
UNIT 3 CONSERVATION OF CULTURE

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we will discuss some aspects related to the conservation of culture. After reading this Unit you will be able to :

- understand the concept of preservation of culture,
- appreciate the importance of conserving the culture,
- know the main areas where efforts for conservation need to be made, and
- know how the conservation can be effected.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the first two Units of this Block we gave you an introduction to Indian culture and heritage in the historical context. In this Unit we will discuss the importance of the conservation of culture. The conservation of culture and heritage enriches a society and helps people appreciate its richness. In the sphere of cultural tourism also the main idea is to familiarize people with Indian culture so that their efforts at "selling" it do not warp its content.

In the International tourism parlance India is perceived as a Cultural Destination and the foreign tourists visiting India for the first time find it so fascinating that quite a few of them come again and again to enjoy the "Indian Experience". No wonder India is one such destination in the world where international tourists spend maximum days once they arrive in the country.

India is replete with heritage resources in the form of art, architecture and archaeology besides other cultural expressions like performing arts, dance, drama, fairs, festivals and the like. These cultural expressions constitute potential recreation resources. These resources, coupled with heritage, contribute to the richness of any landscape which can attract innumerable tourists looking for the "cultural experience".

3.2 CULTURE OF TOURISM VERSUS TOURISM OF CULTURE

Thanks to the launch of Jumbo Jet Air crafts and phenomenon of Organized and Mass Tourism a very large number of travellers cross their national/regional boundaries annually for the purpose of tourism and this results in the following:-

- i) Spurt in the economic activities and growth of the host country/destination.

- ii) Employment generation.
- iii) Easy marketing of local arts and crafts.
- iv) Image projection of host destination and 'exposure' of locals to the aliens, resulting in cultural assimilation.
- v) Familiarising the tourists with the heritage of a region/country.

The negative impact of unregulated, unchecked and increasing number of tourist arrivals begins with the following results:-

- i) Excessive burden on the goods and services of the host destination.
- ii) Taxing the ecological carrying capacity of the host eco- system.
- iii) Rise in the cost of goods and services because of gradual increase in demand and in the process locals who are not well to do find difficult to survive.
- iv) Excessive dose of alien/foreign tourists in a culturally fragile society may at times result in cultural-pollution and cultural perversions.
- v) Once this phenomenon of cultural pollution/perversion starts then it is extremely difficult to check it at once because of predominance of vested commercial interests in prevailing socio-economic milieu.

3.3 CONSERVATION OF CULTURE

Cultural Tourism, on the one hand helps in earning foreign currency and developing tourism. It, at the same time is also endangering the rich cultural tradition and heritage of India. The question is being hotly debated between the people who gain through this tourism and those who are worried about the destruction of this heritage. The people who tend to gain from the development of tourism are tourists and travel agencies, the state earning foreign currency and other taxes, the local beneficiaries and trading groups etc. The groups who are worried with this growing tourism include conservation groups, voluntary agencies advocating responsible tourism and the state agencies responsible for conservation in different areas. Now a consensus is emerging that a balance has to be worked out between tourism and the threat to culture. However, it is not an easy task to maintain the balance.

It is also felt that the conservation of one area of heritage and culture cannot be achieved in isolation. It has to be a concerted effort. The most important aspect of conservation is the participation of the local population. The state with vast resources is definitely in a better position to help in conservation efforts. Besides, non governmental organizations, travel and tourism industry and other local bodies can also contribute in a positive way. We will refer to these at relevant places in the Unit.

Before moving to the efforts made to conserve the culture let us first have an idea about the areas where conservation is needed. Indian heritage is vast and wellspread. It is difficult to include everything in this Unit. In brief we will include environment and natural resources; historical heritage including archaeological sites and monuments; Indian literature and languages; Indian sculpture and painting; music, dance tradition; theatre and folk art; handicrafts and crafts tradition; socio-economic heritage etc. For the convenience of study we will discuss these in four broad Sections.

