

TOURISM IN JAMMU

Nestled amidst the majestic Himalayas, Jammu, the winter capital of the enchanting union territory of Jammu and Kashmir, beckons travelers with its breathtaking landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and spiritual sanctuaries. First and foremost, Jammu's picturesque landscapes serve as a canvas of unparalleled beauty, enticing visitors with their verdant valleys, pristine lakes, and snow-capped peaks. The region's crown jewel, the stunning Vaishno Devi Shrine, nestled atop the Trikuta Mountains, is a pilgrimage site revered by millions, drawing devotees from far and wide to seek the blessings of the divine Mother Goddess. The journey to the shrine, traversing through scenic trails and rugged terrain, epitomizes the essence of spiritual devotion and unwavering faith, leaving an indelible mark on pilgrims' hearts. Beyond its spiritual allure, Jammu boasts a rich tapestry of cultural heritage, reflected in its ancient forts, temples, and palaces. The imposing Bahu Fort, overlooking the Tawi River, stands as a testament to the region's regal past, offering panoramic views of the city below. The historic Mubarak Mandi Complex, with its intricate architecture and sprawling gardens, serves as a living testament to the grandeur of bygone eras, inviting visitors to delve into the annals of history and unravel the mysteries of yesteryears.

Be beholden to omnipotent nature for survival

PURAN CHAND SHARMA

It is well said, "In the ancient times, the primitive man was happy because he was living in harmony with Nature". Homo sapiens in the olden times were in deep motherly relationship with the bountiful and the highly magnificent Mother Nature. Our worthy forefathers and ancestors were worshipping the nature as revered divine mother of all the species and fellow travellers in the cosmos. We have Human kingdom, Animal kingdom, Birds kingdom, flora and fauna etc. Human kingdom happens to be the most enlightened, organized and progressive. Life on earth planet would proceed smoothly till the moment of eternity. If mother nature is happy and is not disturbed or recklessly destroyed for petty materialistic gains pushing all other fellow travellers to the brink of total extinction, holistic peace and ecstasy would prevail for ever. Nature is self regulated and self sustained entity drawing inexhaustible energy from infinite godly resources. It shall be highly significant to underline the universal fact that the magnanimous and merciful Nature has immeasurable bounties in her divine treasures to fulfill the genuine needs of not only humans but all other fellow species but not their insatiable greed. Keeping this logical point in mind, let us endeavour to understand as to what NATURE is and what are her inalienable segments and components, her significance, Overuse and misuse of natural resources, adverse consequences as well as the priority of launching sustained campaign to comprehensively preserve the huge natural resources to avert crisis of extinction of life on Earth planet.

Definition of Nature
The simplified version of Nature may be stated as 'All those things which have not been created by human beings but by SUPREME BEING. The whole of universe is made up of five elements 1. Earth, 2 Water, 3. Fire, 4. Air, 5. Space. Similarly all the species belonging to distinct kingdoms inclusive of Human kingdom comprise the same elements, so they are not only complementary but also dependent on each other for survival. We have innumerable STARS, PLANETS and GLAXIES in the universe which are self regulated by the grace of invisible GOD ELEMENT as experienced and perceived by prominent Scientists during the course of their sustained research odyssey. The omnipotent nature operates in perfect harmony for welfare of all the living beings until and unless some drastic change is required for ultimate well being of all living things, has become a dire necessity at the cost of minimum loss of life on earth. This is the beauty and benevolence of mother nature. Mind it pl, Mother never hurts without plausible reason and cause. This, we notice and experience in our day to day activities.

