CHAPTER - VI
ECOTOURISM AND ITS RELEVANCE IN GOA

Introduction

The present chapter discusses the concept of ecotourism and its relevance in general and its importance and relevance in Goa. Ecotourism, like sustainable tourism and alternative tourism, is an example of an ‘essentially contested concept’, meaning that its use and application is inherently a matter of dispute and controversy. It is regarded as the most legitimate manifestation of alternative tourism. The appearance of the term is significant because it provides as a catalyst around which formal investigation and development of the concept can be undertaken.¹

Ecotourism is a growing niche market within the larger travel industry with the potential of being an important sustainable development tool. It is an industry that seeks to take advantage of market trends. At the same time, it frequently operates quite differently than other segments of the tourism industry because it describes an activity undertaken in remote locations and involving modest accommodation which has been influential in popularizing the view that it is a small-scale undertaking that contrasts with so-called ‘mass’ or high volume tourism. Tourism can bring both benefits and problems to the local economy and its cultural patterns, which is difficult to measure.²

Economic and environmental effects of tourism, however, can be quantified, though not very accurately, but socio-cultural impacts are of great consideration in developing alternative tourism in so many places. A critical relationship exists between ecosystems and socio-economic systems that focus primarily on the issues of sustainability facing
humanity and the life supporting systems on which the society depends. These issues involve: (a) assessing and ensuring that human activities are ecologically sustainable from local to global levels; and (b) distributing resources fairly within the present day generation of humans, between this generation and future generation, and between humans and other species. The globalization of human activities, population growth and large-scale movements of people have placed mankind in an era of novel dynamics. Interdependence of ecological, social and economic systems at regional and even planetary levels has been emerging very fast. These interdependent sub-systems have become so interwoven that actions taken locally may generate regional and global effects witnessed in, for example, climate change and evolution of new diseases. 

Ecosystems are essential in global bio-geo-chemical cycles and produce the bulk of renewable resources and ecosystem services on which the well being of society depends. In Economics, land, labour and capital have traditionally been the three main inputs or factors of production to economic development and in the present context, ecosystem may be seen as an essential factor of production for socio-economic development. The concept of natural capital, often used in present day, represents ecosystem as a factor of production, which generates to human society, a flow of non-renewable, renewable resources as well as ecosystem services that include maintenance of the composition of the atmosphere, amelioration of climate, flood controls, drinking water supply, waste assimilation, recycling of nutrients, generation of soils, pollination of crops, predation on pest insects, provision of food and medicine, maintenance of species and a vast genetic library and also the preservation of scenery of the landscape and recreational sites which have both aesthetic and amenity values.
The rapid expansion of human actions on earth is altering the capacity of ecosystem to generate a continuous flow of natural resources and ecosystem services. This capacity is becoming an increasingly limiting factor for social and economic development. As the human dimensions grow relative to its supporting ecosystems, this may affect the dynamics of both and may draw ecological-social-economic system to critical biophysical thresholds at regional and global levels. 

The Western world has already exploited and destroyed the natural resources, however, they have realized now the importance of preserving the nature. Therefore, they have come out with the concept and models of ecotourism of their own and a number of developing countries are trying to follow the models as coined by them. The fact of the matter is that such experiments may not always succeed due to a number of factors beyond the control of the developing countries, for example, in India, there is need for proper coordination between the forest and tourism department to plan and develop ecotourism in a particular area. Unfortunately, bureaucratic hassles may turn out against the development of ecotourism.

Although the problem of the environment has been recognized for some forty years ago, public awareness of the problem is a more recent phenomenon. Environmental protection seems to be conceptually inspired by the theory of the internalization of external effects, which merely applies the mental portrayal of the market mechanism to public goods. This reflects a theme, namely the pre-eminence of Economics in social relations, in which the best results are supposedly achieved through optimum allocation of productive resources by means of some collective decision-making mechanism, with the sole aim of attaining sustainable development. As the market is merely one of a number of collective decision-
making mechanisms, environmental policy must be seen on various levels, including not only the economic, but also the political and administrative spheres. Accordingly, it is prone to the failures observed in each of these spheres, and must come to terms with the various collective decision-making mechanisms, that may supplement, oppose or reinforce one another.\footnote{7}

Ecotourism in India

India, one of the seven mega biodiversity countries of the world, is a country with a rich and renowned cultural heritage. Yet India has the world's greatest untapped potential of ecotourism resources. The concept is new and inspite of such bounties of nature and varieties of religion, culture, ethnicity, India accounts for only 0.4 percent of the global tourism market. The Ministries of Tourism and Environment and Forest have responded to the developments in the field of ecotourism with policy initiatives. The policy guidelines (July 998) of the Ministry of Tourism lay down the objectives for ecotourism and contain operational guidelines for major stakeholders. In the year 2000, ecotourism in protected areas and territorial forest divisions was recognized as one of the fifteen thrust areas of the Ministry of Environment and Forests.\footnote{8}

