

ECO-TOURISM

As the new millennium unfolds, we are becoming increasingly aware of the finite, interconnected and precious nature of our planet home. Likewise, tourism is becoming an increasingly popular expression of this awareness. With advances in transportation and information technology, ever more remote areas of the earth are coming within reach of the traveller. In fact, tourism is now the world's largest industry, with nature tourism the fastest growing segment.

Tourism is currently the world's largest industry and ecotourism represents the fastest growing sector of this market. Tourism is already the largest source of foreign exchange in countries like Costa Rica and Belize; in Guatemala, it is second. Throughout the developing tropics, protected area managers and local communities are struggling to balance the need for economic growth with the preservation of natural resources. Well-planned ecotourism can benefit both protected areas and residents of surrounding communities by linking long term biodiversity conservation with local, social and economic development.

Eco-tourism, in simple words, means management of tourism and conservation of nature in a way so as to maintain a fine balance between the requirement of tourism and ecology on the one hand and the needs of local communities for jobs, new skills, income generating employment and better status for women on the other. The global importance of eco- tourism, its benefits as well as its impact was recognised with the launching of the year 2002 as the International Year of eco- tourism (IYE) by the United Nations General Assembly . The IYE offers an opportunity to review eco-tourism experiences worldwide, in order to consolidate tools and institutional frameworks that would ensure its sustainable development in the future. This means maximizing the economic, environmental and social benefits from eco- tourism, while avoiding its shortcomings and negative impacts.

As a concept, eco- tourism has gained momentum recently in India , but as a way of life Indians have practiced eco- tourism since times immemorial by their traditional approach to nature and rich cultural heritage. Eco- tourism has been defined in various ways. The International Eco-tourism Society in 1991 produced one of the earliest definitions: "Eco-tourism is responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well being of local people." The World Tourism Organization has defined it as "tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed natural areas with the specified object of studying, admiring and enjoying nature and its wild plants and animals, as well as existing cultural aspects (both of the past and present), found in these areas." According to the World Conservation Union, eco-tourism is "environmentally responsible travel to natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature and accompanying cultural features (both past and present) that promotes conservation, has a low visitor impact and provides for beneficially active

socio-economic involvement of the local people". In sum, the definitions focus on three significant aspects: nature, tourism and local communities. As a development tool, eco-tourism can advance the three basic goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity:

- conserve biological (and cultural) diversity by strengthening protected area management systems (public or private) and increasing the value of sound eco systems;
- promote the sustainable use of biodiversity by generating income, jobs and business opportunities in eco-tourism and related business networks; and
- share the benefit of eco-tourism developments equitably with local communities and indigenous people by obtaining their informed consent and full participation in the planning and management of eco-tourism businesses.

In the years since the concept was first defined, a general consensus was formed on the essential key elements of eco-tourism: a well preserved eco-system to attract tourists, conscientious, low-impact visitor behaviour during various cultural and adventure activities, lowest possible consumption of non-renewable resources, active involvement of the locals who are able to provide authentic information about nature, culture and the ethnic traditions to the visitors and finally, empowering the local populace to manage eco-tourism so that they ensure conservation through alternative livelihood opportunities and educational components for both the traveller and local communities.

Being an environment-friendly activity, eco-tourism aims at promoting environmental values and ethics and preserving nature in its uninterrupted form. It thus benefits wildlife and nature by contributing towards ecological integrity. Participation of the local communities ensures economic benefits for them, which in the longer run can ensure a better status and an easier life.

The mountain Eco-systems are a unique creation having an altogether distinct characteristic. Mountains are fragile eco-systems and are globally important as water towers of the earth, repositories of rich biological diversity, minerals and forests, target areas for recreation, and as a hub of cultural integrity and heritage. Occupying one-fifth of the world's land surface area, mountains provide a direct life support base for one-tenth of humankind as well as goods and services to more than half the world's population. They are inhabited by the richest human culture. Mountains are crucial to all life on earth. They are also an essential source of fresh water. More than three billion people rely on mountains for water to grow food, to produce electricity, to sustain industries and most importantly, to drink. But owing to the ecological degradation, the regional hydrological cycle is being seriously affected and the mountains' role as water towers will cease. The 'greenhouse effect' in the mountains will have serious repercussions. The Mountains Agenda discussed in the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development at Rio de Janeiro in June 1992 says, "a warming trend in mountain region would not only cause an increase in

the altitude of the snowline, it would also increase water run-off by melting ice and snow. The glaciers themselves are reservoirs and if they melt, the run-off regime would change dramatically and serious water shortage may occur."

