True Potential of Tourism

Jammu and Kashmir, often described as "Paradise on Earth," possesses an unparalleled natural and cultural wealth that positions it as one of the most promising tourism destinations in India. From the snow-clad peaks of the Himalayas to serene valleys, pristine lakes, and centuries-old shrines, the region offers a diverse palette for every type of traveler. Yet, despite its immense potential, the tourism sector here remains underutilized and requires strategic planning, sustainable practices, and inclusive development to fully harness its capabilities.

Tourism has always been a critical pillar of the region's economy. It creates employment opportunities, supports local artisans, boosts small businesses, and generates substantial revenue for the state. Destinations like Srinagar, Gulmarg, Pahalgam, and Leh-Ladakh have been popular internationally, attracting travelers with adventure tourism, winter sports, trekking, and spiritual tourism. Beyond these famous spots, hidden gems like Basohli, Bhaderwah, and Doodhpathri hold immense potential to diversify the tourism landscape, bringing benefits to rural communities that have long been neglected in development planning.

The cultural and heritage tourism in Jammu and Kashmir is equally rich. Ancient temples, mosques, monasteries, and festivals present a vivid picture of the region's syncretic traditions. Handicrafts like Pashmina shawls, carpets, papiermâché, and woodwork not only have global appeal but also empower local artisans and sustain traditional craftsmanship. Promotion of cultural tourism alongside adventure and nature-based tourism can attract a more diverse range of visitors and extend tourist stays, enhancing the overall economic impact.

The recent initiatives by the central and UT governments have strengthened the tourism infrastructure significantly. Development of modern road networks, improved air connectivity under the UDAN scheme, upgraded health facilities, and the establishment of world-class hospitality options have enhanced the ease of travel for tourists. Government programs aimed at last-mile connectivity and rural development can transform remote areas into viable tourist destinations, spreading the benefits of tourism more equitably across the region.

However, challenges remain. Political instability, inadequate promotion of lesser-known destinations, seasonal limitations, and environmental concerns have hindered the growth of sustainable tourism. There is also a need for better training of local youth in hospitality and tourism management, ensuring that they are equipped to meet international standards. Without strategic intervention, there is a risk that tourism development may remain concentrated in already popular locations, creating an imbalance in regional growth.

Sustainable tourism must be the guiding principle for Jammu and Kashmir. Initiatives like eco-tourism, community-based tourism, and responsible trekking routes can preserve the fragile environment while providing economic benefits. Promoting off-season tourism, adventure sports, wellness retreats, and heritage walks can create year-round opportunities. Moreover, leveraging digital marketing and social media campaigns to showcase the region's hidden treasures can enhance global visibility.

Awareness about people with disabilities needs to be increased

RAMESH SARRAF DHAMORA

isability is seen as a social stigma in society, which needs to be addressed. This year's theme for World Disability Day is promoting disability-inclusive societies to advance social progress. It underscores the importance of empowering persons with disabilities to shape their own destiny and play a leading role in contributing to society. In 1992, the United Nations General Assembly declared December 3rd as International Day of Persons with Disabilities every year.

The government has enacted numerous policies for persons with disabilities in the country. They receive reservations in government jobs, hospitals, railways, and buses. The government also has a pension scheme for the disabled. However, all these government schemes have become a joke for those with disabilities, as they lack a disability certificate to access these benefits. The purpose of this observance was to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and to raise awareness about them in political, social, economic, and cultural life. However, even today, people are unaware of how many disabled people live around us. Whether they are enjoying equal rights in society or not is not something anyone cares about.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had stated that people with physical disabilities possess a "divine ability," and the term "Divyang" should be used instead of "Viklang." The Prime Minister appealed for the disabled to be referred to as "Divyang" (Divyang). His reasoning was that people with disabilities possess certain God-given special qualities. The term 'Viklang" discourages them. Following Prime Minister Modi's call, people across the country began referring to the disabled as "Divyang," but public attitudes toward them have remained unchanged. Even today, people in society continue to view the disabled with a pitiful gaze. Even though many disabled people in the country have proven their talent in various fields, people's attitudes toward them per-

