



COMMUNITY TOURISM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN KASHMIR

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the world's fastest-growing industries, and for many countries, especially those in the developing world, it holds promising economic backing. Not only does tourism create job opportunities and possibilities for economic development, but it can also do so in regions having few other economic resources.. For these reasons, many countries, mainly in the developing world, have been proactive to build up tourism industries as part of national development strategies.

Although Kashmir is acknowledged as the heaven on earth because of its abundant charming spots and attractions despite that Jammu and Kashmir is an industrially backward state without a strong industrial stand. Community Based Tourism (CBT), a future prospect, is a sort of sustainable tourism that encourages pro-poor strategies at community level and helps to eliminate poverty in rural areas of Kashmir. CBT initiatives intend to involve local population in the management and supervision of micro tourism projects as a means of alleviating poverty and providing a substitute income source for community members. CBT initiatives also encourage respect for local traditions, culture and natural heritage. Tourism offers many advantages to rural communities. Community Tourism has potential and can be used as a strategy for Rural Development.

The present study will help to find out the importance of community tourism and rural development in the Valley of Kashmir. Finally some suggestions will be given so as to enhance community tourism development in Kashmir Valley.

Keywords: *Kashmir, Community, Tourism, Rural, Development, Resources.*

INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

Community is one component for understanding community development for tourism development but is also important to appreciate how community affects local tourism development. Local communities have a key role in tourism development as they are crucial in providing a good environmental condition for tourists. Local communities are a basic element of modern tourism development. They are the focal point for the supply of accommodation, catering, information, transport, facilities and services for tourism development ([Godfrey & Clarke, 2000](#)). The term community can have a specific geographic meaning with a clearly defined spatial boundary and area and also refers to groups of people with a common interest ([Chapman & Kirk, 2001](#)). According to Bradshaw (2008, p. 6) Community as defined has historically shared boundaries one's geography of residence. For the purpose of this study, community is defined as a group of individuals living or working within the same geographic area with some shared cultures or common interests. This geographical definition of community is essential to understand how community development is linked to the ability of a community to improve tourism development.

Tourism plays an important role in economies of almost every nation viz-a-viz GDP of the world. In the recent time few economies in the world which are regarded as purely tourism economies. Similarly, the economy of the State Jammu and Kashmir can also be termed as tourism economy i.e. tourism based economy. No doubt, there is a vital role of tourism in overall development of any nation or region. However, this economic development which can be called as green side of the tourism is also linked with some dark patches which exist in its shadow. Usually, we cheer the economic gains of the tourism and ignore its impact on the environment and the mankind which appears at its later stage. So it is better to plan tourism well in advance by keeping the plight of future generations in view. Tourism in this area is in nascent stage therefore, measures need to be incorporated at this very stage, so that the flora, fauna and environment may not suffer in the long run.

Jammu and Kashmir is the Northern most States of the India. Geographically it is a unique State with three different regions within the State i.e. Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal husbandry, Forestry and Tourism are the main source of economy of the Jammu and Kashmir State. But, economy of twin border districts Rajouri and Poonch can be considered as backward economically. Still agriculture, farming and cattle rearing form the backbone of the economy of the Districts. There is very less scope for industrial development in this region because of the hilly terrain and remoteness of the area. Therefore, there is very less scope of development of agriculture in this region because of limited availability of arable land and small landholding. Secondly, the prospect for development of industries is also hampered due to hilly terrain, non availability of inputs for industry i.e. Men, Machine and Material. Confusion on the land transfer in the State as well as in this region therefore, the only prosperous area is the service sector. Vast numbers of tourists visit the beautiful Kashmir valley, Leh and Ladakh every year. 19 tourism development authorities have been established at places having tourism potential. There is vast scope for adventure tourism, pilgrim tourism, spiritual tourism, and health tourism leaving aside the traditional recreational tourism. During the last decade, the share of services sector has been stable in Jammu and Kashmir. The average contribution of the services sector in the GSDP of Jammu and Kashmir was around 45% during FY2001 to FY2008. The service sector of Jammu & Kashmir is dominated by tourism and adventure sports. As per [Annual Report of](#)

