

FUTURE OF THE PAST: DEVELOPING JAMMU AND KASHMIR AS A DARK TOURISM DESTINATION

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ABSTRACT: *Dark tourism is a multi-layered mixture of history and heritage, tourism and tragedies. Humanity has been interested in the end of life since the time of pilgrimages. Deaths, disasters and atrocities in touristic form are becoming more and more important stops on the international tourism itinerary. War-related attractions, though diverse, are a subset of the totality of tourist sites associated with death and suffering. The theoretical background of the topic is been presented, and further institutional support for the development of this tourism. The paper aims to assess the scope of "dark tourism" in Jammu and Kashmir and the role it may play in leveraging tourism industry which has largely relied on pilgrimage, adventure and leisure tourism in the past. This research investigates the potential for developing this form of tourism, since Jammu and Kashmir has been undergoing death, suffering, violence, or disaster through political tension and instability since 1948 and arguably for a generation earlier. The study tried to identify and analyse both the existing resources of the region and institutional requirements for potential development of dark tourism in Jammu and Kashmir and considerations for future of dark tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir.*

Key words: *Dark tourism, Death, sustainability, Grief tourism.*

INTRODUCTION

Deaths, disasters and atrocities in touristic form are becoming an increasingly pervasive feature within the contemporary visitor economy. For the individual who wishes to journey and gaze upon real or recreated death, a plethora of sites, attractions and exhibitions are now emerging across the world to cater to the 'darker side of travel' (Sharpley & Stone, 2009a). Indeed, seemingly morbid practices within tourism vary from people gazing upon sites of brutality at former World War One battlefields of northern France, to visitors purchasing souvenirs of atrocity at Ground Zero, to tourists sightsee-

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ing in the ruins of New Orleans (after Hurricane Katrina), or excursionists touring sites of genocide and tragedy such as Auschwitz-Birkenau or the Killing Fields of Cambodia. Jammu and Kashmir has been a bone of contention between India and Pakistan since 1948 and has witnessed three wars. People here have seen a lot of violence as a result of which it becomes a front-runner for dark tourism and in current research paper, various dark tourism sites of Jammu and Kashmir and their role in development of Jammu and Kashmir Tourism has been focused. There are various sites which can be planned and projected as dark tourism destinations. The focus of this research has been particularly on Ahagam, Tangdar, Uri, Kunanposhpora, Lal Chowk and other places which have been a source of attraction for many tourists looking for dark tourism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dark tourism which is also known as 'Thanatourism' was first time used by Foley and Lennon (Richard Sharpley and Philip Stone 2008:574-595) and is indicated as "tourism involving locations associated with death and great suffering" (Dirk C. Gibson 2006:20). Heterogeneity in motivations of tourists comes with their unique fascination towards the sites associated with pain, death and horror. Though ages, human being has always shown this tendency. In the way of dark tourism promotion, ethical points are faced which asks whether it is morally right to provide and promote the sites of dark tourism for general consumption and commercialization. Publicity of some places which are meant for mourning is main issue of ethical dimension. The word dark tourism was coined by Foley & Lennon (1996) in his article of the International Journal of Science of cultural and historical heritage. Indeed death has been an element of tourism longer than any other form of tourism supply, often through religious or pilgrimage purposes". Early examples of dark tourism attractions is the Roman Colosseum where the gladiatorial games took place accompanied with death and suffering. Also, in 1838 was the first guided tour in England, whereby a railway excursion in Cornwall took in the hanging of two convicted murderers. And over the last century, dark tourism has become more widespread and varied. Some researchers assume that the sites or destinations associated with war probably constitute the largest single category of tourist attractions in the world. Stone (2005) states that "dark tourism involves visits to sites, attractions and exhibitions which as the main or one of the main themes have real or animated scenes of death, suffering, or in an appropriate manner displayed massacres". Tarlow (2005, p. 48) identifies dark tourism as "visitations to places where tragedies or historically noteworthy death has occurred and that continue to impact our lives". This focused on tourists' motivation which seems to exclude many dimensions of this type of tourism but it does not mean that it excluded disaster and death (Miles, 2002; Stone, 2006). In Philip R. Stone's article Marcel (2004) investigated whether or not "death makes a holiday" and propagated that "dark tourism is the tourism industry's dirty little secret". Stone (2006) also discussed the explanation given by Blom (2000) who writes that "morbid tourism" is centre of attraction for those who shows their interest in real or artificial death (Stone 2006, 148.). It is also true that tragic incidents happened on sites

