

## The Ethics of Tourism Development in Bangladesh

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**Abstract.** *Tourism is the most popular leisure activity that entertains people from every corner of the world and generates high revenue in the global economy. Developing countries like Bangladesh is still have uninvestigated tourist spot. This paper depicts the absence of minimum requirement of Bangladesh to expand its tourism sector, mostly for ethical reasons. Our study has focused on ethical aspects of tourism which will help the decision makers to change the current disequilibrium of tourism industry.*

### 1. Introduction

Tourism is often synonymous to travelling for pleasure and education. Tourism has not only been the single economic sector that has gained considerable economic attention, but has also become a central feature of modern society that affects every part of the world. As tourism is essence of the people movement within this society, it is hard to imagine a world without holidays and opportunities for travelling to new places for new experiences. For this reason, the activity of tourism has grown by around 25 per cent in the past 10 years and is one of the main generators of employment in both developed and developing countries. The role of tourism plays a significant role in sustainable development

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where United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Tourism Organization (WTO) encourages all countries to make sure that their policies and actions for its development and management fully embrace the principles of sustainability.

Developing country like Bangladesh has various potential sectors and tourism is one of them. Travelers from different parts of the world had interest in Bangladesh since a long time, to see the attractive panoramic unknown beauty and unspoiled natural and unique reserves. As tourism is in its modern sense of phenomenon, it mainly started in 1960s. Tourists from abroad come to see archeological sites, historic mosques and monuments, resorts, scenic beauty of lavish green forests, wildfire, hills, vales, tribal culture, religious rituals, deep mangrove forests and the longest beach in the world.

Many businesses grew concomitantly with the development of tourism including the airlines, shipping, hotels and restaurants, finance companies, tour operators, travel agents, NGOs etc. Even though, the government of Bangladesh is suffering from generating the source of earnings for a smooth mobility. Tourism is one of the sectors, where the government can easily manage to earn and make the industry from unorganized to organize. Bangladesh is rapidly developing in tourism industry to compete in local and global market. Because of the overall development of the country's economy and its cultural diversification, Bengal always attracted tourists.

Globally, tourism has become the most important civil and largest industry in the world. It has been making massive contribution to the developing country in terms of foreign exchange, employment by employing 200 million people all around the world and generating the global GDP to 11 percent. Although global and regional patterns have fluctuated from year to year, the predicted growth rate of tourism still remains high and strong. According to the prediction World Tourism Organization (WTO), travelers who have the desire to travel and that might be over 1500 millions international arrivals by 2020. In many countries, domestic tourism outweighs international arrivals in terms of volume and income generated. This is also predicted to grow strongly.

As tourism is also a major source of employment, it is supporting 74 million jobs directly according to a World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimate, and 215 million (8.1 per cent of the world total) if all the indirect economic effects of the sector are taken into account. It represents US\$4 218 billion of GDP (10.4 per cent of the world total), with travel and tourism making a particularly significant contribution to international trade, at over 12 per cent of total exports.

As a result, throughout the world, in both economic and social sector tourism promotes coordinated development programs to generate employment opportunities, reduction in poverty which reduced 40 percent to 15 percent. Tourism not only has potential advantages for pro-poor growth but also has higher potential for linkage with other local enterprises.

In general, to have a sustainable development of tourism there will be some multiplier effect. Tourism relates social impact that scrutinizes distortion of local language and culture, luxurious travelling by air-conditioned vehicles creates a distinct boundary to rich and poor. Second effect can be caused economically by leakage; increase in the price of local good and some jobs with low wages become seasonal. Other impacts can be environmental and political. By understanding its high multiplier effect, the governments around the world are taking more proactive roles and increasing its attention in impacts of tourism that has emerged. They are calling for more planning and management of development. But there are some negative impacts of tourism remain largely unchecked and are increasing. These negative impacts will be discussed more elaborately later in the research paper.

Tourism today is about exploration and discovery. In Bangladesh, the scope of natural is based on tourism, research is based on tourism, culture is based on tourism and eco-tourism is quite evident. Tourism is in a very special position to benefit local communities, economically and socially, and helps to raise global awareness and support for conservation of the environment. Within the tourism sector, economic development and environmental protection should not be seen as opposing forces, they should be pursued hand in hand as aspirations that can and should be mutually reinforcing. Policies and actions must aim to strengthen the benefits and reduce the costs of tourism.

