Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir: With Reference To Shri Amar Nath Ji Shrine Cave

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ABSTRACT
Tourism plays an important source of earning for the Jammu and Kashmir economy. This industry is considered the backbone of Jammu and Kashmir Economy. In fact, tourism is a basic and most desirable human activity deserving encouragement of people and government. Although Tourism industry does not require huge investment and sophisticated technology but it provides benefit to millions. Its main component is pilgrimage tourism which is one of the largest and most flourishing industries. It has great potential to improve understanding between different religions. The paper highlights the problems and benefits of tourism with special reference to Shri Amar Nath JI Cave. Tourism is the oldest and the largest industry in the J &K State. The source of revenue earning for the state is the pilgrimage tourism. The pilgrims’ sites of Shri Amar Nath JI Cave attract lakhs of devotees every year. It satisfies the religious urge of visitors. The pilgrimage season mostly lasts in the month of June and lasts up to Raksha Bandhan festival. Every year the number of pilgrimage has considerably increased too much. The pilgrimage devotees are visiting across the country.

Keywords: J&k Tourism, Tourism industry, Pilgrimage, Problems and benefits. Etc.

INTRODUCTION
Tourism industry is the largest industry in the world and the biggest contribution to global economic development. It is the world’s faster growing industry. At present more than one-third population of the world is directly or indirectly associated with the tourism industry. World tourist organization calculated tourist arrivals between 1990 and 2010 rose from 456 million per annum to 937 million. Tourism has developed at momentous rate after Second World War, but it has become a big global business in the contemporary period. Tourism has become one of the most important phenomena of man’s spatial behavior in the modern times. Tourism is an effective means of earning foreign exchange and providing tremendous employment opportunities beside, guiding modernization of infrastructure and acting as a catalyst in the growth of all sectors of economy. In simple words, tourism means transfer of wealth from one country to other.

According to Singh (1998), “Tourism as a socio-cultural and economic phenomenon is one of the most important forms of interaction between peoples from different parts of the world”. On the other hand WTO states that tourism is “The activity of people who travel to places outside their customary surrounding and stay there, for leisure, business or other purpose, for no longer than one year without interruption” (Bhatt and Badan 2006).

Tourism in India and especially in Kashmir valley is making tremendous growth (M.S. Kohli, 2004). The golden era of tourism development began in Kashmir in the eighteenth century when British made Gulmarg
and Srinagar their favorite destination. A British national namely H. Nedo opened up first hotels of higher standards one each at Srinagar and Gulmarg. Tourism, in Kashmir collapsed for the first time with the partition of India in 1947 with closure of the Muzafarabad-Srinagar route, which has now been connected with the cross border bus service. It started reviewing in 1970’s but suffered hick-ups now and then due to political uncertainties in the state.

In the analysis of tourism, economists emphasize the economic effects of tourism on the economy. The speedy growth to tourism causes an increase of household incomes and government revenues through multiplier effects, improvement in the balance of payments, and growth of the tourism industry. As such, the development of tourism has usually been considered a positive contribution to economic growth (e.g., Khan et. Al (1995); Lee and Kwon (1995); Lim (1997); and Oh (2005)).

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Vukonic (1996) identified the essence of religious attributes to tourism and discussed the nature of religious tourists, motives for their pilgrimage, the problems of transportation, food, catering, accommodation, health care and supervisory staff faced during the pilgrimage. It recommended regular research for appropriate action in updating the pilgrimage destination according to the changing needs of pilgrims. Singh (2000) analysed problems of marketing in tourism due to uniqueness of tourism market characterised by an intangible service being sold which cannot be inspected prior to purchase.

According to Kumar (1992) tourism play significant role as a medium of social and cultural development and promoter of employment. Tourism also promotes peaceful relations among nations. Today Indian government is trying to exploit its tourism resources by providing series of incentives and by inviting private sector participation.

On the other way the organization of various fair and festival for attracting tourists, show the sincere efforts of Indian government for promotion of tourism. In India state tourism Development Corporation improve accommodation facilities, transport system for the promotion of “pilgrim tourism”. Indian government promote tourism industry through organised the various Utsavas and Melas in India and abroad (Acharya 1997).

### OBJECTIVES

The objective of this paper is to make an overall assessment of the economic impact of tourism in the region of Shri Amar Nath Ji Cave in the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

- To examine the strength of the tourists coming to the state for pilgrimage tourism.
- To explain the benefits of Tourism industry in the state.
- To know the problem faced by the tourist in the state.

