

Religious Tourism Backing for Economic Salvation: A Study of Kartarpur Corridor between Pakistan and India

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ABSTRACT

Religious tourism is earliest growing industry for the economic development in a state. Many countries in the world are promoting religious tourism and getting economic benefits from it. Pakistan is famous for its ancient religious sites across the world. In the last few decades the tourism industry was unattended in country due to instability in policies and planning. The new era begins with the new democratic spell in the country and the PTI government has visualized tourism as a multi-sectoral industry for promotion of peace and economic liberation. The Kartarpur corridor inauguration is a major step towards new horizons for peace, and prosperity in the region. The Sikhs are a religious community in the world with their separate and unique culture and religious customs. The corridor opened up for the Sikhs to perform their religious duties on November 9, 2019. The present research paper is an attempt to highlight the economic contribution and significance of the corridor in Pakistan. It is recommended that more efforts to flourish religious tourism for economic salvation in Pakistan should be made with public-private partnerships within and across the border.

Key Words: **Kartarpur corridor, Peace, South Asia, Tourism, Economic development**

Introduction

Tourism is the word that has no place in the English language and literature until the last century. Later on it was described as the individual or group travel for utilizing their valuable time (Rinschede, 1992). Gradually, it became an industry and governments started focusing on the flourishing tourism as a source of economic development. In medieval times and in the 16th century the inhabitants living in agricultural community were static, and they rarely move from their village or local territory (Kurt, 2015). Even in the beginning of the industrial revolution, that was quite a sluggish start in the 18th century. The rich elite travel for business to other places by ships and later through an air travel and promoted the tourism. It got a place in industry as a source of development. Tourism is also

considered as a movement of group or individual traveling, and staying exterior of their accustomed environment for relaxation, search for spiritual peace of mind and business or any other purposes. The UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has defined the word as “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” (Tuzun, 2019). Tourism can be of multiple types such as international, domestic, long distance, and short distance. It can also classify further into eight more categories and religious tourism is one among those (Raj, 2015).

Linkage between religion and tourism

Religion and tourism both have deep common connections. Many pragmatic cases are from Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, Islamism, Judaism and Baha'ism. The large number of followers of these religions every year visit destination, places, and attend religious events. In past, leaders of the religious visit for preaching their belief and some died and buried in those areas (Shukla, 2019). Later their followers visit their burial places and it gradually shaped as a religious tourism. Where the natives started sale, purchase and small cities appeared in those areas. This definitely economically strengthened the local community as tourists buy from them the daily use items like food and shelter. These activities later observed by the modern states and they supported the tourists through easy access to their holy areas by providing visa facilities, transportation and even residencies on affordable charges (Rasul, 2016).

Religious tourism is now growing fast in the globe. The UNWTO has given an estimate that approximately 330 million tourists move to the religious holy places every year. It includes activities of tourists' missionary travel, abbey retreats, religious based conferences and seminars (Baloch, 2007). These tourists travel to meet their religious desires. The peace-loving countries in the modern time are greatly reliant on tourism. To attract the international tourists, these countries advertise them as a tourism-friendly society.

The growing economies are planning to promote their ancient civilization and religious places as free or open access for the followers divert the attention of the local and international community for economic aspects. The present research article is an attempt to highlight the PTI governments to boost up the economic instability through valuable efforts in the field of tourism (Ashraf, 2018). The Kartarpur Corridor inaugurated on November 9, 2019; ceremony was staged in the Gurdwara Sahib compound in Kartarpur. Where approximately 12,000 pilgrims physically present and attended the ceremony. It is estimated that in twelve days, 3000 Sikh pilgrims visited the Gurdwara with free visa facility by Pakistan. It will no doubt increase by the time and will give a prominent support to boost up the market of the country. The present study aims to find out that how the religious tourism will give a push to the economic instability.

