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Impact of terrorism on Tourism of Kashmir- An Analysis

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Abstract

Tourism is a large and growing part of the economy of many countries of the world. Kashmir for its incomparable beauty is known as “Paradise on Earth”. Besides its natural beauty, Kashmir is known for its unique cultural ethos which has evolved through centuries in a seamless co-existence called Kashmiriyat, a second name for hospitality. Kashmir is a land of such strategic location with rare amalgamation of positive aspects of scenic beauty and splendid seasons which must be flocked by tourists all over the world year around. But unfortunately the outbreak of terrorist incidents from 1989 toppled tourist inflow towards valley , which left its deep mark on the economy of the concerned territory . The present paper attempts to study the economic and psychological impact of terrorism on Kashmir tourism.

Introduction

(Ghar Firdous bar rue zameen ast, Hume ast, Hume ast, Hume ast)

Kashmir is a multi faceted diamond set like a crown jewel on the map of India. Two major Himalayan ranges, the greater Himalayas and the Pir Panjal, surrounds the valley from the north and the South respectively. The Mughals aptly called Kashmir, the Paradise on earth¹. Thus mighty Himalayan ranges provide a natural protection from invaders. Despite such natural barriers and isolation, invaders are often attracted towards the valley for rich wealth, mysterious beauty, true knowledge, exquisite artisanship and cultural heritage.

Land of such strategic location with rare amalgamation of positive aspects, scenic beauty and splendid seasons must be flocked by tourists from all over the world year round². The state of Jammu and Kashmir is divided into three zones viz Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, but the most beautiful of all the three is Kashmir known as paradise on earth³. The valley of Kashmir is nestled securely at an average height of about 6000 feet above the sea level in the mighty Himalayan ranges with snow covered lofty peaks. This oval shaped valley of Kashmir spreading approximately 8 miles in length and 25 miles in breadth and is filled with magnificent scenery at each and every inch.

The small piece of land is an exquisite fairy land for the artist and layman, mountains for the mountaineer, flowers for the botanist, vast field for geologist and magnificent ruins for the archaeologist⁴.

The valley of Kashmir comprises of the valleys, mountains, margs, lakes and springs. Kashmir consists of following valleys:

- Lidder Valley: Extending between Anantnag, Pahalgam and Surrounded by lofty mountains with dense forests.
- Sind Valley: with snow covered peaks guarding either sides of the sindh valley, which spreads about a distance of 100 kms between Ganderbal and the Zojila –Pass.

- Lalab Valley: Situated in North western side of Kashmir, Lalab valley is widely known for its apple, cherry, peach, walnuts and thick deodar forests.

Among margs the famous ones are Nagmarg, Sonmarg, Gulmarg, Yusmarg and Khilanmarg etc. Among lakes are Vular lake, Dal lake, Mansbal lake, Harwan lake, Hokarsar lake, Anchar lake etc. The famous springs of Kashmir are Achabal, Verinag, and Kokernag⁵.

Kashmir has well distinctive climatic characteristic features.

- Spring locally known as *sont* (16th of March to 15th of May)
- Summer locally known as *Retkol* (16th of May to 15th of July)
- Rainy season locally known as *waharat* (16th of July to 15th of September)
- Autumn locally known as *Hurud* (16th of September to 15th of November)
- Winter locally known as *wandi* (16th of November to 15th of January)
- Icy cold season locally known as *Chilli kalan* (16th of January to 15th of March)⁶

Inhabitants

Kashmir consists of numerous ethnic and cultural groups. Kashmiris are early immigrants from India. Traces of Aryans in India are found in Kashmir which explains the existence of people from olden days⁷. Kashmiris made remarkable contribution to Sanskrit literature, mystical poetry, the Shiva philosophy, grammar and sciences. Thus the intellectual capabilities of Kashmir are well established. Blend of various cultures is found among Kashmiris as they had contact with Roman, Greek and Persian civilisations. Hinduism and Buddhism coexisted during the olden days. The Kashmiris on the whole are non aggressive, god fearing and temperate, having good physique but lack good muscles⁸. It amplifies the peace loving nature of Kashmiris. In Kashmir, about 90% of the population follow Islam of both Sunni and Shia sects and the rest are Kashmiri pandits and Sikhs professing different faiths. The three religious sub communities of Kashmir historically have lived in peace with one another⁹.

Kashmiryat

Besides its natural beauty, Kashmir valley is also known for its unique cultural ethos which has evolved through centuries in a seamless co existence called Kashmiriyat. Hindus and Muslims are much attracted towards the teachings of Rishis and Sufi peers. The impact of their teachings on their culture is even visible today. With the advent of Sufism and Rishism, shrine worship became a common feature providing a unique platform to build bridges between people of different faiths. Numerous Sufi shrines still attract devotees both Hindus and Muslims. They pay their respect to the saints who preached religious tolerance and contributed significantly to the evolution of Kashmiriyat¹⁰.

