

When the tourists flew in

This poem deals with the impacts of the growth of tourism on an island. Read it and answer the questions in speech bubbles.

The Finance Minister said
"It will boost the economy
The dollars will flow in."

The Minister of the Interior said
"It will provide full
and varied employment
for all the indigenes."

indigenes – local people

The Minister of Culture said
"It will enrich our life ...
contacts with other cultures
must surely
improve the texture of living."

The man from the Hilton said
"We will make you a second Paradise;
for you it is the dawn
of a glorious new beginning."

Hilton – a famous hotel group

When the tourists flew in
our island people
metamorphosed into
a grotesque carnival
- a two week sideshow

metamorphosed - changed

When the tourists flew in
our men put aside
their fishing nets
to become waiters
our women became whores

Whores – prostitutes. A rise in 'sex workers' is a common problem when tourism develops in LEDCs

When the tourists flew in
what culture we had went out the window
we traded our customs
for sunglasses and pop
we turned sacred ceremonies
into ten-cent peep shows

When the tourists flew in
local food became scarce
prices went up
but our wages stayed low

When the tourists flew in
we could no longer
go down to our beaches
the hotel manager said
"Natives defile the sea-shore"

defile – spoil; make untidy

When the tourists flew in
the hunger and the squalor
were preserved
as a passing pageant
for clicking cameras
- a chic eye-sore!

squalor – very poor living conditions
pageant – a show
chic – trendy or fashionable

When the tourists flew in
we were asked
to be 'side-walk ambassadors'
to stay smiling and polite
to always guide
the 'lost' visitor ...
*Hell, if we could only tell them
where we really want them to go!*

Cecil Rajendra



What were the expected advantages of tourism?

Why would fishermen prefer to find jobs as waiters?

Why?

Why might some tourists want to keep local people off the beaches?

What social disadvantages connected with tourism is the poet talking about? Remember, 'social' simply means affects on peoples lives.

Why do you think the poet is so angry?