UNIT 35 THREATS AND OBSTACLES TO TOURISM

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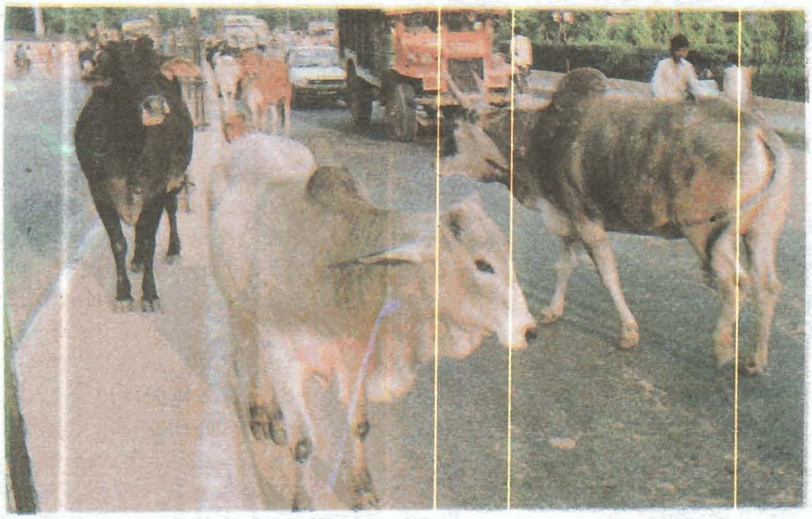

35.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- understand what is meant by threats and obstacles in relation to tourism development,
- identify the threats and obstacles, and
- know their implications and relevance in relation to policy formation, planning and development.

35.1 INTRODUCTION

In relation to tourism very often you come across such statements that:

- the country has tremendous tourism potential but no development is taking place in this regard,
- there has been a fall in tourism arrivals,
- so and so destination is no more an attraction the way it used to be, etc.

Such situations emerge because of certain obstacles and threats. Obstacles are generally understood as those procedures and policies that block, interrupt or reverse the free flow of tourism. At the same time studies have shown that even cultures and perceptions can also become instruments of obstruction. Similarly, the threats to tourism can be located in the very nature of tourism, attitude of the tourists, operations of the travel trade, tourism impacts, tourism policy and planning or the attitudes of the host population.

This Unit attempts to delineate these threats and obstacles and make you understand their relevance in the context of tourism development.

35.2 UNDERSTANDING THREATS AND OBSTACLES

The relationship between the self and the other is a dominant factor in tourism. Here, the self is generally understood as the Western or rich tourist. His/her identity is defined by creating an alternative other than the host or the resident. In this sense the tourism text is full of the language of 'them' and 'us'. In the field of International Tourism, the discourse resembles the essential content of colonialism. In the context of domestic tourism, the text determines the

relations between classes, communities and cultures that serve to define themselves in terms of the other.

The approach of the WTO is to facilitate tourism as the fastest growing industry in the world and its emphasis is on the expansion of tourism for political, economic and income gains. Anything that **interrupts these aims is a threat or an obstacle to tourism.** The approach of the Travel Trade is to match a range of choices with a range of products by a number of producers operating from a variety of destinations. Anything that interrupts this relationship is a threat or obstacle to the business of tourism. However, tourists and residents do not view the threat to/from tourism or the obstacles that emerge as a result of its development in such a one sided manner. On the one hand we have the relationship between the Tourism Industry and the consumer while on the other, we have the political, economic, sociological, anthropological and cultural encounters between tourists, their destinations and residents. These encounters can also be a threat or an obstacle to tourism. Generally, threats and obstacles are perceived only at the destination and not at the point of origin. To understand the true meaning of a threat or an obstacle to tourism, we have to locate the conflict. This is not simple. Conflict can be physical, psychological, cultural or ideological and, therefore, will be both specific (between two people, two nationalities or two regions) or generic (between the West and the East). Therefore, the threat to tourism is located at the point of origin as well as the destination. For example, India's Tourism Year 1991 was not successful because we were unable to promote India as a safe destination. This was because America and West European countries issued travel advisories to warn their nationals not to travel to India in the light of the anti-reservation in the northern parts. Now we in India do not issue travel advisories against America when there are race riots in Los Angeles or tourist murders in Florida. This is because we see India only as a tourist receiving country and not a market for world tourists. The perception of our government is determined by viewing India as a destination only.

