

## **Impact of Tourism on the Ecology of Kashmir**

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### **Abstract**

Set like a jewelled crown on the map of India, Kashmir is a multi-faceted diamond, changing its hues with the seasons - always extravagantly beautiful. Two major Himalayan ranges, the Great Himalayan Range and the PirPanjal, surround the landscape from the north and south respectively. They are the source of great rivers, which flow down into the valleys, forested with orchards and decorated by lily-laden lakes.

The Mughals aptly called Kashmir 'Paradise on Earth' where they journeyed across the hot plains of India, to the valley's cool environs in summer. Here they laid, with great love and care, Srinagar's many formal, waterfront gardens, now collectively known as the Mughal Gardens. They also patronized the development of art and craft among the people of Kashmir, leaving behind a heritage of exquisite artisanship among these people and making the handicrafts of the land prized gifts all over the world.

Kashmir is a land where myriad holiday ideas are realised. In winter, when snow carpets the mountains, there is skiing, tobogganing, sledge-riding, etc. along the gentle slopes. In spring and summer, the honey-dewed orchards, rippling lakes and blue skies beckon every soul to sample the many delights the mountains and valleys have to offer. Golfing at 2,700 m above the sea, water-skiing in the lakes and angling for prized rainbow trout, or simply drifting down the willow fringed alleys of lakes in shikaras and living in gorgeous houseboats are some of the most favoured ones.

Tourism has become a big business and has been considered as one of the fastest growing industry. Kashmir, being a mountainous region there are many problems associated with tourism in mountain regions include: sewage pollution of rivers, sedimentation and emissions from construction activities, erosion and landslides linked to trails and skiing, water extraction from streams to supply resorts, damage to habitats during construction and use, interruption by roads and construction, animal migration. In this background paper will highlight the adverse effect of tourism on the ecology of Kashmir. The main potential adverse impacts of tourism on the environment include: Pressure on natural resources, Harm to Wildlife and habitats, Pollution and wastes, Social and Cultural pressure related to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity etc.

**KEYWORDS:** Kashmir, Environment, Degradation, Externality, Pollution.

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## **INTRODUCTION TO JAMMU AND KASHMIR**

Jammu and Kashmir is located mostly in the Himalayan mountains, and shares borders with the states of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab to the south. The Line of Control separates it from the Pakistani-administered territories of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan in the west and north respectively, and a Line of Actual Control separates it from the Chinese-administered territory of Aksai Chin in the east. The state has special autonomy under Article 370 of the Constitution of India.

A part of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, the region is the subject of a territorial conflict among India, Pakistan and China. The western districts of the former princely state known as Azad Kashmir and the northern territories known as Gilgit-Baltistan have been under Pakistani control since 1947.

Jammu and Kashmir consists of three regions: Jammu, the Kashmir Valley and Ladakh. Srinagar is the summer capital, and Jammu is the winter capital. Jammu and Kashmir is the only state in India with a Muslim-majority population. The Kashmir valley is famous for its beautiful mountainous landscape, and Jammu's numerous shrines attract tens of thousands of Hindu pilgrims every year, while Ladakh is renowned for its remote mountain beauty and Buddhist culture.



### **Kashmir- a Paradise on Earth**

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The Mughals aptly called Kashmir 'Paradise on Earth' where they journeyed across the hot plains of India, to the valley's cool environs in summer. Here they laid, with great love and care, Srinagar's many formal, waterfront gardens, now collectively known as the Mughal Gardens. Anecdotes of four and five centuries ago describe their love for these gardens, and the rivalries that centered around their ownership. They also patronized the development of art & craft among the people of Kashmir, leaving behind a heritage of exquisite artisanship among these people and making the handicrafts of the land prized gifts all over the world.

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Few important tourist places in Kashmir are :

Vernag Spring and Mughal Garden- A fresh water spring and a Mughal garden next to it, spring is chief source of Jhelum River.

Amarnath temple - pilgrimage site for Hindu devotees of Shiva.

Srinagar - Summer Capital of Jammu and Kashmir, a popular hill station.

Dal lake - a lake in Srinagar, with house boats called Shikharas.

