



EFFECT OF MILITANCY ON SKIING IN GULMARG, JAMMU AND KASHMIR, INDIA

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Abstract:

Kashmir is known as paradise on Earth. The valley of Kashmir well-known for its beauty and celebrity is a theme well worthy of a poet. Nowhere in Asia, nor even in the remaining quarters of the globe, can the parallel be found of such an earthly paradise, a paradise in itself but made doubly beautiful by its surroundings. Sports and Tourism constitutes one of the main sources of income for vast sections of Kashmiri population the sports sector received a serious jolt with the outbreak and spread of militancy from 1989 onwards. Sports industry of Kashmir valley suffered tremendously due to violent militant activities. Once militancy gained momentum, the sports to the valley declined substantially. In this study only period of 10 years (2006-2015) were considered. It was shown in the study that due to disturbance in Kashmir in year 2008, 2009 and 2010 the participants shows decline in number almost 15.27% and in the year 2014 and 2015 when there was decline in the militancy there was gradual increase in the participants almost 26.6 % in the Kashmir valley.

Keywords: militancy, ski, Gulmarg, Jammu and Kashmir

1. Introduction

1.1 Skiing

Skiing in Jammu and Kashmir is a thrilling and exciting experience for any adventure enthusiast. The Ski Club of India was established in Gulmarg in 1927, which is now considered as the ski paradise of India. Just 50 km from Srinagar, situated at an altitude of 2,730 m, Gulmarg changes its scenery from a flowery meadow to that of a small ski resort in winters. Ski-lovers from all over the country flock to the place because it is the only ski-resort in the mighty Himalayas where you can ski with a magnificent view of

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the Karakoram and also the cheapest one in the whole world to learn skiing. Gulmarg provides an altitude difference of over 1,500 m with lengths of more than 10 km. However, only a ski-mountaineer can reach these higher slopes. The beginners may hire any of the four ski lifts or a chairlift.

Here, the latest Austrian and French equipment is available on hire and the ski school known as the Indian Institute of Skiing and Mountaineering, which conducts 10 day and 21-day short ski courses for beginners and advanced skiers. The best season for skiing is mid-December to mid-April and the road is kept open to Gulmarg with the help of powerful German machines throughout the winter. There are cross-country runs apart from downhill skiing and there are delightful excursions to the shrine of Baba Reshi through the 'powder chute'. Heli-skiing is the recent addition to the place and there are numerous possibilities of finding new tracks throughout the winter season. A look for a helicopter is even more majestic.

There are other places apart from Gulmarg, where one may find the pleasure of skiing including Srinagar. Ski tours from Pahalgam to Sonamarg through high mountain passes are not only demanding but also exciting. Wardwan Valley of Ladakh also attracts some ski-enthusiasts during the season.

1.2 Aero Sports

India is fast emerging as a major aero-sports destination because of its long Himalayan range that offers opportunities for activities like Para Sailing, Para Gliding, Hot Air Ballooning, and Para Jumping. Though, it will still take some time for the state of Jammu and Kashmir to gain popularity as a hand-gliding landmark, yet the location of a flat valley surrounded by high mountains is an ideal terrain for hang-gliding. The best places to try hand gliding are the meadows at the foot of mountains such as Yusmarg, Gulmarg and Sonamarg and one may go to the Suru and Zanskar valleys for hot air ballooning.

Paragliding is the latest aero sport to take the world by storm and its origin dates back to as late as 1940s, when an aviation pioneer, Dr. Francis Rogallo filed for a patent for his flexible Delta Kite. But it was not until the early 1980s that parachutes were foot-launched regularly from hills. Since then this sport has been rapidly expanding. Thousands of people all over the world have found this sport convenient, sheer fun and a safe medium of soaring in the air. With a vision to make India the leader in paragliding, over the past three to four years, many training courses were organized by several organizations such as Indian Institute of Skiing and Mountaineering. A sizeable number of people have been trained as pilots now and are capable of flying solo. Sansar in Jammu and Kashmir is one of the most interesting spot that offers a bag full of wonders when the pilots take off for the flights.

History bears witness to the fact that whenever and wherever militancy found roots, the economy of that region became a major casualty. This is true for the Kashmir region as well since 1989. In the seventh plan period, a special outlay of Rs.22.06 cores was made available for the development of the tourism sector. The result was that the tourist inflow made considerable upward movement in mid-eighties of the last century.

However, with militancy in the state and engulfing the valley of Kashmir from 1989 onwards the tourist trade completely collapsed the border tensions notwithstanding,

On the other hand, the Indian Army is organizing a cricket tournament to promote budding cricketers from "far flung areas" in Jammu and Kashmir. A total of six teams were taking part in the Rashtriya Rifles Big Bash (RRBB) Intra Village Cricket Tournament in Jammu region, a statement from the military said Thursday. The teams have been drawn from the Naushera sub-division. The game will be played on 20:20 league-cum-knockout basis. The tournament has witnessed an overwhelming response and has turned out to be a crowd puller. The youth and locals of the area were extremely happy since it also diverted their attention from the devastation caused by the floods... With reputation at stake, each team put in their best.

