

**IMPACT OF TOURISM ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND
URBAN DEVELOPMENT OF KATRA, VAISHNO DEVI:
A FOCUS ON PILGRIMAGE TOURISM**

Khalid Hussain*

Rankush Kumar Dalotra*

Abstract

Tourism can be defined as the act of travel for the purpose of recreation and the provision of services for this act. Tourism is the most progressive earning profession in modern life. Tourism is primary a term of economic referring to an economic activity and like other economic activities, it creates a demand or provides a market for number of quite separate and varied industries. The present study deals with the “impact of tourism on the environment and urban development of Katra Vaishno Devi: A focus on the pilgrimage tourism. The tourism has positive as well negative impact on the different places of tourist interests. Each destination has its own nature and characteristics. Katra is one of the important tourist destinations of Jammu province (J&K). Both the positive and negative tourism impact on the Katra. There is rapid change in the land use pattern, most of the open and residential area are replaced by big hotels and guest houses, as in 2014 the number of pilgrimages has increased the marks of 10 million. This urban growth has led to various environmental impact on Katra and nearby villages like Kundrorian, Natali, Arlia, Nomai, Kadmal, Dhana and Sarbed etc. Apart from the negative impact some positive impact can also be noticed, like the international recognition of the pilgrim Centre, rise in living standard of local population, increase in job opportunities, good educational facilities, health facilities and exposure of the inhabitants to new technologies.

Key Words: Recreation, Pilgrimage, Vaishno Devi, Impact, Positive, Katra, Economic, and Negative.

* Research Scholar Deptt. of Geography University of Jammu. 180006.

Introduction

Pilgrimage tourism or religious tourism has great importance in worldwide. The phenomenon of tourism is one providing employment and increasing the economic activities of the peoples. The tourism has both the positive as well negative impact on the different tourist destinations. Such impact may be physically, socially, culturally and economically etc. As Mark Twain said, "nothing so liberalizes a man and expands the kindly instincts that nature put in him as travel and contact with many kinds of people." Man's instinctive wanderlust takes him from deserts to mountains and from rivers to monuments to satiate not only his physical but also his psychological needs. Recognizing in this an opportunity, the Indian government has formulated a policy to promote India as a global tourism brand, based on the central theme of 'AtithiDevoBhava' - the Sanskrit phrase that translates as 'Guest is God'. Tourism as a modern term applicable to both international and domestic tourists it is the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal work and residence. Such a pleasure-seeking tourist is a traveller moving from place or visiting the same place repeatedly. In today's world, tourism is an important socio-economic activity. Tourism is now recognized as an industry generating a number of social and economic benefits. It promotes national integration and international understanding, helps in improving infrastructure, creates employment opportunities augments foreign exchange earnings, etc.

Objective of the study.

- 1 The study of the pattern of urban growth in Katra Vaishno Devi.
- 2 To study the change in land uses, due to the urban growth of Katra Vaishno Devi.
- 3 To assess the impact of pilgrimage tourism on the economy of Katra.
- 4 Assessment of tourism impact on the environment of Katra.

