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## LOCAL PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION ON THE IMPACTS AND IMPORTANCE OF ECOTOURISM IN GULMARG, KASHMIR VALLEY

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### ABSTRACT

*Today, Tourism is one of the key sectors generating revenue and employment. India being rich in heritage, culture and scenic beauties makes it one of the most preferred tourist destinations. Many tourist spots with natural beauty may be found in Kashmir. However, a number of problems/issues have arisen as a result of an influx of tourists and poor management in locations like Dal Lake and Gulmarg. Tourism will be broken down into Eco-tourism & the changes taken place in different states. Kashmir has a number of natural places that have remained untouched, providing ample opportunities for ecotourism. It will also empower local residents who have suffered greatly as a result of political unrest. With its natural richness, Jammu and Kashmir is one of the country's most unspoiled ecotourism destinations. Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Sonmarg, and Kokarnag are some of Jammu and Kashmir's top ecotourism destinations. For individuals who enjoy travelling and relaxing in nature, ecotourism is much more than a term. The purpose of this article is to investigate local people's perceptions of the impacts and importance of ecotourism in the Gulmarg, Kashmir valley in order to better understand tourism's economic impact in J&K.*

**Keywords:** Tourism impacts, Eco-tourism, Tourist, Perception, Kashmir, Gulmarg

## I. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism is described as the management of all resources in such a way that cultural integrity, key ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems are preserved while economic, social, and aesthetic requirements are addressed (World Tourism Organization). Over the last few decades, tourism has grown in popularity. Tourists come in all shapes and sizes, with a variety of budgets and tastes, and resorts and hotels have sprung up to meet their needs. Many sorts of tourism have become more economical as technology, transportation, and infrastructure have improved. This is supported by the fact that international tourism receipts increased by 3.8 percent to US\$1.03 trillion in 2011, up from US\$1.03 trillion in 2010.

Sustainable tourism takes into account ecological and sociocultural carrying capacities, as well as incorporating the local community in tourism development planning. It also entails integrating tourism to align with contemporary economic conditions. When it comes to adopting a sustainable tourism development process, (Murphy, 1985) recommends taking an ecological approach that takes into account both plants and people. A tourism region is a geographical area that has been established for the purpose of tourism. The names usually evoke positive qualities of the location and offer a consistent tourism experience to visitors. Tourism regions are frequently divided into countries, states, provinces, and other administrative divisions. These tourism regions not only attract potential visitors, but they also provide tourists who are unfamiliar with an area with a manageable amount of appealing options. It also aids in environmental management and tourist flow regulation for the long-term management of tourism destinations (Nissar, Kuchay & Bhat, 2013).

Many tourist spots with a lot of natural beauty may be found in Kashmir. However, due to an influx of tourists and poor management at locations such as Dal Lake and Gulmarg, a slew of problems and challenges have surfaced. Kashmir has a number of undeveloped natural areas that offer plenty of opportunities for ecotourism. It will also empower local people who have suffered greatly as a result of political upheaval. Jammu & Kashmir, with its natural richness, is one of the country's most unspoiled ecotourism destinations. Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Sonmarg, and Kokarnag are some of the most popular ecotourism destinations in Jammu & Kashmir. For individuals who enjoy travelling and relaxing in nature, ecotourism is much more than a buzzword. In most cases, resources are being used in an unscientific manner. Unscientific exploitation of natural and human resources exposes the environment and people to a variety of negative consequences such as environmental degradation, floods, droughts, climate change, poverty, hunger and mal-nutrition, political and social tensions around the world. The current study aims to identify key determining aspects that analyse the level of ecotourism potential of the selected area by profiling tourist visits, examining the main purpose of visit, and studying visitor impressions. As a result, it is an excellent time for Kashmir to develop ecotourism, which has the potential to have a huge impact on all aspects of life in the valley.

### A. Objective of the Study

The paper's main goal is to access the local people's perceptions on ecotourism's impacts and value in Gulmarg, Kashmir Valley.