- 1) Conservation of environment and natural resources.
- 2) Conservation of historical heritage, archaeological sites and monuments
- 3) Conservation and preservation of our artistic and cultural heritage
- 4) Conservation of socio- economic heritage with special thrust on protecting culturally, sociologically and economically sensitive/fragile communities like tribals and people living in hills, deserts and coastal areas.

Now let us discuss in detail how we can promote conservation of our culture in its broad sense.

3.4 CONSERVATION OF NATURAL HERITAGE / RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

The kind of geographical diversity that we have in India is perhaps unique in the world. No other country can boast of offering such a variety of landscapes as India with its beautiful mountains, deserts, coastal areas, rivers and lakes and rich variety of fauna and flora. Goa is one of the best known tourism destination for the sea-beach lovers in the world and the desert of Rajasthan attracts domestic and international tourists by thousands every year. Himalayan tourism is also a unique experience but the best of our natural heritage is our National Parks and Wild Life Sanctuaries.

Whether it is Uni-horn Rhino in Kaziranga or a Tiger in Ranthambore or Kanha National Park; an elephant in Periyar or a Siberian Crane in Bharatpur, the sheer number and variety of fauna and flora available in our country is mind boggling and it is one of our major strengths in marketing our tourism products.

But excessive interference caused by ever increasing number of domestic and foreign tourists to our ecosystem is proving counter productive. Large number of tourist arrivals result in noise and air-pollution of the host eco-system which in turn affect the well being of its flora and fauna. Hence it is essential that experts should work out the carrying capacities of these host eco-systems and tourism authorities in consultation with forest authorities should work out the number of visitors to be allowed per day. This has already been in practice in many wild life sanctuaries of the world and even in India at places like Ranthambhore, Sawai Madhopur (Rajasthan) where thousands of tourist come annually to see the Tiger.

Eco-tourism aims at promoting that kind of responsible tourism which is eco-friendly and which does not destroy the subtle environmental balances / linkages thriving between flora and fauna of a given habitat/micro eco-system.

If we fail to conserve our environmental heritage then we will not be able to conserve our other heritage because these are mainly dependent on the environment for their survival. Any imbalance in the ecological equilibrium would upset the tender linkages resulting in major catastrophe and ecological disasters.

The managing authorities of these ecological sensitive host eco- systems should formulate DOs and Don'ts for the visitors and the tour operators which should be enforced strictly. There is a great need to educate the visitors about frugal natural resources of the area and fragile carrying capacity at the destination.

Our natural and environmental heritage is such a wonderful resource which gets regenerated/replenished by 'Mother-Nature' periodically and visitors can really have a once in a life time experience provided that the influx of visitors is eco-friendly and sustainable.

Another aspect of natural heritage conservation/management is that the income generated by charging entry fee from the visitors should be ploughed back into the system and long term scientific methods/steps are undertaken to preserve/conservate the landscape and all its constituents. There is a great need to invest in R & D (Research & Development) Sector for various eco-tourism destination to ensure their proper care, proliferation and environmental health.

We can replicate the successful models of eco-tourism and management of National Parks available in U.S.A., Europe and South Africa, after suitably altering them to suit our specific problems/needs.

We have discussed at length all aspects of environment and tourism in our course TS-5 - Ecology, Environment and Tourism.

Check Your Progress-1

1) Write three main negative impacts of unregulated growth of tourism.

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2) Write two lines on each of the following.

- i) Cultural Destination
- ii) Eco-tourism

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3) Write five lines on our natural heritage.

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3.5 CONSERVATION OF HISTORICAL HERITAGE, ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS

India's historical heritage includes not only the secular and religious monuments dedicated to various faiths but also archaeological sites, rock cut caves, palaces, havelies, homes and the living heritage developed over the centuries.

The cultural heritage in terms of historical relics and standing monuments could be broadly divided into following groups:

- 1) Prehistoric remains
- 2) Prehistoric and early historic sites
- 3) Religious edifices
- 4) Megalithic remains
- 5) Rock-cut caves
- 6) Temples of different faiths
- 7) Mosques and tombs
- 8) Palaces, Havelis, Houses and Gardens
- 9) Miscellaneous buildings

The above classification is by no means perfect. We have divided them into these categories for the convenience of the present study. Most of these monuments are of visitors interest only while some of these are part of living culture and are used by people as places of worship.

