

Vol 7 Issue 2 Nov 2017

ISSN No : 2249-894X

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*Monthly Multidisciplinary  
Research Journal*

*Review Of  
Research Journal*

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RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595

ISSN No.2249-894X

Review Of Research Journal is a multidisciplinary research journal, published monthly in English, Hindi & Marathi Language. All research papers submitted to the journal will be double - blind peer reviewed referred by members of the editorial Board readers will include investigator in universities, research institutes government and industry with research interest in the general subjects.

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## ROLE OF TOURISM INDUSTRY IN KASHMIR'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



### ABSTRACT:-

**T**ourism plays an important role in the state and is one of the major contributors to the state economy. Travel & Tourism is an important economic activity in most countries around the world. Tourism is the most important industry of 21st century. There are several tourist spots with breathtaking scenic beauty located throughout the length and breadth of the state that attracts thousands of domestic and foreign tourists. The picturesque beauty, large natural lakes, the snow clad mountains surrounded by thickly populated pine forests with rivers flowing through have made Kashmir as a prime tourist attraction. The tourist influx has, however decreased considerably in the past one decade because of difficult circumstance prevailing in the state. Tourism is one of the fastest growing service industries in the Kashmir with great potentials for its further expansion and diversification. Tourism industry plays a major role in any country's economic development. It helps significantly to the country for creating the employment opportunities to the large number of people. Moreover, it is also one of the important engines to attract more foreign exchanges with its potential. The paper explores that there has been a tremendous growth in tourism in Kashmir because of the policies of the government and support from all levels. Tourism is considered an economic bonanza. It is a multi-segment industry. While

**Zahoor Yousef Sofi**

**Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of History, Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar.**

*gauging the positive economic effects of tourism, its contribution to the generation of state income, expansion of employment opportunities, rising of tax revenue, generation of foreign exchange and transformation of regional economy. In this paper, the endeavor has been made to assess the development of Kashmir tourism and the role played by the Kashmir tourism for advancing the magnificence and tourism economy of Kashmir.*

**KEY NOTES:** *Tourism Industry, Foreign versus domestic tourists, Kashmir, Economy.*

### INTRODUCTION

The history of tourism is as old as human society itself. The early tourists can be traced from period when man set sail and attempt to know the immediate world around. His inherent zeal for enchanted unknown lands and curiosity for new world culminated into early travels. At the start of present century, travel and tourism were confined only to affluent, i.e. rich, religious extremists, conquerors and well educated and the elites who were fascinated by the enchanting beauty and mysteries of unknown land. Tourism has, however grown from the pursuits of a privileged few to a movement of people; with the urge to discover the unknown places and to seek change in environment and to undergo new experience<sup>1</sup>.

Tourism is an organized industry its dimensions are wide, its location varies, and its benefits scattered over large segments of the population. Tourism means the temporary, short-term, or prolonged movement of people of destination, outside the place where they normally live and work or undertakes their regular activities<sup>2</sup>. In the second quarter of 20th century, tourism has emerged as one of the largest and fast

growing industries primarily due to its commercial expediency, revolution in transport and communication, demographic expansion, growing real income, longer leisure tourist facilities at the destination areas<sup>3</sup>. The International Association of Scientific Experts on Tourism (AIEST) has defined tourism as the sum of phenomenon and relationships arising from the travel and stay of non-residents, as far as they do not lead to permanent residence and are not connected with any earning activity<sup>4</sup>.

Tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industries at present. In India, although tourism has a distinction of being the third largest export industry after gems, jewellery and readymade garments, its share of the world's tourist traffic is a mere 0.51 percent. It is more important in the case of Jammu and Kashmir. Tourism, besides boosting the economy of Jammu and Kashmir, can act as a major force for the conservation of its cultural heritage, and also provide significant opportunities for women and young people and offer educational training and skills development and protect and revitalize traditional arts and crafts. Looking at its economic returns and comparatively light investments and at the potentialities for tourism and limitations of adequate natural resources in other fields of economic growth, tourism in the state has always been an area of attention and required to be encouraged further. According to one estimate, 30 percent of the state's population connected directly or indirectly with this activity subscribing 16 percent of the state's domestic product<sup>5</sup>.