There are numerous examples around the world that demonstrate that, with the right guidance, a disability can become a virtue and amaze everyone. India has numerous government schemes to help the disabled. However, even after so many

Global Accessibility



years, only half of the disabled have a disability received certificate. Consequently, accessing government benefits for the disabled has become a mere joke. There have been many disabled people in the world who, through their courage, determination, and enthusiasm, have etched their names in golden letters in world history. The powerful ruler Timur Lang was handicapped in one hand and one leg. Rana Sanga of Mewar, despite losing an eye in childhood and suffering 80 wounds in battle, emerged victorious in numerous battles. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who founded the Sikh kingdom, had a deficient eye in one eye since childhood. Renowned dancer Sudha Chandran was missing her right leg. Film lyricist Krishna Chandra Dey and musician Ravindra Jain were blind. Former cricketer Anjan Bhattacharya was deaf and mute. Disabled athletes Sandeep Kumar from Jhunihunu district and Sundar Gurjar from Jaipur brought glory to India by winning gold medals in the javelin throw at the World Paralympia Championships.

The first phase of the fifth round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) was conducted in 2019-20. The NFHS provides estimates on key indicators related to population, family planning, child and maternal health, nutrition, adult health, and domestic violence. According to an analysis by an Indian Council of Medical Research publication of secondary data collected from the NFHS-5 survey, the total prevalence of persons with disabilities in India is 4.52 percent of the pop-

ulation. India is a party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This data shows that approximately 63.28 million people in India live with some form of disability. Locomotor (movement) disability is the most common of all disabilities, followed by mental and speech (speech related) disabilities.

It is a harsh reality that people with disabilities in India still depend on others for their needs. According to the World Health Organization, 15 percent of the global population lives with some form of disability. More than 80 percent of these people live in low- and middle-income countries. India, with over 1.4 billion people, has over 2.2 percent of this population suffering from some form of severe mental or physical disability. In today's progressive era, where integration and inclusion of all people are emphasized as the gateway to sustainable development, the list of criteria for classifying people with disabilities in India was revised in 2016. The revised definition, based on the 2016 RPwD Act, also recognizes physical deformities and injuries related to acid attacks as disabilities, entitling these victims to various forms of government assistance and support.

Even today, obtaining a disability certificate in India remains challenging. Even after days of running around government offices and hospitals, people often face disappointment. While the government claims to have simplified the process, the reality seems far from it. According to the government's established criteria for issuing disability certificates, doc-

tors in most government hospitals refuse to issue disability certificates to individuals with disabilities, leaving individuals with disabilities vulnerable to government benefits.

The benefits provided to the disabled in India remain limited to paperwork. Compared to other countries, our disabled population is not receiving even a quarter of the benefits they receive. The central government has taken a positive step by granting a 10-year age relaxation to disabled youth across the country, including those with visual impairments, deafness, locomotor disabilities, or cerebral palsy, for direct recruitment into central government services. Disability can be physical or mental, but the biggest disability lies in our society's mindset, which holds a disdain for those with disabilities, making them feel uncomfortable.

Now is the time to change our mindset towards people with disabilities. Disabled people can only be included in mainstream society when society recognizes them as part of its own. A comprehensive awareness campaign is needed for this. In recent years, the government's efforts towards the disabled have accelerated. Efforts are being made to provide them with some basic amenities. However, questions have been raised about the government's implementation of schemes. Recently, the Supreme Court even reprimanded the government for the slow pace of implementation. Connecting disabled people to education is crucial. There is a lack of special schools for the deaf and dumb, which prevents most disabled people from becoming properly educated and financially independ-

The Himalayan Crises

G.L. KHAJURIA

If there were no Himalayas, there would have been no Ganga, Yamuna, Brahmaputra or indus. If there were no Himalayas, there had been no rains and if there were no rains, India would have been a dead desert like Sahara, Said the father of the nation-Mahatma Gandhi. In the same vein, said our first prime minister PT J L Nehru, Himalayas are not only near us but also very dear, for they have always been a part of our history and tradition, our thinking poetry, our worship and devotion.