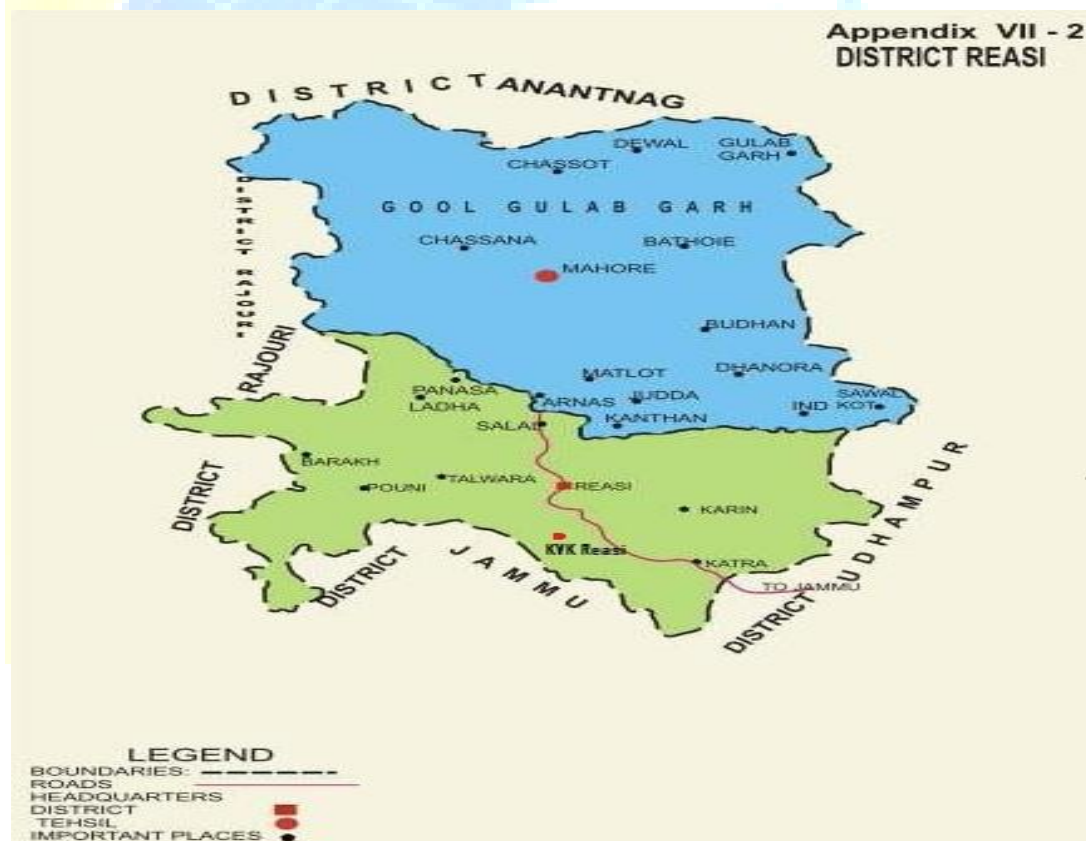
Research Methodology: The study is mainly based on primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data has been collected through the field survey and questionnaire based. Secondary data is collected from different sources such as Jammu and Kashmir tourism department(Jktdc), Books, magazines journals, websites, newspapers brochures, statistical department, Master plans and others official and non-official agencies to draw relevant result. Personal field visits and

collecting data and information. After collecting and tabulating the data suitable statistical techniques has been applied for analysis such as simple percentage method to draw the desirable results.

Study Area:

The Township of Katra is located 48 km away from the city of Jammu. It falls under Reasi block of Reasi district in Jammu Province and is situated at an average elevation of 2840 feet above sea level. Its physical composition suggests that it is located on a plateau that is about 2.6 km long and about 1.2km wide and is composed of mostly limestone and river deposits of recent origin. Geographically, the town of Katra is located right at the foot hills of Vaishno Devi shrine on the western side of the Shivaliks, one of the sub- Himalayan ranges.

Map of Study Area.



Development of Tourism in Katra

Katra, the base for the trek to the cave shrine of Vaishno Devi, is a famous pilgrim center of Indian. In early 80s the average number of visiting pilgrims every year was more than 10 lakh but their number increased steeply after the reforms initiated with the takeover of the shrine by a statutory independent board (shrine Mata Vaishno Devi shrine board) under the chairmanship of the then governor, Jag Mohan in 31 august 1986. Its prime objective was to provide better amenities to the pilgrims and improved infrastructure as well as continuous maintenance and monitoring of services. The shrine board organizes its activities through large number of independent but interconnected departments for the delivery of better services to the pilgrims. These departments include accounts section, security wing, administration, engineering and non-engineering store, personal section, purchase section, development section, civil section and forest wing. All these departments work in coordination with each other to provide different facilities and services, to visitor's enroute the shrine. These services include revenue collection, maintenance of funds, provision of accommodation, eateries, dispensaries, cloakrooms, security, sanitation and hygiene, souvenir and general shops, water and electricity supply. Besides these, the board manages Yatra Registration counter. The main function of this counter is issuing of yatra slips. The board also takes care of renovation and reconstruction of religious and historical places around Katra, the Baba Aghar Jitto, KolKandali, Baba Dhansal, DevaMai Temple, BhimGhar Fort etc. The shrine Board thus plays a vital role in the development of tourism in Katra. There has been a rapid increase of pilgrim traffic in Katra after the establishment of the shrine Board. Before 1986, the figure never crossed 15 lakh mark in any year. Year 2012 witnessed the highest record of pilgrim inflow i.e. over 1 crore.

