Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir: With Reference To Shri Mata Vaishno Devi

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Abstract

Tourism is a great source of earning for the Indian economy. In fact, tourism is a basic and most desirable human activity deserving encouragement of people and government. Although Tourism industry does not require huge investment and sophisticated technology but it provides benefit to millions. Its main component is pilgrimage tourism which is one of the largest and most flourishing industries. It has great potential to improve understanding between different religions. The paper highlights the problems and benefits of tourism with special reference to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi shrine. Tourism is the oldest and the largest industry in the J &K State. The source of revenue earning for the state is the pilgrimage tourism. The pilgrims’ sites of Vaishno Devi attract lakhs of devotees every year. It satisfies the religious urge of visitors. The management of the holy cave shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi was taken over by the shrine board in 1986 with the objective of ensuring better management of affairs of the shrine and to provide better facilities to the pilgrims during their pilgrimage. After the introduction of board number of pilgrims has increased. The pilgrimage to the revered shrine is not confined to any particular region but pilgrims from all states visit the shrine.

Keywords: Tourism, Problems and benefits.

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INTRODUCTION:-
Tourism industry is the largest industry in the world and the biggest contribution to global economic development. It is the world’s faster growing industry. At present more than one-third population of the world is directly or indirectly associated with the tourism industry. World tourist organization calculated tourist arrivals between 1990 and 2010 rose from 456 million per annum to 937 million. Tourism has developed at momentous rate after Second World War, but it has become a big global business in the contemporary period. Tourism has become one of the most important phenomenon of mans spatial behavior in the modern times. Tourism is an effective means of earning foreign exchange and providing tremendous employment opportunities beside, guiding modernization of infrastructure and acting as a catalyst in the growth of all sectors of economy. In simple words, tourism means transfer of wealth from one country to other.

According to Singh (1998), “Tourism as a socio-cultural and economic phenomenon is one of the most important forms of interaction between peoples from different parts of the world”. On the other hand WTO states that tourism is “The activity of people who travel to places outside their customary surrounding and stay their, for leisure, business or other purpose, for no longer than one year without interruption” (Bhatt and Badan 2006). Tourism is responsible for creating the awareness of the value of their cultural heritage and environment among the local people. Some countries have no possibility of economic development but a significant level of inter-national tourism should be regarded an essential.

In India, the Britishers could not promote tourism industry but after independence, the Indian government felt its importance energetically. The government of India started promoting tourism since 1948. They set up a committee under the leadership of Sir John Sergent in 1945 and committee submitted its report in 1946. It was thought at that time it was beneficial for Indian to encourage and develop the tourist industry. A small tourist
section was set up in the ministry of transport in 1948. A separate department was set up early in 1958, which is known as the department of tourism.

Tourism industry is a new industry for India. Previously the people and government did not realize its importance. This was so because the scope for development of tourism was low. India’s glorious traditions and rich cultural heritage are linked with the development of tourism. Its magnificent monuments attract large number of visitors from all over the world. On the other hand it is the land of Mahatma Gandhi and other eminent personalities. The tourism satellite accounting for India has brought out the contribution of tourism to GDP of the country has been 5.9 % in 2003-04, while employment in tourism sectors both direct and indirect has been 41.8 million in the same year thus accounting for 8.78 % of the total employment in the country. It is estimated that by the end of 2006-07 the total employment generated in the tourism sector both direct and indirect would be 61.9 million (Annual report 2006-07).

In India, tourism is one economic sector that has the potential to grow at high rate and can ensure consequential development of the infrastructure of the destinations. Pilgrimage in recent times is fuzzily interpreted in India. The place attributes of pilgrimage sites renders them different from tourist destinations. In India religion is a dominant motivation for travel. So deep and strong is the hold of faith that pilgrimage is still one of the most important reasons for travel in India to holy places like Haridwar, Golden Temple, Vaishno Devi, Amarnath etc. for all the major religious of the world. Tourism also provides jobs worldwide at a faster rate than manufacture. Tourism plays as important role in developing the backward economies every increase in tourist’s activity means increment in the development chances. Jammu And Kashmir State is a hilly and economically backward part of the country, carrying all inherent characteristics of an underdeveloped economy. It occupies an apex seat in the beautiful tourist resorts of the world.
Tourism is not a new activity for Jammu and Kashmir. It is the backbone of Jammu and Kashmir state economy. Tourist arrival in the backward hilly region of Indian union that is Jammu and Kashmir have increased manifold during the last decades. It has shown it’s all round development and state is hopeful to welcome a sizeable number of tourists in the coming years. Jammu and Kashmir is a state that is considered a holy place by people of all the religions and gets the maximum share of tourism from pilgrimage tourism. Jammu and Kashmir also know as a land of full of sacred shrines of all religions in home to the most worshiped places like Amarnath cave, Vaishno Devi, Baba Buda shah etc. that are frequently visited for their architecture and sanctity. The Jammu and Kashmir state divides into three different geographical regions of Jammu, Kashmir valley and Ladakh region.

