



Research Paper

Ecotourism a viable option for Livelihood and Sustenance in Jammu & Kashmir

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Abstract: Kashmir is home to many tourist destinations with a lot of natural beauty. But due to overflow of tourists and mismanagement at places like Dal Lake, Gulmarg etc. number of problems/issues has come to forefront. Kashmir possesses various 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 political turmoil. Jammu and Kashmir with its natural diversity is one of the unspoilt places of the country for ecotourism. Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Sonmarg, Kokarnag are some of the best spots which are visited by tourists for ecotourism in Jammu and Kashmir. Ecotourism is much more than a phrase for those who love nature for travel and recreation. Resources are being exploited unscientifically at most of the places. There is unscientific harnessing of naturals well as human resources which makes environment and people vulnerable to various adverse effects like environmental degradation, floods, droughts, climate change, poverty, hunger, mal-nutrition, political and social tensions worldwide. Present study aims to identify key determining factors that examine the scope of ecotourism potential

of the selected area by analysing the pattern of visit of tourists (profiling), examining the main purpose of visit and study of perception of visitors. Therefore, 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.

INTRODUCTION

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, Gulmarg, Pahalgam etc. 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.

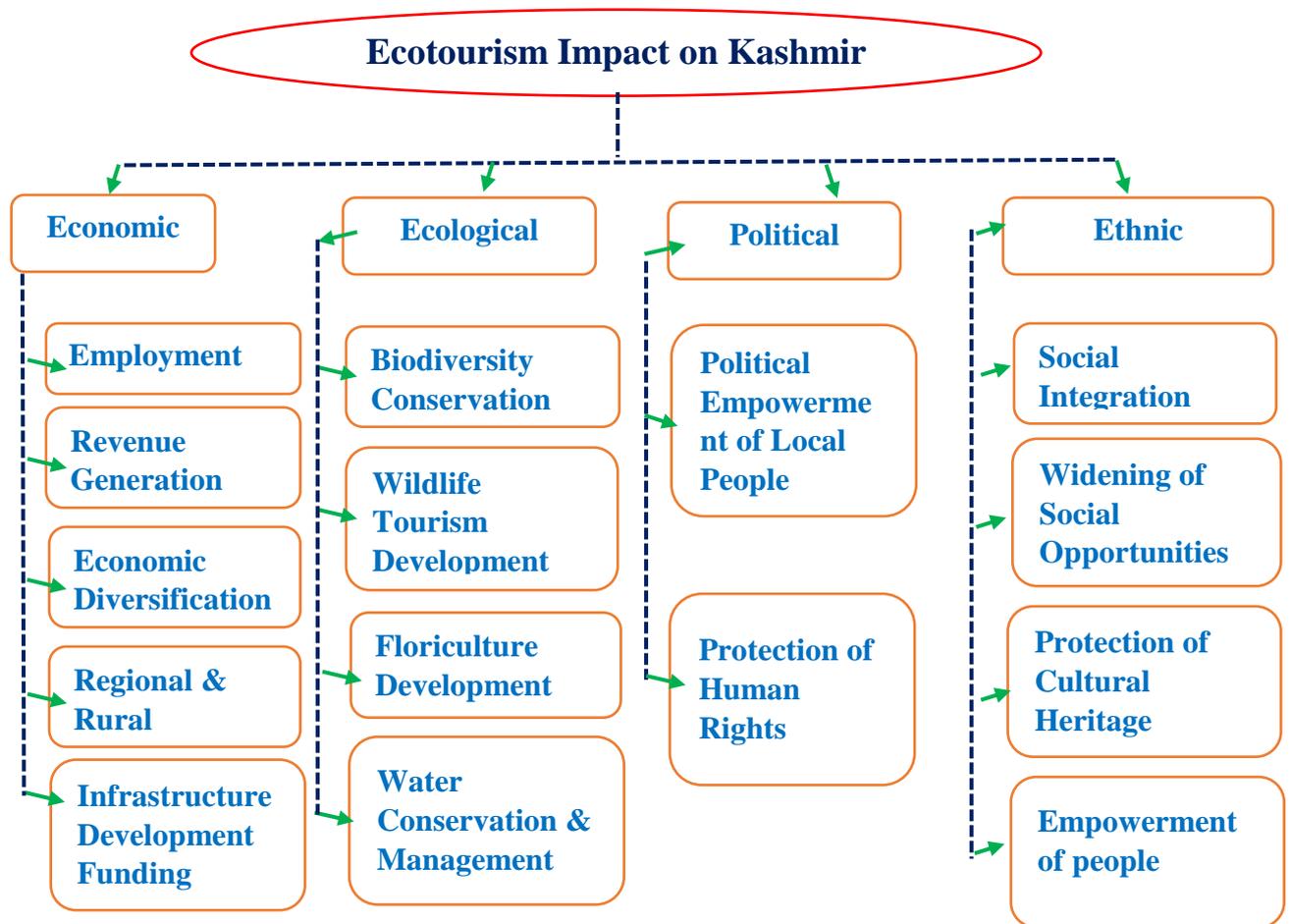


Fig 1: Impact of Ecotourism on Kashmir Valley

Ecotourism involves visiting natural areas without disturbing its untouched ecosystem. Ecotourism generates different means to earn wealth for the local people, who in turn make different measures to conserve and protect the environment and natural resources of that place. Jammu and Kashmir with its natural diversity is one of the unspoilt places of the country for ecotourism. Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Sonmarg, Kokarnag are some of the best spots which are visited by tourists for eco-tourism in Jammu and Kashmir. Ecotourism is much more than a phrase for those who love nature for travel and recreation. Ecotourism also endeavours to encourage and support the diversity of local