## II. ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Over the last six decades, tourism has grown and diversified to become one of the world's largest and fastest-growing economic industries. Taking into account its larger implications, Travel & Tourism contributed US\$7.6 trillion to the global economy in 2014, accounting for 9.8% of total GDP. In 2014, the industry directly employed 2.1 million people, resulting in a total of 6.1 million new jobs produced by direct, indirect, and induced activities. In 2014, Travel & Tourism grew its total contribution to employment by 2.3 percent, while its total GDP contribution increased by 3.6 percent, rising faster than the entire economy and registering positive growth for the fifth year in a row. In 2014, 277 million people were working in the travel and tourism industry worldwide, accounting for one out of every eleven employment. This is yet another example of how travel and tourism are important drivers of global prosperity and job development (World Travel & Tourism Council). Global tourist receipts reached a new high of \$1159 billion dollars in 2013, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Despite minor setbacks, foreign visitor numbers have continuously climbed from 25 million in 1950 to 278 million in 1980, 528 million in 1995, and 1087 million in 2013, with an estimated 1.8 billion by 2030. (The United Nations World Tourism Organization's long-term tourism forecast for 2030).

In 2013, the number of international tourists arriving in India increased by roughly 4.1 percent over 2012. 68.48 lakh (provisional) visitors visited India between January and December 2013, compared to 65.78 lakh in 2012. Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE) from tourism in US\$ were US\$ 18.133 billion in January-December 2013, up 2.2 percent from US\$ 17.737 billion in January-December 2012, compared to US\$ 17.737 billion in January-December 2011 over the same period in 2012. (Govt. of India, Ministry of Tourism)

Jammu and Kashmir, India's northernmost state, is a popular tourist destination that has drawn visitors for decades. The beautiful climate of Kashmir valley is mainly known as “Paradise on earth” due to its sweet springs, perennial rivers and lush green forests and also very popular destination for tourists, whereas The region of jammu is mainly known as the “Land of temples” due to which large number of pilgrims attracts towards this region. The moon land, Ladakh, has long been a popular tourist destination, particularly among international visitors, and is known for adventure tourism (Nengroo & Bhat, 2015).



## III. ECOTOURISM IN JAMMU & KASHMIR

Although Jammu and Kashmir is famed for its natural beauty, the unorganised tourism sector is posing a danger to its long-term viability. Experts feel that Ecotourism may provide beneficial and desirable effects both economically and environmentally, hence there is an increasing need for its implementation. Ecotourism is still not a priority in J&K, despite the fact that all stakeholders recognise the importance of preserving the state's natural beauty.

Following the lead of Karnataka, Jammu and Kashmir began promoting ecotourism in 2009, with Jungle Lodges & Resorts Ltd (JLRL), a Karnataka government-owned enterprise, preparing a pilot project in this area. The much-discussed promotion of ecotourism in Jammu and Kashmir along the lines of Karnataka and other Indian states has

remained confined to official statements, and the government has neither formulated a comprehensive policy in this regard nor shown any seriousness towards the pilot project sites (Verma, 2017).

Jammu and Kashmir has a lot of potential for ecotourism. Because of the increased demand from both foreign and domestic tourists, the government of Jammu and Kashmir must prioritise the growth of this industry. A few years ago, the Department of Environment presented a proposal to the government of Jammu and Kashmir for the formation of an Eco-Tourism Board with the goal of recommending measures and identifying viable sites for the promotion of eco-tourism in the state. However, no one knows what happened to the proposal that was presented to the General Administration Department (GAD). To yet, neither the government nor other stakeholders have been involved in the creation of an ecotourism development board. Experts must be involved in the development of ecotourism in the state (Bhat, 2015).

