

Dhoks (Meadows) in Jammu and Kashmir: Potential Eco-Tourism Hubs for Development of Tribals



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Abstract

A country of diverse ethnicities and complexities, India stretches from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. And shares its borders with Pakistan in the west, and to the east, it shares borders with Bangladesh, China, and Myanmar. With the majestic Himalayas in the north, the Indo-Gangetic plains follow these gigantic mountain ranges. The Deccan Plateau, the Eastern Ghats and the Western Ghats make up the rest of the country. India contains an unparalleled variety of ethnic groups. There are about 461 tribal communities of India out of which 174 have been identified as sub-groups (ASI). While their number was 67,758,000 according to the 1991 Census and it comprised about 8.01 per cent of the total population of the country, now as per the 2011 Census it is and makes up of the total population of the country. The tribes of India are dispersed widely over geographical territory. The mountain ranges of India that span from North to North-eastern frontier of the country is home to thousands of meadows, more specifically in Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Millions of tribals flock to these meadows, for they provide rich nutritious grass, for their sheep, goats and other livestock. Such tribals have primarily a dairy economy. The pattern of Indian life is set by the rhythm of monsoons. With bright and pleasant winter months, temperatures start to rise after February. It is during this time, that tribals begin to migrate from lower reaches to the cooler mountain ranges. At the end of September, when the winter approaches, these tribals begin to migrate back owing to snowfall and shift to their homes in the plains, which are relatively warmer. The meadows at high altitude hold great tourism potential. This paper attempts to bring out the eco-tourism potential held by Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir, the northern most state of India. This study is primarily focused on suggesting ways and means, to empower economically the tribals of the state specifically Gujjars and Bakarwals.

Keywords: Gujjars and Bakarwals, Tribal Economy, Eco-Tourism, Jammu and Kashmir.

Introduction

India is the seventh largest country in terms of size and ranks second in terms of population. It was in third millennium BC that the first civilization flourished in the Indus Valley. The Harappans were the first settled civilisation in India. Later in 1700 BC, Aryan-speaking tribe began to settle across the length and breadth of India. It was followed by influx of Persians, Greeks, Parthians, Kushans and White Huns. Then there came in Mughals and Europeans. All this influx also brought tribals from Central Asia specifically. And India is also home to indigenous tribes.

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demographical set-up, anthropologists have tried to chalk out a zonal classification or a regional grouping of the tribes of India.

The tribes of India have been classified into three zones by B.S. Guha, on the basis of geographical location. The first being the north and north-eastern zone that spans from Kashmir in the west to Assam in the east. This is followed by the central zone. This zone occupies the older hills and plateaus. It also forms the dividing line between the Peninsular India and the Indo-Gangetic Plains, besides being a converging line of the Western Ghats. The third zone viz southern zone makes up entire Peninsular India.

Similar classification of tribes has also been accorded by D.N. Majumdar and T.N. Madan (1956) in their book *Introduction to Social Anthropology*. According to them, tribes in India are segregated in Northern and North-Eastern Zone, the Central Zone and the Southern Zone. Another zone was added by S.C. Dube, who has included the West zone too along with the already given three zones i.e. the North and North-Eastern Zone, Middle Zone and the South Zone.

These zones further grew in number when L.P. Vidyarthi came forward with a five-fold classification. According to him, tribes in India are found in five zones: the Himalayan region, Middle India, Western India, South India and the Islands. The Himalayan region comprises of North-eastern Himalayan states of Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and also the mountainous region of West Bengal including Darjeeling. Besides it also incorporates Terai areas of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and also Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. Akas, Dafilas, Apatanis, Mishmis, Gujjars and Bakarwals, Khampis, Singphos, Kuskis, Gaddis, Khasis, Garos, Lepchas, Bhotias, Sippis and Tharus are the main tribes that inhabit this region.

