



Agro-Tourism Potential in Kishtwar and Bhadarwah Region of Jammu and Kashmir

Madhu Bala

I INTRODUCTION

For the overall economic transformation of any country, it is important to develop its agriculture sector because agro-tourism activities have significantly contributed to the rural economies in various parts of the world. For example, in Thailand millions of tourists visit farm areas; in Europe a large percentage of people take farm holidays; Greece has promoted mountainous and less favoured areas to attract tourists, and so on. (Bwana et al. 2015). Being a developing economy, India needs a strong agriculture sector to feed its growing population and meet the rising demands of the other sectors of the economy.

It is estimated that the tourism industry worldwide is growing at the rate of 4 per cent a year, whereas Indian tourism is growing at 10 per cent which is 2.5 times more than the world's rate (Ingavale 2015). India has a great potential to defeat the competition and increase the productivity of its tourism through agro-tourism. Agro-tourism is the fastest growing

M. Bala (✉)

Government Degree College Kishtwar, Kishtwar (J&K), India

sector in India, and states such as Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Goa have successfully implemented this concept, and it has been observed that the income level of the farmers and their standard of living have increased with new employment opportunities, and so on (Ubale and Borate 2012). It is a merger of two sectors, namely, agriculture and tourism, and provides an opportunity to the tourists to understand the rural life in India, to enjoy the food and to get to know the various farm activities during their visit (Ingavale 2015). Bansal et al. (2010) defined agro-tourism as ‘a range of activities, services and amenities provided by farmers and rural people to attract tourists to their area in order to generate extra income for their business’.

The majority of our country lives in the rural areas, and their main sources of livelihood are agriculture, apiculture, horticulture, forestry, fishery and so on. According to Dr M.S. Swaminathan, major job opportunities could only be provided by agrarian activities (Barbuddhe and Singh 2014). Earlier, mountainous regions and beaches have been the centre of attraction, but in recent years, parks, bird sanctuaries and forests have attracted a number of tourists as well. Nowadays, people want to enjoy visiting rural life because such activities are affordable and less time-consuming (sometimes people can come back within a day), and people are also curious to see practically how and where things (such as fruits, vegetables, dairy, etc.) are produced. This provides an opportunity for the farmers to develop agro-tourism activities (Jagtap et al. 2010). This will not only address issues such as poverty, unemployment, regional inequality and so on (Mukherjee 2012) but will also benefit the farmer in raising their own income, sell ‘experiences’ of agricultural activities and also sell their products directly to the visitors. It would not only be advantageous to farmers but also to rural people and tourists as well. Some of the attractive features offered by the agro-tourism industry includes arts and crafts items (such as blankets made of sheep wool, carpet weaving and shoe making where both are made of either rice or wheat straw, embroidery, baskets made of straw, earthen pots, etc.), farm equipment, road-side selling of fresh farm products, display of various agricultural activities like sheep shearing, wool processing, fishing/hunting and so on; green meadows for picnics, various tours by educational institutions, herb walks, renting a tree, moonlight activities, lunch counter and so on, are also becoming centres of attraction for the tourists (Karri 2016).

Jammu and Kashmir, the northernmost state of India, is an important tourist destination across the world. It has an agro-climatic condition which makes it suitable for horticulture and floriculture (IBEF 2018). Each and every region of Jammu and Kashmir is unique in itself and one can experience diversity in its different regions—Kashmir and Jammu as a mountainous plain region and Ladakh as an extremely cold and dry terrain. Among these regions, Bhadarwah and Kishtwar (Jammu Division) are ideal locations for agro-tourism, as these areas are rich in natural resources and have the potential in various agro-cultural operations.

2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To promote agro-tourism in Bhadarwah and Kishtwar areas of Jammu and Kashmir.
- To observe the key areas hindering the development of agro-tourism.
- To make recommendations for the success of agro-tourism in this region.

3 METHODOLOGY

The research was mainly carried out through primary and secondary sources. The primary sources mainly included discussions with the field experts, and secondary source of data was collected from photographs, internet web, journals, books and so on. For the promotion of agro-tourism in Bhadarwah and Kishtwar, it was necessary to locate various tourist destinations which already existed and simultaneously examine the various types of agricultural activities prominent in these areas. Along with these agriculture-related activities, other activities such as traditional cultural activities, folk songs, dances, antique crafts, fairs, festivals and so on, were also identified. To find out various tourist locations in Bhadarwah and Kishtwar area, help of the field experts and internet were taken, and data related to agricultural pattern and various related activities were taken from the Government of Jammu and Kashmir; the Directorate of Economics and Statics; Planning Development and Monitoring Department, Kishtwar; and Planning Development and Monitoring Department, Doda.

4 PROMOTION OF AGRO-TOURISM IN BHADARWAH AND KISHTWAR AREA OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Barbuddhe and Singh (2014) suggested a systematic approach for the promotion of agro-tourism at any place. These included a survey of tourism sites, analysis of forest area and map identification of areas rich in flora and fauna, identification of plant biodiversity-rich location, analysis of agro-ecological areas, study on the time period, location of various fairs and cultural and religious festivals of the states. A number of sites have been identified by the tourist departments which are rich in flora and fauna. Some of them have been discussed further.

