CHAPTER – VI

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS
The present study has been undertaken to make the garland of tourism attraction of Kashmir more colourful and attractive by exploiting the rich treasure of pilgrimage tourism of Kashmir. As the tourism industry is getting more and more diverse by adding new types of attractions for tourists, every tourist destination is making full use of its resources to add more dollars to its tourist receipts by luring and satisfying tourists. Tourist in turn wants to draw maximum value from his money. He wants to visit those places which provide variety of attractions together with satisfactory services. Hence, there is a race among the tourism destinations around the world to provide more and more attractions, build infrastructure and offer best kind of services.

Kashmir, known as the most beautiful piece of land on the face of this earth is characterized as a miniature heaven designed by nature for the earthly people. Its touristic attractions include snow covered peaks, murmuring brooks, beautiful lakes, Mughal gardens, green meadows, cool and calm climate, revered shrines and hot springs. But the touristic movement has remained confined to the golden triangle of Gulmarg, Srinagar and Pahalgam, although there are much more natural, cultural and pilgrimage tourism attractions which are exclusive to Kashmir. It is a Holy land, the ultimate Thule of pilgrimage. “There is not a space even as large as a grain of seasamum without a tirtha”, says Kalhana. Kashmir has imbibed in itself the culture and traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Islam, which have got attracted to this sacred land and found it as an ultimate breeding ground.

It is said that Shri Ram Chanderji was the first king who established a kingdom in Kashmir. Alberuni says that “Banaras and Kashmir are the high schools of Hindu Science”. Kashmir has a very deep relation with this religion, infact; it is one of the ancient places of its existence. Hundreds of Shiv shrines are found in every nook and corner of this paradise. Shrines of other Hindu Gods and Goddesses are worth visit here. Some beliefs and religious ceremonies of Kashmiri Hindus give Hinduism a new spiritual image in this paradise.
With the rule of Buddhist, they found it the best place for the propagation of their religion. Kashmiri Buddhist missionaries carried the religion to distant lands. Kashmir hosted the historical Fourth Buddhist Council and remained the centre of some important discussions, like, the one between Nagsena and King Milinda. The rule of Ashoka and Kaniska saw the creation of some architectural marvels and revered Buddhist religious structures.

The great Sikh Gurus like, Guru Gobind Singh and Guru Hargobind also found a unique call in its environs. They travelled to this sacred land and held religious discussions as well as gave darshan to their followers. The important points of their religious discourses have been converted into fine Gurdwaras.

With the establishment of a Muslim Sultanate in 1339 A.D., Islam established its firm footings here. The spread of Islam towards the later half of the fourteenth century neither affected the independence of the State nor its culture or politics but absorbed the better aspects of each in itself. Sanskrit remained the official language of the State for some time even after the end of Hindu rule. The Islam which flourished on this land was unique in itself. Shrines were built on the graves of the Rishis and Sufis who propagated the teachings of Islam here. Pilgrims visit these graves and pray for their betterment and solution of their daily drudgeries of life. Islam which is a religion of tolerance not only remained here cordial towards other religions, instead it revered the better aspect of each religion. This aspect of Islam made Kashmir unique in itself. Kashmiri culture and traditions are show cases of this multi-religious and multi-cultural identity of Kashmir.

There are numerous and varied kinds of pilgrimage centres spread throughout Kashmir. If one compares between the pilgrimage tourism interests and other tourism attractions of the Valley, one will find very few spots of tourism attractions in this huge ocean of spirituality. But the apathy of the government and the religious organisations in managing and highlighting has made the pilgrims and the pilgrimage tourism suffer to a large extent. Due to the lack of services most of the pilgrims though have a keen desire yet are
avoiding visiting such spots as they cannot endure the attending difficulties involved in the visit. Government’s ennui in sanctioning funds for the pilgrimage development and the lack of management from the religious organisations causes a serious setback to the pilgrimage tourism which remains inadequately highlighted.

The research work is an effort towards exploiting the pilgrimage tourism potential of the Valley and addressing the issues that are hampering its awareness. The study has focused on the working of different religious organisations and evaluated their performance in carrying out the management functions at the pilgrimage spots of the Valley. Spot surveys, interviews and discussions with the pilgrims and the employees at the pilgrimage spots have helped a lot in tracing the real picture of the pilgrimage spots.

Most of the Muslim pilgrimage spots are working under the management of the Board for Jammu and Kashmir Specified Wakf’s and Specified Wakf Properties. The Board came into existence under the chairmanship of Hon’ble Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, by virtue of an Ordinance issued by the Governor, Jammu & Kashmir state, under no.: III of 2003, dated: September, 8th, 2003. Before this date, there were 41 sub-Awqaf’s working under the management of Muslim Awqaf Trust (MAT). With the formation of the board, 93 shrines were put under its management and the rest of the shrines came under the control of different Awqaf committees. Management of those shrines which are controlled by the Board though some how has improved upto certain extent but is not effective. Condition is even worse at the shrines working under the supervision of different Awqaf committees of Kashmir.

Hindu pilgrimage spots of Kashmir are managed by the Dharmarth Trust and some Hindu Trusts. Dharmarth Trust has adopted a step mother’s behaviour in preservation and promotion of Hindu places of Kashmir and hence most of the temples are in ruins. Poor management and lack of transparency in managing the temples is also taking toll of Hindu temples
managed by other Hindu Trusts of the Valley. Sikh pilgrimage spots are controlled by the Sikh Gurdwara Prabhandak Board’s through Sikh Gurdwara Prabhandak Committees created for each district of Kashmir. The pilgrimage spots of Sikhism are an example of neat and cleanly maintenance of shrine and its surroundings. But, their Board and committees have shown lot of unscrupulousness in managing Gurdwara funds and properties, hence are a case of concern.