According to Mansoor, 2013, we need a better understanding of ecotourism in order to make it successful in J&K. A successful ecotourism programme must combine conservation and business viewpoints, however in order for ecotourism to reach its full potential and provide long-term benefits, protected areas in J&K must develop a planning framework to guide and manage the activity. To enable communities or private tourism operators to promote viable business partnerships, the J&K Management Strategy for Protected Areas must address critical elements of ecotourism management, such as zoning, visitor impact monitoring, visitor site design and management, income generation mechanisms, infrastructure and visitor guidelines, and naturalist guide systems (Mansoor, 2013).

#### **IV. PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION ON THE IMPACTS AND IMPORTANCE OF ECOTOURISM IN GULMARG, KASHMIR VALLEY**

For proper promotion of conservation, Ecotourism is one of the most essential techniques which also help near communities with generation of high revenue. It may, however, cause environmental damage if not carefully planned and managed to objectives socially, economically and ecologically. Furthermore, while tourism is viewed as a helpful approach to long-term development, unplanned or badly planned and conducted tourism can have major negative consequences, cancelling out the benefits it was intended to give (Rome, 1999). Even the potential local benefits of ecotourism can harm a protected area's ecosystem. Increased employment prospects, road improvements, technical help, or health care, for example, can encourage people to migrate into the protected area's vicinity. As a result, understanding the attitudes and views of local citizens toward tourist development, as well as how these impressions are formed, would be useful information for the tourism sector, particularly for regional tourism development projects (Chandralal, 2010).

Jammu & Kashmir offers a wide range of tourism activities and sites for visitors of all interests. The tourist industry is increasingly recognised as playing a vital part in the country's economic development as locations and activities become more diverse (Alejandrino, 1998). The province of Gulmarg is rich in resources and offers a wide range of activities thanks to its historical and cultural features. The natural setting is ideal for sightseeing, beach vacations,

maritime sports, and other excursions. The province is home to a multitude of world-class attractions, including the underground river (Devenadera, 1998). The river's main feature is that it flows directly into the sea, with the lower part of the river being brackish and subject to tidal effect. In addition, the area is an important habitat for biodiversity conservation. It protects forests that are among Asia's most important and comprises a complete mountain to sea ecosystem. The Site's inclusion on the list attests to its outstanding and universal worth, which justifies its protection for the sake of all humanity (Jalani, 2012).

The valley of Kashmir is manly popular as heaven on earth because of it pleasant climate, lakes, beautiful tall mountains and magnificent beauty among tourists worldwide. In recent years, due to rise in the number of tourists globally, the state government has taken several steps to enhance the infrastructure of tourism at popular tourist destinations, but not in a planned and proper manner, and without regard for the negative effects on our biodiversity and ecology. Environmental competence is lacking among the development authorities in charge of these tourism hotspots. They have built hotels, amusement parks, shopping malls, roads, and other structures indiscriminately, wreaking havoc in these areas while showing no concern for the negative ecological and socioeconomic repercussions on this Himalayan region. Ecotourism is defined as responsible travel to natural regions that protects the environment while also improving the well-being of local people. In essence, there are three key tenants to ecotourism. It asserts that, when done properly, it can protect and enrich the environment, respect local customs, and bring practical advantages to host communities, as well as be informative and pleasurable for travellers; yet, in our state, the contrary is true, as we have seen here with Eco-terrorism. We'd travelled to Gulmarg and Apherwat for a field study of flora as part of our research project. We've seen the effects of Gandola construction, particularly on local fauna. Although the first phase of the project had already destroyed the biodiversity up to Kangdoori, the area's typical alpine reaches remained reasonably protected. However, once greed takes hold, the human mind becomes incapable of thinking about anything else. The same thing happened, and construction on the second phase of the Gondola began, resulting in the destruction and fragmentation of these already fragile alpine habitats. The project began without an environmental impact assessment (EIA), which is required before any new construction is built in these areas. As a result, it is easy to see how this effort has had a significant impact on local biodiversity. What was the objective of building this project, which has had severe ecological consequences and is proving costly to Kashmiris? Foreign tourists who expressed environmental concern for this lovely Valley asked us why this environmental threat was established, speculating that it was designed to hunt down local biodiversity and deplete the Valley's endemic and endangered flora and wildlife. They believed that the horseback riding and trekking that they used to enjoy on previous vacations (a few years ago) were environmentally benign, but that this was no longer the case. The similar issue was expressed by a local Apherwat (Gujjar) man. This project, he claimed, had seized his livelihood. Tourists now travel by Gandoola rather than horses from Gulmarg to Apherwat. Due to the huge noise created in 2nd phase of Gondala. He never saw wild fauna like Snow leopards, Wild goats, Jackals, Bears, and so on on the day of the start of Gandoola 2nd phase. A French tourist expressed his concern about the Valley's