In defining threats and obstacles to tourism, we have to go deeper into the nature of tourism and see the different levels at which they operate rather than only at the surface level of the operation of tourism.

35.3 CIVIL UNREST, CRIME AND ARM TWISTING

From the point of view of the Tourism Industry **civil unrest** is a major threat to the business of tourism. In this context are cited incidents like:

- strikes in airlines or hotels
- agitations or civil disturbances,
- communal riots, and
- activities of militants/terrorists, etc.

It is a fact that tourists are very much concerned about their safety. Hence, they would avoid a destination that is not regarded safe. The cancellations immediately after the Ayodhya incidents of 1992 or the decline of domestic as well as foreign tourist traffic to Kashmir Valley are examples in this regard. However, the losses have to be looked in totality. It is not only the tour operators, airlines or travel agents who suffer a loss but the local population is also a victim. The tour operator can negotiate or arrange for changed itineraries but what alternative has the location population? In most of the cases destinations have a seasonality. Failure of one season leads to extreme hardship — particularly for those who belong to the informal sector or depend on providing subsidiary services.

Crime at a destination is another threat. For example theft, molestation or cheating, all bring a bad name to the destination. In certain cases the inflow of tourists is severely effected when news reaches home about a molestation incident and so on. This is common to both foreign as well as domestic tourists.

As mentioned in Sec. 35.2, the big powers use arm twisting methods in relation to Third World countries by issuing travel advisories. They declare countries out of bound for their citizens as per their own discretion. Many a times they have used civil unrest and terrorism as an excuse to issue such advisories. It is worth noting here that often the duration of such advisories is very short. This raises the question whether the situation was really so bad or it was used as an excuse for twisting the arms of small nations for political reasons. The American

government's travel advisory about India just before the PATA Conference was to start in New Delhi (1993) is one such example. The dates of the conference had to be shifted because of this.

As a professional in the area of tourism you must remember that India is a vast country. Disturbances in one part do not mean that whole of India is effected. In case of a crisis situation you must try to bring home this fact to your clients. At the same time you must contribute towards communal harmony.

35.4 REDTAPISM AND BUREAUCRACY

Redtapism is a common feature for the delay in framing or implementation of plans. Tourism is no exception to this. Another aspect is the attitude of certain bureaucrats and politicians towards tourism. Most of them don't realise that it is a specialised area and not every one can plan or handle the operations. Frequent transfers are a drawback. States like Goa, Rajasthan, Kerala or Haryana which have done well in tourism development have provided stability in office to the officials responsible for tourism development. Postings in tourism departments should not be considered easy postings for relaxation etc. Many a times the resources of tourism departments are utilised for the benefit of politicians or influential people rather than for generating revenues through tourism development. It is vital for tourism that **competent officials who have sound knowledge of tourism industry and impacts handle the issue rather than novices in the area.**

35.5 TRAINED MANPOWER AND AWARENESS

Lack of trained manpower and awareness are two other obstacles in tourism development. Tourism is a service industry where a high degree of training and professionalism is required. However, this is lacking at many levels — particularly in the informal and subsidiary services. Imagine a situation where a taxi driver does not know the route or a receptionist is unable to tell the major attractions of the city to a tourist.

Another aspect is the lack of awareness about tourism. By awareness we just do not mean as to knowing what is tourism. Awareness also includes a knowledge about the impact of tourism on day to day life of the people; their own attitudes towards tourism; benefits or loss etc. Very often people working in one segment of tourism are unaware about the impact of their services or actions on other services.

35.6 IGNORING DOMESTIC TOURISTS

The proportion of the movement of domestic tourists is much higher when compared to foreign tourists in India. However, because of foreign exchange earnings, the emphasis remains on providing facilities for the foreign tourists while domestic tourists are ignored. Of late the significance of encouraging domestic tourism is being realised and more and more states are coming forward to create infrastructural facilities keeping the domestic tourists in view. Haryana is a good example in this regard.

Check Your Progress 1

1) How can communal riots and civil unrest be a threat to tourism?

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2) What do you understand by threats and obstacles to tourism?

