

Peace Through Alternative Tourism: Case Studies From Bengal, India

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Abstract

This paper examines the synergistic linkages among alternative forms of tourism and the establishment of long term peace. Peace is a very subjective topic and is not simply the absence of direct violence associated with war. It is also about the elimination of structural violence associated with inequality, injustice and unsustainable development. Outcomes of corporatized forms of tourism, which appears as a constituent of consumer oriented capitalist globalisation, have been found to be detrimental to indigenous cultures, ecology, and the environment as a whole. Alternative tourism, as an element of alternative globalisation, has the potential to establish a consensus on bringing about sustainable global development and peace. This paper analyses the impacts of mass/corporatized tourism that reflect structural violence and the potential of alternative tourism to bring sustainable and positive peace. Case studies representing responsible and alternative forms of tourism are presented.

Keywords: Alternative tourism, peace, community development, structural violence, alternative globalisation, and Bengal

Introduction

Peace is viewed as an intangible attribute that is difficult to measure. It refers not only to reconciliation between nations but also between groups or communities, between individuals, and between people and nature (Salazar, 2006). Tourism may be considered a tool that can bring about this reconciliation by helping people to travel and experience local cultures at destinations, and by fostering cultural exchanges and understanding between host and guest communities (Rabu, 2003; Leong, 2008). It is suggested that peace disturbed due to political hostilities between nations can be restored through tourism (Askjellerud, 2003). However, more importantly, the role of tourism in countering fundamental causes of conflict and violence needs to be examined (Salazar, 2006).

The forces of globalization with an orientation towards the capitalist form of development have led to serious ecological and social consequences (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008). The corporatised form of tourism is one of those facets of capitalist globalization which have rendered structural violence leading to dehumanization and exploitation of indigenous communities and ecological damage (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008; Sklair, 2002). Driven by capitalist motives, planners of mass tourism have taken very little note

of the interests of local communities and the biophysical environment (Rogers, 2008). Advocates of eco-socialism maintain that globalized capitalism has overconsumed natural resources leading to the social exclusion of indigenous communities, poverty and environmental degradation (Lowy, 2005; Schwartzman, 2009).

The process of capitalist globalization of tourism could be arrested by alternative forms of tourism that bring justice through social equity and environmental sustainability (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008; Rogers, 2008). A radical alternative to what Marx called 'capitalism's destructive progress' and a model that rejects neocolonialism and encourages neo-humanism, should be in place (Lowy, 2005). Alternative forms of community-based tourism based on economic democracy, self-sufficiency and decentralisation in favour of local communities are needed to bring about a paradigm shift from a consumerist, ecologically injurious and socially polarising form of capital-oriented tourism to a more justified form of tourism contributing to long-term peace (Gill, 1999; Sklair, 2002).

It is submitted that tourism, if managed in a responsible and just manner involving compatible host-guest relationships and equitable returns, has the potential to bring long-term peace (Malley, 2004). Alternative forms of tourism that echo viewpoints of humanist movements like alternative globalisation (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008), progressive utilisation theories (Sarkar, 1986) and eco-socialism (Lowy, 2005) may be tested for their ability to encourage sustainable peace. This paper discusses the importance of positive peace and structural violence (Galtung, 1969) and the role of the above mentioned humanistic or alternative forms of tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008) that have the potential to address the causes of structural violence and establish positive peace or long-term reconciliation. Developing countries are at the receiving end when it comes to social inequities and irreversible ecological damage (D'Amore, 1988). Three case studies from India, a developing country, demonstrate the potential of alternative forms of tourism to establish long-term peace through poverty alleviation, cultural exchanges and conservation of heritage and wildlife.

