

Impact of Militancy on Tourism of Kashmir (1989-2002)

¹GH.Rasool.Bhat, ²B.A.Khan and ³Sajad Ahmad lone

Research scholar in the school of social sciences Department of History IGNOU New Delhi, ² Professor Department of History university of Kashmir, Assistant Professor Department of Env science ITM university Gwalior ³

Abstract

The valley of Kashmir well-known for its beauty and celebrity is a theme well worthy of a poet. Nowhere in Asia, nor even in the remaining quarters of the globe, can the parallel be found of such an earthly paradise, a paradise in itself but made doubly beautiful by its surroundings. The bare, rugged and frowning rocks, a wilderness of crags and mountains, whose lofty summits tower to the sky in their cold and barren grandeur- a solitary and uninhabitable waste. The valley of Kashmir is an important tourist destination of India and has been a place of attraction for the tourists since centuries. The lush green forests, sweet springs, perennial rivers, picturesque and pleasant climate of Kashmir valley has remained an internationally acclaimed tourist destination.

“Who has not heard of the vale of cashmere

With its roses the brightest that earth ever gave,

Its temples, and grottos, and fountains as clear

As the love-lighted eyes that hang over their wave?” (Lalla Rookh, Thomas

Moore)

However, once the violence engulfed the Valley of Kashmir in 1989, the flow of the tourists both domestic as well as foreign witnessed a heavy decline from more than 7,000,00 in 1988-89 to a few thousands in mid-nineties. This paper aims to analyze the impact of militancy on the tourism of Kashmir and the sectors associated with this industry. More emphasis has been laid on combining and comparing the ups and downs of both the issues of militancy and tourism in Kashmir. Militancy in the state hindered the smooth growth of tourism and had discouraged most of the travelers from visiting India’s most popular tourist destination.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism denotes the temporary, short-term or prolonged movement of people to destination outside the place where they normally live and work or undertake their regular activities. The valley of Kashmir has been an unending attraction of visitors down the ages. The beautiful lakes, clear streams, green turf, magnificent trees and mighty mountains offered varied attraction to the tourists.

History bears witness to the fact that whenever and wherever militancy found roots, the economy of that region became a major casualty. This is true for the Kashmir region as well since 1989. In the seventh plan period a special outlay of Rs.22.06 crores was made available for the development of the tourism sector. The result was that the tourist inflow made considerable upward movement in mid-eighties of the last century. However, with militancy in the state and engulfing the valley of Kashmir from 1989 onwards the tourist trade completely collapsed.

IMPACT OF MILITANCY ON TOURISM

Tourism constitutes one of the main sources of income for vast sections of Kashmiri population. Tourist destinations like Sonamarg and Gulmarg are known internationally for winter games such as skiing. Gulmarg is also known as the highest green golf course in the world, and boasts the world's largest cable car lift. Adventure sports include trekking, mountaineering, winter sports, water sports, golf and fishing. However, most of these tourist attractions remain underdeveloped.

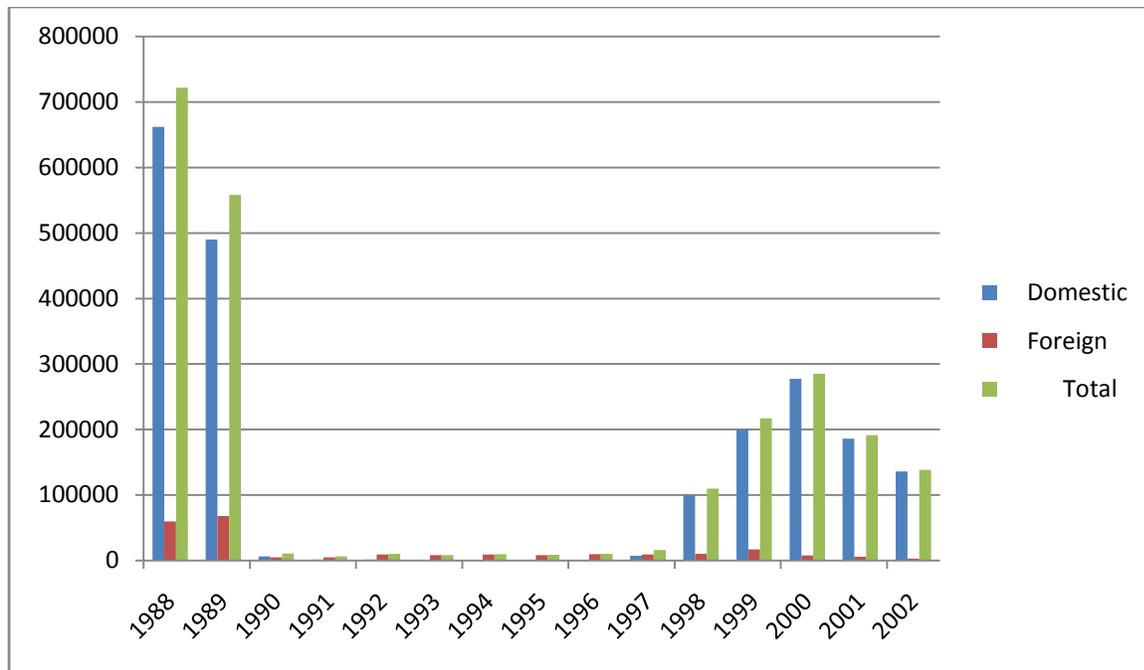
It is a stark reality that till late 1980's the state of Jammu and Kashmir used to attract huge numbers of national as well as foreign tourists, but the tourist sector received a serious jolt with the outbreak and spread of militancy from 1989 onwards. Tourism industry of Kashmir valley suffered tremendously due to violent militant activities. Once militancy gained momentum the tourist inflow to the valley declined substantially. The number of tourists visiting the state per year had gone down from around 7, 00,000 in the pre-militancy days to a few thousands in the following years. It is estimated that the state lost 27 million tourists from 1989-2002 leading to a revenue loss of \$3.6 billion. As shown by the figure in the table, while as many as 722035

