



**SRI VENKATESWARA  
INTERNSHIP PROGRAM FOR  
RESEARCH IN ACADEMICS  
(SRI -VIPRA)**



**Project Report of 2024: SVP2455**  
**“Understanding changed livelihood patterns with tourism  
hot spots”**


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**Sri Venkateswara College**  
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## SRI-VIPRA Project 2024




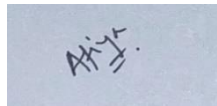

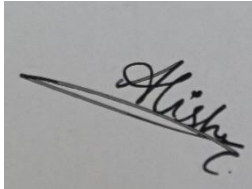
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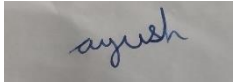

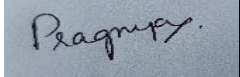

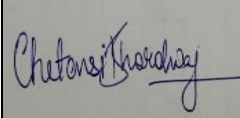



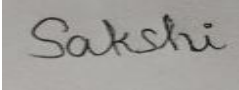
## SRIVIPRA PROJECT 2024



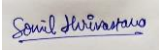
**Title : Understanding the changing livelihood patterns with tourism hotspots**

<p><b>Name of Mentor: Dr. Satheesh Perumalla</b></p> <p><b>Name of Department: Sociology</b></p> <p><b>Designation: Assistant Professor</b></p>	
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## Certificate of Originality

This is to certify that the aforementioned students from Sri Venkateswara College have Participated in the summer project **SVP-2455** titled “**Understanding changed livelihood patterns with tourism hot spots**”. The participants have carried out the research project work under my Guidance and supervision from 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2024 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024. The work Carried out is original and carried out in an online/offline/hybrid mode.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Sathish", written in a cursive style.

**Signature of Mentor**

## Acknowledgement

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to our Mentor **Dr. Satheesh Perumalla, Department of Sociology of Sri Venkateswara College**, for valuable contributions, guidance, and support in the Preparation of this report. Their expertise and assistance have been instrumental in Achieving the goals of this project. We are also thankful to **Prof. Vajala Ravi, Principal of Sri Venkateswara College** for providing us with this wonderful opportunity to complete the project.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>S.No.</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Page no.</b>
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	TOURISM IN VARANASI- MALLAH COMMUNITY	3
3.	IMPACT OF TOURISM ON DOMS OF BANARAS	4
4.	TOURISM, TRIBAL COMMUNITIES, AND LIVELIHOOD: CHOLANAIKKAN AND KATTUNAIKKAN COMMUNITIES IN NILAMBUR	5
5.	TRIBES OF ARAKU VALLEY	6
6.	THE RISE OF TOURISM IN AYODHAYA	7
7.	BLENDING CULTURES, BOOSTING TOURISM- PONDICHERRY	8
8.	TOURISM IN HILLS	9
9.	IMPACTS OF TOURISM ON RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES OF BIHAR	10
10.	RAJGIR AND NALANDA TOURISM	11
11.	KASHMIR TOURISM: ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES	12

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The history of tourism stretches back thousands of years, as people have long traveled for leisure, pilgrimage, exploration, and other purposes. Throughout history, individuals have embarked on long journeys to visit religious and spiritual sites or to discover new landscapes and unknown territories. However, as society evolved with advances in technology and shifts in political and economic landscapes, tourism also underwent significant changes. Over time, the sector has become a vital part of the global economy, culture, and society.

In the past, tourism was primarily centered around religion, spirituality, local customs, culture, and architecture. Popular forms of tourism included spiritual pilgrimages, cultural activities, festivals, and heritage tourism. In modern times, while these traditional forms remain important, new trends have emerged, such as eco-tourism, adventure tourism, trekking, rural tourism, dark tourism, and business tourism. These contemporary forms of tourism offer a broader range of experiences for travelers and have a significant impact on the livelihoods of many local communities.

Tourism is recognized as a significant driver of economic activity, particularly for its role in creating employment, boosting local trade, generating government revenue, and earning foreign exchange. The livelihoods of regional communities in tourist hotspots are heavily influenced by the nature of tourism activities in the area. As tourism develops, it profoundly impacts the social structures, economic systems, and environmental management practices of local populations. People often shift from traditional occupations such as farming, fishing, animal husbandry, and handicraft production to more profitable tourism-related jobs, such as working in hotels, restaurants, and transportation services.