The valley has been an unending attraction of visitors down the ages. The beautiful lakes, clear streams, green turf, magnificent trees, and mighty mountains offer varied attractions to the tourists. Valley of Kashmir has variously been described as an 'emerald set in pearls'. Enchanted by this lovely vale, king Jahangir had proclaimed, if there is a paradise on earth, it is here, it is here. Bernier who was among the first foreign travellers to visit the valley described it as a 'Paradise of the Indies'. Hieun Tsang, the well-known Chinese pilgrim who visited India and Central Asia in the seventh century C. E. spent full two years in Kashmir<sup>6</sup>. As stated at the outset, Kashmir is one of the most beautiful regions of the world. Characterized with young folded mountains, deep gorges, waterfalls, cascades, scenic beauty and alpine pastures, the valley has provided great opportunities for domestic and international tourists. The following were some of the important tourist interest places of Kashmir<sup>7</sup>.

Mughal Gardens, Dal Lake, Nageen Lake, Kokernag, Sonamarg, Wular Lake, Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Takht- i- Sulaiman, Hazratbal, Shri Amarnath Cave, Skiing and Golf.

Tourism is an age-old activity in the state, especially in the valley of Kashmir. Innumerable tourists have visited the tourist places, from time immemorial. As compared to any other industry, tourism trade has witnessed a phenomenal growth in the valley since independence. The number of tourists visiting the valley has increased manifold. Figures below show the year wise statistics of tourist traffic to Kashmir valley since 1951.

**Table 1.1**  
**Tourists coming to Kashmir valley (in thousands)**

S. No.	Year	Domestic	Foreign	Total
1	1951	9.33	1.25	10.58
2	1955	48.19	2.83	51.02
3	1960	63.37	11.19	74.56
4	1965	35.70	7.43	43.13
5	1969	129.75	10.95	140.70
6	1973	175.83	20.01	195.84
7	1974	148.32	19.13	167.62
8	1978	443.34	59.32	502.66
9	1979	498.06	55.68	553.74
10	1980	548.49	46.03	594.52

11	1981	598.55	43.74	642.29
12	1982	560.98	42.85	603.83
13	1983	398.43	41.10	439.53
14	1984	192.68	36.46	229.14
15	1985	465.60	38.02	503.62
16	1986	536.60	53.12	589.72
17	1987	664.08	57.57	721.65
18	1988	662.10	59.93	722.03
19	1989	490.22	67.76	557.98
20	1990	6.10	4.62	10.72
21	1991	1.40	4.89	6.72
22	1992	1.18	9.15	10.33
23	1993	----	8.03	8.03
24	1994	5.01	9.32	14.33
25	1995	3.23	8.20	11.43
26	1996	3.76	9.60	13.36
27	1997	7.03	9.12	16.15
28	1998	9.97	10.25	20.22
29	1999	20.02	17.14	37.16
30	2000	10.44	7.58	18.02
31	2001	6.68	5.86	12.54
32	2002	2.47	2.69	5.16
33	2003	18.23	8.96	27.19
34	2004	35.81	18.24	54.05
35	2005	58.58	19.69	78.27
36	2006	41.29	20.10	61.39
37	2007	41.73	24.58	66.31
38	2008	1.51	7.01	8.52
39	2009	1.41	6.81	8.22
40	2010	1.64	8.01	9.65
41	2011	108.78	31.93	140.71
42	2012	118.70	37.20	155.90
43	2013	98.04	30.04	128.08
44	2014	114.49	27.27	125.31
45	2015	120.30	33.21	153.51

Source: Directorate of Tourism, Jammu and Kashmir.

It is significant to note that the number of tourists visiting the Kashmir valley has witnessed a phenomenal increase since 1973. The figures in the above table show that highest number of tourists visited the valley were during 1978 to 1989 with an exception for the year 1984 when only 229.94 thousand tourists visited the valley. The number of tourists visiting the valley was highest during 1987 to 1988 when 721.65 thousand and 722.03 thousand tourists visited the valley respectively. The share of the foreign tourists has also fluctuated significantly. It was above ten percent of the total inflow of tourists during 1951, 1965, 1973, 1974, 1978, 1979, 1984, 1986, and 1989. However, their percentage share increased tremendously after 1990. It does not mean that influx of foreign tourists has increased but the percentage of domestic tourists had a great fall due to militancy in the Kashmir valley. This can be seen from the fact that during the year 1993 there was no record for domestic tourists whereas