Tourism: A Tool for Peace

According to Rabu (2003), tourism may be considered a "tool" for world peace. Researchers perceive that tourism can be a positive force that can mitigate tension and misunderstanding by playing a central role in national and international politics and world peace (D'Amore, 2002; Leong, 2008). Tourism is viewed as not only the world's biggest business but also the world's biggest peace industry (Malley, 2002). Tourism is a phenomenon that involves social and cultural interactions among communities across the world (Cohen, 1979). It involves the voluntary movement of people from their usual place of residence for leisure, recreation and holidaying, and not engaging in any kind of remunerative activity (UNWTO, 2008). A community, with its surrounding environment, becomes a crucial part of a tourism experience (Blackstock, 2005). Local community members at a destination, irrespective of whether it is a semi-urban or rural area, become major stakeholders in the entire tourism activity. Yet, the macroeconomic benefits of tourism have been deemed more significant while the interests of individuals or communities in terms of socio-cultural/socio-economic and environmental implications have been given less consideration (George, 2007). As a result tourism has largely been

perceived or has turned out to be an economic rather than a political or social force that counters conflict and misunderstanding among cultures in the world (Lee, 2006). Contemporary discourse focuses on economic and business domains to the exclusion of tourism's social values (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008).

Tourism can be a major influence in bringing socio-cultural change (Curtin, 1996). Cultural tourism involves cross-cultural interaction among people of different nations, leading to better understanding and harmonious relations (Rabu, 2003; Desbiolles, 2008). Tourism, if managed in the right way, can be a bridge between cultures, an enlightening and educational force. It can contribute to a harmonious mix of cultures through understanding of host community traditions, customs, lifestyles and environments, resulting in enhanced respect for these elements of the host community culture (D'Amore, 1988). There is an underlying synergy between tourism and peace as the former lays the groundwork for an amicable relationship between local communities and tourists and brings social and economic equity leading to permanent reconciliation (Shin, 2005; Malley, 2002)

However, the growth of tourism as a major large-scale activity has involved unsustainable practices over many decades (Hjalager, 2004). The focus on macro-economic benefits has resulted in a failure to recognise, on the one hand, the harmful impacts that tourism can bring to a local community at a destination, and on the other hand, the potential of tourism to bring social harmony and peace among communities, both host and guest (Khamouna & Zeiger, 1995).

Tourism is a global activity encompassing various cultures and societies and hence its negative impacts are widespread (Pearce et al., 1996). It has been a factor in the loss of dignity and self-respect for many in this world (Brown, 1998), the exploitation of women and children and damage to indigenous cultures and societies (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008; Leong, 2008; Hjalager, 2004). Thailand and Cambodia in South East Asia may be cited as examples of sex tourism destinations involving exploitation of women and children and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS and a decline in moral/ethical values (ECPAT, 2005). According to calculations by the International Labour Organisation, in 1998, 2-14% of the gross domestic product of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand was derived from sex tourism. Widespread poverty and economic backwardness are the principal factors leading to such ethical problems threatening the dignity of many poor societies.

According to Salazar (2006), cultural issues prove particularly important in the context of peace through tourism as it is often the denial of cultural identity that fuels conflict. Bali, in Indonesia, is known for its unique ethnic Hindu culture but has been a victim of commodification/commercialization due to excessive tourist inflow and unsustainable tourism development ((Picard & Wood, 1997). Loss of authenticity of Balinese cultural forms, increase in alcohol consumption and prostitution, and large areas of rice production lost yearly to development, much of it for tourism have been some of the negative consequences in Bali (Picard & Wood, 1997). According to Hjalager (2004), cultural traditions can be sacrificed and replaced by stereotyped mass consumption products, and the rapid expansion of tourism may threaten traditional building styles, landscapes and other representations of cultural heritage. The culture of consumerism that accompanies capitalist globalisation inflicts social and cultural damage and commodification in all spheres of human life (Sklair, 2002).

In an era of globalization and the rise of free market economies across the world, tourism has become a phenomenon that is primarily urban-centric and is sometimes referred to as a form of neo-colonialism where the benefits go in favour of the affluent (Beder, 2000; Sklair, 2002; Leong, 2008; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008). Tourism has been described as the commercialization of the human need to travel (Wearing, 2002). Market-driven globalisation ignores welfare focused development (McMicheal, 1998) and, according to Leong (2008), many countries have made unwise investments in tourism that is often imposed on local communities, especially rural and minority communities, at a level and speed that causes great social disruption. Darjeeling and Shimla, two popular hill stations in North Eastern and North Western India since British colonial rule, have been victims of resource use conflict and depletion of natural resources due to expanding hotel and tourism industry (Luhomi, 2006). Water is an acutely scarce resource in Darjeeling and as a result, the civic amenities are coming under increasing stress, creating a plethora of problems for the residents as well as for the summer visitors (Mazumder, 2008).