Several State Governments have also taken policy initiatives to promote ecotourism. The Governments of Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Sikkim, West Bengal and Goa have designated officials to coordinate ecotourism activities. In Kerala there is a separate department of Ecotourism, coordinating the activities of the tourism and forest departments. Besides, Kerala has
launched the Thenmala Ecotourism Promotion Society to develop a model for ecotourism. 9

**It's Time to Preserve Nature**

Parks, wildlife refuges, wilderness areas and natural preserves occupy a small percentage of our total land area but protect valuable cultural resources and representative samples of the earth’s species and ecosystems. This ‘paradise on earth’ is under threat. This natural wealth has been buffered from human impact by their remote location. But now, the situation has changed, for example, let us take the case of national parks in some of the countries of the world. Most of the national parks have become islands of nature surrounded and threatened by destructive land uses and burgeoning human population that crowd the park boundaries. Forests are clear-cut right up to the edges while mine drainage contaminates streams and groundwater. Pressures are further mounting to expand hotels, shops, downhill ski facilities, convention centers and so on. Dune buggies, dirt bikes and off-road vehicles run over fragile sand dunes, disturbing vegetation and wildlife and are destroying the aesthetic experience of those who come to enjoy nature. 10

Wildlife refuges that contribute to the recovery and preservation of wildlife are having the biggest problem of hunting and poaching which is a curse in some of the refuges. A number of improbable and incompatible uses such as cattle grazing, snowmobile, timber harvesting have become accepted in wildlife refuges. Another group of lands of great biological importance is threatened by our preference for living, working and recreating near the water are the beaches, barrier islands, coastal wetlands and estuaries. Construction on beaches and barrier islands can cause irreparable damage to the whole
ecosystem. Damaging the vegetation that holds the shifting sand in place often not only puts houses and human life at risk but also eliminates habitat for rare and endangered species. Breaching dune systems to create roads or construction sites provides an avenue through which storms surge to wash away beaches or even the whole island. The major problem of the mountain areas is the growing incidence of landslides on hill roads that have been constructed to provide access to tourist resorts. Thus road construction in these areas can create ecological havocs. ¹¹

The issues reflect clearly that human beings due to economic, institutional, social and cultural factors that direct human activities are misusing the ecosystems and a conflict has emerged between recreation and conservation aspects of nature. It is obvious, therefore, now, to protect our ecosystems, conserving them for prosperity and also making them available to other species. In environmental planning these considerations must get top priority, as ecotourism can help the world in general and developing countries in particular, towards attainment of this goal, however, there are problems too that need to be properly addressed. World tourism sector is the largest industry in the world, generating around $ 3 trillion per year in total revenues. A growing segment of this market is ecotourism – a combination of adventure travel, cultural exploration and nature appreciation in wild settings. In addition to that trekking, hiking, bird watching, nature photography, wildlife safaris, camping, mountain climbing, river rafting, botanical study are some of the favourite forms of ecotourism. ¹²

Goa is known for beach tourism not only in the country but worldwide. This factor is largely responsible for crowding. In addition to that most of the major and minor hotels, lodges, restaurants are located on the seaside, which not only attracts the domestic
travelers, but also at the same time, forces them to stay on. Lack of proper infrastructure facilities especially roads and means of communication to major cities is yet another factor responsible for crowding on the beaches in North Goa. In that respect, South Goa beaches are relatively less crowded when compared with the North. It must be also mentioned that North Goa beaches such as Calangute, Baga, Anjuna are more popular and well known to the domestic tourists in comparison to South Goa beaches such as Benaulim, Palolem Mobor, however, the most tourist-centric popular beach in South is Colva.

**Environmental Problems**

The types of environmental problem that Goa faces on account of high rate of growth of tourism are as follows: -

- Hotel construction activities along the beaches.
- Damage to the vegetation along the coastal areas.
- Contamination and salination of groundwater level along the coastal areas.
- Garbage and garbage disposal.
- Large-scale destruction of forest for commercial purposes.
- Mining activities.

**a. Hotel construction activities along the beaches**

Three and a half decades of mass tourism have made the once pristine beaches of Goa sad exemplars of haphazard development. There are around 400 hotels and 350 shacks in and around the beaches. More than 77 per cent of these are located along the beach, almost every one of them within the 200-meters of the High Tide Line, destroyed sand dunes and
an erosion prone coast is what is left of Goa today. In 1996, the National Committee on Tourism, Planning Commission of India observed; 'the natural charm of coastal area and marine area is being adversely affected by massive tourist development. The beach resort facilities are spread all along the coastline of Goa. They undermine the natural sand dunes ecosystems of the coastal areas. The uncontrolled spurt in construction activity provoked by tourist influx in Goa, particularly the extraction of sand dunes for development works has led to a continual erosion of coastal areas by the relentless sea. As regards hotel construction activities, it violates the rules and regulations as laid down by the Government and upheld by the Courts of law. There is gross violation of the Coastal Regulatory Zone (CRZ), which stipulates firmly that no construction activities should be carried on or allowed within 500 meters from the High Tide Line (HTL). Often, either permanent or temporary and illegal structures along the beaches in both North and South Goa can be found. Most of the major luxury hotels and resorts like Ramada, Taj, Leela etc. located along the coastal belt are owned by those who are influential people having political patronage. The first writ petition against the hotels’ environmental violation was filed by Prof. Sergio Carvalho and the Goa Foundation against Ramada Hotel in 1988. 13 Thereafter several other petitions have also been filed against other hotels and resorts. Whenever problems arise on account of violation of regulatory norms, they manage to tackle it through their influences. Not only that even beaches are privatized by some of the hotels (Bogmalo, Cidade de Goa) in the State. As reported in local dailies people holding constitutional offices continue to violate CRZ norms despite getting notices almost three years ago. The enormity of the violation is so
rampant that some people ironically preferred to rename Coastal Regulatory Zone as "Carryon Regardless Zone".

