

Tourism Footprints on Society: Young Goan Women Speak Out

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Abstract

Goa, is a small State situated on the western coast of India. The geography of Goa, with its indented coastline, beautiful beaches fringed with palm trees make it an attractive holiday destination. Further the history of Goa as a Portuguese colony right up till 1961, has left traces of a cultural heritage different from the rest of India. The food, music, dress and the physical presence of numerous churches and crosses around Goa which seem to a visitor as being western, has for the people of Goa been an imposition during the Portuguese regime. Since the 1990's there has been a growing colonization of a different kind. Tourism was declared by the Government of Goa as an 'Industry' and that resulted in its booming growth. Goa which measures only a 100 kms from North to South has become a popular tourist destination attracting 5,41,480 foreign tourists, 47,56,422 domestic tourists in the last year (2015) totalling to 52,97,902 people in one year. The resident population in the State is 14,58,545 (Census 2011). The tourist population is 3 times more than that of the resident population. The impacts on the local population, local resources of food, water and space, as well as the environment degradation with large scale construction, sewage overload and garbage generated are only the tip of the iceberg. This paper discusses some of the concerns for sustainable development based on the impacts of tourism on local society and looks particularly at the impacts for young women from the voices of young women residing in Goa. Tourism is seen as a new colonizer. The paper will highlight some concerns namely drugs, alcohol consumption, growing casinos, non-availability of desired jobs, prostitution, paedophilia, rising incidence of violence against women. The authors of this paper are students of the M. A Programme in Women's Studies at Goa University, Goa. This paper is an outcome of a study done amongst women students in Goa, India.

Keywords: *Women, Tourism, Sustainable Development.*

1. Introduction to Tourism in Goa

The process of tourism is 'multi- facet'. There are different aspects to tourism, which are geographical, socio- economic and psychological. G. Janta has considered two sectors of tourism, namely the dynamic sector and the static sector. For a single consumer, 'the tourist', there are various independent units in the industry that are working towards the economic and commercial goals. Tourism creates a demand for different industries like for example, the static sector would consist of demands such as accommodation, food and refreshments, whereas the

dynamic sector consists of all the economic activities, the community services, the motivation of demand and the provisions of transport. (Kumar 1995)

Scholars described tourists as a holiday maker, who is in search of knowledge, relaxation, pleasure etc, with many aspects like recreational, educational and cultural. The sociological approach to the study of tourism is concerned with the impacts of tourists on the people of the place of destination, how both the residents and the tourists react and influence each other.(Kumar 1995). According to Ravi Bushan Kumar's book, 'Coastal Tourism and environment', he says that, for the Indians, tourism is not a new phenomenon in India. We find three terms in Sanskrit literature for tourists derived from the root "atan", which means leaving home for some time to other places. There are three terms:

Paryatnan- It means going out for pleasure and knowledge

Deshatana- going out to other countries primarily for economic gains

Tirthana- Going out to the places of religious importance.

There are different definitions describing a tourist, i.e. temporary visitors staying at least twenty four hours in the country visited and the purpose of whose visit can be classified under the following as (a) Leisure (recreation, holiday, health, study, religion and sports) (b) Business (family, mission and meetings) (Kumar 1995). Visited by hundreds and thousands of international and domestic tourists each year. Much of Goas culture is its native Hindu culture combined with its Portuguese-Christian heritage. Goa has her long colourful history back to 300 BC when it was a part of the *Mauriyan* Empire, under the Buddhist king *Asoka*. Goa has also observed the visit of the *Kadam* Dynasty, which ruled her for centuries. Thus, Goa is a paradise for all who visit it.

Goa is the land of stunning golden beaches, scenic beauty, delicious food and hospitable people. Over the years since the Portuguese regime, there Goa has seen a lot of change in architecture, food, dress, language etc. Goa is a land that redefines holidays, with its exquisite mix of sun, surf and beaches. Goa has become ultimate tourist destination, with tiny emeralds land with its natural scenic beauty, attractive beaches and temples, famous for its architecture, feast and festivals and hospitable people with a rich culture. The impact of colonization can also be seen on the economic trade at an international level. Goa's magnificent beauty, is one of the most desired and tourist destination of India. Both Indians (Domestic tourists) as well as foreigners (International tourists), flock to Goa due to its peaceful atmosphere and its beauty. Tourism has emerged as an employer and revenue earner for the country. Tourism provides job

opportunities for the jobless. And the people of Goa have benefited to a great extent due to the influx of tourism.

With modern transportation facilities, Goa experiences a wide range of Charter tourists. Charter tourists as described by Valane Smith, are those mass tourists who travel for relaxation at a particular destination, which incorporate as many standardized western facilities as possible. One broad group of tourism contains a travel for cultural purposes. (Kumar 1995).