In the category of living culture may be included Puri temple, Delhi's Jama Masjid, tomb of Muinuddin Chisti and Nizamuddin Aulia and many more. Need for a separate conservation treatment in respect of these has been brilliantly pointed out by A.G.Krishna Menon in a recent article 'The Dilemma of Cultural Tourism in India' (The Eye, Vol. II, No.4). Efforts are made all over the world for the protection of historical heritage. You will read in detail about the monuments and sculpture in **Block-5** and archaeological sites and antiquities in **Block-6**.

France was the first country to enact a law in the year 1809 for the protection of cultural property. India enacted **Indian Treasure Trove Act** in 1878. Greece enacted a law in 1887 for excavated property and Egypt for regulation of excavation in 1897.

Again in the year 1904, **Ancient Monuments Preservation Act** was passed in India for preservation of monuments, excavation, protection and control of antiquities. The Indian Legislature also passed the Antiquities (Export Control) Act in 1947 under which no antiquity could be exported outside the country without permission of the Government of India.

The **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** was established in the year 1861. Besides other functions, it was made responsible for the preservation of monuments, archaeological sites and remains and other important antiquarian and artistic vestiges. The concept to declare historical monument as of national importance was introduced by Government of India in the year 1951.

The ASI is also the implementing agency of two central legislations viz:

- i) **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.**
- ii) **The Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972.**

The total number of centrally protected monuments and sites are now 3517 in India. Archaeology being a concurrent subject, other states of India also enacted similar legislation based on the Central Act and protected monuments and antiquities which have been in existence for not less than 100 years. In case of paintings and manuscripts, it is 75 years for declaring them as an 'antiquity' under the Act.

3.5.1 World Heritage List

The general conference of UNESCO adopted a resolution in 1972 creating thereby a convention concerning the protection of world cultural and natural heritage. The main objective of this forum was to define the world heritage, enlist sites and monuments from the member countries, the protection of which is the concern of mankind. The convention defined world heritage and drew a list of world heritage which included 378 cultural properties/sites. In India it has identified 16 cultural sites and 4 natural sites. These sites are star attractions for international and domestic tourists. **There is a great need to protect, preserve and conserve these cultural properties/sites for the posterity and allow conducted and regulated visitors to these sites so that excessive influx of visitors/tourists should not endanger the survival of these relics of our glorious past.**

The 1979 **Tourism and Heritage Conference** organized by **Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA)** reflected the concern and desire of tourism industry for co-operation in this field.

3.5.2 Main Problems in Conservation of Monuments

Some of the problems in this regard are:

- i) Lack of awareness amongst general public about the importance of saving the monuments and preserving them.
- ii) Lack of sufficient infrastructure and manpower.
- iii) Apathy of local civic authorities.
- iv) Damage and defacement by visitors/tourists.
- v) Lack of coordination between Governmental and Non - Governmental agencies.

3.5.3 Available Expertise

There are very few agencies available with proper technical expertise to undertake the work of restoration, repair, maintenance, development and comprehensive management of monuments. Leading agencies are as follows:-

- i) **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**
- ii) **State Departments of Archaeology & Museum**
- iii) **National Research Laboratory for Conservation (NRLC), Lucknow**
- iv) **Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH)**
- v) **Hindustan Charitable Trust of Birlas**
- vi) **International Centre for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Properties (ICCROM) at Rome, Italy**
- vii) **National Trust of England**
- viii) **National Museum, Delhi**

The monuments/sites of cultural and heritage importance have to be protected from excessive burden of visitors and consequential defacement of the monuments.

The number of visitors should be worked out keeping in view the condition of monuments/sites and their visit should be properly regulated and conducted.