A study by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Kathmandu, Nepal reveals a large number of negative indicators suggesting that the mountains are in a state of unsustainability. Mountains are far more fragile than lowland environments. Throughout the world, unsustainable forestry and agriculture practices are degrading many mountain eco-systems, often as a result of poverty, urbanisation and growing population. Scientists also believe that mountains are barometers of global warning. Mountain glaciers, the source of water for most of the world's river systems, are melting at an unprecedented rate.

India has seven principal mountain ranges and the most important amongst them are the Himalayas. Our country has been bequeathed with the majestic Himalayan range that feeds and preserves life throughout the north. Tranquility and peace are synonymous with these mountains.

The Himalayas run across the top of the Indian sub-continent stretching over some 2500 kilometres. These mountains were formed between 50 to 60 million years ago. The most recently formed are the lower foothills known as the Shivaliks. Beyond the Shivaliks are the lower Himalayas which have the most popular hill resorts of India like Shimla, Dalhousie, Mussoorie, Nainital and Darjeeling at heights of four to eight thousand feet above sea level. Beyond the lower Himalayas are the Great Himalayas or the Himadris.

In the Himadris are the Everest and the Annapurna peaks which lie in the boundaries of Nepal and within India are Kanchenjunga, Nanga Parbat and Nanda Devi. The Aravallis, one of the oldest ranges in the world, runs between Delhi and Gujarat to the south-west. Its once snow-covered peaks are no more there but this mountain range still has one hill resort, Mount Abu, and one peak, Guru Shikhar, over 6000 feet high.

The Vindhyas divide the wide Gangetic plains of northern India from the southern parts of the country. They are stretched over a length of 1000 kilometres with an average altitude of 974 feet. The Satpuras' which are south of the Vindhyas, run parallel to them. The name Satpuras is formed of two words: Sat meaning seven and Puras meaning folds, referring to the seven lines of hills which make up the Satpuras. It has one hill resort, Pachmarhi, which is located near the highest point in the range, Dhupgarh at a height of 4429 feet. The Sahyadris (the western Ghats) run for 1600 kms down the western edge to the southernmost point of India. The Sahyadris catch the monsoon rains on the western side. The hill resort in this area is Ootacamund or Ooty, known now as Ughagamandalam, which stands at the foot of the 8615 feet high Doda Betta Peak. This peak is located in the Nilgiris (literally, Blue Mountains). Beyond Nilgiris are the Anamalai or Elephant Hills, the summits of which are said to resemble elephant heads. The famous hill resort of Kodaikkanal is located in the

Palani Hills. The Eastern Ghats which run on the opposite side of the Sahyadris have summits over 3200 feet but are devoid of hill resorts. To their south-east are the Shevroy hills and the hill station of Yercaud. Purvanchal, or eastern mountains, are the last great mountain ranges of India running along the Indo-Myanmar border in North East India.

Unfortunately the mountains in India are experiencing an inexorable decline in the resource base for local subsistence and a terrible deterioration in the already fragile environment. The results are landslides and frequent floods in the densely populated plains to the south of the Himalayan region in the Ganga and Brahmaputra basins. In the Kumaon Himalayas, in the last few decades, there has been unprecedented growth in human population and a corresponding rise in developmental activities, including housing, industry, agriculture, mining and communications. Consequently, there has been a rapid shrinkage in the size of the remaining natural habitats and forests.

The tourism industry has succeeded in adding an impetus to the immense deforestation activities. Together with the construction of roads and buildings the movement of heavy vehicles is mounting degenerating pressure on the already weakened mountains. Trekking is the latest craze with the youth. Trekking for them means just climbing up and down over treacherous terrain, and not following the basic rules of civics and hygiene that go with this sport. Trekking enthusiasts thus leave in their wake mounds of garbage- an ecological destruction. As a result, even remote places like Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Gaumukh have been subjected to destruction.