Challenges to Capitalist Globalisation

Capitalist globalisation is challenged by a number of alternative concepts, including eco-socialism (Sarkar, 1999), the Progressive Utilisation Theories (PROUT) (Sarkar, 1986; Mangal, 2009) and Alternative Globalisation (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008). The Progressive Utilisation theory (PROUT) is a socio-economic theory based on neo-humanism that pursues social equity by enabling all human beings to develop and utilize their physical, mental and spiritual potentialities while sustainably coexisting with the other living beings of the earth. The Progressive Utilisation theory (PROUT) rejects both capitalist globalisation and socialist command economy concepts and focuses on economic democracy in the form of economic decentralisation that empowers local communities and regional socio-economic units (Sarkar, 1986; proutinstitute.org, 2009).

The PROUT model submits that in the profit-oriented capitalist economies planning powers lie in the hands of a few big corporations, while in socialist command economies such powers are in the hands of party dominated planning bodies, and that both systems have led to increasing unsustainable outcomes. An economic system that involves cooperative systems, local community-centred economic enterprises, local resources controlled by locals and harmony and compatibility with nature from a holistic point of view, has the potential to bring sustainable development (Sarkar, 1986; Mangal, 2009).

Eco-socialism is a philosophy that combines elements of socialism and Marxism with ecology and appeals to qualitative values like use-value, social equity, environmental protection and ecological balance (Lowy, 2005). Like the PROUT theory, eco-socialism is critical of both capitalist and socialist systems as contributing to unsustainable growth and hindering the pursuit of world peace (Lowy, 2005). A system that rejects globalisation and rampant consumerism while advocating economic self-sufficiency and ecological and cultural integration of local communities through non-violent dismantling of the social and environmental inequities caused by the capitalism, is a possible alternative path towards sustainable development (Schwartzman, 2009).

Alternative globalisation is a movement opposing capitalist globalisation, corporatisation and neo-liberalism which bring social inequities and irreversible

ecological damage (Porta, 2006; Juris, 2008). The rise in anti-globalisation movements has stemmed from the search for an alternative form of globalisation that counters the dominance of the current model of capitalist globalisation (Bennholdt-Thomsen et al, 2001; Held, 1991; Klein, 2002; Sklair, 2002). Responsible alternative forms of tourism can be a deserving representative of alternative globalization in this endeavour (Weaver & Lawton, 2002; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008). Justice tourism, which is a new niche in alternative tourism and whose 'products and services', structures and agendas are radically different from other forms, has the potential to be a singular model of difference that can challenge inequitable tourism and capitalist globalization (Leong, 2008).

Tourism Alternatives

The above theories and concepts lead to the idea of an alternative form of development that opposes market-driven globalisation and provides a substitute platform for sustainable growth and a more peaceful world. Alternative Tourism is one way to introduce alternative globalisation to the travel and tourism industry.

Alternative Tourism is a concept that opposes polarisation and is therefore a more humane and naturalistic substitute for mass tourism (Weaver & Lawton, 2002). Alternative Tourism promotes limited-scale, low-impact, community-based activities. It may be defined as 'tourism that gives emphasis to the contact and understanding between the hosts and the tourist, as well as the environment' (Smith & Eadington, 1992) or as 'tourism consistent with the natural, social and community values and that allows a positive relationship among locals and tourists' (Wearing & Neil, 1999). From a business/industry and general point of view Alternative Tourism involves the existence of small or medium companies, created by families or friends, where there is the possibility of more visitor contact with the communities and where most of the time there is respect for an environment (Cater, 1995). Alternative forms of tourism include Sustainable Tourism, which may be considered to be a force that strives to develop tourism with a human face and care for the environment and its ecology (Leong, 2008).

The ultimate aim of alternative tourism is to create a better quality of life for all people, economic sustainability and a reduction in structural violence. Justice tourism and reconciliation tourism are elements of Alternative Tourism with the potential to bring positive peace (Blanchard, 2005; Poon, 1994). Equitable returns and shared cultural understanding through compatible local-visitor relationships are the objectives which can help establish long-term peace (Malley, 2002). Alternative tourism, by rejecting mass tourism, attempts to help societies become part of a larger movement of alternative globalisation (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008).

