

ROLE OF CIVIL AND POLICE ADMINISTRATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM SECTOR IN KASHMIR VALLEY

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***Abstract:** Kashmir is considered as a piece of heaven on Earth. It is surrounded by alluring and attractive Himalayan Mountains. Kashmir valley is brimming with attractive and scenic vistas, breathtaking flora, stunning architecture and there are picturesque and eco-friendly tourist places that visitors can choose from.*

Tourism sector is the prime driver of the economy of Jammu & Kashmir (Department of Tourism, Jammu and Kashmir, 2021). There are many lakes, gardens and hill stations that attract thousands of tourists every year. Pahalgam, Gulmarg, Sonamarg, Tulip garden, Mughal gardens, Aharbal etc are a few to name. Multiple activities of sports are held at these beautiful tourist destinations across the year that attracts the visitors throughout the world to soak their senses. In addition, pilgrimage sites like the holy Amarnath Cave also increase the rush of tourists in the valley.

The findings of this study reveal that there is a significant contribution of civil as well as police administration in the development of tourism sector in the valley. The administration works very hard to promote eco-tourism and offbeat tourist destinations in collaboration with several other concerned bodies (Dar & Islam, 2018). Necessary and requisite arrangements are made well in time by the civil administration to make the tourists visiting the valley feel jovial and gleeful. Police administration ensures the security and the safety of the visitors. This study

consists of the observations at multiple tourist destination sites of the valley like Gulmarg, Pahalgam and Mughal Gardens.

Key words: Tourism, administration, visitors, economy, development.

I Introduction

Kashmir is an epitome of natural beauty, and it is renowned in the world over for that. You can soak your senses on many lakes, gardens and hill stations that attract thousands of tourists every year. Kashmir is also famous for its scenic beauty, flower gardens, apple farms, saffron fields and more. The unparalleled beauty of Kashmir offers the travellers a number of things to do. From a Shikara ride in Srinagar to trekking to the alpine lakes; from skiing in Gulmarg during the winter season to river rafting in Pahalgam; Kashmir has numerous activities for tourists that make Kashmir tour an exciting one. Hospitality and tourism are, in fact, a part of Kashmir valley's tradition, culture, and economic development.

Famous Destinations: Dolled up with immaculate nature, Kashmir has several popular tourist attractions that are perfect for those planning a family vacation, holiday with friends, pilgrimage tour, adventure, and a honeymoon. In the most popular attractions of Kashmir Tourism, Dal and Nigeen Lake in Srinagar, one can enjoy a unique stay at the houseboat or enjoy a Shikara ride. Dal lake is named as the "Jewel in the crown of Kashmir" or "Srinagar's Jewel". Mughal gardens like Shalimar Bagh, Nishat Bagh, Chasma Shahi, Verinag, Achabal are among the most popular attractions of Kashmir tourism. Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip garden which is the largest tulip garden in Asia spread over an area of about 30 hectares is situated on the foothills of Zabarwan Range with an overview of Dal Lake. The garden aims to boost floriculture and tourism in Kashmir Valley. The garden is built on a sloping ground in a terraced fashion consisting of seven terraces. Apart from tulips, many other species of flowers –

hyacinths, daffodils and ranunculus have been added as well. It is opened in first week of April every year and tourists from every corner of the world spend their beautiful moments at this garden.

Gulmarg also known as 'meadow of flowers' is a famous hill station and a popular skiing destination. The natural meadows of Gulmarg are covered with snow in winter and allow the growth of wild flowers such as daisies, forget-me-nots and buttercups during spring and summer. The meadows are interspersed by enclosed parks and small lakes, and surrounded by forests of green pine and fir. Skiing and other winter sports in Gulmarg are carried out on the slopes of Apharwat peak at a height of 4,267 m (13,999 ft). Many points on Apharwat peak and Khilanmarg offer a panoramic view of Nanga Parbat and Harmukh mountains. Gulmarg is the "heartland of winter sports in India" and was rated as Asia's seventh best ski destination (Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir - Wikipedia, 2021).

Pahalgam, known as the 'Valley of Shepherds', is another famous hill station in Kashmir where many films have been shot. Standing at the junction of Lidder river and the Sheshnag lake, Pahalgam is surrounded by thickly wooded pine forests, breathtaking vistas of meadows and the snow-clad Himalayan mountains. It serves as the base camp during the Amarnath Yatra. Apart from being a pilgrimage site, Pahalgam is also a treat for adventure junkies and is the starting point for several treks. However, the highlight of the activities available for tourists is the white water rafting facility winding down the Lidder River through the forests and down the rapids (Pahalgam Travel and Tourism Guide, 2021). Besides these famous tourist attractions, Sonamarg and Aharbal add to the beauty of Valley.

Objectives of present study

The purpose of this document is to provide an introduction about the tourism sector of Kashmir valley, the arrangements made by the civil and police administration for the hassle free movement of tourists across all tourist destinations and how these efforts made by administration help in boosting the tourism sector in valley. This paper also analyses the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on tourism sector in valley.