Buddhism is having its deep relation with Kashmir in terms of its propagation. The religion has vast network of Buddhist pilgrimage centres in Kashmir but the lack of any religious management body for their lookafter, preservation and protection has led these pilgrimage spots to the verge of extinction. Noteworthy to mention here are the name plates that have been fixed by the Central and State Archaeological Departments at some pilgrimage spot to declare them protected monuments. Except this, there is no visible sign or action for the management and protection of those identified Buddhist spots. Tourism Departments of the State and Central government also some times put their blessing in the form of sanctioning some funds for the “Development of Pilgrim Spots” in order to cover all the areas under their definition of sanctioned lists. It can be said that the management shortcoming are making the pilgrimage spots suffer to a greater extent.

Besides spot surveys, interviews and discussions, a survey schedule was also conducted to get the feedback from the pilgrims who visited the pilgrimage spots of Kashmir. Survey was done at 14 pilgrimage spots of different religions located in different corners of Kashmir. The primary data comprising the surveys, interviews and discussion highlighted the fact that Pilgrimage is the most social, environmental and site friendly attraction. Kashmir is second to none in scenic beauty and place of the tourist attractions. Of the numerous attractions, the product of pilgrimage tourism needs to be properly highlighted. For developing any tourism spot, in tourism terminology, there is requirement of four A’s, Accessibility, Accommodation, Attraction and
Amenities. However, the scenario of these essential A's, leaving aside one ‘A’, representing ‘Pilgrimage Attractions’, is very bad so far as developing pilgrimage tourism is concerned. Hence, for exploiting and reaping the rich dividends of this vast treasure, the scholar highlights some core areas that needs to be focused and also gives some suggestions for rectifying the loopholes in different areas linked with the pilgrimage tourism of the Valley.

I - SUGGESTIONS

Suggestions are given with regard to the different issues emerging from the survey based on the questionnaire and the other aspects of deficiency which came to fore during the field visits, discussions and interview with the people and personnel at the different pilgrimage spots around the Valley. Other areas which are directly or indirectly related with the tourism services have also been addressed and suggestions with regard to them have also been given.

The analysis of the questionnaire revealed that the pilgrims visiting the pilgrimage spots of Kashmir belong to different profiles. Therefore, the marketing strategies are to be adopted not according to some specific segment of the society but keeping in view the varied nature of pilgrims visiting Kashmir. Hence, the need is to be more focused and attentive and adopt the wide approach of marketing and publicity.

Though the Valley possess multi-religious pilgrimage attractions, it requires that our approach should be more focussed on secular character of Kashmir and pursued as our Unique Selling Proposition (USP) of Kashmir Pilgrimage Tourism. This approach in addition to attracting the people of different religious beliefs will also attract those segments of society which have more liberal and secular view. This strategic approach will encourage all the people without distinction on any basis to embark upon pilgrimage tourism to Kashmir.
CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

It has also come to fore during site surveys and questionnaire analysis that most of the pilgrims travelling for pilgrimage purpose to Kashmir Valley have group behaviour. This behaviour though is a strong indicator for Kashmir tourism but puts a lot much responsibility on the service provider to cater to their group needs. So, the need is to fully equip the pilgrimage sites with the services suitable to group as well as individual needs.

As the pilgrimage tourism is not restricted to any particular time period so the need is to remain active and alert all the times to welcome those friendly guests. Services have to be made available round the year at the pilgrimage spots.

Keeping the findings of the study in view; suggestions with regard to development of pilgrimage spots as well as improvement in basic and general services by service providers at the pilgrimage spots are given.

6.1 KASHMIR PILGRIMAGE TOURISM REGULATORY BOARD (KPTRB)

Evaluating the evolutionary aspect and potential of the Pilgrimage tourism of Kashmir, it can be said that the Valley is abound in this enormous treasure but the political and management apathy is taking a toll of it. Therefore, large sections of tourists are remaining unaware of it and the Valley is also leaving an important avenue to attract those special tourists who cherish to visit such spots. Hence, the need of a role model is essential to overcome the many bottlenecks which are currently seen in the preservation, protection as well as accountability of the pilgrimage sites. The researcher recommends the creation of the Kashmir Pilgrimage Tourism Regulatory Board (KPTRB) on the pattern of functioning of major industrial undertakings in private sector. The Organisational structure of the Board should be organised in the following manner:
Chairman: Chief Minister of the State
Vice-Chairman: Minister of Tourism, Jammu and Kashmir
Deputy Chairman: Chief Secretary Tourism, Jammu and Kashmir
Member Secretary: Director Tourism, Kashmir
Chief Executive: A person selected by the members of the Board

6.1.1 MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

Chief Executive, Jammu and Kashmir Board for Specified Wakf and Specified Wakf Properties

A representative of Awqaf Committees

Chairman, Shri Amarnath Shrine Board

Chairman, Jammu and Kashmir Dharmarth Trust

A representative of Hindu Religious Trusts

President, Jammu and Kashmir Gurdwara Prabhandak Board

A representative from Buddhist community of Kashmir

Director State Archaeology, Jammu and Kashmir

6.1.2 ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR THE BOARD

As the Board can not perform effectively without the cooperation and participation of different service providers to cater to the needs of pilgrims, so the Board will be assisted by an Advisory committee which should comprise of two to three members of Kashmir Transporters Union, two to three members of Taxi unions of Kashmir region, one member of Hotel Association of Kashmir, one member of House Boat Owners Association, one member from Kashmir Bar Council, one member of Kashmir Medical Association, and Director, Doordarshan Srinagar.
Two nominations may be made by the Chief Minister of persons who are reputed travel writers working outside the State but are State subjects of Kashmir. The Chief Minister may add more members but the Advisory Committee should remain manageable and not exceed 13 members.