Proper strategies need to be adopted to ensure that tourism development encompasses local community issues (Ap & Turgut, 1990). Increasingly, in the study of international humanitarian intervention, researchers are pointing out that the key to success lies in the ability to adapt each project to the local realities, and to make them work in harmony with all aspects of the community. Nobel laureate in economics, Amartya Sen (1999), argues that local economic development, especially in poor and developing countries, must be implemented through the expansion of human capabilities rather than the parameters set by proponents of capitalist globalisation. Successful cases of rural development through initiatives in community-based tourism projects in the developing

world can be cited as examples of how tourism can foster national and international cooperation, understanding and peace (Pearce et al., 1996).

Peace through Alternative Tourism in India

Tourism is one of the emerging industries in India though it is still not a priority area for the Federal government. Tourist arrivals to India for 2007 numbered about 5 million and India was ranked 42nd in the year 2006 in terms of tourist arrivals in the world (UNWTO, 2008). Given the volume of tourism attractions and resources in India, the rank of 42nd is unimpressive. India's share of international tourist arrivals in 2006 was also low at 0.52% (UNWTO, 2008). However, foreign exchange earnings have been important with receipts of US\$ 8.93 billion in 2006 and US\$ 12 billion in 2007. The provinces of Kerala, Goa, Rajasthan and few other pockets in the country are some of the principal destinations as far as international tourist arrivals are concerned (UNWTO, 2008).

The statistics reveal a gap between urban and rural areas in terms of economic development. With 25% of the national population living under the poverty level, and 75% of these living in rural areas, the picture that unfolds is of uneven economic progress in spite of the economic reforms introduced in the last decade (Planning Commission of India, 2007; World Bank, 2009). It is apparent that the progress brought about by the forces of globalization has been largely urban-centric. On the other hand, tourism has not been given due importance by the government despite its ability to mitigate the widening urban-rural divide. Alternative tourism, through community-based and pro-poor initiatives, could be a catalyst for economic development in rural areas. It is also submitted that if tourism strategies are geared towards involving community-based organizations they can promote peace (Verma, 2005).

India has a strong community and democratic ethos and community-based ventures have contributed to more prosperous rural communities in many parts of the country. They have also been successful in building up strong collaborations which have led to environmental protection, rural employment and creation of a peaceful and harmonious social climate. The Dairy Cooperatives of Anand, Gujarat have made India the largest milk producer in the world. Instances of cooperative involvement in tourism have also been developed (Verma, 2005). The 'Cooptour', which is a cooperative travel organization consisting of 55 members, is based in the province of Rajasthan (Verma, 2005).

The Government of India, along with the UNDP and a self-help women's group, is developing and promoting 31 villages across country as rural tourism sites (Verma, 2005; Evaluation of Rural Tourism Scheme, 2007). The aims of this rural tourism project are to alleviate poverty, promote community-based initiatives, strengthen bonds between cultures, and establish cooperation, understanding and peace between social groups. NGOs and self-help groups have promoted tourism in the most sustainable way and their activities provide a model of how tourism can significantly contribute to peace and communal harmony.

The province of West Bengal in Eastern India is one of those areas in the country where industrial development has become stagnant and tourism has received almost negligible

attention from the provincial and federal governments (Mazumder, 2008; Ganguly, 2010). Being run by a democratically elected Leftist - Communist government for more than 3 decades, West Bengal is a province dependent largely on agriculture (West Bengal Human Development Report, 2004). Rural development has been quite successful due to the effective Rural Administrative system or *Panchayat Raj*, under the Left Front Government's rule (WBIDC, 2007). Yet the province still faces problems of unemployment, poverty, social and ethnic conflict, and bureaucratic corruption. Age-old industrial infrastructure and closure of many industries due to militant leftist trade unionism has resulted in the economic backwardness of the province (Ganguly, 2010). Tourism in West Bengal is among the least developed in the country (Bandyopadhyay & Kerstetter, 2003). However, it is in West Bengal that we come across 3 examples of pro-poor and community-based tourism initiatives that have brought positive socio-economic change to rural communities in the province.

