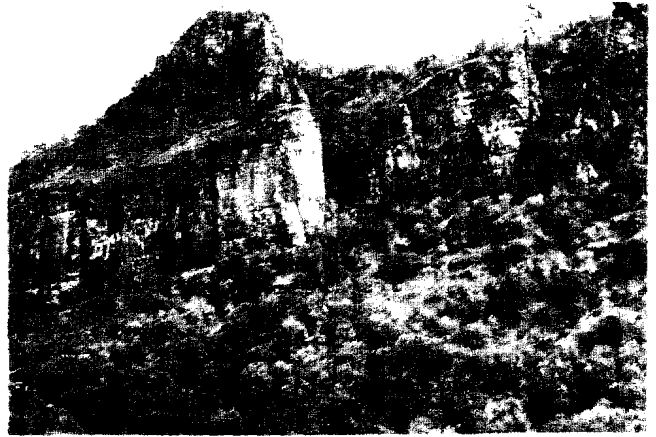


UNIT 34 SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Structure

- 34.0 Objectives
- 34.1 Introduction
- 34.2 Socio-Cultural Impact
- 34.3 Sex Tourism in Asia
- 34.4 Environmental Impact
 - 34.4.1 Wild life
 - 34.4.2 Carrying Capacity
- 34.5 Political Implications
- 34.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 34.7 Keywords
- 34.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises



34.0 OBJECTIVES

In Unit 4 we had briefly touched upon the various impact of tourism. After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- understand the effects of tourism on the social and cultural life of the host population,
- know the hazards of Sex Tourism in Asia,
- learn about the impact of tourism on environment and ecology, and
- understand the political dimensions of tourism.

34.1 INTRODUCTION

It is natural for people belonging to different cultures, life styles or social settings to interact, and leave an impact on each other. In tourism this happens at a massive level. Tourists may explore the social life at the destinations, whereas the host population attempts to imitate the lifestyle of the tourists. This is generally termed as the positive impact of tourism which can be described in terms of:

- friendship,
- learning from each other,
- better understanding among people, and
- their social development.

At the same time there are certain impacts which have been termed as negative impact. These are the demonstration effects, encounter effects, etc. Their symptoms are visible in the short run itself but the impact is felt in the long run (For details on guest-host relationship and, sociology and anthropology of tourism see Units 3 and 4 of TS-2). This Unit attempts to familiarise you with these social impacts of mass tourism with special reference to the developing societies of the Third World. Simultaneously, the impact of tourism development and activities on environment and ecology have also been discussed here. The political dimensions of tourism is another area under discussion in the Unit. We must, however, remember that these impacts are closely linked with the types and forms of tourism.

34.2 SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACT

Among the most debated issues pertaining to the tourism in the Third World are those related to the effects that tourists and the industry have on societies and cultures of local communities.

A general argument is that tourism contributes to international understanding and harmony. On the contrary it has severely effected indigenous customs and ways of life in certain cases.

Tourists are seldom well prepared for an international cultural encounter which is vastly different from their own. Their knowledge, in most cases, is cursory, i.e. glamorised images gleaned from glossy travel brochures, movies and similar material. Travelling with the aid of malaria and diarrhoea prophylactics, in air-conditioned buses and staying in disinfected five star hotels, creates an artificial barrier between the tourists and the host community. Cohen calls it "an environmental bubble". Such circumstances do little to create mutual understanding among people so vastly different from each other. Contacts with locals is often limited to those who serve the tourists — shopkeepers, hotel workers, tour guides, travel agents, — as well as beggars, pimps, conmen, touts, prostitutes, drug peddlers and so on. The 'tourist encounter, results in promoting stereotypes — both of hosts and tourists — and even an outright animosity and aggression. (See Block-1, TS-2).

From an initial 'euphoria' about tourism, Third World communities exhibit 'xenophobia' in the later stages of the so-called "tourism life-cycle". The exhibition of xenophobia takes various forms, For example, the tourist is there to be 'ripped off' exploited to the maximum; tourists are offered 'real bargains' on their purchases, while what is sold is either highly overpriced or of poor quality i.e. 'cheating with a smile'.

Tourists expect a glimpse of 'native culture' during their visit. Travellers have traditionally been welcomed, in most societies, to join and participate in rituals, ceremonies and performances — such as harvest festivals, marriages and other *rites de passage*. With growing numbers of tourists now demanding such participation as a 'right', Third World countries offer 'cultural shows' devoid of intrinsic meaning. This phenomenon is known as 'staged authenticity'.

