

SOCIO-ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND ECOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF ECOTOURISM IN KASHMIR

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ABSTRACT

Ecotourism appeals to socially and ecologically conscious individuals. Kashmir, known as 'paradise on earth', attracts hundreds of thousands of tourists every year but lots of socio-economic, political and environmental problems have arisen mainly because of over influx of tourists at certain places like Pahalgam, Gulmarg and Dal Lake, and political disturbance because Kashmir is trapped in the cross hairs of India and Pakistan. On the other hand, Kashmir provides a great potential for tourism industry. Thus, it is important to understand the tourism of Kashmir through the prism of political ecology, ecotourism and sustainable development, how ecotourism can be used for the protection of the cultural heritage and ecological diversity and to foster the culture and human rights of Kashmir and also contribution in the socio-economic development and political empowerment of local communities.

KEYWORDS: Ecological Diversity, Ecotourism, Empowerment, Sustainable Development, Political Ecology

Let me cry out in that void, say it as I can.

I write on that void: Kashmir, Kaschmir, Cashmere, Qashmir, Cashmir, Cashmire, Kashmere.....Agha Shahid Ali

INTRODUCTION

The state of Jammu and Kashmir has the latitudinal extent of 32° 17' North to 37° 6' North and longitudinal extent of 73° 26' East to 80° 30' East. J & K is divided into three divisions - Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh and all the three divisions have immense potential for tourism but Kashmir Valley is the most important in terms of tourism. Kashmir is famous for its unique beauty and natural scenery throughout the world. It is a multi-faceted diamond, changing its hues with four seasons, always extravagantly beautiful. Kashmir is surrounded by two Himalayan Ranges- the Great Himalayan Range from the north and the Pir Panjal from south. They are the source of great rivers, which flow down into the beautiful valleys, forested with orchards and decorated amazingly by lily-laden lakes. Its high snow-clad Himalayan mountains, scenic spots, beautiful valleys, exquisite pleasure Mughal gardens, hill stations, rivers with ice-cold water, attractive lakes and springs, evergreen fields, dense forests, beautiful health resorts, rich culture and ageless grace of its architecture enhance its grandeur and are a source of great attraction for tourists. People have written zillions of words to best describe the beauty of Kashmir, however the truth is that the power of words can never comprehend the mysticism that this Valley possesses. The famous Mughal Emperor Jahangir while describing the beauty of Kashmir said "**Agar Firdous Baroye Zameen Ast, Hami Asto, Hami Asto, Hami Ast**" which means "If there is heaven on earth, it's here, it's here, it's here". It is also widely known for its different kinds of agricultural products, fruit, vegetables, saffron, herbs, minerals, precious stones handicrafts like woollen carpets, shawls and finest kind of embroidery on clothes. Pilgrimage to famous religious

shrines of the Hindus and the Muslims make Kashmir a great tourist attraction. Kashmir is blessed with breathtaking natural beauty, great cultural heritage, ecological diversity and is known as the '**Land of Sufis**' because Sufism has a great influence on its culture. Thus, Kashmir is truly regarded as '**PARADISE ON EARTH**' and is a famous tourist destination due its socio-cultural and ecological diversity and provides a lot of scope for ecotourism.

Important Tourist Destinations of Kashmir

- Pahalgam, known as 'Valley of Shepherds' (Aru Valley, Betaab Valley, Amarnath Cave, Chandanwari, Baisaran Lake, Tulian Lake, Sheshnag Lake, Katernag Lake), Achabal, Aharbal, Daksum, Kokernag and Verinag.
- Srinagar (Dal Lake, Nigeen Lake, Nishat Garden, Shalimar Garden, Chashma Shahi, Tulip Garden, Pari Mahal, Dachigam National Park, Zabarwan Park, Iqbal Park, Jhelum river, Hazratbal Shrine, Jama Masjid, Shankaracharya Temple, SPS Museum, Royal Springs Golf Course).
- Wular Lake, Mansbal Lake, Gulmarg (Meadow of Flowers), Sonamarg (Meadow of Gold), Yusmarg, Tangmarg, Charari-Sharief, Baba Rishi etc Various adventurous and recreational activities are done at various tourist destinations of Kashmir e.g, River Rafting in Lidar river at Pahalgam; Horse riding at Pahalgam; Golfing at Pahalgam and Srinagar; visiting of inner parts of Dal Lake, Char Chinar (a small island in Dal Lake consisting of four Chinars) and Wular Lake on Shikaras (traditional boat of Kashmir); visiting different parts of Gulmarg on Gandola, Skiing at Gulmarg and mountaineering at Gulmarg and Sonamarg.