Manasbal Lake

Shalimar Gardens—Mughal Garden

Nishant Gardens-Mughal Garden

ChashmeShahi- Mughal Garden

PariMahal- old monument of PariMahal, one can have full view of Dal Lake.

Shankaracharya Temple- Ancient Temple of Lord Shiva

Hari Parbat- Ancient Temple of Goddess SharikaBhagwati and an old fort on this hill.

KheerBhawani Temple

Martand Sun Temple - a Kashmiri Hindu temple dedicated to Surya (the chief solar deity in Hinduism) and built during the 8th century CE. Martand is another Sanskrit name for the Hindu Sun-god. Now in ruins, the temple is located five miles from Anantnag.

Gulmarg - Popular hill station and skiing destination.

Pahalgam - Hill station

Betaab Valley- A lush green valley 06 km from Pahalgam where the movie Betaab was shot.

Sonmarg - Hill station

Yusmarg - Hill station

Aru - scenic valley

Lolab Valley - Least disturbed camping site and lush green valley

Eco-tourism places:Gurez, Bangus Valley.

## INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary period, tourism has become a big business and has been considered as one of fastest growing industry. This is primary a service industry because it does not produce goods but extend services to various class of people. Tourism can serve as an effective instrument in integrating entire universe. With development of technology mobility of one place to another has become quite easier and this is considered as a positive sign for the development and growth of tourism Industry. With a span of time and its development it has created visible impact in the society, environment and economic life of human being. In many developing countries, the costs of environmental degradation have been estimated at 4 to 8 percent of GDP annually. Natural resources degradation – depleted soils, insufficient water, rapidly disappearing forests, collapsed fisheries – threaten the quality of life of millions; an estimated 6 million people die annually, and many more get sick, in developing countries from water-related diseases, indoor air pollution, urban air pollution, and exposure to toxic chemicals. Environmental degradation also increases the vulnerability of people to natural disasters. The impact of environmental degradation threatens the basis for growth and livelihoods today and in the future. Environmental degradation also reaches across borders, affecting the quality of the regional and global commons. The Environment Strategy has to respond to these challenges.

## METHODOLOGY

The present study is descriptive and is based on the secondary information and primary information is also used as supplementary in the form of comments, interviews, observations, opinion etc. The secondary information has been collected from journals, periodicals, magazines, newspaper, books, newsletters and other available sources. The present study highlights the impact of tourism on environmental conditions of Kashmir. The main potential adverse impacts of tourism on the environment include: Pressure on natural resources, Harm to wildlife and habitats, with associated loss of biodiversity, Pollution and wastes, Social and cultural pressures related to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity etc.

## TOURISM AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATION

Himalayan region and particularly Jammu and Kashmir, is needed to be looked from the point of view of tourism. In the context of world tourism, the area is lacking in experience and expertise. The prestige and beauty of the region's socio-cultural and man-made environment may attract millions of tourists every year. The

size of the industry requires the national management of the resources, which make up tourism. Mountain regions and communities often have fragile environments and socio-economic relations, the latter frequently important factors in environmental management. Problems associated with tourism in mountain regions include: sewage pollution of rivers, sedimentation and emissions from construction activities, erosion and landslides linked to trails and skiing/ snowmobiling, water extraction from streams to supply resorts, damage to habitats during construction and use, interruption by roads and construction of animal migration between life zones, litter accumulation on trails.

In many mountain areas, concern has grown about the negative impacts of tourism on the natural environment, village economies and cultural traditions. But these concerns can be addressed by practicing multiple land use methods of resource management combined with sustainable community development. If all activities are carried out with the full participation of local people and communities which make them guardians of their resources and are designed to ensure that local people benefit from trekking tourism and conservation, then also these could be addressed.

The main potential adverse impacts of tourism on the environment include:

1. Pressure on natural resources

The main resources at threat are:

- Land and landscape: mining, land erosion, soil erosion, urbanisation, road, loss of wildlife habitats, deterioration of scenery

- Water resources: recreational impacts, (scuba diving, snorkeling, sport fishing), damage to water/ lakes ecosystem and fisheries

- Atmosphere: high levels of energy use in tourism facilities and in transportation

- Freshwater: overuse of critical water resources for hotels, swimming pools and golf courses.