The stereotyped image of the tourist wearing T-shirt and jeans slinging a walkman and a camera (preferably Handycam) — is all too often a true one. Whether or not all tourists fit the stereotype — that of being loaded with Dollars, Deutsche mark and Yen — the visible display of modern consumer goods is a stark reminder of the affluence of the world's powerful minority.

The resulting impulses within the host community for emulation generates a certain tension and restlessness, and increases their propensity to consume. This is known as the demonstration effect of tourism.

Only a handful of people in the Third World have the resources to participate in the global marketplace. The majority have to be satisfied with "window-shopping". In corporate terms, they constitute "an incipient market" of potential profitability.

The demonstration effect, therefore, contributes to deepening the real as well as the perceived gulf between the tourist and the host. It creates conditions where residents may try to copy tourist behaviour and spending patterns, at the same time resenting their inability to do so and lacking comparable purchasing power. At many destinations social tensions emerge in the form of:

- increase in begging,
- prostitution,
- cheating,
- mugging of tourists, and
- drug peddling.

At times certain pre-conceived images are linked with tourists though they may be **far from reality**. For example, all tourists take drugs, indulge in gambling, prostitution etc. Similarly, many tourists believe that the women working in the tourism sector are easily approachable.

It may be, and has in fact been, argued that the socio-cultural effects of tourism cannot easily be distinguished from those of modernisation in general. However, tourism, with its more

direct intervention in societies (the presence of hotels, tourist infrastructure, souvenir shops, and tourists themselves — a full scale tourist economy, as it were) has its own share in this regard.

It is important to note that apart from the changes in the physical reality — such as music, dance, art, architecture and so on — the most consequential effect that tourism has on native population is perceptual. What is altered immutably is a whole identity, of how people view themselves and who they are, and an understanding of relationships — of people with people, of people with nature, of people with places.

Destinations too have their impact on tourists. For example, 50 to 200 tourists are hospitalised every year in Jerusalem for a “delusional state called the Jerusalem Syndrome”. According to Yair Bar-El, a psychiatrist, “Jerusalem can drive people, mad”. There have been cases where tourists have been found to be proclaiming themselves as King David, the Messiah or John the Baptist. Many tourists collapse from spiritual overload. Doctors have identified a hysteria that seizes pilgrims only and they call it “Jerusalem squabble prison”. As per the **Hindustan Times**, (July 28, 1994) report, “by now Israeli soldiers know, if they find a wild-eyed foreigner wandering the desert, naked or wrapped in animal skin, drive John the Baptist to Fur Shawl, a government mental institution”. Similar situations at many other destinations cannot be ruled out. In Florence “visitors have cracked up in front of provocative paintings”. In London at Heathrow Airport and in New York’s Kennedy Airport “many tourists, isolated and disconnected from family and familiar settings are found wandering in the terminals. They have no idea as to who they are or where are they going”. This has been described as “wandering nomad syndrome” or “airport syndrome”. Further research in the area will be able to tell us more in this regard.

34.3 SEX TOURISM IN ASIA

Prostitution, resulting from the tourism industry, has reached crisis levels at destinations such as Thailand, Philippines, parts of East Africa and the Caribbean Islands. Sex tourism, as it is also known, is a relatively recent phenomenon. It has now taken on the proportions of an organised industry with the backing — at least implicitly — of certain Third World governments and the active involvement of major crime syndicates internationally.

Recent investigations have also hinted at the alarming increase of Asian children — 4 to 15 years old — forced into sexual relations with paedophiles from the West. While figures on child prostitution vary from country to country, as well as depending on the source of the data, the problem has become so large that it can no longer be ignored.

A global campaign to End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism (ECPAT) has succeeded, in recent years, in highlighting this ghastly reality internationally. It has resulted in some action being taken by Western Governments, as well as drawn the attention of the United Nations Working Group on Slavery.

In Southeast Asia, the historical origins of sex tourism lie in the R & R (rest and recreation) centres. These emerged during the Vietnam war where US Army soldiers were provided with a paid holiday from the trauma of combat. Bars, brothels and little else was the standard formulae for R & R. With the end of the war and the departure of troops hundreds of bar-girls were left in the lurch, with the exception of Subic and Clark bases in the Philippines (where US soldiers were stationed till early 1992). Certain segments of the tourism industry, quick to cash in on a profitable opportunity, readily jumped into the breach.

