advantages and shortcomings in promoting ecotourism. Through co-operation and coordination it is hoped that these shortcomings will be minimised.

A question that needs to be answered is whether ecotourism can lead to sustainable development which in turn will lead to empowerment. The answer to both these questions is not as obvious as it seems. Although the role of tourism can be conceptualised in the overall framework of development, ecotourism presupposes sustainable use of resources. As long as communities are responsible for managing ecotourism, sustainability can be assured to a great degree. Assuming that increase in cash flows results in a corresponding increase in empowerment, ecotourism inevitably results in empowering the marginalised. However, insofar as land is fragmented and reallocated for establishing tourist enclaves, local communities become susceptible to the outside market. What follows with the reallocation of land use is decrease in productivity of available land and greater demand and dependence on other areas for basic necessities (both for local use and to meet the needs of tourists). In a sense, even when tourist arrival is restricted, people are forced to rely on supplies for outside, compromising on their autonomy and increasing their dependence. This situation would definitely not result in empowerment. To equate empowerment simply with the fulfilment of material needs is to disregard the traditional village maxim of self-sufficiency. However, contact with the outside world does have advantages for local communities who can gain from the exposure and also increase their participation in political structures (although
increased political participation is not always the result of contact of insular societies with the outside world).

A problem peculiar to most third world nations is that they are governed by bureaucracies that cause inordinate delays. Much time is wasted over deliberations and discussions and environmental threats often get sidelined. Most governments are also faced with having to make compromises over issues that involve employment and religion; and are often reluctant to take unpopular decisions. The role of elites in marginalizing local people in any developmental policy is also vital. Over the years, local communities have been viewed as being detrimental to development and have been pushed to the fringes and their homelands and the wildlife surrounding the same subjugated and exploited (Gadgil & Guha, 1992; Guha, 1993). In fact several critics see this elitist bias of excluding indigenous population from their habitat as an extension of the colonial tendency except that now development is used to justify such displacement. Such an attitude has led planners in India to ignore traditional links between society and nature and has encouraged them to believe that these communities are prime culprits in environmental destruction. This attitude is reflected in all the policies in India that are implemented with minimal sensitivity towards their problem. Given such a scenario, it is vital that there is devolution of power, tourism is decentralised and that a measure of autonomy is given to local bodies that can make judicious decisions regarding their physical environment. It would not be out of place to state that it is possible to encourage local people to determine whether or not tourism at any point needs to be regulated and to monitor tourist inflows in these zones. Strengthening community structures either through the assistance of NGOs or through district and local institutions of the state can be an effective way by which people can be initiated into formal structures and their functioning. Encouraging self-
employment through tourism and horticulture will also enable the community to subsequently establish guidelines for practising ecotourism in their region. This will also enable them to benefit by way of profits that have eluded them thus far. Arguing for increased participation by communities in conservation through Kothari et al opine that not only will conflicts resulting from exclusion from what they consider as vital for their survival diminish but also the costs of maintaining Protected Areas (PAs) reduce. If the objective of PAs is protection of wildlife, then it can be argued that considerable wildlife still exists outside PAs in lands/wetlands owned by local communities.

Judging by the discussion, it is clear that awareness among both locals and tourists as regards the threats to the environment is abysmally low. Perhaps the government and NGOs could indulge in an exercise by which they disseminate information regarding the dangers to the environment, the behaviour expected of tourists while visiting the region. Also, since the ashrams have a great hold over the people, it would not be out of place to include them in the project of building awareness among the masses. However, what is more difficult to eliminate is the fatalistic attitude that accompanies the explanation behind environmental degradation. Fighting the blind acceptance of affairs as routine and the helplessness that what decays cannot be restored can be a Herculean task and requires a complete change in mindset.

Finally, the creation and promotion of satellite areas would succeed in reducing the pressure on the main temple township. Ecotourism involves dispersing tourist traffic effectively in a manner such that no losses occur to any satellite towns. This could be done by constructing rest houses in these places, by promoting natural beauty, by promoting the handicrafts of the

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14 A mid 1980 survey of 222 PAs in India revealed that at least 47 (21%) had had physical clashes between people and forest officials (Kothari et al, 1989).
people, their horticultural produce and so on. Additionally, restrictions could be imposed on
the entry of vehicles into the township and people discouraged from staying overnight. There
could also be a limit to the number of days a pilgrim/visitor could spend in the region. (A
stipulation to that effect already exists with regard to mountaineers).

However, in implementing all these reforms, the role of the State is extremely crucial as it is in
all countries where welfare is the prime concern of the State and NGOs only perform the task
of negotiating the spaces that exist between State and society.

To conclude, the shift from pure pilgrimage to a commercial and secular activity like tourism
has been necessitated due to the ecological damage in the lower reaches, the saturation of jobs
in the plains and the failure of the government to provide avenues for employment. The
linkage between deforestation and ecotourism is quite evident and it can be said that one gives
birth to the other. One can only hope that ecotourism and ecological consciousness emerges
in good time to prevent any irreparable damage.

It cannot be denied that tourism results in economic development and prosperity in a given
area. Ecotourism results in diminishing the profit margins of the local people who survive on
tourism. This is because restrictions are imposed on the number of arrivals and also the
number of tour operators/guides and so on who can conduct their business in the region. As
mentioned in the previous section, ecotourism can result in marginalizing local communities
by circumscribing regions of access and the people who can profit from commercial activity.
If however, communities are strengthened and encouraged to participate and determine what
natural and cultural features in a given area require preservation and how best to go about it,
the benefits of tourism (and therefore ecotourism) can be spread more broadly over a larger section of the local community. In that case, the role of middlemen and touts can be reduced and communities empowered. The role of the state should be restricted to that of a patron that encourages local enterprise and creates conditions for increased and effective participation.

Viewed in the state-society perspective, the chapter has highlighted the following: without community participation, real development, economic growth and change is not possible. This participation has to be in all spheres: the political (thus devolution of power to the local authorities in matters relating to policy formulation and governance) and at the social sphere (thus strengthening of social structures and recognition given to local modes of usage of commons, conservation and so on). Although the state initiates plans for development of infrastructure and religiously allocates funds for the fulfilment of basic requirements in the Gangotri region, the end result continues to be mismanagement and chaotic state of affairs. It is not difficult to locate the root cause of the problem: the failure of the state to include the people in its schemes. For plans to be successful, state and society should work in cooperation and not in tandem with each other. In order that economic growth is balanced, the state must involve members of the society in a manner that envisages increasing participation so that the state becomes one that is aided by the society. This is not to imply that a state aided by society would be the ideal model, indeed, the role of the state can never completely be minimised in the Indian context. Traditional structures as much as they serve to hinder progress and equitable development also often work to enhance the same. The state thus becomes a vehicle ushering development through plans and policies (that are implemented by its organs: the bureaucracy and local governing bodies) but in soliciting feedback from the
grassroots, the state becomes aided and participatory, and policies made therein reflect such participation. In presuming that society-initiated policy can only be environmentally sensitive, we would be making a grave error since priorities of the society vary according to their access to resources. However, social participation can ensure the preservation of resources since limits and restrictions as to the exploitation of their own resources by outside agencies (as in the Chipko movement) can be set. Also, society aided development would minimise the tendency of policies to fulfil contradictory objectives. Perhaps generating awareness and considering the natural wealth of the Himalayas as a national asset would also result in conservation rather than large-scale imposition of restrictions and curbing employment opportunities offered by mass tourism.