economies for which the tourism-related income is important. Local families and service providers can support themselves and their families by participating in this type of tourism. Besides all these, the revenue produced from tourism helps and encourages governments to fund conservation projects and training programs. Saving the environment around you and preserving the natural luxuries and forest life, that's what ecotourism is all about. 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.

Aspects of Ecotourism in Kashmir :

Ecotourism is one of the most important concepts of present time where the world is plagued by greed and greatly affected by the ill effects of Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation (LPGModel). 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. During 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.

Table 1: Monthly Income Earnings of Households offering Paying Guest Activity (PGA)

S. No	Tourist Destinations	Monthly Household Income (INR)	
		Before conversion	After conversion
1.	Srinagar	8000	15000
2.	Gulmarg	5000	11000
3.	Aharbal	6000	10000
4.	Mansbal	7000	12000
5.	Verinag	5000	10000
6.	Pahalgam	5000	12000
7.	Kokernag	4000	11000
8.	Sonmarg	4500	10000
9.	Yousmarg	4700	9000
10.	Doodpathri	4000	8000

Source: Field survey

In Kashmir a new trend of paying guest activity was introduced in late 1990s. Due to this conversion the income of household associated with tourism has become doubled. This can be understood from the table 1, the households in different tourist destinations has increased their income due to paying guest activity. From the table it can be seen that the major tourist destinations like Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Sonmarg and likewise had increased their

family income from 5000, 4700 to 11000, 12000 and 9000 respectively. Not only this, many new tourist destinations with tourism development authorities have come up with lots of economic avenues to the local people. The conversion has proved fruitful to the house owners and this activity has to some extent added in curbing the infrastructure shortage of the valley.

Table 2: Tourist Arrival and foreign exchange

Year	Foreign Tourists Arrival in India (millions)	Foreign exchange earnings from tourism in India (Rs. crore)	Foreign Tourists Arrival in Jammu & Kashmir (thousands)	Foreign exchange earnings from tourism in Jammu & Kashmir (Rs. crore)
2000	2.45	15064	4789	15626
2001	2.54	15084	5859	15083
2002	2.38	15064	2686	15064
2003	2.73	20729	8959	20729
2004	3.46	27944	18634	27944
2005	3.92	33123	19680	33723
2006	4.45	39025	20009	39025
2007	5.08	44360	24576	44360
2008	5.28	51294	21588	51294
2009	5.16	53700	23904	54960
2010	5.77	64889	25984	64898
2011	6.30	77591	32110	61678
2012	6.57	94487	37166	65098
2013	6.96	107671	41233	71096
2014	6.96	123320	47109	74678
2015	8.02	135193	58568	76098
2016	8.80	154146	47045	63003
2017	10.18	180379	67087	78054