Tourism can also act as a catalyst for cultural commodification, where local artisans and craftsmen begin producing handicrafts to cater to tourist demand rather than to meet local needs. It opens up new opportunities for women and youth to engage in income-generating activities outside the household, sometimes altering family dynamics and relationships. This shift not only diversifies the economic base of communities but also reshapes their social and cultural landscapes.

The present study is an attempt to understand the changes that are going on lives of different communities across different places in India owing to increasing tourism in different respective locations. In this case under Srivipra Project, a team of ten students came forward to work and explore the discourse surrounding tourism of different types ranging religious tourism, ascetic tourism, adventure tourism. Very interesting insights were brought in the process which got explained in the different headings in the following chapters. One researcher worked on the Nishad (Mallah) community belonging to Varanasi, where the researcher brought out analysis how increased tourism impacted their traditional expertise in water-related professions, including fishing, ferrying, and operating or making of boats. The other researcher worked on Don community of Varanasi. This community is famous for their important role in cremation work in ghats of



ganga river. Another Researcher explored how tourism has impacted the socio-economic structures and occupations of Nilambur's tribal population. One researcher worked on the Gadaba, Bagata, and Khond tribes in Araku Valley, a region where tourism has gained momentum and explores the multifaceted impact of tourism on their lives, livelihoods, and cultural identity. There is a work on exploring religious tourism discourse in Ayodhya temple expansion and its consequences on the people living in that habitat. An exploratory account on Indo French communities with increased tourism in Pondicherry has been covered. There is research work done on Bhotia community in chemoli district of Uttarakhand. Exclusive research was carried on Bodh Gaya in Bihar covering Sikh and Buddhist communities and impact on this communities with increased tourism in this region. A study was carried out in Nalanda and Rajgir, Bihar to look in to the impact on local communities with increased tourism in this area. Finally, a study was covered on Kashmir tourism and its impact on Kashmiri Muslims

## 2. TOURISM IN VARANASI- MALLAH COMMUNITY

The Nishads, also known by subgroups such as Mallah, Kewat, Bind, and Majhi, are traditionally associated with water-related professions like fishing, ferrying, and boatmaking. This community, categorized as OBC (Other Backward Classes) in Uttar Pradesh, has faced historical discrimination and limited access to essential services such as education and healthcare. Their significance is deeply rooted in Indian mythology, with figures like Kevat, the boatman who ferried Lord Rama across the river, symbolizing their role in ancient texts like the *Ramayana*. Despite their integral role in sustaining riverine life and trade along the Ganges, colonial classifications, such as the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, marginalized them due to their mobile lifestyle.

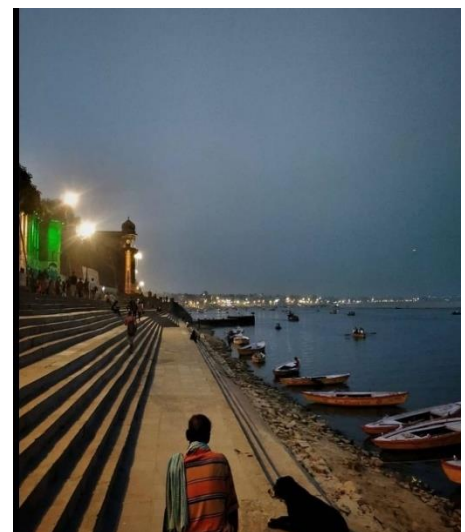
Tourism, particularly in Varanasi, has brought both opportunities and challenges for the Nishads. The community has maintained its traditional roles as boatmen, ferrying pilgrims and tourists across the river, especially during festivals like Dev Deepawali and Dussehra. However, competition has intensified with wealthier boat owners and operators offering larger, modern boats, marginalizing those without the resources to upgrade their equipment. This economic hierarchy within the Nishad boatmen community creates disparities, with traditional rowboat operators often struggling to compete. The seasonal nature of tourism in Varanasi further exacerbates these challenges, leading to periods of financial insecurity for many Nishads.