of dark tourism effects our lives politically and socially (Tarlow 2005, 48- 49). A number of other studies related to visits to graveyards and cemeteries (Seaton, 2002), Holocaust sites (Cole, 1999; Beech, 2009), places of atrocity (Ashworth and Hartmann, 2005), prisons (Strange and Kempa, 2003; Wilson, 2008), and slavery-heritage attractions (Dann and Seaton, 2001; Rice, 2009) also devoted to this specific type of tourism. Cohen (2011) indicated location aspect by considering geographically authenticity while Biran et al. (2011) discussed the benefits of dark tourism (Jamal and Lelo, 2011) also explored construct of dark tourism in social point of view. Seaton (2009) in his study stressed on the management of dark tourism sites.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The rationale for this research centres upon the act of modern-day travel to sites of real and recreated death and dying. Crucially, however, the justification for this research revolves around consequential aspects of scope of dark tourism, its impact on tourism and role of government within the context of Jammu & Kashmir. Further analysis informs the appropriate strategies to develop and promote dark sites centered on map of Jammu & Kashmir so that their uniqueness is maintained for contemporary and future appreciation and enjoyment. The study is important to today's society because dark sites act as archives for public memory and at the same time provide methods of increasing sustainability. More ever in order to mitigate any physical and cultural impacts that dark tourism might have, it is necessary to devise proper policy initiatives.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

- a) To study the scope of dark tourism destinations in Jammu and Kashmir.
- b) To focus on role of role of government to develop and promote dark tourism in Jammu & Kashmir.
- c) To study the impact of dark tourism on overall tourism of Jammu and Kashmir.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to ensure as reliable results and conclusions as possible, a qualitative study, with elements of primary and secondary research was used. Also, the method of semi structured interviews on an appropriate sample was used for the needs of collecting data in the primary study. The interviews were held with the officials of Department of Tourism in order to find out their point of view about the development of dark tourism sites in Jammu and Kashmir. Furthermore interviews were also held with leading travel agencies in Jammu and Kashmir in order to find their perspective about the scope of developing dark tourism sites in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Extensive discussions were also held with people residing at dark tourism sites to know the background his-

tory and events that have taken place and the public attention that these sites have received after such events. The result of this research was that there is a lot of literature on tourism in general like leisure tourism, adventure tourism, business tourism, pilgrimage tourism and so on but literature on concept of dark tourism development remains limited.

DARK TOURISM DESTINATIONS IN JAMMU & KASHMIR

1. Kunan Poshapura, Kupwara

Kunan poshpura, Kupwara is perhaps the only place in J&K where gross human right violations took place and justice has not yet been delivered to the victims of the incident. Kunan poshpura has been a place of misery and suffering where mass rape of nearly 55 women took place and it certainly has got the potential to be a dark tourism destination. The developmental work will start with identifying the areas and the dark tourists who want to visit Kunan poshpura, Kupwara for its significance. The next step should be to convert this place as model village- a village which is equipped with all the facilities that dark tourist requires like proper accommodation facilities, dining facilities, public conveniences, well built and maintained roads, a community centre which will provide information to the dark tourists with respect to the unfortunate incident. Trained manpower who would look after the needs of the guest and provide them all the necessary information related to the incident.