Tourist Attraction around Katra

The Deva Mal Temple is about three miles short of the township of Katra. Many devotees treat it as a very holy site. The holy cave of Shiv khori, believed to be the abode of lord Shiva, is situated at a distance of 70 km from Katra. The cave is a real wonder and measures almost a kilometer in length with a four – feet – high naturally formed shiv-lingam at the heart of the sanctum sanctorum. A few miles away from Katra is Pindan, at the foot of the trikuta range. This spot is also dedicated to Vaishno Devi. The Baba Dhansar is dedicated to lord Shiva and is located at a distance of about 15 km from Katra on way to Salal Dam. Here a huge spring emerges from the

rocks. Era Baba Banda Bhairagi was Guru Gobind Singh's favourite 'saint soldier' who constructed a gurudwara on the banks of river Chenab, where he spent his last days.



A View of Katra Bus stand.

Trend of Pilgrimage tourist's arrival in Mata Vaishno Devi (1950-2011)

Year	Pilgrimage tourist in Lakh	Year	Pilgrimage tourist in Lakh
1950-51	0.03	1998	46.22
1955-56	0.06	1999	44.81
1960-61	1.60	2000	51.10
1965	2.30	2001	50.57
1967	2.12	2002	44.32
1974	5.81	2003	54.00
1977	8.16	2004	61.10
1978	8.82	2005	62.52
1980	12.13	2006	69.50
1985	14.85	2007	72.22
1990	21.69	2008	65.7682.35
1995	40.12	2009	82.35
1996	43.35	2010	87.49
1997	44.34	2011	101.15

Source: JKTDC Jammu.

Results and discussion:

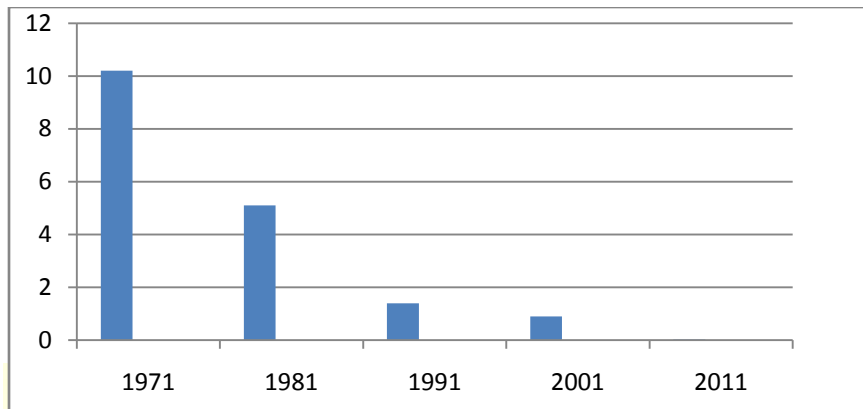
Changing in Land use Pattern

The structure and spatial organization of Katra has undergone transformation due to changes in land use affected by increasing tourist traffic. In 1976, the residential area extended up to 26 acres and only 5 acres of land was under commercial activities. Open areas, rough and rugged land, cultivated fields covered 328 acres of land. Now the picture has changed completely. Due to heavy tourist traffic, more land has been brought under commercial activities. The open areas are now covered with chain of Hotels and other building. The residential area too has increased manifold. The area under cultivation has decreased owing to intensification of commercial activities in the region. The town planner has earmarked 272.25 acres of land under residential, 137.67 acres under commercial, 30.15 acres under pilgrim facilities, 144.92 acres under roads, railways, bus stand and parking areas. The newly created rail link from Jammu Tawi to Katra which led the changing the land use pattern in the study areas.

Decade wise change in Agricultural activities (1971-2011)

Years	Agricultural Activities
1971	10.2 %
1981	5.1 %
1991	1.4 %
2001	0.9 %
2011	0.02%

Agricultural Activities



Alteration of Existing Economic Activity

The development of tourism has led to an alteration in the economic system of Katra to a large extent. The magnitude of change is evident from the figures provided by the 1991 census, which when compared with the 1971 and 98 census, show a considerable decline involvement in agriculture activities in 1971 ,10.2%of the total population was engaged in agriculture activities in 1991, it declined to 1.4%.Now people are mainly engaged in tourism- based activities and thus are directly or indirectly dependent on pilgrims for their livelihood .Most of the people are running shops,restaurants and hotels in the town. Shrine Board like accommodation, eateries, sanitation, dispensary, electricwing, revenue collection, security wing etc. Some poor people have their own ponies and palanquins to help pilgrims reach the shrine easily.