II Literature Reviews

Pilgrimage sites: Amarnath, located in Anantnag district of Kashmir is one of the most important pilgrimage in India for the worshippers of Lord Shiva. The Amarnath cave has an enshrined Shiva-ling formed naturally with ice, which resembles Lord Shiva. Millions of tourists from all across the world visit Amarnath Cave every year for a challenging mountainous trek called 'Amarnath Yatra'. This place is regarded to be the same cave where Lord Shiva revealed the secret of life and eternity to Goddess Parvati.

Jamia Masjid, a spectacular mosque of Kashmir valley was built in 1400 A.D. during the reign of Sultan Sikandar in Kashmir. This is located at the heart of old city Nowhatta, Srinagar. This spectacular mosque is famous for its beautiful construction. This mosque is considered as one of Srinagar's tourist attractions. Visitors to this place have experienced peace and tranquillity. This Indo-Saracen architecture is designed with 370 wooden pillars and a splendid courtyard. This unique feature has attracted many visitors/tourists over the ages. Although Jamia Masjid is situated amidst busy markets, the architecture of this place leaves one surprised. Jamia Masjid is considered as one of sacred mosques of India (2021).

III Research Methodology

In this paper different research methods were employed to collect the data. Firstly an analytical method based on secondary data analysis has been used. This secondary data was collected from several Research Papers, Magazines, Books, Journals, Articles, websites, newspapers, etc. Secondly observation research was done to observe the tourists at different locations. The author made a participative study to observe the situation in reality whether the visitors were happy or not by the arrangements of the administration. A semi-structured interview was also developed with open-ended questions. The questions were asked only to the tourists who belonged to states other than Jammu and Kashmir. The interviews lasted between 15 and 20 minutes and were conducted near famous tourist sites.

IV Endeavour of civil administration in boosting tourism sector

The civil administration whether it may be the secretariat level, district level, block level or subsequent lower levels of administration, all try to make their full contribution in the development of tourism in valley. The administration explores the new sites and makes plans for their development as tourist destination sites. For the convenience of visitors, the administration helps in developing road facility, electricity, mobile connectivity and other infrastructural measures at tourist sites. Necessary arrangements are made by the administration for domestic as well as foreign tourist arrivals for each proposed tourist place. The various steps taken by civil administration in the direction of boosting tourism may be summarized as below (Directorate of Tourism Jammu, J&K, 2021).

1. Up-gradation and improvement of the tourism infrastructure in different parts of the territory.

2. To identify new areas having tourist potential, build the requisite infrastructure in these areas and then to promote them.
3. To make the locals in new as well as established resorts the stake holder in tourism and to extend the benefits of tourism to them.
4. To act as a mechanism for protection of environment by means of framing strict building regulations for resorts and by making locals and tourists aware of the need to respect and protect gifts of nature.
5. Department of Tourism undertakes publicity, promotional and marketing activities with the objective of showcasing tourism potential and its various tourism products. These activities include circulation of information through printed publicity material in local languages, advertising through electronic, print and digital media, outdoor branding, participation in travel & trade fairs and exhibitions & organizing road shows focusing tourism sector.
6. Restoration of sites of all religious faiths and promotion of pilgrim tourism.
7. Preservation of the unique culture and heritage of the union territory and to promote the same as tourist attractions.
8. Development of Infrastructure related to adventure tourism.
9. Administration of the Registration of Tourist Trade Act in order to ensure that tourists are not cheated/ overcharged.
10. Support to the private sector/industry by providing incentives in the form of interest, subsidy on loans advanced by various financial institutions for setting up or upgrading various tourism units.

11. Registration of various Tourism units such as Hotel/Travel Agency/Dealers under the Tourist Trade Act, 1978/1982.

12. Redressal of the complaints of various tourists visiting the union territory.

Besides the above measures, every year a portion of budget is allocated for tourism industry in the union territory. The central government also provides special budget packages for boosting the tourism sector in the territory. Recently, the Ministry of Tourism has organized a mega tourism promotion event in Srinagar “Tapping the Potential of Kashmir: Another Day in Paradise”. The Lt. Governor of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir , Shri Manoj Sinha and Union Minister of State for Tourism & Culture (I/c) Shri Prahlad Singh Patel inaugurated and virtually addressed the delegates at the event. The objective of the event was to showcase the myriad tourism products of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir and promote tourism of Jammu & Kashmir as the destination for leisure, Adventure, Wedding, films and MICE Tourism. The Ministry under Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD has sanctioned projects for Rs.562.79 crore for development of tourism infrastructure in the UT. Most of these projects are at a completion stage and once completed will fulfill the vision of ministry of providing enhanced experience to visitors at tourist destinations. The laser Show at Dal lake is one of such initiative of Ministry among other initiatives taken for enhancing the tourist experience in Kashmir.

Talking with tourists at multiple gardens of Kashmir, majority of them were impressed by the measures that were taken by the administration for them. They thanked the officials as well as local people for their friendly support.