tourism industry, saying that if the state's tourism policy is not reviewed, the number of tourists, travellers, and adventurers will decline in the future.

The same detrimental results of the Himalayan topography may be seen from Baltal and Phalgham, the two main paths to the Amarnath cave. The fact that they are tampering with the biodiversity of the Kashmir Himalaya is alarming, as our biodiversity is under threat from biopiracy, global warming, and other things, and it has yet to be documented due to the state government's and Indian government's callous attitude. Environmental restoration of degraded sites should be an important part of thoughtful tourism development. At tourism sites, the new ecolodge concept must be grasped and implemented. An ecolodge is a 575-room low-impact, financially sustainable nature-based accommodation facility that protects sensitive neighbouring areas, offers tourists an interpretive and interactive participatory experience, provides spiritual communion with nature and culture, and is planned, designed, constructed, and operated in an environmentally and socially conscious manner. Now is the time to develop tourism policies based on the new ecotourism policy, appoint environmental experts to all development activities, and establish a Biodiversity Research Centre at Kashmir University so that policies can be developed to grow the tourism industry while preserving biodiversity (Greater Kashmir, 2015).

The Gulmarg was originally known as 'Gurimarg,' and the name was changed at the insistence of 15th century Kashmiri royal Sultan Yusuf Shah Chak, who was enamoured with the region. If historical affirmations were what Gulmarg desired, then the Mughal emperor Jahangir's visits validated the value of the region. Several British officials stationed in India were attracted to the resort, and their families made Gulmarg their summer home. The presence of these vacationers also laid the groundwork for the two pastimes that Gulmarg is best known for today: golf and skiing, both of which began in the early twentieth century. Gulmarg is 46 kilometres from Srinagar, with 34.05°N 74.38°E as its geographical coordinates. The average elevation is 2,690 metres above sea level. Throughout the month, the average temperature varies from a low of -4°C in January to a maximum of 31°C in the month of July (Wall, 1997).

## V. TOURISM POTENTIAL REGION

Gulmarg is a multi-attraction tourist destination with a diverse variety of tourist-related attractions; as a result, it has been separated into the following tourist regions to study the many areas of tourist interest.

### a) Gulmarg Gondola Region

Since the collapse of Venezuela's Mérida cable car in 2008, the Gulmarg Gondola has become the world's second highest and Asia's highest and longest functioning cable car. The gondola has two stages: the first runs from Gulmarg base to Kangdoori basin, and the second runs from Kangdoori to Ararat Mountain. The two-stage ropeway transports around 600 people each hour from Gulmarg's gondola main station to Ararat Summit.

i. Gondola Lift - Kangdoori to Gulmarg One of the primary attractions of the area is the gondola car. The first of two sections of the cable car rises 400 metres vertically from Gulmarg's cable station at 2700 metres to the bowl-shaped Kangdoori at 3100 metres.

ii. Gondola Lift – Afarwat cable car project's second stage connects Kangdoori station at 3100 metres with the heights of Afarwat peak at 3,979 metres. The peak that looms over Gulmarg and attracts serious skiers is Afarwat.

