



Shrine Tourism and Livelihood Concerns of Hosts: A Study of Baba-Zain-ud-Din Wali (Aishmuqam) Pilgrimage

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Abstract:

Shrine tourism and its impact on livelihood concerns of host communities is noticeable fact. The present study was conducted at Baba-Zain-ud- Din Wali (Aishmuqam) Shrine in the Valley of Kashmir. The Valley is known as (land of Rishis and Monies) or abode of Saints. In spite of growing interest of scholars in Pilgrimage Tourism research, little efforts are made toward livelihood concerns of hosts living within adjacent areas of shrine. The study, therefore aims to understand the relationships between Visitor and Hosts and the impact of this practice on livelihood concerns of hosts. The paper aims to understand the present phenomena through social-exchange theory.

Keywords: Hosts, Livelihood, Guests, tourism, social exchange

1. Introduction:

Religious based travel is an oldest mode of people's movement from one place to another. It is associated with missionaries or exploring an object, symbol, place or person's authenticity distant from their own place Cohen; 1979, Kreiner; 2010, Rinschede; 1992, Jackowski; 1992, Nolan; 1992, Olsen, et al 2006, Vijayanand; 2012. Pilgrimage is a religiously motivated journey to the centre of the world itself, or to one of its homologous representations. This perspective was given in the context of the 'centre of the world', through which passes the 'axis mundi' which is characterized by blessing and stability, while outside of it is featured by instability and chaos (Eliade; 1959). Most of the world's great religious centers, past and present, have been destinations for pilgrimages - think of the Vatican, Mecca, Jerusalem, Bodh Gaya (where Buddha was enlightened), or Cahokia (the enormous Native American complex near St. Louis). They are monuments for spiritual travellers, who often came great distances, to gawk at and be stirred by [such sites] . . . What it suggests . . . is that the human

sense of the sacred - and the human love of a good spectacle - may have given rise to civilization itself (Mann; 2011:40). Pilgrimage shrines are built around tombs of holy people and historical sites associated with saints or prophets and environmental formations or built structures that suggest divine interaction on earth or to contain effigies of deities who manifest themselves to pilgrims (Giovine & Elsner; 2015:1). Massive arrival of Pilgrims/Visitors to the shrines of Kashmir has led to the institutionalization of tourism industry. A large number of people are working in this industry and their livelihood depends on it. The people who live close to the prominent pilgrimage sites earn their livelihood by selling local and non-local products. The shrine tourism in J&K receives every year lakhs of local, national and international pilgrims (Annual Report in India 2017-18).

2. Review of literature:

The focus of the review is to highlight the studies related to economics of shrine tourism. *Peters (1969)* opined that tourism has tremendous impact on the economies

of destination areas. *Butler (1974)* has highlighted the social implications of tourism development. He is of the view that tourists who influence the local or native population or residents inculcate new ways of life above their means and affordability. *Ummat (1979)* has examined the economic benefits of tourism, which can provide a higher level of employment along with foreign exchange earnings. *Wilson (1980)* has explored the economic, social and environmental implications of tourism and its potential for regional and sub-regional development. *Chib (1981)* has stated that tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in India, which has varied economic and non-economic benefits to the tourists and the host (community). *Scheyvens (2007)* says the idea of utilizing tourism to eliminate poverty has been embraced by donors, governments, non-governmental organizations, conservation organizations and tourism bodies, including the World Tourism Organisation. In another study, *Scheyvens & et al (2008)* argues tourism is an effective way through which national planning can both encourage private and public sectors to support poverty reduction and facilitate the involvement of wider sectors of society in tourism development. *Paramasivan and Sacratees (2008)* highlights that tourism is one of the major industries of the world and it can provide employment, income and harmony. *ArunJothi and Ramaswamy (2010)* assert that tourism offers a greater scope for economic, social, cultural and regional development. *Scheyvens & Russell (2012)* argues both small and large-scale tourism make positive contributions to revenue generation, job creation and community development, but there are considerable potential for local

