

# Tourism, Passport to Peace and Development

*by Dr. Willibald P. Pabr*



भारतीय पर्यटन और यात्रा प्रबन्ध संस्थान  
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The theme you have invited me to speak about today is: "Tourism, Passport to Peace and Development". You could say as well: "Peace, Passport to Tourism and Development" or even "Development, Passport to Peace and Tourism". It is a challenge to speak in your country on such a subject. Mahatma Gandhi, one of the founding fathers of independent India, is the apostle of peace and non-violence not only of India but of the world as a whole. India has set in the last decades an example for successful economic and social development, and its tourism has become an important industry and source of foreign exchange earnings.

Undoubtedly tourism, peace and development go hand in hand. There can be no tourism and no development without peace. There can be no peace without development and tourism is essential for both peace and development in today's world. This relationship emphasized in the past was recalled by the sixth session of the WTO's General Assembly when it chose as the theme for World Tourism Day 1986 the slogan: "Tourism: A Vital Force for World Peace" and for World Tourism Day 1987: "Tourism for Development".

The fact is that tourism both depends upon peace and contributes to its maintenance, an attribute that distinguishes it from many other economic activities. This linkage was eloquently described in paragraph one of the Manila Declaration on World Tourism in the following terms: "Its very existence and development depend entirely on the maintenance of a state of lasting peace to which tourism itself is required to contribute".

Tourism is as old as mankind but its present form is very young. For many centuries pilgrims, merchants, students and artists were practically the sole tourists. Such travellers had been on the move since the dawn of civilization. And whatever the most obvious purpose for which they left home, religious, commercial or educational, by travelling they contributed to their own civilizations by the examples and the experiences learned from foreign cultures. It is to their mobility that many

civilizations owe their wealth and their importance. In that way, tourism began to be a force for world peace by providing the moral and intellectual basis for international understanding and interdependence already at that time.

Modern tourism involving travel for mere pleasure started more or less only in the 19th century and was limited to a small group of rather wealthy people. In its present form, as part of the daily life of millions of individuals, tourism really started only after World War II.

Contemporary tourism has its roots in the right to periodic leave with pay arising from the progressive implementation by governments of the provisions of conventions adopted by the ILO during the 1930s. Today still only a minority of the world population enjoys such a right. However, as the right to holidays was endorsed by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and is increasingly recognized and given practical implementation at national level, the number of potential tourists seems destined to grow.

Already the number of world travellers is growing fast. In 1987, according to the latest WTO estimates, 355 million international tourist arrivals were recorded world-wide. The highest number so far. In the same year, international tourist receipts accounted to as much as 150 billion US dollars, or more than 5 per cent of total world exports representing no less than 25 per cent world trade in services. Tourism is now ranked by UNCTAD as the world's third largest export industry and spending on domestic and international travel together now contribute to 12 per cent of world gross national product, near to 2,000 billion US dollars.

Such figures clearly justify the belief of many experts that tourism is on the way to becoming the world's largest industry by the end of the twentieth century. This position would be consistent with a rapid development enjoyed by the services sector during recent decades.

Although governments have sometimes been slow to give proper recognition to tourism, an increasing number are today prepared to give serious attention to the industry and grant priority to its development. It is for me a particular pleasure to note that India is one of them.

But it is not only tourism's economic effects which have received the attention of States. The Manila Declaration stated very clearly that in addition to its well-known economic aspects, tourism had quite a cultural and moral dimension also.

Already in the past, tourism has generated political effects. For example, Lord Byron's visit to Greece exerted a profound effect upon contemporary European public opinion which played a major role in bringing about Greek independence. Naturally, I do not wish to suggest that tourists bring revolution wherever they go. But the fact is that traveller's tales and first hand experience have often thrown light upon economic and social systems of which the international community disapproves and thus helped expose abuses of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Today tourism is generally recognized as a means of improving mutual understanding between countries. Since the frontiers were opened between Western European countries after World War II and the volume of travel and tourism exchanges reached the incredible dimension they have now attained, the historic antagonism between Western European nations has been overcome and armed conflict between them has become virtually inconceivable.