In order to reduce the administrative bottlenecks, the Board should function as an on-the-spot-decision-making organization instead of 'running files'. The Chief Executive of the Board will prepare the agenda of the meetings of the Board and give presentation on the items of the agenda before the assembled members of the Board. The members in turn shall take decisions in the meeting of the Board which should be implemented. The Board shall be reported back on the progress or delays, and all such matters shall be decided in the meetings of the Board. It is further recommend that the KPTRB be financially sustained by the public and private sectors on a cost-sharing basis. There shall be a budget for this Board and the expenditure will be shared and borne by the State Government and the private sector in the ratio of 51:49. Views and suggestions from every member of the board shall be taken into consideration and should form basis for all the decisions taken by the Board. The Chief Executive of the Board should be vested with more powers and shall play a key role in taking final decisions.

The KPTRB, in addition to the well known functions, shall perform the following activities:

- All the service providers from hawkers to hotels running near pilgrimage centres should be registered under it.
- There should be a monitoring team of the Board who should check the sales items and their rates sold by the service providers at pilgrimage centres.
- To receive and disburse funds from the Government of India and other funding agencies for implementation of approved projects related to
direct or indirect development and sustenance of the infrastructure at the pilgrimage tourism spots of Kashmir.

➢ Advise the State government on the exemption or levy of taxes and cess to the service providers of pilgrimage tourism.

➢ Provide assistance to organizations both public and private, which should carry pilgrims from all parts of the country to destinations in Kashmir.

➢ To identify projects for development of pilgrimage tourism for the private sector and guide them in their fulfilment.

➢ To formulate the policy on management of the pilgrimage tourism and review the policy from time to time.

Last but not the least, State Institute of Public Administration can be consulted to make the rules and regulations regarding working of such an organisation and present a scheme of an alternate autonomous body which should function better than different religious organisations managing the pilgrimage tourism sites of Kashmir.

6.2 ALTERNATIVE ROADS TO KASHMIR

There is an urgent need to build an alternative road route to the existing Jammu-Srinagar National Highway. The closure of this single road due to land sliding and snow fall closes the only door to Kashmir for the tourists coming from other parts of the country. Alternative to this road is Mughal road which is accessible round the year. Although much has been said about the funding of Mughal Road by the Central and State government but the road has not seen the light of day till today. This project needs to be given high priority of development for its earliest completion. Funds should be sanctioned by the State and Central government without any delay. There is another road that can also be developed to open alternative doors to Kashmir. The road is from Batote via, Doda, Dacksum and Anantnag. The road at Simthan Pass on this
alternative road remains snow bound for at least one month each year. A fresh survey should be initiated to make this road an all-weather road and construct a tunnel at Simthan Pass which can be an alternative to the uncertain Jammu-Srinagar National Highway connecting the Valley to different parts of Country.

6.3 DEVELOPMENT OF ROADS

First and foremost duty is to develop roads which are in bad condition. The roads developed should be brought to standards including re-alignment of local curves, standardising the width of the road, provide shoulder protection on road edges, create central verge, etc. Repair material should be located at convenient distance for issue to the repair gangs. In addition to repairing the roads, various local roads upto the pilgrimage spots also needs to be constructed so as to provide easy accessibility to such spots located in the rural areas.

6.4 PROCURING PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Accessibility is one of the building blocks for making the pilgrimage product popular and attractive to tourists. The condition of the transport service to the pilgrimage spots of Kashmir is a case of serious concern. In order to reap a good dividend of pilgrimage tourism, there is a need of revival of transport services as well as providing an alternative to the existing transport service at some places. The researcher recommends using environment friendly Chariot or traditional Tonga service of Kashmir for the city pilgrimage centres, like, Dastegir Sahib Shrine, Makhdoom Sahib Shrine, Gurdwara Chatti Padshi, Hazratbal Shrine, and other pilgrimage spots within the city. The Chariot service can be like the one used in many tourist spots of western countries, like, Switzerland, Britain, etc. Traditional Tongas, if used for this service, should be renovated and given Kashmiri architectural touch so as to showcase it as a representative of Kashmir art form. The drivers of the chariot or Tonga shall be
dressed in traditional Kashmiri dress. This traditional uniform must be a
binding for running Chariot or Tonga service.

Using Chariot or Tonga service in addition to reducing the transport
congestion and pollution will also provide an avenue for heritage walk in the
city. Hence this would offer an opportunity to highlight the other tourism
attractions of the historic city. Rather State government should change the
means of transport to Chariot or Tonga transport for tourists within the city and
mark some roads particularly for this kind of transport service as “Heritage
Tracks”. Some easily accessible and convenient spots should be earmarked for
making Chariot and Tonga stands. Guide service should also be made available
at Chariot and Tonga stands. Directorate of Tourism, Srinagar should register
these Chariot and Tonga service providers and fix rates for different routes.
Offenders of the service can be booked under the Tourist Trade Act by the
tourism department after inclusion of necessary rules for governing this
service. Chariot or Tonga transport will be an eco-approach towards
sustainable tourism. Such environment friendly service can also be used at
other pilgrimage spots of Kashmir as well as at other tourist spots of the Valley
after evaluating the feasibility of using such a service at these spots.

At other spots in the Valley where the above mentioned service is not
feasible, revival in transport service for tourists is an utmost case of concern.
The researcher feels that there is an acute necessity of official intervention to
create superior transport facilities connecting the various pilgrimage/tourist
centres in Kashmir division. This superior facility should conform to
international standards which shall include, providing air conditioned and dust
free bus service with reclining seats having heavy cushions, large windows
with manually operated screens, store for drinking water, snacks, separating
partition between the driver’s cabin and the seating area, separate seat for guide
with a mini public address system, night light facility, adequate luggage store
space and wireless set installed on on-line communication with control rooms.
For this superior transport facility, efforts should be made to use clean transport, like, CNG System, Battery Operated Vehicles, etc.

