

IMPACT OF TURMOIL ON TOURIST INDUSTRY OF KASHMIR- A DILAPIDATED LOOK

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ABSTRACT

In the present paper an attempt has been made to analyse the impact of turmoil on the economy of Jammu and Kashmir State, particularly in the valley of Kashmir as the valley is considered the Paradise on the earth. During turmoil period, the state of Jammu and Kashmir in general and Kashmir valley in particular was in a worst situation, there was unrest in every nook and corner of the valley. The youth was frustrated due to grave problem of unemployment; they find it difficult to meet both ends. Poverty was order of the day; income earning hands were putting guns for Azadi. The infrastructure of the valley was no where standing and no where there was a bit of prosperity.

Keywords: Tourism potential, industry, unemployment, poverty, infrastructure, turmoil.

INTRODUCTION

Kashmir is a stunning and captivating land that abounds with natural beauty. Adorned by snow-capped mountains, wildflower meadows, immense glaciers, and sparkling lakes, Kashmir has often been likened to heaven on earth. However, this pristine image of Kashmir has been replaced by a much more frightening one. India and Pakistan both claim ownership of Kashmir and this dispute has resulted in two major wars as well as thousands of deaths, human rights violations, and atrocious acts of aggression. Since 1947, Kashmir has been the main source of contention between these bitter rival nations. When both countries emerged as nuclear powers in 1998, the world feared that the Kashmir dispute would escalate into a nuclear confrontation. Thus far, efforts to ameliorate the situation have had little success. Steps must be taken to improve Kashmir because the status quo is clearly unacceptable. This paper proposes a plan to resolve the Kashmir issue. The proposal suggests that India and Pakistan strike a deal with the United Nations and cooperate to improve the future of Kashmir. The paper begins by presenting the history of the hostile relations between India and Pakistan to put the situation of Kashmir into perspective. It then goes on to explain the current issues that exist in Kashmir. Finally, the paper details the exact measures that need to take place to make the deal between India, Pakistan, and the UN successful.

OBJECTIVES

The basic objectives of the study are;

1. To analyse and investigate that turmoil has hindered the economic development of the state by way of creating huge unemployment.
2. To identify the problem areas as also to highlight the factors that have led to decelerated growth of the industry.
3. To analyse that turmoil has increased poverty and has made the state backward.
4. To suggest suitable measures towards accelerated development of tourism in the state so as to make it economically more viable.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study is to examine the impact of turmoil on tourism and tourist industry in Kashmir. For this purpose the data and information has been collected from both local and foreign tourists visiting Kashmir. The

information has been collected by giving equal representation to both local and foreign visitors visiting to all the famous tourist resorts of Kashmir. The information has been collected by means of a questionnaire served to visitors in famous tourist destination. Therefore, a total number of 100 respondents were interviewed at different tourist destinations. The data collected through the questionnaires was analysed and interpreted with the help of statistical tabulation methods using averages and percentages approach wherever needed.

DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

The present study is an evaluation of turmoil on the so called backbone of the Kashmir economy followed by agriculture, its effect on the income, employment and development of the state in general and Kashmir in particular. The usual refrain of politicians has been that tourism is the backbone of Kashmir's economy. This is not only factually incorrect, but also completely misleading. This is a falsehood sold to everyone by a powerful lobby within the state with strong political connections. At present, Kashmir has a predominantly agriculture-based economy. Agriculture, horticulture, and handicrafts constitute its mainstay. The bulk of handicrafts are exported and the retail sale is a small portion of the total production. Tourism has at most been an additional, albeit undependable source of revenue. Although tourism has definite potential to become the mainstay of Kashmir's economy, the concomitant effort required in this regard has largely been lacking. At the moment it does not constitute even 10 per cent of the state's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). If peaceful conditions return to the state and the tourism potential is explored to the fullest, the entire economy of the state can be supported by tourism. It is supposedly the biggest export industry through which a country can earn foreign exchange without having to physically export anything, other than goodwill and the occasional souvenir. Being a service oriented industry, tourism can also provide employment too many people in the state Apart from the uncertainty in the state, and the other major obstacle to promoting tourism in foreign markets is the adverse travel advisories which discourage organized group movement. The only choice available therefore, is to tap into the domestic market. Surprisingly, the Indian domestic market exceeds 300 million compared to 5 to 6 million foreign tourists. According to estimates, the size of the Indian middle class which can afford to travel is larger than the entire population of the United States. The only hurdle that hinders the tapping of this huge market is the negative image of Kashmir built up by the media over the years. The ideal way to correct this image is to promote cross border travel and organize certain tourist-based and cultural events.

Deterioration of infrastructure in the valley

The turmoil period presents a shabby situation of infrastructure in the valley. All the tourist resorts were in a worst condition. The principal concern with government was the maintenance of law and order rather than taking care of resorts. Before turmoil huge grants were kept for the maintenance of the infrastructure. As a result of which once beautifully maintained gardens of health resorts had been turned into bushes, thorns and other kind of weed that engulfed the garden. In certain cases these health resorts had become the hideouts and safe haven of the militants. In view of fewer earnings, the owners only spent for their day to day meals rather than for developmental purposes. Those working in hotels for their livelihood however in view of militancy, lost their jobs and resulted in creating tension and crises in their families and social life.

Turmoil and impact on income generation

During the turmoil period the people has suffered a lot in terms of poverty, people associated with tourist industry has to a miserable life. The people like houseboat owners, pony owners, the local vendors has to live in poor and harsh condition , as there was no one who visits Kashmir. The state of Jammu and Kashmir has been lagging behind most of the states of the union of India in regard to the growth of Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) at current prices. The

average annual growth of Net State Domestic Product at current prices during 1980-81 to 1999-2000 was 12.45% for J&K against 15.01%, 14.28%, 13.83% and 14.3% for Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, West Bengal and Kerala respectively (Planning commission of India 2006). According to the survey conducted by the Finance and Planning Commission, in 2007, the per capita income of the state at ` 17174 is only two-thirds of national average of ` 25907 in India. Also the State achieved 5.5% annual economic growth as against 7% at the national level during the first four years of the tenth five year plan. Also shopping malls, recreational and transport facilities time and again became the victim of turmoil; some hotels are either occupied by security forces or had been blazed by militant organizations.

Turmoil and security situation

The turmoil has put a negative sign on the state, no tourist whether local (national), international was not ready to visit the state as they think that there is high risk involved in visiting it. Every day, every minute there were grenades, fires, bloodshed which has deteriorated the tourism potential of the state.

Increasing Unemployment

The turmoil of 1989, has directly led to increasing unemployment, because tourism is the only industry which can generate employment either directly or indirectly to both educated and illiterate persons in the state. As our State being essentially a nonindustrial economy, deficient in raw materials and lack of infrastructure and proper location for industrial establishments. During turmoil period all the tourist destination was in a worst condition that any person could earn a single penny. Hotels, restaurants and guest houses which used to do handsome business now were without tourists and the business of this sector reached the lowest ebb to the extent of insolvency, resulted in firing of existent employees.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Thus from the above analysis it can be concluded that, during turmoil period, the state of Jammu and Kashmir in general and Kashmir valley in particular was in a worst situation, there was unrest in every nook and corner of the valley. The youth was frustrated due to grave problem of unemployment; they find it difficult to meet both ends. Poverty was order of the day; income earning hands were putting guns for Azadi. The infrastructure of the valley was no where standing and no where there was a bit of prosperity.

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