Since the essence of eco-tourism lies in admiration of nature and outdoor recreation, it encompasses a wide range of activities such as trekking, hiking, mountaineering, bird watching, boating, rafting, biological exploration and visiting wildlife sanctuaries. In that it is akin to adventure tourism with the difference whereas adventure tourism looks for thrill, eco-tourism ensures satisfaction. Its inspirational and emotional aspects are valued because it does not aim at consumptive erosion of natural resources.

India is one of the seven biodiverse countries of the world and has a rich cultural heritage. It has a vast potential of eco-tourism that needs to be tapped for economic benefits as well as for healthy conservation and preservation of nature. In the International Year of eco-tourism some important decisions were taken by the government and private sectors to promote eco-Tourism.

It is becoming evident that increased tourism to sensitive natural areas in the absence of appropriate planning and management can become a threat to the integrity of both eco-systems and local cultures. An increasing number of visitors to ecologically sensitive areas can lead to significant environmental degradation. Likewise local communities and indigenous cultures can be harmed in numerous ways by an influx of foreign visitors and wealth.

Any programme for tourism development should have the underlying objective of promoting the positive impacts and mitigating the negative impacts on the social, economic and physical environments of the designated areas. However, this same growth creates significant opportunities for both conservation and the local community benefit. Eco-tourism can provide the much-needed revenues for the protection of national parks and other natural areas, revenues that might not be available from other sources. In South and South-East Asia, most of the archaeological and historical preservation taking place can be economically justified because they provide attraction for tourists. In some cases, such as in Sri-Lanka, the admission fee paid by tourists is used directly for archaeological research and conservation.

Additionally, ecotourism can provide a viable economic development alternative for local communities, which may lack other income-generating options. Moreover, eco-tourism can make travellers enthusiastic and effective agents of conservation. Conservation and revitalisation of traditional arts, handicrafts, dance, music, drama, customs and ceremonies and certain aspects of traditional lifestyles directly feed into tourism.

In the mountain context ecological stability, viable economy, energetic efficiency, resilience, farmers' security and social justice should be the main indicators of sustainability. Keeping this in mind the planning of any eco-tourism policy in its macro, and micro dimensions should give utmost importance to the empowerment of the local communities. The inherent qualities of hillmen, which they have developed in the mountain environment — courage, hardwork, honesty and the ability to take fast decision— should grow, as these are the capitals of mankind. Only four percent people live in ten percent area of hilly terrain all over the world, but they decide the destinies of the forty percent living in the foothills. This should never be forgotten. This means that the planning and development of tourism infrastructure, its subsequent operation and its marketing should focus on environmental, social, cultural and economic sustainability criteria.

- **Santosh Yadav**

About the Lesson

In the essay, Santosh Yadav describes ecotourism as 'a responsible travel to natural areas.' Offering market-linked long term solutions, ecotourism provides effective economic incentives for conserving and enhancing bio-cultural diversity, and helps protect the natural and cultural heritage. By increasing local capacity and employment opportunities, ecotourism is an effective vehicle for empowering local communities around the world to fight against poverty and to achieve sustainable development.

Santosh Yadav is a mountaineer. She is the first woman in the world to climb up Mount Everest twice.

GLOSSARY

millennium : a span of thousand years

biodiverse habitat	:	the diversity of plant and animal life in a particular
conscientious	:	guided by one's sense of duty
recreation	:	an activity that amuses;entertainment
hub	:	a centre of activity
repercussions	:	a remote or indirect consequence of some action
bequeathed	:	gave by will after one's death
tranquility	:	quiet,free from disturbance
fragile	:	easily broken or damaged
repository	:	a facility where things can be deposited for storage
inexorable	:	impossible to stop or prevent
unprecedented	:	having no example
terrain features	:	a stretch of land especially with regard to physical
activism	:	a doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct action
resilience	:	ability to spring back to former shape or position
sustainability	:	ability to maintain by providing support
consumptive erosion:	:	constant destruction of land or soil by wind and water
revitalization	:	bringing again into activity

Activity 1: COMPREHENSION

A. Tick the correct alternative:

- The world's land surface area that the mountains occupy is—
 - two third
 - one third
 - one fifth
 - one fourth
- The number of principal mountain ranges in India is—
 - five
 - seven
 - nine
 - six
- Any programme for tourism development should have the objective of promoting the impacts that are--
 - negative
 - harmful
 - positive
 - unpleasant

B. Answer to the following questions should not 10-15 words each:

- What is eco-tourism?
- What does eco-tourism aim at?
- What are the two factors between which eco-tourism can attempt a balance?

