

Provisions and Perceptions of the Hosts in Business at Digha A Study of Beach Tourism in India

Kartick Chakraborty¹, Dipankar Chatterjee² and Arnab Das³

Abstract: *The impact of tourism in a society is a complex and varied subject. It is generally agreed that tourism results in both positive and negative impacts for hosts of tourism destinations. There is a need to study hosts perceptions of tourism because local stakeholders are the ones who are most directly affected by tourism. The present study specifically examines the views of the hosts in 'business' at beach tourism in India. The study adopted the qualitative research approach to understand the viewpoint of the hosts concerning tourism activities in Digha. The analysis resulted in the emergence of the four major themes including livelihood, administration, entertainment and closet services. The findings exposes that the hosts perceived tourism as one component of a larger system of growth and development within the area. Furthermore, hosts recognize the complex nature of tourism impacts and identify several indirect and induced impacts resulted from tourism activities. The work ultimately explores the gamut of the varied but changing cultural representation of the hosts' vis-à-vis guests, the continuity and change in the hosts' perception and other relevant issues of local tourism development.*

Key Words: Hosts, Perception, Tourism, Impact, Digha.

Introduction: Hosts Perception and Tourism Practices

The impact of tourism on the host destination is an area that has been greatly researched by many tourism related authors (Lundberg 1980; Foster 1985; Inskip 1991; Witt 1991; Cooper & Jackson 1989; Friges 1996). Tourism perceptions by the host community have gained academic attention during the last decades and their importance for planning issues in terms of sustainable development has been acknowledged (Dyer et al. 2007). It is generally believed that tourism generates both positive and negative impacts in host communities (Matheison and Wall 1982). The hosts are the ones who are most directly affected by tourism development; therefore there is a need to study their perceptions of tourism to determine the impacts of tourism in their life (Haywood 2000; Simmons 1994; Snaith and Haley 1999). Furthermore, the importance of studying hosts perceptions of tourism is not solely rooted in altruism, but is also based on their involvement in the production of tourism, and their ability to significantly enhance or diminish the product (Ap 1992; Snaith and Haley 1999). Anthropologists have taken serious interest in the issues of tourism for nearly last four decades (Cohen 1972, 1974, 1979b; Dann, Nash & Pearce 1988; Cooper et. al. 1993; Chambers ed. 1997; Burns 1999). Although there are dearth of studies in terms theoretical bases and methodological approaches and other significant factors that have affected the development of solid foundations for further studies on hosts' perception of tourism. During the last decades, increasing academic attention has been given to the hosts' perception towards socio-cultural impacts of tourism (Matheison and Wall 2006), on one particular location (Brunt and Courtney 1999; Gu and Wong 2006) by comparing the perception of different host groups (Besculides et al. 2002) and as a community (Petrzelka et al.

1 Doctoral Scholar, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta, Kolkata, West Bengal.

2 Assistant Professor, Faculty of IRTDM, School of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University, Ranchi - 834008, Jharkhand. Email – dipcha_123@yahoo.com.

3 Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta, Kolkata, West Bengal. Email – arnab_katha@yahoo.co.in.

2005). The existing research suggests that there are several reasons for the emerging scholarly attention to the perceptions of tourism. It has been recognized that the evaluation of hosts' perception could be a valuable component in identifying and measuring tourism impacts as well as mobilizing the local resources (Getz 1994). In the context of developing countries Chib (1980: 292-293) advances to the end of his discussion in the following way:

“The right approach for the Third World, therefore, would not be to turn its back on multinationals but to develop its own resources, particularly human resources. Unfortunately most of the developing countries seem to believe that the answer to the problem is to establish public sector tourist enterprises because it is not generally realised that tourism being a service industry, the key to its success is good management. This is precisely the area wherein public sector tourist establishments have proved to be a failure; the services provided by them are generally sub-standard. Part of the reason is that, historically, tourism in the Third World has not grown from grass roots. Travel has been undertaken for purposes of trade or pilgrimage since antiquity, but the tradition of travel for pleasure had its beginnings in Europe in the post-Renaissance period.”