Potential Regions That Can Be Explored and Developed for Agri-Tourism in Kishtwar Region

Kishtwar is popularly known as the land of ‘Sapphire and Saffron’ since saffron flowers are cultivated here (it is considered to be the best produced saffron in India). Padder is known for sapphire deposits and other forest products like chilgoza (pine nuts), jeera (cumin seeds), guchhi (wild morchella), various herbs and so on. Tatta Pani, a hot spring, is also located here. Padder is visited by thousands of tourists especially during Machail Yatra. Handmade woollen blankets, shawl and gaba are made by the artisans here; silver bakerwal jewellery is also something this region is famous for. Annual fairs and festivals include urs, yatras and losar. Famous ‘Gaddi’ and ‘Zagroo’ dances are performed here. A national park (Kishtwar High Altitude National Park) is located on the northern side of Kishtwar district in Marwah subdivision. Marwah is also famous for trout fishing, mountaineering, springs and rock cut statue of a cow. Sarthal, 24 km from Kishtwar, is one of the most popular places frequently visited by tourists. Nagsen located east of Kishtwar town is full of natural beauty. This site is named after the Buddhist preacher Nagseen. Besides these, a fish hatchery at Mugalmaidan (chatroo) has been established. A total of 25,872 hectare area of the district is under food and non-food crops, out of which 15,186 hectare area is under high yielding variety seeds (HYVS) (Source: Government of Jammu and Kashmir 2015–2016). The area under cultivation of different crops, average horticultural produce and livestock/poultry population in Kishtwar district is given in Table 7.1. The following figures illustrate activities going on in some of the sites the author visited (Figs. 7.1 and 7.2).

Table 7.1 Table showing land use pattern under food crops and non-food crops, major horticulture crops (production in metric tonne) and livestock/poultry population

<i>Sr. no.</i>	<i>Crops</i>	<i>Area (in acres)</i>	<i>Horticulture crops</i>	<i>Production</i>	<i>Livestock/poultry</i>	<i>Population (lakhs)</i>
1	Rice	1729	Apple	3029	Cattles	1.108
2	Maize	13,104	Pear	530	Buffaloes	0.138
3	Wheat	1958	Apricot	575	Sheep	2.289
4	Barley	1399	Peach	196	Goats	0.926
5	Grim/ millets	1268	Plum	185	Horse/ ponies	0.050
6	Pulses	1207	Grapes	7.85	Donkeys/ mules	0.069
7	Fodder crops	138	Walnut	6493	Yaks	0.155

Source: Government of Jammu and Kashmir (2015–2016)

**Fig. 7.1** Saffron field at Kishtwar. (Source: Author)

*Potential Regions That Can Be Explored and Developed
for Agro-Tourism in Bhadarwah Region*

Bhadarwah is designated as ‘mini Kashmir’ and is a mesmerising place in the Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir. It is blessed with vast grasslands and meadows, dense forest areas, diversified flora and fauna, beautiful valleys, streams and so on. Some of the attractive tourist spots include Chinta Valley, where horse riding is a popular activity for the tourists. Padri site



Fig. 7.2 Wheat field at Kishtwar. (Source: Author)

caters to many adventure activities such as skiing and paragliding, and thousands of pilgrims pass through this area to reach Mani-Mahesh temple. Trekking and horse riding are also done here. Jai is a perfect place for rock climbing enthusiasts and Jai nallah is popular for trout fish. A wide range of plants and animal species are found here. This valley is also famous for wild herbs such as Guchhi (wild Morchella), kasrode (fern) and so on, and Seoj meadow is also known for its majestic beauty. Bhal Padri is a beautiful valley comprising many small valleys and flowing rivulets and streams. Gatha is a tourist resort, known for the artificial lake, beautiful parks, tourist huts and traditional flour mill (Gharat). Bhadarwah is a blend of different cultures, art, language, fair and festivals and so on. ‘Dheku’ or ‘Kudd’ and ‘Ghurai’ folk dances are performed there and religious and historical songs are sung. The area under cultivation of different crops, average horticultural produce and livestock/poultry population in Bhadarwah is given in Table 7.2. The following figures illustrate activities going on in some of the sites the author visited (Figs. 7.3 and 7.4).