procurement and improve conditions of labour. Tourism revenue sharing is an appealing concept and its oft-quoted logic of promoting conservation and rural development is difficult to ignore. *Gunarathna (2014)* examines tourism is a proper instrument to move out from poverty, disparity and potential obstacles should be managed via tourism development strategies. *Oskonbaeva (2017)* in developing countries tourism can play an important role in struggling with poverty. Therefore, policies need to be developed which promote the tourism industry. *Irimiea (2018)* explored the unprecedented development of all areas of human concern, in particular and the growth of tourism as a central and global phenomenon has drawn the researchers' attention to tourism studies. *Akdua & et al (2018)* explains tourism is a versatile activity that can have both positive and negative impacts on touristic destinations and local people. *Foley & et al (2018)* argues that empowerment of women in rural and remote communities through sustainable tourism development are prospecting idea. In the light of above quoted studies about tourism and economic development of Host communities, there is a dearth of research about Muslim shrine in Kashmir and their role in livelihood concerns of host communities. The Aishmuqam shrine receives large numbers of visitors every day and it is continuous process. This study, therefore, aims to understand the relationships between visitor and hosts and impact of this relationship on livelihood concerns of hosts. The paper aims to understand the present phenomena through social-exchange theory.

3. Study Site:

Aishmuqam is a popular Muslim Pilgrimage site in the valley of Kashmir. It

is a place where famous Sufi saint of Kashmir Hazrat Sheikh Zain-ud-din Reshi (RA) was buried. He was born at the village Rakna (Bhandarkoot), a small village 12 kms away from Kishtwar, in a non-Muslim ruling Rajput family. Before the family embraced Islam under the influence of

Sheikh Noor-u- Din Noorani (Sheikhul Aalam), Zain ud din was known by the name Zia Singh, but later became Zain-ud-din with Sheikhul Aalam (RA) being his spiritual mentor (Khan 2018). The sacred places is situated in the region of South Kashmir. It is at the distance of 70 Kms from summer Capital of Jammu and Kashmir. The locals as well as the non-locals of Kashmir visit shrine Aishmuqam with different expectations, beliefs and experiences. The Kashmiri community have its own version of Islam, it is loaded with cultural practices of Hinduism or we can say it “cultural amalgamation” of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam (Noori, F. 2017). The travel to Shrine is easily accessible from Union Territory’s summer Capital Srinagar to Anantnag. The road connectivity is efficient and hassle free. Aishmuqam shrine resembles a short form of tourism in which most of the pilgrims prefer to spend 3-4 hours at the Shrine. Short-term religious tourism distinguishes itself by spatially limited travel over short distances. The goal of such tourism is to go to a religious center with local, regional, or supra regional catchment area (pilgrimage sites) or to participate in a religious celebration, a religious conference, or a church meeting (Rinschede 1992:51-67). People from all the areas of Kashmir have spiritual attachment with Baba-Zain-ud-Din Wali (Aishmuqam). Besides that non-local tourists, who are travelling Kashmir for leisure or profane activities prefer to visit

Shrine also. Baba-Zain-ud-Din Wali (Aishmuqam) is situated on the way to famous tourist destiny of World namely Pahalgam (Anantnag), it adds the presence of secular tourist at the Shrine. Shrine tourism to Baba-Zain-ud-Din Wali (Aishmuqam) can be divided into forms. The first one is the faith of the local Muslim people of Kashmir who has a spiritual affiliation, with shrine that connects religious belief with practice. The second one is the arrival and presence of both local and non-local tourist from different religion, region or country. For an outsider the visit to a shrine is gaining a spiritual experience, different from their own. It benefits a lot to all the Stakeholders of the Shrine. “Pilgrimage as a practice of religious tourism have encouraged local benefits, people’s participation, the spiritual enhancement of the guests and the hosts, besides respectful for the environment” (Shinde 2010, 523-535). Pilgrimage appears similar to the tourism in its impact (Kaur; 1985). Almost every pilgrimage place in India has shop catering to tourists and pilgrims seeking special handicrafts (Gupta; 1999).