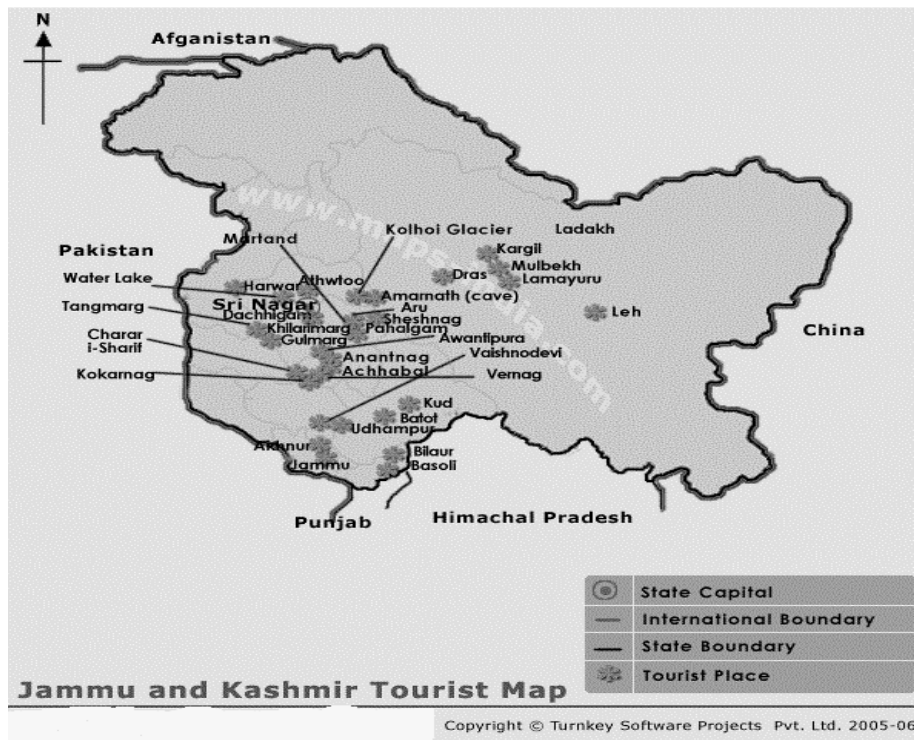


Figure 1: Important Tourist Destinations of J & K

Source: internet (<http://www.maps-india.com/jammu-kashmir/jk-map/jammu-kashmir-tourist-att.gif>) Kashmir provides a lot of scope for natural, wildlife, religious, historical, cultural and adventurous tourism and possesses immense potential for Ecotourism.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To examine the impact of tourism in Kashmir.
- To examine socio-economic, political and ecological aspects of ecotourism in Kashmir.
- To examine why there is need of ecotourism in Kashmir.
- To analyse the importance of sustainable development in ecotourism in Kashmir.
- To examine the potential of ecotourism for the development of Kashmir and the empowerment of local people.
- To highlight the hurdles in the development of ecotourism and providing feasible suggestions in promotion of ecotourism in Kashmir.

METHODOLOGY

Both primary as well as secondary data has been used in the present paper. The sources of primary data are discussion with the local people, hoteliers, travel agents, government officials and personal experience. The secondary data has been taken from Economic Survey, J & K 2013-14, Govt. of J & K and Jammu & Kashmir Department of Tourism. The data was converted into tabular form and in the form of graph for evaluation and analysis.

Defining Ecotourism

In simplest terms, ecotourism is defined as the visiting of pristine, fragile and relatively undisturbed natural areas intended as a low impact and often small scale alternative to commercial or mass tourism. The term ecotourism was coined by Héctor Ceballos-Lascuràin in 1983 and was initially used to describe nature-based travel to relatively undisturbed areas with an emphasis on education. He defined ecotourism as "Travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas". The International Ecotourism Society defines Ecotourism as: "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people". Many proponents of ecotourism also argue that an important ingredient of it is the provision of environmental education or knowledge for tourists who participate in it (Wight, 1993) . Such knowledge can make tourists more aware of nature and more supportive of its conservation via changes in their personal behaviour, greater political support and larger financial contributions for such conservation (Tisdell and Wilson, 2012).

