

**Role of Tourism In Poverty Alleviation And Socio-Economic  
Development:  
A Study Of Leh (Ladakh)**

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**Abstract:** Tourism development has become an important strategy to spur the socio-economic development and poverty alleviation of an area. The present study examines the role of tourism activities in poverty alleviation and socio-economic development in the Leh District of Jammu and Kashmir, India. The analysis was done on the basis of the Seven Point Mechanism prescribed by the UNWTO for the evaluation of the role of tourism in poverty alleviation and the findings were substantiated by undertaking a household survey of the BPL population living in Leh. The study found that there is a great contribution of tourism in poverty alleviation and socio-economic development of the area. Tourism has created employment opportunities in the area through multiplier effects and has increased the household income and that the BPL population who are actively associated with tourism activities are enjoying comparatively better socio-economic status than the households who are associated with non-tourism activities like agriculture and allied sectors. However, it has been found that the benefits of tourism are concentrated in a few places mainly in the town areas of Leh due to the availability of tourism infrastructure and hence, some suggestions have been forwarded to spur the benefits of tourism in the far-flung areas too and have inclusive growth.

**Keywords:** *Tourism; Seven Point Mechanism; Poverty Alleviation; Socio-Economic Development; Leh; Jammu and Kashmir.*

**Introduction**

Tourism is recognized as one of the world's largest industry and continues to expand at a rapid rate (UNWTO, 2006). In the united nations world tourism organizations UNWTO (2013) report it was said that during the past six decades, there is a continuous increase in the tourism world over despite the occasional ups and downs, tourism has shown nearly constant growth which can be justified with the help of International tourist arrivals data. Global tourism earnings by destinations worldwide have increased from US\$ 2 billion in 1950 to US\$ 104 billion in 1980, US\$ 495 billion in 2000 and US\$ 1260 billion in 2015 (UNWTO 2016). It is said that tourism is an effective tool to increase economic growth (Dritsakis, 2004 and Ekanayake & Long, 2012) to preserve natural resources (Nelson, 2012) and local culture (Ong & Smith, 2014 and UNCTAD 2010) and to contribute in alleviation of poverty (Lapeyre, 2011 and Nguyen & Nguyen, 2013) in less developed countries.

Tourism in India is one of the largest service industries, with a contribution of 6.88% to the national GDP and provides 9 % of the total employment (WTTC 2015). India witnessed more than 8.03 million foreign tourist arrivals and 1432 million domestic visitors with a growth rate of 4.5% and 11.6% respectively during the year 2015 (Indian Tourism Statistics 2016). During the year, 2015 India earned 21.07 billion in the form of foreign exchange with a yearly growth rate of 4.1% (Ministry of Tourism India 2016).

According to the UN (1998), "fundamentally, poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means a lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness, and exclusion of individuals, household and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living in marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation". This definition of poverty covers all the dimensions of concern to poverty. However, for the purpose of this study, we will keep the definition of poverty confined to the deprivation of basic human needs. United Nations Millennium Development Goals include eliminating extreme poverty and hunger by reducing the percentage of people living below the extreme poverty line of \$1 a day by 2015 which has now extended up to 2030. Following the agenda of Millennium Development Goals, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) also adopted the Pro-Poor Tourism approach. UNWTO has considered 2007 as a critical year where tourism was recognized as the main component in poverty reduction (UNWTO 2007) and the