By the late 1970s, brothels catering to tourists flourished in Southeast Asia under a variety of guises. Massage parlours, sex shows, yoga bars, cocktail lounges, health clubs — all existed with the sole purpose of meeting the sexual needs of male (and sometimes female) visitors. The women in these establishments were — and still are — not better than objects on display, often seated behind a way-way mirror, a numbered badge on their bodies their only identification. Clients state their selection by quoting the number, as if buying vegetables in a bazaar.

The promotion of sex-tourism increased in the early 1980s, when sexual services of young Asian women were openly sold, as part of a package tour, by travel agents in Germany, the

Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe. While a majority of sex tourists were men from Western Europe, Japan with its strong currency, constituted an important part of the demand side as well.

Parallel to this emerged the phenomenon of mail-order brides, a system by which clients in Europe could purchase — literally — a woman of their choice. This they could do just by going through a brochure or a video which gave photographs and other details of the women — qualifications, age, knowledge of household chores as well as qualities such as being passive, loving, homely and so on. The mail-order traders also threw in a bargain: they offered a sample tour, during which the client could spend a few days with the intended bride, and reject her if she did not meet his expectations.

While some of these marriages do work out, most do not. Alone in a strange country, the woman must accept her situation for what it is whether the husband treats her humanely or not.

Sometimes the marriage is just a way of getting the women a visa to enter a foreign country, where they are soon forced into prostitution.

Another way in which women are sold into the international sexual trafficking trade is that of direct recruitment for work in bars, discos and so-called dancers and entertainers.

Although not a form of tourism per se, tourism is a factor which contributes to creating a market for Asian women. Therefore, if the men cannot travel to the countries where the women are, the alternative is to bring the women to the men.

In both situations — that of mail order marriages and of Asian women working abroad — apart from the physical torture and mental trauma they face, the women are also subject to harassment by the authorities, since their legal status is often unclear. Seldom do they have proper documents (work visas, residence status, and so on) and when they do, the papers are often kept in 'safe custody' by their employers or agents.

While the external reality of sex tourism is appalling enough, it is underscored by a far more distressing story: that of capture, slavery, brutalisation, violence, fear and despair. Many women and children who cater to sex tourists have been sold into prostitution by their families out of economic desperation, with scant knowledge of the fate that awaits them.

Sex tourism is not a factor in tourism in India. Yet, the symptoms have started emerging. It is necessary to take precautions in this regard at this stage of tourism development in India. It appears that the AIDS menace might act as a deterrent but for this also awareness has to be created.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Mention some of the social tensions that emerge in tourism.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2) What do you understand by the following.

- a) Jerusalem Syndrome
- b) Airport Syndrome

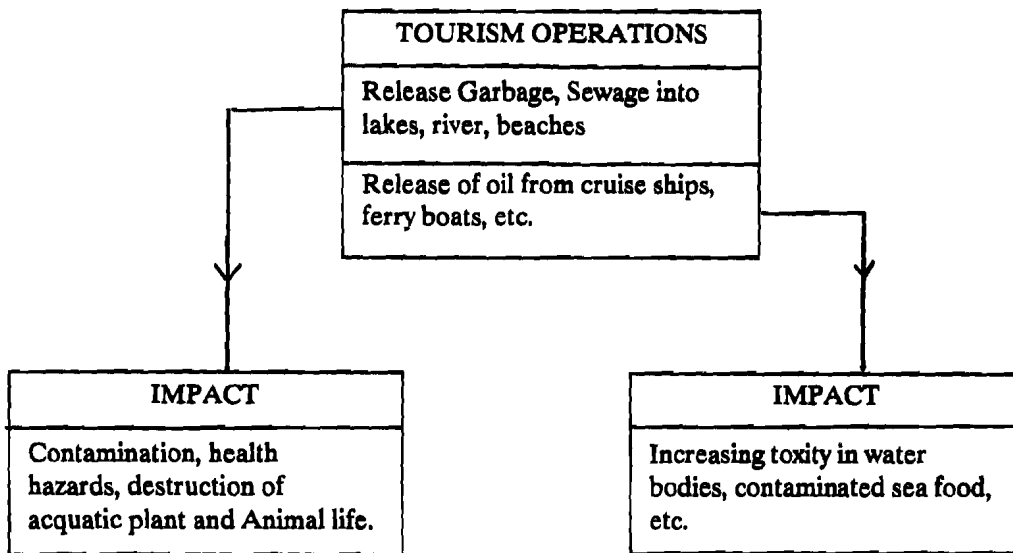
.....
.....
.....