Art and Architecture

Kashmir art and architecture is known though out the world. Some of its examples are:

1. Kashmiri Carpets known as *Kaleen*
2. Kashmiri Shawls
3. Embroidery
4. Paper- mashie
5. Wood Carving.

6. Namda Saazi.
7. Metal work, especially *Samawar*-making
8. Kangri or fire pot.
9. Khatam bandh or roof- making art¹¹.

Fairs and Festivals

Fairs and festivals are important and integral part of Kashmiri life. Some of the known festivals are as under:

1. Ursi-e- Shahi- Hamadan
2. Ursi-e-Pir Dastagir
3. Urs-e- Baba Rishi
4. Urs-e- Nund Rishi
5. Pat fair of Badarwah.
6. Kapalmocham festival
7. Jawalamukhi fair
8. Tulip Festival
9. Spring Festival
10. Shikara Festival
11. Kheerbawani festival
12. Gurez Festival
13. Water Sports Festival
14. Garden of Paradise Festival
15. Kashmir Snow Festival

The other man made attractions of Kashmir are Cheshmeshahi, Nishat garden, Pari mahal, Shalimar garden, Salsabil Park, Harwan Bagh, Siraj Bagh, Achabal, Darashikoh, watlab, Nehru Park, Char chinar, hariparbat fort, S.P.S. Museum, Gulmarg Siki resort, Tulip Garden, Peer ki gali, Simthon top, Shikargah etc¹².

In the recent past terrorist activities have increased in many regions, but especially after the incident of 9/11, the term terrorism gained a lot more weight and international attention. In the specific case of the Indian case in Jammu and Kashmir, terrorism is the just the continuation of a long lasting disagreement regarding territorial disputes that reaches back 1947, when the partition of India and Pakistan was decided. Since then Pakistan has challenged the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India and provoked four wars with the aim to obtain the site of Jammu and Kashmir. Such a violation in history leaves its mark on the economic history of the concerned territory, but particularly also affects the sensitive tourism industry¹³. Land of such strategic location with rare amalgamation of positive aspects of scenic beauty and splendid seasons must be flocked by tourists all over the world round the year. No doubt tourists flocked this land of unending glory since time immemorial. Unfortunately the outbreak of terror incidents from 1989 toppled tourist inflow towards valley. Network and support for terrorism had been spun in the Kashmir valley by ISI and its agents during early 1990's¹⁴. The insurgency in Kashmir is an internal conflict between Kashmir insurgents and Government of India. The roots of conflict between the Kashmiri insurgents and the Indian government are tied to a dispute over local autonomy. Democratic development was limited in Kashmir until the late 1970's and by 1988 many of the democratic reforms provided by the Indian government had been reversed and non-violent channels for expressing the discontent were limited which caused a dramatic increase in

support for insurgents advocating violent secession from India¹⁵. In 1987 a disputed state election created a catalyst for the insurgents which resulted in some of the state legislative assembly members forming army insurgents groups. In July 1988 a series of demonstrations, strikes and attacks on Indian government began the Kashmir insurgency which during the 1990's escalated into the most important internal security issue in Kashmir¹⁶. Such a feeling of insecurity wrapped the whole valley with fear.

In the valley of Kashmir thousands of people have died during fighting between insurgents and government. At the same time thousands of people lost lives as a result of being targeted by the various armed groups. According to the official sources there are about 3450 disappearance cases and the conflict has left 48000 people dead till July 2012¹⁷. Feared with the wrath of many of the Muslim militant groups, more than 2, 00,000 Kashmiri Hindus known as Pandit have fled out of the Kashmir¹⁸.

Incidents of Terror in Kashmir

Some of the main attacks which took place in Jammu and Kashmir which spread the wave of terror throughout India are as under:

- In 1989 Rubbia Syed, daughter of Mufti Muhammad Syed, The then Home minister of India was kidnapped by militants and released after some dreadful militants were released by Government of India from jails.
- In 1995 some foreign tourist trekkers were kidnapped by militants, among whom one was be-headed, one escaped and other four untraced, who were latter declared as dead.
- In 1997 in Sangrampura Budgam on 22nd of July, 7 Kashmiri Pandits were killed by unidentified gunmen.
- In January 1998, 24 Kashmiri Pandits got killed in Wandhama .
- In 1998, 26 Hindus got killed in Prankot of district Udhampur.
- In 2000, 30 Amaranth pilgrims were killed and in the same year, 36 Sikhs were killed by unidentified gunmen.
- In 2001 an attack on J&K legislative assembly in Srinagar took place killing 38 Muslims on spot.
- In 2002 Ragunath temple was attacked in Jammu killing 11 people on spot.
- On July 13, 2002 three hand grenades' were hurled in Qasimnagar Srinagar, killing 27 people.
- In 2003 in Nadimarag Shopian 24 Hindus were killed.
- On 3rd May 2006, 35 Hindus were killed by unidentified gunmen in Doda¹⁹.