To such assessments, which sound similarly familiar to any urban Indian, who participate in tours and travels, Chib (1980: 293) added:

“[P]eople started travelling in much larger numbers and the need for travel promoters and organisers arose (. . .) Private enterprise was associated with governmental efforts somewhat grudgingly, or was allowed to play a subservient role. However, with the growth of (. . .) even the domestic holiday market the tourist industry, e.g. hoteliers, travel agents, ground tour operators, started asserting itself, though not quite successfully because the carriers, (. . .) railways and road transport services are usually owned and operated by the state. Of course the pattern in the developing countries is not the same”.

The strict questions of the present study emanate from here. Whether, why and how do the narratives of the locals of a place of leisure tourism in a developing nation, like India reflect the perception and practices of tourism? The present work selected Digha, a very popular sea beach in West Bengal that is known to meet two different kinds of leisure ends of the domestic tourists especially the urban Bengalese. The selection puts emphasis on the patterns of the domestic tourists and the experience of the local sections of people more concerned with tourism and about the tourists. By identifying the hosts' perception strategies can be set up to minimise the misunderstanding between hosts and guests (Lankford and Howard 1994) and therefore to pursue the goal of sustainable tourism. In Williams and Lawson's (2001) words:

“[i]f it is known why hosts support or oppose the industry, it will be possible to select those developments which can minimise negative social impacts and maximise support for alternatives”.

Such questions of the study need to highlight some deeper understanding of some aspects of the relationship between Anthropology and Tourism. Thus the present work felt to resort to the yet less-explored broad domains of incentives and impacts for both tourists and locals in its context of study.

Digha: The Context of Attraction

Digha, the first beach tourist centre in West Bengal has a historical background and we got this particular name from the personal letters of Warren Hasting, who wrote to his wife about the appreciation of Digha Sea Beach. During the British colonial period this small village on the shore of the Bay of Bengal was rarely known to the outsiders and little number people visited this place. The article considers the perception of hosts toward tourism in general and to understand the element of attraction still prevailing and on the increase in Digha since colonial period in particular. In the literature there has been less concerted focus on tourist attractions even though they are the core element of the tourism system and a primary influence on destination success (Gunn 1979; Mill and Morrison 1985; Lew 1987; McIntosh, Goeldner, and Ritchie 1995; Swarbrooke 1995; Weaver and Lawton 2002). Tourism could not exist without the presence of attractions (Pigram 1983), which fundamentally influence the overall image and market profile of the destination (Mill and Morrison 1985). Tourist attractions for the purposes of this study are defined as leisure requirements, services, administrative aspect and areas with specific human or natural features that provide the focus of hosts and guests attention.

After independence the state government has taken several steps to make it a well-fashioned sea beach tourist center. Since then the place has got the attention of the government as well as the private businessmen who established several hotels, lodges, refreshment joints and other amenities whose numbers are still increasing not only in the same place but with extension to other adjoining places along the sea beach. The New Digha and Talsari are the two important extensions in the right side, while Sankarpur and Mandarmani in the left side. The then Digha is now identified as 'Old Digha' by the tourists and the hosts. Many people of the locality are attached to the industry by varied means in a patterned way and they together form a flexible system through which the industry works. The major components that attract the tourists' as evident from the dialogue with the selected hosts can be classified in the following manner:

- **Natural Delights:** Digha seems an idyllic holiday destination for the weekender tourist especially the urbanites of the adjoining districts of West Bengal. Digha beaches are adorned with natural glory. The beaches are surrounded by attractive plantations of casuarinas. The sea is always calm and offers tranquil atmosphere to relish. At the end of the day, the beaches of Digha offer the beautiful scenes of the sunset. These scenes are worth seeing.
- **Administrative Aspects:** Administrative instability in the destination choice plays a pivotal role and all holiday destination decisions are characterised by risk which is influential in the avoidance of places (Lawson and Thyne 2001). Of the potential risks tourists overwhelmingly express safety-related concerns especially in the context of leisure travel (Dolnicar 2005). The hosts' view Digha as being easily accessible, low cost, having strength in scenery, climate, open spaces, rest strands, hospitality and law & order but having less satisfactory opinions on issues such as restaurants, shopping, varied quality food items and entertainment for the 'foreign' tourists'. The authors unanimously agree from the hosts' point of view that the political stability in the state plays a crucial role for the maintenance of law and order. The local administration of Digha mainly operated through two principally operative institutions. These are

a) Digha police station mainly responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the area and providing security to the 'guests'.