Blatant Exploitation of Nature by the Modern Man
Modern man at this crucial juncture has gone berserk in pursuit of his evil misadventures. He has become habitual of turning a blind eye towards his misdeeds for being engrossed in his lust for amassing disproportionate materialistic possessions, property and wealth for worldly enjoyments at the cost of inflicting huge loss and irreversible damages on gullible fellow travellers on this planet. In this twilight hour Human kingdom has become too possessive and over ambitious by indulging into excessive exploitation of Natural resources. However, virtuous NATURE manages everything possible for making the life of human beings more comfortable and enabling them to take due care of all other lower species who are not equally and fully developed in comparison to Homo sapiens. Their intellect is comprehensively developed. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the Human kingdom to treat the other significant species on equal footing and extend them needed liberty to live on the principle of peaceful co-existence sans fears of being pushed to the point of undesirable extinction. At the moment things are not moving in the positive direction. Exceedingly progressive, arrogant and driven by obnoxious instinct of maintaining supremacy and hegemony over all other kingdoms and the fellow travellers, man is indulging into gross violation and killer neglect which is taking heavy toll of all other the important constituents of this universe. Let us diligently examine.

Basic Bhartiya Culture Ethos and Moral Values not being adhered to

From the perusal of our History we observe that moral as well as cultural Education has been systematically and mischievously deleted from the syllabus by the authorities that be, which became instrumental in distracting and discontinuation of proper cultivation of positive Sanskars, Ethics and values in the tender minds of our upcoming young Generations with regard to their role and responsibility towards guarding and ensuring fool proof protection of our huge natural resources. Resultantly focus has shifted from Service to Money. In the ancient times teaching and farming were considered to be the noblest and the most preferred professions. However, at this crucial juncture, the scenario has turned upside down. Our joint family system was unparalleled and productive, wherein the basic moral teachings used to be imparted right from the day of conception on wards. 'Matre devo bhav', pitre devo bhav, atithi devo bhav, acharya devo bhav, Bharat mata, Gou mata, Ganga mata, Prakriti mata, Sarve bhavantu sukhina, GOD is omni present, omni potent and omni scient, Ahinsa parmodharma, Rashtar sarvopari, Aparigraha (not to amass material wealth more than the actual need), ISHWAR PRANIDHAN (leaving things to God which are beyond our control) and many more. These were the basic and greatly significant primary cultural values being cultivated in the families and the educational Institutions. At the moment this is grossly missing. How we can fill the gap and address it on top most priority is the burning need of the hour.

Decline can be checkmated with concrete action
The crux and indispensable message is "Respect Nature as divine mother; Stop harming Nature forthwith for excessive and unsustainable development, Stamp out production and usage of plastic in totality. It is dangerous for one and all. Look for suitable and fool proof alternatives. Adopt and implement system of organic farming. Desist from destruction of forests, mountains, rivers, lakes, ponds and other water bodies etc, for unwanted and undesirable development. Mind it pl, we owe our life and survival to mother nature, therefore, let us be grateful and respectful to Nature for peace and happiness in this universe. The Mantra is "Plant a tree, Plant a hope of sustainable growth and survival."

Exploring the Rural Tourism Potential in J&K

DR BANARSI LAL

Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is endowed with ample natural resources including soil, water, climatic condition, diversity, topography, rich natural flora etc. which are conducive for the tourism. Jammu and Kashmir is located between 32.17 and 37.06 North latitude and 73.2 and 80.36 East longitude in the Himalayan region. The agro-diversity of J&K varies from sub-tropical in Jammu region and temperate in Kashmir region. The average annual rainfall of these two regions is 1069mm and 660mm. The average temperatures of these two regions are 24.5 and 13.3 Centigrade respectively. High Mountains and small hills, snow peaks, rivers and rivulets, glaciers, valleys and lakes, large forest areas and terraced fields are the integral features of hilly areas of Jammu and Kashmir. J&K lies in the North West of the country. The industrial sector in J&K is not well developed and rural tourism can play a key role for the upliftment of the rural economy. Rural tourism can improve the quality of life of the rural people of J&K. Rural tourism entrepreneurship has gained importance as it is seen as a major driving force behind rural tourism. J&K has lot to offer to the tourists across the globe because of its scenic beauty, a kaleidoscope of traditions, a variety of cultures and an array of opportunities to explore the outdoors activities through sporting and adventure activities.

Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is one of the most beautiful tourists' destinations in the world. This beautiful territory of India is characterized by scenic beauty, folded mountains, deep gorges, natural waterfalls, alpine pastures, lush green forests, rich wild life, snow clad fields, carpet green turfs, gushing fountains, lofty skying grounds, charming gardens, cool pollution free breeze, shimmering lakes, apple orchards, benevolent people etc. Tourism is an important economic activity in J&K. Around 20 per cent of the workforce of the J&K is directly or indirectly dependent on tourism. Jammu and Kashmir is blessed with enormous sites which attract the tourists across the globe. Still there is much scope to accelerate the process of tourism in J&K. The rural areas need to be selected as new sites of attraction for the tourists so that the rural people are benefitted from the process of tourism. In order to bring the rural people on the scene of tourism, rural tourism is one of the important options for J&K and this can strengthen the rural economy. Under rural tourism villages are designed in such a way that fresh and non-polluting environment, traditions, village handicraft, village



folk dance and music, painting and sculpture, history of the region, nature of local work and technology use, architecture, education system, religion, dress, leisure activities etc. can attract tourists from outside.

Rural tourism includes a range of activities, services and amenities provided by the rural people to attract tourists to their area in order to generate extra income and employment. The growth of new employment opportunities is lesser than population growth. Tourism forms an important part in the J&K economy. A need has been felt to extend the tourism development in rural areas and to tap the natural rural beauty of J&K in the form of nature based projects. Industrialization and development is mostly urban centric. The urban stress has led to growing interest in the rural areas. Rural tourism is a new concept which covers all those aspects of travel whereby people from the urban areas learn the ways of life and thoughts of rural people. Rural tourism refers the tourists' interest in the customs of the indigenous and exotic people. This tourism showcases the rural life, culture; heritage and art of rural areas and rural people are socially and economically benefitted and enable the interaction between the villagers and tourists. It can also be termed as agricultural tourism, cultural tourism, nature tourism, ecotourism etc. Rural tourism has certain characteristics like it exists in natural environment, sparsely populated, experience oriented and based on the preservation of culture. In this tourism, tourists visit the homes of local people to understand their customs, traditions, life style, food habits, their festivals, folk dances, songs, rituals etc. It also involves a study, research and purchase of local products. Rural tourism fascinates the domestic and outside tourists as villages in Jammu and Kashmir have their unique styles and splendid natural beauty. The charming beauty of the vil-

lages could be the centers of attraction for the people of urban areas who live in the congested and polluted cities. The urban people lifestyle is stressful due to their hectic lifestyle. They want to get away from their daily routine work and want to enjoy the natural beauties of rural areas during weekends and holidays. Rural tourism can create the job opportunities for the rural people. Environmental consciousness, increasing interest in culture and heritage, improving villages' accessibility etc. are the factors responsible which are shifting the trend towards rural tourism. Under this scheme key geographic regions are identified for the development of rural tourism. Jammu and Kashmir has a great potential for rural tourism, due to its unique heritage, culture and natural attractions.

Rural tourism is useful for J&K where around 80 per cent people reside in the villages. Rural tourism is participatory and designed in such a way so that the economic and social well-being of local people can be improved. It also points the need for careful planning to project the integrity of sites and highlight the village culture. It is planned in such a way that local community needs to ensure that rural tourism sustains and benefits local community socio-culturally and economically and is not simply the gaining the money for government or private entrepreneurs. If we want to commercialize the rural tourism, we need to endeavor to satisfy its obligations towards local villagers. Rural tourism is a socio-cultural event for tourists. Through rural tourism one gets the opportunity to enjoy the natural beauty of villages, observes different cultures and way of life of the rural people. Tourists are a major factor of socio-cultural change. Rural tourism has many advantages. It enhances communication skills, improves self-image of the community, increases employment opportunities, improves educational

opportunities, motivates for learning new things etc. of the rural people. Rural tourism creates new jobs in rural areas, attracts many youths for rural employment and slows down the migration of rural people in the urban areas. New jobs in the rural areas may motivate the rural people for education. Employment opportunities in rural tourism can divert workers from other professions. Employment generated in the villages may improve the status of the rural people and can also increase the income of rural people.

