



Warwan Valley an unexplored Paradise in Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract

Kashmir valley is popularly known as paradise on earth. It attracts tourists from every corners of the world. Very few states of India have such natural beauty like Kashmir. There are many places which are most attractive and beautiful and have great potential of tourism but are yet to be unexplored and untapped. Warwan Valley in district Kishtwar of Jammu and Kashmir is one among those unexplored tourist spots that can provide many attractions to its visitors in terms of scenic beauty, floristic and faunistic diversity and pollution free environment. This beautiful Valley has vast potential to become an International tourist destination. It has great potential for both summer and winter tourism. The exploration of the Warwan Valley would help in reducing ever increasing tourist pressure on the already developed tourist destinations. Therefore, the present paper is an attempt to identify, investigate and analyse the tourism potential of Warwan Valley. The present study is based on secondary data which has been obtained from various organisations such as Department of Tourism Jammu and Kashmir, Ministry of Tourism Government of India and Economic Survey of Jammu and Kashmir etc. in order to gain fruitful results. In nutshell, it has been suggested that Warwan Valley is one among the various tourist spots of J&K that has huge potential of tourism but are yet to be unexplored and untapped. Thus, concrete and positive steps on the part of everyone concerned, whether administrators, local communities, tour-operators and the policy makers are the need of the hour.

Key words: Tourism, Warwan, Exploration, Potential, Tourist.

Introduction

Tourism has been defined by the world tourism organization as the phenomenon involving the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes. Tourism thus, refers to all activities of visitors, including both "tourists (over-night visitors)" and "same-day visitors" (W.T.O, 1994). Tourism is one of the fastest growing and single largest industries in the world accounting for over one-third of the value of total worldwide services trade. It is an important instrument used for contribution to preservation of the natural landscape and offers a solution to the poverty problem in underdeveloped regions. In addition, it produces a structural utility for the economic development and political progress of the local population, providing resources for training of the visitors and for preservation. Tourism provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people and a greater understanding of local culture, social and environmental issues, etc. The contribution of tourism industry in the global as well as individual perspective is worthwhile. Many countries in the world depend upon tourism as a main source of foreign exchange earnings.

The World Tourism Organization recorded a total number of 763 million international tourist traffics in 2004 and earned US\$ 623.00 billion. Tourism continues to surge as a world economic force, contributing nearly US\$ 5.5 trillion to the world's economy in 2004. The increasing trend of tourist arrivals and earnings is continuing. In 2005, the world tourist arrivals rose to 808 million. The World Tourism 2020 Vision forecasted that this figure will reach to 1,561.1 million in 2020 (Jain, Deepak, 2013). This continued growth in tourism business throughout the world is encouraging and