b) Digha Sankarpur Development Authority (DSDA) came into existence in the year 1956 with an objective to develop Digha and Sankarpur as an attractive tourist spot and to develop the adjoining areas for the benefit of the local people.

- **Accommodative Components:** The hotels and the lodges of the area constitute the accommodative component of the tourism industry of Digha. There are several hotels in governmental ownership and private business. There are two government-undertaking hotels at Digha. These are

- a) Digha Tourist Lodge
- b) Saikatabas

On the other hand there are a large and always changing number of private hotels at Digha. These hotels can be grouped into the following categories:

- Starred hotel
- Starless hotel.
- Private Lodge.

The majority of the owners of these hotels are local. They have their own awareness of the realistic services and means to attract the tourists to their hotels. The closer look at the location of the hotels exhibits a clear social differentiation in terms of the tourists and the services. The tourist of the elite category and travelling with family prefer to stay near Barrister colony, which is less crowded, relatively clean and a bit costly. Some of the prominent hotels in that area include Sea Hawk, Sagarika, Samudravilla, Sandpiper, Saikatabas, Blue View etc. On the other hand hotels near Foreshore colony accommodate all categories of tourists especially of younger generation travelling with friends as the closet services are easily available in that area.

- **Vendors and others components:** There are several types of shops at Digha. The locals classified shops into two categories, the first one is permanent and the other is temporary in nature. The permanent shops are situated at the 'Nehru Market' and they are the retailers, while the small shop owners of locally popular items collect those articles from the permanent retailers of either of that market or of distant markets like Kolkata. They utilise the advantage of hawking closer to the hotels of the tourists and sea beach. The permanent shops are mainly of various types of handcraft materials and food or edible items. The items made up of conch are supplied from the southern India, mainly via Chennai. The permanent shops store their items at the shops but the temporary shops, more particularly the vendors who sale their items on the footpath have to remove their items everyday after the sale.
- **Entertainment components:** This particular part principally is constituted by the following:
 - Photographer
 - Horse lender
 - Tube lender
 - Temporary shades of coconut sellers
 - Food sellers beside the beach

Tourists usually do not prefer to take their camera with them near the tumultuous water of the sea. The photographers on the beach shoot pictures of the tourists and earn some money as their livelihood. Always changing in number, the photographers know nearly fifty such photographers working at Old Digha and they are not allowed to run their business at New Digha. If any tourist party hires them and takes them to New Digha then they can shoot the picture there. The horse riders can be seen on the beach during the sunrise and sunset. They mainly work during the early morning and late evening. There are nearly thirty such horse leasers who lend their horses for a certain time for riding and they have fixed a particular charge for the purpose. They are not the real owners of the horses but they have to hire them on lease from their real owners in exchange of a fixed amount per month. Tube lenders are the local people mainly belongs to the fisherman community, who lend the tubes to the tourist that allow tourists to enjoy float in the sea wave. Some of the tube lenders are also appointed by the DSDA as a 'safety officers' mainly to look after the tourist especially during the high tide.