### **b) Golf Course Region**

The Gulmarg Golf Course is the highest golf course in the world. Gulmarg's 18-hole, par 72 golf course is fairly hilly. The golf club was founded by British residents in 1904. Table tennis and billiards are also available. For the duration of your visit, you can purchase a temporary membership. From April to November, the course is open to the public, after which it is blanketed with snow. After the Royal Calcutta Golf Club, this Government Golf Course was the second British-built golf course in India. The resort had two 18-hole courses, the 'Upper Course' and the 'Lower Course,' as well as a 9-hole middle course, by the 1920s (the "Rabbits Course"). However, the only course that has survived is where the Upper Course used to be. Peter Thomson redesigned it in the 1970s. Gulmarg golf course, at 3,730 metres above sea level, is one of the world's highest and most beautiful green golf courses.

### **c) Gulmarg Skiing and snow-boarding Region**

While Gulmarg is an all-season resort with delightful summer meadows and pastoral vistas, the offpiste, deep-powder, long-run skiing and snowboarding is the major reason to visit, at least in the winter. Gulmarg, a Himalayan resort, is one of the newest and most popular ski resorts. Gulmarg receives some of the highest snowfalls in the Himalayas as a result of its geographical location, and it has earned the title of best ski resort in the Himalayas. Skiing was initially introduced to Gulmarg by two British Army officers who founded the first ski club in 1927, but it wasn't until the last 7-8 years that Gulmarg's name began to appear on the hot list of the cognoscenti. Gulmarg has some of the best slopes in the country for beginners and intermediate skiers. Skiing equipment can be rented from the Ski-Shop. Gulmarg's natural slopes and inclines transform into the country's best skiing destination in the winter. Tourists who arrive in the winter do not all come to ski; some simply come to watch the skiing or to spend a vacation in the snow. There are a few slopes that are serviced by ski lifts among the numerous slopes. The majority of the skiing takes place on these slopes, which are designed specifically for beginners and intermediate skiers, with ski routes ranging from 200 metres to 3 kilometres and instructors available for both levels. The operation of the Gulmarg Gondola Cable Car has made it even more convenient for advanced skiers, as they can now access a roughly 3-kilometer ski line via this cable car, which runs from Kangdoori to Afarwat.

#### d) Other Attractions

**i. Khilanmarg** The modest highland dale of Khilanmarg is reached through a six-kilometer walk and a 600-meter elevation from Gulmarg. The grassy knolls and a variety of trees and plants surround the small bridle path, which includes masses of daisies, mulberry, berberis, and walnut, among others.

**ii. Alpathar Lake** The little lake of Alpathar is located about 13 kilometres from Gulmarg, at an altitude of around 3840 metres. This, like many other high-altitude lakes in the western Himalayas, is located in a shallow mountain bowl and is surrounded by sparse vegetation.

**iii. Religious Shrines** In and around Gulmarg, there are four major religious sanctuaries. The grave and shrine 'Ziarat' of the famed Muslim saint Baba Rishi, established in 1480AD, is a few kilometres from this glade. Rani temple, devoted to Lord Shiva, and the historic St. Mary's Church, built by British holidaymakers, are two more prominent religious buildings. The Avantiswami temple, devoted to Lord Vishnu and dating back to the ninth century, is also in Gulmarg's surroundings [10].

## VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research work Secondary data is used. Secondary data collection is a kind of research where there is no need for the researcher to be involved directly or physically with the live experiences. In this research the data is available in different forms such as printed material or electronic versions and contain all the past experiences, experienced by individuals or organizations. Comparatively secondary data collection is much easier and hassle free for the researcher who wants the research to be based on past experiences. The current study will be solely dependent on secondary information. Peer-reviewed journals, magazines, and articles are examples of secondary resources.

There are numerous endless resources through which information can be acquired for secondary data research. The data gathered prior to doing the research must be used by the researcher, and it may have been used for other purposes previously. Novels, books, newspapers, magazines, essays, and journals (both manuals and e-journals) are the most prevalent sources of data for accessing local people's perspectives of ecotourism's affects and value in Gulmarg, Kashmir Valley.