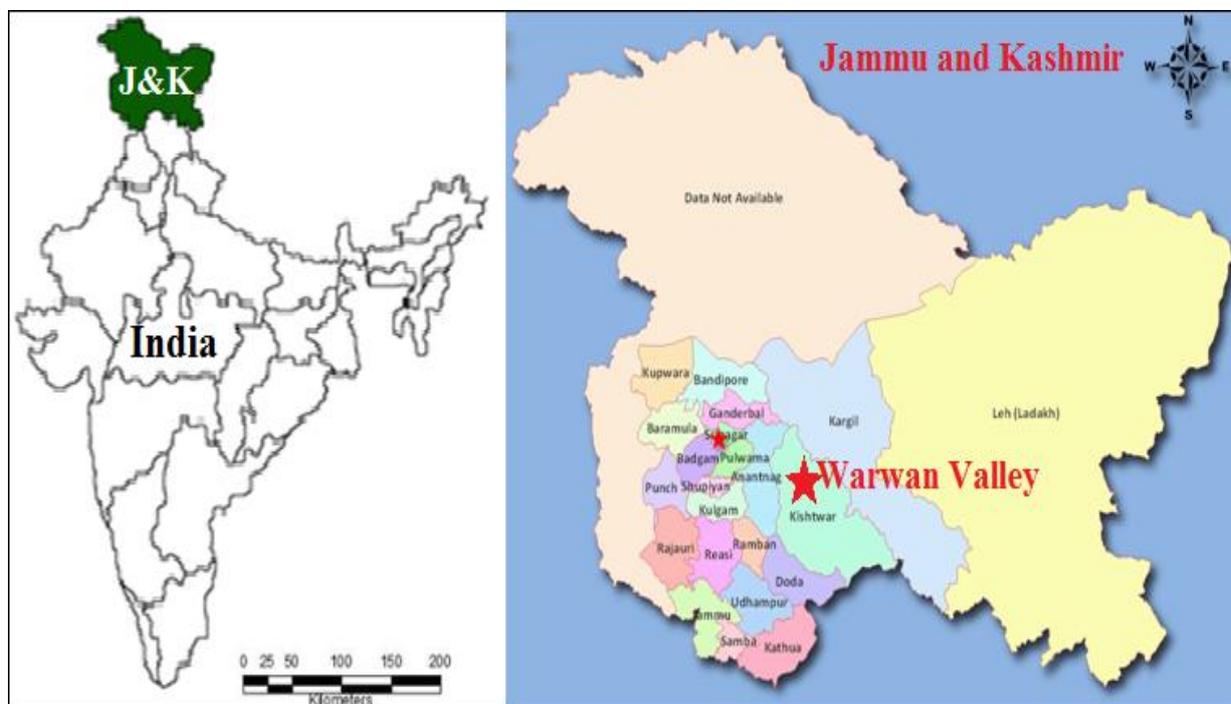
nations are becoming more concerned to attract more tourists to their own destinations and trying to promote this sector as a major source for the economic development of the nation. India is not left unaffected by this trend. The World Travel and Tourism Council calculated that tourism generated US\$ 121 billion or 6.4 percent of the India's GDP in 2011. It was responsible for 39.3 million jobs, 7.9 percent of its total employment. The GDP of the tourism sector has expanded 229 percent between 1990 and 2011. The sector is predicted to grow at an average annual rate of 7.7 percent in the next decade. In a 2011 forecast, the World Travel and Tourism Council predicted the annual growth to be 8.8 percent between 2011 and 2021 (Wani et al., 2013). This gave India the fifth rank among countries with the fastest growing tourism industry.

The state of J&K has been a place of attraction to the tourists from the very beginning. Because of its natural beauty and cultural heritage, it attracts tourists from every corner of the world. The bubbling streams, snow covered peaks, evergreen forests, lush green meadows, cool and sweet water, pleasant climate and lily laden lakes are unparalleled and unmatched throughout the world and offers good attraction to the tourists. The Mughals aptly called Kashmir 'The Paradise on Earth'. Tourism is one of the potential sectors of Jammu and Kashmir and provides jobs to thousands of youths. But there are many sites which have great potential of tourism but are yet to be unexplored by the decision maker. Warwan Valley is one among those hidden tourist sites which has rich potential for tourism. It is best tourist destination due to its natural beauty, landscape, meadows bubbling streams, archaeological sites, picnic spots, forest and wildlife. It is a perfect hub for promoting adventure tourism. The green patches provide shelter to some of the best plant, bird, mammals, reptiles and amphibians species. In this area, the scope of nature based tourism, research based tourism, culture based tourism, and eco- tourism is quite evident. It is high time we explore our natural treasures and utilize it.

