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## Socio-Cultural Impact's of Tourism on Kashmir Valley with Special Reference to its Problems and Prospectus.

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### Abstract

*Tourism is considered as the major tool of economic development throughout the globe, and economic impacts of tourism have become more and more reiterated and more noticeable in society. On the other hand little attention is paid relatively to non-economic or socio-cultural impacts of tourism. However, it is now being accepted that tourism and its related activities need to be properly planned and managed if they are to make an ongoing contribution to sustainable socio-economic prosperity. So need of the hour is to examine whole array of impacts and not just stop at economic aspects of tourism development. In this paper an attempt has been made to examine the socio cultural impacts of tourism on Kashmir valley. The perception of the residents regarding socio-cultural impact of tourism- positive & negative will be also taken into account. Additionally this paper will also throw light on the problems and prospectus of tourism in Kashmir which otherwise has the great potential to boost its economy. This paper is primarily based on the secondary data. The main objective of the paper is to highlight the socio-cultural impacts of tourism in Kashmir valley and to highlight the problems and future prospectus for sustainable tourism development in Kashmir valley.*

Key words : Tourism, socio-culture, impacts, prospectus , sustainable

### INTRODUCTION

The increasing significance of tourism as an engine of economic development, socio-cultural transformation and international understanding particularly in the developing countries has attracted the attention of governments as well as the regional and local authorities to promote tourism as an industry. World Tourism Organization has estimated 600 million international tourists by 2000 A.D. when it will lead and will be the top industry in world commerce (Smith, 1989). Even in U.S.A., the desire to develop domestic tourism has infected the government of each of the 50 states and 4 territories, the taxpayers of whom now support an average annual budget of over US \$6 million per political entity for travel promotion (U.S Travel Data Center, 1989).

Most of the literature which focuses on socio-cultural and economic effects of tourism development revolves around debate of positive and negative effects of tourism (Nash, 1981). The positive effects are commonly reported to be increased total income for the local economy, foreign exchange earnings for the nation hosting the guests, direct and indirect employment generation and the stimulation of secondary economic growth (de Kadt, 1979) and OECD,

1986). Social benefits include the educational, scientific and aesthetic advantages of cross cultural contact. Mc Kean (1977). Boissevain (1977) and others report that tourism has served as a means of cultural revitalization as dying customs were rejuvenated for tourists, leading to increased cultural pride. Tourism as a matter of fact represents the most effective manner of transforming the resources from affluent to the developing societies (Kayastha and Singh, 1983). It has to deal with socio-cultural prospects like national/ international understanding and awareness, social barriers, language change, acculturation, fashion and mode of life, arts, sense of belonging, holiday mood and provision for leisure time (Jafari, 1987). Tourism has taught the destination residents to live in multinational, multilingual and multiracial environment. Simultaneously, tourism development leads to displacement and other social problems (Briton, 1983; Smith, 1977; Gallegos and Preistrer, 1981; Presiter, 1987; Urbanowicz 1977). People attempt to resolve such conflicts through their social and political relations which may be horizontal (local networks) or vertical (extra-local), formal (political parties) or informal (patron client) (Preister, 1989).

The state of Jammu and Kashmir has been receiving the large number of visitors from times immemorial. It attracts not only pilgrims to its holy shrines but also pleasure seekers to its bewitching beauty of Kashmir and diverse landscape of Jammu and Ladakh. The number of tourists to the state has increased from 2.56 lakhs in 1966 to 5.70 lakhs in 1989 at a compound growth rate of 11.93 percent per annum. No doubt the tourist traffic has increased

rapidly during last two decades, but in view of existing tourist potential there is further tremendous scope to develop this industry. It has been observed that, the benefits from tourism are not being availed by the households living nearby tourist resorts, but the maximum returns are siphoned away from the tourist modes to the main urban center of Srinagar and other affluent areas of the valley (Dutta and Zutshi, 1988). Tourist industry has not acted as growth generative force as its impact has only been felt by small sections of population. The benefits have not trickled down to grass root levels so that the associated workers are encouraged to establish infrastructures of growth at these nodes. The present study therefore attempts to examine socio-cultural impact of tourism on various sections of population on the bases of the perception of the people.