3.2 Social Exchange theory:

The aim of the present study is to understand the relationship between guest and hosts at Aishmuqam shrine and measure the impact of this visitation on livelihood concerns of host community. The credit to introduce SET in Sociology goes to George Homans and Peter Blau. The theory resembles the ideas of behavioral psychology given Skinner, Utilitarian economics of Adam Smith. In brief the theory is blend of neo-liberal and rational choice assumptions (Turner; 2005, Ritzer; 2013). The salient features of this theory are (1) Social exchange theory depicts interaction between two parties. It makes analyses of face to face interactions

of groups, communities and organizations. It seems appropriate to understand guest-host relations in tourism studies. (2) SET is considered as one of the most useful and explanatory methods (Lee et al, 2003). It is useful to clarify residents and visitor's perception or feelings toward current situations related to Shrine tourism. (3) In addition, SET can explain extensively the intensity of tourism practices in terms of positive and negative connotations (Redmond; 2015). The base of theory lies on the idea of rewards and costs. (Homans, 1958: 606) "Social behaviour is an exchange of goods, both material goods and non-material ones, such as the symbols of approval or prestige," and later in his writings, social behavior is seen "as an exchange of activity, tangible or intangible, and more or less rewarding or costly, between at least two persons. (Homans, 1961:13), "At the intangible level, carrying on a conversation with someone costs your time and energy but can be offset by the rewards gained such as confirmation of your value and development of a relationship". Moreover, perceived costs do not exceed perceived rewards.

Social Exchange Theory (SET) helped to explain respondent's perception about the present situation. The intensity of social interaction between local stakeholders and visitors described and outlined the current developments of Muslim pilgrimage tourism in Kashmir. If the stakeholders (guests and hosts) of Muslim shrines perceive that the benefits to be gained from such exchanges overshadow the costs, then there will be positive outcomes about entering into the exchange process. Conversely, if the outcome is seen to be economically and socially beneficial to the local community, there are more chances of positive interaction. Therefore, the

purpose of this study is to understand the relationships between hosts and guests and impact of that social relationship on livelihoods concerns of hosts by using a social exchange theory.

3.3 Data collection:

At Aishmuqam shrine structured interview method was used to collect first-hand information.

Around 80 respondents including visitors (40 persons) and local general shopkeepers, souvenir shop owners, vendors, bread makers, restaurant owners and rishis (40 persons) participated in this process. A judgemental and random approach was taken. It took about more than one year to achieve total number of samples from 2019 Urus (annual festival) to 2020 Urus. The further collections of samples were stopped due to occurrences of saturation point. The researcher visited 11 times to the present site and found tourist/pilgrims participating in prayer gatherings from both rural and urban areas of Kashmir. Besides that a good number of national and foreign tourists were also found at the place. Luckily majority of visitors accepted to answer questions. No doubt time constraint limits some respondents not to participate in the study. Overall the reaction of both guests and hosts was overwhelming towards study. The questions were asked in Kashmiri, Urdu and English language. The questions were framed in such a way that can access and evaluate relationship between hosts and guests and their level of exchange in terms of costs and rewards. Interview schedule included questions related to demographic profile of guest and hosts, price of different products available at the outskirts of shrine. Two types of interview schedule were formulated to get information from guests and hosts, particularly economic dependence of hosts

on guests. SET was used to check positive and negative relations between them. The study also focuses on minimization costs and maximization rewards through social exchange.