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35.7 TOURISM FLOWS AND IMPACT

The flow of tourists, at the most basic level, depends on a large number of individual decisions and choices. For example : Do I want to go on holiday this year? No/Yes. If the answer is "No" the propensity to travel or lack of it, will be an obstacle to tourism. If the answer is "Yes", then which holiday shall I choose from the variety of possibilities?

Here money, time, distance, accessibility, seasonality and confidence in ones ability as well the Travel Agent or Tour Operator will be seen in the form of a threat or an obstacle in making a short list of possible holiday choices.

The mix of the elements of demand and supply as well as inter-subjective elements will have a bearing on decision making and perception regarding threats/obstacles in tourism.

35.7.1 Motivation

Do I have the inclination to be a tourist? If I do not, then my personal motivation is an obstacle to tourism. Some research has looked at the potential tourist purely in economic terms, and the approach of such researchers is to overcome the fears of those who stay at home by the blandishments or the promises made by Mass Tourism operators. They see it as problem of marketing because in the post modern individual the self is no longer the origin or the source of decision making, but itself the result or product or multiple social and psychological inputs.

Where the potential tourist is an obstacle, the role of pull and push factors are pressure points for the individual to see tourism, particularly International Tourism as a threat or as a desirable activity.

35.7.2 Preference

Preference is the process of making a choice through a selection of real or imagined possibilities tempered by experience, information and word of mouth publicity by members of a peer group or opinion leaders. For example preference can be interlinked with motivation to overcome obstacles to tourism in the following ways:

1.	VFR	Cost, range of facilities (Visiting, Friends events, kinship. and Relations)
2.	Exploration	Science beauty, strangeness relatively unknown risk.
		Little promotion, publicity, No formal infrastructure.
3.	Evaluation of Yourself	Range of products, facilities, attractions, prices.
4.	Fantasy	Emotive, exotic, strange, mysterious product but which a range of facilities and prices.
5.	Prestige	Social value, upmarket resorts, range of facilities and products, range of attractions.

In each case a perceived threat or obstacle can be overcome by a preference — motivation mix, which should be balanced with local benefits and expectations. We can also see how destinations can then be mapped from one extreme to another. These models points out the importance of social context in determining what we see as a threat or what we think of as an obstacle to tourism. This aspect is often not given enough importance.

35.7.3 Attitudes, Expectations and Behaviour

Social interaction can take place within an enclosed group (same language, ethnic group, economic status, work based etc,) or on the basis of common beliefs (tradition, folklore, popular culture, dress and behavioural norms etc.). It can be on a wider social scale (religious or national or activist solidarity) in which case mainstream and alternative norms, canons, rituals and expectations are developed which will determine future behaviour, both of tourist and the resident. We can, therefore, say that in tourism attitudes, expectations and behaviour go beyond the individual's motivation and preference and are defined as group goals, standards and expectations. For example, the mass tourist's formula of the 4's (Sun, Sea, Sand and Sex) promoted the charter package that was to create a world wide uproar on the negative impact of tourism along the coastline. Beach Tourism, once promoted as the vanguard of International holiday tourism is today seen as the black sheep of tourism because of environmental degradation, overcrowding, displacement of local people, social undesirable activities, hostility of native populations, and foreign control and use of local resources. Thus, we can see how one form of tourism can act as an obstacle to tourism development, because the destination sees tourism as a threat to its social, economic and cultural life. Similarly, local people hope to benefit economically from tourism and become hostile when the transfer of wealth does not take place.

35.7.4 Constraints of Tourism Growth

The international community is threatened by numerous constraints like the energy crisis, the use and distribution of resources, inflation, unemployment, and deteriorating terms of trade. In this context we have to clarify the true nature of tourism and its role in the future to see how these factors function as obstacles. Most countries, by adopting paid holiday and some form of a tourism subsidy (like LTC or holiday bonus) have made a commitment to leisure time and, therefore, to tourism, Such a commitment is often made without realising that there is an interdependence between the general level of development and the social framework of civil society. These then act as obstacles to tourism development.

These factors are identified as obstacles to the development of modern tourism. Added to these can be economic, social and political differences in:

1. Financial Resources
2. Human Resources
3. Institutional, Administrative and Managerial Cultures
4. Implementation and design machinery
5. Priority given to tourism

How countries react to these issues will depend on their status in the world economic order and it will be conditioned by their internal framework of development. Therefore, what the WTO defines as **universal** obstacles to modern tourism development are very much conditioned by mainstream mass tourism which requires heavy in-puts of finance, training and skills, a western life-style model based on compulsive consumption and waste of resources, simply because they are available. Alternative strategies are not considered.