2. Kargil

Kargil has never been in limelight as far as tourism is concerned, it came into prominence because of the armed conflict between Pakistan sponsored insurgence and Indian Army which resulted in the loss of thousands of lives on the both sides of the border. The conflict brought both Indian Army and Kargil into limelight as it was one of the fiercest wars that has ever been fought in the history given that the Pakistani soldiers were at strategically advantageous positions and Indian Soldiers were at equally disadvantageous positions. Despite heavy odds stacked against them, the Indian army turned victorious flushing out all insurgents and Pakistani Army who had dared to cross the LOC. Kargil war is an embodiment of courage, grit, determination, pain and agony and unparalleled struggle that brought laurels for the nation. Given the above mentioned facts, it is quite obvious that Kargil has got true potential to be promoted as a dark tourism destination. However, there should be strategies in place so as to attract the tourists with flair of visiting dark tourism related destinations in them. A broad marketing program has to be made by Department of Tourism, Jammu and Kashmir along with Indian Army so as to make people traverse those destinations where sons of the soil have laid down their lives so as to defend the nation's integrity, honor and dignity.

3. Ahagam, Pulwama

The village of Ahagam in District Pulwama has witnessed one of the ferocious gun battle between army and militants that rendered a village full of life, lifeless. Therefore it has got all the essential ingredients that a dark tourist looks for. Hence Ahagam certainly is one of the front runners as far as dark tourism destinations of Jammu & Kashmir is concerned.

4. Uri /Tangdar

Uri and Tangdar Tehsils are situated along the Line OF Control (LOC) between India and Pakistan which were badly hit by deadly earthquake struck in the month of October-2005, resulting in heavy human and material loss. While planning and development of these two destinations, long term as well as short term objectives need to be established. This involves determining of socio-economic benefits that will accrue to the state of Jammu and Kashmir in general and the indigenous people in particular who live at these two places. During the planning stage, the representatives of indigenous people must be involved at every stage and their valid suggestions and ideas must be incorporated to avoid any hostility that normally exists between the tourists and host population.

5. Lal Chowk, Srinagar

Lal-Chowk is the commercial hub of Srinagar city and historic as well as symbol of peace and unity, but Lal-Chowk has also witnessed several fierce gun battles that has wrecked havoc on the residents of this area as well as those who had their shops and commercial establishments at Lal-Chowk. Lal-Chowk happens to be prime choice for shoppers who visit Kashmir, but also has got tremendous potential as far as dark tourism is concerned given the fact it (Lal-Chowk) has been amidst political turbulence for decades all together. The need of the hour is to project and promote Lal-Chowk as one of the premier dark tourism destinations because of the tremendous potential of Lal-Chowk as far as dark tourism is concerned.

ACTION PLAN FOR DEVELOPMENT & PROMOTION OF DARK TOURISM DESTINATIONS IN JAMMU & KASHMIR

It is very important that development related to infrastructure be of prime agenda in dark tourism sites and other adjoining areas which are to be promoted as dark tourism destinations. The important infrastructural facilities which need to be set up in this area includes well furnished, luxurious accommodation, food courts, well built and maintained roads, recreation clubs, spas and gymnasiums. The state government has to ensure that these infrastructural developments do not lead to the loss of their ecology, flora and fauna and do not adversely affect the natural beauty. Building of such basic facilities

like accommodation units, communication and health care centres, should be in harmony with the natural surroundings of these two destinations in order to ensure sustainable tourism development.

No matter how beautiful and attractive a destination may be in terms of its pleasant weather, picturesque beauty, lush green forests, beautiful mountains, crystal clear rivers and lakes, if people living outside the state or a country are not well aware of these or they have not even heard of such destination, as a result these destinations will continue to remain isolated and away from tourists. This also holds true for dark tourism destinations. Hence promotion of any destination whether leisure or dark, play a very significant role for the growth and development of tourism. Therefore, extensive use of print and electronic media should be made for creating awareness among the masses about these dark destinations. The state government may arrange free trips of celebrities and famous personalities to these two destinations to draw the attention of the masses as the words of such personalities carry weight among the people interested in visiting these destinations. Advertisements can be carried out through leading national and international media with an aim in mind to create a distinct image and flair for dark tourism in the minds of the dark tourist. Innovative ways of advertising like advertising through social media-putting hyperlink on various internet pages which will direct the users towards the dark tourism related pages. Further sign boards providing the information related to the destination can be put at strategic locations so as to disseminate the information and direct more tourists towards the said dark tourism destination. Further it is of utmost importance that the staff which is engaged with dark tourists is well trained and hospitable so that they leave an indelible impression on the dark tourists. State tourism department in association with other tourism players should participate in travel and tourism fairs, organized at national as well as at international level and make people aware of the dark tourism sites in Jammu and Kashmir so that more and more tourists for dark tourism are attracted towards these tourism destination.