This zone is followed by the *Middle India Region* that includes the states of Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. More than half of the total tribal population of the country lives in this region. Juangs, Kharia, Khonds, Bhumijis, Baiga, Muria, Marias, Mundas, Gonds, Santhals and Oraons are the main tribes that live in this region. The states of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa and the Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli make up the western region with Barodias, Bharwads, Bhils, Damors, Dhanwars, Dhodias, Girasias, Gonds, Katkaris, Koknas, Kolis, Minas, Siddi, Warlis. The tribes of Chenchus, Irulas, Paniyans, Kurumbas, Kadars, Todas, Badagas, Kotas inhabit the southern region. The last zone comprises of *The Island Region*. It includes the islands of Andaman and Nicobar in the Bay of Bengal and Lakshadweep in the Arabian Sea. Jarawas, Onges, the Great Andamanese, North Sentinelese are the chief tribes of this region.

This being the geographical basis of classification, then tribes has also been classified on the basis of their subsistence pattern. On the basis, tribals can be food gatherers and hunters. Such

tribes include the Chenchus, Challa, Yanadi, Malaya Pandaram/ Hill Pandaram, Cholanaickan and the Great Andamanese. Then tribes can also be chief horticulturists and pastoralists. The Pastoralists are specialised in herding and those specializing in farming on a regional basis. Bakarwals, Bharwads, Broqpas, Gujjars, Todas are chief pastoralist tribes.

Hill cultivation type tribals are the people who inhabit the hilly areas have adopted shifting cultivation methods. The Adis, Akas, Birjhis, Bondos, Chakmas, Chirus, Gangtes, Hmars, Jamatias, Juangs, Dimasas, Karbis, Mijis, Mishmis, Aos, Konyaks, Phoms, Paites, Riangs, Tangsas, Wanchos of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh are the main hill-cultivation type tribals. Tribals can also be agriculturists, whose chief economic activity is agriculture. Tribal communities practicing agriculture are the Apatanis, Cheros, Deoris, Miris, Hos, Jaintias, Khambas, Kharias, Khasis, Kolams, Tiwas, Rabhas, Kinnauras, Bhumijis, Santhals, Mundas, Oraons, Kharwas, Baigas, Gonds, Bhils, Minas, Warlis and Koyas, in India.

In India, there are a number of tribes in India who subsist on basketry, wood craft, weaving, iron smelting, rope making amid other traditional crafts and cottage industries. The Asurs of Bihar, Goduliya Lohars of Rajasthan, Agarias of Madhya Pradesh are engaged in iron smelting; the Birhors are engaged in rope making; the Garas of Jammu and Kashmir and the Kammarus are blacksmiths. The Katkaris are engaged in catechu making; the Kotas and the Tharus are potters; the Sauntas and the Mahalis are basket makers. In India, Many tribes are traditional singers, dancers, bards, acrobats and snake-charmers, which help them in their economic survival and subsistence. The Nats and Saperas of Uttar Pradesh; the Munduptas and Kelas of Orissa who are acrobats; the Pardhans and the Ojhas who are bards; the Pamulas and the Kalbelias of Rajasthan who are snake charmers; the Dommaras who are acrobats; the Gorait who are drum beaters; the Mons and the Paradhis who are musicians, fall in this category.

The mountain ranges of India that span from North to North-eastern frontier of the country is home to thousands of meadows, more specifically in Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Millions of tribals flock to these meadows, for they provide rich nutritious grass, for their sheep, goats and other livestock. Such tribals have primarily a dairy economy. The pattern of Indian life is set by the rhythm of monsoons. With bright and pleasant winter months, temperatures start to rise after February. It is during this time, that tribals begin to migrate from lower reaches to the cooler mountain ranges. At the end of September, when the winter approaches, these tribals begin to migrate back owing to snowfall and shift to their homes in the plains, which are relatively warmer. The meadows at high altitude hold great tourism potential.

Review of Literature

Kezang Dema in his 'Identifying Potential Ecotourism Sites Among the Hotspots of Livestock

Kills by Major Predator Species in Bhutan' has brought to limelight that farmers living in and around protected areas in Bhutan are prone to huge financial losses owing to crop damage and wildlife-inflicted loss of livestock. His study evaluates that there being no sustainable solution so as to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts. This paper suggests setting up of ecotourism sites in such protected areas, so as to strengthen the locals economically so as to counteract the losses inflicted by wild animals.

