

UNDERSTANDING KASHMIR VALLEY TOURISM- AN INSIGHT INTO ITS MAJOR TRENDS, PROSPECTS AND PROBLEMS

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ABSTRACT:

The Valley of Kashmir, popularly known as “Paradise on Earth” holds a rich and diverse touristic potential that clearly depicts its immense prospects for the development of tourism. In this paper, not only those unmapped and unutilized prospects of tourism have been unveiled by the author but also the problems of unplanned and mismanaged tourism that have taken away the “Sheen” of Kashmir Valley tourism have been exposed and thus the possible regional as well as national policies for adopting measures to tackle them have been simultaneously recommended. This Study is based on the secondary data which has been collected from the Tourism Department of Jammu and Kashmir, Ministry of Tourism GOI and Economic Survey of Jammu and Kashmir and simple tabulation methods have been used for analysis purpose. In nutshell, it has been suggested that tourism in Kashmir Valley has undoubtedly been the victim of undulations right from the India’s independence but mere willingness to develop Kashmir Valley tourism can’t do the job. Thus, concrete positive steps on the part of everyone concerned, whether administrators, local communities, tour-operators and the policy makers are the need of the hour.

Keywords: Kashmir Valley; Tourism; Trends; Prospects; Problems.

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Introduction

Tourism has been defined by the world tourism organization as the phenomenon involving the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes. Tourism, thus, refers to all activities of visitors, including both "tourists (over-night visitors)" and "same-day visitors" (W.T.O, 1994).

Tourism is one of the fastest growing and single largest industries in the world. The contribution of tourism industry in the global as well as individual perspective is worthwhile. Many countries in the world depend upon tourism as a main source of foreign exchange earnings. The World Tourism Organization recorded a total number of 763 million international tourist traffics in 2004 and earned US\$ 623.00 billion. Tourism continues to surge as a world economic force, contributing nearly \$5.5 trillion to the world's economy in 2004. The increasing trend of tourist arrivals and earnings is continuing. In 2005, the world tourist arrivals rose to 808 million. The World Tourism 2020 Vision forecasted that this figure will reach to 1,561.1 million in 2020 (Jain, Deepak, 2013). This continued growth in tourism business throughout the world is encouraging and nations are becoming more concerned to attract more tourists to their own destinations and trying to promote this sector as a major source for the economic development of the nation. India is not left unaffected by this trend.

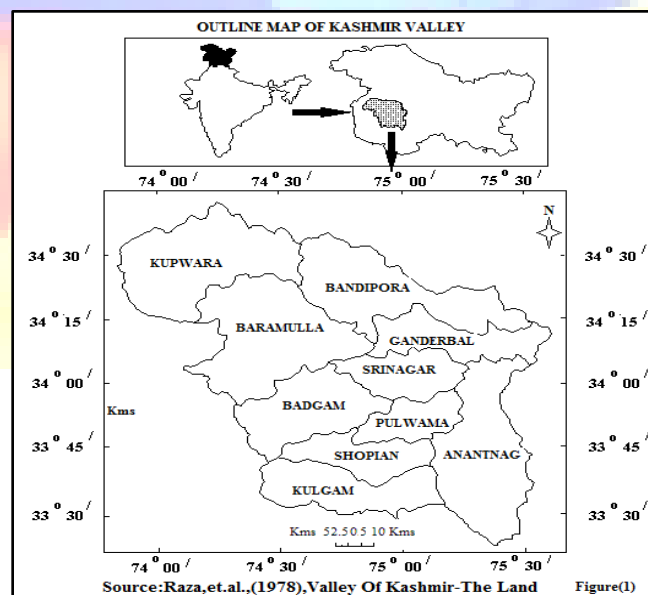
The World Travel and Tourism Council calculated that tourism generated \$121 billion or 6.4 percent of the India's GDP in 2011. It was responsible for 39.3 million jobs, 7.9 percent of its total employment. The GDP of the tourism sector has expanded 229 percent between 1990 and 2011. The sector is predicted to grow at an average annual rate of 7.7 percent in the next decade. In a 2011 forecast, the World Travel and Tourism Council predicted the annual growth to be 8.8 percent between 2011 and 2021 (Wani et al., 2013). This gave India the fifth rank among countries with the fastest growing tourism industry. Kashmir being called as "paradise on Earth" is one of the major tourist attractions in India. The state of J&K is known all over the world for its beautiful valleys, lakes, snowcapped peaks, invigorating climate, opportunities for trekking, fishing, skiing and number of archaeological, historical, cultural and religious places and hospitable people. Thus, Tourism is an important industry considered to be an economic bonanza for J&K state (Lala and Bhat, 2008).