tourists visited the valley in 1988, in 1993 the number reduced to 8476. The tourist influx declined considerably up to 2002 during which the state suffered heavily in the sector due to militancy and militancy.

Table: Tourist arrival to Kashmir from 1988 to 2010.

Year	Domestic	Foreign	Total
1988	662097	59938	722035
1989	490212	67762	557977
1990	6095	4627	10722
1991	1400	4887	6267
1992	1195	9149	10324
1993	450	8026	8476
1994	500	9314	9814
1995	322	8198	8520
1996	375	9592	9967
1997	7027	9111	16138
1998	99636	10247	109883
1999	200162	17130	217292
2000	277347	7575	284922
2001	185735	5859	191594
2002	135686	2694	138380

Source: Director Tourism Kashmir.



The infrastructure created over the years suffered huge damage. The tourist resorts of the valley could not be maintained and they acquired a shabby and shoddy look. Those engaged with the maintenance and beautification of these resorts did not discharge their duties since this was internal security and maintenance of law and order. Before the advent of militancy a separate budget was kept for the development of infrastructure and beautification of the resorts which performance had to be curtailed for use in counter terrorist activity; as a result, the once beautifully maintained gardens turned into bushes. In certain cases, tourist resorts became hideouts and safe heavens for militants, some of whom were killed in the resorts. Many resorts were denuded recklessly by the timber smugglers and other deceitful persons who established their illegal timber trade in the broad day light at many places like Matipora Anantnag, where I myself talked to the people who were associated with trade during the period of our study. The result as can be seen from table 1, the number of foreign tourists to Kashmir valley has drastically dwindled from the figure of 0.60lakhs to 0.2lakhs during the years 1988 to 2002.

The owners of hotels, in earlier times, spent a substantial portion of their earnings on the development of infrastructure. As business deteriorated, they lost the will to invest leading to deterioration of their properties; they could barely make two ends meet what to talk of development and improvement. Nearly 1094 houseboats in Dal lake, Nigeen lake and river Jhelum and all those people employed in their running were rendered idle. The fact of 2000

“Shikarawallas” in these and other lakes was no better. The average level of occupancy before militancy was 80% for houseboat owners, 70% for hotel owners and 70% for shikara owners. This declined to 5%, 5% and 10% respectively. About 70% of houseboat owners, 50% hollies and 40% shikara owners changed their occupation during the turmoil. Similarly, all-tourism related occupations and personnel such as taxi-transport operators, retail-sellers, footpath vendors, handicraft and other shopkeepers, and other seasonal occupational personnel had to face the same situation (B.A.Dabla , “Role of Religion and Culture in Economic Development; the case of Kashmir.2009). The extreme suffers in this field were artisans and workers doing the basic handicraft work. In the absence of tourists in the valley, the local retailers could not sell handicraft items in the local wholesalers on much cheaper rates. The latter sold these on much higher rates in national and international markets. Thus, exploitation of the former led to huge profits for the latter. The latter were also benefitted by the foreign currency benefits given by the Central government (B.A.Dabla ,Role of Religion and Culture in Economic Development 2009). In fact, all the above mentioned sectors still remain backward and underdeveloped. This situation can be explained in terms of two main factors. First, no Indian or foreign industry was ready to invest in Kashmir as being considered “disturbed territory”. Second, consequently, no workable economic infrastructure for all economic sectors could be developed here. This made the Kashmir economy a ‘baseless’ and ‘faceless’ economy (Greater Kashmir, Srinagar 29, March 2010). In this regard the policy of discrimination against Kashmir region on the part of Government of India in the field of development planning its programmes and schemes was also responsible. The other aspect of this phenomenon was positive discrimination for Jammu region. Systematic, official and continuous efforts were carried out in various ministers in Government of India to allocate more funds, facilities, resources and other benefits to Jammu at the cost of Kashmir (B.A.Dabla, “ Ethnic Plurality and Problems of Nation-building; The case of Kashmir Problem”2010) It was reported, and not denied by the government, that planned funds were not utilized in Kashmir region and were shifted to Jammu region and spent there (Greater Kashmir, Srinagar, 22nd Aug.2009).