B. K Gangte in his study entitled 'Ecotourism: An Opportunity for Conservation and Livelihood' has advocated the involvement of the local community for integral development of tourism in the Bhundyar Valley. Among various suggestions, this study advocates the involvement of local shopkeepers and also with the local people to involve them in the idea of clearing and cleaning the garbage, from the routes. The study has also persuaded the forest department to construct entrance gate to the valley along with a ticket counter that would ensure revenue for the development, numerous resting points all along the way and also restroom facilities. These steps hope to bring in more tourists.

Majumdar (1950), Ralph Linton (1953), Radcliffe Brown (1955), Lewis (1970), etc., defined the tribe in terms of common cultures, geographical identification and small population size and particular socio-political aspects. Majumdar (1963), defined, "Tribe as a social group with territorial affiliation, endogenous, with no specialization of functions, ruled by tribal officers, hereditary or otherwise, united in language or dialect, recognizing social distance with other tribes or castes, without any social obloquies attaching to them, as it does in the caste structure, following tribes traditions, beliefs and customs, illiberal of naturalization of ideas from alien sources, above all conscious of homogeneity of ethnic and territorial integration".

According to Linton (1953), a tribe is a group of bonds occupying a contiguous territory or territories and having a feeling of unity deriving from a numerous similarities in culture, frequent contacts and a certain community interest".

Lewis Oscr (1970) defined "Tribal societies are small in scale, are restricted in a spatial and temporal range of their social, legal and political relations, and possess a morality, a religion

and world-view of corresponding dimensions.

Characteristically too, tribal languages are unwritten, and hence, the extent communication both in time and space is inevitably narrow. At the same time, tribal societies exhibit a remarkable economy of design and have a compactness and self-sufficiency lacking in modern society".

Radcliffe Brown (1955) definition is also slightly similar. "A tribe is a group united by a common name in which the members take a pride by common language, by a common territory, and by a feeling that all who do not share their name are outsiders, enemies in fact".

Nina (2004) in his study presented the state of the indigenous and sacred forests in Taita Hills that

lie in southeast Kenya. He has gone a long way to discuss the possibilities of ecotourism and has suggested that preserving natural-cultural habitats is the need of the hour.

Ecotourism combines conservation of nature along with economic development of locals, by providing another means of income. Eco-tourism promotes small-scaled tourism which go a long way to offer jobs for the locals and also imparts knowledge, besides preserving the old cultural traditions of the communities.

Frida and Matilda (2013) have thrown light on sustainable development, which according to them, is concerned with acknowledging economic, social and environmental development aspects. Emerged as a niche for sustainable tourism practices, ecotourism serves to provide tourism-related services, along with retaining the economic, social and environmental aspects of society. But this study reveals that it is not easy to handle the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Makindi (2016) has conducted a study in the protected areas in Kenya, which face a greater number of development issues, faced with limited resources and few livelihood opportunities. Community-based biodiversity conservation has been avocated, as a potential tool for the promotion of ecotourism, opportunities, which will help sustain economic development and also ensure biodiversity conservation side by side. While studying the Kimana Community Wildlife Sanctuary, this study implored upon the socio-economic profile of locals and also their economic and livelihood activities. There was considerable enthusiasm for biodiversity conservation and ecotourism among the locals, as indicated by this study. Even though they raised concern, they were in support of benefits that are associated with employment opportunities and infrastructural development.

Zelenka and Martina (2016) have studied the application of generalised social responsibility in ecotourism, based on managerial, economic, environmental and socio-cultural aspects. The generalized findings of this study which are based on key ideas for ecotourism are presented by using DPSIR model.

Objectives of the Study

This study will primarily cover following objectives:

1. To bring out meadows of Jammu and Kashmir on tourist map of the country.
2. To analyse the potential of meadows as hub of eco-tourism.
3. To enable the local communities specifically Gujjar and Bakarwals in managing eco-tourism for maximising economic benefits.
4. To develop ways and means to broaden the tourism base.
5. To develop infrastructural facilities for such tourism.
6. To protect cultural integrity of local people and use the same to further ecotourism concepts.

7. To generate self-sufficient and sustainable revenues for preservation of the environment.

Methodology

The present study shall rely heavily on the data from secondary sources like Tourism Department, Tourists survey; data published by the government of the state, articles published in different journals, newspapers, data from published and unpublished sources of different departments of the government etc. The study being more of an analytical nature shall be restricted to the available data on the tourism related developments in the state. Besides, the focus shall be to highlight the ways and means through which eco-tourism in the state can be developed to reduce unemployment and generate more income for the state.