The community has organized itself to protect its economic interests, particularly by establishing informal territorial control over specific ghats. This arrangement helps maintain order during high demand periods and ensures that ancestral rights are preserved. However, the rise of corporate tourism initiatives, such as the Alaknanda luxury cruise, has posed a significant threat to their livelihood. These modern, government-supported services attract wealthier tourists and monopolize prime docking spaces near major ghats, reducing opportunities for traditional Nishad boatmen. The high-end cruise services are less affected by the seasonal nature of tourism, unlike the Nishads, whose income fluctuates depending on festivals.

The socioeconomic landscape of the Nishad community is characterized by a constant struggle for survival and adaptation in the face of modernization. The influx of tourists during festivals boosts their income, but the community remains vulnerable to the volatility of tourism, especially during non-festival seasons. Many Nishads have been forced to diversify their income by engaging in other professions, such as fishing and agriculture, to cope with the economic instability. The community's challenges reflect broader issues of caste-based marginalization, competition from corporate tourism, and the impact of modernizing riverine infrastructure, all of which continue to shape the future of the Nishad people in Varanasi.



View of ghat



Handboats on Ganga

### 3. IMPACT OF TOURISM ON DOMS OF BANARAS

The Dom community, live near the Manikarnika and Harishchandra Ghats, has been involved in cremation work for generations. Their livelihood largely depends on performing cremation rituals, for which a Dom worker typically earns Rs 300-350 per body—an amount insufficient to support a family. Despite being essential to the cremation process, they still face social discrimination and untouchability, which has only marginally improved over time. Economically and socially, they continue to be regarded as a backward section of society. The community firmly believes in maintaining this hereditary occupation, with children expected to follow the same path as their ancestors. Low literacy and economic struggles further limit their opportunities for upward mobility.

Women in the Dom community are prohibited from participating in cremation work, and their roles are restricted to cooking and household chores. The nature of work—dealing with corpses all day—is both physically and mentally challenging. Dom workers must ensure that everybody is fully cremated, often having to handle half-burnt remains, which exposes them to burns and other hazards. Due to the grim and intense nature of their tasks, many Dom workers turn to alcohol, which they often receive as a form of tax or offering from the families of the deceased. Alcohol serves as a coping mechanism for the psychological toll of working so closely with death.

While the Dom Raja, the community leader, enjoys a relatively better lifestyle as he oversees the collection of taxes at the ghat, the rest of the community continues to live in poverty. The Dom Raja's family, including his son Om, is more financially secure and engaged in education and other activities, reflecting a stark contrast to the rest of the Dom community. However, with the rise in tourism, some Doms have found additional work as tour guides or by opening small shops selling ritualistic items, but this shift has not significantly improved their overall economic conditions.

Despite some engagement with tourism, the Dom community remains heavily reliant on cremation work for their survival. Educational opportunities for children are limited, with few pursuing higher educations. The life of most Doms is marked by social and economic backwardness, with only the Dom Raja enjoying a better standard of living. The community's struggles highlight the need for more scholarly attention and research to understand their plight and develop ways to improve their living conditions.



View Manikarnika Ghat

#### **4. TOURISM, TRIBAL COMMUNITIES, AND LIVELIHOOD: CHOLANAIKKAN AND KATTUNAIKKAN COMMUNITIES IN NILAMBUR**

Nilambur is celebrated for its picturesque landscapes, rich wildlife, and significant historical importance. The region is particularly famous for its teak forests, waterfalls, and tribal heritage, positioning it as an emerging eco-tourism destination. The natural beauty of Nilambur not only attracts tourists but also plays a crucial role in the lives of local tribal communities. While tourism brings opportunities, it also presents challenges, particularly affecting the indigenous groups as they navigate economic and cultural changes.

Eco-tourism can be defined as a sustainable tourism model that aims to protect natural resources while fostering the socio-economic development of local communities. Its goal is to provide eco-friendly travel experiences that minimize environmental impact and enhance the well-being of local populations. In Nilambur, ecotourism significantly aids in environmental conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources. However, it can also have adverse effects on the local ecosystem.

Successful ecotourism depends on balancing social, environmental, and economic factors. It promotes practices such as recycling, energy conservation, and water management while creating economic opportunities for local residents. When executed responsibly, with collaboration from government entities, tourism officials, and local communities, ecotourism can contribute to sustainable development in forest areas, serving as a tool for alleviating poverty and protecting the environment.