Damage to the vegetation is caused along the coastal belt in Goa due to shifting of sand for commercial activities. Not only that, even there are large-scale conversions of agricultural lands along the seacoast for commercial activities despite having a ban on such conversion.

b. Contamination and salination of groundwater level along the coastal areas

Large and medium hotels along the seacoast have dug up huge wells and bore-wells clandestinely not only to escape from paying water tax to the Government but also to tide over the water problems during the summer. As per the existing Panchayat and Municipal Acts in Goa, digging any well other than for agricultural purposes, is totally prohibited in the State. This has in turn, resulted in salination and contamination of well water all along the coastal belt rendering it unusable for drinking purposes for the locals. Hotel industry requires plenty of water for their own use as well as to serve their customers. Drawing such huge gallons water from the well is responsible for salination as the seawater enters to fill the vacuum created by drawing of water. The case of Leela Beach is revealing that despite conditions being imposed on the hotel by the Environment Ministry that no water would be tapped within 500 m. from the HTL, the resort went ahead and installed several bore wells in the zone. Water treatment plants do not exist in most of the hotels, as it is not cost effective and at the same time expensive too. So water supplied to the tourists by the hoteliers are often contaminated. Further, water contamination is also caused by garbage disposal and mining waste. 14
c. Garbage and garbage disposal

With the ever-increasing growth of tourists and population coupled with rapid rate urbanization, garbage disposal is becoming a nightmare for Municipal and Panchayat administration. While driving down all along the National Highway or taking a walk along the beaches, heaps of garbage can be seen littered around. The disposal of garbage is the responsibility of the local administration, which has failed to discharge its duty. Garbage bins are provided at the beach sites, however, these bins are either not lifted and cleaned regularly or overflowing. It spoils the surrounding areas and the environment with foul smell and dirt spread across by scavengers, dogs and so on. A number of communicable diseases such as malaria, leptospirosis, and jaundice are the obvious outcome in some of the areas along the coasts in Goa. In addition to that there is lack of dumping ground and waste treatment plant in Goa, which is said to be largely responsible for this problem. Such commercial activities are being undertaken in gross violation of the existing rules and regulations. Huge wastes are also generated by the hotels, lodges and restaurants all along the beaches and are flushed into the sea. This causes extensive environmental damage particularly to the marine ecosystem. Often one comes across floating of tar balls; oil spills human and animal waste on the surface of sea water.

d. Large-scale destruction of forest for commercial purposes

About 34 percent of the total land area in Goa is under forest cover while at the national level it is approximately 18 percent. These are mainly rain forest all along the Shayadris coming down right upto the sea. The Government of Goa has totally banned cutting of trees or use of forestland for any non-forest purposes including cutting of trees in private forests. As a result the value addition from forestry to GSDP has been declining in real
terms. This is a positive development and is largely welcomed by environmentalists. However, the ban exists only on paper while real picture is different. Trees from the private lands are cut mercilessly for construction of buildings and concrete structures as the laws allow hassle-free conversion of agricultural lands into non-agricultural, making of wooden curved furniture, a craze among the Goans, besides, of course, for the purpose of firewood. It was proposed by the Government some years back to cut down the trees along the Bandodkar Marg in Panjim city. The proposal met with strongest protest from the general public, so much so that the Government had to revert back its proposal. People in Goa love greenery and one can see even a small garden in front of the houses. But those living in the far-flung villages often say that contractors in connivance with the forest officials destroy forests, eventually, affecting the habitat of wild animals, and different specie of birds, besides, hunting of animals like wild boar and rabbit etc. This has also resulted in climate change in Goa as noticed by many. Rainfall has become very erratic, sometimes, there is excess rainfall but most of the time, rainfall is less than the average, hovering around 80 to 90 inches during the monsoon season, when average rainfall used to be more than 120 inches and or more until some years back. A casual glance at the areal forest cover shows that that the interior taluks are densely forested while the coastal taluks have negligible area under forest. This is due to socio-economic developments, including tourism.

c. Mining activities

The worst of all is the problem of mining and quarrying activities, particularly iron ore mining in a tiny place like Goa. It is an important economic activity in the State, contributing immensely to the GSDP. However, due to its continuous exploitation, the
iron ore stock is depleting and so also its production which has remained stagnant for many years. As mining is basically open cast mining, it is responsible for large-scale pollution of river, sea, and surrounding areas. Large industrial houses of Goa, such as the Houses of Dempos', Chowgules', and Bandodkars' own these mines privately. A visit to some of the taluks like Sanguem, Bicholim and Ponda expose the extent of environmental damage by mining. These ores are navigated to Marmagao port by the barges and then exported to foreign countries. The local residents feel that unless the mining activities are strictly controlled and regulated, Goa will continue to face environmental hazards, so much so, that tourism, which is the second most important economic activity in the State, will suffer. Therefore, they feel that mining activities are going to ruin tourism sector in the State.