year 2017 was declared as the international year of sustainable tourism for development (UNWTO 2018). This shows the commitment of UNWTO's to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, it also indicates that UNWTO's enhanced perception with regard to the importance of sustainable tourism development to poverty alleviation. Tourism plays a very significant part in supporting the comprehensive growth of the less advantageous section of the people in society and in the eradication of poverty. The main aim of the tourism policy in India is to promote tourism as a major driving force for economic growth and development and harness its direct and multiplier effect on employment generation and poverty alleviation. The goal of employment generation and poverty eradication will be achieved in a sustainable way by the active involvement of all sections of the society apart from promotion and marketing. (Ministry of Tourism India 2015-16). There are some of the examples from world over in which it was found that growth in the tourism has helped them in reduction of poverty like in Cambodia's international tourism arrival in 2012 grew by 24.4% (UNWTO, 2013), and its poverty ratio decreased from 11.3% in 2010 to 10.1% in 2011. There is a number of methods used for the analysis of the impact of tourism on poverty alleviation. This paper aims to study the living standard of people living below the poverty line in Leh District of Jammu and Kashmir and assess the contribution of tourism in poverty alleviation and socio-economic development by making a comparative study of two different groups of a BPL people; one associated with tourism and another earning livelihood from non-tourism activities. The paper also aims to explore and suggest various means and ways of poverty eradication and achieving inclusive growth through tourism activities.

### **Study Area**

Leh is located in between Karakorum and Ladakh range. The Leh remains inaccessible for land transport for almost six months because of the snowfall in this region. Leh being a cold desert and a mountainous region too which makes this area inaccessibility, fragile, biologically rich. The mountain people of Ladakh belong to indigenous groups, they remain at the periphery of socio-economic opportunities and live at margins of society. In the early seventies, some leaders of Jammu and Kashmir became concerned about the backwardness of Ladakh. In the summer of 1974, the government made Ladakh open to tourists. It was the second event towards the economic development of the Ladakh region. After 1974 tourists started visiting Ladakh and gradually Ladakh emerged on the international tourist market. Many hotels, guesthouses, restaurants were constructed, old shops, buildings renovated,

monasteries repaired and travel agencies and antique shops came into existence which boosted up the tourism activities in this area and provided additional sources of earnings for these people till some point of time and now it is considered as one of the main sources of income in the Leh District. However, the study found that although tourism has contributed in a positive way and has enhanced the economic condition of the people the economic benefits from tourism are not equally distributed in the district, as tourism activities are concentrated in few places only. Consequently, the people of Leh have been divided into two classes viz economically well-off class and the poor class which can be designated as above poverty line and below the poverty line. In Leh District, the estimated BPL population as on 1st October 2007 was 22.07 percent scattered over Rural and Urban areas with headcounts standing at 27.47 percent and 5.37 percent respectively. The block-wise changes in BPL population (percentage) from 2001 to 2011 has been shown below-

Table 1- Comparison of BPL Population (Percentage) of 2001 and 2011-

Blocks	Percentage of BPL Population in Leh (2001)	Percentage of BPL Population in Leh (2011)	(Change from 2001-2011)
Leh	11.93	7.00	4.93
Nubra	24.19	19.71	4.48
Durbuk	35.78	33.39	2.39
Thiksay	16.94	14.05	2.89
Chuchot	27.94	25.75	2.19
Nyoma	59.63	57.33	2.3
Kharu	29.96	27.00	2.96
Khaltsi	36.95	33.57	3.38
Turtuk	37.92	35.17	2.75
Saspol	38.92	36.04	2.88
Nimo	29.95	28.48	1.47
Panamic	37.82	35.70	2.12
Skurbuchan	41.89	39.45	2.44
Rong	45.37	43.72	1.65
Rupsho	46.65	43.93	2.72
Singay	47.78	44.81	2.97
District	25.61	22.12	3.49