Source: Tourism Statistics, Govt. of India

Table 2 indicates that, the foreign tourists' arrival in India vis-a-vis shows a fluctuating trend. Foreign tourist's arrival to India and J&K have seen somewhat of a dramatic turnaround since 2002, when a temporary declining trend was reversed aggressively. It could be observed that,

the share of India in world tourists' arrival increased from 2.38 million in 2002 to 10.18 million in 2017 and the share of J&K in world tourists 2686 in 2002 to 67087 in 2017. The foreign tourist statistics indicates that, J&K has a greater potential in tourism sector.

Table 3: Projected target for tourist arrival in J & K

Year	No. of tourists
2002	6284029
2003	6743282
2004	7236634
2005	7766684
2006	8336228
2007	8948294
2008	9606150
2009	10313328
2010	11073650
2011	11891251
2012	12770613
2013	13716589

2014	14734445
2015	15829895
2016	17009148
2017	18278954
2018	19646661
2019	21120269
2020	22708506

Table 3 shows projected target for tourist arrival in Jammu and Kashmir. From the table it can be understood that the number of tourist arrival in Jammu and Kashmir shows an increasing trend for the reference period 2002-2020. The flow and growth of

the tourists and tourist industry respectively is growing in the state and is proving a viable sector for providing jobs to both skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled people of the state.

Table 4: Projected targets of requisite infrastructure in Jammu and Kashmir

Infrastructure	Year							
	2005		2010		2015		2020	
Hotels	Hotels	Beds	Hotels	Beds	Hotels	Beds	Hotels	Beds
	670	3109	1174	43039	1715	63653	3018	97600
Guest houses	Hotels	Beds	Hotels	Beds	Hotels	Beds	Hotels	Beds
	530	16438	896	58052	1607	40108	3032	65663
Transport	Buses	Cabs	Buses	Cabs	Buses	Cabs	Buses	Cabs
	20179	8576	27659	11755	38178	16226	60462	25697

Table 4 shows projected target of accommodation/infrastructure required for the reference period 2005-2020 for coping up with the ever increasing flow of tourists to the state of Jammu & Kashmir in general and valley of Kashmir in particular. Accommodation is one of the basic requirements for promotion of tourism. The existing tourism infrastructure in the state of Jammu and Kashmir is not sufficient to cater to the needs of the tourists. Moreover, the existing tourist accommodation is not sufficient to accommodate all the tourists especially the high-end tourists who invariably visit Kashmir in all seasons. During the peak season, the problem gets confounded. The available infrastructure

requires upgradation and more facilities need to be developed to cope up with the tourist rush in future. In this direction the target number of hotels should increase from 670 in 2005 to 3018 in 2020. Similarly, the number of bedding capacity should also reach from 3109 in 2005 to 97600 in 2020. The guesthouse capacity for catering the tourist should reach 3032 in 2020 and similarly, the bedding capacity in guesthouses should reach up to 3032 by 2020. Transport the jugular vein of the tourist industry should also increase from the existing capacity of number of buses (38178 in 2015) to 60462 in 2020. The number of sophisticated cabs should also increase to 25697 by 2020 in order to meet the requirements of the ever increasing

tourist flow to the valley of Kashmir in particular and state of Jammu and Kashmir in general.

Table 5: Employment Generation by different sectors to the Economy in India

S. No.	Sector	Jobs in India
1	Agriculture	44.7
2	Manufacturing	12.6
3	Mining & Quarrying	2.6
4	Railways	0.9
5	Other Transport	13.8
6	Tourism	47.5

Source: Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) Enterprise, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and Govt. of J&K.

Table 5 highlights the employment generating capacity of different sectors in the country. The major contributor to the

employment is tourism sector which is linked with different sectors, thus generating 47.5 lakh jobs annually.