**Impact on Socio - Cultural Environment of Goa**

The tourism industry and proponents of its 'economic efficiency' argument are the first to divorce the activity from its obvious and visible social aspects. This must have to be a blinkered understanding of a sector, which depends on local cultures, entrepreneurship and labour for its survival.\(^\text{15}\) It is obvious that since tourism is the second most economic activity in the State, it will definitely influence the socio-cultural fabric of the people especially in a tiny State like Goa. Historically, 450 years of Portuguese rule has already had its influence and impact on Goan society. As an economic entity, tourism has been largely now responsible for furthering the socio-cultural change. As social and cultural aspects are omingenous, it is difficult to define; moreover, so many factors and forces like historical, political, economic, anthropological and psychological, influence in moulding socio-cultural aspects of people of a region.\(^\text{16}\)
Portuguese rule has created an impact on Goan society, which makes it seem like a Western society. The impact is so profound that people from other parts of the country may feel totally alienated here. It is more pronounced among the Christian community than their Hindu counterparts, who are still trying to cling to old values amidst the onslaught of Western cultural invasion, though, as a matter of fact, we come across this phenomenon elsewhere too, particularly among the younger generation.

Life-styles of Catholic Christians and Hindus in Goa or for that matter, any other community is distinct as generally is the case. But in Goa it is more distinct and significant than elsewhere. This social and caste divisions, customs, dresses rituals, food habits, way of speaking the same language, i.e. Konkani, music, festivals, drama and dance style and so on have made the two communities quite distinct from each other but never divided the people. For example, Catholic community loves, admires imbibes and adores western music, as if, it is part of their Christian culture, while Hindu community practices bhajans, kirtanas and Indian Classical music and dances not only in temples but impart basic training to their children, perhaps, with the intention of maintaining and retaining cultural identity and values. Communal harmony exists in Goa, as people are individualistic, resilient, tolerant, peace loving, non-interfering. These attributes are, perhaps, the most distinctive and exemplary features of Goan society, which get reflected in their culture. It will be quite right if some of these attributes can be emulated to counter divisive forces in society elsewhere in the country.

Of late there have been attempts by some outside groups and organizations in Goa to break this bond of communal harmony and stray incidences of disharmony are featuring the front pages of several local newspapers. Being a small State, such incidences are
certainly not congenial for tourism as it poses law and order problem leading to insecurity of the tourists. People at large must thwart such moves in their own interest with the assistance of law enforcing agencies. ¹⁷

Goa has been a destination not only for tourists but also large number of people who come from different States in search of jobs. This huge in-flow of workers in search of employment in different sectors, particularly in construction, has created not only social problem in terms of development of slums, but at the same time, law and order problem for the entire State. Eventually, it has affected tourism. Tourists have often complained of their insecurity, particularly, foreign tourists. Police stations located in coastal areas have registered several cases related to rape, murder, narcotic drug trafficking, prostitution, child abuse and child prostitution or pedophiles etc. Most of the time, outsiders in connivance with locals commit such horrific acts. ¹⁸ This is one of the several reasons that many people are opposing any further development of tourism in the State. The recent closure of bar dances in Mumbai by the Government of Maharashtra, had an impact on Goan soil as most the bar dancers migrated to Goa for earning livelihood through prostitution particularly in the Northern belt. A number of cases related to prostitution in hotels and lodges were booked by Goa Police in Calangute, Baga, and Anjuna. The eviction of sex workers from Baina beach in Vasco was hailed by many as the right step in checking the social malaise, particularly in the backdrop of alarming rise in HIV/AIDS cases in the State, but without their rehabilitation the problem does not seem to have its long lasting solution.

As Goa is one of the most preferred tourist destinations, a large number of foreign tourists visit Goa and this number is increasing with every passing year. The younger
generation, already facing the onslaught of Western cultural invasion, are greatly influenced by the foreign tourists in such a tiny territory. They closely observe the habits, customs and lifestyles of foreign tourists and tend to imitate the same without realizing the consequences. As a result, the Goan youths are becoming drug-addicts, alcoholic and often abused by foreigners. Parental love and care is often missed as parents are either working in Gulf countries or on foreign ships, leaving the children at the mercy of relatives, who hardly care for proper upbringing. This is typical among the Catholic community living in coastal belt of the State. There is no dearth of money for those children, as parents are working in Gulf countries and earn fat salary, but more often, the children for amusement, entertainment and cheap imitation of western lifestyle misuse money. Consumption of alcoholic drinks at home is not considered a taboo in Catholic community, though it is restricted among the Hindu community. But the Western influence has not left behind the children of Hindu community in the midst of all such influences. This is yet another reason for opposing tourism. This is, perhaps, wrong on their part to hold tourism as responsible for this.