However, Tourism becomes then part of the natural, cultural and human environment with respect to the special features of host places; this sector highly contributes to national economy. Sustainable tourism development can be achieved through alternative tourism, which is in its purest sense is an industry which attempts to make a low impact on the environment and local culture, while helping to generate income, employment, women empowerment and the conservation of local ecosystems. There are some policies to promote sustainable development which should take full account of the opportunities offered by tourism.

## **2. Tourism and Development**

Tourism is an attractive tool for economic development in developing countries. Sustainable development of tourism is based on the principle of sound of world's resource that refer to environmental, economic and socio aspects of tourism development. This approach is suitable to make the development of tourism more ecologically supportable in the long term. The important thing about development of tourism lies in its motives is to conserve the resource and increase the value of local culture and tradition along with alleviating the impact on environment and culture. All tourism has the possibility to be more sustainable and have the following characteristics.

### **2.1 Tourism Development and Economic Growth**

Tourism activities are one of the crucial factors in economic growth. As tourism industry has emerged as one of the leading industries and comprises extensive range economic activities recently, the economic flows generated by international tourism have become a vital factor in economic growth in developing countries. According to the World Tourism Organization (2010), as there are increasing numbers of destination opening up, modern tourism has become a key driver and covering a board range of enterprises, employment, infrastructure development, foreign earnings and stakeholders.

Tourism is a major source of foreign currency. It provides positive externalities and creates added value for the real sector and encourages capital accumulation and creation of new investment activity. However, the foreign exchange earnings vary among tourism driven economics because of leakages which is arising from importing goods and also for consumer goods required for tourists. Besides export earnings, tourism generates share of government tax revenue throughout the world. In addition, the development of tourism as a whole gives investments in infrastructure development i.e. roads, airports, roads, water, telecommunication and other public utilities. Therefore, the improvement of infrastructure will not only benefit the tourists but also improve the standard of living of domestic population. As a result, these increases in capital attract enterprises that are in disadvantage.

The sector of tourism is a source for increase in employment in both construction sectors and agriculture sectors including unskilled labors, migrants from poor rural areas, people who prefer part-time job and also notably women of Bangladesh. As the sector is relatively labor-intensive, investments in tourism tend to generate higher employment. Tourism industry is also characterized by a

range of stakeholders. To resolve the conflicts between various groups, government take lead in cooperation and collaboration. This ensures sustainable feature of the tourism industry of Bangladesh, are kept in mind that all stakeholders express their point of view and decision are made easily.

There can be sudden changes in consumer taste and can have a sharp downturn in the economic growth but given the demand of mass tourism, it produce negative responses to economic recession. Nonetheless, generally tourism makes a vital contribution in Bangladesh and identified as a promising drive force for economic growth.

## **2.2 Tourism Development and Natural Environment**

The countries get an incentive to conserve and protect their environment for tourism which indirectly helps to keep the balance in ecology system. Tourism development exercises great pressure on natural resources such as water, land, air and ecosystem that endanger the natural balance of the planet. As fresh water is one the most critical natural resource, when tourism increases there is an increase in demand of water for both personal use of tourist and maintenance of other facilities. Tourism is fully dependent on environment. Natural resources such as beaches, sea, mountains, lakes, rivers and also man-made resources like historic cities, heritage building and monument, constitutes the primary source of tourism. As there are always greater chances of getting affected by the construction activities and operation of tourism units, ports, marines and transport installation, interruption might occur in the movement and communication of the species. There is always a pressure to protect the wildlife and habitats in tourist sites. That's why to control the degradation of natural environment government adopted few policies.

Tourism sometimes also characterized by time and place concentrations, which promotes eco-tourism where the domestic people are informed about the harmful effects from surroundings. The government always seeks to channel the investment into the suffering areas from overexploitation of tourism resources, environmental degradation and scarcity of infrastructure faulty lands. But, in modern tourism and environment have a harmonious relation. It gives resources and incentives to conserve ancient culture and tradition.

However, tourism also causes pollution as the tourist uses vehicles like cars, planes, buses etc that contaminates the fresh air. This directly affects the visiting destinations and causes more harm than benefit. Hence ecotourism is the ultimate solution to eradicate environmental issues.

Bangladesh is endowed with the largest mangrove ecosystem: the Sundarban, the longest unspoiled beach in the world, largest man-made lake and vast offshore marine environment. For tourism development, there are number of laws related to environment in Bangladesh. Therefore, this makes sure that the tourist products are not used in such way that will destroy the beauty of the environment.

### **2.3 Tourism Development, Culture and Society**

One of the elitist types of tourism is cultural tourism. Cultural touristic trips are emerging as the most successful type of modern travel. It is growing rapidly and covering more areas of social and economic life. According to the researchers, culture is one of the motivating factors for tourist in the world. Not only attracts tourists with higher education but also tourist with specific interests with an affinity to history and religion. Tourism shapes on global culture and makes individuals globally competent with better knowledge that will help the nation to prosper.

