



HISTORICAL LEGACY OF TOURISM IN KASHMIR VALLEY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO DOGRA PERIOD

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Abstract

This study delves into the historical backdrop of tourism in the Kashmir valley during the Dogra era. Despite Maharaja Gulab Singh establishing Dogra rule in 1846, little attention was given to promoting the tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir until the establishment of the residency in 1885. It wasn't until the last two decades of the nineteenth century that Dogra rulers, in collaboration with British officials, initiated various measures to enhance tourism in Kashmir. This included improvements in communication, transportation, and infrastructure, along with the establishment of facilities to enhance air services for tourists.

Keywords: *Dogra Period, Residence, Tourists, Legacy, Kashmir,*

1. INTRODUCTION

Nestled in the northernmost part of India, Jammu and Kashmir spans from approximately 32°17' to 37°5' North latitude and 72°40' to 80°30' East longitudes, covering a total area of 222,236 square kilometers. However, a significant portion of this territory is occupied by Pakistan and China, totaling 120,849 square kilometers. Administratively, the state is divided into three provinces: Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh, with Kashmir valley holding particular importance for tourism. Surrounded by majestic mountain ranges, including the Pir Panjal and the Great Himalayas, the valley presents a breathtaking panorama of lakes, rivers, and lush greenery framed by snow-capped peaks. At an average elevation of 1,850 meters above sea level, the valley boasts a serene ambiance, contrasting with the towering Pir Panjal range averaging 5,000 meters. This picturesque landscape, often described as an emerald set amidst pearls, is adorned with lakes, streams, verdant meadows, and grandiose mountains, offering a tranquil retreat from the hustle and bustle of urban life.

The modern tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir traces its roots back to 1846 when the Sikh rulers, who governed the region from 1819 to 1846, harboured suspicions toward European visitors. Although the valley has long been frequented by travelers drawn to its myriad shrines, temples, gardens, and historical sites, it was during the Dogra rule that organized tourism began to take shape. Prior to this period, however, the mere presence of travelers did not constitute a thriving tourism industry, as their visits did not significantly contribute to the state's economy. Instead, the state bore the burden of providing food and accommodations to these travelers. Overall, the rich natural and cultural heritage of Kashmir valley, coupled with strategic measures taken during the Dogra era, laid the foundation for the development of a robust tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir.

2. OBJECTIVES

- To explain the Dogras' contribution to the Valley's tourism industry.
- To examine the historical context of Kashmiri tourism during the Dogra era.

3. TRIPS INSIDE THE DOGRA ERA

The year 1846 marked a pivotal moment in the history of Kashmir, as the State of Jammu and Kashmir was established through the Treaty of Amritsar. During the Dogra period, particularly under the reign of Maharaja Gulab Singh and his successors, the region gained prominence as a tourist destination, especially the Valley of Kashmir, attracting visitors from various parts of the world. This newfound attention was largely influenced by the emergence of the British Empire in India, leading to increased travel trade in the valley, with a significant influx of British visitors. The

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Dogra rulers made significant contributions to the development of tourism infrastructure, including the construction of roads, improvement of transportation and communication networks, and expansion of accommodation facilities. Recognizing the strategic importance of connecting the valley with the rest of India, the Dogras prioritized road construction to enhance accessibility and security, particularly in light of perceived Russian threats. Collaborating with the British, a project was initiated to establish a cart road linking the valley to the rail-head at Rawalpindi, which was completed in 1890. This reduced travel time between Rawalpindi and Srinagar to just four days by Tonga.

Additionally, traditional routes such as the Banihal pass were upgraded to cart roads, further facilitating travel and opening up the valley to ordinary tourists. Telecommunication infrastructure, including telegraph and telephone lines, was extended to remote areas like Gilgit and Ladakh, breaking the isolation of the valley and connecting it with the outside world. As the number of visitors to the state grew, the government responded by providing various types of accommodation, ranging from inns and huts to houseboats and hotels, as well as amenities such as waiting rooms equipped with latrines. To address the increasing demand for accommodation, the concept of "paying guest" arrangements was introduced, albeit with regulations requiring permission from the Resident of Kashmir for establishments hosting four or more guests. These measures collectively contributed to the development of a robust tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir during the Dogra period, laying the foundation for its continued growth and prominence as a tourist destination.

Some accommodation establishments were constructed along the riverbank in Harisingh Bagh to cater to the increasing number of European visitors. Recognizing the inadequacy of Maharaja-provided accommodations, camping sites were designated for different demographics, such as bachelors in Chenar Bagh and married couples/single ladies in Sheikh Bagh and Munshi Bagh. Some tourists, enamored by the natural beauty and tranquility, preferred setting up camps in Naseem Bagh on the Dal Lake. Efforts were consistently made to ensure the safety, security, and comfort of European tourists, with initiatives directed at the Maharaja of the state, although attempts by the British Indian Government to acquire land or property in the state by Europeans were unsuccessful. The collaborative efforts of the Dogra Maharajas and the British facilitated the integration of the secluded Kashmir valley with the rest of India. The State's Foreign Department took responsibility for tourist welfare during this period. With the development of motor transport and air travel, tourist numbers increased, leading locals to depend on tourism for their livelihoods.