Tourism is also contributing to increasing number of HIV and AIDS cases in the State and according to the Goa AIDS Control Society, such cases are alarmingly increasing in the State, particularly in those places that are catering to tourism and located in coastal belt. The first reported case of HIV in Goa was with a foreigner in 1987 and since then there has been a rise in reported number of persons with HIV/AIDS. In the first half of 2003, the number of HIV cases reported are 478 with a total of 5897 and positivity rate of 9.29 per cent. It is needless to point out that the above figures of number of HIV/AIDS cases detected or reported in Goa are not reflective of actual position because of the lack
of proper epidemiological data due to non reporting or under reporting by the hospitals.

The estimated number of HIV/AIDS cases in Goa is close to 10,000.

The table No.6.1 shows the male/female breakup of HIV/AIDS cases reported in Goa.

**Table No. 6.1 Male/ Female Breakup of HIV/AIDS Cases from 1986 to 2003:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of blood test</th>
<th>HIV positive</th>
<th>Positivity rate</th>
<th>Total of AIDS cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>1255</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>3822</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>10210</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>8603</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>8690</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>7978</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>4533</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>4.30</td>
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<td>2279</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>8.91</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>327</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>1998</td>
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</tr>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>7804</td>
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<td>9.61</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>807</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>2001</td>
<td>7216</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>11.10</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>13848</td>
<td>999</td>
<td>7.21</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>5144</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>9.29</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>110883</td>
<td>5897</td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: GOA AIDS CONTROL SOCIETY)
Further, taluk-wise distribution of HIV cases show that Marmagao has the highest number of recorded and detected cases in the year 2002 (263) followed by Salcete (191), thereafter comes Tiswadi (147) and then closely followed by Bardez (111). All these taluks are tourist-centric places. This substantiates as to why the general people are opposed to further development of tourism in the State. If it is not controlled, the younger generation, which is the most vulnerable group, may be ruined. It needs awareness through general programmes; role of educational institutions and NGOs are significant in this endeavour to save the younger generation from the dreaded disease like HIV or AIDS and protect the mankind which supplies the most important resource i.e. labour to initiate economic activities.

Ecotourism: An Answer to Ecosystem Conservation

In Goa, the concept ecotourism has gained prominence in recent years and is now considered to be the fastest growing branch of travel industry with a low receptive rate. It is a fact that sustainable development is a guided process, which envisages management of resources so as to ensure their viability and thereby, enabling our natural and cultural capital, including protected areas to be preserved. It is hailed as a hopeful approach to both preserving the fragile and threatened wild areas including those of rural or native people who have traditional and cultural relationships on the one hand and providing an opportunity to the people to participate in forest management on the other. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) has worked out the carrying capacity, a measure of sustainability, of tourism in Goa and recommended a limit of 41 lakh tourists per year (Refer Chapter – III). Therefore, though presently, the number of tourists visiting Goa is
very much within the prescribed limit as mentioned in the WTO report, but the real picture is horrifying when visits to the coastal areas were undertaken in the North and South, during the course of survey. It can be said beyond doubt that the coastal belts or areas have definitely exceeded the threshold limit. Therefore, they need to be diverted to hinterland. 19

Unfortunately, infrastructure bottleneck is the greatest of all the hurdles in this endeavour to diversify the tourist flow to move to other areas that are partially unexplored or unknown to a large number of foreign and domestic tourists. Having Western Ghats on one side, the state of Goa has given a wealth of ecosystem, which is well protected and preserved compared to many other States in India. 20 The ecosystem, which has great potential and resources to make ecotourism, a success in Goa is as follows: -

• Western Ghats: - The rain forest and sylvan surrounding at considerable altitude offer an enchanting and delightful natural environment to visitors. The Surla village located on the Chorla Ghat after crossing Anjuna Lake, Harvalem at Saquelim, Tambdi Surla and Dudh Sagar in Sanguem (Photo 6.1), Cabo-de-Rama in Quepem and many such other areas can be identified to develop eco-friendly infrastructure for ecotourism.

• Marine ecosystem: - Goa has 105 kms of coastline with coral reefs and three islands. The marine bio-diversity can be divided into coastal and oceanic forms, for developing ecotourism. Besides that, the coastal ecosystem is an area of immense importance as it has certain special attraction like the presence of coral reefs and mangroves.
• Sacred groves in wildlife-protected areas: Goa has six wildlife sanctuaries and one National Park, covering an area of 1368 sq.km, that is about 20 per cent of the total geographical area of the State. There are several sacred groves that can attract tourists due to special vegetation and bio-diversity; for example, Bamber in Valpoi taluk has unique vegetation that can be found only in Kerala. Similarly, Mahadevachi Rai, at Salgini at Velim village in Salcete taluk, has sacred grove called Goethirai.