IMPACT OF DARK TOURISM ON JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Tourism happens to be one of the most vibrant industries in the world. The contribution of tourism to India's GDP is around 6.8 percent. Around twenty million people in India are directly or indirectly associated with tourism. As far as Jammu and Kashmir is concerned, it is known world over for its scenic beauty, snow-clad mountains, splendid meadows, gushing streams and not to forget beautiful Dal Lake and tourism happens to be corner stone on which economy of Jammu and Kashmir rests.

The dark tourism sites mentioned in this project have visibly very less influx of tourists visiting these places because they visit other places which are pertinently more famous than these sites. However, once these dark tourism sites are developed and brought on tourism map, it is quite obvious that the kind of misery and poverty that prevails in these areas can be abated and income can be generated by engaging local people of these areas in developmental projects that will be carried out in these places. Thus we see that by increasing influx of dark tourists to these destinations we can certainly improve the

standard of life of these poor and miserable people. Not only this, but infrastructure can be developed and the conservation of certain places which are very important from dark tourism point of view can be carried out. Further the ecological erosion that takes place due increase in number of tourists at ecologically fragile tourist destinations like Gulmarg , pahalgam, Tangmarg can also be reduced by diverting the people to these destinations. Thus dark tourism can also be projected to increase the sustainability of tourism in Jammu and Kashmir.

COMPARISON OF DARK TOURISM VIS A VIS OTHER FORMS OF TOURISM IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Data obtained from the previous findings revealed the dark tourism in Jammu and Kashmir contributes very less to overall tourism of Jammu and Kashmir as has been shown in the Table 01 below. The contribution of dark tourism in Jammu and Kashmir as per the Directorate of statistics and directorate of Tourism, Jammu and Kashmir is 0.562 percent out of 13074336 (Thirteen lac seventy four thousand three hundred thirty six) while as other sectors like pilgrimage, adventure, leisure and others contributed heavily towards the overall tourism of Jammu and Kashmir and maximum tourist arrivals were seen in these sectors of tourism.

Table 1. Tourists Arrivals In Jammu & Kashmir For The Year 2012

S No.	Purpose Of Visit	Percentage
01	Pilgrimage	47%
02	Leisure	38%
03	Adventure	08%
04	Dark	01%
05	Others	06%

Source: Department of tourism Jammu and Kashmir [Dec 2012]

The bar graph below depicts the contribution of various dark tourism sites towards overall Jammu and Kashmir Tourism. It is quite clear from the bar graph that contribution of these sites except for Kargil and Lal-Chowk has been menial and the only way tourist influx to these areas can be increased is by promoting and projecting these sites as popular dark tourism destination by marketing these sites aggressively and effectively as suggested in the research.

Given below is the bar graph showing the current status of various dark tourism destinations and the projected growth in these dark tourism destinations if these sites are developed in amicable manner.

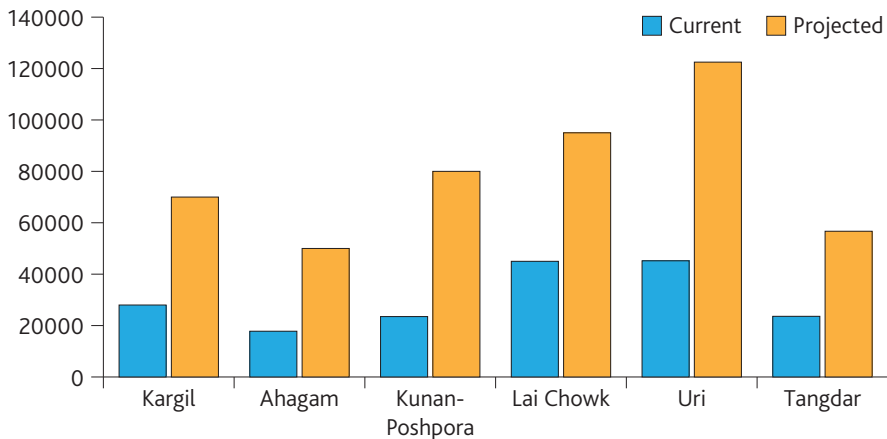


Figure 1. Current and Projected Dark Tourist Arrival in Thousands

Source: Department of tourism Jammu and Kashmir [Dec 2012]