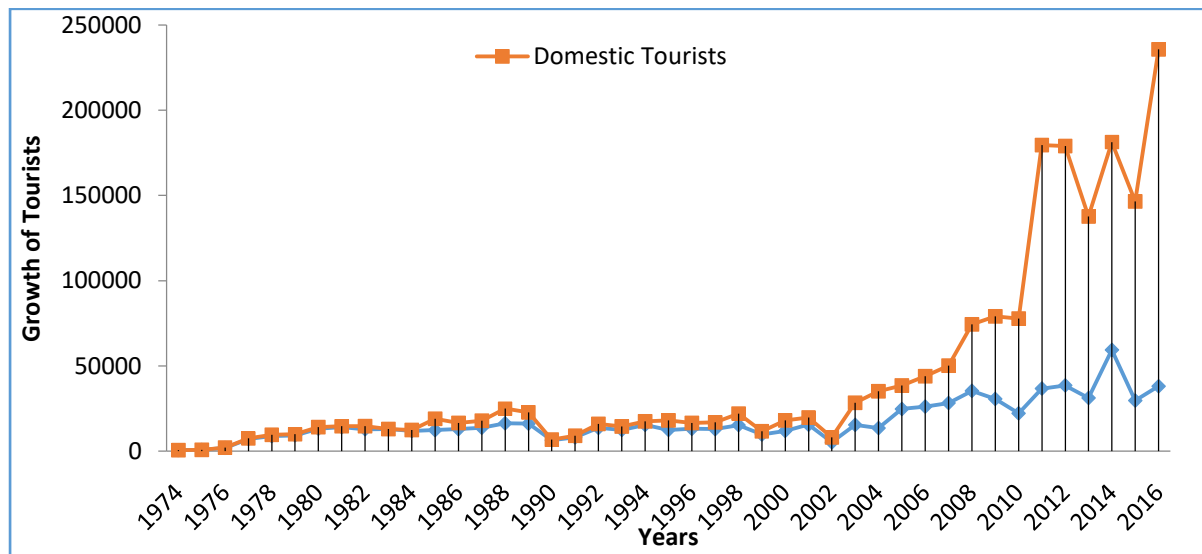
Source: Census of India (2011) and Assistant Commissioners Revenue Leh (2001-2011)

From the above table, it can be inferred that the change in the BPL population throughout the district was not uniform. Over the period of 10 years (2001-2011), different blocks have shown the different rate of changes like Leh block shows the decrease of 4.93% followed by the Nubra block with a downfall of 4.48% whereas the least change was observed

in the block Rong i.e., 1.47% decrease only. The major decrease observed in the block of Leh and Nubra maybe because of the influence of the tourism activities as these two blocks were having the major share of the tourists.

Tourism development in the Ladakh was stated in 1974 after that there was a continuous increase in the tourist flow in terms of both domestic and international. the number of tourists grow from 527 in 1974 to over 235698 tourists in 2016, with 197693 domestic tourists and 38005 international tourists. Let us have a look at the growth of tourist flow in the form of the chart since the inception in 1974-

Figure 2- Evolution of Tourist Flow in Leh from 1974 to 2016-



Source: -Department of Tourism Leh (2016).

**Database and Methodology**

To assess the role of tourism in poverty alleviation and socio-economic development Seven Point Mechanism prescribed by UNWTO (2006) has been used. The present study used the seven-point mechanism developed by UNWTO for the analysis of the impact of tourism on poverty alleviation. These seven points are mentioned in a report i.e., Poverty Reduction through Tourism, which as published by the UNWTO in the year 2006, it was said that impact of tourism on poverty reduction can be assessed by using following mechanisms-

1. Poor people's employment in the tourism business.
2. Poor people engaged in the activity of providing a supply of goods and services to tourism enterprise
3. Poor people directly engaged in sales of goods and services to tourists
4. Poor people engaged in the establishment and running of tourism enterprises

5. The poor get benefited from the taxes collected on tourism activities.
6. Poor benefits from voluntary support by tourism enterprises and tourists
7. Poor benefits from the tourism investment in infrastructure development in their locality, (UNWTO, 2006).

As the prescribed mechanism is mostly associated with tourism enterprises a survey of 152 tourism enterprises operating in Leh District was undertaken out of which 122 were accommodation units 25 travel agencies and 5 restaurants. The findings of the tourism enterprise survey were substantiated by undertaking a survey of 300 BPL households out of which 150 households were from the families actively associated with the tourism industry. The tourism enterprises, as well as the BPL households, were selected based on purposive sampling in order to represent all the blocks of the District. The BPL households were surveyed based on five parameters. The parameters used were adopted from Human Poverty Index and Human Development Index, there is the guideline that has been intended to bring complete measures of poverty and these guidelines have been reliably used in the UNDP Human Development Reports (UNDP, 1990; UNDP 2006). The parameters used are shown below-