Tourism not only allows visiting new places but also make us aware of their culture, religion, history and practices. Tourist can get an idea of their way of living and their struggles. Sometimes, main behavior of consumer affects the tourist service by fashion, customs and traditions. In ancient times, there used to be several religions in Bangladesh. Some say, long time back people used to worship deity called Bangi, and the name of the country was derived from the name of the deity. In 14<sup>th</sup> century, Muslim saints came from Iran and started preaching Islam and soon Islam became the faith of majority people.

The culture of Bangladesh can be expressed in its history. The presence of unique historical sites of Bangladesh such as Lalbag Fort in Dhaka, Liberation War Museum in Dhaka, Ahsan Manzil etc determines the successful development of tourism. Series of monuments and sculptures can also express a country's culture such as the sculpture in University of Dhaka will remind the tourist about the incident of 1971. However, in "The Four Faces of Global Culture," Peter Berger, professor of sociology and director of the Institute for the Study of Economic Culture at Boston University, tourism have some disadvantages too. According to him it may degrade or reproach individual culture considering a certain culture as dominant.

In recent times, the aim of tourism is to maintain sustainable development. There are many travel agents who offer expedition to ensure that these areas will remain untouched. Tour guides are always available to educate the tourist and ensure that the tourist understand the local culture and society. Therefore, tourism always

associates to show the relationship between, behavior, values and tradition of the society.

### 3. Code of Ethics in Tourism

In order to enhance the ethical aspect of tourism, the code of ethics has developed as a response to ethical transgression of the tourism industry, tourist and the government in recent years. For a sustainable tourism, the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET) developed some codes of ethics and comprehended some set of principles to provide guidelines and to comply with specific moral standards for tourism development. The following principles are:

**Contribution to mutual understanding and respect:** Understanding the ethical values with humanity, with tolerance and with respect for diversified religions, philosophical and moral beliefs are the foundation and consequence of sustainable tourism. For the development of tourism, both stakeholder and tourists should observe the culture, traditions and social practice of people. The activities of tourism should be conducted as a harmony by respecting the laws, practices and customs, and vice versa. The public authorities must provide protection to the tourists and should facilitate prevention and security of any kind of threats against the tourists.

According to national laws, if there is any destruction of tourism facilities or any elements of culture, it should be severely condemned and will be punished. While travelling, the tourists should not commit any criminal act by going against the host country's laws and regulation. Lastly, the tourists must be aware of health and security risks and have to take their own responsibilities to minimize those risks even before their departure.

**Vehicle for individual and collective fulfillment:** The activity of tourism is associated more with relaxation, access to culture and nature. That's why it should be planned as means of individual and collective fulfillment. This activity not only should respect both men and women but also promote human rights, individual rights from normal people, handicapped to ethnic minorities and indigenous people. Travelling for the purpose of health, culture or education are very beneficial and huge encourage of tourism.

**Tourism as sustainable development:** To have a sustainable development in tourism, all the stakeholder should protect the natural environment so that there can be sustainable economic growth to satisfy the needs of present and future generations. All source tourism development is conducted to save precious

resources specially water and energy, protect natural heritage composed of ecosystem and preserve endangered species of wildlife. As nature tourism and eco tourism enhance people more to travel, there should be limitations in sensitive areas like coastal areas and tropical forests.

**Tourism as a user of the cultural heritage of mankind and contributor to its enhancement:** Tourism resources belong to the common heritage of mankind. There are several tourism policies and activities that should be conducted for artistic, archaeological and cultural heritage. Mankind should be devoted to care and preserve the historical monuments and museum, so that it is more widely open not only to the tourists and also to the future generation. The financial resource from the tourist visits should be used for the protection and development of the cultural sites and monuments.

**Tourism a beneficial activity for host countries and communities:** Local population should be more involved in tourism activities and share economic, social and cultural benefits, so that they can generate direct or indirect jobs which results from them. The policies and the planning of the tourism help to raise the standard of living of the local population and also help to give priority to local manpower. Special attention should be given to specific problems of coastal areas, rural or mountainous region because tourism often has rare opportunity for development. Studies are carried out by the tourism professionals, investors and public authorities to see the impact of development projects on environment and natural surroundings and must deliver the contents with great transparency.