V Role of Police administration in boosting tourism sector

The police administration as well as army and other paramilitary forces play an important role in the safety and security of tourists visiting valley. Being Kashmir valley as a disturbed area, there have been terrorist attacks at tourist destinations multiple times. So it becomes obvious for the police administration to tackle with such problems appropriately. Every year the pilgrims from all parts of the country visit the holy cave of Amarnath (Pahalgam), Kheer Bhavani (Ganderbal), Martand Temple (Mattan Anantnag), Shankaracharya temple (Srinagar) and other pilgrimage sites. The police and paramilitary forces are deployed along the full route from Jammu to Srinagar and Pahalgam route for the safety and security of the pilgrims visiting the holy cave of Amarnath. The Baltal route is also covered by police as some pilgrims choose that route for visiting the cave. The police remain extra vigilant in advance during the Kheer Bhavani mela which is being held every year in Ganderbal district.

A special police force called Tourist Police is posted at all important places frequented by tourists for providing assistance to tourists to prevent them from being cheated, harassed, etc. This force is headed by a Superintendent of Police, designated as Deputy Director Tourism (Enforcement) and is stationed in the Tourist Reception Centre (Jammu & Kashmir Police - In the service of the Nation since 1873, 2021). The police also help in case of cheating, overcharging, harassment, pestering, touting, etc. faced by tourists.

There have been several instances when the unknown gunmen have planned for attacks over the pilgrims of Amarnath but the on time operations of Jammu and Kashmir police have made these plans unsuccessful. The reaction of the pilgrims visiting the valley regarding J&K police is majestic. According to them the arrangements made by police for safeguarding them are

worthy. It is due to J&K police and other paramilitary forces that make the yatra to Amarnath and other places successful.

VI Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on tourism sector in valley

The novel corona virus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has been a death warrant for the tourism industry in Kashmir: Thousands of families that rely only on tourism and allied sectors have lost their work due to this pandemic. The pandemic has worsened the situation for Kashmir's floundering tourism industry, which has repeatedly suffered shocks in the last three decades.

The tourism sector is a significant contributor to Jammu and Kashmir's economy and accounts for around seven per cent of the region's gross domestic product, according to Jammu and Kashmir government's estimates. But, it is not possible to resume tourism when the COVID-19 crisis continues to betray all signs of improvement. Jammu and Kashmir reported around 4,000 cases positive to novel corona virus on a daily basis from April 2021 to June 2021. After that the number to positive cases reduced. The season from April to June remains best for Kashmir visit but the lockdown has restricted everyone at their homes shattering the tourism of Valley again. A *Shikara wallah*, a *taxi wallah*, a hotel owner or travel agent- all of them have suffered a lot due to pandemic.

Zahoor Ahmad Trumboo, a hotel owner has said that most of his fraternity has been without livelihoods for a year now. The boatmen are now selling barbecues, vegetables and fruits on the roadside. But there aren't many buyers. He added: "If you couldn't sell a carpet or shawl today, you may be able to sell them tomorrow. But if my hotel room is not booked for a day, it means I lose the day. The same applies to a houseboat owner, a pony owner, a hawker and all

those associated with tourism,” he observed, adding the industry needed a financial package to cushion the economic impact of the pandemic. Noor Mohammad Shungloo, vice-president of Pleasure Leisure Tour Operators’ Forum said if basic precautions such as wearing masks, adhering to social distancing norms and carrying out testing are observed properly, “Resuming tourism activities would be possible.”The tourism department of Kashmir, too, is trying hard to get back on its feet. Those associated with the industry are keen to do their bit to make it happen (Parvaiz, 2020).

VII Conclusion

Kashmir is an acclaimed tourist destination for national and international tourists. The tourism sector has remained a significant contributor in the economy of the region. The nature has bestowed the region with beautiful places which attract everyone to visit at least once in life. But this has been a disturbed region since past three decades due to terrorism incidents. The killing of non locals and many outsider vendors by unknown terrorists in the recent past have frightened the visitors from coming to the valley. This has also lowered the number of tourists in summer which remains the peak season for tourists to come to the valley. So the role of administration to bring normalcy and to counter these terrorist activities become inevitable. The civil as well as police administration have put their best to flourish the tourism in valley despite many hindrances. The administration has already taken several measures towards the safety and security of visitors but there is need for more positive steps to be taken so that tourists can feel this place better and safe for journey. The Jammu and Kashmir administration has also launched the first-ever open-air floating in the famous Dal lake. The concept of open-air is pretty unique, not found anywhere in this world. It is a great step to advantage the tourism in Kashmir. Shikara,

houseboat owners, the hotel industry is welcoming tourists with open hands. The Covid-19 pandemic has also worsened the tourism sector due to frequent lockdowns. Although Jammu and Kashmir is safest from the Covid-19 point of view since the entire tourist industry has been vaccinated. Various capacity-building programmes were done on Covid protocols by the administration. Still the need of hour is that the administration should come up with a list of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for resumption of tourism. Vaccination, Social distancing, rampant testing, 24-hour quarantine and pre-booking should be ensured.

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