Historical significance of Kartarpur: an overview

The Guru Nanak, stay in Kartarpur area in 1504 CE near the right side of the Ravi .Where the former Sikh community based and accommodated by him. After his death in 1539, he was buried there; Hindus and Muslims both communities claimed him a common wall between them. After a change in the river route, the mausoleum was demolished. It remodel on the opposite bank of the Ravi (de Bercegol, 2017).

The 1947 detachment of the united India, the area also divided between both India and Pakistan. The Radcliffe Line allocated Kartarpur, to Pakistan, and the Gurdaspur Tehsil India. The Akali Dal claimed and encouraged India to occupy two holy Gurdwaras of Nankana Sahib and Kartarpur. These demands remain persisted from 1948 to 1959, but the state government was against any alteration of the state line which was fixed by the Radcliffe Award. The Sikhs were restricted to go Kartarpur through a bridge that joined Dera Baba Nanak with Kartarpur Sahib. This bridge was damaged in the Indo-Pakistan war, 1965, and border security went tight.

In 1969 the 500th anniversary celebrated on the day of birth of Guru Nanak, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had promised to negotiate with Pakistan for a land-swap for Kartarpur Sahib again might became the part of India (Mann, 2016). In September 1974, an agreement made between the two states for visits to religious holy places. Later in 2005, this protocol was restructured by raising the number of visits. But, Kartarpur was never added among the holy sites. The Indian External Affairs Ministry had demanded its insertion, but rejected the demand due to security Pakistan.

The Gurdwara Kartarpur, remained closed from 1947 to 2000 with no religious activities. It had no staff for receiving devotees. In September 2000 government started renovation and reopened Gurdwara in September, 2004. The Kartarpur Corridor was started by continuous efforts of Bhabishan Singh Goraya. However, Pakistani governments reportedly take some plans for the maintenance of Sikh religious Gurdwaras.

In the new democratic era started in Pakistan after PTI government established and announced to use its soft power. It has promised to allow pilgrims in the country with a free access scheme. For this purpose a plan announced and at first phase Kartarpur border in Punjab opened to the Sikh community .The ceremony was attended by a huge number of the community from all over the world .The prime minister Imran Khan mentioned the significance of the promoting tourism in the country in his speech at Kartarpur Gudwara. The tourism, religious tourism holds an outstanding place. According to a media report more than 300 million people travel to different places all over the world for religious purpose. It helps to generate revenues of more than \$18 billion per annum.



Source: The Kartarpur Corridor: Google image retrieved on December 12, 2019

The Gurdwara Darbar Sahib is located near the Indian border in Pakistan. The entrance allows the Sikh devotees from the Indian side for the visit of the Gurdwara in Kartarpur, which is only 4.7 kilometers from India and Pakistan border. The free visa facility is creating a link that permits pilgrims with Indian passports to have a trip of the Kartarpur and Gurdwara Dera Baba Nanak. Pakistani Sikhs were deprived to make a visit or cross the border in the past. They even have no access to the Gurdwara Dera Baba Nanak, without getting an Indian visa (Devashter, 2019).

The Corridor idea was first presented in 1999 by Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif; both were holding the prime minister's offices in their countries. They also introduced the Delhi–Lahore Bus diplomacy in their tenure. The stone laid foundation ceremony held in India on 26 November 2018, while it was made on 28 November 2018, by Prime Minister of Pakistan. The corridor was completed in the limited period and it was proposed to open earlier than the 550th birthday of Guru Nanak which was on 12 November 2019. Earlier, the Sikh pilgrims from India had to hire a bus from Lahore to visit the Gurdwara, which has a 125 kilometer journey; even the visible access to the Sikh people on the Indian side of the border may well see Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur, where a high observation podium was specially constructed for this holy watch.

Religious tourism for economic salvation in Pakistan

Iran, Nigeria, Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Russia and Thailand are major emerging markets in the world. Some recently industrialized countries

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are flourishing their markets for economic prosperity that have not yet caught their development status. The developing countries are searching new economic zones and markets with new areas to boost up their economic status. Many Asian countries like other world countries have a notable increase by adopting new strategies for example Nepal and Philippine have much focused on tourism. Philippine earned about 245 billion pesos from international tourists during the first half months of the 2019 while tourism generate \$471 million a year by Nepal tourism department.