The researcher has particularly identified the need to develop the tariff for the means of transport used by tourists/pilgrims. The tariff should be enforceable in periods of six months in the financial year and should be of two types, namely, calculated by digital meters for travel and secondly by a minimum block of time operations plus additional kilometres run.

There is a strong requirement to sensitise drivers, conductors, assistant drivers of all public transport on aspects of courtesy, knowledge about the local tourist spots, essential first aid intervention, mechanical repairs and on importance of showcasing traditional Kashmiri hospitality.

6.5 DEVELOPING WATER TRANSPORT

Kashmir is rich in various kinds of water resources. Shikaras and houseboats are the trade marks of Kashmir tourism which are linked with water transport. Besides our water is sacred which makes this resource even more special. It can not only be used as a means of transport but also as a means to showcase and project our rich cultural and natural beauty. A survey was undertaken about three decades ago to evaluate if river Jhelum could be utilized for transportation of goods as an alternate means of transport to reach various isolated population pockets. The survey had given promising indicators and suggested waterways from Anantnag downstream on Jhelum upto Wuler Lake. The survey highlighted that Inland Water Transport System (IWTS) could be made available along the 170-km stretch of the Jhelum from Khanabal (Anantnag district) in South Kashmir to Khadanyar (Baramulla district) in North Kashmir. Hence, transporting tourists through water transport will be an environment friendly approach of Kashmir tourism which can prove to be USP of Kashmir tourism.
CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The Valley of Kashmir needs to have separate plan to clean up the rivers and the streams that flow into the main river systems. The researcher feels this is a matter of high importance and should be referred to identified set of experts to create Jhelum Action Plan on the pattern of Ganga Action Plan or Yamuna Action Plan.

6.6 ACCESSIBILITY THROUGH AERIAL ROPEWAYS

Some Pilgrimage spots can be made more accessible and pilgrim friendly by connecting them with aerial ropeways. These ropeways will be an added attraction for the pilgrims and tourists to visit these spots. Ropeways can be planned on those pilgrimage spots which are difficult to reach or are located on high mountains were the pilgrim has to cross a mountain of stairs to arrive at such spots or do arduous tracking. Ropeways can be more suitable at pilgrimage spots like, Shankaracharya, Hariparbat Fort, Zainudin Wali, Amarnath Cave, etc,. A foolproof survey is needed to check the feasibility of ropeways at these spots and other such spots and then creating the facility, keeping the environment and social aspects in consideration.

6.7 ACCOMMODATING PILGRIMS

Kashmir is all but short of rooms when it comes to accommodating tourists who are here for the purpose of picnic or pilgrimage. Particularly during the months of summer and some festive occasions, much difficulty is faced in accommodating tourists when there is an increase in tourist arrivals. As it is not possible to build the accommodation infrastructure over nights particularly in a region like Kashmir, so an alternative to this big problem has to be found. Moreover, the pilgrim is a less demanding tourist and likes to live close to the societies living nearby the shrines.

The appropriate suggestion which can be made is that the Directorate of Tourism, Kashmir should identify service providers near pilgrimage spots, get
the house holders registered who would be owners of one, two or even three
bed rooms and convert them into ‘living modules’. These bed rooms should be
of minimum size 4.25 meters by 3.50 meters. Each module will have a set of
crockery for the service of lunch/dinner. It shall have a study table and chair
with separate light, one telephone connection, one clothe iron, clean cotton
line, small amount of toiletry, special toiletry for women, solar power
emergency light (where there is no power, or power is disrupted). The rooms
should be providing sun light and warmth. There should be adequate room
heating facilities.

The State Department of Tourism should provide the first set of
standardise crockery, room furniture and cooking utensils depending on the
total offered bed capacity. The State Government should bear the first 50
percent cost of developing the module in which a further 25 percent investment
will be of the household in cash and the residual 25 percent of the cost will be
under taken by a bank loan, given to the householder directly.

Subsequent repairs of the module will be undertaken by the householder
earlier or within cycles of three years. Officers of the Department of Tourism
will inspect the premise atleast once a year and within the first four months of
the calendar year, and advise on the maintenance repairs. A register shall be
kept in the module area in which the visitor would be free to record his
impressions of stay as well as provide suggestions. Each house holder shall
also keep literature essential for tourists which shall be copies of the approved
rate lists for room and food, essential phone no.'s of the Department of
Tourism and emergency services, copies of schedules of local transport
services, air flights, and train services from the terminals. One member in the
family shall also be knowledgeable as guide, and if he works as a guide, his
rates of services should also be made known.

The Department of Tourism shall maintain computerised registers in all
their centres and reception counters, which will contain the list of such
registered persons providing such accommodation facility.
Such kind of accommodation will not only satisfy the accommodation requirement of pilgrims and tourists but will also bridge the gap between guest and hosts. It will be much more than sufficient for pilgrims as well as fulfill the requirements of different segments of tourists. Guests can have the access to know about the culture and lifestyle of hosts who in turn will be benefited in terms of infrastructure and employment. This in turn will create good mouth publicity and hence will build a strong image of the destination. It is also recommended that the accommodation infrastructure should be renovated to give it a more traditional look by showcasing and using Kashmiri art, architecture, and handicrafts at these tourist accommodating centres. Besides training service providers to give a service touch to our services at different places is a necessity in today's more demanding scenario.