**Table 2- Parameters and Sub-Parameters of Studying Poverty Level-**

S/N	Parameters	Sub-parameters
1	Demographic Indicators	The number of family members, age of family members, gender, educational qualification.
2	Economic Indicators	Source of income, monthly income, monthly expenditure on food, health and education, per capita income.
2	Housing environment	Housing structure, number of rooms, sanitation, and location of washrooms.
3	Food habits and health	Staple foods, number of meals per day, source of drinking water, health issues.
4	Major Assets	Agricultural land, hotels, guest houses, homestays, travel agencies, vehicles, shops, livestock.
5	Proximity related to public amenities and facilities	Education facility, health facility, banking, transport, market.

## Results and Discussion

**Data Analysis and Interpretation:** Let us first discuss the findings of the Tourism Enterprise Survey and then the BPL Household survey-

**a. Analysis of the Seven Points Mechanism with Reference to Leh-**

The details of the data collected from the tourism enterprises with regard to these seven points are discussed below one by one-

**1. Employment of poor in the tourism business**

Tourism and employment are closely related to each other as the former has long term impacts on the later. As compared to other economic activity tourism provides direct employment opportunities (Shukla & Ansari, 2013) by diversifying and increasing incomes, which reduces the vulnerability of poor people. As a result of increasing national income, additional funds can be diverted to poverty reduction programs (ESCAP, 2005:8) and the same was observed in Leh during the survey of tourism enterprises in 2018. In Leh, out of a total of 868 employees working in 152 surveyed tourism enterprises, 304 employees were from BPL families. Thus, we find that more than 35% of employees working in these tourism enterprises constitute the poor though most of them were working in low profile positions mainly because of their low educational qualifications.

**2. Supply of goods and services to tourism enterprises by the locals**

The tourism enterprises established for serving the tourists don't run on their own rather they require different goods and services which are either supplied by enterprises employing locals or directly by the locals. Although Leh is not self-sufficient to supply all the required goods and services to serve the tourists and hence many of them are procured from outside Ladakh but a good amount of goods and services are procured from local sources as well. During the survey, it was found that out of the total 152 surveyed enterprises 77 enterprises were using the goods which are produced by the local poor people like food items, handicrafts, transport services, construction materials and the like. If we calculate the percentage of the enterprise using locals products produced by the poor it comes to around 50%.

**3. Direct sale of goods and services to visitors by the poor**

The direct sales of goods and services to the visitors by the poor help to great extent in poverty alleviation and socio-economic development although that depends on their access to the tourist market (Bah & Goodwin, 2003) and the exclusionary policies held by the

lodges/hotels restrict the artisans and tour guides from assessing the tourist market (Smith 1994). Tourists are encouraged to interact and purchase products from these vendors. As a result, the income of these groups has increased and the tourists have reported more positive experiences as well (Bah & Goodwin, 2003). Out of the total 150 surveyed households in the tourism group, 73 percent of the households were found to be engaged in direct selling of goods and services to the tourists.

#### **4. Total number of establishments run by the poor**

Tourism establishments mainly include hotels, guesthouses, homestays, restaurants, travel agencies, etc. during the survey it was found that big establishments like a hotel, guesthouses, and restaurants that run their business with profit motive were mainly concentrated in the market area. Whereas some of the small guesthouses and homestays were found to be located in the countryside owned and managed mostly by the poor people as a source of extra income for their survival. It was also found that most of the homestays provide homemade food to the tourists for further enhancement of their income. During the survey of 152 tourism enterprises, it was found that 24 percent of enterprises, mainly homestays were owned and run by BPL families.

#### **5. Taxon tourism income or profits with proceeds benefiting the poor**

The subject of tourism taxation is highly valued for developing nations that effort to originate the desirable income from tourism (Wall & Mathieson, 2006) but it is given insufficient attention in the literature (Mbaiwa, 2005). Tourism revenue is determined by the size of the tourism industry, rates of taxation, as well as the political, social and legal environment. During the survey, it was found that 62 percent of tourism enterprises out of 152 surveyed enterprises have been paying taxes currently in Leh.