#### SOCIO CULTURAL IMPACTS OF TOURISM ON KASHMMIR VALLEY

The socio-cultural impact of tourism development refers to changes in the quality of life of residents of tourist destination. These are the ways in which tourism brings about changes in value system, individual behavior, family relationship, life style, safety level, moral conduct, religion, language, interpersonal relationship at the destination. These changes may result from direct and indirect association with tourists. The local people tend to observe and learn the life styles of the visitors from well off societies and try to imitate their way of life. However growth of tourism, sometimes also leads to cultural commercialization, increase in crime rate, drug abuse, prostitution etc. Tourism is a socio-cultural event for the people and the tourists. It plays a key role in social change and

brings slow and drastic change in the cultural values and traditions of society. The socio cultural impacts of tourism on Kashmir valley can be briefly discussed under following paragraphs:

a. Transformation in Lifestyle: The residents of hilly and mountainous state of Jammu and Kashmir are mostly conservative and traditional loving people. Though they respect their cultural values but the societies around tourist resorts have markedly changed .the dressing style, habits and language of the people associated with tourism has been affected. A notable example is that of the horse men in Phalgam, Gulmarg etc who serve tourists mostly foreign have learned many languages. These illiterate horse men speak fluent English. Consequently their dress style and habits have also affected.

b. International understanding: Tourism not just broadens mental horizons and understanding of the tourists but in turn also makes society more liberal and tolerant. Tourists in Jammu and Kashmir have not just gained insight about the local culture and traditions, but has also enabled them to clear their confusions, misunderstandings or prejudices. They express shock and dismay over the media propaganda of projecting Kashmir as a violent society. It is through tourism that the world community has come to know that the Kashmir's are the most humble, hospitable and lovable people on earth.

c. Cultural Exchange: Tourism is a unique process of cultural contact and cultural exchange. A tourist arriving is an ambassador of the treasures of his civilization, culture and history of his county. In turn he is also affected

by the local culture, habits and different styles of life. His social background, knowledge dress has a great impact on the local people and vice versa and sometimes carries back home new habits and styles of life. Sometimes tourists are seen taking with them many Kashmiri things carrying cultural significance like Kangri (fire pot), Pheran (long dress weared in winters particularly) Shawls (long woolen dupatta's). Besides, travel and tourism is a unique way of establishing an unspoken and unwritten relationship between the people of different cultures and different societies.

d. Tourism as a Repository of Cultural Heritage: Tourism has been recognized markedly for playing a great role conserving many cultural heritages across the world. these cultural heritage sites monuments, buildings etc serve as an important attraction for tourists. Besides these also serve an important source of revenue for the government which facilitate their maintenance. For instance, Pari Mahal, Hari Parbhat Fort , Pari Mahal, Vaishnu Devi, Takht-i Sulaman, Pandrathan and number of others serve an important source of income. These are being protected bt the government. Besides tourism also boosts traditional arts and crafts of Kashmir like weaving, woodcarving, papier mache, embroidery, shawl making etc

e. Tourism and Infrastructure Development: Tourism is one the chief sector of economy in J & K. Being the biggest service industry, tourism is a major contributor to the state GDP, foreign exchange, provides wide spread employment, yields revenue, tax and so on. Consequently government pays much attention to the infrastructure development in particular of the tourist areas to attract more tourists. Tourist spots are well connected with

the macadamized roads, telegraph, telephone services, regular power and water supply. It has resulted in the further development of various social amenities around these spots.

f. **Tourism and Change in Housing Design:** Tourism has greatly impacted the architecture design of the state. With its increase, hotels, guest houses, resort houses have been designed in a magnificent and attractive ways. In Srinagar, the new colonies like Baltic colony, Alamdar colony, Kursoo, Raj Bagh, Rawalpora, Shivpora, Hyderpora, Shah Faisal Colony etc and in Jammu, colonies like, Rehari Colony, Resham Ghar Colony, Gandhi Nagar, Shiv Nagar etc. have been designed and constructed on the new patterns with concrete -R.C.C. structures.

g. **Promotion to Local Arts and Crafts:** Tourism is one of the main factors which keeps societal arts and crafts alive. In Jammu and Kashmir tourism serves as a blessing for the local and regional handicrafts, music, woodwork, carpentry, paper mache and shawl-making. The arts and crafts speak of the

grammar of Kashmiri society and act as its representative in the outside world. The scenic splendor and aesthetics of Jammu and Kashmir is reflected specimens of art and handicrafts.

h. **Tourism and Social Problems and Evils:** Tourism also resulted in certain social problems and evils like drug addiction, prostitution, unwanted life styles, cultural commercialization, displacement of people, cutting of forests and so on. Unfortunately, the growth of slums in Jammu and Srinagar cities are also because of influx of laborers who are pulled in the region by the forces of tourism.