6.8 FOOD AND CATERING

Businesses that cater to the eating and drinking needs of visitors is to be promoted at the pilgrimage spots of Kashmir. Tourism department should give special incentives to the unemployed persons for running such shops. Kashmiri cuisine should be promoted through these eating points at pilgrimage spots. Monitoring can be done by the KPTRB to check the quality and hygiene of these eating spots. Every shop should keep a rate menu which should be checked and stamped by the Board. Besides JK TDC should also start pilgrim cafeterias at the pilgrimage spots of Kashmir so as to provide an alternative and variety to the pilgrims of different tastes.

6.9 BUILDING PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

The domestic and foreign pilgrims visiting Kashmir have one more common complaint about the sanitary conditions of public places. Municipal responsibility is seen in great carelessness both in the streets and lanes of all urban areas and the same situation is found at pilgrimage tourist spots visited.
When any person, pilgrim or a tourist visits this Heaven on Earth, he has to wonder here and there for tracing out the toilets, drinking water points, resting chairs, etc, and the end result is that he hardly finds any one of them. The lack of these essential services gives the visiting guests first bad impression about the services at the pilgrimage spots around the Valley as well as at most of the tourist spots. Way side amenities are totally absent in the entire State. There is not a single urinal/toilet marked for female tourists, as if women do not have the need to use them. As the pilgrim is the most demanding tourist for toilets and bathrooms as he needs to purify himself before visiting any pilgrimage spot so making available these facilities is an utmost duty of the management. Creating the facility is an easy task but maintaining it is even more important than creating. Hence due care should be taken to keep these toilets and bathrooms at pilgrimage spots neat and clean.

Besides the lack of toilet facilities, there is no declared drinking water facility available on the highways, with the result that all must carry plastic drinking water bottles during their travels. This has led to plastic pollution in all places of tourist interest. Constructing water points in a region like Kashmir which is full of water reservoirs and where the water doesn’t need refining should not be a big task. But the political apathy and lack of planning is making all negativities overtake the positive potential of tourism. Drinking water points should be created at all the pilgrims spots on the pattern of traditional architectural designs. One more aspect that has to be taken care of is that the facility once created is left to the mercy of God. No renovation or cleaning is done at these places. This also gives a bad impression to the guest.

Usual way side facilities are also a case of concern. The availability of wayside facilities should be known as a signage on the State and National Highways. A system of maintenance of wayside units catering to replenishment of furnished stock of basic necessities and commonables may be evolved and given to unemployed persons to run. There should be State wide use of traffic
signals using solar power. Maintenance should be given on contract to agencies, which are capable of doing so.

6.10 SHOPPING AT SHRINES

Pilgrimage centres can prove to be ideal centres for selling the handicrafts and other unique items of Kashmir. Researcher suggests the setting up of Kashmiri Art and Handicraft Market (KAHM) at every pilgrimage spot so as to promote pilgrimage on one hand and market the unique master pieces of Kashmir art on the other. These markets should be set up by the KPTRB around the pilgrimage spots of Kashmir. Every sort of artistic work, like, paper machie, namda work, gabba work, Kashmiri carpets, Suzan work, Kashmiri Shawls, etc, done in Kashmir and the cultural master pieces of Kashmir, like, Pheran, Kangri, Kashmiri dresses, etc, should be available at these spots. Creating such kind of markets around pilgrimage centres will provide employment to large section of unemployed youth and will also create a host friendly behaviour towards such type of tourism. Taking such a measure will create a unique image of Kashmir pilgrimage tourism around the globe.

6.11 SECURITY FOR PILGRIMS

There is an urgent need to provide pilgrim friendly security at all the pilgrimage spots. The security personnel should have tourism specific training. Besides courtesy, tackling the illegal activities they should know politeness and manner to interact and inform pilgrims at the pilgrimage spots. They should be dressed in different kind of uniforms other than the traditional Khakee worn by the State police personnel, in order to give a different look and sense to pilgrim security. These pilgrim security personnel should be given special training and responsibility for creating cordial atmosphere, maintaining peace, guiding pilgrims, helping the needy, and above all meeting and greeting the pilgrims, to make them fit for this special service security. As there are hundreds of
pilgrims spots which are in need of such security personnel, a battalion of pilgrim security should be raised which should be controlled by an enforcement officer of the rank of SSP from police department but will work as an officer of the board, on the pattern of enforcement officer in Tourism Department. Due care has to be taken that security is not in excess at any spot or they have built permanent establishments in the shrine premises so as not to create any suspicion in the eye of the pilgrims.

6.12 MEANS OF INFORMATION

Pilgrimage spots are the cool and calm places so there should be proper use of sign boards at different places in and around the pilgrimage spot. This helps avoid the mess created by the unnecessary enquiries of pilgrims. Sign boards should be legible, written with prominent colours. Different sign boards should not be placed at one spot to create confusion. Instead they should be conveniently placed at appropriate places. Signboards should be such that they will inform as well as attract tourist towards them. This means that they should be created artistically, well designed and well maintained. Sign boards made of wood should be preferred.

6.13 EDUCATING PILGRIMS

Pilgrimage spot is a place where there is no restriction on the entry of any person. But the pilgrims visiting them have to take care of the holy nature of the place so as to maintain its spiritual sanctity. A better way to manage the flow of pilgrims at the pilgrimage spots could be to educate pilgrims, providing them with codes of conduct/ethics that should be displayed prominently in various languages on billboards and through internationally understood signage. Information and awareness about the pilgrimage spot can also be given by selling brochures and booklets, hiring out guiding services, and
renting out earphones and records that allow tourists to walk themselves through religiously important heritage locations.