The Himalayas are virtually home to twenty thousand small and large glaciers and as well as a high repository of snow. And the snow line of perennial and seasonal snow cover comes down to two thousand meters. The appearance and disappearance of snows cover concern not only the men of the mountains but at large the entire country which is dependent on the flow of Himalayan rivers.

Apart from, snowcapped Himalayas, these have been the abode of our great rishis, munis, saints and sages who in their deep samadies meditate for years together to obtain favors of gods and goddesses.

With the over- exploding population which weknow have crossed 1.25 billion next to China and coupled with industrial culture has in unison over exploited our forest cover which stands now at the threshold of uncontrolled destruction. And this environmental destruction has taken shape in hundreds of different ways. The resources of nature have been manipulated beyond sustainable limits.



is now frightening and we are compelled to shout as no hope and help is expected to come to rescue us.

The Himalayan crises are no longer an isolated event. It is the outcome of consumption-oriented industrial culture of the day and the rapid proliferation of human population. It is in a way 'Treshma' around wants ever-increasing in spirals but never the loss ever satisfied. Let us remind late Sh Daphtarys words: "Enough is just a little more than you have and therefore, you never

As a consequence, therefore, even the trees, the only renewable source, have become irretrievable owing to ever amounting over exploitation. Pollution

and ecological degradation are the ultimate outcome in more than many ways. This is obviously one track development and civilization which we very proudly claim as the progress or to say development. Our late premier smt Indra Gandhi had very rightly remarked in Stockholm at world conference on environment way back in 1972 that "we do definitely want development but not at the cost of destruction. We have rather become a hunted civilization and are lacking foresightedness as to what lies ahead of us and our generations to come. Would not they abuse us for the blunder and utter neglect for our misdeeds? What kind of inheritance we are passing onto them? The immediate problem is to rectify the ecological imbalance of Himalaya before it is too late and the challenging situation is quite irreversible. The most vital solution is, therefore, to adopt a new development strategy in which the man and the nature must progressively coexist in harmony. We need to remember that prosperity in its manifestations is much more than material satisfaction. We in Kashmir call 'parkath'. It arises from a total feeling of well being, when we find ourselves In tune with environment and reasonably satisfied with what we have. Prosperity is the consequence of small population with abundant production of food and other necessities and would work ethically and considerably with retrained consumption.

We must have to endure to develop a complete and minimal vital and stable natural eco system and the benefits of the centralized productions shall at all casts are warranted

be totally avoided. Alternate are substituting sources of fuel and energy are to be produced eftsoonly. Hydropower is probably the best suited option for all the hilly reasons. Solar system can very conveniently be developed and solar energy can be trapped thereby eliminating pollution as well. As a consequence, Therefore, the new approach has to be stratified to treat Himalayan mountain system with a combination of a number of dynamic watershed ecosystems which of course have been expounded by many experts at national and international level at this pernicious juncture. Himalayas which, are our country's crown provides us a line of defense from the foreign invaders like China. The crisis arising out from the melting of glaciers and perennial snows is beyond all ambiguities an alarming challenge. The Chinese policies and strategies are quite unpredictable despite the fact that our prime minister, Sh Narerdra Modi made all out efforts for better ties. There is an unforcettable reminder to us when China invaded India in 1962 and illegally occupied a larger part of Indian territory owing to a big folly called as Himalayan blunder which was subsequently elaborated and documented by brig. J P Dalvi. This book by a senior army officer reflects as to how our Valliant jawans and officers flowed their blood while counteracting Chinese aggression in safeguarding county's honor which, defacto left an indelible mark in the history of the world. As on date, our Valliant jawans are on active surveillance for the defense of the country and are defending teeming

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When Tempers Drive and Civility Dies: The Alarming Rise of Road Rage in Our Communities

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Roads are meant to connect people, not divide them. Yet, across the country, a disturbing trend of road rage has taken root. An argument over a minor collision or a misunderstanding in traffic jam can escalate within seconds. A moment of inconvenience often explodes into aggression, intimidation, and violence. The alarming rise of such incidents demands serious reflection and collective action.