- Ecotourism enterprises
- Tourism to unspoiled natural resources, with minimal impact on the environment being a primary concern.
- Minimization of tourism's own environmental impact
- Affordability and lack of waste in the form of luxury
- Local culture, flora and fauna being the main attractions
- Local people benefit from this form of tourism economically, often more than mass tourism.

Ecotourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing sectors of the tourism market, influenced primarily by public demand for more environmentally and responsible tourism (Boo, 1990, Eagles et al 1993). Whelan's (1991) viewpoint, the eco tourists will be key players in the success or failure of ecotourism. Ecotourism appeals to ecologically and socially conscious individuals and helps the tourists in personal growth and learning of new ways to live on this planet. Kashmir being blessed with natural beauty provides immense potentialities for ecotourism as ecotourism can lead to the

overall development of Jammu & Kashmir. Ecotourism can act a environment regulating force in Kashmir.

Why Ecotourism in Kashmir?

Kashmir is blessed with a variety of natural beauty. The geography of Kashmir presents a perfect blend of natural and cultural features with visible effect on the lifestyle of the people of the Valley. But due to greed and overflow of tourists at places like Dal Lake, lots of problems like deforestation, air, water and land pollution have taken place. Thus, in order to protect the ecological and cultural beauty of Kashmir, it is necessary to flourish the ecotourism. Also, Kashmir possesses lots of undisturbed natural areas which provide a lot of scope for ecotourism. It will also lead to the empowerment of local people who have suffered a lot due to various political problems. So, it is the perfect time for the development of ecotourism in Kashmir which can have a profound impact on all the spheres of life in the Valley of Kashmir.

Discourse on Sustainable Development in Ecotourism in Kashmir

In the pace of development, sustainable development has been recognized as one of the significant phenomenon for achieving development goals without depleting the natural and cultural resources or degrading the environment. Sustainable development forms the legalising base of ecotourism which is an important tool of sustainable development. The concept of sustainability has become a mediating term in bridging the ideological and political differences between the environmental and development lobbies, a bridge between the fundamentally opposed paradigms of eco and anthropocentrism¹. The increasing importance of the concept of sustainable development has led tourism researchers to posit the latest phase of tourism as rooted in the paradigm of sustainability (Macbeth 2005). It is an important legitimising concept of ecotourism as ecotourism claims to be the tool through which all the promised goals of sustainable development are realisable. As sustainability is based on three aspects, sustainable ecotourism is also based on the balance of social, economic, and ecological goals (Wight, 1993). Recognising ecotourism's potential role in sustainable development, the United Nations declared 2002 the "International Year of Eco-tourism".

There is a close relationship between sustainable development and ecotourism in Kashmir as Kashmir is full of physical and cultural diversity but is also plagued by various environmental, political and social problems. Sustainable development in ecotourism in Kashmir can lead to reduction of impact of overflow of tourists at certain places like Dal Lake and can help in promotion of adventure and nature tourism which can result in protection of fragile environment. It will lead to empowerment of local people and raising awareness of the environmental, political and social issues of Kashmir. This idea will lead to technological transformation towards energy saving mechanisms, alternate and non-conventional systems for providing comfort to tourists without bringing down the quality of life and can result in long term planning for productive techniques and equitable distribution policies for the exploitation of resources. Thus, sustainable development in ecotourism in Kashmir can play an important role in achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and can act as an innovative method for socio-economic, political, cultural and aesthetic development of the Valley while maintaining cultural integrity and ecological processes so that future generations can also get benefitted by the tourism industry.