34.4 THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

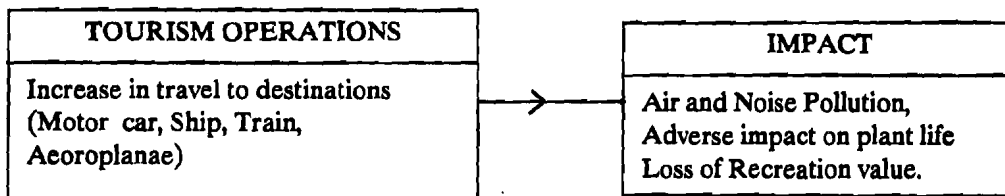
Different kinds of tourism activity effect the natural and built environment. There is a complex interaction between tourism and the environment. Many studies have shown that tourism has an immense impact on the physical environment, and that little has been done to remedy or control the assault on the ecology.

This is especially distressing in view of the fact that a major part of tourism depends on nature: mountains, beaches, deserts, forests, wildlife, water-bodies and the like. Tourism destroys tourism, an oft-repeated truism, is one which has seldom entered the consciousness of planners and developers. Based on Amita Plaeumaron's table of Environmental Impact of Tourism (1989) we provide you certain figures:

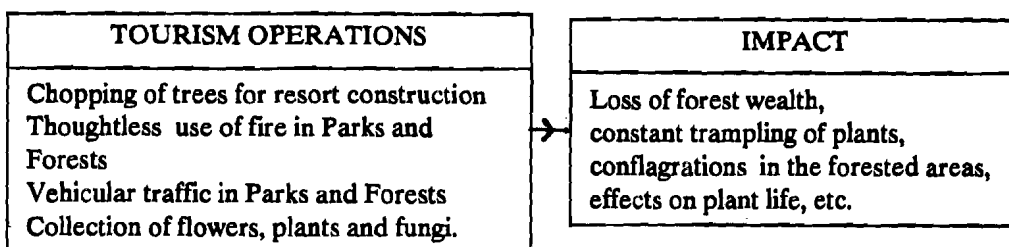
WATER



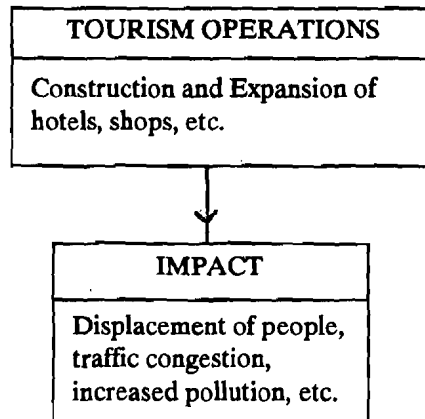
ATMOSPHERE



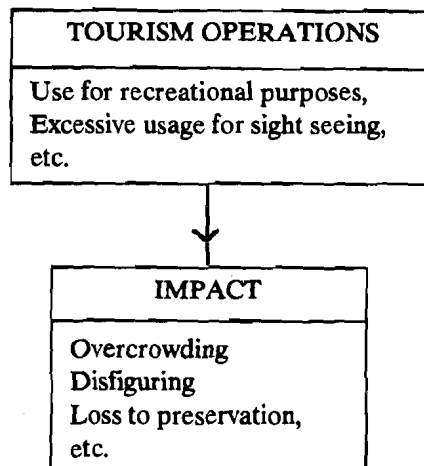
VEGETATION



HUMAN SETTLEMENTS



MONUMENTS



34.4.1 Wildlife

Different sorts of tourism have varying impacts on the environment. A useful case study can be the experience of promoting national parks and forest areas for tourists.

Tourism in National Parks, Reserves and Sanctuaries has considerable effects on the wildlife which ranges from disruption of animal feeding and breeding patterns to providing the impetus to maintain such protected areas. However, as mentioned earlier, unplanned tourism puts enormous pressure on the carrying capacity of the area which has severe effects on the wildlife. Tourism can also be an advantage to conservation because when the common man understands and experiences wildlife he can play an active role in protecting nature (See Units 9 and 16 of TS-2).