4. Results:

Religious travel is a multidimensional phenomenon that often encompasses commercialization and commoditization of religious products for economic growth, geopolitics and for wider tourism development (Naumov; 2019:3). During our field work, we observed almost every visitor were involving in purchasing of goods from local market of the Shrine. Before entering into the shrine, they were involved in purchasing of (Almas) “*Chaadar is a green colour cotton piece of rectangular shape which visitors used to buy from local shops before entering into the Aishmuqam shrine. They put Almas on the top of burial place of Saint as a mark of respect and veneration*”. Purchasing these kinds of gifts from the local market provides avenues of social exchanges between Guest (visitors and Hosts (locals). These faces to face interaction were rationally chosen to minimize costs maximize rewards. Social behavior is seen “as an exchange of activity, tangible or intangible, and more or less rewarding or costly, between at least two persons. (Homans, 1961:13), “At the intangible level, carrying on a conversation with someone costs your time and energy but can be offset by the rewards gained such as confirmation of your value and development of a relationship”.

Religion tourism has become a commercial enterprise and many destinations and service providers worldwide have capitalized religious attributes and their potential to attract visitors, such as Jerusalem and Lourdes. This is supported by substantial historical

facts dating back to the establishment of the first accommodation and catering facilities (e.g. inns and eateries) for medieval pilgrims and their eventual evolution into hotels, restaurants, museums and souvenir shops (Naumov; 2019:2). To achieve the objectives of the present study, the authors have highlighted some cases of respondents to substantiate the primary argument how shrine tourism in Kashmir is meeting the daily expenses of local stakeholders living within the adjacent areas of Baba-Zain-ud-Din Wali (Aishmuqam) pilgrimage. For the purpose of empirical justification, out of forty interviews, the seven cases of Hosts (stakeholders) of shrine are highlighted below:

(Case 1) Out of 40 respondents, the first person we highlight here was selling Islamic painting and pictures on the upstairs of shrine. His name was Momin (changed) and 31 years of age. Momin was an unmarried person who lives in extended joint family. He needs not to bargain with customers. His products were scripted with verses of Quran and Hadith. Usually Muslim of Kashmir does not like to bargain products affiliated with religion and consider it sin. We had a very cordial conversation with him. We came to know that, since 6 years he is doing this job. We asked him about income from this shop. *He replied with religious enthusiasm that “I am working for my religion and earning good deeds. No doubt, selling products here is a source of income for me and my family”.* **(Case 2)** the second first person we highlight here was selling cosmetics on the nearby lawn of shrine. His name was Rustum (changed) and 41 years of age. Rustum was a married person who has wife and two sons, an older Son in sixth grade and a younger son in fourth grade. We chose Rustum after observing him

busy with their customers in bargaining and selling cosmetics. We had a very nice conversation with him. We came to know that, since 6 years he has been selling cosmetics at Aishmuqam shrine. He was a local resident. We asked him about income from this shop. *He gave us a very good gesture and smile in reply* “(Allhumdallah: is Arabic word which Kashmiri use as a mark of satisfaction and glorifying worldly success as God’s divine gift). *I am meeting the daily demands of my family and myself. Huge rush of visitors keep me busy for whole day. It gives me ample chance to experience new things about our culture and life.* (Case 3) The third person we highlighted here was making and selling local bread (*Bakirkhen: is a local bread of Aishmuqam which is famous throughout Kashmir due to its unique taste. People use it with both salt and sugar tea*) of Kashmir nearby lawn of shrine. Her name was Lallia (changed) and 12 years of age. Lallia was an unmarried girl who lives in extended joint family. We observed that she used to help their father to sell breads. Her father was bread maker. She told us breads of Aishmuqam are very popular throughout the valley. We found couples of people were working there and it seems very busy shop. We came to know that, since 12 years they are doing this. We asked her about income from this shop. *She replied, “we collective a good income. We have hired some bread makers also to meet the demands of customers. We are happy with this source”.* (Case 4) The fourth person we highlighted here was making and selling (Tabrook, Parata, Halwa, munj Golzei: *Tabooks are local snacks of Kashmir, available at every Shrine. Visitors buy all Tabrook as auspicious items from local markets of Shrine. It includes Parata (Oiled chapatti), Halwa (Sweet dish) and Munj Golzei (fried potatoes)*) of Kashmir nearby lawn of shrine. His name was Lasskaak (changed) and 52years of age. Lasskaak was a married person. We observed that Lasskaak was the owner of shop and four other people were working with him. It