¹ Stephen Wearing & John Neil, *Ecotourism: Impacts, Potentials and Possibilities*, Second Edition, Routledge UK 2009, p. 24

Various Aspects of Ecotourism in Kashmir

Ecotourism is one of the most important concepts at the present time where the world is plagued by greed and greatly affected by the ill effects of Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation (LPG Model). Resources are being exploited unscientifically at most of the places. There is unscientific harnessing of natural as well as human resources which makes environment and people vulnerable to various adverse effects like environmental degradation, floods, droughts, climate change, poverty, hunger, malnutrition, political and social tensions worldwide. At the present time there is **'development at the cost of displacement'** which has resulted into displacement of millions of indigenous people from their homes and forced to live in camps where they face shortage of food, clothing, shelter and other basic amenities. This has resulted into various environmental, social, economic and political problems at different places like in India, Africa, Latin America etc. This has resulted into emergence of various tribal and other movements. Many such environmental, economic and socio-political problems have also arisen in Kashmir due to unscientific tourism. Thus, sustainable development is an important approach to overcome these problems and ecotourism can play a significant role in this regard. Ecotourism has the potential to eradicate numerous environmental, socio-economic and political problems in Kashmir if applied properly.

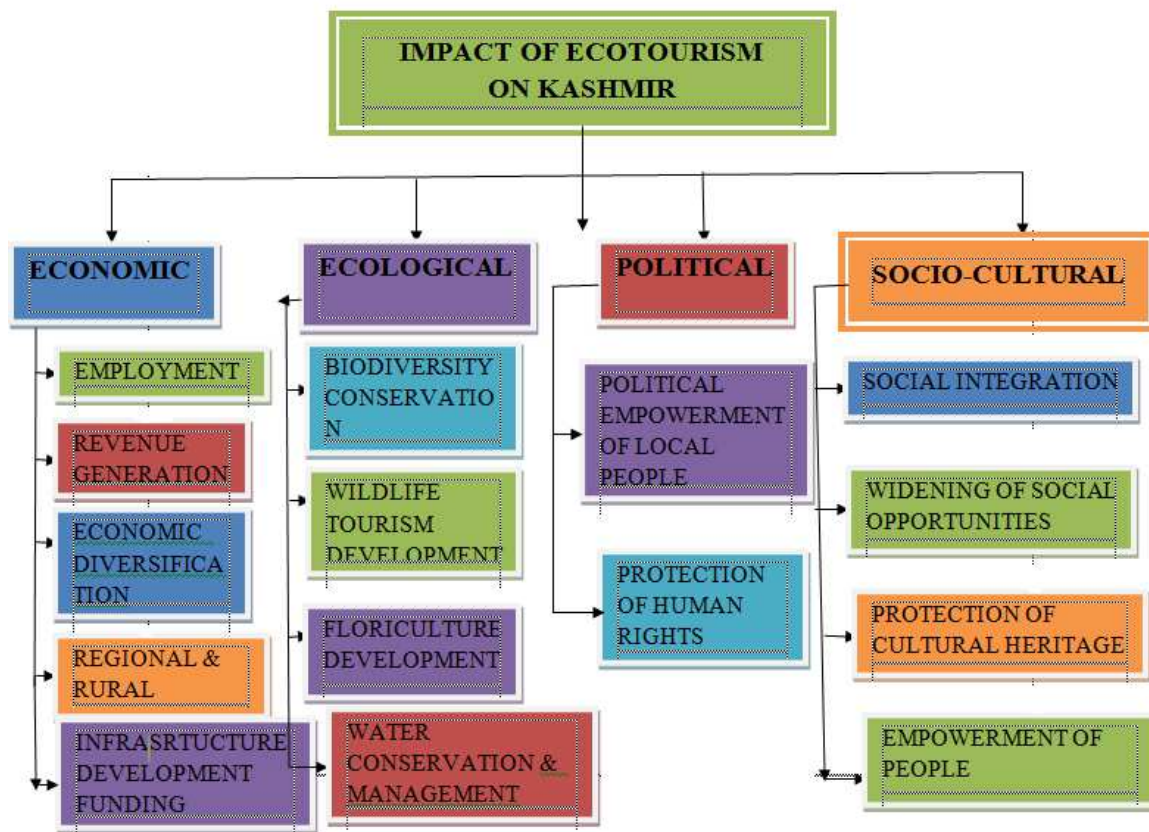


Figure 2: Impact of Ecotourism on Kashmir

In order to know the impact and potential of ecotourism in Kashmir, it is necessary to examine various aspects of ecotourism in Kashmir like;

- Economic Aspects
- Ecological Aspects

- Political Aspects, and
- Social Aspects

ECONOMIC ASPECTS

Ecotourism has been described as "one of the most potent tools in the arsenal of the contemporary conservationists" (Downs). Ecotourism in Kashmir has a profound impact on the economic conditions of Kashmiri people and has a lot of potential to increase its impact. It can be understood by following points;