6.14 EDUCATING HOSTS

Although Kashmir economy to a much extent is dependent on the tourism but the hosts are thinking in the short term gains and are exploiting tourists. This behaviour in long term affects the tourism industry of the State. Awareness campaigns should be started to educate people about the maximum returns and long term gains from this smokeless industry. On the spot training camps for service providers should be started to inform them how to greet and treat the pilgrims. People around the pilgrimage spots should be encouraged to adopt and inculcate the Kashmiri culture and traditions so as to create an environment of Kashmiri hospitality. Infact, the Kashmiri hospitality is world over known for its meeting and greeting behaviour.

6.15 PILGRIM TAX

Most religious site managers adore the idea of charging admission fees to visit God's abode or the places associated with the lives of deity. It is recommended that a pilgrim tax be levied on all persons who are visiting different pilgrimage centres of Kashmir. Tax should be nominal so that pilgrims of different segments can manage it. Money realized from such pilgrim tax should be used in improving the micro economics of the villages neighbouring these sites, part of the money should be earmarked for the maintenance of public services which aid the pilgrims to feel more comfortable. Major part of this tax should be used for keeping the environs of the site neat and clean.
6.16 DEVELOPING LITERATURE ON PILGRIMAGE TOURISM

Although promotional materials of Jammu and Kashmir Tourism department is available in abundance highlighting the scenic beauty as well as the manufactured products of Kashmir, but there is total absence of booklet or pamphlet on highlighting the pilgrimage interests of the Valley. There is a great need felt to develop literature related to disseminate information widely about the significance of the pilgrimage sites located in the Kashmir so as to highlight sacred and secular importance of these spots. This study finds necessity to stress need for preparing material required for making booklets and brochures highlighting the varied interests of pilgrimage tourism of Kashmir.

6.17 COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Religious organizations and their associated shrines or holy places and the surrounding communities can not operate in seclusion from each other. Communities around the pilgrimage spots will get benefits generated by pilgrimage tourism, and religious organizations will need the support of the community. Promoting pilgrimage tourism will open the gates for the prosperity of the community. It will generate different employment avenues in different sectors of economy, like, transport, accommodation, food and catering, guiding services, etc. Handicraft and handloom artisans will find avenues for their business and hence will lead to the promotion of these sectors which in turn will open the further avenues of employment for the poor and needy sections of the society attached with these industries. It will lead to the development of the villages and the spot environs with the creation of infrastructural facilities. Level of standard of living of people will rise. Cultural exchange will breed goodwill among the guest and hosts and hence the ties of brotherhood will get stronger. As the people from different sections and different areas within and outside the country will visit these pilgrimage spots, it will create a sense of national integration and spread the message of universal brotherhood. It would be pertinent to point out here that only a fraction of the
economic importance of pilgrimage tourism is directly associated with the pilgrimage. Infact, the staple part of the pilgrimage tourism has bearing on the economic well-being of the people surrounding the site. The majority of economic benefits arising from pilgrimage tourism occur to the community living in the area in which the sacred place is located.

6.18 PROMOTING PILGRIMAGE TOURISM

Kashmir though possesses enough tourism attractions to satisfy the taste of any tourist but is lacking in its marketing and publicity initiatives. An aggressive campaign needs to be organised worldwide. Kashmir World Tourism Bureaus should be encouraged to organise local publicity. They should be supplied pilgrimage tourism promotion kits consisting of TV advertisements video material, newspaper advertisement kits, pamphlets and posters for displays in schools and local commercial events. Links should be created on internet with different tourism related websites so as to aggressively market pilgrimage tourism of Kashmir. Periodically from a central source preferably a reputed advertising company based in India, travel advisories should be issued to counter any negative image generated by local governments against persons visiting India. Personalities from entertainment and sports field should be used in marketing and publicity campaigns to encourage and motivate tourists for safe and secure travel to the Secular City.

Tourism professionals from different service sectors of the industry should be invited by the tourism department for conducting orientation courses of some selected travel agents so that they are competent to inform tourists about Pilgrimage interests of Kashmir in an easy and convenient manner. Moreover, each year the State Government should invite in turn from various identified countries, travel agents and tour operators to visit Kashmir pilgrimage sites at State expense to familiarize them with the available facilities and impress upon their clients to visit these sacred sites. Some IATA registered agencies headquartered in India should be appointed as authorized
travel agents to book groups or individual tourists to visit the Kashmir Pilgrimage spots.

**6.19 HIGHLIGHTING MULTI-RELIGIOUS CHARACTER**

Kashmir is the main hub for all the great religions of the world and this fact is known to a lesser cross section of society. All the great religious personalities or founders of religions, like, Sikhism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam have either visited this sacred land or have chosen it as their final resting place. This revered land has remained the land of spirituality from the very earlier times. The Buddhist pilgrimage character of Kashmir has remained hidden. This needs to be brought to limelight. Buddhist religious structures need to be marketed to the Buddhism followers around the world. Sikhism also has a deep relation with this part of land as Guru Gobind Singh and Guru Hargobind Singh have visited and propagated their religion here. Hence, Sikhism also needs to be projected as main attraction for the believers of this religion. Hinduism and Kashmir have a deep and ancient relationship. This needs to be projected and the Hindu religious places be marketed aggressively. Islam which is a predominant religion here has a deep relation with spirituality and this too needs to be highlighted as very few people are aware about it. Spirituality and Kashmiri Sufism are synonymous and hence projecting such things will put Kashmir in the travel itineraries of the tourists around the world.

**6.20 ORGANISING PILGRIM CHARTERS**

KPTRB in collaboration with Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department should organise pilgrim charters to inform and make aware the international and national tourists about the unique pilgrimage potential of Kashmir tourism. This can be done with the help of National Air Carriers as well as some international ones. Organising charters is an easy affair but handling the coming guests and satisfying them is a difficult task. So the primary
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requirement is to create all sorts of infrastructure facilities, arrange service providers and then organise such charters. Implementation of the suggestions given in the study with regard to building transport, accommodation and other services and infrastructure can solve the problems to a great extent. Once the International awareness about the destination is built there is no further need of investment in terms of marketing and publicity. Only the services and the infrastructure has to be kept updated.