Pakistan is a developing country and need to have a notable boost in economic strength. It needs to pay his loans, IMF, make infrastructure, health, education and basic necessities to her citizen which are promised in the constitution. For making all these promises fulfill it need to search and work with new dimensions for economic development. The new democratic government has established a new regime with an aim to avoid foreign loans and focus new economic policies (Khan, 2016). The government is confident that tourism may add up Rs.1 trillion to the economy by 2025. The government has implemented strictly a National Action Plan that has contributed to eliminate terrorism and extremism from Pakistan and the tourism industry is the beneficiary of this present situation (Alasttal, 2017). The security improvement in the country gave a boost to annual tourist ratio by 300 per cent to 1.75 million only in 2017. Pakistan is highly striking with its beautiful sites for tourist excitement with bewitching landscape beauty, rich culture, and historical places of religious significance.

National Tourism Strategy (2020)

The new democratic regime takes a start with new vision and promises for economic development plan with implementation in the country. Tourism is one among those strategic plans and recently a 10 year road-map offering to energize tourism industry that was ruthless in past decades, for maximum utilization of the huge resources for persistent economic growth, poverty reduction and condense social inequalities (GoP, 2019).

The new PTI government had assigned duty to Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) to yoke the sector's potential under a multi-pronged approach. The PTDC has drafted a National Tourism Strategy (NTS) after holding several consultative sittings with tourism connoisseurs of public and private organizations.

The strategic plan was guided by a vision (2020-2030) that visualized sustainable tourism industry contributing extensively to the economic development in the country for a better lifestyle for people by providing them job social enclosure and economic expansion. It will also help raising the industry's competitiveness and maximum use of natural, cultural, historical and geographical places.

Kartarpur Corridor and its impact on Economy

The Article 36 of the Constitution, 1973 in Pakistan is a strong advocate of granting religious rights of the minorities as a citizen.

“Article: 36 Protection of minorities-The State shall safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of minorities, including their due representation in the Federal and Provincial services” (Hamid, 2011).

This article describes that the state will protect the rights and interest of minorities, including political rights in Federal and Provincial institutions. The development of Kartarpur corridor is also established to promote religious freedom of the minorities. Many Sikh devotees from India and all over the world visit Pakistan every year to perform religious duties.

Pakistan has made conscious efforts to provide a comfort zone to Sikh community's access to their places of worship, stay there and perform their religious rituals. Approximately 12000 Yatrees had attended the inauguration ceremony in November 2019. Pakistan has made an effort to respect and protect religious liberty and the rights of all minorities in the territory.

This Corridor is a mega project, funded by the government with no foreign support and the Ph-1 of the project completed before the 550th Birth Anniversary of Baba Guru Nanak, inaugurated to make possible the Sikh Community to visit the Gurdwara to commemorate the holy day. The federal government acquired 1500 acre area for the Kartarpur Corridor expansion at the cost of approximately Rs. 15 Billion (Singh, 2019). The infrastructure development of Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur has completed with a concern of all historic necessities. The work was done with the consultation of the religious scholars of Sikh community to preserve the legacy of Baba Guru Nanak. Transport facility is also well planned to facilitate the Sikh pilgrims during their stay in Pakistan (Kamboh, 2018).

It has been theorized that the Kartarpur Corridor will open doors for economic growth and it will give a new boost to the tourism industry. Both nations desired to promote peace and development in the region, within and across the borders. The Kartarpur border opening has hidden advantages to new economic zones in Pakistan and its soft image across the world. It's not new that Pakistan has opened its border for neighbors; it has a Silk Road experiment with China. Pakistan is a growing economy and searching new horizons to strengthen its economy. The corridor between India will support the Pakistani local business and foreign exchange reserves as well (Sukkur, 2019). It is anticipated to earn up to \$365, 00,000 from tourists. The service charges from the Yatrees in Indian Rupees are 259 crore per year and approximately Pakistani Rs. 555 crore will generate new revenue.