4. Why does the author say that eco-tourism is a way of life in India?
5. What are the inherent qualities of a hill-man?

C. Answer to the following questions should not exceed 30-40 words each:

1. Discuss the key elements of eco-tourism?
2. What are the reasons for the rapid shrinkage of natural habitats in the forests of the Kumaon Himalaya?
3. How do mountains sustain human and animal life?
4. Discuss the impact of global warming on living beings in mountain regions?
5. Why is it essential to focus on the sustainability criteria for the planning and development of infrastructure and operation of tourism?

D. Answer to the following questions should not exceed 60-80 words each:

1. How can eco-tourism result in social, economic and cultural development?
2. Explain how India has a vast potential for eco-tourism.

E. Say whether the following statements are true or false. Write T for true and F for false in the bracket:

1. Trekkers do not follow the basic rules of civics and hygiene. []
2. The tourist industry has led to the immense deforestation activities. []
3. India is one of the seven bio-diverse countries of the world. []
4. Ecotourism is not an environmental friendly activity. []
5. Eco-tourism revitalizes traditional art. []

Activity 2: VOCABULARY

- (a) The word 'eco-' is a combining form (in nouns, adjectives and adverbs), and is connected with the environment. Some words formed by combining 'eco-' are as follows –
eco-friendly, eco-warriors, eco-terrorism, eco-cide, eco-feminism, eco-tourism
Make one sentence each using the above words so as to make their meanings clear.

- (b) Following is the list of words/phrases that are used to describe an activity protecting the environment.

- address/combat/tackle/ the impact of climate change
- fight/take action on/reduce/ stop global warming
- limit/curb/control air/water/atmospheric environmental pollution
- cut/reduce pollution/greenhouse gas emissions
- achieve/promote sustainable development
- preserve/conservate biodiversity/natural resources
- protect endangered species
- prevent/stop massive deforestation
- raise awareness of environmental issues
- save the planet

Now prepare a list of the words/phrases used to save energy and resources.

Activity 3: GRAMMAR

Study the following sentences:

- (i) Can you imagine her feelings at that time?
- (ii) Nor could Punna stay to mourn her dead child.
- (iii) What might have befallen Punna at that time?

There are a few helping verbs through which we can express notions like ability, obligation, possibility, etc. These are called modals/modal verbs because they help us to express various modes of meaning. All the underlined words in the above sentences (i), (ii) and (iii) are modal verbs. You should learn to use them properly.

Ability is expressed by "can" and "could"

I can speak English fluently.
(= am able to)

They couldn't submit the papers in time.
(= were not able to)

Possibility is shown by "can / could" and "may / might".

Anybody can question the move.
(= it is possible for anyone to)

The road could be blocked.
(= it is possible the road is)

He may come today.
(= it is possible that he will come)

That might be true.
(= it is possible that that is true)

Requests for permission are made with the help of "can / could" and "may / might". "could" and "might" are more polite than "can" and "may".

Can I use your pen?
(= am I permitted?)
May I come in?

Could I use your pen.
(= am I permitted)
Might I say a word?

Permission can be given by means of "can / could" and "may".

He can come if he wants to.
(= is permitted to)

You may borrow my pen if you need to.
(= are permitted to)

Obligation is conveyed by "should", "ought to", "must" and "had to". "Had to" is used to indicate obligation in the past.

You should do as he instructs.
(= you are obliged to do)

Oughtn't he to have helped him ?
(= wasn't he obliged to help him ?)

You must write your name in the register before you enter.

We had to report back by 15th March.
(= we were obliged to)

There are two negatives for "must" in the sense of obligation: ("mustn't" and "needn't/ don't have to") But they mean two different things:

You mustn't go if I refuse.
(= you are obliged not to go)

You needn't / don't have to go if you don't want to.
(= you are not obliged to ...)