The net impact of the developments related to militancy on tourism sector as a whole was characterized as “catastrophic” in all sectors (B.A.Dabla, “Role of Religion and Culture in Economic Development.2009). In simple terms, it reduced to rumbles the existing economic infrastructure in the valley and government and private sector together could not revive it fully.

According to an unofficial survey, the Kashmir economy had to face a loss of more than 60,000crores of rupees mainly as a result of strikes[called by pro-freedom political parties to protest against the state and central governments] which were observed for 120 days in a year [on an average] and about 4,000 days in last 20 years (Business Edition, Greater Kashmir, Srinagar).According to the president, Federation of chambers of industries, Kashmir (FCIK), the total number of shut-downs, including curfew period, since September 1989 is more than 1,800 days and the minimum loss incurred amounts to 1,80,000crores (Business Edition Greater Kashmir, Srinagar) He also calculated the loss of per day contribution to GDP as 66 crore rupees during this entire period .

CONCLUSION

Tourism has undoubtedly been one of the major sources of income and employment for the people of Kashmir valley. However, the militancy badly impeded the tourist inflow into the valley and the financial conditions of the people suffered heavily. The survey indicated that the state has shown 5.27% annual growth during first three years of tenth five year plan against the national average of 6.6% (Finance and Planning Commission.2007).The enormity of economic damage due to militancy can be gauged by the fact that the estimates of damage till December 1996 were approximately 4 billion INR (Strategic Foresight Group 2005) Now that peace is getting to prevail albeit laboriously, it can only be hoped that the region witnesses no revisit of the dismal years of economic, political, social and developmental stagnant which set back the clock for the progressive people. The department of tourism is trying hard to improve the condition of the tourism industry in Kashmir and bring back past glory of the state. They are trying to beautify the existing tourist spots and increase the facilities for the tourists in order to attract more people to the state.

Though, the state government has declared many incentives and facilities for those who are interested to business related to this field of activity, an integrated planning for sustainable development of tourism sector needs to be considered. Achievement will be influenced by the degree to which planning for tourism is integrated both horizontally and vertically. Due to militancy much has been lost but it can be regained and restored only if peace prevails.

REFERENCES

1. Chopra, Sunita (1991) "Tourism and Development in India" Ashish Publishing House New Delhi.
2. Bhat,M.S and Misri,M.C (1994) "Poverty planning and Economic Change in Jammu and Kashmir" Vikas Publishing House Pvt.Ltd.
3. Francois, V. and B.Lionel (1995) "International Tourism" Macmillon, London.
4. Human Rights Watch (1996) India's Secret Army in Kashmir: New Pattern of Abuse Emerge in The Conflict".
5. Badan,B.S (1997) "Impact of Tourism in South India" Commonwealth Publishers, New Delhi.
6. Bakshi, S.R (1997) "Kashmir: Tourism Monuments and Folklore" Sarup and Sons, New Delhi.
7. OM, Hari (1998) "Beyond The Kashmir Valley" ,Har Anand Publishers, New Delhi.
8. Khurshid, Salman (1999) "Beyond Terrorism: New hope for Kashmir" UBS Publications and Distributors,New Delhi.
9. Peer Basharat, "Curfewed Night: One Kashmiri Journalist's account of life , love and war in his homeland" , Simon and Schuster Publishers.
10. Soundararajan,Dr.R and Rajan, P (2006) "Impact of Terrorism on Jammu and Kashmir Tourism" Kalpaz Publications,New Delhi.
11. Dabla,B.A, "Role of Religion and Culture in Economic Development; the case of Kashmir",paper presented in 35th annual Conference of AISA held at University of Kashmir in(October.2009).
12. Government of J&K, Digest of Statistics (2010), Directorate of Economic and Statistical Planning,J&K.
13. Dabla,B.A " Ethnic Plurality and Problems of Nation-building; The Case of Kashmir Problem" (2010),Jay Kay Books Srinagar.
14. Government of Jammu and Kashmir, Economic Survey 2010-2011, Directorate of Economic and Statistical Planning, J&K.
15. Michel Peter, "International Tourism, Economies and Development of International Tourist Trade.

