

# IMPACT OF PILGRIM TOURISM ON THE ECONOMY OF JAMMU & KASHMIR WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE HOLY AMARNATH YATRA

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## Abstract

One of the most significant and rapidly expanding economic sectors worldwide is the tourism industry. Different sectors of the economy are impacted by the critical growth and development rate, amount of foreign exchange, infrastructure development, new management techniques, and training experience, all of which positively impact the development of the country and of society. The present study comprises of two objectives and reveals the impact of pilgrim tourism on the economy of Jammu and Kashmir where the researcher has limited its scope to the Holy Amarnath Yatra situated in Kashmir Division which is scheduled every year for a period up to 60 days. The study revealed that the number of pilgrims' attraction to the Holy Yatra is increasing year after year. The study reveals that every pilgrim who pays obeisance to the Holy Cave stays a week in the Valley and there by visiting other tourist destinations and spending approximately ₹ 20000. There are many sections of the society associated with it and thereby getting benefit directly or indirectly. The present study is based on the secondary data and the period of study is taken to last five years, ranging from 2013-2017. The scope of the present study is limited to the yearly Holy Amarnathji Yatra.

Key Words: Pilgrim, Tourism, Holy Amarnath Yatra, attraction.

## Introduction

One of the most significant and rapidly expanding economic sectors worldwide is the tourism industry. Different sectors of the economy are impacted by the critical growth and development rate, amount of foreign exchange, infrastructure development, new management techniques, and training experience, all of which positively impact the development of the country and of society. Both in the host countries and in the exporting countries, the tourism industry generates a wide range of economic benefits. The anticipated economic expansion is one of the key drivers behind supporting and promoting tourism in emerging nations. As a result, tourists spend a lot of money on goods in the tourist area, starting with lodging, food, and drinks, leisure activities, and so on, which a direct impact on business and the economy as has assessed by income and taxes. A significant segment of the world economy and contributor to international trade is now tourism. The state of the world economy has changed significantly and dramatically. The value of tourism as a driver of economic development and the generation of jobs, particularly in rural and suburban areas, is well acknowledged on a

global scale. This industry's diversity of structures gives it the foundation for economic development and supports balanced regional development. A significant portion of the workforce in the economy is engaged in this sector, which also provides a low-cost option to earn foreign currency. There is now a greater demand for interactions between rich and developing nations due to the global spread of development programmes. In the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag area, there is a Hindu sanctuary known as Amarnath Temple. An essential component of Hinduism is represented by the shrine. Between the month of June and August, a lot of Hindu pilgrims visit the Cave to offer their respects. The pilgrimage, also known as the Amarnath Yatra, starts in Chandanwadi, 16 kilometres from the popular tourist destination Pahalgam. The hike ends in Amarnath Cave after passing via Sheshnag and Panchtarni. According to Hindu mythology, the shrine, which is devoted to the god Shiva, is more than 5,000 years old. The cave is located 141 kilometres from Srinagar at a height of 3,888 metres. Both the Sonamarg - Baltal Route and the Pahalgam - Chandanwadi Track Route goes to the cave. Hindu devotees who visit the cave each year have made it a revered destination over the years. The Lidder Valley cave is bounded by glaciers, snow-capped mountains, and is mostly always covered in snow, with the exception of a brief window during the summer when it is accessible to pilgrims. There were between 12,000 and 30,000 pilgrims in 1989. The number of pilgrims peaked in 2011 at 6.3 lakh. The annual journey has lasted anything from 20 to 60 days. One of the most well-liked tourist attractions in Asia is Jammu & Kashmir. For Kashmir the Amarnath Yatra is more than just a pilgrimage and will significantly boost the economy of J&K. There are numerous different destinations to visit as part of Jammu and Kashmir tourism. The beautiful landscape of Jammu and Kashmir is well known throughout the world. The state's economy is heavily reliant on the tourism industry. The Kashmir Valley in particular offers a variety of tourist attractions in Jammu and Kashmir. These include of pilgrimage tourism, adventure tourism, and medical tourism, water rafting, and skiing. The three separate regions of Jammu and Kashmir State, namely Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh, have enormous potential for local and foreign tourism. In J&K, tourism is currently a sizable industry that significantly boosts the state's economy and employs a big number of people. As far as present study is concerned, it is related to the impact of Pilgrim Tourism of Jammu & Kashmir particularly for the Holy Amarnath Yatra.