## VII. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism is a key industry in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in general, and in the Valley of Kashmir in particular. During peak seasons, the Valley of Kashmir sees a tremendous influx of tourists, and every corner of Srinagar city is teeming with people. The Golden Triangle of Kashmir, which includes Srinagar, Phalgam, and Gulmarg, has traditionally been closed to tourists. The government has begun identifying and establishing authorities to develop additional undeveloped areas in Kashmir, but the situation on the ground is very different. It is vital to analyse the carrying capacity of tourist sites, particularly new and emerging locations, in order to reduce the negative



consequences of tourism. In light of these considerations, the current research intends to highlight the tourism potential of lesser-known locations in Ganderbal District, which have significant ecotourism potential (Bhat, 2014).

It is reasonable to wonder whether and how tourism can contribute to long-term development. This is not the same as sustainable tourism, which may neglect critical interconnections with other sectors as a single-sector strategy to growth. Tourism must be economically feasible, environmentally conscious, and culturally appropriate if it is to contribute to long-term development. Ecotourism is frequently promoted as a sustainable form of tourism, but terminology confusion obscures fundamental issues, and there are compelling economic, ecological, and cultural reasons to believe that, even in its purest forms, ecotourism will pose significant challenges to destination areas, especially if it competes for scarce resources and displaces existing uses and users. Many forms of ecotourism may not be sustainable, and if ecotourism is to contribute to long-term development, rigorous planning and management will be required (Wall, 1997)

The aim of the (Ababneh, 2019) study is to identify the move from cultural to creative cultural tourism as new model for meeting tourists demand for creative experience. Hence, traditional cultural tourism must reinvent itself as creative tourism for those creative tourists seeking more interactive experiences. This new trend in creative cultural tourism has emerged from the changes in the production of cultural tourists' commodities, the skilled tourist activities, and new consumption patterns. Moreover, creative cultural tourism can solve those problems experienced by traditional cultural tourists.

(Banerjee, 2014) stated that the major issues that are restraining the industry from achieving high economic value are shortage of qualified personnel, shortage of tourism training institutes, shortage of well qualified trainers, working conditions for the employees. Policies which can help the employees to work in supportive environment are also a point of concern. The paper is an attempt to judge the work done by the HRD team of the tourism industry with special reference to Jet Airways India Ltd. This in turn can enhance the capabilities and motivate them to work more efficiently.

(Kumbhar, 2015) Tourism is an integral part of human life. It is a situation where person from one country, or region to other region and country for a short run period, is included in the concept of tourism. Now-a-days the tourism industry has a greater importance. India has a great heritage of historical place like the Taj Mahal, Various Forts, Natural sites etc. Since 2000 tourism industry has been giving number of benefits to India. The number of foreign tourists visited to India which has given foreign exchange earning to the Country. Here, we have focused the growth and performance of the Indian tourism industry. We have also analyzed the causal analysis of the Indian tourism industry for overall development of the Indian economy. National tourism policy 2002 and its implications are important in this context.

(Nissar, Kuchay & Bhat, 2013) the importance of tourism to economic development has been recognized widely due to its contribution to the balance of payments, GDP and employment. Since last few years, Indian tourism industry has been growing at a rapid pace and it has vast potential for generating employment and earning large

amount of foreign exchange. So, it is imperative to study the growth and development of Indian tourism industry. For this purpose, data has been collected from secondary sources such as Bureau of Immigration, Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India and World Travel and Tourism Council. To analyze the collected data, Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) has been calculated. Results showed that tourism is the largest service industry in India, with a contribution of US\$34.008billion to the national GDP and 7.4 percent to the total employment in the year 2011. India witnessed more than 5 million annual foreign tourist arrivals and more than 740 million domestic tourist visits in the year 2011. Moreover, it is suggested that the central and state government should take initiatives to develop tourism in India.