Study Area

The area of study is Warwan valley which is an unexplored region and unknown tourist paradise. It is located in the south-eastern part of Jammu and Kashmir and falls under the jurisdiction of Kishtwar district about 68 Km from the district headquarter and 86 Km from the Srinagar summer capital of J&K. It lies between $33^{\circ} 39' - 33^{\circ} 55' N$ latitude and $75^{\circ} 28' - 75^{\circ} 41' E$ longitude and covers an area of 305 Km^2 . Warwan Valley is situated in the bosom of Himalaya at an altitude of approximately 7000 feet from sea level. It is nestling between the stark, sharp Ladakh side and the gorgeously green Kashmir valley and remains completely cut off from the rest of the world for around 7 months in a year. Dasbal (the gate way of Warwan) is the first village from south and Sukhnai village is terminal point of Warwan in north. It is connected through lone vehicular Road with Anantnag district in south Kashmir via a spine-tingling and tricky Margan Pass. This pass is the only connecting link to the Warwan valley and is known as Life Line of Warwan in summers and Valley of Deaths in winter. This route remains open in May- June for brief summer season and closes in November-December every year. Warwan Stream a tributary of River Chenab, flows throughout the Warwan Valley in a zigzag manner and forms the main source of its irrigation and drinking water. The area exhibits complex topography with wide range in altitude and climatic conditions, resulting in diverse habitats in the form of forest lands, subalpine and alpine pastures, mountain slopes, glaciers and alpine lakes etc. The climate is predominantly temperate with wet and cold winters and relatively dry mild summers. It is marked by well defined seasonality, with four seasons a year- winter (December-February), spring (March-May), summer (June-August) and autumn (September-November).

Fig. 1: Location of Warwan Valley in Kishtwar district of J&K (India).



Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the present study are:

- (1) To highlight the potentiality and wide scope of tourism in Warwan Valley.
- (2) To create interest and awareness among people in tourism.
- (3) To suggest necessary recommendations for the development of tourism in Warwan Valley.

Methodology and Database

The methodological principles adopted for the present analyses is based on empirical observation conducting through field studies and use of secondary data obtained from published and unpublished sources such as Department of Tourism J&K, Economic Survey J&K 2013-2014, United Nations World Tourism Organisation, World Travel and Tourism Council, Ministry of Tourism-GOI etc.

Warwan Valley an Unexplored Paradise

Warwan Valley with vast tourism potential is one of the relatively unexplored grasslands and unknown tourists paradise situated in the lap of Himalayan Mountains. It is a part of a unique ecological area, comprising Mountain and Grassland with flora, Taiga or Coniferous forest. The Valley which is as beautiful as Gulmarg and Pahalgam, but less spoiled and more pristine is located in south-eastern periphery of Jammu and Kashmir (India) and falls under the jurisdiction of district Kishtwar. The valley with its ideal setting will surely capture the hearts and the minds of all visitors to the region. The approach to Warwan Valley, passing through various forest ranges provides an ample opportunity for those in the search of adventure. The Valley and the inhabitants living here in and the surrounding areas, provide a unique opportunity for the study and understanding of cultural

and biological diversity. Because of its unique natural resources, Warwan Valley is the very few of the tourist spots which possess hills, streams, and lots of natural beauty and greenery within. It is probably the most beautiful place in Jammu and Kashmir and an ideal place for adventure camping. It is a real paradise for the botanists, nature lovers, trekkers, wild lifers and eco-tourists. Warwan landscape is colourful and enchanting due to lush green verdant conifer forests, purling mountain brooks, sparkling streams, beautiful blooms, magnificent birdlife, and diverse kinds of mammals.

Warwan valley which is one of the most beautiful hamlets remains completely out of reach for the modern world for about six month during winters. The gloomy winter not only turns the whole valley into white carpeted canyon but also withers the dynamic beauty of this region. Without basic amenities of life viz. connectivity, electricity and communication, hope is the only way to survive for the inhabitants of Warwan valley during these extreme weather conditions. But once winter is over, spring god comes with a new ray of hope, loaded with a heap of joy for the region. In this season the beauty of the valley wakes from the long winter sleep and moves around like an attractive damsel during summer. With the onset of April snow starts melting and seeds of different floras buried under previous years snow starts germinating, and in the month of June whole valley is in full bloom. The lush green pastures, gentle breeze, milky waterfalls, and clear sky in mid June present the real beauty of nature in its purest form.