- This is of particular concern in lower regions where water resources are scarce and each tourist consumes more than 100 –150 litres a day.

- Pressure on other local resources: for example energy, food, and other raw materials which may be in short supply locally.

2. Harm to wildlife and habitats, with associated loss of biodiversity

The main harm to wildlife and habitats is:

- Biological resources: disruption of wildlife habitats, clearance of vegetation for tourism developments, increased pressure on endangered species due to trade and hunting; extra demand for fuel wood, forest fires.

- Ecologically fragile areas: such as rain forests, wetlands, mountains, if not properly planned and managed nature tourism threatens the world's most ecologically fragile areas including parks and natural world heritage sites.

### 3. Pollution and wastes

Pollution and wastes contaminate:

- Land: solid wastes and litter (a tourist produces an average of about 1 kg of waste a day)
- Freshwater: pollution by sewage
- Water: sediment run off, pollution from land-based hotels; waste & litter linked with water sports
- Air: at local level, air pollution from tourist transportation, global impacts, especially from CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, related to energy use in transportation, air-conditioning and heating of tourist facilities, etc.
- Noise: related to ground as well as air transportation

### 4. Social and cultural pressures related to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity

- Social and cultural impacts: tourism means disturbance to the local way of life and disturbance of social structures, and can adversely affect traditional practices that contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. It also enriches the culture of the host society by the cultural diffusion (i.e. the movement of cultural traits from one society to another).
- Adverse impacts on livelihoods and lack of benefit sharing with those who bear tourism related costs to both the human and natural environment. It will contribute to the national income and also foreign exchange, to the host state.
- Resource use conflicts: competition between tourism and local populations for limited resources of water, sanitation and energy, competition with traditional land uses, especially in heavily used areas.

### POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

a) Tourism is encouraged as a part of effort to regenerate the area and interiors. Tourism is generally encouraged in the periphery towns and city areas with less number of buildings and vacant land. The meaning of development of tourism in these areas is investing the money for environmental improvement. Tourism development can be seen as a vital aspect in physical and economical regeneration of remote and under developed areas as it contributes to attractive appearance of the environment like better water supply system, planned sewage and solid water disposal and overall improved environmental quality. International Journal of Advanced Research in Tourism helps in conservation the old historic monuments, protected and reserved forests assets etc that could be neglected otherwise.

b) There is a close synergy between handicrafts and tourism. Handicrafts are great tourism boosters. Handicrafts and its process of manufacturing are great means of attractions for the visiting tourist. On the other hand tourism also helps in revival of dying arts and crafts, it provide a source of income to the craftsmen and artisans with lesser investment

## NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Tourism is the world's largest industry. Although a "smokeless" industry, it has important environmental implications. It is a fact that all over the world man has been using the natural resources without even thinking the consequences of the misuse, which is creating environmental misbalance.

Today environmental pollution poses a serious threat to life in earth not only in industrial areas but also areas where there is a great concentration of tourist. Unfortunately, the various areas with tourist concentration are dumping ground for municipal and industrial waste. Think of the health hazards involved for tourists vacationing in the hill areas. In the tourist areas various diseases are often transmitted by contaminated food. Locals of the area mainly face the severity of problem as during the peak period the demand of public services reaches saturation point, there are generally shortage of water, unclean environment due to piled garbage and lots of pollution.

On the other hand tourism because of poor planning often damages the vegetation and disturbs animal life. There is a wide spread criticism of pollution in the wake of tourism, such as automobile exhaust, detergents poured in to rivers and garbage of all kinds left at camping and picnic sites. Other kinds of environmental damages, which should be mentioned, are the destruction of vegetation by trampling, extinction of fragile species after introduction of alien seeds, risk of forest fire, and destruction in the cycles of animal life.

Development of tourism has an impact on wildlife, which is likely to be affected due to hunting, photography and filming by the tourist. The degraded environment (dirty water, piles of garbage etc) creates ecological imbalance, which affects the local wild life; the impact is largely visible on mammals and birds.