Jammu city is renowned in all over India as a “city of temples”. The historical city of Stourist resorts, provide many opportunities for employment generation. Jammu is a holiday home for visitors. It provides opportunity to relax facilities and a quiet holiday. It has potential to attract more and more foreign and domestic tourists. Development of tourism industry will reinforce the development of other sector. On the other hand, if the tourism activity does not develop in the due course then the region will be considered remote and isolated. The employment and investment activities will be further restricted. The region will be called backward and underdeveloped. Development of tourism industry is considerably higher than that of many other industries. In Jammu region religious tourism has attained the status of almost a perennial nature which shows a continuous favourable growth chiefly because of the holy city of Katra.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**
Vukonic (1996) identified the essence of religious attributes to tourism and discussed the nature of religious tourists, motives for their pilgrimage, the problems of transportation, food, catering, accommodation, health care and supervisory staff faced during the pilgrimage. It recommended regular research for appropriate action in updating the
pilgrimage destination according to the changing needs of pilgrims. Singh (2000) analysed problems of marketing in tourism due to uniqueness of tourism market characterised by an intangible service being sold which cannot be inspected prior to purchase.

According to Kumar (1992) tourism play significant role as a medium of social and cultural development and promoter of employment. Tourism also promotes peaceful relations among nations. Today Indian government is trying to exploit its tourism resources by providing series of incentives and by inviting private sector participation. On the other way the organization of various fair and festival for attracting tourists, show the sincere efforts of Indian government for promotion of tourism. In India state tourism Development Corporation improve accommodation facilities, transport system for the promotion of “pilgrim tourism”. Indian government promote tourism industry through organised the various Utsavas and Melas in India and abroad (Acharya 1997).

PROBLEMS OF PILGRIMS:-
There are many problems facing by pilgrims to visiting Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine. some of them are:-

- **Accommodation**: At any destination accommodation is the first priority for tourist. They need accommodation for stay and if they are offered comfortable well furnished accommodation with proper facilities along with reasonable price, tourists not only like the visit but repeatedly visit the same place where they enjoy maximum satisfaction. These days more than 90 lakhs pilgrims are visiting the shrine every year. Which means that a lot of accommodation is required here. There is no dearth of accommodation to suit every pocket either at bhawan or at katra.

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Supply of Electricity:- Electricity department had carried power from katra to Vaishnodeviji. The system was not very stable and the power supply would often get disrupted. Thus an assessment was made to improve the position of power supply. The work was divided into three parts:-Immediate tasks, Short term tasks, Medium /Long term tasks. The immediate tasks are those task that had to be completed with in three months. The short term tasks as those that would require to be completed with in twelve to eighteen months and the medium/ long term task as those that could take more than thirty six months to complete. Eight new sub-stations were constructed to improve the quality of power supply. Work was taken up on the replacement of the existing lines and superior lines between katra and Adhkawari in the first phase and laying new lines were connected from Vaishnodevi to Sanjhichhat so that this area could be electricified . large diesel generating sets were installed at Vaishnodeviji and Adhkawari to illuminate these places during power failure.

Refreshment units:- The holy cave is at distance of twelve kms from the Darshani Darwaza. This area is under the shrine board. When Dharamarth trust was managing this area they had set up a few shops for selling food etc. at Adhkawari, Sanjhichhat and Bhawan, which had been leased out, to private individual on payment of annual rent. Some shops were constructed at few isolated places in between these major points. They provided food snacks and hot and cold beverages to the pilgrims. However they had one major shortcoming they were dirty. It was decided that the shrine board should set up a few refreshment units where the pilgrims would be given hygienically prepared and packed snacks etc. the staff managing these refreshment units would be clearly turned out. The items would be sold on a no profit no loss basis. The setting up of the refreshment units by the shrine board had a positive impact on the private shopkeepers.