Case Study 1: An Example of Communal Harmony

100 kilometer from Kolkata, a city in eastern India, is a little hamlet called Pathra that is testimony to communal harmony and peace that can be achieved through heritage conservation. Located on the banks of River Kangsabati, in the district of West Midnapore of the province of West Bengal, Pathra tells the story of a poor clerk of a local school named Mohammed Yeasin Pathan who, despite being Muslim, carried out relentless efforts to protect 17th and 18th Century brick-built Hindu terracotta temples (Bhowmick, 2007). Without the efforts of Pathan, the 34 temples of Pathra which contain impressive terracotta sculptures and represent a rich slice of Bengal's heritage would have passed into obscurity, lost and forgotten.

Mohammed Yeasin Pathan originally belonged to a village 2 kms away from Pathra and as a child was mystified by the temples. As he grew he realized that these structures were a part of the nation's heritage and required preservation. His efforts to conserve these monuments started in 1971 when he was just 17 (Bhowmick, 2007). These temples had been in a state of neglect for more than 100 years, incurring structural damages and loss of architectural identity.

While he was carrying out conservation work, he encountered stiff opposition from extremist sections of both Hindu and Muslim communities, and became a victim of verbal and physical assaults. Overcoming these obstacles, he was eventually successful in inspiring locals and involving them in his noble cause (Hinduism Today, 2005). He realised that restoration of the temples would enhance the touristic importance of Pathra and bring benefits in terms of infrastructure and amenities (Mazumder, 2006).

He then formed an NGO, the Pathra Archaeological Preservation Committee, or the Pathra Puratatwa Sangrakshan Committee, with the help of locals belonging to different religious and ethnic backgrounds (Mazumder, 2006). Faced with the problem of lack of funding, Pathan sought to gather contributions from various sources, and was finally successful in 1998 when the National Planning Commission of India granted Rs.20 lakhs (2 million) for the conservation of the temples (Banerjee,2003). He was also triumphant in drawing the attention of the ASI (The Archaeological Survey of India), which took over restoration work of the temples in 2003, and in gaining support from the local police (Banerjee, 2003).

The outcome of Pathan's efforts has been not only restoration of the temples but he also fostered bonding and communal harmony between local Hindus and Muslims in the poverty-ridden, backward area (Mazumder, 2006). Hindus and Muslims now mingle and participate in each other's festivities and celebrations. In addition, Pathra has become a growing tourist destination in the local/district-level tourist circuit (Mazumder, 2006; Chatterjee, 2006). Pathan is now trying to extend his efforts in raising the touristic importance of Pathra to a higher level (Bhowmick, 2007).

With no thought for personal gain, Pathan took a wise and determined initiative to protect the 18th century heritage. The inspiration behind such a noble act was his love and respect for the history of the country to which he belongs. In 2005 Pathan received the President's Award (the Kabir Award) from the Government of India for fostering communal harmony (Bhowmick, 2007). Except for this award, Pathan received nothing for himself from his 30 years of struggle. He remains a poor peon (messenger/ laborer) in a local school with a meagre income. He lives in a modest two room home and after getting his two daughters married off, he is now left with only Rs 2200 (around £26/\$54) a month (Bhowmick, 2007). Despite his struggle, Pathan managed to study archaeological remains in the district of Midnapore and came up with an informative and useful publication called 'Mandirmoy Pathra' in Bengali which explains the history and architectural aspects of the temples in Pathra and his struggle to protect them (Mazumder, 2006; Chatterjee, 2006)

The efforts of Mohammed Yeasin Pathan surely stand out in the times when the rise of Islamic terrorism has rendered a lot of misunderstanding among other communities about Muslims leading to communal disharmony and loathing (Banerjee, 2003).

Case Study 2: An Inspiring Example of Wildlife Conservation

The Sunderbans in South Asia is one of the largest tracts of mangrove forests in the world and is a complex ecosystem formed by the Ganges Delta. The entire Indian Sunderbans was declared as a Biosphere Reserve in 1989 and was included in the World Network of Biospheres by UNESCO in November, 2001. The Sunderbans is also one of the major habitats of one of the largest cats in the world, the Royal Bengal Tiger (*Panthera tigris bengalensis*). It is known for being a man-eater and is feared by local communities living in the Sunderbans. At the last census in 2008, there were 1411 tigers in India, of which 270 were found in The Sunderbans, a figure which, according to forest authorities, has remained unchanged. This is a unique example of habitat conservation and man-animal coexistence (Hui, 2009).