Militants not only attacked and disturbed Kashmir but international militants also attacked international sports activities also. Between the 1972 attack at the Munich Olympic Games and 2003 there were an estimated 168 different realized and thwarted terrorist acts around the world targeting sports events Some of these events include:

- 1997, Liverpool, UK. The Grand National horse race was evacuated after two coded bomb threats were reportedly received from the IRA but no spectators were hurt. The event took place two days later.
- 2006, Iraqi Olympic Team. In the lead up to the 2006 Olympic Games, the Iraqi team was targeted three times. On 17 May, 15 taekwondo athletes and staff members were kidnapped while travelling to a competition in Jordan. They were never released or heard from again. On 26 May, the Iraq tennis coach and two players were killed by gunmen. Lastly, on 15 July, the head of the Iraqi Olympic Committee and 37 officials and athletes were kidnapped. Of these, only 13 were seen again.
- 2008, Waliweriaya, Sri Lanka. A dozen people were killed and almost 100 injured when a suspected Tamil Tiger suicide bomber detonated an explosion at the start of the New Year Marathon.
- 1997, Sweden. Two bomb and several arson attacks around Stockholm, which damaged stadiums and other sports facilities, occurred in August/September. The group claiming responsibility was aiming to disrupt/oppose Sweden's proposal to host the 2004 Olympic & Paralympic Games.
- 2002, Karachi, Pakistan. The New Zealand national cricket team's hotel was targeted by a suicide bomber, killing 11 French navy experts, two Pakistanis, and the team's physiotherapist.
- 2002, Madrid, Spain. E.T.A., a Basque separatist group, detonated a car bomb close to Madrid's main stadium just hours before the start of Real Madrid's Champions League semi-final match against Barcelona. 17 people were injured. A bomb threat in 2004 also forced Real Madrid's match against Real Sociedad to be abandoned.
- 1972, Munich, Germany. The Palestinian militant group Black September took the Israeli national team hostage during the 1972 Munich Olympic Games. After

- a 16-hour stand-off and failed rescue all 11 athletes and coaches, one German police officer, and all of the attackers were confirmed dead.
- 1986, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. A bomb exploded at the headquarters of the 1992, candidature committee in Amsterdam, allegedly the responsibility of the 'Into the Blue Commando of the Revolutionary Cells' in a protest against Amsterdam's bid for the 1992 Games. There were no casualties.
 - 1987, South Korea. Korean Air Flight 858 was destroyed in flight when a bomb hidden in an overhead compartment was detonated. All 104 passengers and 11 crew were killed. The attack was designed, in part, to disrupt the lead up to the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games.
 - 1996, Atlanta, USA. Eric Rudolph planted a knapsack with three bombs underneath a bench in the Centennial Olympic park at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games. Two people were killed and 120 injured when the blast went off.
 - 2010, Africa. A variety of attacks against crowds of people watching the World Cup occurred in Uganda and Somalia. At least 75 people were killed and over 70 injured in the combined attacks. Responsibility for the Somalia attacks was claimed by the Hizbul Al Islam group who claimed that gathering to watch the World Cup violated Islamic law.
 - 2013, Boston, USA. Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev, apparently motivated by extremist Islamic beliefs, set off two pressure cooker bomb devices at the 2013 Boston Marathon. Three spectators were killed and 264 injured.
 - 2015, Stade du France. Three suicide bombers detonated devices outside the Parisian Stade de France while France were playing Germany in an international football friendly. 1 bystander and the three bombers were killed. The attack was part of a broader series of coordinated terrorist attacks that killed 130 people and injured 368 in total.
 - 2008, Mauritania. The Dakar Rally was cancelled due to a security threat from al Qaeda. The decision was based on safety warnings from the French government and threats received directly by the race organizers. When the rally resumed in 2009 it was moved to South America.
 - 2009, Lahore, Pakistan. Roughly a dozen gunmen with guns, rockets, and grenades attacked the Sri Lankan cricket team bus and their police escorts. Eight people were killed and six injured.
 - 2010, Cabinda, Angola. An Angolan separatist group attacked the Togo football team bus at the African Cup of Nations, killing 3 people.
 - 2010, Pakistan. A suicide bomber killed at least 105 people and injured over 100 when he drove a vehicle filled with explosives into a community volleyball match in NW Pakistan.