Nilambur boasts a variety of natural and cultural attractions that offer visitors experiences beyond Kerala's typical backwaters and beaches. The Teak Museum highlights the region's teak industry history and attracts both tourists and researchers. It features some of the oldest teak plantations globally, including Conolly's Plot, named after H.V. Conolly, a British official who played a crucial role in establishing teak plantations in the 19th century. The Adyanpara Waterfalls, known for their stunning views, are particularly popular during the monsoon season, while the Nedumkayam Rainforest is a haven for eco-tourists, rich in biodiversity and wildlife.

Cultural travelers may find the Nilambur Kovilakam, the royal residence of the Nilambur monarchs, particularly fascinating due to its traditional Kerala architecture, which provides insight into the region's aristocratic history. Nearby attractions like the Meenmutty Waterfalls and Silent Valley National Park offer additional options for nature lovers. Silent Valley, a few hours' drive from Nilambur, is one of India's last untouched tropical rainforests, home to endangered species such as the Lion-tailed Macaque. This scenic route through Nilambur has become a popular choice for travelers heading to these destinations.

The rise in tourism has had mixed effects on the indigenous tribal communities, such as the Cholanaikkan, Kattunaikkan, Paniyan, Aranadan/Eranadan, and Aalar, who have historically relied on traditional livelihoods like agriculture and forest resource gathering. While tourism has opened new avenues for economic engagement, it has also introduced significant socio-economic and cultural challenges. Government initiatives have aimed to provide essential healthcare, education, and economic support to these communities, but challenges remain in maintaining their cultural integrity amid the evolving tourism landscape.

## 5. TRIBES OF ARAKU VALLEY

Araku Valley, located in northeastern Andhra Pradesh, is a serene hill station celebrated for its stunning natural beauty. Nestled in the Eastern Ghats, it features rich biodiversity, verdant coffee plantations, and a lively tribal culture. Situated about 114 kilometers from Visakhapatnam at an elevation of approximately 1,300 meters, the valley is surrounded by prominent mountain ranges like Galikonda and Sunkarimetta, which enhance its scenic allure. The region's hilly terrain, dense forests, and pleasant climate make it a favorite spot for nature lovers and adventure enthusiasts. Attractions such as the breathtaking Katiki and Chaparai waterfalls, along with the famous Borra Caves known for their unique stalactite and stalagmite formations, draw numerous visitors.

Historically, Araku Valley has been inhabited by indigenous tribes that have preserved their cultural traditions while coexisting harmoniously with nature. The area gained prominence during British colonial rule, which recognized its agricultural potential, especially for coffee cultivation. Today, Araku is famous for producing high-quality organic coffee, particularly the Araku Arabica variety, which has been granted a Geographical Indication (GI) tag. The local Coffee Museum offers visitors insights into the history and processes of coffee production, showcasing the region's cultural richness alongside its natural wonders.

Tourism in Araku Valley flourishes not only because of its natural landscapes but also due to its diverse attractions. Key sites include the Borra Caves, known for their intricate limestone formations, and Padmapuram Gardens, celebrated for their botanical diversity. The gardens feature tree-top huts and a toy train, providing a delightful experience for visitors. Chaparai Waterfalls is a peaceful location for nature lovers, while Katiki Waterfalls offers a more secluded retreat. The Coffee Museum is a must-visit for coffee enthusiasts, offering a glimpse into local coffee culture and production methods.

Along the route to Araku Valley, travelers can find small honey-producing biofactories, indicated by blue boxes where local farmers harvest honey. This eco-friendly initiative enables tourists to buy fresh honey directly from producers, supporting the local economy with minimal investment. The culinary offerings in Araku are equally noteworthy, highlighting local specialties like Bamboo Chicken, a traditional dish cooked inside bamboo stalks. This unique dining experience is prepared by local tribes and can be pre-ordered for enjoyment after exploring nearby attractions.

For those interested in eco-tourism and adventure, the Tyda Nature Camp provides opportunities for jungle trekking, rock climbing, and bird watching. Tyda exemplifies the valley's dedication to sustainable tourism while preserving its natural environment. With a temperate climate, Araku is an attractive destination year-round, particularly from October to March when the weather is especially conducive to outdoor activities. The valley also features the Dhimsa tribal dance and offers tree-top houses for unique accommodations, enhancing the overall visitor experience.