Study Area

Kashmir Valley, a separate geographical entity- popularly known as “Paradise On Earth”- is one of the three Meso regions (Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh) of the state of J&K which are separated by the Himalayan mountain ranges from one another. These divisions have been referred to as a 03-storey building in the middle of which lies Kashmir Valley having half closed Ecosystem (Raza, et al.,1978).The oval shaped valley (figure-1) extending between latitudes $33^{\circ}20'N$ to $34^{\circ}40'N$ and longitudes $73^{\circ}45'E$ to $75^{\circ}35'E$ stretches over an area of $15,853 \text{ km}^2$ (out of $1,12,387 \text{ km}^2$ area of J&K), giving the appearance of an old lacustrine bed.

Kashmir Valley has rightly been called “Switzerland of Asia”. Bernier, the first European to enter Kashmir, writing in 1665A.D, says: "In truth, the kingdom surpasses in beauty all that my warmest imagination had anticipated."(Younghusband, 1911).Kashmir Valley occupies a special place in India, because of its geographic location, its scenic splendor and its great contributions to the arts and culture of India.

Geographically and climatically Kashmir is the child of the mighty Himalayas receiving in abundance the paternal grace in the form of captivating scenic beauty, lush green pastures and lofty glistening snow covered mountain peaks which capture the changing hues of the brilliant Sun, in a hundred thousand ways, the ever gurgling rivers and rivulets and the great lakes of mythological fame.



Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the trends, prospects and problems of tourism in Kashmir Valley.
2. To suggest necessary recommendations for the development of tourism in Kashmir Valley.

Materials and Methods

This Study is based on the secondary data which has been collected from the Tourism Department of Jammu and Kashmir, Ministry of Tourism GOI and Economic Survey of Jammu and Kashmir and simple tabulation methods have been used for analysis purpose.

Profile of Kashmir Valley Tourism

Kashmir Valley is an important tourist destination and has been a place of attraction since centuries. History of tourism in Kashmir Valley and its growth and development is closely associated with its ancient civilization. Travelers from far and wide have visited the Kashmir Valley for centuries past. It has been the main route of cultural and commercial intercourse between India and rest of the Eastern World including Middle East and central Asia (Ahmed,2013).

The tourism sector with a revenue generation of more than Rs.3, 000 crores provides employment to about 5 lakh people in J&K. The sector with its potential for employing people across the skill spectrum and positive externalities for other sectors like handicrafts, handlooms and transport occupies an important place in the development and employment strategy of the state. Tourism as an industry not only incentivizes the preservation of culture and heritage but is also in sync with the objective of conserving the fragile environment of the state. (J & K Tourism & Horticulture Report, 2013).

There are various places of tourist attraction in the state being visited both by foreign as well as domestic tourists. Prominent among them are the Mughal gardens, Gulmarg, Sonmarg, Pahalgam, Verinag and Manasbal etc. However, a marked pattern of negative growth in the tourist flow to Kashmir Valley has been seen in 1989-90 and this flow of tourists has not remained the same or kept on increasing continuously because of certain peculiar reasons like insurgency etc. which have drastically impacted on the tourism industry in Kashmir.

Table 1: Showing Year-wise break up of domestic and foreign tourist arrivals in Kashmir Valley (in numbers)

| Year | Domestic | Foreign | Total |
|------|----------|---------|---------|
| 1951 | 9933 | 1246 | 11179 |
| 1956 | 57341 | 7012 | 64353 |
| 1966 | 112127 | 7149 | 119276 |
| 1971 | 76612 | 15240 | 91852 |
| 1976 | 286412 | 38078 | 324490 |
| 1981 | 598555 | 43745 | 642300 |
| 1986 | 536598 | 53118 | 589716 |
| 1991 | 1400 | 4887 | 6287 |
| 1995 | 322 | 8198 | 8520 |
| 1996 | 375 | 9592 | 9967 |
| 1997 | 7027 | 9111 | 16183 |
| 1998 | 99636 | 10247 | 109883 |
| 1999 | 200162 | 17130 | 217292 |
| 2000 | 104337 | 7575 | 111912 |
| 2001 | 66732 | 5859 | 72591 |
| 2002 | 24670 | 2686 | 27356 |
| 2003 | 182205 | 8959 | 191164 |
| 2004 | 358095 | 18234 | 376329 |
| 2005 | 585702 | 19680 | 605382 |
| 2006 | 412879 | 20009 | 432888 |
| 2007 | 417264 | 24576 | 441840 |
| 2008 | 550100 | 22000 | 572100 |
| 2009 | 577348 | 23904 | 601252 |
| 2010 | 710504 | 25984 | 736488 |
| 2011 | 1282360 | 32110 | 1314470 |
| 2012 | 1274674 | 37166 | 1311840 |