Table 6: Projected Generation of Employment by Tourism in Kashmir

Year	Additional Tourist inflow (lakhs)	Direct Employment (lakh)	In-direct Employment (lakh)
2002	62.83	1.57	7.85
2003	67.43	1.68	8.42
2004	72.36	1.80	9.04
2005	77.66	1.98	9.70
2006	83.36	2.08	10.42
2007	89.48	2.23	11.18
2008	96.06	2.40	12.00
2009	103.13	2.57	12.89
2010	110.73	2.76	13.84
2011	118.91	2.97	14.86
2012	127.7	3.19	15.96
2013	137.16	3.42	17.14
2014	147.34	3.68	18.41
2015	158.29	3.95	19.78
2016	170.09	4.25	21.26
2017	182.78	4.56	22.84
2018	196.46	4.91	24.55
2019	211.2	5.28	26.40
2020	227.08	5.67	28.38

Source: Directorate of Tourism, J & K Govt.

To support the statement above that in India highest employment generating sector is tourism, table 6 shows the projected employment generation by the tourist industry in Jammu and Kashmir. Due to the political instability in Kashmir. The tourism industry has received a major setback in 1990-91. This has affected the economic stability as well as employment generation for tourist dependent population. The tourist influx again picked up substantially after 1996 onwards achieving a significant growth rate of 58.53 percent and 628.31 percent in 1996 and 2001 respectively. Domestic tourist arrivals showed phenomenal increase as compared to foreign tourist arrivals. However, the year 2003 has recorded the highest tourist growth of

598.8 percent. The tourist arrivals to Kashmir valley again decreased in 2009 due to political unrest. During the last three years the tourist flow has again picked up with the total tourist flow of more than 13 lac in 2011. Tourism is providing employment to lakhs of people in Jammu and Kashmir as in 2002, 1.57 lakh people are directly associated with this venture and 7.85 lakh are indirectly provided employment by tourism services which over years has increased and by the 2020 the direct employment provided by this sector will go up to 4.91 lakh and indirect employment to 24.55 lakh which is expected to further increase to 5.67 lakh direct employment and 28.38 lakh indirect employment by the year 2020.

Table 7: Generation of Revenue by different state organisations from tourist Industry in Kashmir

Organisation	Year							
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2015-16	2016-17
Gulmarg Development Authority (GDA)	19.07	21.86	32.46	48.50	51.17	34.35	21.1	27.91
Pahalgam Development Authority (PDA)	11.00	10.15	15.62	79.00	20.00	19.54	5.91	3.69
Sonmarg Development Authority (SDA)	-	-	-	-	-	-	39.67	43.43
Yousmarg Development Authority (YDA)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.46	6.05
Aharbal Development Authority (ADA)	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.75	1.19
Cable car corporation J&K	-	-	-	-	-	-	2765.58	3329.27
Lolab BangusDrangyari	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.94	0.79
Manasbal	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.86	11.46
Doodhpathri	-	-	-	-	-	-	9.5	5.49

Source: Directorate of Tourism, J & K Govt.

Table 7 shows the revenue generation of various organisations in Kashmir valley from 2004-05 to 2016-17. The revenue generated by Gulmarg Development authority is 27.91 lakh and Pahalgam Development authority generated revenue

of 3.69 lakh. The highest revenue generated by the cable car corporation in 2017 was 3329.27 lakh. The other tourist destinations like Lolab Bangus, Mansbal Dohpathri has generated a revenue of 0.79, 11.46, and 5.49 respectively

Ecotourism and diversification of Economic Activities:

Ecotourism has resulted into diversification of economic activities in Kashmir which previously were limited to only few economic activities. It is due to ecotourism new activities in Kashmir like river rafting, cable car tourist view sighting go introduced and construction of many new hotels and restaurants which has resulted into increase in income generation. The returns are very high than costs incurred on ecotourism, thus ecotourism is highly remunerative venture.

Ecotourism and Rural Development:

Due to ecotourism rural areas of Kashmir have come to forefront and present a picturesque view. Number of tourists are visiting rural areas of Kashmir like Aharbal which has resulted into economic and social development of rural areas. Ecotourism is playing an important role in this regard because it creates 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. These areas are world famous these days and attracts tourists from all over and helps in economic advancement of the areas.