we still find that 8.03 thousand foreign tourists visited the valley during the same year. The potential for domestic as well as foreign tourism has grown substantially during the last few years. The favourable climate, particularly during summer months, had a supplementary impact in increasing the tourist traffic to the valley. With the development of winter sports at Gulmarg and Pahalgam, the number of tourists visiting during the winter season has also increased considerably. Recent data show that in 2015, 153.51 thousand tourists visited the valley out of which 120.30 thousand (78.37 percent) were domestic tourists and 33.21 (21.64 percent) thousand were foreign tourists. Mostly foreign tourists came from rich and prosperous countries like USA, U.K., France, Germany, Australia, Canada, Spain, Italy, Japan, Switzerland, and South Africa.

### ROLE PLAYED BY TOURISM

Tourism is a complex and multidimensional phenomena whose incidence is felt on almost every section and activity of society. Protagonists of tourism have visualized it as harbinger of economic growth. Which is modifier of social and economic inequalities, while the critics have enlightened various social strains that are caused by the development of tourism examples being distortion of cultural expressions, conversion of small farmer into wage labourers due to high land cost which tourism creates and associated alienation of land, perpetuation of racial inequalities and erosion of dignity. Tourism has also been considered as a force, which extracts a price from the host community and at the same time, bestows benefits upon it. The price is not only in terms of investment in infrastructure and superstructure projects, but also in terms of other factors, which may be non-monetary but also are never the less important. Therefore, whether or not tourism is blessing or blight eventually depends upon the capacity of host economy to harness its potential gains and mitigate its evil effect<sup>8</sup>.

Tourism as a socio-cultural and economic phenomenon is one of the most important forms of interaction between people from different parts of the world. It is a phenomenon which entails the exchange of value and transfer of capital or foreign exchange from one country to another and thereby, influences the shape and speed of social and economic changes particularly in the host country. In fact, tourism is now recognized as a social form of industrialization with all its advantages and dis-advantages<sup>9</sup>.

Tourism is an important industry in the valley. Tourism brings a number of social and economic benefits like promotion of national integration and international understanding, creation of employment opportunities, removal of regional imbalances, opening up of new growth centres, augmentation of foreign exchange earnings and so on<sup>10</sup>.

The valley where the scope of large-scale industrial development is very limited and due to hilly terrains and small size of land holdings agriculture is unable to meet the expectations of the valley's economy, tourism is considered an economic bonanza. Being a labour intensive industry, the scope of employment is very vast. It requires very low level of investment and wages provided under this industry are comparatively higher than many other industries. Tourism is regarded as multi-segmental industry, therefore provides different types of jobs like hotel managers, receptionist, accountants, clerks, guides, tour conductors, travel agents, transport operators, chefs, cooks, attendants, photographers and many other jobs, which are required to strengthen tourism. Some of the important benefits of tourist industry in the valley are listed below<sup>11</sup>.

### CONTRIBUTION TO STATE'S INCOME GENERATION

Tourism has proved to be successful in generating state's income. Being a multi-segment industry, the hotels and restaurants, transportation service, tourist resorts, amusements parks, sales outlets of handicrafts, jewelleryes, paper machie etc., provides services to both tourists and non-tourists and contribute to the process of income generation in the valley. The process of income generation starts with the money spent by the tourists. Every unit of money spent by the tourists circulates in the economy and brings prosperity to the economy. The money spent by the tourists, it has been estimated by the tourism experts, takes about 13 to 14 transactions before it disappears. Out of these transactions 5 to 6 transactions takes place within the first year. The money spent by the tourists goes into circulation in the economy through accommodation and meals in hotels and restaurants transport for sightseeing, entertainment, gift, photography, drugs, cosmetics, etc. In this circulation, money goes on adding to its value. Ultimately, it creates a chain reaction in the economy<sup>12</sup>.



**FOREIGN EXCHANGE**

Foreign exchange a prerequisite for economic development is also earned through international tourism. Foreign exchange earned by the state goes to the country's exchequer. The additional income generation effect of a foreign visitor has been more than that of Indian visitor to the state, foreign tourist on an average spends more than two times compared to domestic tourist.