Insistence can be expressed by "will" and "would"

He will do it, whatever you say.
(= He insists on doing it....)

Grandfather would take a cup of coffee late in the night.
(= He insisted on taking a cup of coffee)

In order to indicate **logical necessity**, we use the modals "must" and "should"

He must be in school now.
(= Last year he was 3 years old, so we can conclude he is in school now.)

He should have reached home by now.
(i.e. He left from here sometime ago, so it is reasonable to conclude that he has reached home by now.)

We make predictions with the help of the modal "will".

The function will be over in five minutes.

Oil will float on water.

He'll certainly come if you request him.

"Will" and "Shall" also indicate intention. "Shall" in this sense is used with the first person.

I'll speak to him about the matter.
(= I intend to ...)

I shall let you know my decision.
(= I intend to let you know ...)

Now compare some of them and see how they are used:

(i) Idea of Suggestion:

Weaker	You might try to solve the problem.
↓	You could be a little more considerate to your friend.
Stronger	You should not work like this.
	You must not work like this.

(ii) Idea of Politeness and Degree of Formality:

Polite	More polite	Most
formal		
May I ask you to contribute to the Welfare Society? Can I.....?Could I....?	Might I	
Will you contribute some money to the Welfare Society ?	Would you....?	
Do you mind contributing..?	Would you mind...?	
		↓
		Least Formal

Note that "(don't) have to" or "needn't" are negative forms of "must". "Have to" and "have got to" can also be used positively to mean obligation.

e.g. We have to reach Jaipur on Sunday.
I have got to be there in the afternoon.

"Had to" expresses **obligation in the past**; it is the past equivalent of "must".

e.g. In those days, we had to return to the hostel before 10 p.m.

"am/are/is to" is similar in meaning to "have (got) to" and "ought to".

e.g. All teachers on leave are to return to duty immediately.

"need to" also refers to obligation but is less forceful than "must".

You need to attend the seminar.

is less forceful than

You must attend the seminar.

"Used to" refers to a past state or habit in the distant past.

I used to go for a walk every day. (some years ago)

Don't say: I used to go for a walk every day last week.

(iii) **The Idea of Permission** is expressed by a number of helping verbs that fall into a sequence as follows:

mild suggestion	could.... If I wish, I could....
	can.... If I take the initiative, I can...
	may.... I am allowed to....
	should.... I am advised to....
	Ought to.... It is recommended that....
	need to.....It would be good for me
	had better There might be difficulty or trouble if I don't....
	must.... I am required to....
	have got to.....It is unavoidable for me to

(iv) **The Idea of Prohibition** (not giving permission) is expressed in the following sequence:

need not	it is not necessary
haven't got to	not forced to
should not	advised not to
must not	strictly forbidden
cannot	not in a position to
may not	forbidden
shall not	refused permission to

(v) **The Idea of Prediction** or speculation is expressed into a sequence as follows:

might	It is possible, but not likely
may	It is possible that....
should	It is probable that....
would	I guess / speculate
will	It is very likely
am, are, is going to	It has been arranged
	It will happen soon
can't help	It is impossible for....

Exercise

Fill in the blanks using couldn't, can, can't, must, need, have got to, will have to:

Raman : Hello, Peter! Are you coming to the cinema tonight?

Kamal : No, I _____. I really _____ get some work done.

Raman : That's a pity. _____ you do it tonight?

Kamal : I'm afraid I _____. My father says I _____ start working harder. Otherwise I _____ leave college and work in an office.

Raman : How much _____ you _____ do tonight ?.

Kamal : Well. I _____ read at least two chapters of our economics book and then I _____ finish that essay, you know.

Raman : Haven't you done that yet ? We _____ hand it in tomorrow.

Kamal : I know. Look, _____ you really go to the cinema ? _____ you stay and help me ?

Raman : Well, I _____ if you like, but I _____ do my work.

Activity 4: SPEECH ACTIVITY

Organize a Classroom Symposium on the following Theme –
'Eco-tourism is the Need of the Hour'

Activity 5: COMPOSITION

Ask your teacher to tell you about the environmental awareness of our ancestors/forefathers as described in our Scriptures and then write a paragraph of 250-words on

‘Our Traditional Knowledge System and Ecology’