Source: Jammu & Kashmir Tourism Department, 2013

Fig (2) Graphical representation of tourist arrival in Kashmir Valley

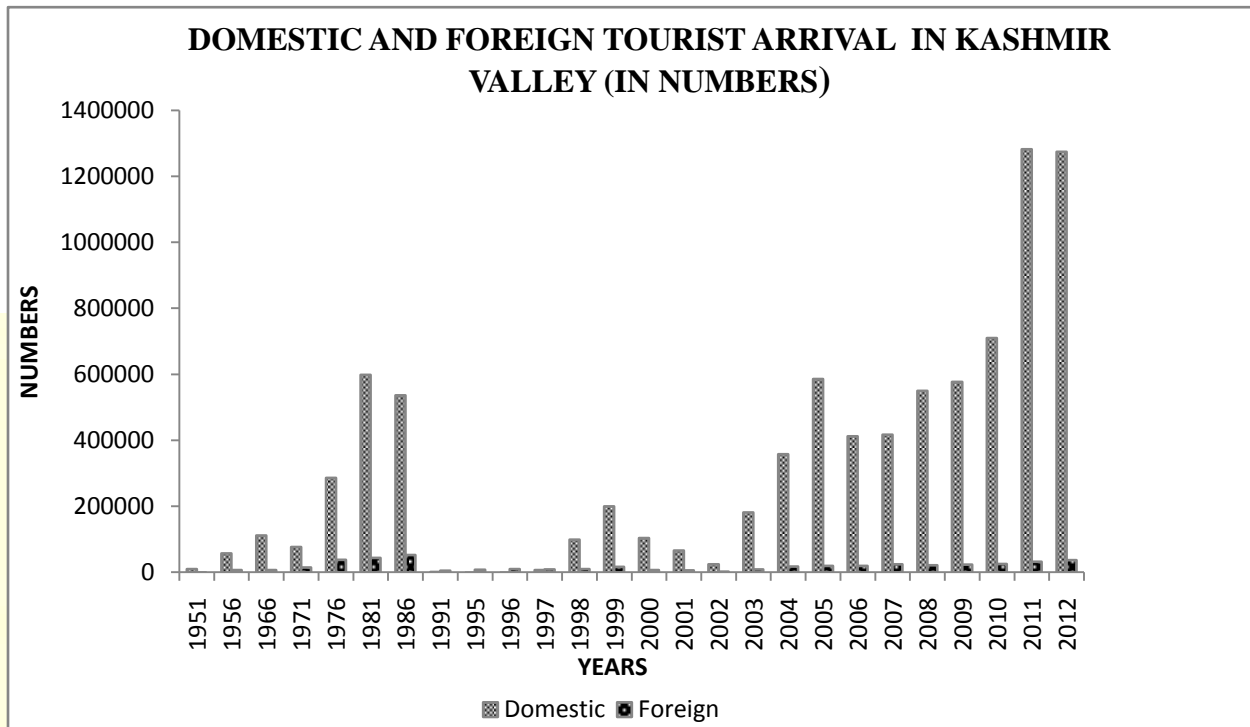


Table (1) reveals the fact that tourism in Kashmir Valley has waxed and waned in tandem with the prevailing circumstances since Independence. Up to 1971 it was one of the major industries providing employment to a considerable population of valley. However, it was in 1971 that this industry suffered a severe jolt because of the indo-Pak war. Kashmir being located geographically quite adjacent to Pakistan was, thus, the main sufferer.

However, this industry recovered itself soon and continued on its path of journey of progress. But, it was in 1989 when this industry again suffered a setback because of rise in political instability in the form of insurgency and militancy which reduced the flow of tourists to the Valley Of Kashmir significantly and it continued up to 2001-02 during which tourist infrastructure suffered a considerable loss. After 2002, when tourism was about to attain pace, few tourists in Kashmir were attacked which again put the prospects of this industry in doldrums.

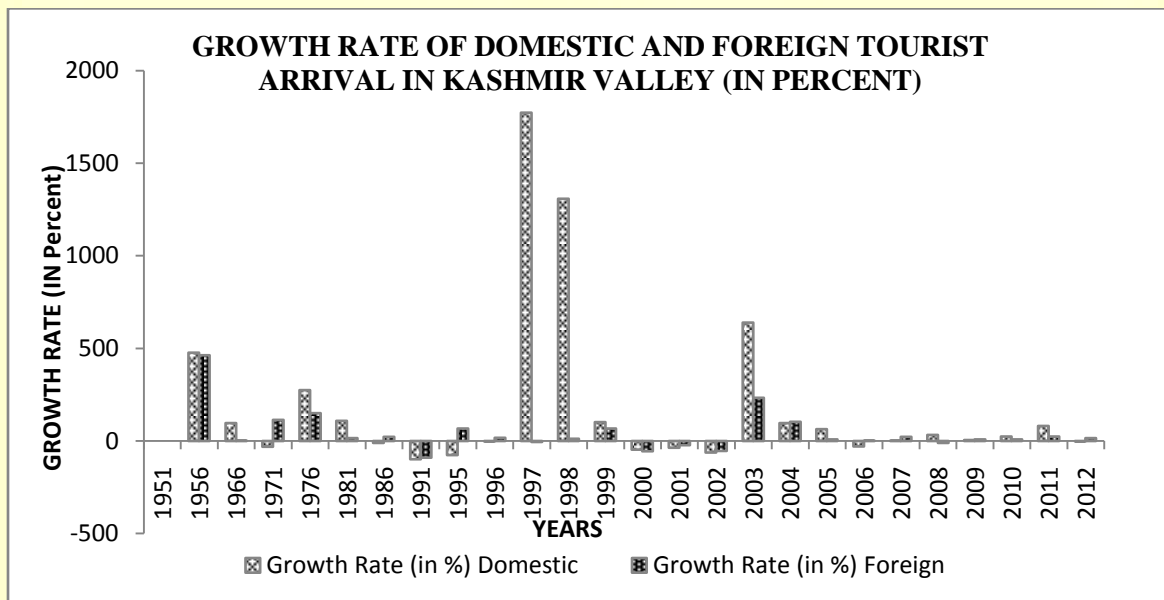
Despite all these undulations and fluctuations, the post 2006 period has witnessed a retardation in the militancy related activities and thus an increase in the tourist arrivals significantly. It was in 2011 that highest number of tourists ever (13,14,470); domestic (1,28,236) and foreign (32,110) visited Kashmir Valley from different countries like China, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, United States of America, Germany and United Kingdom.