- **Employment**

The **Table 1** shows the arrival of tourists in Kashmir in last 28 years. The table clearly shows that there has been an increase in tourist flow in Kashmir in recent years. This tourist arrival has generated lots of employment in the Valley. Millions of people are getting jobs due to tourism. According to **Table 2**, tourism provides employment to millions of Kashmiris, e.g, 20. 574 lakh people were employed due to tourism in 2013 and 22.101 lakh people in 2014, despite the devastating floods in Kashmir in 2014. It even provides employment to people without specialized skills. Ecotourism is an important source of employment generation in many hilly and remote areas of Kashmir. Due to ecotourism, the employment generation from tourism is expected to increase as many more people can be encouraged to participate in ecotourism and allied activities.

Table 1: Tourist Arrivals in Kashmir from 1987 to 2014

S. No	Year	Total Tourist Arrivals	S. No	Year	Total Tourist Arrivals
1	1987	721654	15	2001	72591
2	1988	722035	16	2002	27356
3	1989	557977	17	2003	191164
4	1990	10722	18	2004	376729
5	1991	6287	19	2005	603582
6	1992	10324	20	2006	432888
7	1993	8026	21	2007	441836
8	1994	9814	22	2008	572100
9	1995	8520	23	2009	601250
10	1996	9967	24	2010	736448
11	1997	16131	25	2011	1314432
12	1998	109883	26	2012	1308765
13	1999	217292	27	2013	1171130
14	2000	111912	28	2014	1100000

Source: Economic Survey, J & K 2013-14, Govt. of Jammu & Kashmir

Table 2: Employment Generation by Tourism in Kashmir

Year	Employment (in Lakhs)
2002	9.4245
2003	10.1145
2004	10.854
2005	11.649
2006	12.504
2007	13.422
2008	14.409
2009	15.4695
2010	16.6095
2011	17.8365
2012	19.155
2013	20.574
2014	22.101

- **Revenue Generation**

The tourism industry in J&K is one of the most flourishing industries in the state. This industry plays an important role in the development of the regions of Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir. As the industrial sector is not very much developed in the state, so the activities related to tourism are considered with much seriousness by the state government. Apart from agriculture sector, Kashmir tourism is the most popular source of income for the state.

Table 3: Revenue Generation from Tourism in Kashmir

Name of the Org./ Dept	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
J&K Tourism Development Corporation	1642.41	1796.44	1763	1963	1961	1894
Cable Car Corporation	289	754.41	676	798.81	839.14	1116
SKICC	46	49.34	52	64	71.2	65
Directorate of Tourism, J&K Govt.	11.46	14.83	35.25	62.06	54	56.65
Royal Spring Golf Course	57.26	35.09	34.73	50.06	45.66	44.25
Gulmarg Development Authority	19.07	21.86	32.46	48.5	51.17	34.35
Pahalgam Development Authority	11	10.15	15.62	79	20	19.54
Others	5.12	9.16	9.95	19	12.73	6.68
Total	2081.32	2705.06	2619.01	3084.43	3054.9	3236.47

Source: Directorate of Tourism, J & K Govt

From Table 3, it is clear that tourism plays a significant role in revenue generation of Kashmir. The revenue generation from tourism was 3054.9 lakhs in 2008-09 which increased to 3236.47 lakhs in 2009-10. Tourism contributes 8% in J & K's GDP. The revenue generation from ecotourism has increased in last some years as there has been focus on ecotourism at certain places in Kashmir like Wular Lake. The revenue generation from ecotourism is expected to increase in coming years as ecotourism is getting boost in Kashmir.

- **Diversification of Economic Activities**

Ecotourism and thus tourism, has resulted into diversification of economic activities in Kashmir which previously used be very limited to only few economic activities. Ecotourism has resulted into introduction of new tourism activities in Kashmir like river rafting, cable car tourist view sighting and construction of many new hotels and restaurants which has resulted into increase in income generation. The economic returns from engaging in ecotourism can exceed the costs involved.