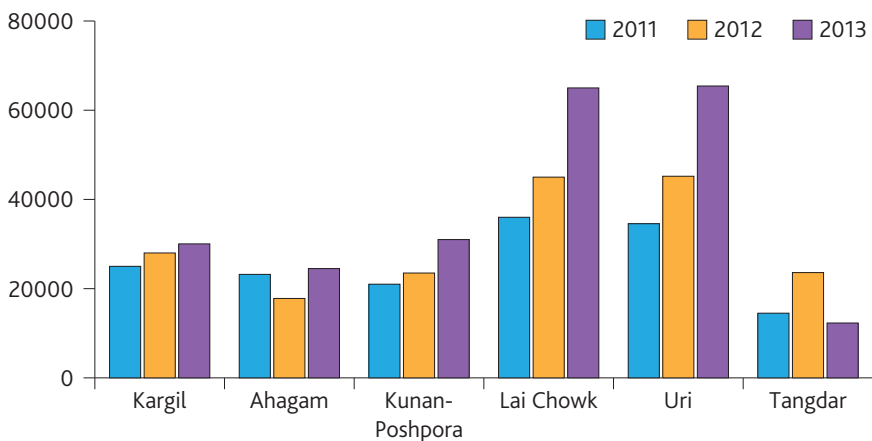


Figure 2. Last Three Year Contribution of Below Mentioned Sites Towards J&K Tourism

SUGGESTIONS

1. The contribution of dark tourism to overall tourism of Jammu and Kashmir is negligible however by promoting and marketing the destinations involved in dark tourism, the contribution of dark tourism to overall tourism of Jammu and Kashmir can be increased significantly.
2. Identification of the dark tourist needs and ability to fulfil those needs in an amicable manner dividing market into different segments and identifying the segment which they will be catering to.

3. The role government in developing these is pivotal given the amount the funds that would be required to develop infrastructure at these places. Public private partnership is the only way that can solve infrastructure related problems at these sites.
4. Being a sensitive and niche form of tourism the promotion and advertising needs to be carried out in a very efficient manner stimulating the demand and at the time not hurting the sentiments of others.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to construct a conceptual framework of the dark tourism and also to see if Jammu and Kashmir has resources for this type of tourism. Unfortunately Jammu & Kashmir did not exploit the dark spot so good until now, though it holds humongous potential as far as dark tourism is concerned. The need of the hour is to tap this untapped potential so that it could contribute heavily towards overall development of Jammu and Kashmir Tourism. The sites which have been mentioned in the project happen to be prime contenders among best dark tourism destination because they have got all essential prerequisites which a dark tourist craves for. The need of the hour is to develop these sites and adopt proper marketing plan in order to woo more and more dark tourists to visit Jammu and Kashmir for dark tourism purpose. Further as has been suggested umpteen times in this research that there is paucity of infrastructure rather basic infrastructure at these sites. So the first step towards development necessarily has to be improvement in the basic infrastructure at these sites. One very important thing which has been reiterated throughout this research has been the fact that there is no strategic planning with respect to these destinations. So the revamp has to be done necessarily with respect to the planning and marketing strategies need to be in place which will not only resurrect the image vis-a-vis dark tourism and persuade more and more tourists to visit Jammu and Kashmir for dark tourism purposes, especially Kunan Poshpura, Ahagam, Uri/Tangdar, Lal chowk and so on so that the congestion that is there on other sites like Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Sonamarg could be diverted and the concept of sustainable tourism made practically applicable with respect to Jammu and Kashmir Tourism.

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