6.21 ESTABLISHING TOURISM RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Kashmir has unique treasures of tourism which no other tourist destination on this earth possesses. Besides, it provides the employment avenues for a large section of Kashmiri population. There is an urgent need of establishing a research institute on tourism in this Tourism State. The institute should be developed under the supervision of Central Ministry of Tourism of India. Besides, tourism professionals and premier tourism institutes of the country should be consulted for the necessary guidance and technical assistance in its establishment. This Research Institute of Tourism will revive the tourism industry of the Valley. It will explore the new areas for new types of tourism as the Valley is not short of such resources. Environmental impact and assessment of various tourism interests of the Valley can be done by the institute, and then environmental friendly measures can be taken. The institute will produce the human resource required for the various spheres of this sensitive service sector. Workshops for the tourism service providers can be done by the institute to build new skills among them and encourage the private players for starting new ventures related to tourism. Awareness camps may be conducted by the visiting research scholars of this institute in different tourist spots to inform and make aware the local population about the long term benefits from tourism as well as to teach them how to meet and greet guests. The institute can help provide research on finding ways and means of more community involvement in different spheres of Kashmir tourism. The institute can help provide a better
input for framing the policies and plans of the government regarding tourism. It can also suggest means for better marketing and publicity of pilgrimage tourism and its related events.

6.22 CREATING PILGRIMAGE TOURISM CIRCUITS

Pilgrimage tourism interests of the Valley are varied. Pilgrimage Tourism Circuits of different religions can be created to attract pilgrims from various religious backgrounds. There can be different Pilgrimage Tourism Circuits for Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Sikhs, and Sacred Springs. There can also be inter-religious pilgrimage circuits connecting two or more religious attractions. For the tourists interested in spirituality, there can be pilgrimage circuits linking spiritual and secular sites. Potential tourism spots can also be included in the pilgrimage tourism circuits to mutually benefit each other and provide a variety of attractions for pilgrims and tourists.

Buddhist tourism circuit can be built between Parihaspora, Harwan, Pandrethan, etc. Sikh pilgrimage circuit can include Gurdwara Patshahi Pehli, Gurdwara Chatti Padshahi, Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi Param Pillan, Uri, etc,. Hindu Pilgrimage circuit will revolve around Shankaracharya, Kheer Bhawani, Sharika Devi, Martand, Mattan, Pandava Temple, Awantipore, Vivekananda Kendra Nagdandi, Vishnu Pad, etc,. Muslim Pilgrimage circuit can be of Hazratbal, Chrar-e-sharief, Makhdoom Sahib, Baba Reshi, Zainudin Wali, Dastigeer Sahib, Khanqah-e-Maula, Baba Shakoor-ud-din, Syed Hassan Mantaqi, etc,. Pilgrimage circuit of Sacred Springs can revolve around Nagbal, Vetha-Vatur, Sut Haran, Pushkar Nag, Shiv Nag, etc,. After the success of these religious circuits, there can be devised circuits comprising more than one religion. These would be inter-religious tourism circuits, like, a pilgrimage tourism circuit between Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, and Sikh sites, e.g., Shankaracharya, Hazratbal, Parihaspora, and Gurdwara Patshahi Pehli. Like wise many other inter-religious pilgrimage tourism circuits can be developed. In addition, pilgrimage and tourism circuits can be developed in unison like, a
circuit between Pahalgam, Gulmarg and Kheer Bhawani. Likewise hundreds of other pilgrimage circuits can be developed after checking the feasibility of transport and accommodation at the various pilgrimage and tourism sites.

6.23 ORGANISING FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

Kashmir also has some unique fairs and festivals attached with its pilgrimage spots which are unknown to the rest of the world. These fairs and festivals not only highlight the religious contribution and the personality of the deity but also showcase unique features of their attachment with the shrines. Like, Dambali and Zool festivals attached with the shrines of Baba Naseebudin Gazi and Sheikh Zainuddin Wali are unique in themselves. Likewise, some other festivals celebrated at Kheer Bhawani, Hazratbal, and Chrar-e-Sharief project the culture and traditions of Kashmir and also provide a platform for the Kashmiri artisans to showcase their artistic masterpieces. The KPTRB should review these fairs and festivals and market them on the patterns of the fairs and festivals celebrated in other States, like, Rajasthan’s Ajmer Festival, etc. The fairs and festivals of Kashmir are distinctive and they will draw sizable number of pilgrims and tourists, the only need being to plan and promote them efficiently.

6.24 DESIGNING A WEBSITE ON KASHMIR PILGRIMAGE TOURISM

Pilgrimage tourism of Kashmir is a vast resource and has the potential to attract sizable number of population but it is also the least known tourist interest of Kashmir tourism. A website on internet needs to be created which can make aware potential pilgrims about the pilgrimage interests of the Valley and provide them authentic information. The website should provide information on history, architecture, legends, myths and fables, besides, geography of the pilgrimage sites. The site should contain links on Kashmiri
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Sufism, Kashmiri Rishism, Kashmiri Shivism, Kashmiri Sufis, Kashmiri Rishis, Unique religious beliefs of Kashmiri Pandits, Fairs and Festivals attached with the pilgrimage spots of Kashmir, Springs of Kashmir, etc,. The website should also give all the authentic information regarding these interests of Kashmir pilgrimage tourism. Buddhist tourism should be the main part of this site. It should also inform pilgrims about the weather conditions and other do’s and don’ts of visiting pilgrimage sites of Kashmir. The site should have links and facility for booking hotels, houseboats, transport service and booking flights. It should also provide information and links with the tourism department and travel and tour operators of Kashmir. The site should give all the relevant information regarding management and pilgrim statistics as well.