MSME-DI, Jammu & Kashmir (2011-12) which states that, Besides the scenic beauty, J&K is also known as a famous pilgrimage center. i.e. Shri Mata Vaishno Devi in Jammu province, Amarnath in Srinagar province and old Buddhist Monasteries/Gompas in Leh. It is worth mentioning that the State of J&K is one of the best tourist centers of India and is known as “Paradise on Earth”

Jammu and Kashmir is one of the popular tourist destinations in Asia. The tourism in Jammu and Kashmir offers a wide array of places to see. The delighting backwaters, hill stations and landscape make J&K a beautiful tourist destination. Historical monuments, forts, places of religious importance, hill resorts, etc. add to the grandeur of the state. Thus, they attract tourists from all over the world.

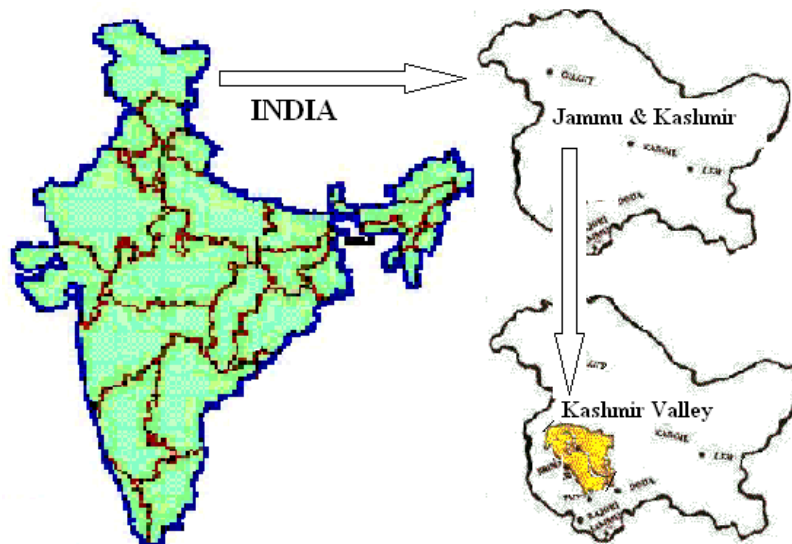


Fig 1: The Valley of Kashmir, The Land, MoonisRaza, Ali Mohammad (1978)

RURAL TOURISM IN KASHMIR: AN OVERVIEW

In bringing the rural areas and rural people on the scene of tourism, rural tourism is one of the important options for the state, its agencies especially those concerned with the rural development. Rural development and rural tourism can facilitate the ways of progress for each other. This in turn can develop and diversify the rural economy. The subsequent paragraphs are being devoted to discuss the option of rural tourism in developing the rural economy of Kashmir. Moreover, about, 20 percent of the workforce of the state is directly or indirectly dependent on tourism. In changing economic scenario of the world, tourism has emerged as one of the world's largest service industries with sizable economic benefits. So in a region like Kashmir, blessed with enormous sites and locations of tourist attraction, there is much scope for accelerating the process of tourism. New areas need to be identified and developed in order to attract the more tourists. In a region inhabited by more than 70 percent rural people mostly dependent on agriculture. Rural tourism is a challenging service among the landscapes and cultural heritage of rural communities. Tourism has many potential benefits for rural areas. This activity generates local incomes, employment and growth of welfare and is a valuable contributor to rural economy. Rural tourism can serve as an important source of tax revenues for local jurisdictions and promotes the usage and sale of local food products. Rural tourism prevents viable traditional occupations from being displaced and offers rural residents the business opportunities and creates new employment opportunities. Rural tourism preserves tradition and heritage of rural areas. It promotes the environment improvements within the settlements and respects the natural diversity.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT VIA COMMUNITY TOURISM IN KASHMIR:

Rural Development and Rural Tourism Rural tourism can be harnessed as a strategy for rural development. The development of a strong platform around the concept of rural tourism is definitely useful for a region like Kashmir where more than 70 percent of the population resides in rural areas. The trends of industrialization and development have had an urban centric approach across the world. Along with this, the stresses of urban life styles have led to a counter urbanization syndrome. This led to growing interest in rural areas. Rural development initiatives if taken in consideration with the concept of tourism can facilitate the process of rural tourism in rural areas. The progress of rural tourism in turn can facilitate the process of rural development of the rural areas. Taking initiative for introducing rural tourism in Kashmir primarily demands the development of the rural infrastructure; that is at the centre of rural development programmes. So the two processes of rural development and rural tourism are dependent on each other. After all there is a limit to the number of tourists we can accommodate in hotels, houseboats in Srinagar. There is a scarcity of land for dumping of the wastage generated by the human activities during the tourist seasons in the Srinagar city. Dal Lake, Jhelum is facing severe problems of pollution. Noise pollution, water pollution, air pollution and traffic jams are other problems faced by the Srinagar city. To all these problems, tourism is one among the causative factor. Centralizing tourists within a particular area of Srinagar city has various ill consequences

and such a planning is neither desirable nor safe for the Srinagar people and administration and need to address. Rural tourism is best option in tackling this problem. Firstly, it can decrease the burden of tourists on the Srinagar. Secondly, various problems for administration like problem of pollution, management of waste disposal, traffic jam to some extent can be checked. Thirdly, it will diverge the benefits of tourism to rural people. Fourthly, tourists can enjoy the quite, calm and natural environment of countryside, free from noise. At last we will give an overview of the resources available in Kashmir that can become the sources for the rural tourism and also the various benefits of the rural tourism to the community and the tourists ([Malik, .Bhat,Kuchay :2011](#)).

OBJECTIVES

Following are the objectives of the study:

- To study relation between tourism and community development.
- To study and highlight the mechanism for rural development through community based tourism.

METHODOLOGY

The study is mainly based on secondary sources and Insights are gained through various journals, articles, books, newspapers, Research articles, Internet and published and unpublished records of Ministry of Tourism Government of India and J&K tourism.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Tourism is a human experience, a social experience, a geographical phenomenon, a resource value, and a business industry. It is a major social phenomenon of the modern society with enormous economic consequences. Its importance as an instrument for economic development and employment generation, particularly in remote and backward areas, has now been well recognized the world over. The industry today is globally recognized as a major economic contributor and employment generator. The investment flows into this field are constantly on the increase ([WTO, 2011](#)). It is believed that only those rural regions with specific cultural, natural or social charm can attract tourists and this in turn can have significant impact on rural development strategies ([Mostowfi, 2000](#)). Rural areas of most touristic countries have become the centre of attraction for tourism planners and holiday makers ([Haghsetan2011](#)). In regard to this notion, rural tourism is thought to be one of the sustainable development channel through which rural areas can achieve economic, environmental and socio-cultural growth ([Haghsetan, Mahmoudi and Maleki, 2011](#))

Economic benefits of rural tourism have been expressed as growth in new jobs, and diversification of products through creation of new markets for agricultural products and broadening of the regional economic base. Most rural tourism businesses are small, owner-operated, and act as a second income, so they generally are not earning a lot of money. This income is still important however, as it increases the economic viability of businesses on-and-off the farm ([Oppermann, 1996, Warren and Taylor, 1999](#)). Rural tourism is not altogether a new phenomenon. Interest in the countryside recreation started to grow towards the end of the eighteenth century as a reaction to the stress of the increasing urbanization and industrialization. The nature and the countryside became the “gaze” of tourists ([Urry, 1990](#)). Krishna (1993) through light on historical prospective, that the first conscious and planned efforts to promote tourism in India were made in 1945 when a committee was set up by the Government under the chairmanship of Sir John Sergeant, the then, Educational Advisor to the Government of India. But it was only after the 1980’s that tourism activity gained imputes full swing. The government of India took several significant steps, making tourism in the country effective in 1982.