It will be a big support to the financial crisis. Pakistan has allowed 5,000 religious tourists to visit the Kartarpur, so it will be charged \$20 service cost per Yatee, it will earn \$1, 00,000 (approximately Rs 71 lakh) per day. As the rate of Pakistani currency is Rs 155.74 for one USD in a day. The expected earning in Pakistani Rupees is about 1.55 crore. Pakistan has no restriction of time

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framework. Yatrees are allowed all 365 days in a year. An expected earn is \$3, 65, 00,000. India mutually signed the pact with Pakistan for making traveling between the two borders for visitors.

An online pilgrim's portal (prakashpurb550.mha.gov.in) has been started. The Yatrees will be registered on the portal. They will be updated by SMS or email on their trip confirmation and registration within three to four working days. The Yatrees need to carry Electronic Travel Authorization, with their passport in the future at the arrival time at Passenger Terminal Building.

Both countries agreed on a visa-free travel of Indian Sikhs to Gurdwara Darbar Sahib through the Kartarpur Corridor. Tourists will clutch passports to visit the venerated Gurdwara. Approximately 5,000 Yatrees may visit the Gurdwara everyday and on the special festivals number of visitors can be increased. The corridor will remain open throughout the year for pilgrims. They are allowed free visit in groups or individually.

Conclusion

South Asia is considered the religious hub in the world with the greatest number of pilgrims for religious festivals. It is estimated that there are about 600 million national and international religious voyages in the world, of which 40% in Europe and over half in Asia. The UNESCO gave statistical figures that 60% of the world's population performs a religion based activities.

Pakistan has six *UNESCO listed World famous Heritage Sites*. Pakistan is also famous for historical ancient religious places of Sikhs, Hindus and Christians. Tourist spiritual magnetism can help out Pakistan in an increase to the religious tourism income \$364.2 million recorded in 2018. Tourism industry generated 2.4% of employees of total employment. Since 2015, Pakistan has been prominent in the list of the world's most eager places to travel.

The representative of the UK promised to endow 500 million pounds for the promotion of the *religious tourism*. The Punjab government in 2019 sets up a tourism policy to promote more than 20 industries. Under the *Punjab Travel Plan*, the federal government planned to spend \$50 million to bring tourists into line. Pakistan's domestic tourism generates approximately 1.5 billion dollars. The GDP produced about 3.5 billion dollars, which is comparable to the current value of Pakistani cotton. The Kartarpur corridor no doubt will open new doors for economic salvation in Pakistan. The prevailing economic instability demands new horizons for economic stability in the country. It can give a boost up to the economy. The Kartarpur corridor will support Pakistan in growth, trade, industrial activities, and a boost at larger scale industrial revenues, infrastructure, development, improved local brand image, source of increase in foreign exchange, and a big source of employment generation.

Recommendations

On the basis of the present study few suggestions are following.

- A separate department for the religious tourism should be established at the federal level with its sub branches at provincial levels for the promotion of tourism as industry.
- Residence and transportation facilities should be provided by the ministry of tourists.
- Provide awareness to the local community for business through the promotion on the local handicraft.
- Security measures should be maintained by the law enforcement agencies.
- Maintenance of the ancient holy places for economic aspects must be ensured.
- Special tourism staff for guidance and translation must be trained.
- Give religious tourism the status of industry in the country.
- To nurture a healthy eco-system for religious tourists, better synchronization between the essentials of the system is required.
- The government must encourage organizations to support for tourists accommodation and visits across the country to generate the revenue.
- Civil society should help in spreading awareness among people through programs on heritage, awareness seminars and conservation. Heritage walks can help tourism.
- Nepal and Philippine tourism strategy models ought to be followed by the relevant departments in Pakistan to flourish tourism.

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