• Lakes: Goa has a number of lakes, such as Anjuna, Selaulim, Carambolim, Mayem and so on that supply water for irrigation and domestic requirements. Some of these lakes are quite old and constructed during the Portuguese rule. These lakes harbour a variety of migratory birds coming from different parts of the world during the winter season for breeding. Those lakes can become a tourist attraction in a big way if Government and other private agencies and NGOs undertake proper protective measures. There is also scope for photography, boating, in addition to bird watching and other eco-friendly outdoor activities.

• Mangroves: The mangroves are called “Tidal Forest” or “Coastal Wetlands”. These are salt tolerant forest covering an area of about two thousand hectares, of which 900 hectares are along the Zuari estuary, 200 hectares along Cumbajua canal and the remaining is scattered along Terekhol, Sal, Talpona and Galgibag estuaries. This is of considerable importance due to coastal stabilization, check soil erosion, habitat for various types of marine flora and fauna and also supports commercial and recreational fishing. These mangroves are the source for timber, fodder and charcoal.
Apart from this, coconuts, arecanuts and cashew plantation under private ownership have great potential to attract large number of ecotourists to study horticulture and agriculture. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) in association with private landowners and agriculturists have introduced the concept of agro-eco-tourism at some places for ecotourists, however, though not on large-scale, to visit farms that are engaged in agricultural activities, such spice farm at Savio-Verem, Pascol Farm near Ponda and some other places in the same taluk as well as in Canacona. Such visits by the tourists can provide educational values in terms of History, Anthropology, Sociology, and Biology etc. It can project rural socio-economic life of Goans for the benefit of foreign and domestic tourists. Similarly, ecotourism, in principle, benefits significantly to the local communities as well. Setting up of an ecotourism unit can provide income and employment as the tourists would form a ready-made market to sell large number of forest products, such as honey, medicinal plants, roots and barks of the trees as means of nature-cure for different ailments and diseases, local handicrafts and so on. Most importantly, ecotourism can be an effective means of communicating to the children about the benefits of conserving the forests and natural ecosystem.

The trend towards ecotourism holidays as sustainable, nature-based and environment friendly, is now subject to considerable controversy. It is the tourism industry’s fastest growing sub sector with an estimated worldwide growth of 10 to 15 percent. Governments as well as tourism industry promote ecotourism, with its claims of economic and social sensitivity. But there are well-founded concerns that lack adequate scientific foundations and is not viable as a solution to social and environmental problems. These are as follows:
Ecotourism is an eco-façade, that is, the claims concerning its benefits are exaggerated or more to labeling and marketing than genuine sustainability. Not only are such projects repeatedly planned and carried out without local consent and support, but also they often threaten local cultures, economies, and natural resource bases. Critics regard ecotourism as an ‘eco-façade’: a tactic concealing the mainstream tourism industry’s consumptive and exploitative practices by ‘greening’ it.

Environmentally risky, i.e. ecotourism may sound benign, but one of its most serious impacts is the expropriation of virgin territories – natural parks, wildlife parks, which are packaged for ecotourists as green option. Ecotourism is highly consumer-centred, catering mostly to urbanized societies and the new middle-class ‘alternative lifestyles’.

No local benefits, i.e. diverse local social and economic activities are replaced by an ecotourism monoculture. Contrary to claims, local people do not necessarily benefit from ecotourism. Tourism related employment is greatly overrated; locals are usually left with low paying jobs such as tour guides, porters, food and souvenir vendors and above all not assured of year-round employment. Workers may be laid off during off-season. Most money, as with conventional tourism, is made by foreign airlines tour operators and developers who repatriate profit to their own economically more advanced countries.

Lovely Devastation, which means that claim of ecotourism to preserve and enhance local culture is highly insincere. Ethnic groups are viewed as a major asset in attracting visitors; an ‘exotic’ backdrop to natural scenery and wildlife.
The simultaneous romanticism and devastation of indigenous cultures is one of ecotourism's ironies. Therefore, despite so much of successes of ecotourism as an alternative tourism or responsible tourism world wide, over exploitation of natural resources will lead to the popular belief, “tourism destroys tourism”. These factors need to be kept in the minds of the planners of ecotourism in Goa. Environment is the travel industries base product and in the light of these factors, promotion of ecotourism in Goa must be planned in such a way that environment is not affected in order to find an alternative solution to beach tourism. 

Analysis of Tourists’ Awareness on Environmental Issues

Randomly selected domestic and foreign tourists were provided with questionnaire schedules (refer Appendix) so as to know their level of awareness and viewpoint with regard to environment and related issues on Goa. The findings are by and large interesting and amazing that all the stakeholders are aware and concerned about the environment in which they live in.

As stated, though all the respondents (tourists) are aware of environmental issues, the rate of their participation is dismal. Out of 450 tourists, the participation rate is a meager 19 per cent and the remaining 81 per cent tourists never participated in any awareness Programme per se, however, the foreign tourists are more concerned about environmental issues than the domestic tourists.