We have seen far too many painful examples. Only recently, a school bus driver in Jammu, wearing his turban, doing his duty, was dragged out and beaten by three individuals who believed the bus had brushed past their vehicle. Instead of verifying facts or ensuring the children's safety first, they chose aggression. In another case not long ago, a young couple driving home in Srinagar were chased and attacked because they refused to give way on a narrow road-a small inconvenience that almost cost them their lives. And who can forget the tragic incident on the Jammu-Pathankot highway where a minor accident between two cars escalated within minutes, leading to a violent brawl that injured bystanders who tried to

intervene?

These are not isolated stories; they are symptoms of a deeper social illness. These incidents reveal a deeply troubling pattern: disproportionate violence triggered by the smallest provocations, turning the threat of sudden, senseless aggression into a chilling reality. What should be a routine journey becomes an act of quiet fear and uncertainty for countless people on our roads.

Road rage does not end with two dented vehicles and bruised egos. It leaves behind something far worse: fear among ordinary people who simply want to reach home safely; children shaken by the sight of adults behaving worse than toddlers; communities anxious, wondering when the next outburst will strike; hospitals and police stations burdened with cases that should never have happened at all. And slowly, without even realising it, we lose something precious, that is, our civility.

But, why this is happening? Does road rage suddenly erupt on the street, or does it begin much earlier? The truth is, these outbursts are symptoms of a deeper social erosion.



a society slowly forgetting the simple courtesies that once held us together, road rage takes root long before a vehicle touches the road. It stems from a hurried mind, an unsettled heart, rising impatience, shrinking tolerance, and a dangerous illusion that anger is a sign of strength. These daily shifts in how we think and treat one another become the silent seeds of the violence we later witness on our roads. When a community normalises shouting, shoving, and short tempers, it silently invites the same aggression

into homes, schools, workplaces, and

public spaces.

We must ask ourselves: what exactly are we defending when we allow anger to dictate our hands and tongues? A dented vehicle can be repaired, but a damaged dignity cannot. A broken headlight can be replaced, but a broken conscience takes a lifetime to mend. A single moment of rage on the road can orphan children, breakhouseholds, and leave wounds that no com-

pensation can heal.

Road rage prevention is not the job

of the traffic police alone. It is a collective civic duty. We need to bring back the old-fashioned virtues that every faith and every culture taught us: dignity, kindness, self-restraint, and empathy. When we look at the person behind the wheel not as an obstacle but as a fellow human with a family waiting at home, our reflex changes. Anger slows. Compassion takes the front seat.

takes the front seat.

If each of us slows down our mind before we slow down our vehicle, half the battles will dissolve on their own. A minor collision does not demand a major confrontation. A mistake on the road need not become a personal insult. Sometimes, stepping back is not weakness but wisdom. The world does not shrink when we let someone

overtake us; our peace expands.

When we treat road safety as a shared responsibility, we begin to cultivate a culture of patience. Schools must teach emotional awareness alongside traffic rules; families must show children how to respond calmly; communities must openly condemn

aggression, not silently justify it.

Road rage is preventable. A small shift in attitude can save lives. Every time we choose patience over provoca-

tion, we strengthen our community. Every time we refuse to escalate, we protect our own future. And every time we remind someone else to stay calm, we create safer roads for all.

Stronger governance is equally essential. When people know that their roadside theatrics will be caught on CCTV and followed by a summons, they will think twice before turning into street-corner wrestlers. Driving licences must come with clear lessons on anger management, because operating a vehicle also means managing one's emotions. Traffic rules cannot remain decorative; they must be enforced with firmness and fairness. The recent road-rage incident in Jammu, which sparked widespread public outrage and resulted in swift arrests, is proof that timely action restores public faith and deters future offenders. A society that values safety must show, through its governance and its behaviour, that violence on the road will never be tolerated.

The journey to a peaceful society begins with the way we behave on its streets. Let us drive with care, speak with respect, and remember that humanity must always have the right of way.