SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION
CHAPTER – VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A travel based recreation, tourism involves a wide range of attractions and activities. Site tourism involves a wide range of attractions and activities. Site tourism, as against event tourism, is the most common form of tourism and has a range of consequences for the environment. In tropical regions hill stations become the natural destination choice of domestic tourists during the summer. Tourism today has become a mass phenomena with a dual concentration in time and space which threatens the environment. Hill stations which have great tourist potential in terms of their climate and scenic beauty are particularly vulnerable to overuse. Environmental problems associated with tourism may not be as evident as pollution but it is identifiable. It is pertinent to note that the environment is the resource of tourism and tourism thus impinges on its very resource. Because tourism is environmentally dependent, it is potentially destructive. The unsympathetic environmental development of tourism has been traced by numerous scholars around the world.

Since its inception, Ooty has been a focal point for pleasure trips in summer. Although Ooty has been a tourist center for long, the past decade has witnessed a rapid increase in tourism with a concomitant rapid growth in hotels, restaurants and travel agents. Tourism impacts are a function of the resilience of the ecosystem, intensity of use and rapidity of development. The intensity and rapidity of tourism development has been great in Ooty. Consequently the relationship between tourism and environment has been one of conflict rather than symbiosis.

Beyond certain levels of tourism development, the asset base of tourism rapidly depreciates. The impact of mass tourism is great because of growing commercialisation of the destinations. Ooty shows signs of both a decline in visitors and undesirable changes in the environment, both natural and manmade. Seasonal concentration of
visitors is high, making the town crowded and placing enormous strains on the infrastructure.

Random developments have resulted in inadequate infrastructural facilities. Building constructions have progressed before the development of water supply, sewerage etc. Stress on infrastructure highlights potential stress as well as limits to sustained economic contribution. Ooty lake has become a helpless victim of abuse. The visual and olfactory squalor of the untreated water of Ooty lake bears witness to the infrastructural overloads on the sewerage system. Enormous funds are being spent in an effort to salvage the lake, but the road to recovery is bound to be excruciatingly slow, considering the continuing sewage inflows. Similarly solid waste is a staggering burden both because of the litter and because it exceeds the capacity of the natural process to transform it. The increasing volume of use of elaborately packed and presented throwaways has resulted in an increase in non-compostable matter. Ooty town compost yard bears witness to this. Tourist vehicles are major emitters of gases and the air quality of the town is affected.

Environmental and social stresses are noticeable in Ooty. Agricultural and vacant lands are getting rapidly transformed into resorts etc. and the land is scarred by construction activity. Congestion and commercialisation, the two conspicuous traits of tourism growth are evident in Ooty. When tourism development is carried too far the quality of life is lost to the residents. In the last decade (1981-1991) the population of Ooty town increased by 4.4 percent while simultaneously the tourist population rose by 153 percent. Tourist resident ratios are also high (15:1 in 1996). Consequent to this crowding, there is a loss of residential amenities to locals. Residents face problems of housing, feel deprived of water supply and hold tourism responsible for price rise and shortages. A resident focused development rather than tourist focused development is desired by the residents of Ooty. There is a rising swell of resentment against tourism and a quarter of the respondents felt a need to regulate and organise tourism, Concerns for the environment are visible in resident reactions to further expansion of tourism.
Environmental degradation can have very direct and undesirable consequences for the industry itself, as despoiled destinations become less and less attractive to more discerning tourists. A study of visitors to Ooty shows that repeat visitations are on the decline. Since most of the visitors to Ooty were there for the first time, it is possible that many potential visitors have already been displaced. Although a large number of tourists expressed their desire to visit Ooty again because of its scenic beauty and climate, dissatisfaction of visitor's experience is also evident. Pollution and infrastructural inadequacies were major deterrents to those unwilling to visit Ooty again.

The first indications of non sustainability of tourism in Ooty are visible in the decline in visitors and other undesirable developments. Since 1994, the growth of tourists visiting Ooty has been declining and in 1995-1996, a negative growth rate was registered. Figure 7.1 shows Ooty's growth as a resort as defined by Butlers typology of resort development. It is seen that the resort has reached a point of stagnation and decline is certain unless remedial planning occurs in tourism.