Terrorism has de-stabilised the tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir to bring back normalcy and to maintain the peace, security forces are deployed in state of Jammu and Kashmir. Amidst the presence of security forces terror attacks took place as a result of which it created more panic in the minds of people in other parts of India, as a result of which domestic tourists showed very less interests in visiting Kashmir valley. Tourism inflow reduced to large extent and Kashmir as a domestic and global tourist destination gradually lost its place and pride²⁰.

Tourist arrival was remarkable 7.2 lakh In 1988 but saw a drastic dip in 1991, when it was a negligible 6287²¹. The Kashmiri tourist spots were totally or partially encroached by army camps and pickets. During the last 23 years of unrest tourism contributed virtually nothing to the state economy. Before violence tourism accounted for approximately 10% of the state's income.

Some incidents which took place on tourist spots and led to the decline in arrival of tourists in the valley.

- Phalagam: - On 12th of June 2004, four tourists including a child were killed and 18 people got injured when militants hurled a grenade.
- Mughal Gardens: - On 25th of May, 2006, militants hurled a grenade at a tourist bus killing four persons and injuring seven others.
- Dalgate: - On 31st of May, 2006 militants hurled grenades at tourist buses from west Bengal injuring 22 people.
- Hazratbal: - Four tourists were killed and six others injured in an explosion on their vehicle near Hazratbal, all were the residents of Gujarat.
- Old City Srinagar: - On June 11, 2006, a campaign of grenade attacks in Srinagar claimed the lives of six tourists and wounding 40.
- Shalimar: - On 29th July 2007 a tourist bus was attacked, killing six tourists and injuring 21.
- Gulmarg; - In 2008, a grenade exploded killing one tourist and injuring five.
- Bijbehara :- On July 28, 2012, two women tourists from Maharashtra were killed and six others injured, when militants hurled a grenade on a tempo traveller in Bijbehara Kashmir.
- Srinagar:- A Spanish tourist was injured on 16th Feb, 2013 as valley witnessed severe protests to oppose hanging of Afzal Guru.
- Anantnag: - A grenade attack killed a pilgrim and a taxi driver on 17th Feb., 2013²².

According to the estimates the state of Jammu and Kashmir has lost the revenue of rupees 190.8 billion which in turn caused unimaginable losses to those who drew employment from tourism. There is direct link between the turbulent times in J&K and its economy as tourism is one of the main source of the economy in J&K. Since the tourist inflow has been declining, its impact heavily felt on handicraft, agriculture, local employment as now the state is highly reliant on government's financial support and subsidies²³. Basic infra structure like roads, power supply, communication system, drinking water and proper maintenance of tourist destinations remained poor because resources are diverted to counter terrorism activities²⁴. Inevitably there is clear connection between terrorism and increasing unemployment as well. Statistics have shown that the employment rate declined from 44.3 % in 1981 to 32.6% in 2011. Considering that the government is the only employer, due to lack of private investments in the state. According to a study conducted by the JNU (Jawaharlal Nehru University) which reveals that 66 % of house boat owners changed their occupation during the turmoil.

Suggestions

- Government should identify new tourist destinations so that those who had visited once Kashmir will not get bored to see the old destinations again.
 - Government should organise the tourist fair and festivals in collaboration with the tourist departments of the J&K so that awareness regarding tourism in J&K can be developed by maintaining websites, advertising in print and electronic media.
 - The Government of J&K in collaboration with department of tourism should put hoardings in other states of India highlighting the beautiful scenes of valley.
 - The tourist destinations should be demilitarized.
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- The Tourism department should check bus fairs and other needs of tourists, so that they may not get deceived by the private companies etc.
- The tourism department should have its own protection force, which may check the quality of the food, transport, hotels, rides etc.
- Tourists should be provided pamphlets and maps regarding the tourist destinations of J&K.
- Tourist guides should be made available to the Tourists on feasible rates.
- Cultural programmes should be held at the respective tourist destinations.
- Government should held peaceful talks with the local gunmen.

Conclusion

The above analysis shows that the tourism sector in Kashmir suffered a great downfall due to sudden political unrest which struck valley in 1989. This period put the valley into a deep economic shock, which will take enormous time to fill the economic gap produced by it.

The need of the hour is that the governmental and non governmental agencies should come forward and adopt such important measures, which can give name and fame back to Kashmir tourism.

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