This fact was also recognized by the Manila Declaration when it stated: "With respect to international relations and the search for peace based on justice and national aspirations, tourism stands out as a positive and ever present factor in promoting mutual knowledge and understanding and as a basis for reaching a greater level of respect and confidence among all the peoples of the world".

Conversely, when frontiers remain closed and when tourism is still hampered, mutual understanding is jeopardized. This is why the Final Act of the International Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Helsinki Final Act, emphasized the importance of human contacts including tourism in breaking down barriers to cooperation.

Of course, the relationship between tourism and peace is not a novel discovery but it is a fact whose truth has been frequently reemphasized over the years. It is not surprising therefore that the International Tourism Year 1967 already adopted the memorable slogan: "Tourism: Passport to Peace". This assertion was reemphasized in article 3, paragraph 1, of the aims of WTO, set forth in the statutes, which emphasizes not only tourism's contribution to economic development but also to international understanding and peace. In short, promotion of tourism is promotion of peace.

The choice of the theme for World Tourism Day 1986: "Tourism: A Vital Force for World Peace", was not of course fortuitous. 1986 had indeed been designated the International Year of Peace by the United Nations. The celebration of the International Year of Peace by the international community provided an opportunity to focus on three aspects of peace identified as particularly important. These were respectively: "peace and development", "peace and disarmament", and "preparation for life in peace".

As I have already mentioned, peace and development are clearly inter-related. Without peace, in a situation of armed conflicts, violence and distress, we cannot expect any social and economic progress. On the other hand, social and economic progress or in other words successful development contributes to the well-being and the stability of the world as a whole and therefore to peace. It goes without saying that tourism, as an important economic activity, is well-placed to contribute to the process of development. In the present economic situation, tourism, the most important service industry, could play a prominent

role in improving the economic and social situation of developing countries. Tourism:

- generates foreign exchange earnings;
- redistributes income;
- creates employment, specially youth employment;
- promotes economic diversification and regional development; and
- increases State revenues.

WTO has emphasized the role of tourism in the development process on many occasions, be it in publications or studies, in the Manila Declaration on World Tourism, in the Acapulco Document or technical meetings organized in the different regions.

Nevertheless many developing countries have still not drawn adequate benefits from tourism. Their share in total international tourism remains below 25 per cent. In fact, only a few developing countries, and India, I am happy to note, is one of them, have given tourism appropriate attention in their development strategies. Most developing countries have not taken advantages of the possibilities offered by tourism to improve their economic and social conditions and prefer to give priority to other economic sectors. Accordingly, only 0.56 per cent of UNDP funds had been devoted to tourism projects in 1986. I should emphasize that this is in no way the fault of UNDP to which I would like to express my deep gratitude for its continuing cooperation. Rather the problem lies with developing countries themselves inasmuch as they are still not prepared to give tourism due weight among development options.

It is up to the developing countries themselves to change the situation and to give priority to the development of their own tourism potentials.

This could assist them in resolving the difficult situation with which many are confronted today. WTO is prepared to assist the developing countries in such a policy and will be intensifying its efforts to make more funds available for technical cooperation in the interest of all parties concerned. However, such assistance through WTO's technical cooperation programmes in particular will be provided in a pragmatic fashion based on a realistic assessment of potential rather than upon imported models. Tourism development, and in particular, development of international tourism, has to be planned in accordance with sound economic principles, in order to make it as productive and profitable as possible. Planning has to include as the four most important components: demand, marketing, transportation and accommodation.

India has made good progress in the development of both international and domestic tourist travel, particularly in the recent years. You have been able to reach the so-called "magic million" in tourist arrivals in 1986, which no doubt is an important landmark in the history of tourism in India. I am pleased to learn that the Government has accorded priority status to the tourism sector by declaring it as an "industry" to receive incentives and assistance. This will help to vitalize your development efforts and expand your foreign tourist traffic to the projected two-million mark by the end of the century.