- **Development of Rural Areas**

Ecotourism has resulted into visiting of rural areas of Kashmir which present a picturesque view. Nowadays many tourists are visiting rural areas of Kashmir like Aharbal which has resulted into economic and social development of rural areas. Ecotourism plays an important role in this regard because it can create jobs in remote regions that historically have benefited less from economic development programs than more populous areas. Even a small number of jobs may be significant contribution in communities where populations are low and alternatives are few.

- **Opportunities for Locally Controlled Eco Tourist- Related Businesses**

In Kashmir, ecotourism has resulted into benefitting of local people from tourism which has resulted into benefits from other allied activities of tourism. It has resulted into development of handicraft and handloom industry and also transport sector. It also provides a lot of scope in coming times to improvise it.

- **Funding for Infrastructure**

Ecotourism provides financial capital for the development for infrastructure in Kashmir. This has resulted into infrastructure development at certain places like Pahalgam, Gulmarg, Srinagar etc.

ECOLOGICAL ASPECTS

In last some decades, there has been unplanned infrastructure and urban development which has resulted into large scale environmental and ecological degradation. In Kashmir too, due to overflow of tourists at certain places and unplanned infrastructural development, lots of ecological problems have arisen. Thus, it is important to understand the tourism of Kashmir through the prism of ecotourism.

At the present time of environmental crisis, ecotourism is often considered to be a potential strategy to support conservation of natural ecosystems while, at the same time, promoting sustainable local development. Proponents of ecotourism emphasize that ecotourism is an important tool to conserve natural environment and its objective is to foster responsibility for managing the adverse impact of tourism by minimizing adverse effects while maximizing beneficial outcomes and preserving the natural environment. The ecological aspects of ecotourism in Kashmir can be explained by following points;

- **Conservation of Biodiversity**

In Kashmir, ecotourism has been an important factor for conservation of biodiversity. It has resulted in biodiversity conservation at Pahalgam, Sonamarg etc. Many parks and sanctuaries have been made in Kashmir for the protection of rare species of flora and fauna e.g, lots of efforts are taken to conserve the Kashmiri Hangul and tigers. It provides lots of potentialities for conservation of many other species at other places.

- **Travel to Natural Destinations**

Ecotourism has encouraged tourists to travel to various natural destinations in Kashmir as Kashmir is endowed with a variety of natural beauty. Ecotourism has resulted into highlighting of new potential areas of tourism.

- **Development of Wildlife Tourism**

Ecotourism has resulted into development of wildlife tourism in Kashmir as it involves seeing of wild animals in zoos, parks and sanctuaries. People visit different places to see the rare species of animals like Kashmiri Hangul, ducks, swans etc.

- **Development of Floriculture**

Ecotourism has provides incentives for the development of floriculture in Kashmir. People visit many picturesque gardens in the valley, the most important case in point is Tulip Garden in Srinagar which attracts lakhs of tourists every year. This has resulted into conservation of various species of flowers.

- **Water Conservation and Management**

Ecotourism has resulted into water conservation and management at places like Dal Lake. Dal Lake has been highly polluted in recent years. In the past, the water of Dal Lake was an important source of drinking water in Srinagar city but at the present time it is filled with waste. Under ecotourism measures, Dal Lake is being rejuvenated and still needs

a lot of effort for its purification and management.

POLITICAL ASPECTS

Kashmir being politically and ecologically fragile area needs a special understanding in terms of political economy and political ecology. Ecotourism can result into political empowerment of local people in Kashmir and can result in protection of human rights.

Kashmir issue is an important issue in the South Asian region. It is become a bone of contention between India and Pakistan and the people of Kashmir have been trapped in the cross hairs of these two countries resulting into huge loss to human lives and property. This has also hampered the economic development of the region resulting into underdevelopment of resources and increasing poverty. It is a stark reality that till late 1980s, the state of Jammu and Kashmir used to attract huge numbers of tourists, but the tourist sector received a serious jolt with the outbreak of militancy in the year 1989. The tourist's influx declined considerably up to 2002 during which the state heavily suffered in this sector due to conflict (Fig. 2). Lots of peace-building efforts are made for the promotion of ecotourism in Kashmir.