**Stakeholder's Obligation in Tourism Development:** Authorities of tourism industry are ought to maintain transparency with their clients regarding their visiting destinations. Information like environment, quality, price of the destinations should be clearly stated to the travelers in order to avoid unforeseen disarray. In any event of disorganization from the authority, financial compensation must be given to the clients. Government as well as the operators should warn and advice if any political or natural calamities are likely to hit or occurring already. This will ensure the accountability of the authorities and give assurance to the travelers that authorities are always well prepared to handle any case of disarrangement Therefore it eliminates the insecurity of the potential travelers.

Furthermore, the authorities should have constant concern about traveler's security. They should be keen in providing all the basic security and aid in case of any emergency. Besides, the tourist professionals should acknowledge individual's religion and their practices and allow them to perform those during



their visit. Additionally, tourist professionals and the hosting countries should establish a system that resolves the problem of traveler's financial solvency. Lastly, the media and the advertising agency are advised to provide accurate information about the culture and ambiance for the tourism spot. Adverting of sex tourism should not be promoted by any means.

**Right to Tourism:** There are numerous reasons for travelling. For example, one can enjoy the adventures and have a sense of accomplishment in doing so. Every individual in the society including the youths, disabled, senior citizens are encouraged to travel for their mental wellbeing. Moreover, travelling rejuvenates our psyche and contributes in giving a society with open minded individuals. So exploring the world should not have any obstacles. World Tourism Organization drew attention to Article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 7.d of the 'International **Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Right**' indicates the right to rest and leisure along with the limitation in working hours and holidays without freezing the employees pay. In addition, social tourism should also be facilitated in the same manner.

**Liberty of Tourist:** The streak of formalities and discrimination among the tourist displease the travelling experience. Every individual has the liberty to move anywhere within the country in accordance with Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This will enable the travellers to visit any religious and cultural sites without any form of provocation. Hence maximum freedom of travel should be ensured by the tourist industries. Other sort of liberty includes right to convert currencies in the visiting country without any hassle and right to communicate through any internal or external means along with the advantage of easy and inexpensive mean to access prompt health service, local administrative and legal services. However, any personal information of the tourist should remain confidential just like the locals of the visiting country.

**Rights of the associated stakeholders of the Tourist Industry:** Tourism creates many employment opportunities at various level of the society. There are self-employed workers, seasonal workers and permanent hired workers in this field. Their job security, social protection and adequate relation with the hosting country must be administered by the government. They must be provided with proper training for managing their assigned work for keen supervision and governance their task. On the other hand, entrepreneurs are highly encouraged to establish good relations with the foreign countries and realize their roles in the sustainable development of their own nation by contributing their profits of its growth.

**Implementation of the Principles:** Both the government and private operators of tourism should work together in order to make tourism better and enjoyable for the tourist. All of the principles mentioned above should be implemented in a feasible way that benefits the international tourism. It is vital to repeat that tourism industries must have constant apprehension regarding social and environmental impacts that is spawned by tourism.

#### **4. Ethical Tourism in Developing Countries and its Historical Perspective**

After the Second World War, development theorist and ecologist shed light to the anthropogenic and environmental impact of international tourism in their narratives. In 1970's, the concept of tourism flourished in numerous nations and successfully became the financial backbone of the developing countries. It is noteworthy to mention some early thoughts of development ethics of Denis Goulet who is highly appreciated for his notions for development that are considered to be influential ideas. He articulates "ethics" as the reflective study of what is good or bad, leading an individual to make genuine choice.

Furthermore, during that period, development incorporated political, social, cultural and economic goal applying both as an end product and as a process. However, the concept of sustainable development was not nifty defined. Nonetheless, Goulet (1973) states that dynamic stability and the regenerative powers of the world's ecological systems are to be protected with major human efforts for survival, health and creativity.

In regard of tourism, Issa Shivji (1973: ix) a Tanzanian Economist accentuate Fanon's (1967: 123) description of a settler's town where he illustrates the soothing environment and luxurious ambience of a town meant to please the elites and western bourgeoisies by the national bourgeoisies. This indicates an industry devoted to entertain the elites with utilizing the national resources. However the latter part of Fanon's description portrays that such industries are helping national elites to deteriorate the morality by exploiting the middle class and involving them in socially unacceptable acts. For example, the casinos of Havana and of Mexico, the beaches of Rio, the little Brazilian and Mexican girls, the half bred 13-year-olds, the ports of Acapulco and Copacabana etc. Although the international tourism supports their economy but it does demoralize social and cultural values in many developing countries like Africa etc.