It is within this framework that the Ministry of Tourism and the Travel Trade talk of the infrastructural weakness of India as a tourist destination. This includes a shortage of hotel rooms, poor air services, poor rail services, very poor road transport, unreliable power available and very underdeveloped human resources. There is also criticism of India's taxation customs and excise policy with regard to the tourism sector.

The Indian Govt. has evolved a 39,000 Cr. plan for investment in these areas to overcome the obstacles to tourism growth and to increase arrivals to 5-6 million per year. While the government is doing all it can to ensure that obstacles to the growth of international tourism are removed, it has no plan to ensure that spare time, holidays and tourism are accessible to all sections of the population, and that tourism should have a beneficial economic and social impact, since investment is being directed away from other social sectors to this sector.

If tourism is not to be a threat to its own future then all countries should devote special attention in the following areas:

a) A quantitative and qualitative analysis of the natural, cultural, artistic and human resources and plan their use as well as their protection. Most planned tourism extends their use but does not protect resources.

b) Realise that one country's heritage is a part of the heritage of mankind and, therefore, avoid conflict, war and mis-sensitivity to a holistic view of heritage.

c) Recognise the social and economic importance of tourism and extend its conversationist aspect to create an unpolluted environment.

d) Recognise that traditional values, particularly non-materialistic values should guide tourism as a social force and a negotiable resource between the rich and the poor.

e) To achieve tourism related goals via bilateral and multilateral agreements, into which socio-economic goals can be introduced, if tourism is for developing the host country.

f) The threats and obstacles model in tourism development should address to the dual problem — preserve as you develop.

g) All tourism development must not be related to short term needs, no matter how pressing, but must respond to obligations which we must feel towards the exploited, the marginalised, the poor and backward, the uneducated etc. Therefore, the view of tourism should be long term. This means that the habitual consumer attitude which has been developed with general social approval, should be discouraged.

There is an assumption that in the post industrial society tourism and leisure time will become the centrepiece of general culture. Once tourism moves away from pure entertainment and becomes a cultural vehicle, man will expand his physical space to enhance his self awareness and emerge with a world oriented view.

Journeys to more or less distant places, a temporary but intense stay at any one of them broadens the horizons and changes the outlook of the tourist by removing prejudices and restrictions associated with them.

Tourism can be said to have freed itself from obstacles if it can help people to change their daily routines. A new environment, a new room, new food, new people, different faces, different languages, different money could be an opportunity to recognise the need for change rather than to succumb to international standards simply because they are familiar.

Check Your Progress 2

1) How can tourism be a threat to itself?

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2) What measures should be adopted as a special attention to promote tourism?

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35.8 LET US SUM UP

There are various threats and obstacles to tourism. Besides civil unrest, communal riots, red tapism etc., the type and nature of tourism also at times becomes a threat. The nature of guest-host relationship (See Unit 3 of TS-2), image of the destination and marketing strategies of the tourism Industry also should be looked upon in this regard. It is vital that tourism policy makers, planners, resort developers etc take account of the various threats and obstacles.

35.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Sec. 35.3 for your answer.

2) See Sec. 35.2 for your answer.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Base your answer on Sub-secs. of Sec. 35.7.

2) Base your answer on Sub-sec. 35.7.4.

SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

Dharmarajan and Seth : **Tourism in India**, New Delhi, 1994.

Rob Davidson : **Tourism**, London, 1993.

Robert Christie Mill : **The Tourism System**, New Jersey, 1992.

Suhita Chopra : **Tourism Development in Irdia**, New Delhi, 1993.

Virendra Kaul : **Tourism and Economy**, New Delhi, 1994.

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS BLOCK

Activity 1

Write an essay highlighting the economic advantages and disadvantages of tourism in your area.

Acivity 2

Try to list the attitudes of the following towards tourists visiting your area:

a) College students (boys and girls)

b) Retired people

c) Housewives

d) Working women

e) Taxi drivers or rickshaw pullers.

Activity 3

Find out the reasons for pollution in your area.

Activity 4

Mention the reasons behind communal riots. How can you contribute towards promoting communal harmony