Rural tourism can create confidence among the rural people and revive the local people's interest. Rural people may have pride in their culture, traditions and values. Mass media and hegemonic culture can promote the local folk traditions into oblivion. Rural tourism can also provide the opportunities to study the religious and ritualistic services of the rural areas. These aspects of a culture can fascinate the tourists. Religious rituals, festivals and public performances can provide inputs to symbolic qualities of rural tourism. Rural tourism is an invisible export. It is different from other sectors of industry.

The rural tourism industry can earn a huge amount of money. Rural tourism is thus a source of aid from within J&K, country and out of country. Rural tourism is directly helpful in correcting J&K economic position and can divert the rural people towards progress. Through rural tourism government can gain more economic profits from taxes on things tourists use and buy. Rural tourism has now become a major sector influencing all aspects of a nation's. Government should take proper measures for creating framework for the promotion of rural tourism.

There is need to increase the rural tourism at a fast rate and it should be diversified. Increased tourists traffic in J&K calls for new marketing and pricing policies. There is need of proper planning and effective legislation for resource conservation and balanced developmental activities for the rural tourism. The technical resources are also required for successful promotion of rural tourism. Rural tourism can be fostered if it is an integral part of a balanced economic and social development programme.

It is not only the government but the private sector should also play an equal responsible role for the development of rural tourism. Rural tourism can make our rural areas attractive and prosperous.

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Climate change concerns need attention and investment

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According to new research published in the Journal of Global Health, pregnant women, newborns, children, adolescents and the elderly are facing serious health problems due to climate change, yet the special needs of these groups are largely ignored.

These published articles document the available scientific evidence on the health effects of various climate hazards at key stages in life, from heat waves to air pollution and natural disasters such as wildfires and floods.

The drawbacks far exceed the benefits. There's more to it than just feeling warmer. If that were the case, perhaps climate change would have some positive effects. One of the primary concerns revolves around the rapidity of the warming process. Organisms are facing significant challenges in keeping up with the rapid pace of change.

The drawbacks of species, including ourselves, struggling to cope with the abrupt change far outweigh any benefits.

Together, they show that climate-related health risks are significantly underestimated, with serious, often life-threatening effects, for young and old people and during pregnancy. For which people are paying a heavy price by experiencing extreme heat, the article shows that premature births, the leading cause of childhood deaths, increase during heat waves. While older people are more likely to have heart attacks or breathing problems. Each additional degree Celsius (1 degree Celsius) in daily minimum temperature above 23.9 degrees Celsius has been shown to increase the risk of infant mortality by 22.4 percent.

These studies clearly show that climate change is posing a huge health threat and that some populations are already paying a heavy price. Dr. Anshu Banerjee, the Director for the Department of Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health and Ageing at the World Health Organization (WHO), has said that while awareness of climate change has grown, action to protect the lives of those most at risk has barely scratched the surface of what is needed. "To achieve climate justice, this must be addressed urgently," he added. The collection, titled 'Climate Change Across the Life Course', written by WHO experts and academics from around the world, reports on the specific physical and mental health impacts caused by various climate hazards.

For example, high temperature are associated with adverse birth outcomes, mainly preterm birth and stillbirth, as well as hyper-



tension and gestational diabetes in pregnancy. Heat waves affect cognitive function and, therefore, learning for children and teenagers, while increasing heart attacks and respiratory complications in older people. Also, environmental pollution increases the likelihood of high blood pressure during pregnancy, low birth weight, premature birth, and negative effects on fetal brain and lung development. It increases the risk of respiratory disease in children and the elderly, who face a higher risk of cancer, cardiovascular disease, and pneumonia. In addition, climate-related natural disasters have a significant impact on mental and physical health. Floods and droughts reduce access to safe water and food supplies, increasing diarrheal diseases and malnutrition. Wildfires have been shown to increase respiratory disease and cardiovascular mortality for older people. Although climate change affects everyone, climate-related displacement and disruption have serious consequences for people who need regular access to health services and social support. Infants and the elderly, as well as pregnant women, may have specific physical risk factors, such as difficulty with temperature regulation, vulnerability to dehydration, and/or a weakened immune system. They also face the indirect effects of climate change and related disasters, such as food and water scarcity and an increase in vector and water-borne diseases.