As per (Boora, 2020) Ecotourism implies the opening of natural reserved areas like biosphere reserves, national parks and sanctuaries for tourism. The use of reserved areas by the tourists, the entrepreneurs, the government and the host community, the major agencies or stakeholders in ecotourism, has generated multiple effects – ecological, socio-cultural, economic which are many times unsustainable in nature. Sustainability, here, deserves a serious consideration. Sustainability in terms of the relationship existing between all the stakeholders and postulates that maintenance of a balance in the relationship is essential to attain sustainability. The role of law in the attainment of sustainability is explored in the sense that it helps in restoring the required balance in the relationship among the stakeholders in ecotourism. Ecotourism in India is gradually qualifying for attention of the tourists, the government and the entrepreneurs for obvious reasons. Where India has enough potential in ecotourism to cater to the interests of the tourists, the entrepreneurs and the government but does sustainability find a concern in the agendas of these agencies. Environmental laws which can be one of the most effective tools to implement sustainability, lack adequate provisions to establish coordination among the stakeholders and thus the objective of sustainability in ecotourism remains unattainable.

According to (Karunakaran, 2018), Ecotourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourism industry. It entertains the visitors in a way that does not affect the world's natural and cultural environments. It promotes the preservation of wildlife and natural habitats ensuring for future generations. Aside from tour guides, a range of local businesses benefited from ecotourism. Crafts people, innkeepers and restaurateurs provide services that help tourists discover local features. In fact, education and awareness may be the true benefits of ecotourism and provide the most lasting effect. Ecotourists meeting people who live more closely with nature may learn to live more simply themselves. Meanwhile, locals gain the funds and the ability to pursue more education of their own, giving them a better understanding of world issues like environmentalism.

In the study of (Bindu, 2018) Ecotourism is one of the fastest growing new forms of tourism in India. People are now in search of a quiet life where they can spend their holidays with nature. India is very rich in natural resources due to mountains, deserts, forests; rivers etc. Ecotourism affects the socio-economic and socio-cultural conditions of the local communities. The objectives of the present study are to examine the present scenario of ecotourism in India and to investigate local residents' perception about socio-economic and environmental impacts of ecotourism.

India has huge potential for ecotourism. It is being promoted both by the government and the tour operators. Further, it is found that ecotourism positively affected the employment opportunities, income, infrastructure but the locals consider tourism to be the major cause of culture degradation in India.

(Hameed & Khalid, 2018) stated that Ecotourism is consecrated for preserving and sustaining the diversity of the world's natural and cultural environments. It accommodates and entertains visitors in a way that is minimally intrusive or destructive to the environment and sustains & supports the native cultures in the locations it is operating in. The terms have received much attention in recent years especially within the developing world. As in simple terms it means management of tourism and conservation of nature in a way so as to maintain a fine balance between the requirements of tourism and ecology on the one hand and needs of the local communities for jobs, new skills, income generating employment and a better status for women on the other. Moreover, the geographical diversity of India is its wealth of ecosystem, which are well protected and preserved. These ecosystems have become the major resources for ecotourism in India.

The logo for JETIR (Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research) is a large, light blue watermark in the background. It features a shield-like shape with a central emblem containing a colorful flower or star-like pattern. The word "JETIR" is written in large, bold, capital letters across the top of the shield.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

Ecotourism is a game-changing, multi-tiered activity that appeals to those who are environmentally and socially conscientious. It is a catalyst for change, with the potential to enhance present socioeconomic, political, and ecological conditions. It is a development and conservation philosophy. Many others, however, have abused the principle for their personal gain. As a result, careful application of the ecotourism idea is required. Ecotourism in Kashmir has the potential to be a significant contributor to the overall development of people and the environment, with plenty of room for expansion. For the benefit of Kashmiris' futures and the economic and political empowerment of people, particularly women, who have suffered immensely as a result of the conflict, it is vital to know the approach of sustainable development. The political unrest in Kashmir has had a negative impact on the tourism industry, which needs to be revived in order for the local people to profit and live a better life.

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