**Fig. 7.1 OOTY TOWN - STAGES OF RESORT DEVELOPMENT**
Simultaneously with the beginning of declining tourists, the environmental and social stresses closely related to saturation are noticeable. Hotels are reporting declining occupancy. With the exception of the few hotels who cater to film crews, almost all the others report declining occupancy. The reasons attributed by the hoteliers was the greater competition on account of the large number of hotels and the low spending power of the increasingly low income segments of the market who choose not to stay overnight. Since the mass domestic tourists are largely composed of the middle class, the economic benefits are low as compared to the problems created by overcrowding. An outcome of the increasing competition and decreasing tourists is that a syndicate of brokers are holding others to ransom. Hotels pay them a hefty commission in order to survive. The tour operators in turn pay hotels a considerable commission for sending them their guests. In the absence of sufficient information dissemination, self appointed guides hound tourists. Tourism development is haphazard in Ooty and consequently its environmental impacts are great.

Conclusion

The development of tourism depends not only on resources but also on how best destinations are planned and controlled. Tourism must be environmentally sustainable to be economically sustainable. In no other development activity is the link with environmental quality more obvious than in tourism. Hence it is in the interest of the tourist industry to protect the environment to ensure the sustainability of the industry. There is a need for a well managed tourism that combines and balances business interests, environmental and social concerns.

The present research work has brought into lime light the following emerging environmental issues. These issues have to be carefully examined before a policy framework is laid down for sustainable tourism in Ooty.

a) On the basis of the evaluation carried in chapters IV, V and VI and the detailed field work, three important environmental stress zones have been identified. These zones are more or less elongated concentric zones. They are
(i) A very high sensitive zone in the areas adjoining the race course which adjoins the elongated road around the race course and extending from the bus stand in the west to Kelso Bridge near Charring Cross in the east. An inspection of figures 4.10 and 4.11 shows that this is the zone with a concentration of hotels, restaurants and tour operators. This zone occupies the entire race course sub water shed area, and the eastern part of the lake sub water shed. The race course water shed area is the most intensively developed area with more than 60 percent of the area built up. This part of Ooty town is characterised by buildings (Plates 5.1 and 5.2) and is the commercial hub of the town. Ettines road, at both its eastern and western end are dominated by hotels and restaurants and tour operators. This zone has witnessed rapid transformation of land because of a large number of hotels. Ettines road is less congested in its central part because of the location of a few large hotels which have large open spaces. The road once again shows a gradual congestion at its western end.

Charring Cross junction in the east, near the trijunction of the garden road, Coonoor road and Commercial road is dominated by hotels, restaurants, tour operators and a large number of shops catering to the tourists. Westward of Charring Cross land use intensifies along Commercial road since this is the commercial heart of Ooty town with a market located west of Commercial road. This area is characterised by narrow, crowded lanes and a domination of buildings. Along lower bazaar road further west, a large number of small lodges are scattered with their numbers increasing westward near the bus stand. Near the bus stand a large number of tour operators and small shops dealing with miscellaneous hill products are located.

(ii) A medium sensitive zone can be identified as a parallel zone surrounding the core highly sensitive region. This zone extends from Fern Hill in the south west of the lake sub water shed to Elk Hill region south of Ettines road, to Coonoor road in the east of the town, north towards Garden road and Havelock road, west to
Mysore road and onward to Finger Post and Theetukal and North lake road thus forming a loop around the highly sensitive region. Although this medium sensitive zone also has a considerable number of hotels aligned along the main roads, they are fairly large and recent as compared to those in the highly sensitive areas.

iii) The peripheral zone which forms the outermost concentric zone is presently the least sensitive zone because tourism has not yet made large inroads into the slopes of the Dodabetta Range and in Snowdon in the north. But, since these zones are near the Reserve Forest zones, they are highly sensitive in terms of potential environmental changes and any development here will require close monitoring and checks.