The Sunderbans protects villages and agricultural land from cyclones, and pumps precious oxygen into the atmosphere for people to breath. It provides thousands of impoverished families with wood, neepa, grass, honey, prawns, shrimp and fish. Sustenance of tiger life relies on the continued interaction of many different plant and animal species in the ecosystem (Jackson, 2006). While tourism can provide an alternative livelihood to people dependant on the Sunderbans, touristic activities that destroy this delicate balance will be suicidal. To ensure this, the Sunderbans project management team is driven by three interwoven objectives: actionable research, capacity building, and conservation awareness (STP, 2010). The management decisions are informed by knowledge on: age specific reproduction and survival rates, habitat size and

effective population size, and habitat quality (Tilson & Seal, 1987).

Though the local community in The Sunderbans has been traditionally respectful of the tigers, there have been confrontations between humans and the big cats in recent times due to various factors. But with the initiatives of some enterprising locals and organisations like the Forest Department, The Sunderbans Tiger Project, the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI) and Help Tourism, tiger conservation efforts were encouraged among the local community members and The Sunderbans has become an extraordinary case of wildlife protection in India (Biswas, 2008 ; Hui, 2009).

The Bali Nature and Wildlife Conservation Society (BNWCS) based in the Bali Island of The Sunderbans is one of the initiatives which have promoted sustainable development with the help of local participation. The Bali Nature and Wildlife Conservation Society is led by Anil Kumar Mistry (principal field officer), a poacher-turned-conservationist and an enterprising local responsible for carrying out campaigns like the 'Bagh Bachao' or 'Save the Tiger' in motivating locals towards tiger conservation (Hui, 2009). He is the main initiator of the nature clubs which brought about a cohesive man-animal relationship in The Sunderbans. The initiative of the forest officials in inviting Mistry to join their conservation campaigns as a part of its process of raising the level of local participation paid rich dividends (Biswas, 2008). Because of such initiatives, local economic activities have become ecologically compatible. The Bali Nature and Wildlife Conservation Society, in association with the WPSI, is supporting the local community by enabling poor children to have education and running a library for them to have free access to books.

Promoting The Sunderbans as an ecotourism destination, the Bali Nature and Wildlife Conservation Society runs a 10-cottage ecotourism complex in association with Help Tourism, a group that runs sustainable tourism projects in eastern India. This ecotourism complex is part of a tourism project called The Sunderbans Jungle Camp, a community-driven initiative and it is credited with providing jobs, directly and indirectly, for a number of local people (Hui, 2009; Biswas, 2008). It is also supported by WWF-India (West Bengal State Office), the Department of Forests (Government of West Bengal), and the Association for Conservation and Tourism (ACT) – a non-profit organisation (Biswas, 2008). The complex adjoins a small agricultural settlement, embedded between river and paddy fields. The construction follows traditional patterns and uses local materials. Several guided excursions and boat trips to the forests and the nearby villages can be arranged by locals according to the visitors' preferences. Today the complex is run by local people almost independently (Gotliffe, 2007; Biswas, 2008 ; Hui, 2009 ; Roy, 2008). Local social projects, such as an evening school, free medical camps, book and garment banks and scholarships, are supported with revenue from tourism. In the 2007 'Tourism for Tomorrow' Awards in London, organized by the WTTC (World Tourism and Travel Council), The Sunderbans Jungle Camp was one of the award winners in the category of 'Investor in People' (Hui, 2009).

The efforts of the Bali Nature and Wildlife Conservation Society, through projects like The Sunderbans Jungle Camp, have led to the fostering of peace, harmony and co-existence between man and wildlife in the Indian Sunderbans. The Sunderbans Jungle Camp project is an idyllic example of community-based tourism that protects the endangered Bengal Tigers while giving locals a sustainable alternative livelihood (Hui, 2009). According to officials of The Sunderbans Biosphere Reserve , a study conducted

by The Wildlife Institute of India for IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) judged The Sunderbans to be the 'best managed park' in the country' (Biswas, 2008).