Araku Valley is home to diverse tribal communities, each rich in cultural heritage and traditions. Despite modernization pressures, these communities have managed to uphold their traditional lifestyles. The Araku Tribal Museum showcases their unique culture, daily practices, and handicrafts. However, the Adivasi tribes face significant challenges, including low literacy rates and high mortality rates. Nevertheless, they maintain a sustainable relationship with nature, relying on local resources for their livelihoods. Each of the 156 tribal villages contributes to a rich tapestry of culture and tradition, fostering community cooperation among various tribal groups.

## 6. THE RISE OF TOURISM IN AYODHAYA

The Ram Mandir in Ayodhya stands as more than just a religious monument; it serves as a pivotal force shaping the region's socio-economic landscape. As the government embarks on this transformative journey, it is crucial to acknowledge the multifaceted impacts of the project—not only in terms of tourism and economic growth but also on the lives of the local communities directly affected by its development. Central to this exploration is a critical understanding: development must be both inclusive and equitable. The construction of the Ram Mandir presents a unique opportunity to address historical injustices related to land acquisition and displacement, particularly among marginalized groups such as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. For these communities, the consequences of land acquisition extend far beyond the physical loss of property; they involve disruptions to livelihoods, cultural heritage, and social cohesion. Any policy that fails to account for their voices risks perpetuating cycles of marginalization and exclusion.

When we examine the various dimensions of the Ram Mandir's impact, we see that this narrative is not just about bricks and mortar—it is about people. The lives of individuals intertwined with the land, their stories of resilience, and the strength of their communities often remain overlooked, yet they should be at the forefront of any conversation about development. To ensure that the benefits of the Ram Mandir's construction reach every segment of society, the government must adopt a holistic approach that prioritizes fairness, justice, and community empowerment.

Moreover, land redistribution must be seen as an essential element of a just development strategy. Allocating land to displaced individuals and supporting agricultural cooperatives will economically and socially empower marginalized groups. By doing so, the government can help these communities regain stability while promoting sustainable practices that respect both the environment and local traditions. The involvement of local communities in decision-making is indispensable. By forming advisory councils and engaging residents in participatory planning, the government can ensure that development initiatives align with the community's unique needs and aspirations. This approach will not only make policies more effective but also empower individuals to take an active role in shaping their futures.

Looking ahead, it is essential to establish monitoring and accountability mechanisms that uphold transparency and social justice. An independent oversight body, including representatives from civil society, should oversee compliance with land acquisition policies and assess the socio-economic impacts of development regularly. This commitment to accountability will foster a culture of responsibility within the government and instill confidence in local communities.

The Ram Mandir represents a defining moment in Ayodhya's history, one that holds the potential to spark transformative change. However, this change must be rooted in inclusivity and respect for the rights of all residents. The recommendations outlined in this report offer a blueprint for ensuring that the benefits of the Ram Mandir's construction are shared equitably across all sections of society. By amplifying the voices and needs of marginalized communities, encouraging local engagement, and promoting sustainable practices, the government can turn this monumental project into a catalyst for lasting positive change.

## 7. BLENDING CULTURES, BOOSTING TOURISM- PONDICHERRY

Pondicherry has experienced consistent growth in tourism, drawing over 1.7 million domestic tourists and nearly 150,000 international visitors in 2019. Domestic tourists primarily come from neighboring states such as Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala, while international visitors, especially from France and Europe, are attracted by Pondicherry's colonial heritage and spiritual retreats. The tourism influx peaks during the cooler months between October and March, when the weather is ideal for sightseeing and beach activities. Tourism is a significant contributor to Pondicherry's economy, supporting local businesses, hotels, restaurants, and tour operators, with its proximity to cities like Chennai and Bangalore further enhancing its appeal as a weekend getaway.