In view of the environmental stresses in these zones there should be a ban on all further development of tourism activities in the inner most sensitive zones, close monitoring of the medium sensitive zone and restricted controlled development in the presently least sensitive zones. Currently the master plan of Ooty town prohibits developments within 200 m around the lake and garden and imposes restrictions in the other zones mainly with reference to size of plot, area of coverage etc. In view of the environmental situation these alone are insufficient to ensure sustainable development of Tourism. Specific laws must prohibit the scarring of the land as visible in Plate 5.1.

b) Within these zones, pockets of intense pollution could be identified. The inner most highly sensitive zone, is the zone that contributes the largest to the pollution of Ooty lake. Since tourism activity is focused in this zone, this zone also witnesses maximum problems in terms of solid waste. The major arterial roads in this zone together with Coonoor road in the medium sensitive zone is a zone of maximum vehicle congestion and consequent air pollution. Permanent restructuring of the land due to tourism is the maximum in the zones of
construction of large tourist accommodation in the medium and less sensitive zones.

c) On the basis of the growth of the industry, it was observed that tourism activity began at the inner most zone and with saturation there, moved into the next zone which because of the lower intensity of development is currently a medium sensitive zone. Tourism developers have now begun making inroads into the outer most zone which was thus far spared from tourism development. Developments are now occurring along the Southern and Eastern periphery of the town. Since these are undisturbed areas of forests, any disturbance here are bound to trigger reactions which will affect the town. Further development of resorts etc. must stop in Ooty.

In an over exploited destination like Ooty, management rather than promotion should be the focus of tourism policy. Ooty has reached a point of saturation and management rather than promotion is the urgent need of tourism.

d) Both the tourism industry and the local population, by virtue of their involvement in the service sector, accelerate the damage to the environment.

e) This thesis has also brought out the less significance attached to awareness and perception issues involving residents, tourists and tourism industry operators. Hardly any of them were aware of the environmental consequences of their action or are actively involved in trying to improve the quality of life and of tourism in Ooty. The development of tourism has occurred with little awareness of the possible consequences of rapid haphazard growth.

Developers seem oblivious of the environmental effects of their activities or are unable to grasp the implications of their operation on the overall environment. While the majority of them expressed concerns over lack of cleanliness, need for better roads, etc, only a small fraction of them expressed concerns about
environmental degradation. Their perspective is only one of short run profits. A recent attempt at introducing a helicopter service for tourists to Ooty is an example of one such operation. Despite protests from environmentalists the helicopter run continued. Eventually the wildlife department had to put an end to it because of the disturbances to wildlife in the reserved forest zones on account of the noise. Short term economic gains has been the cornerstone of our economic system. Since the tourism entrepreneurs do not own the resources which attract tourists, there is no direct obligation on their part to be concerned about its conservation. Tourism entrepreneurs feel that it is the responsibility of the local bodies to keep the town clean and provide basic infrastructure. But the local bodies are hard pressed to cope with the growing resident populations. The enormous tourist invasions break down the infrastructural systems hopelessly.

While the residents do feel the pinch the increasing use of their resources by the tourism industry there is no attempt at awareness creation among residents, tourists or the industry at better handling of their resources and wastes. Local initiatives are lacking, both on the part of residents and the industry. Since there is a rising sensitivity among tourists towards a polluted environment and of residents towards tourism's use of local resources, the tourism industry must adopt environmentally sustainable practices.

f) Existing infrastructure is over loaded resulting in pollution of Ooty lake and mounting problems of waste disposal etc. There is a need for the government to prioritise certain infrastructural developments like roads and water supply in Ooty. Since the infrastructural provisions for sewage disposal and solid waste disposal are grossly insufficient and given the scale of development of tourism, it should be mandatory that all tourism establishments manage their own solid and sewage waste. This will encourage them to reduce usage and waste. This will also ease the pressure on local administration which can concentrate on the infrastructural deficiencies in water supply, roads etc. While a handful of hotels
now manage their own sewage with sewage treatment plants, none of them think it necessary to manage their own solid waste.

g) The spatial spread of tourism is occurring into outlying areas with the larger participation of tour operators in tourism. Consequently there is a need for stricter controls to avoid the despoilation of the environment in any form. Mere proclamations of litter-free zones etc are insufficient to prevent littering etc, as is evident in Ooty. There must be a regulatory authority with strict enforcement of rules. Existing environment protection acts must also be implemented. Random emission check of tourist vehicles must be mandatory.

In the light of these issues, this study suggests three broad requirements for sustainable tourism in Ooty

(i) a massive awareness campaign with the participation and cooperation of individuals, the tourism industry and the government. Codes of conduct must be voluntarily followed by individuals and the industry.

(ii) the need for a voluntary system of regulation by the tourism entrepreneurs with the adaptation of environmentally sustainable business practices

(iii) Since all entrepreneurs are not bound by such voluntary codes, there is a need for government intervention. Government policy must make provisions to match tourism promotion efforts by efforts to manage the impacts of tourism.