The table No. 6.2 and table No.6.3 reveals the tourists’ responses and are analyzed graphically in fig No.6.1.
Table No. 6.2 Reasons for Participation / Non-participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Time constraint</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No interest</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Other reasons</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Love for nature</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tourist survey at Calangute, Baga, Colva, Benaulim and Palolem

As 63 per cent of the respondents stated, lack of time is the main constraints due to which the participation rate in environmental awareness programme is very low among the tourists. Most of the tourists come from big and mega cities to Goa for relaxation and so, time constraint is a genuine reason. So far as the foreign tourists are concerned, they come to Goa for enjoying the natural beauty and avoid crowds.

Table No. 6.3 Tourists’ Interest in Wildlife Protection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No Interest</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Somewhat Interested</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Very much Interested</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>No Need</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tourist survey at Calangute, Baga, Colva, Benaulim and Palolem

237
During the survey, tourists were asked to express opinion as to who should undertake the responsibility in wildlife protection. The responses of the tourists were quite right that major responsibility lies with the local people (46 per cent), followed by the Government (33 per cent). However, there are many NGOs and animal right activists, such as Goa Animal Welfare Trust (GAWT), working for the welfare of the animals, also need to share the responsibility as well (21 per cent). Some of the foreign tourists expressed the view that in addition to the above-mentioned institutions, even the tourists themselves have to share this responsibility of protecting and preserving the environment in Goa.
Table No. 6.4 Tourists’ Perception to Undertake Responsibility in Wildlife Protection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local People</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tourist survey at Calangute, Baga, Colva, Benaulim and Palolem

Fig. No. 6.2 Tourist’s Perception to undertake Responsibility in Wildlife Protection.

These observations and findings state that local people or local residents have to bear greater responsibility in protecting the fragile environment in Goa, which is threatened by ever increasing number of tourists every year. As such it was found to be necessary to
undertake a survey of local people to know their viewpoint on promotion of tourism in the State.

It was found that local people, especially those residing in coastal areas, are not opposed to tourism, on the contrary, they want that tourism must be promoted at any cost, since tourism is the main source of their income and are casual about environmental damages in which they live in. It was mentioned by some of the local residents that they prefer foreign to domestic tourists visiting Goa for the obvious reasons that the foreigners are potentially rich, well mannered, sober, clean, disciplined and apparently environment friendly, in complete contrast to domestic tourists. Many foreigners come to Goa and stay for months together as 'Paying Guest' with the local people in their house, they buy or rent out the house owner's vehicle for sight seeing and other purposes and when they go back to their country, tell others and friends to visit and stay at host's house. This creates a chain of business not only for the house owner but for others as well.

Local residents staying in cities and towns expressed a mixed view with regard to tourism. They hold tourism as responsible for large-scale environmental degradation, precisely because it fetches quick money in a short span of time without any significant amount of investment. They argue that for the sake of making quick money, the locals residents, particularly those residing in costal areas are neither concerned nor bothered about environmental damages such as, cutting down trees, removing sand dunes for making beach shacks, small temporary shelter or make-shift accommodation without having regard to laws for protection of environment. The local politicians who help in the event of any problem by the law enforcing agencies also patronize local people for this under the guise of employment generation for the locals. The residents also blame
indifferent, partisan and callous attitude of local politicians and bureaucrats for frequent changes in laws and rampant corruption while giving contracts or inviting tenders for different services to the tourists just before the onset of the tourist season as tourism in Goa is a seasonal phenomenon.

Yet another reason for opposition for tourism is the skyrocketing prices of even essential commodities due to tourism. Supplies of locally produced goods are quite insufficient to meet the domestic demand and therefore, Goa is considered as a “Deficit State”. As a result, the general price level is high in the State. Tourism further aggravates this price level situation. This has been quite evident when the shopkeepers and even petty traders indifferently treat consumers for the obvious reason that goods would be sold at any rate to hoteliers, restaurants. Tourism has led to increase in cost of living in the State. This has been the experience of not only Goans, but also the middle-income tourists or budget tourists who visit Goa.

Residents, at times, opposed many proposals that were put forth by the Government and other organizations for promotion of tourism, such as acquiring prime land for developing Golf course to which the Japanese tourists are most attracted, Casinos or legalized gambling in star hotels, rave parties on the beaches, involvement of foreigners in business in connivance with locals and so on. However, the main reason for opposition is not only of clash of economic interests, but at the same time it pertains to social environment that is also getting polluted day by day on account of growth of mass tourism in the State. It will be pertinent to highlight the social issues and impact due to growth of tourism in the State.
General Agreements on Trade in Services (GATS) and Tourism: An Overview

It is into this complex web of Tourism that the GATS enter as an uninvited guest. It is the first multilateral, legally enforceable agreement governing trade and investment in services. GATS is aimed at deregulating the international markets in tourism to ensure that corporations are provided non-discriminatory rights of entry into markets worldwide. Tourism’s presence in the GATS is far too removed from local realities in tourism destinations as the language of sustainability, benefit sharing, conservation and democratization is excluded from the WTO lexicon. There is no questioning the fact that tourism is an immensely lucrative activity and a source of employment – both direct and indirect, for millions worldwide. But the commitments of developing countries, reflecting this blinkered understanding of tourism, needs to be questioned. A study of the legally binding commitments (at the end of the Uruguay Round in 1994) made in tourism by several developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America indicates a worrying trend of market access being granted with negligible, and in some cases absolutely no limitations.