Tribes in India: Problems Faced by Them

The term 'tribe' usually refers to a group of people who speak a common language, have uniform rules of social organization and have other characteristics of having a common name, a well defined territory and a distinct culture. Being the natural abode of numerous tribal communities, India's tribal population mostly lives in forest and hill areas, and some also live adjacent to villages. Poverty inflicts most of the tribal population. Poverty, illiteracy and ignorance are the common characteristics of the tribals (Nadim, 1994).

Since the tribals inhabit the unexplored and virgin lands, creation of these lands as eco-tourism hub, can be seen as a medium of transforming the entire society not just economically but also socially, politically and on an all-round basis. Studies have revealed that tourism, as an industry degrades the tribal people both in economic and cultural terms. Because revenue from the commercial activities at tourist places within the tribal areas are not shared, locals are at loss (Mehta, 1975).

The tribal people are undoubtedly the economically poorest people in India, primarily based on agriculture of the crudest type. The poor and illiterate tribals are exploited by landlords, money-lenders, forest contractors and excise, revenue and police officials. Moreover most are engaged in cultivation and also majority of them are devoid of any land-holding. Very few tribals are involved in occupational activities.

Even as government has ensured affirmative action, by providing reservation for Scheduled Tribes in jobs, still majority of tribals remain unemployed or underemployed. Development of animal husbandry and poultry farming, besides handicrafts, handloom weaving can aid them, as supplementary sources of income. Development of meadows and forest villages occupied by them for tourism, can also aid them financially.

Tribes in Jammu and Kashmir: Gujjars and Bakarwals

Jammu and Kashmir is the northern most state of India located mostly in the Himalayan mountains. It shares borders with the states of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab to the south. It has

geographically been divided into three regions: Jammu, the Kashmir Valley and Ladakh. Srinagar is the summer capital, and Jammu is the winter capital. Jammu and Kashmir is the only state in India with a Muslim-majority population. The Kashmir valley is famous for its beautiful mountainous landscape, and Jammu's numerous shrines attract thousands of Hindu pilgrims every year while Ladakh, is renowned for its remote mountain beauty and Buddhist culture. The total population of the state is 1.25 crore, out of which 68.3% of the state population follows Islam, while 28.4% follow Hinduism and small minorities follow Sikhism 1.9%, Buddhism 0.9% and Christianity 0.3%.

The state of Jammu and Kashmir is home to the Kashmir Valley, Tawi Valley, Chenab Valley, Poonch Valley, Sind Valley and Lidder Valley. The Himalayas divide the Kashmir valley from Ladakh while the Pir Panjal range, separates it from the Great Plains of northern India, by enclosing the valley from the west and the south. When it comes to population groups, the state is also home to the Scheduled tribe Population, in addition to Kashmiris, Dogras and Paharis. According to the Census 2011, the total population of Scheduled Tribes in the state is 11.9% of the total population of the state.

Gujjars and Bakarwals are the one of the twelve tribal communities that has officially been recognized in the Jammu and Kashmir state of India as per different Amendment Acts. The officially recognized Tribal communities in Jammu and Kashmir are Balti, Beda, Boto, Brokpa, Drokpa, Garra, Chnagpa, Mon, Purigpa, Gujjar, Gaddi, Bakarwal and Sippi. However, together form the third largest population group in the state. Of this total percentage, Gujjars are the largest in number followed by Bakarwals in the state. It has long been a tradition among both the Gujjars and Bakarwals to migrate to the highland pastures along with their livestock in the summer and migrate back to the lowlands in winters. This tradition has consistently been maintained by their generations together. It is because of their maintained tradition of seasonal migration that they are known as nomads and their movement is called transhumance. Though both the Gujjars and Bakarwals have continuously been migrating but this tradition has declined more among Gujjars than Bakarwals.