### **Justification of the Study**

There are numerous studies conducted on Pilgrim Tourism of Jammu & Kashmir, its socio-cultural aspects. The study is of great importance as it is found out that the number of Pilgrims to visit these Pilgrimages has increased rapidly. There are various sections of the society associated with this tourism especially in the Valley in terms of their earnings. As far as present study is concerned, it is related to the Holy Amarnath Yatra and it will reveal the economic impact of it to the different sections of the society who are directly or indirectly associated to it.

### **Scope of the Study**

There is a vast scope of the current study but the researcher has limited its scope to the last ten years data ranging from 2013-2017. The research is very important from the point of view of income generation to the thousands of people associated to the Holy Yatra of Amarnathji. The present study will also help in boosting the growth of the Local Tourism of the of Jammu & Kashmir.

## Review of Literature

**Das Sandeep (2011)** He demonstrates in his piece how both directly and indirectly, the tourism industry offers prospects for job generation. Therefore, incentives for this sector should be offered in order to promote general, long-term economic growth and the creation of jobs. **Himadri Phukan and colleagues' (2012)** study, which primarily addressed the numerous research initiatives that evolved in religious tourism and examined the prospects for future work in tourism-related research, focuses on the development of spiritual tourism in India. They examine studies on pilgrimage tourism that were published in five different journals and at significant events between 1992 and 2009. **Mir Lateef Ahmad and Bhushan Sangram 2016**, in their study revealed that constantly expanding pilgrimage tourism is directly or indirectly responsible for a sizable portion of the economy. Jammu's flourishing tourism business may be seen in the steady growth of visitors and the abundance of pilgrimage sites. The focus of tourism planners and specialists should be on strategies that will lengthen visitors' stays in order for pilgrimage tourism to succeed in the future. Packages that incorporate visits to additional adventure and scenic beauty sites ought to be made available to tourists. **Ahmad Bilal and his associates in their research Pilgrimage Tourism and Environment, 2017** have found that the political, economic, social, and cultural ramifications of pilgrimage are significant, and they can have an impact on global trade and health. Due to its breadth and spatial impact, it is a crucial topic. The distance travelled and how the phenomena affects behaviour piques geographers' interest. One of the most popular tourist destinations worldwide is Kashmir. However, given how the Kashmir valley is described, even the most minor negative aspects of the tourism sector have a tremendous impact.

## Objectives of the Study

The present study will focus on the following objectives:

- To explore the determinants of Pilgrim Tourism.
- To analyse the economic impact of Pilgrim Tourism associated to Holy Amarnath Yatra.

## Research Methodology

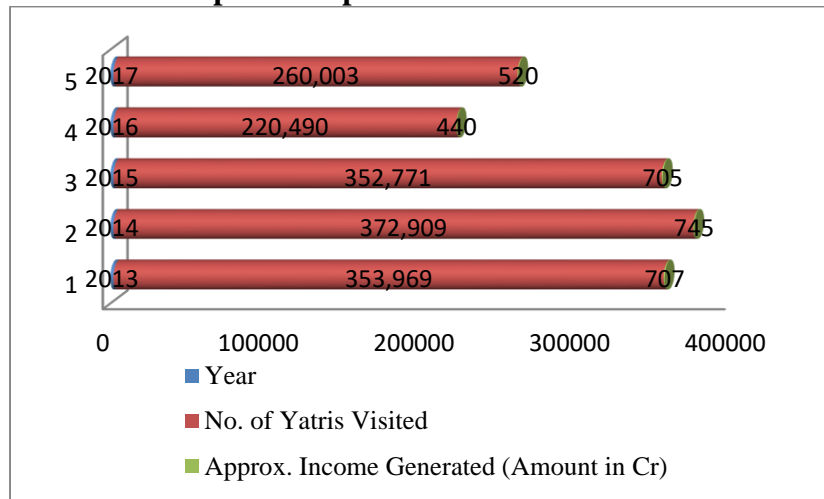
As far as present study is concerned, it is purely a secondary data base research. The gathering of secondary data is the basic foundation of the investigation. The data was gathered from a variety of sources, including magazines, journals, research articles, websites, published and unpublished records of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, and Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board.