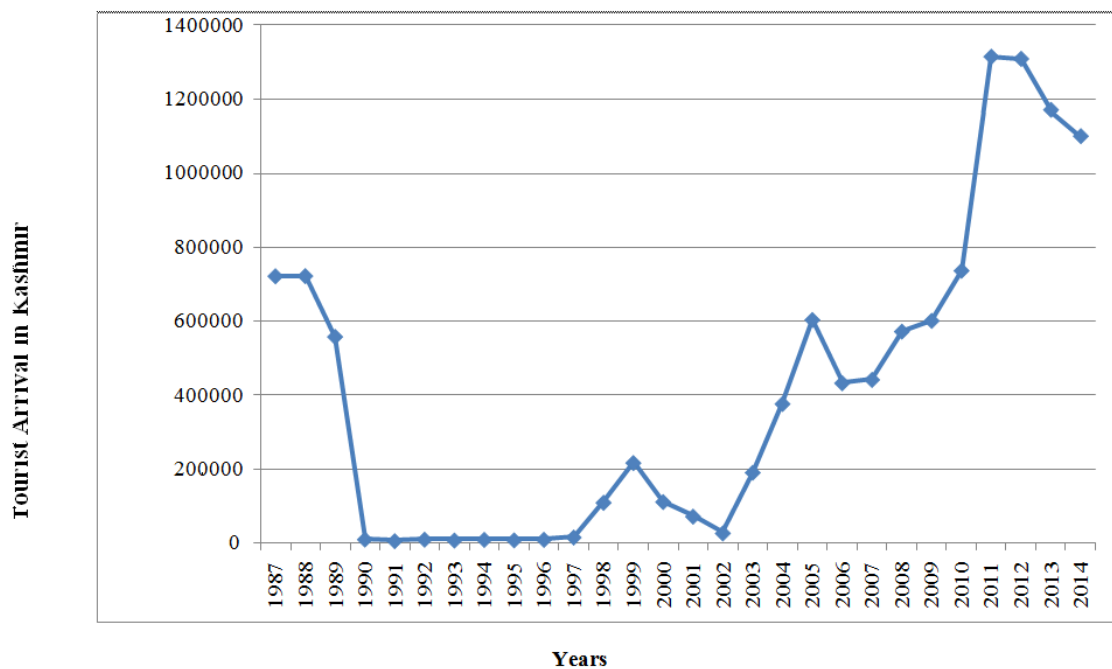


Figure 3: Graph Showing Fluctuation of Tourist Arrival in Kashmir

SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS

Due to great cultural heritage and social cohesion, Kashmir attracts lots of tourists to visit the religious and historical sites. Amarnath cave and sufi shrines like Chari Sharief, Dastgeer Sahib shrine etc are important attractions of tourists. The Kashmiri food, known as Wazwaan is famous throughout the world which also helps in attraction of tourists. Ecotourism includes knowledge about local culture and cultural heritage and also environmental education. It can result in social integration and widening of social opportunities in Kashmir. Ecotourism has resulted into participation of local communities in Kashmir in tourism sector which has improved the socio-economic condition of the people and thus helped in reduction of poverty and thus a better life for Kashmiris. It can lead to social, educational, economic and technological empowerment of women in Kashmir.

Table 4: Pilgrims Visited Amarnath Shrine from 2008 to 2014

Year	Pilgrims Visited Amarnath Shrine
2008	498075
2009	373419
2010	458046
2011	634000
2012	621000
2013	353969
2014	400000

Hurdles in Development of Ecotourism in Kashmir

- Poor transportation connectivity to remote natural tourist sites.
- Political instability in Kashmir which results into constant threat among tourists.
- Lack of environmental education among the local people as well as tourists.
- Unplanned infrastructural development, e.g, lots of hotels and restaurants are constructed in Pahalgam and Gulmarg at tourist sites haphazardly.
- Environmental degradation at certain places like Dal Lake.
- Timber smuggling which results into deforestation and thus loss of biodiversity.
- Lack of sufficient funds for the development of ecotourism.
- Corruption in implementation of various tourism projects.