Scope of Eco-tourism in Jammu and Kashmir: District Wise

Nestled in northern –most India, the offers unlimited lofty snow-capped peaks, meandering rivers, perennial springs, alpine meadows and lush green forests, and thus has unlimited eco-tourism potential. But the State's wilderness has remained largely unexplored Meadows in the state of Jammu and Kashmir hold great potential for development of eco-tourism. Vegetated primarily by grass, meadows are vast grasslands, surrounded by confers and other temperate vegetation. There are plenty of meadows in this northern-most state of India:



Source: WRIS-India

Poonch

Poonch district has plenty to offer, when it comes to meadows. It has hundreds of meadows spanning over Surankote and Mandi tehsils. Most famous and easily accessible is the valley of seven lakes called Girjan valley, which also is a halting point to Sukhsar, Neelsar, Bhagsar, Katorasar, Kaldachnisar and Nandansar situated at the high altitude of 12000 ft. Besides Dehra-Gali which separates Poonch from Rajouri, is also a favourite for tourists, owing to its clean climate. Poonch is also home to lush green meadows like Girjan, Panjtari, Isanwali, Nainsukh, Dharawali, Jamiangali, Noorpur, Dharamarg, Pirmarg and Sari-mastan amid hundreds of others.

Rajouri

This district is also surrounded by the snow clad peaks and mountains which are again home to beautiful meadow, which leave travellers awestruck. Being situated at the foothills of Pir Panjal Range, it is home to virgin peaks between 15290 ft. to 16000 ft. like Dhakyar-15290 ft. Kotoria-15000 ft., Budhal Pir-15170 feet., Brahma-15400 ft., Tatakuti-15557 ft. Sun set-15510ft. Kagha Alana and Handoo Peak, Housing more than twelve passes viz Galli Medhan pass, Jamina pass, Noor Pur Galli, Chor Galli, Choti Galli, Pir Galli, Handoo Pass, Ruperi Pass, Budhal Pir Pass and Pir Panjal, the development on tourism front will definitely boost the local tribals economically.

Doda

Located in the Chenab belt, even Doda has much on its plate, for tourists. Home to Seoj Meadow, which is surrounded by magnificent snow-

covered mountains, on all sides. Then there is Jai valley, which lies in the North East of Bhadarwah and even has a stay facility for the tourists. This valley is surrounded with lush green coniferous trees, and tourists often come here for camping and trekkin. Telli Garh is another famous spot, with huge eco-tourism potential. Padri and Sarthal valleys also are no less, in potential for development of eco-tourism hubs. Chinta and Bhalesa also attract thousands of tourists every year.

Kishtwar

Chowgan, surrounded by Chinar and Deodar, is great attraction for tourists. Chingam, located between Sinthan Top and Chatroo, is also a very picturesque and evergreen spot. Then Padder and Sinthan Top, once properly development, can also boost the economy of locals, owing to great scenic beauty. Warwan and Dachhan Valley, Patnitop and Sanasar also have plenty to offer, once developed on tourism lines.

Ramban

Nilpal- Lambe and Thandi-chhah, Zabban and Neel are known-tourist destinations that hold immense potential for eco-tourism. Neel Top, Pogal-Paristan have meadows of Nanimarg, Mayalsar, Yamul top, Sargali, Goglidhar among various others besides Ghora Gali and Dogan Top also hold great and vast meadows, for development of eco tourism hubs.

Suggestions and Conclusion

The following suggestions are devised so as to effectively transform the meadows to eco-tourism hub:

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1. Permanent structures should be constructed. It would go a large way to save forests too.
2. Involvement of tribals in joint forest management, social forestry and agro-forestry too.
3. Promotion of educational development among the tribals through effective implementation of mobile schools.
4. Development of forest Villages, with basic infrastructure required for a decent life.
5. Home-stays by the tribals should be encouraged which would translate into immediate economic benefits to the host families.
6. The local tribes can be employed in construction of trekking-trails and maintaining them.
7. Creation of eco-tourism societies, with district's retired and senior officers, at the helm of affairs, and enthusiastic youth as volunteers.
8. The revenue generated should also be shared with the locals.
9. Rates for services offered by local people would be genuinely fixed by the authority and not arbitrarily, to avoid any fleecing.
10. Involvement of forest staff will also help build with confidence with locals, which otherwise would always be at loggerheads.

These suggestions, when properly implemented would definitely go a long way to generate revenue and hence supplement the income sources of the local tribals, besides building up the economy of the state and also bringing these unexplored meadows on the tourism-map of the country.

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