2. Impact of Militancy on Sports and Games in Kashmir

Sports and Tourism constitutes one of the main sources of income for vast sections of Kashmiri population. Tourist destinations like Sonamarg and Gulmarg are known

internationally for winter games such as skiing. Gulmarg is also known as the highest green golf course in the world, and boasts the world’s largest cable car lift. Adventure sports include trekking, mountaineering, winter sports, water sports, golf and fishing. However, most of these sports activities remain underdeveloped. It is a stark reality that till late 1980’s the state of Jammu and Kashmir used to attract huge numbers of national as well as international players , but the sports sector received a serious jolt with the outbreak and spread of militancy from 1989 onwards. Sports industry of Kashmir valley suffered tremendously due to violent militant activities. Once militancy gained momentum, the sports to the valley declined substantially. On the other hand, Department of Youth Services and Sports organizes different tournaments of all games between the students of Kashmir valley. Every year thousands of students participate in games and sports. This study also shows that due to the disturbance in the valley (2008, 2009, 2010) there is also decline in percentage of sports participants (domestic). When there is normal conditions (normalcy) in the valley (2006, 2007, 2013, 2014, 2015) there is increase in percentage of sports participations.

Table 1: Participation of skiers’ persons at Gulmarg Kashmir from 2006 to 2015

Year	Domestic	National/International participants	Total
2006	1524	224	1748
2007	1452	315	1767
2008	1280	212	1492
2009	1352	420	1772
2010	1136	180	1316
2011	1443	412	1855
2012	1829	512	2341
2013	1950	550	2460
2014	2100	615	2715
2015	2331	660	2991

Source: Director Tourism Kashmir and Department of youth services and sports.

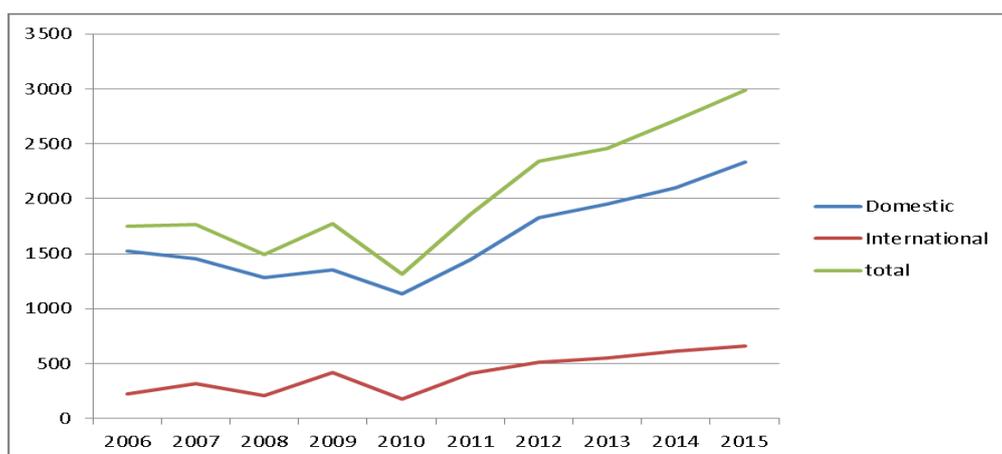


Figure 1: Participation of skiers’ persons at Gulmarg, Kashmir from 2006 to 2015

The sports infrastructure created over the years suffered huge damage. The sports industry of the valley could not be maintained and they acquired a shabby and shoddy

look. Those engaged with the maintenance and beautification of these sports infrastructure did not discharge their duties since this was internal security and maintenance of law and order. Before the advent of militancy, a separate budget was kept for the development of infrastructure and beautification of the sports grounds which perforce had to be curtailed for use in counter terrorist activity.

3. Conclusion

Sports has undoubtedly been one of the major sources of income and employment for the people of Gulmarg area. However, the militancy badly impeded the sports lovers and tourist inflow into the valley and the financial conditions of the people in the Gulmarg area suffered heavily. The survey indicated that due to disturbance in Kashmir in year 2008, 2009 and 2010 the participants shows decline in number almost 15.27 % and in the year 2006, 2007, 2014 and 2015 when there was decline in the militancy there was gradual increase in the participants almost 26.6 % in the Kashmir valley. The enormity of economic damage due to militancy cannot be really judged because the present conditions in the valley. Now that peace is getting to prevail albeit laboriously, it can only be hoped that the region witnesses no revisit of the dismal years of economic, political, social and developmental stagnant which set back the clock for the progressive people. The department of sports is trying hard to improve the condition of the sports industry in Kashmir though, the state government has declared many incentives and facilities for those who are interested to sports, an integrated planning for sustainable development of sports sector needs to be considered. Achievement will be influenced by the degree to which planning for sports culture is integrated both horizontally and vertically. Due to militancy, much has been lost but it can be regained and restored only if peace prevails.

*“If we want to achieve sports we can't use peace
But if we have to achieve peace we can use sports”*

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