- **Food and Other refreshments:** Food and refreshments has been one of the most sought after item that tourists adore during the leisure. There are many cheap "rice hotels" all over Digha, serving cheap, but good quality dishes. There are few expensive restaurants. Tourists can buy fresh fishes like *ilish*, *pomfret*, *parshe*, *prawn* etc. from *Mobona*, Digha fish market in the morning and can have it cooked at the numerous "Dada-Boudi'r" joints around Sea Hawk. The tourists can enjoy the fried fish on the sea front in the evening while strolling in the beach. There is no dearth of soft and hard drinks at Digha. Green coconuts are very cheap here. The green coconut vendors move with their cycles all along the Sea Beach. There are few bars and wine shops in Digha serving all sorts of hard drinks. The hard drinks are also available almost at all the betel nut shops.
- **Closest Services:** The people who are indirectly benefited from the tourism in the area by providing service like sex, drugs, alcohol etc. are hereby considered as 'closest' services. The hosts' admitted that some of the services that allure the youth tourists are regarded as socially unacceptable, especially those that involve child prostitution and commercial sex though it is mutually beneficial to the people involved. Holidays are time when people may "live life to the full" and not have to consider whether their actions and behaviour are socially acceptable. Thus, the holiday environment provides a catalyst for people to engage both mentally and physically in the atmospherics of relaxation, with its underpinning notions of sensuality and sexuality. Local feelings are generally sympathetic towards the people who provide sexual services to tourists. As one local explained:

"This sex industry has linkages with tourism but I don't blame tourism. The problem is the lack of employment, and

sex work gives an opportunity to the unemployed. There are things that go on here, secret things. These secret things are bad but if it makes the tourists happy we are happy because if those people are happy other people will come. Happy means money”.

It was found that the sex workers are not the host community but a floating population of the adjoining areas. The rickshaw pullers, petty shopkeepers are act as an agent mainly to recognize potential customers. They use some locally significant vocabulary having ‘dual meaning’ like ‘*sab byabostha ache*’ (everything is available), ‘*ekbane jamai bhara paoa jay*’ (groom is available on rent) to identify clients. Thus ‘closet’ services allowed Digha to develop and given people of different section of the area, the ability to earn a living in ‘different areas’ and therefore affords them a better lifestyle.

Methodological Considerations

The research utilized qualitative approach in the form of ethnography for identifying ideas and opinions of the people in a host destination, participation in tourism directly, interacting with tourists on a regular basis as guides, photographers, hoteliers, travel agents and other service providers. Qualitative research was deemed appropriate for the purpose of this research as the aim was to discover hosts’ perceptions on their experience of Digha. A qualitative perspective also helped to capture the nuances of tourism and travel by welcoming anomalies in the discussion (Kuhn 1970). The researchers used Personal Construct Theory (PCT) to arrive at the ‘construct’ of the diversity of tourists’ preferences as entailed by the hosts about Digha. Originally conceived by Kelly (1995) as a technique in clinical psychology, this theory is based on the proposition that individuals generate and constantly reassess their own personal expectations about the nature of people and/or places in which they interact directly or vicariously. PCT, therefore, involves the personal schemata that individuals construct in order to make sense of and function within the world. Similar to ideas of Middleton (2003) the aim was to understand the hosts’ various experiences and to give voice to the interplay of hidden cultural dynamics of being participant and being non-participant rather than typical consumer and market driven initiative which characterizes much tourism research (Westwood 2005).