The government plays a pivotal role in promoting tourism, with initiatives such as the Swadesh Darshan Scheme, which includes Pondicherry in the Puducherry Heritage Circuit to improve infrastructure around key tourist spots like the French Quarter and Sri Aurobindo Ashram. These efforts aim to boost tourism while preserving the city's cultural and historical integrity. The Incredible India Campaign has helped elevate Pondicherry's profile internationally, highlighting its unique cultural blend. Additionally, the e-Visa system has simplified travel for foreign tourists, particularly from Europe, enhancing accessibility. The restoration of colonial buildings into boutique hotels and cafes has further boosted tourism and local employment.

Despite its growing popularity, tourism in Pondicherry faces challenges such as its seasonal nature, with a significant decline during the summer and monsoon months, affecting businesses dependent on tourism. While the main tourist areas like the French Quarter are well-maintained, rural regions still lack adequate infrastructure. Addressing these gaps could offer a more comprehensive experience to visitors. Additionally, the environmental impact of increasing tourist numbers, particularly in waste management and water conservation, is a concern. Although eco-friendly tourism is being promoted, more needs to be done to preserve Pondicherry's natural environment.

Pondicherry's Indo-French community, with its deep-rooted cultural fusion of French and Tamil traditions, also plays a vital role in its tourism appeal. Originating from the colonial period when the French East India Company established its settlement in 1674, this community blends French and Tamil influences in language, religion, and lifestyle. French is still widely spoken in areas like the French Quarter, while Tamil remains dominant in everyday interactions. The community's bilingual nature, along with its mix of French Catholic traditions and Tamil festivals like Pongal, offers a rich cultural experience for tourists.

The unique culinary fusion of French and Tamil cuisines further adds to Pondicherry's charm. French-inspired cafes and restaurants, alongside Tamil eateries, serve a blend of French pastries, baguettes, and local dishes like dosa and idli, reflecting the region's multicultural heritage. Establishments like Satsanga offer a mix of French and Tamil flavors, while street food stalls serve fusion dishes like crepes with local spices. Additionally, the city's growing café culture caters to younger visitors and digital nomads, contributing to its modern, cosmopolitan vibe.

Pondicherry's tourism sector also includes educational and spiritual tourism, with institutions like the French Institute of Pondicherry and Auroville attracting long-term visitors. The picturesque French Quarter and beaches are popular for photography and social media content, particularly pre-wedding shoots. However, the rise in tourist numbers has also led to challenges like environmental degradation, gentrification, and seasonal fluctuations in tourist activity. To ensure sustainable growth, Pondicherry must balance modern development with the preservation of its unique cultural and natural heritage.

## 8. TOURISM IN HILLS

Chamoli, a district in Uttarakhand, is renowned for its natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and spiritual significance. Located in the central Himalayan region, it became a separate district in 1960. Chamoli is home to various tourist destinations like Badrinath, the Valley of Flowers, Hemkund Sahib Gurudwara, Auli, and Joshimath, which attract spiritual pilgrims and adventure seekers alike. Historically, the region has been influenced by a blend of cultural traditions from the Garhwali, Bhotia, and other ethnic groups who have shaped its distinct cultural identity.

The Bhotia community, which is the focus of this study, has long lived in the high-altitude regions of Chamoli, particularly in places like Niti Valley and Mana Village. Historically, they were engaged in cross-border trade with Tibet, along with pastoralism and farming. However, after the closure of the Indo-Tibetan border post-1962, the Bhotias shifted to alternative livelihoods, including agriculture, wool textile production, and handicrafts. This transition also coincided with their recognition as a Scheduled Tribe in 1967, opening up new opportunities in education and government jobs.

In recent decades, the rise of tourism has significantly impacted the Bhotia community's livelihoods. With increasing numbers of tourists visiting Chamoli for its natural beauty and spiritual destinations, many Bhotias have transitioned to tourism-related jobs such as operating homestays, providing transport services, and guiding trekkers. Tourism has also helped in preserving traditional crafts and cultural practices, as visitors often seek authentic experiences involving local handicrafts and rural lifestyles.

Despite the economic benefits, the seasonal nature of tourism means that many Bhotias still rely on subsistence farming and pastoralism to sustain their livelihoods during the off-season. Moreover, there is a clear gendered division of labor, with men typically engaging in tourism-related activities while women continue traditional agricultural and handicraft production. This shift has altered family dynamics and gender roles within the community, further influencing social structures.