Tourism marketing mix is largely a complex group of several factors interveining to achieve the end product, which is the increased effectiveness in demand output in relation to supply and marketing investment by tourist enterprises (Bhatia 2002). Tourism is a very much part of a globalization process. It is genuinely a powerful and a unique form of change in the community. Tourism may have different effects on the social and cultural aspects of life in a particular region, depending on the strength of the region. In Goa, it has emerged as the foremost industry in the post globalization era and it has driven for the socio-economic and environment transformation. Presently, tourism contributes approximately 34percent of the total workforce – (economic survey 2011-12). In the last two decades, the traditional Goan culture like folk dances, music, festival celebrations etc. is slowly decreasing and western culture such as pubs, dance bars, rave parties, casinos , nudism on the beaches and sex trade has come to the forefront.

2. Tourism as Sustainable Development plan in Goa

Tourism has had a positive as well as negative impact on the economy and culture of this land. None the less, tourism is very important for all economies. Tourism is the largest source of income for Goa after agriculture (Kumar 1995).

We see that, tourism has led to privatization of the beaches, where in local population cannot access the demarked beach area because the resort owners have put restrictions on the coastal belt. The resort owners capture the land and sea for their private use only. There were comprehensive guidelines formulated by the Ecological Development Council to control the development within 500 metres from the high water mark along the coastal area (Kumar 1995). Thus, these guidelines listed by the council had their own drawbacks, which benefited the resort owners, their customer's and not the residents of the state.

Along the coastal belt there are restaurants or shacks which facilitate tourist recreational purposes. Shack owners also tend to give their first priority to the foreign tourist more than the

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local residents of the state. So the prices charged for the food is exorbitantly high for the locals to purchase. Besides this, the best of the fish, grains, and vegetables are sent to these resorts and restaurants for commercial use only. The locals hardly consume a quarter of what is sent to the hotels and shacks around the state. So the most nutritious food is sent before dawn to the hotels and there after the locals purchase the fish, poultry and other items during the day when the prices have touched the sky.

In Indian Culture, women are seen to have eaten their meals after all their family members have cleared from the dining room. This leads to rise in Anaemia among the women, as most often they eat the leftover food, or there is no food remaining and the reason could be due to a price hike in food supply. Women are seen as the victims to different types of issues in the society.

Sustainable Tourism can be broadly understood as an area which encompasses many elements, that of the stakeholders, environment, tourist organizations, functional management and regions of the world in relation with sustainable development of tourism (Swarbrooke 2010). To develop sustainable tourism, John Swarbrooke mentions that, “prior to the trip the tourist must be made aware of the key issues in relation to sustainability in a hope that they will modify their behaviours accordingly”(Swarbrooke 2010). Thus the tourist must be given a virtual reality experience about the place they are going to be paying a visit.

Besides this, tourism brings with it a wake of inflation, soaring land and property prices and often a virtual extinction of local food production replaced by expensive imports of exotic food items(Chattopadhyay 1995). Since market prices of resources and goods often do not reflect their true cost in a developing country. For example the prices that the locals pay for an item will be completely different from that of a tourist, unless they visit the local markets.

If a tourism development programme is to succeed, it is necessary and essential to have a financial planning for tourism. Agencies concerned with the development of an optional national investment programme should compare investments in tourism facilities and related infrastructure with alternative investment opportunities in that sector (Bhatia 2002). Careful planning is prerequisite for complete success of any developmental programme. Thus the state government, should strive for sustainable tourism management goals, that would not hamper the economy of the state, as well as it would benefit the local population.

The amount of appropriate tourism development ultimately rests in the measures of its sustainability, which is determined by how successfully it protects the regions natural resources

and environmental quality and also minimizes adverse cultural impacts (France 2002). The sustainable tourism challenge is to manage tourism in destinations in ways which maximize the positive impacts while reducing the negative one's (Swarbrooke 2010). Management planning must also be an ongoing process involving periodic reviews to allow for changing regional objectives and adjustments to existing regulations (France 2002).

3. The Impact of Tourism on Women

Women are subject to vulnerability of different types of abuses in the society. All-round development of a nation depends on the development of its women. The constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralising the cumulative socio- economic, educational and political disadvantages faced by women. (Pandey, Jena, and Mohanty 2003). The marginalized sections, especially the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribes are prone to exploitation. It was found that developed areas with improved infrastructure were invariably the main source, as well as destination for the business of trafficking of women (Pandey, Jena, and Mohanty 2003). The United Nations General Assembly, 1994, defined Trafficking of a person as “an illicit and clandestine movement of persons across national borders with the end goal of forcing women, girls and children into sexually oppressive and exploitative situations for profit of recruiters”, it is also done for illegal activities related to forced domestic labour, false marriages, clandestine employment and false adoption (Pandey, Jena, and Mohanty 2003). Goa has seen an increase in the number of massage parlours and spa's which contain illegal activities. Besides this, due to large number of women working in the public sphere, girls from other deprived states are recruited as domestic workers. Women also are highly vulnerable to getting into prostitution as most often the tourist give them false promises and displace them to another area.