The point here is that tourism also is an active promoter of protected areas. Protected from whom is a question that needs to be asked. Due to the money generating capacity of tourism, it is actively promoted in these areas. What is not clear is whether the income generated is re-invested in afforestation, protection of the wildlife, park maintenance, and so on.

The sale of the sanctuary as a tourist destination is often thought of as a necessary agent in conservational efforts. However an example of tourist congestion in National Parks is to be found in Corbett. There has been no increase in the road use to keep pace with tourism growth in Corbett National Park. Hence the increase in tourism has restricted itself to a relatively small area. Since the Park cannot be modified to suit the tourists, that is lay more roads and other infrastructure in core and restricted zones, tourism patterns have to be changed to reduce human overcrowding and to avoid man-animal conflicts (See Unit 16 of TS-2).

Speeding vehicles, driving off roads and night driving all contribute to wildlife mortality and alteration of animal habits. Unregulated sewage and garbage disposal around lodges and campsites attracts animals and disturbs traditional feeding patterns. Wastes including cigarette packets, liquor bottles, cartons, polythene bags and other city garbage are common in these areas.

The capture and killing of animals for trade has increased with the growing demand for wildlife souvenirs. Bulging curio shops brazenly display elephant tusks, zebra hides, mounted antelope heads, lion-claw necklaces, monkey-skin throw rugs, ostrich-foot lamps, gazells-hoof key rings, crocodile skins and a variety of stuffed animals and birds. All these, in many cases, are on the shopping lists of tourists.

Another inhuman practice that tourism gives rise to is the fashion of getting photographed with the baby animals, such as chimpanzee, tiger, lion or leopard. While capturing these animals from their habitats many animals are killed.

Beyond issues related to flora and fauna, wildlife tourism has once again brought into focus the unsolved question of people who inhabit the forests. Projects to promote tourism in sanctuaries have more often than not meant the outright dispossession of tribals (**adivasis**) from their traditional habitat. While the tourism and forest department officials aim at maximising profits by all means, they are blissfully unaware of the role that forest-dwellers have in maintaining the man-animal balance, and in the protection of trees and plant species.

34.4.2 Carrying Capacity

Unplanned an unregulated management of tourism programmes leads to structural or visible modifications of the natural and social environment that are often destructive and difficult to remedy. One main problem is that the benefits of tourism have been measured in economic terms but the ecological factors cannot be calculated in monetary terms and are therefore ignored.

All tourist destinations are ecosystems in their own right and have carrying capacities. They could be:

- of the public amenities and utilities (normally intended to serve the needs of a smaller local community),
- the ecology or the environment of the locus, or the capacity of the people to live a life of comfort, satisfaction and dignity in their own cultural and social milieu.

At what point, therefore, does a tourist destination become something other than what it was intended to be? When does its character so dramatically change that it no longer attracts people for the purpose it was promoted — be it the beauty of nature, a pristine culture, impressive architecture or a unique history? (Note: It may still attract people, but for completely different reasons: for gambling, nightlife, shopping, or just hotel resorts which provide a perfect holiday.)

Carrying capacity is a notion which recognizes that both natural and human attractions have upper limits in their capacities to absorb visitors, a capacity above which a deterioration of the resource itself takes place.

It has been defined by O' Grady and Alison as a level of tourist development or recreational activity beyond which the environment is degraded (environmental carrying capacity),

facilities are saturated (physical carrying capacity), or people's enjoyment diminished (perceptual or social carrying capacity).

Although the concept is simple, its application is complex because of:

- the problem in making changes which occur, and
- discovering the casual relationships between tourism factors and their effects on the environment.

Carrying capacity is a function of a number of tourism factors as well as of a variety of social, economic and environmental features of the destination area. Among the latter are environmental features like:

- climate, topography, flora and fauna,
- the level of economic development of the area,
- the sophistication of its social and political organisation, and
- the scale of tourist infrastructural development.

All these things together will govern the capacity of a destination to absorb the demands placed on it by tourism.

This emphasises very careful examination of these factors prior to developing any new tourism project or programmes. Once such an exercise is undertaken (known as Environmental Impact Assessment or EIA), its results must be made public, and the residents of the project are must be involved in arriving at a final decision.

Although the tourism carrying capacity of a specific destination can help determine an optimum level of development, this must be accompanied by appropriate legislation and policies. This must be regularly monitored and evaluated for effectiveness. This is seldom done or generally ignored by governments and tourism policy planners.