Later in 1988, the national committee on tourism formulated a comprehensive plan for achieving a sustainable growth in the tourism sector. [P.K. Bal \(2008\)](#) portray various dimensions of tourism and Hospitality which includes various hotels, motels and restaurants throughout the world as well as in India. Various techniques of revenue management and emerging issues of IT are also the part of this book. [Farrell & Runyan \(1991\)](#) in his book “The Dynamics of tourism-A trilogy”, deal with the concept of tourism, its fundamental nature, its correlations, development and manifestations, and interaction and interplay of two basic factor-accommodation and transportation leading to the phenomenal growth of tourism world-wide. [C. G. Bruce \(2005\)](#) in his book “The Peep at Kashmir” throws light on the historical importance of some temples of Kashmir. The temples during the reign of different rulers, particularly during the Afghan rule, which has been termed by him as the darkest period of ecological destruction in the Valley.

The author has also focused on the snake worship period of Kashmir Hinduism. [S. K. Sharma and S. R. Bakshi \(1995\)](#) in their book “Kashmir Art, Architecture and Tourism” have given a brief introduction to the ancient monument of Kashmir But; their study had not included ancient temples of this region. [Vijayanand \(2012\)](#) describes that pilgrimage tourism is playing a major role in socioeconomic development. Among other observations, it has shown that, for many countries of the region, the economic significance of pilgrimage tourism is very large when measured against GDP and exports. For many countries in general and the least developed countries in particular, pilgrimage tourism is a sector in which they have comparative, if not competitive, advantages for which they can efficiently convert domestic resources into foreign exchange. If appropriately used, such foreign exchange can purchase the investment goods necessary to support more broadly based economic development policies. . The study has demonstrated that the social significance of pilgrimage tourism, measured

in terms of employment (especially unskilled labor), is very large. It has also illustrated that appropriate pilgrimage tourism-related interventions can play a role in raising the standard of living and in reducing poverty in local communities. (Jhangir :2012). Famous historian P.N.K Bamzai, (1994) has given outstanding account other religions on of Kashmir in his book "Cultural and Political History of Kashmir". This book throws light on all aspects of ancient culture and political hierarchy of the State

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Tourism plays an important role in economies of almost every nation viz-a-viz GDP of the world. In the recent time few economies in the world which are regarded as purely tourism economies. Similarly, the economy of the State Jammu and Kashmir can also be termed as tourism economy i.e. tourism based economy. No doubt, there is a vital role of tourism in overall development of any nation or region. However, this economic development which can be called as green side of the tourism is also linked with some dark patches which exist in its shadow. Usually, we cheer the economic gains of the tourism and ignore its impact on the environment and the mankind which appears at its later stage. So it is better to plan tourism well in advance by keeping the plight of future generations in view. Seeking an alternative for rural development and contribution in employment generation, tourism can be regarded as a viable model of development in the region. Jammu and Kashmir is lacking in implementing sustainable tourism development practices. Tourism is the life line of Jammu and Kashmir and all possible efforts need to be undertaken for retaining, maintaining and sustaining it. Tourism opens up new window for resources, both investment generation and revenue generation leading to employment generation as well as socio-economic development of the local populace. The development of tourism in local communities is often an illustration of a community taking advantage of resources within community. Tourism can offer rural residents business opportunities in activities that cater to the tourism trade. Such locally – operated businesses, which may be seasonal, can provide local residents with valuable opportunities to develop business skills and can give local retail establishment. By the general analysis of the rural tourism development in Kashmir Valley, an attempt was made to present the complex nature of the activity. Though rural tourism has the potential to be one of the most effective tools of regional development, it has not grown up to the expectations so far, due to several interrelated reasons like the political disturbances in the region and unawareness of the rural tourist attractions.

To conclude, we can say community tourism can be an effective alternative for developing the rural areas of the region

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