Thus, Government has started paying attention towards the development of tourism infrastructure and people have started engaging themselves in the tourism related activities as Receptionists, Hotel and Motel Managers, Shikara and House boat owners, Tour Guides, Photographers, Salesmanship, pony-wallas (donkey owners) and Tour operators etc.

Table 2- Showing Year wise growth rate of domestic and foreign tourist arrival in Kashmir Valley(in Percent)

| Years | Growth Rate (In Percent) Domestic | Growth Rate (In Percent) Foreign |
|-------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1951 | ----- | ----- |
| 1956 | 477.27 | 462.76 |
| 1966 | 95.94 | 1.95 |
| 1971 | -31.67 | 113.17 |
| 1976 | 273.84 | 149.85 |
| 1981 | 108.98 | 14.88 |
| 1986 | -10.35 | 21.42 |
| 1991 | -99.73 | -90.79 |
| 1995 | -77 | 67.75 |
| 1996 | 0.001 | 17 |
| 1997 | 1773.86 | -5.01 |
| 1998 | 1308.88 | 12.46 |
| 1999 | 100.89 | 67.17 |
| 2000 | -47.87 | -55.77 |
| 2001 | -36.03 | -22.65 |
| 2002 | -63.03 | -54.15 |
| 2003 | 638.56 | 233.54 |
| 2004 | 96.53 | 103.52 |
| 2005 | 63.56 | 7.93 |
| 2006 | -29.5 | 1.67 |
| 2007 | 1.06 | 22.82 |
| 2008 | 31.83 | -10.48 |
| 2009 | 4.95 | 8.65 |
| 2010 | 23.06 | 8.7 |
| 2011 | 80.48 | 23.57 |
| 2012 | -0.59 | 15.74 |

Fig (3) Graphical representation of Growth Rate of Domestic and Foreign Tourist Arrival in Kashmir Valley



Prospects of Tourism in Kashmir Valley

Tourism is highly labor intensive industry of a unique type. It provides different services needed as well as expected by the incoming tourists. According to the latest estimates of the world travel and tourism council, this industry is expected to generate about 6 percent of India's total employment. Looking ahead, the economic impact of all this is expected to generate a total of about 28 million jobs by the year 2014.

It is proper to say that tourism is neither a single nor a specific kind of industry strictly located at a particular site. It is the sum total of a host of services rendered to the tourists as soon as they start gathering information from the host country through any medium. Thus, the development of such a multifarious service industry is least expansive and for less difficult to manage as a part of economic activity. The biggest resource required to operate such an industry is human ingenuity and a creative skill.

So far as the Valley of Kashmir is concerned, it has a vast potential of Tourism because of its natural beauty dotted with numerous lakes and waterfalls, lush green hills and valleys, pilgrimage sites and historical Gardens, torrential rivers and pine trees and vast grasslands that have remained untouched by the man. However, because of a multitude of factors like the lack of interest of Government and other authorities, lack of required technology and funds, unawareness of tourists and to some extent isolation of the region, this vast potential is still shrouded behind the scene. Thus, besides few tourist destinations like Mughal gardens, Gulmarg, and Pahalgam, rest of the huge potential of Kashmir Tourism remains untapped. The main prospects of Tourism in Kashmir Valley can be elaborated as follows:

- **Adventure Tourism**

“Adventure is an evocative term that speaks of beginning, boldness and power. It connotes participation and active involvement in the life. An adventure, a quest, begins because of a human desire, a drive to experience which is hidden and unknown” (Quinn, 2003).