### TOURISM IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Jammu and Kashmir is an important Tourist destination and has been a place of attraction for tourist since centuries. The lush green forests, sweet springs and pleasant climate of Kashmir valley has remained an internationally acclaimed tourist destination. Whereas Jammu region is attracting a large number of pilgrim tourists and the important destination has been the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine and the Ladakh region has been a much famous destination especially for foreign tourists and adventure tourism as shown in given table.
Table: 1. Tourist arrivals in J&K (Lacs)
Source: Ministry of Tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Kashmir valley</th>
<th>Jammu</th>
<th>Ladakh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amarnathji</td>
<td>Vaishno Devi</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>50.56</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>44.32</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>54.00</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>61.00</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>62.52</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>69.51</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>72.22</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>65.76</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>76.57</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>82.39</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.7 The arrival of tourists in the Amarnath Ji from 2001 to 2010
From the figure 4.7 it can see that the flow of yatris/tourist was not enough in the initial period of time because of the disturbance in the state, as the time passes the flow of tourists increased continuous.
Tourist inflow to J&K has continuously been increasing steadily from 69.12 lakh in 2004 to 96.43 lakh in 2009. About 107.53 lakh tourists visited J&K during 2010. The inflow could have been even more but the prerequisite for growth of tourism sector. Out of the total tourist visitors to J&K, about 85% to 90% tourists visit the shrine of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Ji and hence pilgrimage tourism is the main contributor towards the Tourism sector. The share of tourist visitors to Shri Amarnath Ji Shrine cave is also quite significant and stood at 4.58 lakh for the year 2010. The perspective of overall, tourist inflow to all the three regions of the state, the percentage has increased during the years 2004 to 2010 by 37.39%. The number of foreign tourist to Kashmir Valley has increased from the figure of 0.19 lakhs to 0.24 lakhs during the years 2004 to 2010. Contrary to this, the number of foreign tourist to Ladakh has decreased.

PROBLEM FACED BY PILGRIMS
While talking with the pilgrims, we came to know about certain types of problem faced by them during their stay in the state.
Most of the tourist feels that the accommodation facilities provided by the shrine board and others are not sufficient. Similarly, the number of inn is not enough to accommodate all the pilgrims. The pilgrims were also complaining that the rooms in Dhams were allotted for only 12 hours and if someone had to stay for more than 12 hours he was supposed to pay double rent. The pilgrims also demanded that there should be separate path for Pithoos and ponies from katra to Bhawan. The behavior of shopkeeper is not pleasant towards the tourist. The tourists do not get good tourism package neither do they get proper guidance from the officials. They were also complaining that there is no free food and Prasad facility from the Shrine Board side.

**BENEFITS FROM TOURISM**

Tourism industry does not require huge investment and sophisticated technology. It provides benefit to millions. Its main component the pilgrimage is one of the largest, most flourishing and on the growth industry in its own right. It is potent of increasing national income, creates new employment opportunities and substitute’s capital which is scarce in developing countries.

Source of Foreign Exchange and Income:- It is source of foreign exchange. The foreign exchange earned by tourism is obtained conveniently the customer brings himself to the point of sale at his own expenses and taken immediate delivery of the services. Pilgrims also contribute to the income of the state. By adding the earning of pilgrims, it bridges the gap between developed states and the backward states like J &K .which means that the money spends by a tourist is not a complete transaction in itself but actually generate further economic activity as it circulates through the economy. As such the impact of tourists is felt after the tourist has left the state.

Growth Industry:-It is a growth industry and growing faster than other export industries. Any government which is mindful to assist its export industry would be well advised to select this industry. Especially in the hill region like J &K .this is a major export item industry whose products are giving to be increasingly in demand day by day.

Rational for States Development:-Regional imbalances are reduced by tourism. We are seeing that there is a lot of imbalances in the funds of states. We know many states are richer than J & K state. The people of the other state and spend their income and their expenditure becomes the state income. The tourism bridges the gap between the poor states and richer states.

Employment:-We know that unemployment is curse for a developing society. The economic value of tourism is generating employment remains unsurpassed in our state. Tourism is a labour intensive industry and main source of employment in hill regions. It can give employment to the semi-skilled or even to unskilled labour. It is considered a very good measure to remove the evils of unemployment.

Demonstration Effect: - Demonstration effect which changes the outlook and standard of living of the people. In simple words demonstration effect means catching up with one neighbor. As tourists are mostly from well do families naturally they will be having a unique style of living so the people especially from the poor state will avail the chance of catching up all their habits that will give rise to further economic development of the state. It improves the social relation of tourists with other state people. There is no other media than tourism for bringing the family of men together.

**CONCLUSION**

The study firmly indicates that there is significant direct contribution of the religious tourism on the economy of Jammu & Kashmir. As such every social event, whatsoever small it may be, generates some income in the economy as well as some employment. For very small events, the employment generation might be in fraction and income generation may be even in single digit of the currency, to think of the least. As the significance and intensity of the event enhances, making it more important, the income generation
may go up to billions of the currency units and employment generation may also reach to the extent of hundreds and thousands. The period between 1990's to 2004 is considered as the lean phase in the history of J&K tourism but now it's again increasing at significant rate. Now, the tourists who visit the state mostly come for the purpose of pilgrimage. These pilgrims spent crores of rupees within the state. The money spent by them does not goes to one sector of the economy but it distributed in all the sectors of the economy. It also provides the employment to a large number of unemployed people. Looking at the problems faced by the pilgrim's one can say that there is still huge scope for improvement and to attracting more and more tourist, the government has to overcome all those shortcomings. In the end we can conclude that tourism is playing a vital role in the improvement of this militancy hit state and is one of the major contributors in the economy of J&k state.

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