Transport:-Transport service is an integral part of any tourist destination, whether, it is cultural, adventure and pilgrimage destination. Being situated mostly at very remote and difficult locations, the pilgrimage destinations require
specialized transportation modes. After entry of pilgrims in the state the first half point towards the shrine is Jammu. Which is connected by three modes of transportation, that is roadways, railways and airways. From Jammu, Katra is connected through road only and the modes of transport available are buses and taxis. From Darshani Darwaza again it is roadways where taxis, autos, free service by shrine board and private vehicles owned by hoteliers are available. From the Darshani Darwaza towards to the holy cave one has to trek on foot or can hire pony services.

- **The New Tunnel**: When the management of the holy shrine was taken over by the new board in 1986, the entrance to the holy shrine was through two tunnels. On the tunnel was used as entrance and other was used as exit point. Earlier the natural cave was used both as the entrance and exit point. Thus not more than 2000 pilgrims could have Darshan in 24 hours through the single opening leading to the holy shrine. The pilgrims at the bhawan faced a lot of problems as they have to wait for days to have darshan. The board took the decision in 1989 to construct another tunnel leading to the shrine. The work of construction of the new tunnel was given to the national projects construction corporation. The construction of the new tunnel helped to overcome the problem of long periods of waiting for the pilgrims at katra. This improved the satisfaction level of the darshan as the pilgrims could have the darshan in a reasonable time.

**BENEFITS FROM TOURISM**:–

Tourism industry does not require huge investment and sophisticated technology. It provides benefit to millions. Its main component the pilgrimage is one of the largest, most flourishing and on the growth industry in its own right. It is potent of increasing national income, creates new employment opportunities and substitute’s capital which is scarce in developing countries.

- **Source of Foreign Exchange and Income**:– It is source of foreign exchange. The foreign exchange earned by tourism is obtained
conveniently the customer brings himself to the point of sale at his own expenses and taken immediate delivery of the services. Pilgrims also contribute to the income of the state. By adding the earning of pilgrims, it bridges the gap between developed states and the backward states like J &K .which means that the money spends by a tourist is not a complete transaction in itself but actually generate further economic activity as it circulates through the economy. As such the impact of tourists is felt after the tourist has left the state.

- **Growth Industry**:-It is a growth industry and growing faster than other export industries. Any government which is mindful to assist its export industry would be well advised to select this industry. Especially in the hill region like J &K .this is a major export item industry whose products are giving to be increasingly in demand day by day.

- **Rational for States Development**:-Regional imbalances are reduced by tourism. We are seeing that there is a lot of imbalances in the funds of states. We know many states are richer than J & K state. The people of the other state and spend their income and their expenditure become the state income. The tourism bridges the gap between the poor states and richer states.

- **Employment**:-We know that unemployment is curse for a developing society. The economic value of tourism is generating employment remains unsurpassed in our state. Tourism is a labour intensive industry and main source of employment in hill regions. It can give employment to the semi-skilled or even to unskilled labour. It is considered a very good measure to remove the evils of unemployment.

- **Demonstration Effect**:- Ddemonstration effect which changes the outlook and standard of living of the people. In simple words demonstration effect means catching up with one neighbour. As tourists are mostly from well do families naturally they will be having a unique style of living so the people especially from the poor state will avail the chance of catching up
all their habits that will give rise to further economic development of the state. It improves the social relation of tourists with other state people. There is no other media than tourism for bringing the family of men together.

CONCLUSION:

Tourism is modern sense developed in the state after world war- II. During the last few decades the state of J &K has been considered as a famous pilgrimage destination of North India. The pilgrim sites of Vaishnodevi attract lakhs of devotees every years. As a consequence of various promotional programme and policies undertaken by the state government and Shri Mata Vaishno Devi shrine board, the pilgrimage tourism in particular has had a phenomenal growth better than any other industry in the state. Tourism as a source of employment in particularly important for the state. It has the potential of generating about half of the total employment generated by tourism in the state. Shrine board provide better facilities to the pilgrims during their pilgrimage. The improved services at the destination provided by Shri Mata Devi shrine board have further increased the expectations of pilgrims. It is contributed a lot in the growth of over all tourism in Jammu and Kashmir and has the impact on the socio-cultural and economic fronts. The pilgrimage tourism has not only generated economic benefits but has also uplifted the social life of the host population. The economic benefits being derived from the pilgrim tourism by the Jammu province in general and J &K state in particular. In short all sections of the population and all the areas of the state getting benefits from this industry. In simple words tourism is one of the major contributor in the economy of J & K State.

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