#### PERCEPTION OF RESIDENTS TOWARDS SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACT OF TOURISM ON THEIR COMMUNITY.

In order to ascertain the socio-cultural impact( positive and negative) of tourism on residents two main tourist spots viz. Srinagar and Gulmarg were selected. The impact is calculated on the bases of mean values of their responses given below in the tables.

Table No. 1- Perception of Residents towards Positive Socio-Cultural Impacts of Tourism

Indicators	Srinagar		Gulmarg		Total	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Tourism has Improved quality of life	3.89	1.3	3.69	1.45	3.79	1.38
Tourism has Facilitated meeting visitors (educational experience)	3.74	1.9	3.29	1.24	3.52	1.57
Tourism has brought Positive changes in values and customs	2.57	1.8	2.43	1.9	2.50	1.85
Tourism has Promoted cultural exchange	3.63	1.05	3.69	1.16	3.66	1.11
Improved understanding of different communities	3.69	1.20	3.87	0.50	3.78	0.85

Tourism Preserved cultural identity of host population	2.22	1.32	2.45	1.15	2.34	1.24
Increases demand for historical and cultural exhibits	3.43	1.44	3.39	1.29	3.41	1.37
Greater tolerance of social differences	3.74	1.22	3.97	0.85	3.86	1.04
Satisfaction of psychological needs	3.11	1.56	3.32	1.67	3.22	1.62

Table No. 2: Perception of Residents towards Negative Socio-Cultural Impacts Of Tourism

Indicators	Srinagar		Gulmarg		Total	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Crime rate has increased due to tourism	3.83	0.97	4.22	0.97	4.03	0.97
Prostitution has increased due to tourism	3.86	0.61	4.16	0.87	4.01	0.74
Drugs Abuse has increased due to tourism.	3.59	0.86	3.18	0.96	3.39	0.91
Vandalism has increased due to tourism	2.80	1.12	2.76	1.16	2.78	1.14
Smuggling has increased due to tourism	2.84	1.29	2.66	1.13	2.75	1.21
Negative Language and cultural change	3.34	1.89	3.55	1.12	3.45	1.51
Unwanted lifestyle changes	3.88	1.15	4.21	1.10	4.05	1.13
Commercialization of traditions and Customs	4.26	1.01	4.02	1.18	4.14	1.10
Displacement of residents for tourism Development	4.55	1.19	4.21	1.33	4.38	1.26

Table ( 1&2 ):source<sup>1</sup>

1. [http://www.erpublications.com/uploaded\\_files/download/download\\_15\\_01\\_2016\\_13\\_40\\_04.pdf](http://www.erpublications.com/uploaded_files/download/download_15_01_2016_13_40_04.pdf)

## FINDINGS

From above both the tables 1&2, standard (SD) values show variables between 0.5 to 2 having no high differences in perception of the respondents, while as mean values show average perception regarding socio-cultural impact. Further table 1 shows favorable perception of tourists regarding all parameters excluding changes in values and customs (2.50) and preservation of cultural identity (2.34). Similarly table 2 shows tourism has resulted in various negative socio-cultural impacts excluding smuggling (2.75) and vandalism (2.78).

## PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTUS:

Kashmir valley has a tremendous potential to become a major global tourist destination not just in summers or in benign climate but in winters as well. In his article titled 'Winter Tourism in Kashmir' Mr. M. Ashraf (Greater Kashmir Jan, 19 2017) an admired authority on tourism, has rightly stated that the mountains surrounding Kashmir valley have the best winter sports possibilities in the world. Unfortunately there is no one ready to listen his expert view. Until and unless there would not be on time desirable settlement of Kashmir, all facets of development would continue to remain illusionary in particular the highly delicate tourism sector.

As of now conditions regarding tourism are stern in Kashmir. Unfortunately its continuous failure is to Kashmir only. Terrible and frightening incidents occur all over the world including India, in particular North-East, yet tourism survives and flourishes. Naxalites blow-up trains. Innocent tribals are slaughtered. Yet these incidents are brushed aside as naxalism

menace. Foreign tourists become victims of rape in proud cities of New Delhi, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan etc. In Rajasthan, Government had to take steps to protect travelers especially foreigners from organized gangs, one of these known as "Lapka" gang, which remained operative in Jaipur, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Mount Abu and Pushkar. Despite these facts tourism survives there. In Kashmir tourism frequently fails as a stigma of terror is attached to it. Consequently a neighboring State has thrived at the cost of Kashmir. Kashmir has both internal and external challenges to its tourism sector.