One has to recognize that the ability of policy makers to arrive at possible limitations, given that prudential regulation on limiting tourism activity varies in response to the ecological fragility of areas, requires enormous capacity and the ability to foresee future development. The inability of trade negotiators who are inept at environmental policies to do this is evident. Consider that only Egypt deemed it necessary to specify that inland water passenger and / or local tours are subject to the physical capacity of the Nile River. That the GATS is being pushed by a corporate agenda raises further concerns in the
context of tourism – clearly a sector where huge corporations control a substantial chunk of the market Benavides (2001). In Europe integrated tour suppliers sell more than 60 per cent of the packages. The monopoly of large corporations holds true not just in the hotel or tour packages sub-sectors but also on vital aspects of access to Global Distribution Systems.

Without the clauses of the GATS, the tourism industry has used various anti-competitive techniques like de-racking, exclusive use of the Global Distribution Systems (GDS) and Computer Reservation Systems (CRS) as barriers to market entry to secure higher commissions from the smaller tour operators and hotel chains in the developing countries. In India the Swiss Multinational Kuoni, by taking over the major domestic player SITA, controls a majority of both the inbound and outbound tourists. With the GATS clauses coming into effect it is clear that the domestic economy gets only a nominal amount of the profits generated. GATS has identified four modes of supply for services (incorporated in various Articles), which, represent different forms of international trade: - (1) Cross-border Services that are provided from abroad into the territory of another member country. (2) Presence of Natural Person (Article XVII) on national treatment implies that there can be no discriminatory treatment of foreign players. (3) Commercial Presence that pertains to selective promotion of SMEs (Small and Medium Scale Enterprises) to establish hotels, restaurants and tour operators and (4) Consumption Abroad, i.e. services consumed by nationals of one country traveling to another country.²⁴

The imminent danger in the GATS is that it only vaguely addresses environmental concerns in Articles XIV and XX dealing with “general exceptions” and “exhaustible
natural resources”. With respect to measures to control trade, the GATS says that it “could take the form of defining certain standards for the service concerned or limiting the effect of the service activity”. The GATS text goes on to say that this does not imply that Article XIV can be used to justify the imposition of these restrictions and an alternative available for members would be to request renegotiations of their commitments. These restrictions will result in a number of complexities, especially if a country has unlimited commitments in a sector. The renegotiation process is devoid of any meaning through what is known as the ‘ratchet’ effect. Article XXI, which allows for modification or withdrawal of a commitment states that due notice of three months must be given after the commitment has been in place for three years. It requires negotiations with all the affected members and is subject to compensation by the affected parties ultimately it may be subject to retaliation within the rules, of the dispute settlement body, by affected countries.

The Market Access provisions (Article XVI) clearly state that if a country has made unlimited commitments in a sector it cannot limit the number of service providers. The GATS Committee on Specific Commitments has clarified that even if you do not discriminate against foreign providers, you cannot limit the number of service suppliers, domestic or foreign. To put this in tourism parlance it negates the core principles of ecotourism and sustainable development.

The CRZ, clearly, is an exemplar of a pertinent environmental regulation being poorly implemented and facing repeated threats from industry for its dilution and even complete removal. In the context of recent natural disasters like the tsunami, even governments have now come to acknowledge the lack of adherence to coastal regulations as a pertinent
cause for aggravating impacts and devastation along coasts in South Asia - many of them housing international tourist beach destinations.

Thus though the GATS issues on tourism are still being deliberated and negotiated, its impact on Goa’s tourism cannot be quantified or assessed at this moment. However, it is quite evident that so far as ecotourism is concerned, Goa has the potentialities and must develop it in the interest of the tourism per se; otherwise, Goa will lose out to some other States. It is no longer possible to develop tourism depending upon beaches only. The States, such as Kerala, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir are promoting ecotourism vigorously. If necessary, Goa may make an attempt to learn the experiences from these States.25

Thus to sum up, It seems that the State machinery in Goa is not properly geared up to tackle the problems on account of large-scale violation of environmental rules and regulations, garbage problem, and omissions and commissions on the part of the stakeholders. It must be seriously taken into consideration by one and all because it is the need of the hour and any lacunae may prove to be disastrous. The socio-cultural degradations on account of tourism also need to address through institutions, such as, the Church, the State, NGOs, social activists, and others. It is true that negative impact of tourism is felt more among the youths in Goa who are vulnerable as well as susceptible, and fall prey to anti-social elements and are forced to indulge into activities that are detrimental not only to their interest but for the entire society. The role of the institutions, social activists, NGOs are now important and significant for development of manpower, which is of utmost importance for economic development.

-------------------------XXX-----------------------------
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