**EXPANSION OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

The expansion of employment opportunities is an outstanding contribution of tourism industry. As mentioned earlier, it is a highly labour intensive industry in which we find different types of employment for skilled, semi-skilled, and un-skilled persons. It generates large-scale direct and indirect employment. Under direct employment, the number of jobs are created in various sectors of the state economy viz., hotels, restaurants, house boats, transport services, guides, travel agents and so on. Indirectly employment is generated in jobs created through the demand for goods and services required by directly employed person's viz., manufacture of handicrafts, paper machie, cottage industries, bakeries, and tea stall etc. The tourists, during the visit to valley purchase local products like woolen shawls, carpets, wood carving, jewelleries and paper machie products. This increases in the local artisans, carpenters, jewelers and too many other people who provide raw material to these producers<sup>13</sup>.

The approximate employment provided by the tourism related units in times of normalcy is shown in table.

**Table 1.2**  
**List of Tourism related units of Kashmir valley registered with Tourism Department and the approximate Employment provided by these Units.**

Name of unit	Total No. of registered units in the valley	No. of Employees attached per unit	Total No. of Persons
Houseboats	1094	5	5470
Hotel A category	59	25	1475
Hotel B category	71	15	1065
Hotel C category	113	10	1130
Hotel D category	29	6	174
Travel Agent	202	5	1010
Guest Houses	154	8	1232
Restaurant Dhaba	306	8	2448
Tourist Guides	94	1	94
Photographers	341	1	341
Hawkers	2500	2	5026
Bathing Boats	81	1	81
Motor boats	113	1	113
Tour Operators	5276	1	5276
Pony Keepers	209	8	1672
Boat Shops	11	1	11
Ski Shops	650	1	650
Golf Professional	1	2	2
Total	11304	101	27289

Source: Directorate of Tourism, Jammu and Kashmir — 2003.

### RAISING TAX REVENUE

The tourism sector contributes a lot to the state tax revenue. All economic activities associated with the tourism contribute towards the state revenue. In the past, share of tax revenue had been 13 to 15 percent<sup>14</sup>.

### TRANSFORMATION OF REGIONAL ECONOMY

Tourism helps in developing or transforming backward and rural areas into prosperous developing areas. The development of Gulmarg, Phalgam, Achabal and Kokernag etc., in Kashmir valley give positive evidences of the contribution of tourism to the development of backward areas in the Kashmir valley. These places were relatively unknown villages with dismal economic activity and now are well-known tourist resorts<sup>15</sup>.

The investments on socio-economic infrastructures for tourism increases the mobility of men and material, extends the size of market and helps in accelerating the rate of growth of the state economy.

### STEPS FOR THE GROWTH OF TOURISM

Tourism, as mentioned earlier, plays an important role in the state economy. It is in view of this importance that the state government has taken up the development of tourism industry in the right direction. The investment for the development of tourism has been raising steadily<sup>16</sup>. The tourists have been visiting the state since times immemorial but commercial tourism in the state as a new phenomenon dates to 1951. After independence when the planning process in the state, made the planners realize the importance of the potential of the tourism, earmarked funds for the expansion of tourism infrastructure, identification of new resorts and reorganization of the industry.

The different five-year plans were undertaken for the development and promotion of tourism in the state. The development efforts made by the government for promoting travel, trade enabled the industry to get the increased number of tourists. After India's independence, the state Government took several aspects, connected with the development of tourism industry. There were improvements of roads for better transport facilities, opening of new tourist resorts and increasing accommodation facilities<sup>17</sup>. In addition to accommodation facilities, transport and sports, water supply, electrification and entertainment are being developed in all the tourist spots<sup>18</sup>.

Tourism industry has witnessed a phenomenal growth in the state since independence. The number of tourists visiting the valley has increased manifold. A turning point in the history of Kashmir tourism is marked by the construction of Srinagar-Jammu National Highway in 1948 (the old Banihal cart road), and the introduction of catering facilities in Dak Bungalows constructed along the road at different points as resting place for pony rides, who used to carry 'Dak'(mail) for Kashmir. Both international and domestic tourism received a boost with the valley figuring on the air map of the country. Many things have changed since India got freedom in 1947, when total tourist flow to Kashmir was 14,568 and when it touched a margin of 6, 62,097 in, 1988. Kashmiri generally believed that their land is much explored, seen, and enjoyed by foreigners than Kashmiri themselves. If one goes through the written accounts of foreigners, it will become obvious that they really love the valley, with utmost. It can be said that they are somewhat really in love with this part of the landmass<sup>19</sup>.