Ecotourism and local Arts and Crafts:

Ecotourism resulted into benefitting local people which intern has resulted into benefits from other allied activities. It has resulted into development of handicraft and handloom industry. The age old arts have revived once again and also fetches handsome income to these artisans. Not

only this but also preserves and flourishes our Kashmiri culture throughout the world.

Ecotourism and Infrastructure Development:

Ecotourism provides financial capital for the development of infrastructure in Kashmir valley. The infrastructure development at certain places like Pahalgam, Gulmarg, Sonmarg etc. has increased up to a great extent. Still the process is continue and lot is needed to be done to cater the ever increasing demands, but ecological prospective should be borne in mind.

Ecological aspects of Ecotourism in Kashmir:

Unplanned infrastructure and urban development which has resulted into large scale environmental and ecological degradation. Kashmir is not exception and during recent past due to overflow of tourists at certain places and unplanned infrastructural development has resulted into various ecological issues. Tourism no doubt increases the employability and income of people, but at the same time presses certain negative impacts on the ecology and therefore paves way for ecotourism to a great extent.

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;

Ecotourism and Biodiversity Conservation:

Ecotourism is an important factor for conservation of biodiversity in Kashmir. It has resulted in biodiversity conservation at Pahalgam, Sonmarg, Gulmarg etc. Many parks and sanctuaries have been made in Kashmir for the protection of rare and endangered species of flora and fauna.

Ecotourism and travel to Natural Destinations:

Natural and scenic beauty of ecologically rich destinations has encouraged tourists to travel to various natural destinations in Kashmir. Ecotourism has resulted into highlighting of new potential areas of tourism and has carved out the destinations that mesmerises the tourists.

Ecotourism and Wildlife:

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.

Ecotourism and Floriculture:

Ecotourism has provides incentives for the development of floriculture in Kashmir. People are loving to visit many picturesque gardens in the valley, the most important one is Tulip Garden in Srinagar which attracts lakhs of tourists every year. This has resulted into conservation of various species of flowers which not only has recreational value but are used in various medicines and is used in decorative works all over the world.

Ecotourism and Water 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. In order to attract large number of tourists Dal Lake is being treated by efficient machinery, so that it rejuvenates its past glory.

Political Scenario and Ecotourism in Kashmir:

Kashmir being politically hypersensitive and ecologically fragile area needs a special understanding indealing its political economy and political ecology. Ecotourism can play a role in political empowerment of local people in Kashmir and can result in protection of human rights. Kashmir issue being a very sensitive issue in the South Asian region. It has 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. The turmoil has also hampered the economic development of the region resulting into underdevelopment of the region which resulted into abject poverty. Upto 1980s, the state of Jammu and Kashmir attracts huge numbers of tourists, but the tourist sector received a serious jolt with the outbreak of militancy in the year 1989. The sector received huge loss due to militancy, because, less number of people visit Kashmir for vacations due to political instability and insecurity.

Socio-Cultural aspects of Ecotourism in Kashmir:

Kashmir being home to Sufi's and saints and therefore possess great cultural heritage and social cohesion, attracts lots of tourists to visit these places. Amarnath cave and sufi shrines like Chari Sharief, Dastgeer Sahib, Makhdoom Sahib, Amir Kabeer Shrine etc. are important attractions of tourists. Kashmiri food, (Wazwaan) is famous throughout the world which also attracts number of tourist to the valley.

Table 8: Outlays and Expenditure (Plan Schemes) & Revenue Realized w.e.f. 2009-10 of Floriculture Department, Kashmir

S. No	Year	Allocation (Rs. In Lakhs)	Expenditure (Rs. In Lakhs)	Revenue realised (Rs. In lakhs)
1	2009-10	1576.00	1512.95	258.60
2	2010-11	1200.00	1153.00	199.38
3	2011-12	1250.00	1063.13	369.57
4	2012-13	1250.00	0991.67	406.26
5	2013-14	1051.57	1047.37	549.36
6	2014-15 (Ending Nov)	956.10	317.89	446.95

Table 8 shows outlays and expenditure and revenue realised by floriculture department in Kashmir during 2009-10 to 2014-15. The allocation of funds in 2009-10 was 1576 lakh which over years reached to 956 lakh. Similarly the expenditure incurred by

the department was 1512 lakh in 2009-10 which also decreased to 317 lakh. The revenue realised by the department in 258 lakh in 2009-10 which over the years increased to 44.95 lakhs.