The environmental impact of tourism, particularly in the fragile Himalayan ecosystem, has raised concerns. Overdevelopment and unregulated construction have led to ecological problems such as landslides, which threaten both the tourism industry and the livelihoods of local communities. For example, the 2023 Joshimath landslide incident caused a significant decline in tourist numbers, severely affecting local businesses dependent on tourism. This has sparked protests from locals, demanding sustainable development practices.



## **9. IMPACTS OF TOURISM ON RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES OF BIHAR**

The economic and social impacts of tourism on the Sikh and Buddhist communities in Bihar exhibit both similar and divergent trends. Both communities have experienced an economic boost due to tourism, but the nature of these benefits differs significantly. The Sikh community around Patna Sahib has witnessed a shift from traditional occupations to tourism-related ventures such as hospitality and transportation. However, the distribution of these economic benefits remains uneven, with smaller businesses often struggling against larger enterprises. Meanwhile, the Buddhist community in Bodh Gaya has benefitted from significant foreign investment, particularly from Buddhist-majority countries. Despite this, economic inequality persists, with international organizations controlling much of the infrastructure, leaving local Buddhists marginalized.

On a social level, tourism has led to both positive and negative changes. For the Sikh community, increased interaction with tourists has fostered cultural pride but has also strained traditional social bonds. The Buddhist community, on the other hand, has seen greater engagement with international Buddhist networks, which has enriched local cultural life. However, social fragmentation has also increased, as the tourism boom has disproportionately benefitted certain sections of the community, leaving others on the periphery.

Culturally, both communities face the challenge of balancing tourism with the preservation of their religious practices. For the Sikh community, there has been a notable commercialization of religious festivals, where rituals are often tailored to suit tourists. In contrast, the Buddhist community has seen more direct efforts toward cultural preservation, largely due to the presence of international monasteries that focus on maintaining the authenticity of Buddhist practices.

Despite these preservation efforts, both communities struggle with the pressures of commercialization. The growing tourist demand has led to the simplification or alteration of religious practices, particularly in Bodh Gaya, where religious ceremonies are sometimes adjusted to accommodate international visitors. This has raised concerns about the potential erosion of cultural authenticity in both the Sikh and Buddhist communities.

In addition to cultural and economic impacts, environmental challenges have emerged, particularly in Bodh Gaya. The influx of tourists has put significant pressure on local resources and infrastructure, leading to environmental degradation around the Mahabodhi Temple and other sacred sites. Patna Sahib, while experiencing some development, has faced relatively less environmental strain. However, rising property prices due to tourism-related developments have made it increasingly difficult for some locals to cope with the changing landscape.

Tourism has brought both opportunities and challenges to the Sikh and Buddhist communities in Bihar. While both have benefitted economically, the Buddhist community has seen greater international investment. Socially and culturally, both communities grapple with the tension between cultural preservation and the demands of commercialization, with the Buddhist community showing more success in maintaining the authenticity of its religious practices. Environmental concerns, particularly in Bodh Gaya, also highlight the complex consequences of increased tourism.

## 10. RAJGIR AND NALANDA TOURISM

The study of tourism's impact on the Nalanda and Rajgir regions reveals how deeply intertwined the local economy has become with tourist activity. Many locals, including beggars, have creatively adapted by turning to storytelling as a means of income, offering narratives about the historical sites to attract tourists. Additionally, tourism has fostered a shift towards businesses that cater to visitors, as reflected in the proliferation of restaurants and food outlets. A significant portion of the population, especially women, has become engaged in tourism-related activities, indicating the sector's influence on economic livelihoods.

The findings also show that tourism has played a crucial role in promoting cultural and technological development in the area. A high percentage of residents believe that tourism has improved their cultural understanding and technical skills, particularly for women, whose involvement in the economy has surged since the influx of tourists. The informal sector has also grown, with many low-income individuals finding opportunities in this space, though they remain vulnerable to fluctuations in tourism demand.

Social and infrastructural benefits from tourism have also been notable. Improvements in local services and infrastructure have been appreciated by the majority of residents, while the increase in cultural activities, promoted by government policies, has enhanced the local cultural landscape. However, religious tourism also presents challenges, particularly for the local Buddhist community, as the influx of visitors can disrupt religious practices and create conflicts between tourists and practitioners.