Adventure Tourism is an outdoor leisure activity that generally takes place in an unusual or remote geographical setting, involving sometimes unconventional means of transportation and tending to be associated with low or high levels of physical activity (Lala and Bhat, 2008). It has been a part of a spectrum of new tourist practices claiming different ethics to those of traditional mass-tourism. It is a special form of tourism that involves risk and excitement and is taken in conjunction with nature. Most of the existing literature on adventurous activities suggests that the pursuit of risk is central to their attraction (Carl, 2004).

As a result of scenic splendor, Kashmir Valley has got a vast potential to prove as a successful destination in tapping into the increased interest in adventure tourism which can be represented by a plethora of activities like trekking, rafting, mountaineering, climbing, golfing, skiing, paragliding, aero sports, camping and zorbing etc. Being surrounded by towering mountains like the mighty Pir-Panjal, Zaskar and Greater Himalayan Ranges, the Valley of Kashmir can provide joyful experiences and enjoyment to the tourists. Climbing and trekking to these virgin mountain peaks can prove stimulating, breath taking and worthwhile.

Recently trekking routes have been opened from Doodpathri to Yousmarg and from Dangwathi to Aharbal in addition to the already existing ones from sonmarg to Narang and Gurez in Kashmir Valley.

In case, the tourist is more adventurous, he may go for angling in high altitude lakes which are reached by trek. e.g., one of the trek starts from Sonmarg and goes on to high altitude alpine lakes of Vishansar, Kishansar, Gadsar and Gangabal.

Secondly, river rafting in Kashmir on Lidder, Sind, Kishan Ganga and Jhelum rivers provides the best opportunity to enjoy and experience the natural beauty of the spectacular landscape with deep gorges, towering snowcapped peaks, hill side villages and glimpses of unique wildlife.

Despite having all these potentials and prospects for adventure tourism, Kashmir Valley is getting only a small portion of adventure tourists on national as well as international lines.

- **Pilgrim Tourism**

The State of Jammu and Kashmir has been a seat of reference to all major religions of the world. This state is full of holy sites and most of these sites are located in between the scenic surroundings of great Himalayas.

Kashmir is an epitome of harmonious blend of art, religion and philosophy. Religions like Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism etc. has co-existed in J&K since hundreds of years especially in Kashmir Valley that is saturated with various mosques and temples which are just marvel creations. The state stands as an example of religious tolerance. Visiting Hari Parbat Pilgrim Center where a temple, a Gurudwara and a mosque stand side by side gives a feeling of pure brotherhood in between the major religions of the Region(Bhat,2013).

Jammu & Kashmir has various pilgrim destinations for Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists. The very famous Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine and the Amarnath Temple are located in this state. These sites are the most valued and sanctified of Hindu pilgrimage sites where thousands of devotees pay homage every year. For Muslims, there is the Hazratbal Shrine in Srinagar where the sacred hair (Moi-e-Muqqadas) of Prophet

Mohammad (S.A.W) is preserved and the truthful come to pay homage. The Shahdara Sharief located in Rajouri District of the State is like an emblem of communal harmony.

Besides all the above destinations, a number of other religious places that the Valley of Kashmir has been bestowed with include shrine of Baba Rishi (district Baramullah), Kheer bawani, Charari-sharif (district Budgam), shrine of Noor shah sahib and sheikh Noorudin-wali (District Kulgam), Martand temple, shrine of Baba Naseebudin-gazzi (District Anantnag) and Khankah Moalla and Old jamia masjid (District Srinagar)

Thus, looking at the huge untapped potential of Pilgrim Tourism of Kashmir Valley, number of tourist circuits can be developed like:

- Srinagar-Hazratbal shrine-sheikh Noorudin Wali's shrine-Shahdara Sharief via Pir ki Gali.
- Srinagar-Martand temple- Holy Amarnath cave
- Srinagar-Old Jamia Masjid-Baba Rishi
- Srinagar-Kheerbawani
- Srinagar-Shrine of Baba Naseebudin Gazzi-Shrine of Noor shah Sahab.

● Rural Tourism

Rural tourism has long been considered a means of achieving economic and social development and regeneration. More specifically, it has been widely promoted as an effective source of income and employment, particularly in peripheral rural areas where traditional agrarian industries have declined. More recently, however, a number of established tourism destinations have also turned to rural tourism in order to diversify their tourism products and markets and to spread the benefits of tourism away from the resorts into the hinterland (Sharpley,2002). Generally, rural tourism is seen as a valuable and growing sector of the overall tourism market, representing a significant source of income to rural economies.

Kashmir is known throughout the world as much for its arts and crafts as for its scenic beauty and bracing climate which are mainly the production of rural Kashmir. Its crafts range from woolen textiles of fleecy soft texture of matchless excellence in weaving, hand-woven carpets of the finest warp and weft, to the exquisite designs worked on papier-mâché, wood work, silverware, etc. They are products of unique

craftsmanship. The skill of the craftsmen and their capacity for intricate workmanship are assets, which can help development on a much larger scale.