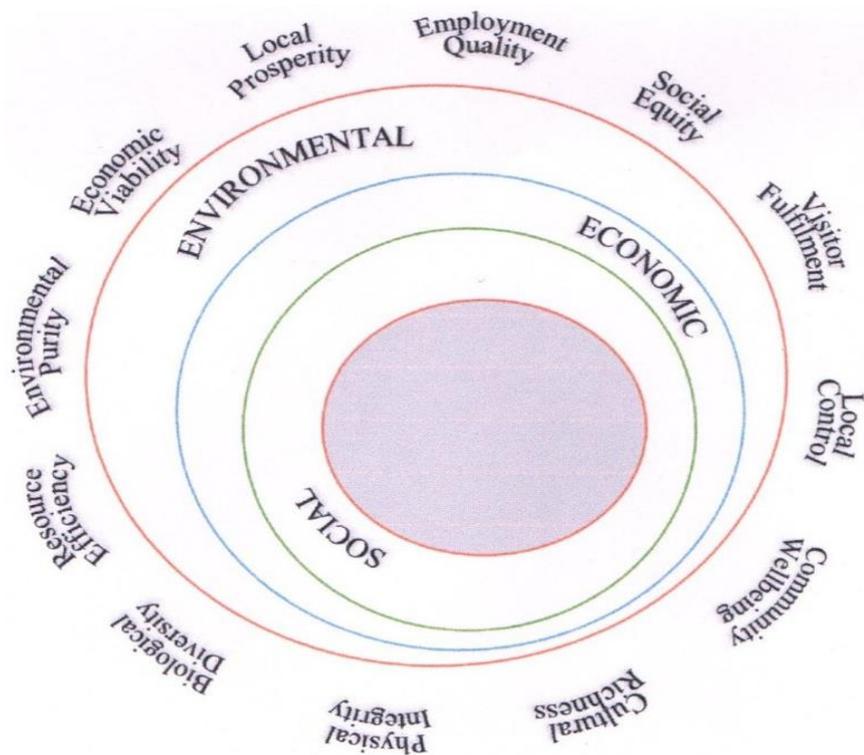


Fig 2: Relationship between aims and the pillars of sustainability

Stakeholders in sustainable tourism

Many different interests can benefit from tourism being made more sustainable:

Tourism enterprises, while seeking long term profitability, should be concerned about their corporate image, the

relationship with their staff, and their impact on the global environment and that immediately around them.

Local communities are seeking increased prosperity but without exploitation or damage to their quality of life.

Environmentalists are concerned about the harmful impacts of tourism but also see it as a valuable source of income for conservation.

Tourists are seeking a high quality experience in safe and attractive environments; they are becoming more aware of the impacts of their travelling.

In seeking more sustainable tourism, governments must recognize the different positions and motivations of these stakeholders and work with them to achieve common goals.

Agenda for Sustainable Tourism

For the sustainable tourism international forum has agreed upon certain agenda to follow for achieving this goal. The basic agenda include;

Ability of tourism to continue as an activity in the future, ensuring that the conditions are right for this

Ability of society and the environment to absorb and benefit from the impacts of tourism in a sustainable way.

On the basis of this, an agenda for sustainable tourism can be pronounced as a set of twelve aims that address economic, social and environmental impacts. This agenda can be further framed as a framework for future policy documents for sustainable tourism. The broader focus of the aims should be on; (a) minimising the negative impacts of tourism on society and the environment (b) maximising tourism positive and creative contribution to rural, economies conservation of natural habitat and cultural heritage and the quality of life of hosts and visitors.