"A healthy environment reflects lifelong health, enabling healthy growth and development in childhood and adolescence, healthy pregnancy and healthy aging," said Anaïda Portella, a scientist at WHO, "reduces greenhouse gas emissions." There is an urgent

need to mitigate climate change to build climate resilience; to take specific actions that protect health at these different stages of life, and to provide health services for those most at risk when climate disasters occur. Steps need to be taken to ensure continuity.

Cognitive Barriers By documenting the health impacts of various climate risks for specific populations, researchers aim to help governments and programs address risks and plan for action. Currently, some climate adaptation measures are tailored to the specific needs of women, infants, children and adolescents, the authors note, as well as older people who may have mobility and cognitive impairments. Measures should include preparing childcare, social care and education systems for extreme weather events and rising temperatures, as well as engaging people of all ages in climate action, dialogue and planning. The year 2023 was the hottest year on record in more than 170 years, and there were many climate emergencies, from wildfires to hurricanes, floods, and extreme heat.

A fatal heatwave swept wide parts of Asia for weeks in April and May 2024, with temperatures reaching 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43.3 Celsius) in India on May 7. Politicians, local news broadcasters, and voters passed out due to the terrible heat. From Japan to the Philippines, the persistent heat disturbed daily life. In Cambodia, pupils and instructors were sent home because hand-held fans offered little respite in poorly ventilated classrooms. Thai farmers saw crops wither and cattle suffer under the scorching sun, resulting in hundreds of heat-related fatalities.

In recent years, the globe has seen an

increase in the incidence of intense heat. In 2023, Phoenix had a weeks-long heatwave with temperatures of 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43.3 degrees Celsius) or above on 31 consecutive days. Europe saw extraordinary temperatures, which killed hundreds and sparked flames in Greece. Elderly people are especially sensitive to excessive heat, and the issue is projected to intensify. Our study on climate change and population aging indicates two alarming patterns. First, global temperatures are higher than ever, with 2015-2023 being the warmest period on record. Second, the world's population is aging, with the number of individuals aged 60 and over predicted to quadruple to 2.1 billion by 2050, accounting for 21% of the population.

By 2050, more than 23% of individuals aged 69 and older would live in areas with peak temperatures over 99.5 degrees Fahrenheit (37.5 degrees Celsius), up from 14% now. This implies that 250 million extra elderly people will suffer dangerously high temperatures. The majority will be in low- and middle-income nations with minimal services and limited access to energy, cooling equipment, and clean drinking water.

Policymakers, communities, and families must recognize and plan for these hazards. High temperatures may be fatal for older persons, aggravating existing health issues and increasing susceptibility to dehydration and bad air quality. Effective regional policies and substantial expenditures are required to safeguard elderly people from rising heat hazards.

Nevertheless, the transition to clean energy infrastructure is unavoidable, and when we do so, we will create a great number of new employments that are safer and cleaner, and we will do it without the hazardous safety record that coal has. Those who are willing to put their heads above their wallets and participate in the activities that are necessary will find that the future is bright and clean. The expense is monetary and there is a short-term impact. The benefits include the preservation of people and species for all of time. There are now deniers who are attempting to complicate the problem by adding ideological hatred to what is fundamentally a requirement for scientific and risk assessments. See many other comments for more information. We should start and finish this transition phase for reducing profits as quickly as possible, and then go on to a future that is cleaner and more sober. It is only those who deny the facts of climate change that make this confusing and unpleasant.

(The writer is a veteran journalist and freelance writer based in Brampton).