Case Study 3: A Model Ecotourism Village in the Darjeeling Himalayas

Tinchuley is a little hamlet in the picturesque Darjeeling Himalayas in West Bengal, India. It is 32 km from the town of Darjeeling and is considered a model Tourism Village demonstrating community-based pro-poor tourism. Ecotourism has been the main theme for Tinchuley which, in the local dialect, means three *Chuleys* or ovens. The absolute tranquility of the place, beautiful view of the Himalayan mountain ranges and local hospitality attracts many national and international guests. With support from Help Tourism (a sustainable tourism group), and through active participation of the locals, this little hamlet has been converted to a well known ecotourism destination and a model ecotourism village.

The Gunung family in Tinchuley has been the main leader in taking the initiative to develop the model of homestay program that suits the needs of the tourists. The homestay program has been developed as an eco-friendly accommodation complex incorporating 5-6 houses which have been revamped to comply with tourist requirements. The people of Tinchuley have undertaken several eco-friendly projects including:

- developing a forest nursery with floriculture, bio-compost manure, and vermi-compost projects
- establishing organic farming of non-seasonal vegetables to provide additional income
- forming the Tinchuley Model Village Committee, which oversees all development work in the area and ensures that progress takes place in accordance with the needs of the residents (eg, restrictions on the setting up of commercial lodges which may prove unsustainable)
- conversion of three homes into guest houses. Now there are 4 double and 4 four-bedded rooms with private toilet cum bath in one of the buildings
- involvement in biogas and hand-rolled tea production, and apiculture

The Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) provided logistical assistance and supplied equipment, including a chaff-cutter and a slug tank for the biogas project. The hamlet has also been adopted as a model village by the WWF Save Environment and Regenerate Vital Employment Activity (SERVE) which is providing additional technical assistance. Tinchuley won the Most Innovative Product award in 2002 at the Travel and Tourism Fair held in the capital, New Delhi as well as the First Prize in the All India Ecotourism Competition.

The Tinchuley ecotourism village is an example of how tourism can mitigate structural violence within communities and propagate peace and well-being among community members. It is yet another inspiring case of how pro-poor, community centred tourism can bring improvement in the living standards of indigenous communities in remote areas and difficult geographical conditions (Dutta, 2003).

Concluding Remarks

These case studies are testimony to alternative forms of tourism that lead to communal harmony, wildlife and heritage conservation, and socio-cultural and socio-economic development of local communities. They bear witness to the fact that community-based tourism, considered as a facet of alternative tourism, can, as Higgins-Desbiolles (2008:347) said, “foster ecological and societal transformation that might be conducive to a transition to an alternative globalisation”. The attributes of alternative tourism identifiable in the case studies can contribute to positive peace in line with the IIPT’s concept of peace (D’Amore, 1998). The cases also support the view that the involvement of culture in tourism can have a positive impact on the socio-cultural systems of destination communities (Curtin, 1996; Leong, 2008).

Tourism should be carried out to the benefit of local communities. Responsible alternative tourism and peace and prosperity complement each other (Shin, 2005; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008). The success of the community-based alternative tourism cases described in the study demonstrate that they can bring better quality of life, economic sustainability and a reduction in structural violence (Blanchard, 2005). It is also clear that it has become increasingly vital to combine local community participation with government intervention while dealing with tourism projects. This ensures that social and cultural conditions in the local communities are recognized and enhanced (Rogers, 2008).

It is imperative to seek a paradigm shift from the predominantly corporatised tourism that stems from the unchallenged reign of the capitalist system since the fall of socialism in the late ‘80s (Lowy, 2005). Alternative approaches that lead to more just and equitable forms of tourism are essential in addressing the critical issues of local community well-being and ecology while realising the recreational and economic value of tourism (Weaver & Lawton, 2002). However, it is necessary to maintain awareness that alternative forms of tourism may be co-opted by corporatised tourism agents, leading to misrepresentation of the concepts and lack of legitimacy in applying them (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008). This highlights the need for further studies involving empirical research on alternative forms of tourism (Salazar, 2006). Such studies will reveal the potential of these in contributing to sustainable development and positive peace in a more effective way than the replicated forms adopted by corporatised tourism.

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