Data were generated from fieldwork by means of different ethnographic techniques ranging from observation as ‘companion’, semi-structured interview with peoples engaged in providing any kind of services to the tourists, focus group discussions and informal interactions with the informant. The authors ably collected narratives from some selected informants to elicit the element of attraction and repulsions of the tourists’. The sample used in the study was a non-probability and may be characterise into two types – snowball and purposive. In consequence the samples were few in number yet representative of all the sections associated with the tourists’ service. The exercise mainly adopted for the selection of different hosts’ at beach primarily responsible for providing diverse services to the tourists’. The classes of informants include photographer, tube lender, petty shopkeepers and other ‘closet’ service providers. At first the authors initiated the exchange of the experiences about Digha and its changing patterns over time to unfold the perceptual dynamicity of the hosts’. During this period, remaining in a leisurely mood the interviewees was given a preferred context of the interaction for elaborating their experiences and focusing on the plan for future. The familiarity of the linguistic and local identities was conducive for the free exchange of ideas between the ‘Guest Self’ and the ‘Host Other’. It was snowball in that some interviewees were interviewed as a result of the recommendation by the initial informants; the first few interviewees were acquaintances of one of the researchers but others were gained on a snowball basis. It was during the reporting at Digha Police station as ‘Guest Anthropologist’, we met one of the hoteliers, who introduced us with the other hotel owners. The authors endeavoured to classify the varying standard of hotels on the basis of the locals’ preferences and purposively selected each category of hotels to get diverse insight about the provisions available for accommodation. The results from the non-probability sampling cannot be claimed to be representative of a wider population. Indeed the purpose of the study was not to achieve representativeness but to gain deeper insight into hosts’ view. The interview of the hoteliers was structured around six main topics involving (a) Number, Types and Tariff of rooms, (b) Most profitable season, (c) Places tourists coming from, (d) Facilities available, (e) Recruitment process of Staff, (f) Notion of competition among them. The shopkeepers at market were also interviewed with the help of pre-selected set of questions involving various aspects related to their personal life and their experience as a part of tourism industry. The typical interview lasted thirty to forty five minutes and the significant points of the interview were written down on paper as accurately as possible. The findings were read through and analysed by the authors individually based on

the topics. The individual interpretation was eventually discussed among the authors to reach the consensual outcome of the findings. Quotes from the interviewee were incorporated as an evidence of the subjective objectivity.

The Hosts' at Digha: Empirical Investigation

During the fieldwork an attempt was made to seek the perceptions of the hosts towards the tourism at Digha. The respondents were mainly comprised of the two class of service provider – the hoteliers and shopkeepers representing the formal sector and the vendors at beach representing informal sector. The hosts irrespective of their class affiliation perceived tourism in the area as a solution to the problem of unemployment and poverty though there are some inherent negative and positive impacts that seem to increase with tourism development.

- **Hoteliers' Perception:** The perception of the hoteliers towards the tourist has been constructed through the help of the staffs, managers and the owners of the hotels and lodges. For the purpose of the study, the authors visited several hotels and lodges and the employees of the hotels were mainly asked for the information. Perception of the respondents regarding the accommodation facilities available in digha for the tourists can be summarised under the following heads:

a) The government undertaking hotels and lodges are less in number than the private business projects. So it is clear that the industry is highly dependant on the private entrepreneurship for the accommodation of the tourists.

b) The name of the hotels are very much related with culture of the Bengalis and sea-beach tourism. The words that are frequently used either as prefix or as suffix with the name of the hotels are *Saikat*-, *Samudra*-, *Sagar*-, sea etc.

c) The number of the skilled and formally specialised employees in the hotels shows that the permanent staffs in all hotels both in government undertaking or private business is less than the requirement, though the number of the temporary employees fluctuate on the basis of the demands of service.

d) The number of the rooms in the hotels shows the competition between the government and private hotels, where the later, though with varying standards, are well ahead of the governmental provisions of facilities given to the tourists.

e) The tariff of course fixed in case of the government hotels. But in case of the private hotels the tariff is not fixed and it can be increased during the peak season and discount is given up to 50% during the off seasons.

f) The employees of the hotels are mainly recruited from the local area. The recruitment of the local people helps the owner to get all the useful information about the employees.

There are several contractors who bring these employees to the hotels and they get some commission in return from the both employee and employer.

h) The owners of the hotels of the area are generally the inhabitants of the Digha for many generations or they have been staying here for many years.

i) The tourists' arrival happen all round the year but the area crowded with the tourists mainly during the Durga Puja, Christmas and the holidays prefixed or suffixed with weekends.

During the fieldwork it was found that the vast majority of the hoteliers agreed that the tourism activity positively improved the livelihood opportunities for the local people. This means that for local people benefits accruing from the presence of tourists outweigh the negative effects of tourism. The hoteliers have classified tourists into several categories and accordingly trying to equip themselves to accommodate the all categories of tourists as per their need. The hoteliers categorise the rooms of the hotels considering the economic standard, aesthetic sense and the composition of the tourists. They adopted various means to allure tourists that include

online booking facilities, advertisement in news daily, discount on booking, arrangement of entertainment programmes, food and refreshment facility, appointment of local agents and above all the commitment for security. The authors came to know that all the hotels and lodges in Digha are the members of 'Digha Hotel Owners Association' and they efficiently manage the misdeed created by the tourists or hoteliers with utmost care.