Dasbal (the gate way of Warwan) is the first village from south and Sukhnai village is terminal point of Warwan in north. Ascending north from Sukhnai village, a semi-glacial adventurous Lanwlla-Gangsla pass connects the Valley with Panikhar village of Kargil. In the middle of Lanwlla-Gangsla pass, Warwan Stream a key tributary of River Chinab originates which flows through the middle of Warwan Valley in a zigzag fashion. It provides a unique and mesmerizing look to the area with steep gorges and wide plains on the way. This stream is a rich habitat for world's rarest and critically endangered rainbow trout fish species. Inshan is the main village of Warwan Valley where one can get official accommodation (recently constructed Government Dak Bungalow and a Rest house of Forest Department). Warwan Valley is connected through lone vehicular Road with Anantnag district in south Kashmir via a spine-tingling and tricky Margan Pass situated at an elevation of 4473 meters above sea level. Margan pass is the only connecting link to the valley and is known as lifeline of Warwan in summers and Valley of Deaths in winter. This route remains open in May- June for brief summer season and closes in November-December every year.

Warwan Valley is also famous for its high mountain passes which have been the mountaineers delight since British era. The area exhibits complex topography with wide range in altitude and climatic conditions, resulting in diverse habitats in the form of forest lands, subalpine and alpine pastures, mountain slopes, glaciers and alpine lakes. This beautiful Valley has been rated among India's top ten trekking destination with a wide range of landscape. The climate is predominantly temperate with wet and cold winters and relatively dry mild summers. It is marked by well defined seasonality, with four seasons a year- winter (December-February), spring (March-May), summer (June-August) and autumn (September-November).

Mariv Sudir at warwan is ideal for the organization of water sports like river rafting, kayaking, water skiing and canoeing. The slopes between Gumri, Rikanwas, Margi and basmina are ideally suited for winter sports such as skiing, Iceskating, icehockey etc. The valley has good spots like Tuiller, Nopachi, Marwah, Tata Pani, Dashbal and Inshan. Like other parts of Pir Panjal range, Warwan Valley has also been bestowed by nature with pristine beauty and rich diversity of flora and fauna. One can see the canopy of thick forests of cedrus, pinus, abies, oak and birch on the mountains which serve as a habitat for many endemic wildlife like Snow leopard, Himalayan black bear, Kashmir stag, mountain crow, Himalayan Monal, Eagle, and many species of Pheasants. Apart from conventional floras and faunas, the Valley is rich in medicinal plants with the likes of Aconitum, Viola, Digitalis, Podophyllum, Bergenia, Artemesia, Rheum, Primula, Gentiana and many species of fungi among which Ghuchhi (*Morchella*) is found abundantly in wild.

Fig.2: Panoramic View of Warwan Valley



Conclusion and Suggestions

In the concluding remarks, it is observed that the tourism industry has emerged as a competitive and promising sector. This sector earns not only foreign currency but also creates image of the country and cultural diversification. Warwan Valley an unexplored hub for adventure tourism is paradise for nature's lovers. Its location, greenery, evergreen forest, mountains, hills, valley streams, cultural heritage and rich bio-diversity provide a wide base for the development of adventure tourism. It is a part of a unique eco-system with a distinct bio-diversity. The valley with its ideal setting will surely capture the hearts and the minds of all visitors to the region. In order to promote the natural tourism potential of Warwan Valley, it is very important to develop a set of objectives, which will encouraging visitors to the area and will also simultaneously help in protecting and conserving the existing environment of the Valley. For an overall sustainable development of Warwan Valley as a viable tourist destination, an integrated approach to tourism planning and conserving of the rich, natural eco-system is required. In this context, traditional tourism in terms of accommodation, accessibility, road network, services and related marketing and economic development need to be combined and integrated with a tourism development plan that primarily focuses on the preservation of the existing Eco-System. Thus there is an urgent need to discover and set-up new ways and means through which negative impacts can be minimized and positive impacts can be strengthened keeping the basic concept of eco-tourism in mind. Therefore, it is asserted that if all these measures are implemented and augmented, the tourism sector in Warwan Valley would yield a positive result.

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