Like handicrafts, the handloom industry is also the oldest traditional cottage industry in the state. The importance of this sector lies in the fact that it has enormous employment potential; it does not consume scarce resources, does not cause pollution and is environment friendly. The social cost benefit ratio, therefore of all investment in this sector goes up manifold.

Kashmir Valley is famous for the weaving of specialized fabrics like pashmina and kani shawls, silken, woolen and cotton fabrics. The elaborate kanishawl which was introduced by Zain-ul-Abed in and spanned through the Moghul, Afghan and Sikh rule are primarily found in the tiny village of Kanihama near Magam. Similarly, Main production centers of woolen articles in Kashmir are Gurez, Tillel, Bandipur. Nadihal, Kazipora and Papchal (well known for kandidaror bordered chadars), Lolab valley, Badgam, Beerwah, Chadoora, Inder Gadodar, Pulwama, Tral, Shopian, Sophare, Handwara, Magam and Tarzoo.

In the areas surrounding Anantnag in Kashmir, many people are engaged in embroidering raffal and pashmina shawls, pherans (a loose over gown worn by men and women). Besides, the Kashmir Carpet, Introduced to Kashmir by Sultan Zain-ul-Abedin in the 15th century ranks amongst the finest in the world today. The weaver takes special pride in his ability to accurately reproduce Persian, Turkish, Turkman, Caucasian, antique Kashmir Moghul and Jaipur Moghul patterns.

Moreover, The silver work of Kashmir is extremely beautiful and some of the indigenous patterns, like the chinar and lotus leaf, are of exquisite design. Handmade pieces of high quality workmanship are available in Srinagar. Articles include cups, bowls, plates, tumblers, trays, tea and coffee pots, dinner sets, goblets, boxes, vases, trinket boxes and cigarette cases.

In the rural areas of Kashmir, Utilitarian earthenware is still in demand for domestic use. Low priced and colorful clay containers are used to store water, set curds and cook vegetable and meat. The Kashmir potter also makes symbolic objects linked with the Shivratri festival, clay-containers for the kangri bowls and chillums containing smoldering embers for the hukka. Rural pottery found in Charar-e-Sharif is painted red

and blue and is occasionally decorated with white and green flowers. Mud-pots for storing water and cooking continue to be widely used in every village home.

Above all, beautiful temples, idols and monuments testify to stone carving being an ancient craft in Kashmir. Athwajan, close to Srinagar is known for its stone work, chiseled stone for paths, pillars, grinding stones and gravestones.

Despite having the huge potential for this type of tourism the rural Kashmir is still in a state of underdevelopment which if utilized properly can prove as a boosting factor for the generation of employment and various other skills.

- **Wetland Tourism**

Wetlands represent the interface between land and water. These are areas of land that are either temporarily or permanently covered by water. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment estimates conservatively that wetlands cover seven percent of the earth's surface and deliver 45% of the world's natural productivity and ecosystem services of which the benefits are estimated at \$20 trillion a year.

Kashmir valley nestled in northwestern folds of the Himalayas is replete with diverse types of freshwater bodies (Khan, 2000) which have a tremendous potential for the development of tourism. These consist of both high altitude and low altitude wetlands and Natural as well as man-made ones. Some of these wetlands include the world famous Dal Lake which lies in the heart of Srinagar city. Wular, the largest fresh water lake of India about 16kms long and 9.6 kms wide at a distance of 75 kms from Srinagar in Bandipora district, Anchar lake, a swampy area of about 8km length and 3kms width, Manasbal lake at a distance of 29kms from Srinagar with 5kms length and 1km width and Hokarsar lake on the Baramulla road, about 13kms from Srinagar with 5kms length and 1.5kms width.

All these are the low altitude wetlands (below 3000mtrs) and the high altitude wetlands(above 3000mtrs) having crystal clear and deep blue waters include Sheeshnag lake near vavjan, enroute to Shri Amarnath cave, at a distance of 28kms from Pahalgam, the Neelnag lake in Budgam district at a distance of 10kms from Nagam and Tulian lake etc.

Almost every part of the Valley of Kashmir is abound with larger or smaller water bodies including rivers, streams, ponds, springs, waterfalls, and lakes. e.g., District

Srinagar alone consists of 99 wetlands (lakes-14, streams-7, high altitude waterbodies-29, riverine wetlands-25 and smaller wetlands with area of less than 2 hectares-24) with an area of 10081 hectares. Baramula district consists of 97 wetlands with an area of 16360 hectares (lakes-2, streams-13, riverine- 29, high altitude waterbodies-38 and smaller ones-15), Pulwama district comprises of 266 wetlands with an area of 3561 hectares (streams-5, riverine-7, high altitude wetlands- 2, smaller-252), Kupwara district is abound with 95 wetlands with an area of 2384 hectares (lakes-18, streams- 5, Riverine wetlands- 2, smaller wetlands-70), Budgam district consists of 80 wetlands with an area of 3402 hectares (high altitude wetlands-11, Riverine wetlands-9, streams-12, smaller wetlands- 48), Anantnag district comprises of 118 wetlands with an area of 6875 hectares (high altitude wetlands- 69, riverine-15, streams-11 and smaller wetlands-23).(National Wetland Atlas, 2006).Rest of the districts of the Valley are similarly rich in the wetland potential tremendously.