- **Shopkeepers View:** One of the most important aspects of the tourism industry of Digha is the market, which is situated on the sea embankment. The shops can be classified as permanent and temporary depending on their location and the nature of ownerships. The permanent shops are situated at the 'Neheru Market' and the authorized license holder of DSDA. These shops generally act as the retailers of the various items like jute made carpets, wall mats, begs, oscillators and ornaments made of conch and sea shell. The temporary shops are arranged in a row along the sea bank and engaged in selling different items ranging from fast food items, handicrafts, dry fruits, toys, betel nut cigarettes etc. The temporary shop owners are often evacuated by the local administrators because of illegal encroachment. One of the temporary shop owners reported that:

"We people serve the tourist while they are strolling in the beach. Instead of providing facilities and making plan for our development, the administrators consider us as nuisance creator. We are not the only people who reap benefits from the tourists. Tourists also need our service. They came here to relax and want everything in their footsteps. If you don't believe me, ask them".

During the trip, the authors interacted with the shop owners of all categories to get a clear idea about their perception related to self and other with reference to tourism activity in the area. The following are the excerpts of the findings:

- a) All the shop owners whether permanent or temporary have started their business much earlier and they are experiencing the shifting trends of tourism landscape in the area.
- b) The permanent shop owners are well-to-do in comparison with the temporary shop owners.
- c) The majority of the respondents admitted that political affiliation to the local ruling party is essential to run a business smoothly. All the semi-permanent shop-owners get their land by paying ransom to the local leaders.
- d) The shops remained open from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. to fulfil the demand of the tourists. During the peak season the shops also kept open till late night. All the owners of the temporary shops stay at the shop during night to keep vigil on their items. Sometimes they feel exhausted due to the excessive pressure of the tourists. Still they consider it better to handle the pressure than to take rest for nothing. Mahamaya Rout, 42 yrs old temporary shop-owner stated: *"More you work, more you earn and can lift your family from distress"*.
- e) Majority of the families under this category are nucleated. Permanent owners are associated with this vocation for almost two generation whereas the temporary owners are the first generation businessman. Some of the respondents admitted that they do have some cultivated land in the village which they cultivate to supplement their income.
- f) Capital is necessary to run a business. The moneylenders play a crucial role in the life of the shopkeepers by providing capital for purchasing raw materials from the wholesalers. The shopkeepers have positive attitude towards moneylenders because they are considered as a person who helps shopkeepers during the crisis period.
- g) The tourists visit Digha all round the year yet during the worship of goddess Durga, Christmas Vacation and other holidays, the flow of tourists' increases. The monsoon is perceived as the off season for business. During the off season the hosts has to depend either on their own savings or take loan from the moneylenders for sustenance.
- h) Finally the shopkeepers of all categories classify the tourists in terms of their behaviour during the transaction. Two types of tourists were identified – 'soft & well behaved' 'rude & ill-behaved'. The

respondents admitted that the satisfaction from the business not only depends on the maximisation of profit but also on the good attitude of the customers.

It is apparent from the above observation that a sharp line of perceptual disparity exists between the temporary and permanent shopkeepers. Temporary shopkeepers consider themselves more vulnerable though they constitute as the backbone of the tourist industry in terms of tourist satisfaction. They had to face financial, political, infrastructural and social challenges to continue their business. The permanent shop-owners perceive that their competition in business increases due to the presence of these 'illegal' shopkeepers. Whatever the competition exists among the different sections of the shopkeepers, it needs to be continued for the benefit of the locals and the tourists. The impact of tourism is not only restricted to the increased economic opportunities of the people rather it raises wider social issues like environmental degradation, social exclusion, tourists identity etc.