Visitors and Tourists should be educated by the managers of these cultural properties and the guides so that they behave responsibly once allowed entry inside the monuments. The way very large number of visitors/tourists are conducted and regulated at internationally known tourist places like **Tower of London** and **Palaces at Versailles (Paris)**. This is very exemplary and we could devise our own methods incorporating ideas from these successful models of heritage management.

The money collected as entry fee from these monuments should be ploughed back for the conservation activities for these monuments. There have been cases like the **Fort in Jaisalmer (Rajasthan)** where excessive use of water by the inmates of the fort has caused irreparable damage to this magnificent fort popularly known as **Sonar-Qila** built in the year 1158 A.D.

The threat of environmental pollution to world famous **Taj Mahal at Agra** is also another example of susceptibility of these monuments to the external polluting and damaging factors like air, noise, water pollution and negative impact of a positive economic activity like tourism.

A large number of historical monuments, houses and buildings have not been declared under the list of protected monuments by the **Archaeological Survey of India** or State Government agencies. These are being regularly plundered by people and commercial interests. Their stones, doors, decorative motifs and sculpture are taken out and sold. A case to point is of houses, in Rajasthan and Gujarat, whose doors and windows have been taken out and are sold as antiques. In the process hundreds of houses have been pulled down. Here the efforts of local bodies, voluntary agencies and local population are urgently required to extend the protective hand to save them from unscrupulous traders.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) List two main acts passed by the Govt. of India for the protection of monuments and antiquities.

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2) What is World Heritage list?

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3) List four main agencies which undertake the restoration and preservation of monuments in India.

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4) How can local initiative help in the protection of heritage

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3.6 CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION OF ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Our artistic and cultural heritage is used as a Unique Selling Point (USP) in the international tourism market. India is known as a cultural destination and tourists coming to our country are very keen to watch our artistic and cultural expressions in following forms:

- i) Architectural relics
- ii) Sculptures/temples
- iii) Paintings
- iv) Folk Music
- vi) Fairs and Festivals
- vii) Rites and Rituals
- viii) Literature and Poetry
- ix) Handicrafts
- x) Cuisine and our life-style

While visitors are welcome to observe and understand and even participate in our celebrations but efforts should be made to insulate our heritage from getting 'affected' by 'visitors' lifestyle or thinking.

Most of our fairs and festivals, extremely popular with international tourists, now are gradually being exposed to these external factors like excessive flow of outsiders/tourists.

Many of these fairs and festivals are already showing signs of change like the Pushkar Fair in Rajasthan. This cattle fair with religious fervour has now almost become a tourist fair and there are negative impacts because of large number of tourists. Spread of the prohibited drugs is one of the negative features which has been noticed ever since it became so popular with tourists. At the same time liberal lifestyle of these foreign tourists is adversely affecting the sociological equations and behavior in a small place like Pushkar.

Another example of cultural pollution is distorting the authentic Indian Styles of paintings, music and dance to tailor-made it to suit the taste of the visitors/tourists. The poor artists fall prey to the lure of money and change the style of their presentation to suit the market needs rather than keeping in view the traditional artistic considerations. Handicrafts, under the pressure of market demand are also undergoing change. Mass production and commoditisation have adversely affected the crafts and craftsmen. You will read more about it in Block-7.

The authorities should initiate steps to educate the visitors about the finer points of these art forms and allow the tourists to enjoy the art form without tampering with it.

There has been an alarming increase in the number of beggars and lepers especially around tourist places. These elements not only conjure up a bad image of our country but also harass the visitors/tourists for the doles and their pestering at times spoils the mood of the tourists leading to avoidable unpleasant situations.

There is a great need to plough back atleast the part of tourism earnings for the preservation and development of our traditional art forms and our cultural heritage.