Despite these benefits, wetlands in Kashmir Valley are the first target of human interference and are among the most threatened of all natural resources primarily because of increased siltation, eutrophication due to run-off from catchments, agricultural conversion, receding open water areas as a result of expanding reed beds, construction of canals, weirs, levees and over-grazing (Bacha, 2002).

Thus, if these wetlands are managed and brought to the tourist map of Jammu & Kashmir, new prospects and possibilities of tourism which will enhance the vistas of tourism in Kashmir Valley will emerge.

- **Heritage Tourism**

The State of Jammu and Kashmir has its own long and glorious history. Under the Antiques Act, any article that is more than 75 years old is to be declared heritage property. Jammu and Kashmir is a land with more enormous potential for heritage tourism. The land is full of natural beauty that is unique to the state. It is also bestowed with a variety of cultural forms and manifestations that has their distinct flavor. It has diverse practices in religion, rites and rituals, fairs and festivals, landscape and people, language and culture.

Kashmir Valley is blessed with both tangible and the intangible heritage which should be incorporated into the wider tourism circuit. The need is to treat heritage

tourism in this region as the function of the tourism. Only then it can thrive in the true tourism sense. First, the heritage tourism assets of the region should be identified and then a proper documentation mechanism has to be devised so that a proper inventory is developed which can be integrated into a well-defined tourism product by employing the proper marketing strategy with the help of the multidisciplinary approach of the varied professionals, who can constitute task force for the application of the mechanism developed from this integrated process. Once this procedure is brought into action it will lead to the heritage tourism development model that will lead to the bright prospects of the overall tourism business in the region.

Problems of Kashmir Valley Tourism

Looking at the prospects of Tourism in Kashmir, it becomes quite evident that tourism in Kashmir can play an utmost important and significant role in the overall development of Kashmir Valley. With its backward and forward linkages with other sectors of the economy like transport, telecommunication & handicrafts etc., tourism has the potential to not only prove as the economy driver but also as an effective tool for poverty alleviation and ensuring growth with equity.

However, .The tourists are attracted to the destinations not only because of the natural resource or natural beauty of the place, but because of the returns they get on the expenditure they do in the tourist place. These could be satisfaction of psychological needs like proper, safe, hassle free and affordable accommodation, good transport facilities, in and around the tourist place, good water, and hygiene and sanitation facilities. Thus, this sector of Kashmir Economy is ridden with some of the inherent problems and limitations that can be noted down in the following paragraphs as:

❖ Tourism Infrastructure

The tourist infrastructure is poor in Jammu & Kashmir which impedes the expansion to tourism in two ways. First, the absence of some types of infrastructure such as roads provides an effective block to tourist development. Second, the absence of other types of infrastructure does not preclude tourism, but makes achieving and maintaining service standards more difficult and expensive. Thus, the failure to provide adequate bulk services to the tourist sector is alarming. The Jammu & Kashmir government has tried to invest in building basic

infrastructure such as railways, highways, roads, electric power plants, water supplies, and other related facilities. With the support of central financial assistance some basic physical infrastructure has been constructed but this is still at a very low level. For example, the total number Hotels in Kashmir Valley are 386, Restaurants-104, Paying Guest Houses-75, Registered Guest Houses-406, House boats-910 and Shikaras-4656 (Department of Tourism, J&K) which is very insignificant so far as the tourist flow-both domestic as well as foreign- especially in peak seasons is concerned. Similarly the road length has increased from 18,368 kms in 2007-08 to 26,700kms (surfaced-23,600kms and unsurfaced-3100kms) in 2013-14. However, 10,20, 786 public and private vehicles use to ply over this much of road length the situation of which is further aggravated with the loopholes and bottlenecks during most of the times of the year. Similar is the case with the 119km single rail route of valley from Qazigund to Baramulla. Only 2 trains run over it that too after 4-5 hours of gap. Aviation sector which has created havoc for Kashmir Valley Tourism is worthwhile to be mentioned here. The air tickets to Kashmir from New Delhi become more costly than the tickets from Delhi to Bangkok or Switzerland in peak tourist season. Besides, lack of entertainment facilities like cinema Halls, Swimming pools and cyber cafes at major tourist destinations also spoils the taste of tourists in the Valley.