The state government gave special attention to the construction of roads. In 1965-66, the total road length was 4798 kms. (Excluding National Highway) which increased to 12436 kms., in 1994. Border Roads Organization is also entrusted with work of maintenance of roads. Project Beacon is maintaining roads in Kashmir province and project, Sampark is maintaining roads in Jammu Province, and the number of buses plying in the state has increased from 813 in 1971 to 10,403 in 1974. Similarly, the number of taxis has increased from 489 in 1971 to 4486 in 1994. At present, efforts are being made to connect Kashmir with other parts of India by train<sup>20</sup>.

The valley provides all types of accommodation for the stay of all types of tourists, right from the affluent class to the most economic class. All-important cities, hill stations, and tourist resorts in the valley have good accommodation facilities<sup>21</sup>. Hotels are by far the most impressive and easily noticeable component of any tourism infrastructure. This can be seen from the fact that almost all the incentives for tourism are directed to hotels. In Kashmir mostly Srinagar, there are hotels to suit every requirement in terms of price, location and facilities. The most desirable location is the Boulevard, which overlooks the Dal Lake. Dalgate is central for shopping and nearest to the Tourist Reception Centre. It has mostly budget accommodation. Some good hotels are also located in Sonawar and Rajbagh, which are largely residential areas within 2 km from the Tourist Reception Centre. Lal Chowk



in the city's centre has several medium category hotels, mostly preferred by visiting traders. The J&K Tourism Development Corporation's hutments at Cheshma Shahi and Pari Mahal are also attractive for those with their own transport. Many tourists are attracted to Srinagar by the charm of staying on a houseboat, which provides the unique experience of living on the water in a cedar-panelled elegant bedroom, with all the conveniences of a luxury hotel. Srinagar's thousand houseboats are moored along sections of the Dal Lake, Nagin Lakes, and River Jhelum, each decorated fancifully, and named romantically. The state tourism department has classified the houseboats into five categories as follows:

**Table 1.3**  
**Tourist Accommodation in Houseboats in Kashmir Valley**

Houseboat Category	No. of Houseboats	Dal Lake	Nageen Lake	River Jhelum	Naseem Bagh	Other Locations	Total No. of Rooms
Delux	349	264	76	5	4	---	1007
A-Class	131	89	28	10	1	1	310
B-Class	126	85	17	16	---	6	299
C-Class	136	78	9	32	---	15	306
D-Class	352	186	43	79	---	43	772
Total	1094	702	173	142	5	65	2694

Source: Directorate of Tourism, Jammu and Kashmir.

The valley is famous for its handicrafts, fresh fruits, and dry fruits. In order to provide better shopping facilities, a large number of shops have been registered by the Department of tourism for the sale of notified handicrafts and its items. Besides, Government Arts Emporiums scattered throughout the state sell best pieces of handicrafts at reasonable rates.

A network of tourist offices spread over the state as well as outside the state as Pathankot, Amritsar, Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Ahmadabad provide adequate guidance, help, and advice to the intending tourists. In the private sector, travel agencies play an important role in providing right guidance to the tourists visiting the valley.

Besides the above steps, the diversification, boosting tourist traffic off-season, guarantee of security, insurance of tourists and proper planning also played an important role in the promotion of tourism industry in the valley<sup>22</sup>.

**CONCLUSION**

To conclude, the tourism industry has played an important role in developing the economy of Kashmir. As it provides employment to the people directly or indirectly, encourage handicrafts, earn foreign exchange, develops transportation, develops new potential places, act as a source of income for the Kashmir, source of state finance, assists hoteliers, and leads to all round progress. Finally, Kashmir is an area with great tourism potential and is a leading edge of development. Kashmir is considered as the most elite destination in the world. Tourism is the main industry after agriculture in the valley. It is regarded as a multi-segmented industry therefore, provides different types of jobs, like hotel managers, guides, travel agents and others. The enchanting geographical landscape and range of ecosystems leaves a lasting impression on the tourists in Kashmir.

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