was very busy shop and visitors were waiting in lines for their turn to buy Tabrook. Lasskaak told us Tabrook of Aishmuqam is auspicious for visitors and has power to heal diseases. We came to know that, since 9 years they are doing this job. *We asked him about income from this source “Allhumdallah a good source of income in rush he replied”.* (Case 5) The fifth first person we highlighted here was Restaurant, offering local food to the visitors. His name was Maanlal (changed) and 41 years of age. Maanlal was a married person. We observed that Maanlal was the owner of shop and three other people were working with him including his son and nephew. It was very busy shop and the restaurant was jam-packed by pilgrims of far-flung areas of Kashmir. We came to know that, since more than 13 years they are doing this job. We asked him about income from this source. *“He replied, in spite of inflation, we are happy with this shop and it is our basic source of income even to upcoming generations”.* (Case 6) The sixth first person we highlight here was selling toys of different colour for children on the upstairs of shrine. His name was Majnoon (changed) and 44 years of age. Majnoon was a married person who has wife and three children. The first two were daughters in eighth and sixth grades and the last one was a son in third grade. *“Majnoon used to attract visitors with loud and clear voice buy cheap toys for Children as auspicious gifts for them”.* Visitors with family members were mostly the source of earning for Majnoon. We had a very smooth conversation with him. We came to know that, since 11 years he is selling toys here. We asked him about income from this source. *“He replied it is difficult nowadays to maintain the standard of life on this source. I had some primary income also; somehow I am*

managing my family and myself”. (*Case 7*) The seventh person we highlighted here was selling wooden items on the upstairs of shrine. These items were made of walnut timber. This craft is one of the oldest skills of Kashmiri crafting. His name was Khazarkak (changed) and 47 years of age. Khazarkak was a married person who has wife and two children, an older one Son in fifth grade and a younger daughter in third grade. He told us wooden items attract both locals as well as non-locals. We came to know that, since 7 years he has been selling wooden items of different varieties on the upstairs Aishmuqam shrine. He was from adjacent areas of Shrine. We asked him about income from this source. *He replied “I fetch manageable income here, besides that wood carving is our identity, it is my little contribution towards revival of wooden products inside and outside Kashmir”.*

5. Conclusion:

Muslim shrine tourism is a prospecting area in Kashmir and has sustainable impact on host communities. The cases mentioned above clearly reveals how shrine tourism in Kashmir is providing opportunities to hosts to fulfil daily needs of life. It was observed that from shopkeepers to street vendors, their livelihood depends on Shrine tourism. The visitors are adding more income and new employment opportunities to local communities. Besides that Shrine tourism are boosting various sectors of economy like revive local crafts, improvement of rural transportation system, increase of quantity and quality of services, creating commercial and retail centers, reduction of migration, particularly for young people (Pourtaheri & et al, 2012). Shrine tourism plays vital role in the cultural and economy development of any region. It

was identified as one of the world’s largest smoke free industries and its annual growth rate has been 5.0 per cent over the past twenty years (Aruljothi & Ramaswamy, 2012). It attracts a large number of people from different parts of the country to Jammu and Kashmir. It has now emerged fastest growing industry and is leading from front in terms of job creation and sustainable livelihood. Massive number of people both skilled and unskilled is working in different sectors of Industry as service providers (Bhat, 2013). There is positive relationship between Shrine tourism and livelihood concerns of local community. There is a need for comprehensive plan to capitalize Shrine tourism of Jammu and Kashmir for the sustainable development of Local community. It should be based on public-private partnership between the key stakeholders in order to utilize the full potential of Shrine tourism and with prior importance to secularism, integration and peace (Medhekar & Haq, 2012).

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