Hosts' Reaction to Tourism: Some Perceptual Nuances

Tourism has the capacity to interfere with the host society's socio-cultural set-up. According to Pizam & Milman (1984) socio-cultural impacts of tourism contribute to:

“Changes in value systems, individual behavior, family relationships, collective lifestyles, traditional ceremonies or community organization”.

When any place is recognized as a tourist center, then lots of changes take place due to the amalgamation of people from different culture facilitating cultural exchange. Tourism causes gradual change in a society's values, beliefs and practices. The locals feel this impact heavily due to their close interaction with the tourists. While this influence may be interpreted positively as an increase in the standard of living, it may also be considered negatively as an indication of acculturation (Brunt and Courtney, 1999, Dogan 1987). The changes resulting from the tourism can only be judged good or bad by those affected. During the fieldwork it was observed that the tourism activity in the area did not influence all the hosts uniformly. The host associated with the tourism industry has varied experience and notion about how tourism activity influences both 'self' and 'other'. In this section an attempt has been made to explore the varied understanding of the hosts concerning the tourism development in Digha. In some instances, the hosts experienced the impacts of tourism similarly, whereas in other cases, there were notable differences that reflected the unique relation each community had with tourism. When thinking about tourism, it is important to use objectivity to evaluate hosts perceptions of the industry's effects and to avoid polarization of tourism effects into positives and negatives. It is perhaps more useful to consider how tourism affects stakeholders to varying degrees. The experience of the hosts on the impact of tourism mainly focuses on the changes in the spheres of personal life as well as in the total cultural landscape of the area. Along with transformation in the cultural sphere, the tourism has created a new social order that acknowledges the participation of women in income generating activities. It is hard to consider that the participation of women in business as an indicator of women empowerment. During the fieldwork it was observed that very few number of stalls were under the sole control of a woman. Nearly every woman stall owner interviewed narrated that they were forced to accept this activity to stabilize their own lives. Mahamaya Rout, 42 yrs old divorcee with a child stated that:

“None (housewives) want to go out for earning money but the situation forced them to move out and do something for survival. When I was left by husband, I literally have no option other than to work for the rearing of my son. Howsoever I am not doing any wrong thing”.

She also explained that it was not easy for a woman to accommodate herself in the market dominated by the man. The initial challenge a woman face was to adjust her with the fellow shopkeepers and then with the tourists. From own experience she narrated that:

“It is true that there are several problems, but we cannot close the shop for that reason only, if we do so then how do we earn our meal”.

The economic benefits of tourism were readily acknowledged by the respondents participated in the study. Nearly everyone interviewed agreed that tourism led to the creation of income opportunities and open up avenues. The increased flow of tourists is directly proportional to the growth in business, jobs, infrastructure, amenities and different illegal activities. The significant number of local youth are engaged themselves with flesh trade, supply of alcohol and other intoxicating substances to the tourist especially of younger age. In this context it is very difficult to judge whether the impact of tourism could be considered as generative or degenerative. Even a sharp perceptual difference is observed among the respondents. The respondents disclosed that the youth of rich family usually visits Digha and spent huge amount of money that indirectly benefits the hosts but degenerating our value systems. Mr. Harsh Jana, an aged respondents stated:

“More the people visit the place more these incidents will take place. Generally the sons of the rich come here to waste their parental wealth. The main intention behind their visits either to enjoy sex or to drink”.

However the respondents approved that it is difficult to compartmentalize all the youth as offensive and opined that all depends on the upbringing and background of the family. In respect to the similar events, Prashanta Bera, 24 years old youth appears little argumentative,

“Digha is not a religious place, where youth came to worship the sun. Here they came either to enjoy with their girlfriend or to enjoy leisure by other means. We have to acknowledge their demand to maintain the flow of tourists. If they don't come here then we all have to starve”.