The aims for the agenda of sustainable tourism are;

1. Economic viability

Ensure viability and competitiveness of tourism destinations and enterprises, so they are able to continue to prosper and deliver benefits to whole mankind in long term.

2. Local Prosperity

Maximise contribution of tourism to the economic prosperity of the host destinations, including the spending of local visitors.

3. Employment Quality

Strengthen the number and quality of tourism jobs in the locality which include level of salary and conditions of service without any discrimination.

4. Social Equity

Seek a widespread and fair distribution of economic and social benefits from tourism throughout the recipient community, including improving opportunities, income and service available to poor.

5. Visitor Fulfilment

Provide a safe, satisfying and fulfilling experience for visitors, available to all without discrimination by gender, race and disability or in other ways.

6. Local Control

Engage and empower local communities in planning and decision making about the management and future development of tourism in their area, in consultation with other stakeholders.

7. Community Wellbeing

Maintain and strengthen the quality of life in local communities, including social structures and access to resources, amenities and life support systems, avoiding any form of social degradation or exploitation.

8. Cultural Richness

Respect and enhance the historic heritage, authentic culture, traditions and distinctiveness of host communities.

9. Physical Integrity

Maintain and enhance the quality of landscapes, both urban and rural, and avoid the physical and visual degradation of the environment.

10. *Biological Diversity*

Support the conservation of natural areas, wildlife their habitats and provide protection to them.

11. *Resource Efficiency*

Minimise the use of scarce resources in the development and operation of tourism facilities and services.

12. *Environmental Purity*

Minimise the pollution of air, water land etc. and the generation of waste by tourism facilities and services.

Ecotourism and challenges thereof in Kashmir

Inadequate transportation connectivity to new and remote natural tourist sites.

Political system prevailing in Kashmir results into constant low arrival of foreign tourists.

Environmental education among the local people as well as tourists is very meagre.

Unplanned and unscientific infrastructural development at various tourist destinations.

Environmental degradation at many Lakes and rivers.

Deforestation due to timber smuggling.

No plan under government account for the development of ecotourism.

The Government is very serious for the development of ecotourism, the various steps taken up by the Government and other Agencies for Promotion of Ecotourism in Kashmir are;

New roads have been constructed in remote areas like Kupwara, Budgam and Kulgam to attract more tourists.

World class convention facilities have been made available at SKICC Srinagar.

Dispersal of tourist traffic from congested destinations of Kashmir.

New hospitality courses sanctioned for 6 ITI's.

Golf Courses have been upgraded at different tourist places.

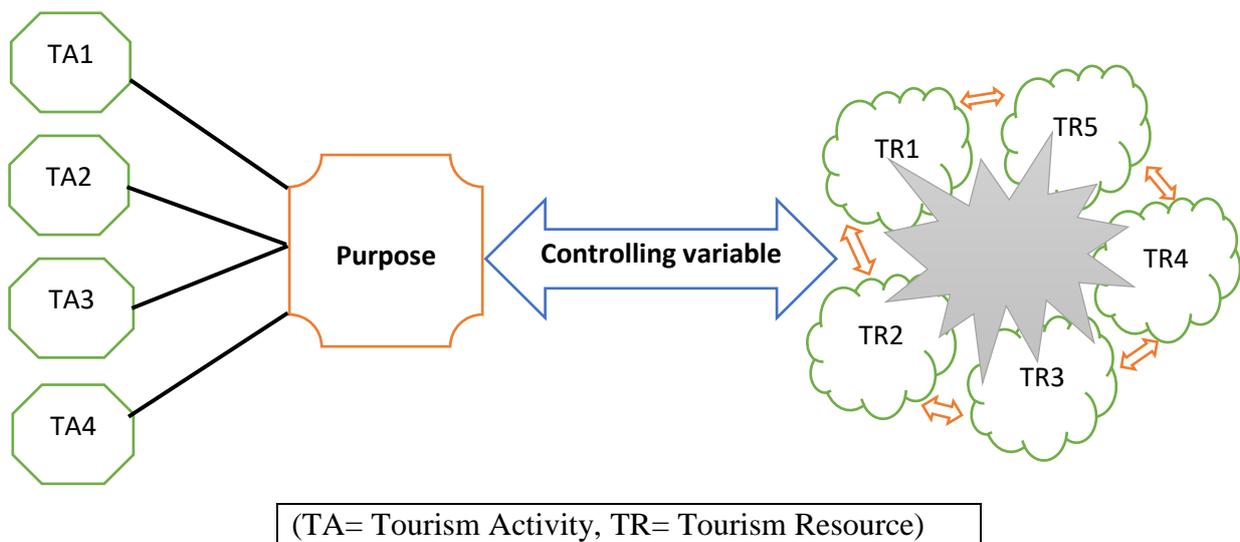
Capacity Building, Training Programs for the local youth and potential entrepreneurs.