In the past some areas of Katra were used for planting tea. Now they have concrete structures built mainly to meet the requirements of the pilgrims.

Urban Development

Reasi district is a newly created district of Jammu and Kashmir state.It is separated from the Udhampur and Rajouri district of J&K state. According to the census 2011, the total population is 314714 in which 288010 persons are living in rural areas and 26704 persons are living in urban areas. Tourism provides lot of business opportunities in the form of hotel industry, hospitality and retail services. At any tourist destination, accommodation, catering and entertainment constitute the primary tourist services industry. A large number of people in India have a desire to go for pilgrimages and in due course, they need tourism related services.These days more than 90 lakh pilgrims need services of the hotel industry .With this increasing rate of

growth in pilgrims traffic the number of pilgrims in 2012 is estimated to be 1.08 crore, implying that there is lot of market potential for hotel industry at Katra and Bhawan. Katra has many good hotels and more are coming up. A few new additions are country inn and suits town (7km from town and marks the entry of an international chain in the Jammu region), Hotel white, Bhawani s' paradise, hotel jig and a row of hotels on the railway road which separates from Hotel Ambica etc. Many Dharamshalas have also been opened. Construction in the hill town also includes souvenir shops, handicraft stores and about 460 general stores. Thus, rapid increase in tourist traffic has caused Katra to become a major commercial center of the state.

Demography changes

Katra experienced its highest growth rate. This is obvious because the town, being a pilgrimage center, has tremendous economic potential for development in terms of commercial activities. The floating population in Katra is rapidly increasing every year. With increasing commercialization in the town, people have become more conscious about the importance of education. The region has begun to attract more educated people. Literacy rate in the town has gone up. The Shrine Board has also opened a new university near Katra with a view to provide better educational facilities in the town and areas nearby. Tourism provides an impetus to the development of various facilities, which has improved the living conditions of the host population. Provision of regular water and electricity supply, hospitals, afforestation, construction of drains and roads has improved the lifestyle of the people of Katra.

Environmental Impact

It is clear from the survey that heavy pilgrim concentration at Vashno Devi and Katra has created problems of congestion, noise, air and water pollution, sewage and garbage disposal, strain on public utility services and recreational facilities, scarcity of land due to increasing number of hotel and commercial buildings. On the other hand, improvement in living standard of locals, increase in job opportunities and modernization of infrastructure are the positive effects. There is acute water scarcity in Katra and Kudrorian. The supply of water in town is only half of the actual requirement. The hotels buy waters from the adjoining villages to fulfill their water requirement but the local population and the pilgrims staying in dharamshalas bear the brunt of insufficient water supply.



1 A view of Katra Land use change.



2 A view of tourists in Katra.

Solid Waste

There is no sewage treatment plant in Katra. All the sewage generated from the houses, hotels and restaurants flows from the drains into the Bangangastream. All the waste generated from the town is dumped on the hill slope by the notified area committee, which again flows down into Banganga. The toilets along the track generated a lot of waste especially during May-June and September-October, when the number of pilgrims reaches up to 20000 per day. In addition, about 5000 people are permanently stationed at Bhawan, Sanjicithat and ArdhKumtri, enroute to the shrine. The toilet waste finds its way to the septic tanks constructed nearby, which do not have adequate capacity. There is no sewage treatment plant in VaishnoDevi. Due to large number of pilgrims (approximately 12600 per day) and the people permanently stationed there, the waste water generation is approximately 359000 liters per day. Besides this each pilgrim is estimated to generate an average of 450gm/ day of solid waste in the journey to the shrine, thus approximately 5670 kg/ day of waste is generated. The shrine Board has employed around 437 sweepers to clean the track. The dustbins are installed at a distance of about 200-300 meters all along the track. The sweepers clean the track and the dustbin very efficiently, but all the garbage is dumped on the mountain slopes after every half kilometer. There are 7 major dumping sites on the hill slopes along the track. The pony dung and other wastes are set on fire and it releases obnoxious fumes.