The problem of water pollution rises due to improper development of sewage and solid waste disposal system from hotels and other residential facilities. Sewage disposal is affected either through septic tanks and absorption pits. This water pollution affects the eco system of the area.

There are incidences of misuse of archaeological and historical monuments by the tourist. All these happen due to poor planning in this sector. For tourism the quality of the environment is the basis for attracting visitors and needs to be conserved. Tourism development can become a positive factor for improving environment if some amount of intelligent planning is done.

## CONCLUSION

The size of tourism industry requires the rational management of the resources. The existing unplanned development may soon be transformed completely in to a chain of constructions of unplanned infrastructure. It is necessary that some alternative development strategies be brought to the forefront. These are strategies, which must not only show more respect for the environment but also facilitate some mutual understanding between locals and the visitors. A separate and distinct planning efforts are required aiming primarily at determining the best location of facilities, hotels, resort facilities and transportation networks. The planning should view tourism as a source of foreign exchange earnings. There should be an approach of profit

maximising by development to accommodate the maximum possible number of projected visitors and to design facilities to generate the maximum possible spending by the tourist

The existing non-pollution norms should be tried and construction regulation should be enforced. A tourist “code of conduct” for this region should be evolved which could be applicable to both tourist industry and consumers alike. Legal provisions are made/applied for strictly following of the “code of conduct”. Specially for the areas of archaeological value and there should be strict legal action for

- Damage of monuments
- Destruction of environment of surrounding areas
- Construction of other buildings in the adjoining areas
- Dumping of waste in open
- Unauthorised industrial activities

A greater number of national parks and forest reserves should be created; national parks and forest reserves should be integrated components of environmental management policy. Tourism should expand in the whole region, especially in regions of low demographic density where sites with open space still exist. These areas can be promoted by creation of sport facilities and recreational and cultural centers.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Depleting substances as set out in international agreements.

- Raise the Awareness of Tourism Clients of the environment and social implications of their holidays, and of opportunities for their responsible behaviour.
- Develop a Better Dialogue with the Local Communities in travel destinations and promote the involvement of local stakeholders in tourism ventures.

For the tourism industry to remain credible in their commitment to sustainable development and be responsive to the environmental concerns, it needs to address the following issues:

- Natural tourism should boost to reduce the environment pollution and exploitation of local resources.
- Promote Wider Implementation of Environmental Management, particularly in the many small and medium enterprises that form the backbone of the tourism industry, and spread initiatives to all sectors of the tourism industry.
- Use More Widely Environmentally-Sound Technologies, In particular to reduce emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases and ozone
- Work with Governments and Other Stakeholders, to improve the overall environmental quality of destinations.

➤ Involvement of the Banking and Insurance Sectors

Banks and insurance companies could greatly expedite progress of sustainable tourism by incorporating environmental and social criteria into assessment procedures for loans, investments, and insurance. They could help finance environmentally-sound technologies and provide incentives for sustainable tourism. Widespread involvement of the banking and insurance sectors should be sought.

➤ Use of Economic Instruments

The tourism industry consumes increasingly scarce natural resources. The costing of energy and water in particular could expedite greatly eco-efficiency in the tourism industry and raise revenue for the improved management of these resources. Governments should consider the development and widespread use of economic instruments for sustainable tourism.

➤ Involvement of Tourism Board

Often, marketing strategies and messages are not in line with the principles of sustainable tourism. There is the need to better, involve tourism boards in sustainable tourism efforts.

➤ Greater Focus on Transport

There is a continued development of long-haul travel. Economic, technological & management approaches should be developed to reduce emissions, waste & pollution resulting from tourism transportation. Changing consumption patterns should also be considered.

➤ Improving Monitoring

Careful monitoring of impacts and results as well as the adoption of corrective measures are conditions for sustainable tourism. All stakeholders at all levels should thus develop monitoring. As previously stated, the private sector should develop monitoring and public reporting of their activities. Local and central governments should develop, more widely, monitoring tools such as indicators, and incorporate the results into their decision making process. Where appropriate, participatory approaches should be used in monitoring, is currently uncommon and this should be a priority.

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