In these narratives certain opinions recur: the older generation equates the transformation as degenerative while a representative of younger generation find the changes as lucrative and beneficial for both the tourists and hosts. The hosts recognized the shift in taste of the tourists, who are to be satisfied to keep the industry alive. The hosts recognized the impact of tourism not only in terms of material benefits rather they identified tourism as an avenue that develops their professional skills, such as dealing with people and money, confidence, communication skills, courtesy and reduced some prejudices. The skills that they develop through their lifelong association with the tourists services can help them during business transaction. Mr. Pintu Dey, a shop owner at the market narrated that:

“Since the tourists are of diverse nature, we need to behave accordingly. I am here for the last 10 years and can easily identify between the fraud and the honest”.

The statement is an indication of his confidence that he had develop through experiential learning. Not only did interactions between hosts and guests promote social transformation but also responsible for creating social tensions. The change in the composition of tourists groups may also be responsible for the tension that arises. Previously, the tourists used to come with their families but nowadays the youth came in groups. The bantering of girls by the boys is a regular phenomenon that often leads to the quarrel between the either parties. Despite, tourism activity in the recent times evolves a new class of service providers' especially local youth, who act as an agent in flesh trade and engaged in the supply of narcotics. The respondents appear compassionate concerning the women attached with prostitution as they are forced in this business because of varied reason. In the word of Mahamaya Rout:

“Nobody is there to feed them but everybody is ready to insult them. Who give them that right?”

The local administration also seems to be reluctant in preventing 'illegal' activities in the area. The police often made raids in the hotels and lodges but the things get settled as usual. This phenomenon becomes a way of life with regard to the illicit activities. Concerning the future of the Digha tourism industry Mr. Pintu Dey commented that:

“The development can only happen if the local authority, residents, hosts and the tourists work together. We have to accept the transformation whether benevolent or malevolent and order ourselves accordingly.”

Thus tourism fostered concerns about changes to the character of the hosts, including the pace of life and tendency towards commercialization. The analyses are very much reflective about the active orientation of the hosts in recording the impacts and interpreting the behaviour and needs of the tourists. They assimilate changes, order necessary cognition and build up perceptions to cater to the need of tourism. However, the higher flow of tourists and money might motivate the local hosts for better understanding and dealing of the tourism and tourists but the 'negative' impacts are also the things to experience as well.

Conclusion

If the host in a tourist centre is one major component, the other complimentary components is the tourists or the guests. Interaction between host and guest is a key element in the total number of components of socio-cultural impacts, effecting various changes to the hosts' life style, traditions, norms, habits, beliefs and values. These changes can result in both positive and negative consequences with implications for crime rates, social conflicts, traffic, materialism, community services and cultural activities (Hejazeen, 2007; Schianetz, 2007). In the study the focus was given to study the nature and pattern of the tourists visiting Digha from the host's point of view and during the interviewing the respondent from various sections have express the fact that tourists are the main source of the income and so they are always treated well. The above story tells the glorious or enlightened part of the tourism industry. But it has a dark area too. As it is stated in the foregoing discussion that the establishment of the tourism industry has opened a door for the employment for the locale and many people of various age are working here. But all of them are working as contractual labourers and during the rainy season or when the inflow is less many of them lose their jobs. Another dark side of it is that many local women now regularly visit several hotels and lodges, these women are employed as sex-workers and there are some youth who are working as agents. Several studies related to the sustainability of tourism stated that the host community can tolerate negative socio-cultural impacts if the benefits of tourism exceed the negative consequences (Faulkner and Tideswell, 1997). The present study validates the above findings in the context of Digha. Despite all that, the popularity of the Digha is growing day by day as a leisure destination especially to the urban Bengalis due to the availability of cheap and high-quality accommodation, good transportation and entertainment components of varied type including socially tabooed services.

At the end it is more difficult to draw a conclusion as it is true that the development of the area as a tourist spot has brought a great change both at material and ideological sphere of the local people. The findings come very close to the Bryden's (1973) view that tourism development takes various forms and its impact is conditioned by the context in which the development occurs. But it is also a fact that the changes have had to happen as no place in the present time is isolated from the greater world and here tourism has act as a reagent. The future will decide if the changes those have taken place will damage or suit for the development of the industry and condition of the locale.

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