Your ideals relating to the development of domestic tourism is even more relevant to the subject that I have been asked to speak on—Peace and development through tourism. You are pursuing a policy of encouraging domestic tourism as a means of achieving national integration. This is a laudable policy in a vast multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-lingual society like yours. You have already recognized tourism as an agent of national harmony and social integration.

The holding of this important meeting itself is an eloquent proof, if at all such a proof were needed, of the deep awareness on the part of the

Government of the need for setting up an appropriate framework and a congenial environment with proper incentives for coordinated growth and development - within which the tourist industry of this country can play its vital role in close cooperation with the Government, in the wider interests of all the parties concerned.

You have been able to develop your tourism without much assistance from the international funding agencies. Tourism still constitutes a very small sector in your total economic activity. You have vast potential for building up a more dynamic, vibrant and sizeable tourism industry through international cooperation and assistance. You are better placed than most other developing countries with a myriad of attractions ranging from equatorial waters to Himalayan heights, rich culture and traditions, and above all a friendly people. India has actively participated in the several UNDP/WTO Regional Tourism Training Programmes starting from the top level seminar held in New Delhi in April 1984. You have not only nominated the largest number of participants but also provided the venue and facilities for most of the training courses. We are now processing a proposal to field a sectoral support mission to prepare a master plan for tourism development in the hill State of Himachal Pradesh. I am happy to note that India has benefited, even in a small way, by the technical cooperation programmes executed by the WTO.

If tourism has to serve as a veritable passport to peace, it will be necessary and desirable to solve problems which could have a negative influence on tourism development. Let me just mention some of them.

Environment is one of the most important. A sound environment is a precondition for successful tourism. But tourism as well has to avoid any negative influence on the natural and human environment. This is of special importance for developing countries. Without proper planning and supervision by the public sector, tourism can lead to the destruction of landscapes or the pollution of lakes and beaches. It can also lead to the destruction of the cultural and social balance of part-

icular areas leading to a loss of identity and disappearance of local customs and morals. If such damages occur, you cannot blame tourism, you have to blame the public sector which is responsible for appropriate planning of tourism and for the protection of the environment. When the public sector is exercising its function properly, tourism can be developed not only without harming the environment, but it can even contribute to the protection and enhancement of the environment.

Security and safety of tourists are other problems for the continued development of tourism. Experience has shown that tourists react very sensitively to any possible threat to their security. In today's world, terrorism along with alarming infectious diseases like AIDS and other dangers have no respect for international frontiers. It is only by combining our efforts that we can combat them effectively.

A third and last problem I want to mention is facilitation of travel and liberalization of the tourism industry. Tourism can be developed only if tourists are as free as possible to travel. The tourism industry has to provide the necessary facilities and services to tourists. It can exercise its function properly only if unnecessary administrative and other restrictions are avoided.

The problems cited above are only the most important ones, that stand in the way of promoting peace and development through tourism. Others include education and training, information, foreign investments, transfer of technology, provisions for legal assistance to travellers, standardization of statistics, signs and symbols, facilities for the handicapped and the elderly as well as many problems concerning transport.

What is clear beyond any doubt is that all these problems can be solved only by international cooperation. Tourism has become and is likely to remain an international phenomenon. Therefore its problems are inter-

national and stand in need of international solutions. WTO has been in the past and intends to continue to be in future a forum for such cooperation.

In conclusion, I hope that through international cooperation the positive trends in tourism development can be assured and even intensified in the future. I am convinced that world tourism can be a vital force for world peace and a forceful motor for economic and social development.

What Mahatma Gandhi said about his non-violent movement some fifty years ago could well apply to tourism almost word by word. "The aim of our struggle", he said, "is friendship with the whole world. Non-violence has descended amongst men and will stay there. It is the harbinger of world peace".

Tourism, too, has come to stay with us and it is no doubt a powerful force contributing to friendship and peace in the world.

The **Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management** was established in 1983 by the Government of India to pioneer tourism-oriented management studies and training facilities, to professionalise the travel and tourism industry.

The Institute conducts advanced level courses, research projects, workshops, seminars, conferences and lectures - covering a wide spectrum of tourist services and human resource development programmes.