

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