The thrust of the New Tourism Policy 1992, in India, emphasises opening up of hitherto protected areas as Special Tourism Areas. For tourism development massive subsidies and incentives are given to private sector developers (See Unit 29). This is a prime example of the non-application of carrying capacity concepts or Environmental Impact Assessments in tourism policy planning.

It is high time that such policies were reviewed in the light of available data from tourist destinations around the Third World and from recent experiences within India, such as that of Goa, Kashmir, Rajasthan and Orissa. Instead of ignoring the methodological possibilities that techniques such as EIA offers, planners must adopt, adapt and utilise EIA applications — including socio-economic cost benefit analysis within its scope.

34.5 POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

The links between tourism and politics in many Third World nations are almost inevitable. Given the need to boosting images of their sagging regimes and fattened bureaucracies, politicians often see the tourism industry as a direct way of gaining powerful friends, including Western governments, ad agencies and investors. A healthy balance of payments can be achieved by prominently displaying gross earning from tourism, which in turn can be used to obtain aid and investments.

On the part of the critics, they have emphasised several aspects of tourism that have di political implications, some of which are:

- 1) the relationship of 'master-slave' between tourists and locals, akin to that of colonial realities,
- 2) the priority given to external assistance, investments and imports, over and above developing local capabilities, enterprise and production,
- 3) that a priority for tourism takes budgetary allocations away from social sectors such as education, health, sanitation and provision of other basic necessities,

- 4) that tourism being of a volatile nature, over-dependence on it can be dangerous for a country's future development which ought to be more diversified, less mono-cultural, and
- 5) the lack of protection for workers in the tourism industry.

Several other arguments can be cited, not least of which is the issue of land use for recreational purposes, in the context of inadequate and ineffective land reform policies.

Plans and projects should not be evolved secretly or continue to be veiled long after approvals have been given and construction begun. Efforts by local groups to obtain information should not be shunned. Tourism activists have complained of harassment, threats and even physical violence. It is a sad reality that peoples' participation in tourism decisions must often take the form of agitations, campaigns, legal and others forms of action in certain areas.

Primarily, the issue is one of democratic participation in decision making about tourism. **Tourism activists make the point that they have the right to have their opinion heard and taken into consideration, since the development of tourism has a direct repercussion on their economy, ecology, culture and everyday life.**

Governments and industry must realise that the underlying conviction is the desire for greater political participation in economic and social processes, of which tourism is only a part. Ignoring this sentiment can only lead to greater dissatisfaction, further agitations and campaigns, even attacks on the industry and tourists, as has happened in some parts of the Third World. **Such a situation would hardly be a conducive setting for attracting tourists.**

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Is there an inevitable conflict between environment and tourism development?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

- 2) Explain how natural resources are affected by mass tourism along with examples.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

- 3) List some of the direct political implications of tourism.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

34.6 LET US SUM UP

Development of tourism is no doubt a major concern of many developing countries to-day including ours. Its growth has no doubt produced many positive results which we had already discussed. But as a tourism professional it is necessary on your part to know that unplanned and uncontrolled growth in tourism has serious implications for the society and environment. Generally such impacts are ignored by the policy makers and planners. We have tried to make you aware of these social and environmental consequences of mass tourism along with the effects on the culture of the hosts, moral behaviour of the local people and tourists. Similarly, environmental pollution and chances of destruction of ecological balance — some of the major environmental concerns — effected by tourism were also discussed. Political implications of tourism is another area to be looked upon by tourism professionals and activists.

34.7 KEYWORDS

Emulation : Imitate zealously.

Native Culture : Culture of the local people has been described as 'Native Culture'.

Paedophiles : Those having sexual desire with children

Prophylactic : A preventive of disease

Third World : The Countries which are not politically aligned with Communist or Western nations, generally the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America are known as Third World Countries.

UNEP : United Nations Environment Programme

WTO : World Tourism Organisation

Xenophobia : Dislike of foreigners or strangers.

34.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Discuss things like begging, prostitution, cheating etc. mentioned in Sec. 34.2.
- 2) See the last two paras of Sec. 34.2.
- 3) You have to write about various changes that came in the local culture as a result of half-way interaction with the culture brought by the tourists. See Sec. 34.2.
- 4) See Sec. 34.3.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Development of tourist infrastructure and mass tourism has direct correlation with environment. You have to delineate some of the areas in our ecology which may be effected by tourism. See Sec. 34.4.
- 2) Base your answer on Sub-secs. 34.4.1 and 34.4.2.