Karri (2016) suggested three vital principles of agro-tourism: first, that the visitors find something to see, something that will catch their eyes; second, that they can do or perform various activities themselves; and third, that they have something to buy as well. And all these three principles are applicable to Bhadarwah and Kishtwar region of Jammu and Kashmir. As there are tourist places to support agro-tourism, and tourists can see various kinds of animals, birds, herbs, festivals, folk dances, folk songs, traditional equipment and so on; they can participate in various agricultural activities such as fishing, harvesting, sowing, hunting, riding

Table 7.2 Table showing land use pattern under food crops and non-food crops, major horticulture crops (production in metric tonne) and livestock/poultry population

<i>Sr. no.</i>	<i>Crops</i>	<i>Area (in hectare)</i>	<i>Horticulture crops</i>	<i>Production</i>	<i>Livestock/poultry</i>	<i>Population (laks)</i>
1	Paddy	442	Apple	801.00	Cattles	1.108
2	Maize	2270	Pear	298.00	Buffaloes	0.138
3	Pulses	182	Apricot	20.30	Sheep	2.289
4	Fodder	105	Peach	12.30	Goats	0.926
5	Vegetables	116	Plum	9.25	Horse/ponies	0.050

Source: Government of Jammu and Kashmir (2016–2017)



Fig. 7.3 Vast fields in Bhadarwah. (Source: D. K. Dogra 2018)

yak, horses and so on; and lastly, they can even buy rural crafts, raw honey, pulses, herbs and so on.

5 KEY AREAS HINDERING THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRO-TOURISM

- There is lack of agro-tourism awareness among the farmers
- Lack of skilled human capital



Fig. 7.4 Cattle grazing in the meadows. (Source: D. K. Dogra 2018)

- Inadequate rural infrastructures such as roads, pathways and so on
- Lack of training facilities for the farmers
- Social problems such as language, hygiene and so on
- Safety and security of the tourists (Barbuddhe and Singh 2014)

6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SUCCESS OF AGRO-TOURISM

- There is a need to increase the awareness level of farmers towards agro-tourism and the opportunities it can offer in the form of additional income and employment, thereby benefitting the local people (Mukherjee 2012).
- Agro-tourism activities include tours of farms such as apple, grapes, apricot, pear and so on and bird and animal farms, poultry farms, dairy farms, goat farms and so on. For setting up such farms, a huge investment is required. The state government should take initiatives to support this sector through financial aid. For example, in Himachal

Pradesh, the government has launched a new initiative ‘Har Gaon Ki Kahani’ to explore the tourist potential of the villages (Parmar 2012).

- Basic infrastructure including roadways, airways and railways is essential for the success of agro-tourism because no one would like to visit a place which is difficult to reach.
- Establish a body responsible for the development, marketing and training of agro-tourism activities.
- A small-scale agro-tourism project could be initiated on an experimental basis.

7 CONCLUSION

It is evident from the preceding discussion that both Bhadarwah and Kishtwar have a distinctive geography and culture which can offer an opportunity to the state of Jammu and Kashmir in terms of growth and development of agro-tourism. Agro-tourism can act as a medium through which rural areas can be developed and provide an alternative source of income to the farmers and employment to the youth. When the villages will develop, India will develop.

REFERENCES

- Bansal, A., Thakur, S., & Mishra, S. (2010). Agricultural and Rural Tourism in India: Scopes in Current Environmental Changing Scenario. *Management Prudence Journal*, 1(1), 1–6.
- Barbuddhe, S. B., & Singh, N. P. (2014). Agro-Eco Tourism: A New Dimension to Agriculture. *Technical Bulletin No. 46*, ICAR Research Complex For Goa, Old Goa, pp. 1–37.
- Bwana, M. A., Olima, W. H. A., Andika, D., Agong, S. G., & Hayombe, P. (2015). Agritourism: Potential Socio-Economic Impacts in Kisumu Country. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 20(3), 78–88.
- Dogra, D. K. (2018). Photos. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/D.K.Dogra/photos>
- Government of Jammu and Kashmir. (2015–2016). *District Statistical Hand Book* (pp. 1–81). Kishtwar: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Planning Development and Monitoring Department, District Kishtwar, District Statistics & Evaluation Office.
- Government of Jammu and Kashmir. (2016–2017). *District Statistical Hand Book* (pp. 1–289). Doda: Planning Development and Monitoring Department, District Doda, District Statistics & Evaluation Office.

- IBEF. (2018). About Jammu and Kashmir: Information on Tourism Industries, Economy & Geography. Retrieved from <http://www.ibef.org/states/jammu-kashmir.aspx>
- Ingavale, D. (2015). Agri Tourism: A Business Model of Agri Tourism Development Corporation. *Paripex-Indian Journal of Research*, 4(7), 76–77.
- Jagtap, M. D., Nichit, M. B., & Benke, S. R. (2010). Agri Tourism: The Performance, Problems and Prospects for the Farmers in Maharashtra. *International Journal of Commerce and Business Management*, 3(1), 153–156.
- Karri, G. N. (2016). *Scope of Agritourism in India (with Reference to Development, Challenges, Extension & Advisory Services)* (pp. 1–40). Hyderabad: ICAR-National Academy of Agricultural Research Management.
- Mukherjee, D. (2012). Rural Tourism Path to Economic & Regional Development in India. *Kurukshetra*, 60(7), 3–10.
- Parmar, J. S. (2012). Tourism: An Engine to Economic Growth in the Rural Economy of Himachal Pradesh. *Kurukshetra*, 60(7), 7–20.
- Ubale, N. B., & Borate, H. V. (2012). Agri Tourism: An Innovative Income Generation Avenue. *Kurukshetra*, 60(7), 21–25.