The media, particularly electronic, media has maligned Kashmiri's overall image by projecting Kashmiri's as a violent society. Many agencies in India ignore Kashmir valley from highlights on tourism. Situations are created periodically to destroy peaceful atmosphere here, the game plan being to discourage travelers to visit Kashmir. As and when tourism gets revived some agencies work hard to reverse it. They flare up the atmosphere by pronouncing controversial issues like settlement of protected colonies etc only to agitate the Kashmiri. These colonies may not come up in the first place but such statements destroy peace here, the core plan being to push Kashmir towards an economic depression. The Kashmiri wish a peaceful settlement of Kashmir and is always prepared for a meaningful dialogue but the other side is not, the aim being to score points for a malicious propaganda on terror. Thus peace here is shattered by the politics over Kashmir. India should have been interested in peace & calm in Kashmir but it is not for the sole reason to exploit terror worldwide, which does not exist here. Peace gets disturbed frequently and this is

why business community in Kashmir supported the agitation in 2016 to favour settlement of the basic issue once for all so that they could also pursue their business interests like their counterparts in Jammu & Ladakh.

Tourism failed during 1990's, after Kargil war, due to uprisings in 2008 & 2010, after devastating floods of 2014 & now due to mass killings in 2016. The private sector revived it earlier. House-boat owners did wonders in the revival of tourism each time. The youth who took up tourism as their profession in recent times aggressively marketed Kashmir after each fiasco & the most pleasing experience is that this new brand of young people are honest and truthful. Currently they are reorganizing again for yet another effort. Negative role of media will continue to haunt them but let us hope they will succeed this time as well. As continued strikes cost us heavily and as it has caused depths of despair in all aspects of life, the Kashmiri need to track an altogether different strategy to deal with their problem.

The year 2017 again proved grim to our tourism industry and failed to bring smiles back to it. The Amarnath yatris are no tourists (as the holy yatra has religious connotation only) who came in large numbers even those were not spared (attacked), which was followed by bread chopping which added fuel to the problem, and are big instances of game plan of agencies. It has been observed that those who brave to come here, after each debacle in tourism, give much wanted publicity for its revival, including yatri's. Tourists visiting Kashmir go back pretty satisfied and contented. They express dismay & shock over media propaganda outside Kashmir.

Foreigners who come here feel that the world has been grossly misguided about the wonderful land of Kashmir. Thus, as the media is hypercritical on Kashmir with its disinformation campaign there must be a counter propaganda in place. As the Kashmiri lack facilities to do so in the present scenario it is important to realize how important tourism could be, as in the present conditions tourism alone could counter media's adverse projections. The revival of tourism is therefore of greater importance today for Kashmiri's overall image than the economic benefit that is derived from the trade. Further, in order to plan for more socially, culturally, and environmentally sustainable future development, local-level analyses are needed on the ways in which communities are affected by tourism industry. Notably, local communities increasingly play a relevant role in the assessment of tourism impacts, as much anthropological and sociological work on tourism impacts has revealed. Additionally, it may be argued that sociological and anthropological research within host communities may reveal which community-level variables might complicate the successful creation and management of tourism industries by national governments.

## CONCLUSION

The tourism has great socio- cultural & economic impacts on Kashmir. The socio-cultural impacts vary and may be categorized as positive and negative. The positive ones include improvement in quality of life educational values, understanding of different communities, demand for historical and cultural exhibitions, and greater tolerance of social differences and

satisfaction of psychological needs. The negative ones include increase in crime rate, prostitution, drug abuse, unwanted lifestyles, commercialization of traditions and customs and displacement of local residents for tourism development. However this is not the end, though Kashmir also called 'paradise on earth' has a great potential to be one of world's great tourist destination thereby boosting its economy far greater is subjected to certain problems. Terrible things occur all over the world yet tourism survives but situations are periodically created by agencies to destroy peace and tourism development in Kashmir. Tourists who come to Kashmir express much dismay and shock over the media propaganda of projecting Kashmir as terrorist or violent society. It is through tourism that the world has come to know about the respect, love and hospitability of the Kashmiri's. Consequently they give much wanted publicity for the revival of tourism. The government, tourism development industry and public should also work to boost its revival by providing easy & varied access to boarding & lodging facility, special incentives for greater duration, paying guest system, easy transport facility and so on. This will not only help to counter malicious media propaganda but will also help in international understanding besides boosting state economy. Last but not least a standard policy framework must be established by the government to preserve and protect social and cultural values of local people.

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