6.25 FRIENDLY AMARNATH YATRA

Amarnath Cave is a big pilgrimage spot and Amarnath yatra is the biggest religious congregation of Kashmir so far as the number of pilgrims visiting it is concerned. But it is also true that it is mismanaged although whole State machinery is put into action during those two months of Yatra. Carrying Capacity of the destination is the prime concern which the management has to take care of but is least cared. This, according to researcher can be ensured at the time of registration by pilgrims. Each registration counter can be given the maximum limit of registrations for a particular day, say two thousand. Likewise, five registration counters can do the registration for maximum of ten thousand pilgrims for a specific day. If the number of registrations is more, they should be registered for the next day. Hence, pre-planning for providing different services can be done according to the pilgrim’s strength. One more aspect of avoiding the rush at the two base camps, Pahalgam and Baltal, of the yatra is that there should be an entry gate and an exit gate of the yatra. Pilgrims to Amarnath yatra should go for darshan using the Pahalgam route and travel back from the Cave Shrine through the Baltal route. In this way maximum tourists can visit the Cave shrine in minimum time in a safe and comfortable
manner. By following this passage, they can save two days of yatra and also there will be no rush of pilgrims at the base camps. Hence, more tourists can be accommodated in the two months time of the Yatra(Pilgrimage). Only the arrangements for the stay and transportation upto and from the base camps remain to be looked after.

Recent case of melting of Shiv linga has given a shock to devotees visiting the shrine. This has occurred due to more number of pilgrims visiting the shrine without proper monitoring regarding use of things which disturb the environment of the cave, like, taking photographs, burning candles and other puja items. Also lack of equipments to keep the Cave environment at its suitable temperature is also responsible for this situation. This needs to be tackled by proper monitoring and procuring things needed for keeping the temperature of the cave shrine at its undisturbed level.

Dry open latrines having removable collection tanks should be placed at convenient places to avoid pollution of the running streams. Department of Research and Development Organisation is now having bio-degradable waste degradation facility and these units should now be located at convenient places for use of the Amarnath Yatries.

It is also recommended that the area should be open to trekking for a period of 5 months instead of present two months. This period should be from May to September each year. Future system of registration of trekkers be evolved who would like to walk to Amarnath cave in the odd season which excludes the months of July and August. To ensure passenger safety, the State government should provide for inspection of the trekkers kit and also disallow individual to freely move. Instead small groups only be permitted to take the journeys. Besides, the trekking to the cave during these odd months should be open for some specific age groups only. This could also prove to be an alternative for the sudden rush of tourists as well as for promoting the adventure tourism in the area.
6.26 EXPLORING HOT SPRINGS

The Valley of Kashmir is abound in hot springs spread throughout its length and breadth. The streams are full of variegated nature - some big and some small, some accessible and some less accessible, some explored and a lot much to be explored. These springs are linked with great religious personalities who visited Kashmir and have been formed by the miracles of them, because either they were in need of water at that time or they created them by their miracles for the benefit of society. Hence, these springs are important centres of pilgrimage. Besides, the religious importance, these hot springs are also known for their medicinal and mineral properties. The researcher recommends that the Directorate of Tourism, Kashmir, with the cooperation of the Department of Archaeology, and the Department of Geology of the University of Kashmir, make an inspection of these springs, bring on map all such hot springs and make them available to visiting tourists as bathing spas.

As there is a lot of boom about the health tourism and nature care treatments, hot water springs of Kashmir provide a good opportunity to tap this market. The water of the springs should be collected properly, channelled and a health complex be located. The special quality of water needs to be emphasized and all these activities should be clubbed under a new nature-care facility for foreign and domestic tourists. Strong publicity about these hot springs as hot pilgrimage and health spots can bring a large crowd of tourists towards the Valley.

6.27 FEEDBACK AND REDRESSEL

It is obvious that besides taking hundreds of measures there may be some shortcomings in services or in the pilgrim’s satisfaction. Hence, a Feedback and Redressel system should be there to handle such complaints or receive suggestions made by the pilgrims. There should be prominent suggestions and complaint boxes in premises of the pilgrimage spots. These
boxes should be opened every day by the board official assigned the job. There must be prompt action on the complaints lodged against the employees or the services so as to improve the services and provide better comfort to pilgrims. Suggestions given by pilgrims should be discussed in the board meeting and action on the relevant ones should be taken.

Working on the suggestions given in the thesis will ease the passage of pilgrims and tourist to the pilgrimage spots of Kashmir. The satisfied pilgrim/tourist will carry a good impression of the destination and hence will do word of mouth publicity. Thus, the Pilgrimage Tourism of Kashmir will move out of the Dark Age of publicity and development and will get known to the tourism world as a unique attraction of overall Kashmir tourism.

II - GUIDELINES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH IN THIS AREA

Though the study has made an effort to cover almost all aspects of Kashmir Pilgrimage Tourism but some aspects have not been given the space, time, and effort they deserve because of their vast potential and depth on account of limitations of this study. Hence, on the basis of the study as also the insight gained during the course of the study, the following recommendations can be made regarding direction for further research in this area.

- Devising a sound marketing strategy for promoting Pilgrimage Tourism of Kashmir.
- Exploring, exploiting and marketing the Buddhist Tourism of Kashmir.
- Marketing the secular character of Muslim shrines as unique tourism attraction of Kashmir pilgrimage.
- Promoting Kheer Bhawani Pilgrimage as a link between North and South India to attract pilgrims/tourists from South India.