❖ **Political instability**

The challenges faced by the Tourism sector particularly in Kashmir Valley are many as the continuous militant activities have led to the decline of tourism industry in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. In order to fight the militant activities, the army and police have been taking several measures. For instance, police routinely stop and search passengers of overcrowded buses. Armed security forces line the roads with sand bagged bunkers at strategic points. Heavy military vehicles are on constant patrol. Moreover, since 1989-90 to 2002-03 over 1151 government buildings, 643- educational institutions, 11-hospitals,, 337- Bridges, 10729-Local Houses and 1953 shops have been gutted down.(Ito,2011).The Already 24 years of armed militancy in Kashmir is

destroying not only Kashmir Tourism but also its forests, lakes and wildlife. Endangered wildlife is freely poached and human habitation is destroying the area's ecosystem, leaving its fate hanging in the balance environmentally as well as politically. This has caused a fear psychosis both in the minds of domestic as well as foreign tourists. In such a suspicious climate it is natural that the tourist flows have declined.

❖ **Social ,Cultural and Religious Ethos**

Kashmir Valley is a land of quite distinctive culture, traditions, language and taste because of which people of the Valley are quite reluctant to adhere to it. e.g., the pony-wallas or horse-men in tourist destinations like Pahalgam, Sonmarg and Gulmarg etc look like poor and dirty people in their quite untidy clothing ready to carry tourists for some ride which gives quite bad impression. Similarly, the bad and rude behavior of drivers is also noteworthy to hinder in the progress of tourism development.

Being a Muslim dominated region, tourists feel unsatisfied in not getting things like wine etc. with ease or after long searches that too through illegal means quite unpopular and religiously treated as taboo in the Valley which spoils their taste and acts as an obstacle for tourism success.

❖ **Lack of proper Management and Utilization of Tourist Spots**

Tourist spots especially the world famous Dal lake are not being managed properly because of political and personal reasons quite unknown to public which has rendered it devoid of its Sheen. Similar is the case with the largest fresh water lake-Wular-of India. It has turned into a callous water body with undefined shorelines filled with huge masses of mud and willow trees and has been left quite unattended and under developed. The authorities are so negligent towards the management of water bodies that these have turned into marshy lands giving bad smell and acting as the epicenters of diseases which has not only affected the health and hygiene of the local people but has also given a setback to the Valley's

Tourism. Furthermore, the somehow developed parks and gardens like Kokernag garden, Achabal garden and Verinag etc, lack in the proper facilities of hotels, stalls and toilets etc which spoils the enjoyment of tourists therein. Besides, An unregulated inflow of visitors to tourist places in the vicinity are so affected by such conditions that they may decide to keep away from them the next time. The debris kept lying for long as a result of any developmental activity, kitchen sewerage unless treated, garbage dumps, landfills and fuel spills distract the tourists. How sensitive is the tourist industry to all the adverse changes in environment if it is not properly conserved are a moot question.

It is aptly described that tourism= nature's beauty + wild life + cultural attractions + ecology. All these are the components of one single and indivisible system. They need to be conserved in order to protect the very resource base of tourism from destruction. Thus, Kashmir Valley, despite being the hub of tourism potential is ridden with innumerable problems that if attended and worked upon could regain its age old epitaph -The Paradise on Earth- for it. To solve these problems and to give tourism industry a fillip in the valley, few suggestions become noteworthy to be mentioned here.

Suggestions for the development of tourism in Kashmir Valley

1. Develop a better connection with the Local Communities of tourist destinations and provide opportunities to the local stakeholders in tourism ventures to work with Governments and other stakeholders to improve the overall environmental quality of destinations.
2. Emphasis must be placed on the security of the entire tourism network. Making tourists feel secure and safe before and after vacations is essential to the international competitiveness of destination.
3. Take a close look at ways and means of improving the existing infrastructure and hygiene conditions at places of tourist interest and public places.
4. Banks and insurance companies can play an important role in the development of tourism by incorporating environmental and social criteria into assessment procedures for loans, investments, and insurance. They can help to finance Environmentally-Sound technologies and provide incentives for sustainable tourism.

5. The marketing strategies at tourist destinations are not in line with the principles of sustainable tourism. The need of an hour is the better involvement of tourism boards in sustainable tourism efforts so that the market sales and purchases can be checked and enhanced.
6. Maintain the number of Tourist arrivals to different tourist destinations according to the Carrying Capacity of the area.
7. Participate and arrange national and international tourism fairs and festivals like Gulmarg Snow Festival at Gulmarg, Shikara Festival at Srinagar, Mughal Rally, rafting championship, Golf Championships and trekking expeditions etc.
8. Develop and update an attractive web site to provide the required information to the potential tourists.
9. Use Social media for tourism promotion and Produce/broadcast quality short films and promos and telecast the same on leading satellite/cable TV channels.
10. Include Archeological Sites in the Tourist Circuit and set up Heritage Conservation and Preservation Authority.
11. Quality assurance is important to attract customers and encourage repeated visits.
12. Promote New Trekking Routes and conduct basic and advanced courses in mountaineering expedition, adventure, rescue and skiing.
13. Establish commendable Master's and Ph.D. programs in hospitality.
14. Organize Familiarization trips of tour operators, travel agents and media persons from time to time.
15. Fix rates of accommodation and services and penalties for malpractices.

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