To accommodate this growth, the state established a Visitor's Bureau (V.B) to provide necessary facilities and promote tourist traffic. This marked the formal recognition of tourism as a commercial endeavor, with tourist statistics maintained systematically for the first time. Kashmir's climate, particularly during the onset of June when temperatures rise in the rest of India, made it a sought-after tourist destination during the Dogra period. Resorts like Gulmarg, Pahalgam, and Sonamarg gained popularity, attracting visitors from distant lands. Houseboats and shikara rides on the Dal, Nigeen, and Jhelum rivers also appealed to foreign tourists. The influx of tourists from various parts of the world, particularly Europe, popularized Kashmir as a vacation destination globally. The number of tourists visiting Kashmir increased significantly, with a notable presence of upper-class tourists who could afford the luxury of travel. This aristocratic trend in tourism persisted until the mid-twentieth century, evolving into a mass tourism industry after Jammu and Kashmir's accession to India in 1947. Foreign tourists played a pivotal role in promoting Kashmir's beauty and charm worldwide, fuelling the growth of tourism in the region.

Table 1: Number of tourist arrivals in the Valley of Kashmir before independence

Year	Domestic Tourists	%age of Domestic Tourists	Foreign Tourists	%age of Foreign Tourists	Total Number of Tourists	%age change over previous year
1935	10457	65.86	5420	34.13	15877	----
1936	18342	83.97	3499	16.02	21841	37.56
1937	19274	77.97	5444	22.02	24718	13.17
1938	18694	77.52	5421	22.47	24115	-2.43
1939	22675	81.55	5128	18.44	27803	15.29
1940	20925	71.43	8367	28.56	29292	05.35
1941	21275	71.87	8327	28.12	29602	01.05
1942	8005	42.87	10666	57.12	18671	-36.92
1943	14525	52.86	12953	47.13	27478	47.10
1944	15101	44.84	18575	55.16	33676	22.55
1945	18407	49.35	18890	50.64	37297	10.75
1946	20606	75.59	6652	24.40	27258	-26.91

Source: - (i) Annual Administrative Report of the Jammu and Kashmir State for the years (1934-1941) (ii) Directorate of Tourism, Govt. of Jammu and Kashmir, 2023.

Looking at Table 1.1, it's evident that the Kashmir Valley saw a significant influx of tourists in 1935, with domestic tourists comprising 65.86% and foreign tourists 34.13%. The following year witnessed a further increase in total tourist numbers, reaching eighteen thousand domestic tourists, although the number of foreign tourists decreased to three thousand due to disturbances in Europe. Despite relatively stable tourist figures in 1937-38, there was a notable increase in the percentage of foreign tourists, rising to 22% from 16% in 1936. Tourist arrivals continued to rise until 1941, peaking at 29,602, with domestic tourists outnumbering foreign tourists. However, the 'Quit India Movement' in 1942 led to a sharp decline in tourist numbers, resulting in a negative growth rate compared to the previous year. Despite this setback, tourist arrivals rebounded from 1943 onwards, reaching 37,297 in 1945, with a significant proportion being foreign tourists. The onset of World War II and financial crises in Europe led to a decline in tourist numbers in 1946, marking a negative growth rate compared to 1945. Notably, the number of foreign tourists saw a sharp decline during this period. In summary, the development of Kashmir's tourism industry was gradual and influenced by collaboration with the British. While the valley had already begun to attract attention in the national and international tourist market before independence, there was a lack of scientific planning in its initial development. The industry's true growth began with Kashmir's accession to India.

3.1 Tourism from Independence up to Nineties (1947-1989)

In 1947, Kashmir saw unrest due to its split from India, but still attracted visitors. In 1948, an armed uprising and the Indo-Pak War caused a drastic drop in tourism. Peace brought a steady rise in visitors from 1951 to 1955, with government initiatives and media coverage helping. However, political tensions in 1957 briefly impacted tourism. The Third Five Year Plan saw investment in tourism, but conflicts in the 1960s led to declines. Stability post-1965 wars led to a surge in tourists from 1966 to 1968, especially international visitors. The Fourth Five Year Plan focused on infrastructure and saw fluctuations due to conflicts. The Fifth Plan aimed for balanced tourism development. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah's return in 1975 spurred growth, peaking in 1981, but political unrest in the 1980s led to declines.

4. Conclusion

The historical legacy of tourism in the Kashmir Valley, with a special focus on the Dogra period, reveals a rich tapestry of cultural, economic, and political influences that have shaped the

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region's tourism landscape. During the Dogra rule, significant infrastructure developments, including the establishment of roadways, guest houses, and the promotion of local handicrafts, laid the foundation for modern tourism in Kashmir. The Dogra period also witnessed the emergence of Kashmir as a favored destination for both domestic and international tourists, drawn by its natural beauty, pleasant climate, and unique cultural heritage. The policies and initiatives undertaken during this time not only enhanced the accessibility and appeal of Kashmir but also integrated tourism into the socio-economic fabric of the region. The legacy of the Dogra period continues to influence contemporary tourism practices and contributes to Kashmir's enduring allure as a premier travel destination.

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