Steps taken up by the Government and other Agencies for Promotion of Ecotourism in Kashmir

- The following 20 Development Authorities were created:
Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Sonamarg, Yousmarg, Dodpathri, Verinag, Kokernag, Leh, Kargil, Patnitop, Lakhanpur-Sarthal, Aharbal, Manasbal, Zanaskar, Rajouri, Poonch, Bhaderwah, Kishtwar, Surinsar-Mansar and Lolab-Bungus-Drungyari.
- Many new roads have been constructed in remote areas like Kupwara to attract more tourists.
- World class convention facilities have been made available at SKICC Srinagar.
- Dispersal of tourist traffic from congested destinations of Kashmir.
- During 2009-10 to 2013-14, 11256 persons have been trained under CBSP/ Hunar-se-Rozgar/ tourist facilitators by the state government.
- Hospitality courses sanctioned for 6 ITI's by the government.
- Pahalgam Golf Course has been upgraded to 18 Hole Golf Course of the international standards and thrown open for public, and completion of Gulmarg Golf Course.
- Capacity Building, Training Programs for the local youth and potential entrepreneurs emphasized by the state government.
- Amendment of Ancient Monuments Act, passing of Heritage Conservation and Preservation Act, and setting up of Heritage Conservation and Preservation Authority.

- Assistance of Department of Tourism, J&K Govt. in shooting of films and also providing security to film crews.
- In order to promote Dal Lake and Shikara, Shikara Festival and Bhaderwah Festival have been organized by the Department of Tourism.
- The Dept. of Tourism has appointed Ogilvy & Mather Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi as Advertising Agency to manage the media plans of the Department.
- A cultural show “Ehsaas-e-Kashmir” was conducted at Shalimar Bagh by Internationally renowned artist Zubin Mehta in the month of Sept., 2013 which got lot of media attention.

Suggestions for Improvement and Promotion of Ecotourism in Kashmir

- **Carrying Capacity Analysis**

Tourism carrying capacity is defined as ‘the maximum number of people that may visit the tourist destination without causing destruction of the physical, economic and socio cultural environment and an unacceptable decrease in the quality of visitors’ satisfaction.’ (Alvin Chandy, 2009). Srinagar has excess potential carrying capacity which can accommodate extra tourist inflow. This is primarily due to low tourist inflow to the city because of poor connectivity, and perceived security issues in past. With the under construction railway line from Srinagar to Jammu the connectivity is hope to improve. The security situation has also largely improved in the recent years. But the carrying capacity of Dal Lake has been exhausted and can be enhanced to accommodate the tourist flow by expanding the Lakefront on the western edge as well as on the eastern edge. In Gulmarg the existing carrying capacity is almost exhausted. Pahalgam has a lot of carrying capacity due to its vast area and beautiful valleys. However, due to over influx of Amarnath Yattris ,lots of problems have arisen. Thus it is necessary to understand the carrying capacity of different tourist destinations so that limited number of tourists can be allowed at environment sensitive places.

Opening up of New Tourist Destinations

- New tourist destinations like Simthan Top, Baderwah, Tarsar and Marsar Lakes, Litherwath etc should be highlighted so that the overflow of tourists can be shifted to these places.
- Better infrastructure and transportation facilities should be provided for remote tourist destinations.
- Identification and Implementation of ecotourism projects with professional guidance.
- Capacity building of local youth.
- Timber subsidy should be provided for houseboat manufacturing and repairing.
- More wooden huts should be constructed for tourists.
- Use of internet and social medial like Facebook and Twitter should be used for promotion of ecotourism.
- Cultural programmes based on local Kashmiri culture and folklore should be held to promote environmental education and respect for local culture.
- Festivals and sports events like Water Rafting, golf and skiing championships should be held for the promotion of ecotourism in Kashmir.f
- Political stability in J&K through peace building measures between India, Pakistan and China.
- Involvement of all the stake holders of tourism.
- Identification and declaration of Eco Zones and identification of tourism products.

- Development of rural tourism and involvement of local people.

CONCLUSIONS

Ecotourism is a game changer, multi-tiered activity which appeals to ecologically and socially conscious individuals. It is an instigator of change which can result in improvement of existing socio-economic, political and ecological situations. It is the philosophy of development and conservation. However, the concept has been misused by many people for their own benefits. So, there is a need to apply the concept of ecotourism properly. Ecotourism in Kashmir can act as an important factor for overall development of people and environment, and provides lots of scope for further development. It needs to be understood through the approach of sustainable development for the better future of Kashmiris and for economic and political empowerment of people especially women who have suffered a lot due to conflict. The political disturbance in Kashmir has affected the tourism industry badly and there is a need to revive this industry so that the local people can get benefitted so that they can live a better life.

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