In the context of environmental ethics, tourism takes an ambiguous position in its development effects, involving both conservation and destructive attributes. Some well-publicized examples destructive attributes are the worldwide reaction to the

ruin of rain forests in Papua New Guinea and Brazil to concern about the invasion by indigenous farmers onto animal habitats in Africa. Roderick Nash asserts in his book that the idea of human nature relationship is a moral issue restricted by moral issue is revolutionary and it is believed that it will transpire a fundamental and far reaching change in both thought and behavior comparable to that which the ideal of human rights and justice held at the time of the democratic revolutions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Roderick Nash affirms that the American Declaration of Independence, the abolition of slavery, emancipation of women, civil rights for Black Americans and the Endangered Species Acts of the 1970 are the milestones that shows the evolution of ethics and pertains similar spirit to voice for the rights of nature. Nash (1989) acknowledge American ecologist Aldo Leopold who explains “All ethics rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts” (1949: 203). Leopold termed this biocentric ideology as ‘Land Ethic’ He concluded his write up “The Land Ethic,” by stating his moral code that “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise”.

By the 1960s, environmental awareness had spread to a “greening of religion” in Western countries. Western countries began to appreciate the fact that man was indeed just a cog in the wheel than being the entire force in the mechanism. This was championed by western historians such as Nash. Eastern perspectives were already more focused on the treating the natural world as an entirety. However, hypocrisy is prevalent in even the strictest societies, for example, Muslim tourists in western countries. But modern societies in first world countries are having a paradigm shift as they are focusing on conserving their own resources while having little care for others. This is concerning major aid agencies in the world. The tourism industry is rudimentarily considered to be a capitalistically organized society driven by social dynamics. Most of the tourism practices originate from the Metropolitan cities where tourism is most concentrated and replicating these things in the developing countries has consequences. Practices however are changing as more and more ecological bodies are encouraging more environmentally friendly tourism practices are developed.

One of the vital aspects of responsible tourism is travel ethics. Travel ethics simply indicates an awareness of our impact as we explore the world benefitting people and the environment in different destinations. International tourism has changed drastically in the last 20 years. In contrary of responsible travelling, the Dalton’s (1973) guidebook on Indonesia advises the traveller with the following

note “Going to Bali is like stepping on a giant tab of LSD.” Such obscene Balinese culture is the reason why travel ethics comes into play. With such controversies arising due to scatological culture of a nation, the idea of responsible travelling is emerging. “Code of ethics for Tourist” - a well-known 12 point guidebook is being published by Christian Conference of Asia in the early 1980s for realizing travel ethics.

In the more recent material includes “to raise awareness by providing information; to stimulate thinking and discussion and to encourage individuals and groups to become involved in working for more authentic human encounter” (O’Grady 1990). To elaborate responsible travel, there are three basic principles, which are the following: to observe and understand the culture of the visiting destination, to respect the local hosts and to tread softly on the environment of the host.

One way to promote the responsible travelling is ecotourism. It is pertained by the magazine *Tread Lightly*, which offers cycling through China and tracking Timber Wolves in the wilderness of Minnesota. Goa, India’s south west coast is one of the most popular tourist spot which once raised concern about their social and environmental aspects by the locals. There were 69 hotels along the 107 km of Goan coastline (Times of India 1990). The local political organization Jagrut Goencaranchi Fauz (JGF) placed their demand to eradicate overexploitation of the locals and the environment by the tourist and its operators. Their demand included ban on any new five star hotels, restrict to allow extension of existing five star hotels, withdrawal of tourism industry, strict code of conduct for advertising Goa and its culture, the Government’s non-collusion with hoteliers by organizing and sponsoring infrastructures required for five-star tourism. Their revolt against the prevailing situation pressurized the government to bring change in the existing tourism system. There are significant troubles confronting small group of Third World tourism activists endeavoring to construct a development sufficiently strong to respond adequately to the difficulties displayed by these issues in their nations. Calls have been made to build up global treaties to restrain tourism in specific cases. This Goan case has evolved due to ethical perspective of locals which made them conscious about conserving their culture and environment. Hence, ethics in tourism is one of the most important aspects in tourism that should be given high importance to flourish the sector of tourism industry.

### **Conclusion**

Every nation has different social and cultural values. These differences in values trigger variations in tourism industries of developing and developed countries.

Developing countries face tragic choices when it comes to a luxury industry like tourism. Hence they lag behind to prosper and sustaining development in this certain sector. However Bangladesh has high potential to bring fruitful results by taking more ecological steps and follows the global code of ethics that direct the right way for tourism. Bangladesh needs to gear up its infrastructure, government policy, generate creative innovations and necessary reconstruction that will help the nation to step ahead in the global platform.

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