## Results

**Table showing Yearly No. of Pilgrims Visited Amarnath Cave and Approx. Income Generated**

S.No	Year	No. of Yatris Visited	Approx. Income Generated (Amount in Cr)
1	2013	3,53,969	707
2	2014	3,72,909	745
3	2015	3,52,771	705
4	2016	2,20,490	440
5	2017	2,60,003	520

Source: Amarnath Shrine Board Official Website

**Graphical Representation of the data.****Findings**

The purpose of the study was to look into the financial effects of pilgrim tourism, particularly those related to the Holy Amarnath Yatra. As per the data collected, the study revealed that the number of Pilgrim Tourists who paid obeisance to the Holy Cave increase in number year after year. However, during the years 2016 the Holy Yatra was interrupted by the Govt. of Jammu and Kashmir and by the Shrine Board Authorities due to the unrest and strikes. However, during the year 2017 this number gets increased. The Holy Yatra was resumed next year 2017 where it was seen the rapid increase of pilgrims. The study revealed that the Holy Yatra has a great economic impact on the economy of Jammu and Kashmir. During the year 2014, its economic impact was more as compared to the previous year as the revenue generated this year was ₹ 745Cr approximately. The revenue generated from the Holy Yatra also uplifts the weaker sections of the society who are directly or indirectly associated to it. The study also revealed that the Holy Yatra not only boosts the other pilgrimages but also boosts the other tourism destinations of the UT of Jammu and Kashmir. As far as the present study is concerned, it was also found out that each pilgrim spends at least ₹ 20,000 during their weeklong stay in Kashmir.

**Suggestions**

It is evident from the present study that the Holy Amarnath Yatra is not mere a pilgrimage but also a big economic booster to the economy of Jammu and Kashmir. So the government authorities and concerned Boards must take steps to improve the very facilities that are to be provided to the Pilgrims. The authorities should have a proper check over the exploitation of the Pilgrims. The government should take steps to encourage more pilgrims cum tourists to visit Kashmir Valley and also to stay longer there by proving better hospitality, better and easy transport facilities, improve the conditions of the roads. The authorities should make them feel safe and secure while having the pilgrimage.

**Conclusion**

People of many different sects and faiths live in Jammu and Kashmir, and as a result, there are several pilgrimage sites that draw a sizable number of pilgrimage travellers. In addition to being spiritual, several of Jammu and Kashmir's well-known pilgrimage tourism destinations also have historical value because they were established in earlier eras. The beauty that surrounds them and elevates the entire spiritual experience is another reason to visit the pilgrimage sites while on vacation in Jammu and Kashmir. The Holy Amarnath

Yatra Pilgrimage is one of the most pious pilgrimages of the Hindu sect and also most visited destination. It also not only boosts the tourism of Jammu and Kashmir but also a economic booster as the revenue generated from the two months long Yatra is rapidly increasing on yearly basis. The government and the Shrine Board authorities are taking rigorous steps to improve the facilities and other services provided to the pilgrims. It is not only the job of government and the concerned authorities but also the local community should join hands with the government for the betterment of this very pilgrimage as it boosts overall development.

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