3.7 CONSERVATION OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC HERITAGE

In a bid to attract large number of tourists to new areas many states are opening those areas which are sociologically speaking very fragile and susceptible zones like:

- i) Desert Areas
- ii) Hill Areas
- iii) Tribal Area
- iv) Coastal Areas

One glaring example of the negative impact of tourism was spread of Hippy Culture in late seventies in Goa which was vehemently resented by the locals. Similarly, the spread of drug-use in places like Kathmandu (Nepal), Benaras (U.P.) and Pushkar (Rajasthan) is another phenomenon which is causing concern. Ecologically and culturally sensitive zones like Desert of Rajasthan and in places like Jaisalmer there have been cases of AIDS reported recently. It is believed that this virus of AIDS reached Jaisalmer because of excessive movement and stay of foreign tourists in the countryside of Jaisalmer while 'enjoying' the popular tourism activity like Camel Safari.

In places like Jaisalmer where number of tourists visiting annually is more than four times of locals then gradually even the behavioral pattern of the new and young generation shows some unwelcome signs of change which are causing concern amongst village elders.

Another example is of famous tribal fair at Beneshwar (Dungarpur, Rajasthan). Attracted by the large congregation of tribals and because of wide publicity and aggressive marketing hundreds of foreign tourists started visiting the fair. Due to lack of instructions and proper briefing to the tourists by their travel agents some of the tourists took photos of young tribal girls while they were bathing in the holy-river at Beneshwar. This invited criticism by the people and in the press lot of articles appeared against encroaching upon the sanctity/privacy of this fair, as a result authorities stopped promoting the Beneshwar fair for the tourists.

While promoting tourism in such sensitive areas the authorities must keep in mind the following points.

- i) Carrying capacity of host eco-system.
- ii) Special nature of fairs/festivals.

- iii) Sensibilities of locals.
- iv) Educating the visitors about the Dos and Don'ts
- v) Discourage longer stays of foreign tourists specially in close proximity to tribals.
- vi) Only special interest groups and serious tourists should be allowed to visit these areas; proper regulation has to be ensured.
- vii) Efforts should be made to gainfully associate the locals in tourism activities so that locals derive economic benefit of the activity without being adversely affected by it.
- vii) In a sensitive tribal/desert/coastal area we should define Heritage Zones and open areas which are open to visitors so that the influx of visitors does not disturb the normal pace of life of the host society.

Keeping the fragile ecology and sensitive local population in mind a number of steps have been taken to preserve local culture. Certain remote areas have been declared restricted areas (in North-East and other hill region). Special permits are required to visit these areas. There are restrictions in buying the property by outsiders. In Lakshwadeep and Andaman Islands also the tourist flow is highly regulated. These steps have certainly helped in preserving the local culture.

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) Write Five lines on adverse affect of tourism on **Pushkar Fair and Jaisalmer**

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- 2) List four main points to be kept in mind while promoting tourism in sensitive areas.

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- 3) What steps have been initiated to preserve ecologically fragile and sensitive areas.

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3.8 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we discussed some aspects of tourism of culture and the significance of conservation of culture. We also discussed various areas of our culture and heritage that need conservation. Important of these are our natural resources, historical heritage, artistic and cultural heritage and socio-economic heritage. You must have realized that for the conservation of culture concerted efforts are required by people in general, government, voluntary agencies, tourism trade and local bodies.

Tourism like any other economic activity has positive and negative impacts in a given area/situation. Our efforts should be to monitor the growth of tourism and initiate steps to regulate the activity by enforcing reasonable restrictions/code of conduct for the tourists.

Our culture has survived for more than 5000 years and it has withstood the onslaught of all types. It can certainly endure the marginal impact of movement of international/domestic tourists provided we all join hands and ensure proper and scientific management of tourism which is eco and culture friendly and we evolve a living culture which is tourism friendly.

3.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) See Sec. 3.2
- 2)
 - i) A place which is to be visited as a place of some cultural interest
 - ii) Tourism which takes into account the potential of ecology and environment to attract people and at the same time protects the eco system from harmful effects of tourism.
- 3) See Sec. 3.3.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) See Sec. 3.5.
- 2) See Sub-sec. 3.5.1.
- 3) See Sub-sec. 3.5.3.
- 4) See Sub-sec. 3.5.3.

Check Your progress-3

- 1) See Secs. 3.6 and 3.7.
- 2) See Sec. 3.7.
- 3) See Sec. 3.7