Trafficking is one side of the coin, besides this there are other issues that also affect the lives of women. The states see tourism as a source of revenue including earning foreign exchange, therefore focus is on being able to fulfil the needs of tourists without considering the needs of the local people (Singh et al. 2012). We see a huge absence of issues of women vendors. Women street vendors are seen selling petty goods like prayer items, eatables, trinkets which do not earn them much profit. Male vendors on the other hand are seen selling profitable goods in the market. Tourists tend to give a blind eye to these female vendors as there is a

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magnetic pull towards the goods being sold by male vendors due to infrastructural set-up etc. (Singh et al. 2012). Women are thus seen in more culturally and socially accepted jobs in the society like the handicraft industry, fishing industry etc.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), focused its attention on the issue of women in tourism it stated that “tourism is a sector of the economy that not only employs significant number of women, but provides enormous opportunities for their advancement” (Vishwanath and Singh 2011). The horizontal gender segregation is when, women and men are also placed in different occupations like for example, women are employed as waitresses, chambermaids, cleaners, travel agents, sales persons, flight attendants, etc. whereas men are employed as workers, drivers, pilots etc. The vertical gender pyramid is where there is low career options, lower levels of job opportunities etc. (Vishwanath and Singh 2011).

As the focus of this paper were the voices of the young women. We had done a small study on ‘the opinion of tourism as sustainable development in the state and the positive and negative outcomes of tourism in Goa’. The study had been done on the campus of Goa University among random young girls. The students felt that Tourism in Goa did have a very positive outcome in which it had created a market for Goa, where people set up their own business and earn a livelihood. It gave women the opportunity to earn a little extra salary. Though it has helped the state grow at a fast rate, with developing international links with other countries around the world, we should not forget that it has had a huge impact on the resident female population of the state. Women are denied access to local beaches which are flooded with tourists 365 days of the year. Culturally, women avoid spending time by the sea side as tourists are seen sun bathing in bikinis, which is not a part of the Indian culture. Young girls are seen as victims of harassment, eve teasing, stalking etc. that has had an enormous impact on the mind-set of the local residents towards the safety of girls in the state of Goa. Tourism has brought to Goa events like ‘Sunburn’ and ‘Supersonic’, which are held on a large scale and people from different parts of the world attend events like these, the negative side of these events is that it denies free movement of girls on the streets where these events take place.

Some of the contributors of this study felt that it brings about more liberal mind-set when it comes to dress, language and attitudes among people. None the less, we must not avoid the fact that traditionally it leaves a scar on the local population. The annual circus that takes place in cities has given rise to trafficking of young girls and boys for various reasons within the state during events like these. Some feel that the latest Bollywood Trends have submerged

the original culture of dressing, which is the ‘Kashti’ and ‘Dhentuli’. The influence of nudism on young girls of the state has given rise to sex rackets due to increased ‘hippie’ population in parts of Goa. We get to see the young indulging in drug, alcohol abuse as well as gambling that is not a part of the tradition. Women are also seen as victims of marketing in different ways. Casinos and Carnival’s highly objectify women during the marketing of their business. Most often women who are recruited for low paid jobs are vulnerable to various abuses at their work place.

4. Conclusion

Tourism has benefited Goa in many ways. It has provided Goa with a good economic status which is recognized worldwide. The stand so far declared by the state Government of Goa is that it will stick to the guidelines issues by the centre. The J.G.F. (*Jagrut Goankarachi Fauz*), an environmentalist group wants to preserve the pristine purity of Goan Culture and Values (Kumar 1995).

Women play a key role in the. Goan Small scale industry like the handicraft industry which includes basket making, brooms made from coconut leaves- for cleaning the dust away, hand-made bedsheets etc. With a rapid growth in the tourist population along the coastal belt, women have become prey to different types of abuses. Women earlier were free to move along the beach side during their leisure time without any restriction on their movement. Now a days, due to rise in rape cases, drug mafia, trafficking for prostitution etc., we see a decline in the rate of local female population at the prominent tourist spots. The need to address gender discrimination is seen in large global process and mainstream development efforts(Vishwanath and Singh 2011). Goa has undergone a sea change with the closing down of Baina Red light district in 2004. This has given rise to several massage parlours and spa’s and the frequent visitors of these massage parlours and hotels are the tourists, both domestic and international.

Goa has experienced a transitional change in the tourist population by the beach side over the years, which has made Goa a popular tourist destination on every tourist site. There are a number of ways by which we can move closer to the goal of sustainable tourism. Though there is a steady growth in the Goan Economy, the state should address the local issues in specific manner, thus strengthening the advocacy process.

Finally, the state’s policy makers and government agents should engage in more organized ways with the challenges of women’s empowerment in tourism industry. The state should work

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towards eradicating the evil side of tourism, where they disallow women to live a normal life and bring about gender equality.

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