Landslide

The area is both geologically and ecologically fragile and also prone to landslide and erosion. An alternative track to the shrine was completed and opened to the public in 1999. The rocks were detonated with explosives, which weakened the rocks and also resulted in loss of forest cover. This triggered landslide in the area and the track remain closed most of the time. This is the result of poor environmental planning by the authorities. The preventive measures, if not taken immediately, may lead to the sinking mountain slope up to Sanjichhat and damage the buildings along the track. There is loss of forest cover due to the construction of alternative track. As no environmental impact assessment (EIA) study was done before starting the work, no record of the number of tree cut is available. But as the length of the track is 5.5 kms. And the width is 3 meter approximately 11.06 km of the forest area has been destroyed. It also lead to the loss of a thin soil cover in this area and one can see exposed rocks all along the track. So the afforestation project of the Shrine Board has not been very successful, so far as protection against landslide and other soil conservation measures are concerned.

Pollution

During field observation it was observed that plastic cups, spoon and foodstuff in non-biodegraded packaging find their way on the hill slopes and are burnt by the sweeper, resulting in the release of obnoxious fumes. During rains, the un-burnt waste finds its way into the Banganga. On an average 2000 vehicles come to Katra every day. Their exhaust fumes cause air pollution. Besides, it also causes noise pollution. Music systems played by the shopkeeper to attract the pilgrim also add this noise.

Economic Impact

Heavy pilgrim traffic has created problems like rise in land value, goods and services. But at the same time income of the locals has increased. Mostly, females are not involved in the business sectors, neither it showing any inclination toward it. The pilgrim visiting the shrine is mostly from the average income group and prefers to stay in cheaper accommodation. Construction of five star hotels is only adding to the infrastructure and not attracting pilgrim from the higher strata. During peak season, most of the pilgrims are seen sleeping on road, at bus stops and in the

market place. Over all, people in Katra are becoming prosperous and their standard of living is going up.



1 A view of urban development in Katra.

2 A view of Heliport in Vaishno Devi.

Socio-Culture Impact

Various social problems like changing traditions, customs and values of people, habit of bargaining and duping the pilgrims has arisen in the area. The crime rate in the town as gone up, habits of drinking, smoking and gambling among youth are on an upswing. But at the same time it has given international recognition to Vashno Devi (Katra) as a major pilgrim center and exposure of the local population to other culture and new technologies. Several families are sending their children for higher education to the states like Maharashtra and Karnataka after paying huge donations. The peoples have become materialistic and competitive. This is all because of the exposure to other culture and races. Local groups raised a combined voice for the shrine Board to pay more attention to the development of Katra.

Number of tourist Bungalow in Kata: **2**

Number of Register Hotel in Katra: **219**

Number of register Resturant in Katra: **19**

Conclusion

Katra the base for the trek to the Cave shrine Vaishno Devi experienced more development after 1986, when shrine Board of Mata Vaishno Devi under took the management of holy shrine up to 1990's the expansion of Katra is just up to KatraUdhampur road but it has been now extended up to railway station Kundrorian, Katra and the limits of Katra Development Authority (KDA) is up to Nangal, Dhanori and Nomai. There is rapid change in the land use pattern, most of the open and residential area are replaced by big hotels and guest houses as in 2014 the number of pilgrims has increased the marks of 10 million. This urban growth has led to various environmental impacts on Katra and nearby villages like Kundrorian, Natali, Arlia, Nomai, Kadmal, Dhana and sarbed etc. Problems like various types of pollution, sanitation, dumping of solid waste, lack of proper sewage, lack of water and electricity supply, commercialization, over charging and duping of pilgrims, change in mental attitude of the locals population towards tourists, increase in crime rate, change in the system of medicine from unani to Allopathic and degeneration of moral values etc. are faced in Katra and nearby areas. Apart from the negative impact some positive impact can also be noticed, like the international recognition of the pilgrim Centre, rise in living standard of local population, increase in job opportunities, good educational facilities, health facilities and exposure of the inhabitants to new technologies.

References.

Ahmed N, "Management of tourism in Jammu and Kashmir", (2000) , Dilpreet publishing house f-198 Vishnu garden, New Delhi 110018.

BandhuDesh (1983) "Income and employment effect of tourism- a case study of J&K state", a thesis submitted at university of Jammu.

DewanParvez (2007), "Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh" Manas Publication, New Delhi.

MandalR.B (2000) "urban Geography A text book", concept publishing company, A / 15-16 commercial block Mohan Garden New Delhi. 110059.

MawaSusma (2004) "pilgrimage tourism marketing Strategy: Special reference to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine" Rakeshgoelkaveri books Ansari Road New Delhi.