Despite the benefits, the full potential of tourism in Nalanda and Rajgir remains untapped. The research suggests that while religious tourism dominates the local economy, adventure and leisure tourism could be further developed. Sites like Bimbisara Hills offer untapped opportunities for trekking, camping, and eco-tourism, which could attract a wider range of tourists and spread the economic benefits more evenly across the local community.

The study emphasizes the importance of actively involving local residents in the development of new tourism ventures. Participation in activities like trekking or vending along trekking routes would provide additional employment opportunities while ensuring that tourism growth benefits the entire community. Furthermore, the collaboration between local authorities and residents is key to ensuring the safety and security of tourists, fostering a more inclusive and sustainable tourism environment.

Tourism has been a powerful driver of economic, social, and cultural development in Nalanda and Rajgir. While religious tourism will likely remain the cornerstone of the local economy, the diversification into adventure and leisure tourism holds great potential for further growth. Active involvement from local residents, particularly women and children, will be essential for ensuring that the benefits of tourism are widely distributed and that the region continues to thrive as a major tourist destination.

## 11. KASHMIR TOURISM: ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The tourism sector in Kashmir encompasses a wide range of activities that go beyond traditional tourism services, drawing deeply from the region's rich cultural heritage. Ecotourism stands out as the dominant subcategory due to the valley's natural beauty, which has earned it the moniker "Switzerland of Asia." This form of tourism provides economic opportunities to houseboat owners, shikara rowers, and taxi drivers, as tourists frequently rely on these services to explore the valley. Since 2020, there has been a significant rise in tourist arrivals, leading to increased income for those involved in tourism-related activities, particularly in lodging and transportation services.

However, despite the economic boost, several challenges persist. For instance, although government policies promote training personnel for the tourism industry, the findings suggest that no tangible steps have been taken to establish vocational centers. The emergence of fraudulent travel agencies further complicates matters, creating distrust between tourists and service providers. Additionally, the plan to introduce "smart city" features has faced resistance, as both locals and tourists prefer basic cleanliness and improved waste management. The lack of infrastructure to manage littering, especially by tourists trekking in the hills, has been a source of concern, with locals often stepping in to mitigate the problem.

Religious tourism, particularly during the Amarnath Yatra, also plays a significant role in Kashmir's tourism landscape. However, the strict schedules imposed during the Yatra limit the movement of not only pilgrims but also regular tourists. This adversely affects local businesses, as tourists are forced to halt their activities, often leading to dissatisfaction and poor feedback. Moreover, native Kashmiri Muslims are restricted from certain areas during the Yatra, reinforcing a sense of exclusion and marginalization. The treatment of ethnic minority groups, such as the Gujjars, who serve as ponywallas during the Yatra, also highlights the unequal power dynamics and the presence of Indian paramilitaries.

The government's focus on rebranding Kashmir as an attractive tourist destination has been criticized for commodifying the region's culture and heritage. While policies encourage private-public partnerships and ease of doing business, many of the new ventures are owned by non-Kashmiri third parties, which undermines the livelihoods of local business owners. Artisans, particularly those involved in traditional crafts like carpet weaving and wood carving, face bureaucratic challenges in accessing government support, further straining their ability to recover from the economic losses incurred after the revocation of Articles 370 and 35A in 2019.

Film tourism is another emerging aspect of Kashmir's tourism industry, but it brings its own set of problems. The closure of popular tourist destinations for film shoots or celebrity visits often disrupts the vacations of regular tourists, as seen in 2023 when a famous Indian cricketer's visit to Gulmarg led to the shutting down of roads. This prioritization of high-profile visitors at the expense of regular tourists creates dissatisfaction and further complicates the already challenging business environment for local service providers.

While the tourism industry in Kashmir has shown signs of growth, it is important to recognize the deeper structural issues that continue to hinder equitable development. The setbacks of 2019, along with policies that fail to address the needs of the local population, particularly artisans and smaller business owners, have left many struggling to recover. The Indian state's neo-colonial approach, which seeks to commodify Kashmir for tourism, ultimately undermines the region's ability to truly benefit from this growing industry. This analysis highlights the need for more inclusive policies that address the realities on the ground, rather than imposing top-down measures that alienate the local community.