Shooting of films and also providing security to film crews.

Shikara Festival and Bhaderwah Festival have been organized.

Framework for Ecotourism Development in Kashmir

The following model will be of utmost importance for the development of ecotourism in Kashmir valley



Given model represents a framework for ecotourism development in Kashmir valley. Tourists activities are taken from the literature cited in the paper. There are different tourist activities which include religious and pilgrimage, adventure, scenic beauty, shopping handicraft, cultural diversity and understanding, winter tourism, sports, mountaineering, hiking, rafting etc. Furthermore, tourism resources of the valley are highly dependent on the control variables as it can lead to the development of the state through ecotourism. Better connectivity and scientific exploration of natural resources with efficient planning can prove beneficial in drafting a well-structured and well-designed tourism plan for the valley of Kashmir.

Conclusion: Considering the wide geographical and biological diversity, the scope of ecotourism in Jammu and Kashmir is very high. If these natural resources are harnessed successfully we can transform the face of ecotourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir. The need of the hour is careful planning and target oriented approach. Ecotourism in Jammu and Kashmir has flourished because of the immense bio-diversity that exists nowhere else in the country as well as in the world. It must, however, be realised that there is immense potential still to be tapped in terms of making optimum use of the available natural resources. Well-managed ecotourism can be hugely beneficial for biodiversity. There are some factors that have promoted ecotourism in Jammu and Kashmir to a great extent. However, Jammu and Kashmir's full potential is yet to be realised and in the future years the state can expect to reap some great rewards. Looking at the tremendous potential the ecotourism industry offers in the field of its employment generation, infrastructure development and foreign exchange

earning capacity, it is the time that Government pays urgent attention to the needs of the ecotourism industry. It is believed that by 2020, tourism industry would be a single biggest industry in the world. In this way, the ecotourism in Jammu and Kashmir requires to be developed by amending laws for attaining the objectives of sustainability.

Ecotourism can be a viable option to rural youth in Jammu and Kashmir, because, due to ecotourism new destinations has been carved out in the remotest areas of the valley. Due to ecotourism rural development has taken place in terms of road connectivity, better rural health and hygiene. The rural markets have developed. Above all the employment avenues for rural youth has increased remarkably. Due to ecotourism, the rural agricultural products got a better market. This activity has reduced the dependency on the middlemen (dalals). The rural farmers get a remunerative price at their door steps. Ecotourism has opened the vision and mind of the orthodox people living in the remotest areas. The cultural exchange has ordered and paved way for modern and advanced developments to flourish to the rural areas. Ecotourism has no doubt increased/enhanced the life style and has made livelihood of the people much better than ever before.

Suggestions for Improvement and Promotion of Ecotourism in Kashmir

- ✓ Carrying Capacity Analysis at different tourist destinations
- ✓ Opening up of New Tourist Destinations
- ✓ 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 and entrepreneurs on scientific lines.

- ✓ Timber subsidy should be provided for houseboat manufacturing and repairing.
- ✓ Eco-friendly huts should be constructed for tourists at tourist destinations.
- ✓ Use of internet and social medial like Facebook andTwitter 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.
- ✓ Tourism festivals should be organised in and outside state for promotion purposes.
- ✓ Ties with neighbours should be strengthened.
- ✓ 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 youth and women folk
- ✓ Ecotourism as a subject should be introduced in the curriculum.

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