#### **6. Voluntary giving/support by tourism enterprises and tourists**

Voluntary giving or support by tourism enterprises and tourists comes in the form of tourist philanthropy (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007). During the survey, it has been found that tourists and tourism enterprises regularly support the poor people of the area through donations and other forms of help. For example, when there was a flood in Leh in 2010 the tourists, as well

as the tourism enterprises, helped the locals to rebuild their houses, schools, and other necessary amenities.

**7. Investment in infrastructure stimulated by tourism which also benefits the poor of the locality directly or through the support of other sectors**

Infrastructure development requires significant investment from both the public and private sector sources in the tourism destinations which are mainly located in the countryside as these areas lack basic tourism infrastructure. At present, in Leh, investment from such sources is mainly focused in the town areas which already have sufficient tourism infrastructure and hence, investors now should focus more in the countryside for the benefit of the rural people and maintain a balance in economic growth and development. During the survey of 300 households, 73 percent households strongly agreed to the fact that there has been a significant development in basic infrastructure like roads, hospitals, financial institutions, electricity, and water supply, etc. in Leh which helps the local people in the development of their socio-economic status in multiple ways.

**b. Analysis of Data Collected from the BPL Household Survey**

Table 3: Demographic Profile of the Household Respondents

Variables	Respondents (Household)	No. of family members	Demographic Profile	Number	Percentage
Gender	Tourism (150)	592	Male	307	51.86
			Female	285	48.14
	Non-Tourism (150)	768	Male	406	52.86
			Female	362	47.14
Educational qualification	Tourism	592	Illiterate	99	16.72
			Middle	184	31.08
			Secondary	267	45.10
			Graduate	33	5.57
	Non-Tourism	768	Above	09	1.52
			Illiterate	337	43.88
			Middle	270	47.53
			Secondary	138	17.97
Size of family	Tourism	150 (Household)	Graduate	19	2.47
			Above	04	0.52
	Non-Tourism	150 (Household)	Below 5 (Members)	126	84
			5-10 (Members)	24	16
			Below 5 (Members)	98	65.33

Source: Field survey, 2019.

Table 3 shows that the number of family members is more in a non-tourism group of a household than the tourism group. Moreover, in the tourism group, relatively more people are educated and more people have higher education degrees than the non-tourism group.

Table 4: Economic Indicators

Variables	Respondents	Sub-Indicators	Number	Percentage
Average monthly income per household	Tourism (150)	-	8000	-
	Non-Tourism (150)	-	6000	-
Monthly expenditure on food, health, and education per household	Tourism	Food	3600	64.29
		Health	500	8.92
		Education	1500	26.50
		Total	5600	100
	Non-Tourism	Food	3185	69.23
		Health	541	11.76
		Education	874	19
		Total	4600	100
Per capita income (Annual)	Tourism	-	24,000	-
	Non-Tourism	-	14,400	-

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 4 indicates the economic status of both groups of households. It is observed from the table that the respondent households who belong to the tourism group earn more than the non-tourism households. In addition, the tourism group was found to spend relatively more on education whereas the non-tourism group was found to spend more on health issues.

Table 5: Housing Environment of Surveyed Households

Variables	Respondents	Housing Structure	Number	Percentage (%)
House Type	Tourism (150)	Kaccha	106	70.67
		Pacca	44	29.33
	Non-Tourism	Kaccha	127	84.67

	(150)	Pacca	23	15.33
Number of Rooms in House	Tourism(150)	Below 5	121	80.67
		5-10	29	19.33
	Non-Tourism (150)	Below 5	137	91.33
		5-10	13	8.67
Washroom location	Tourism (150)	Outside	29	19.33
		Inside	97	64.67
		Both	24	16.00
	Non-tourism (150)	Outside	90	60.00
		Inside	49	32.67
		Both	11	7.33
Sanitation	Tourism (150)	Proper	51	34.00
		Improper	99	66.00
	Non-Tourism (150)	Proper	37	24.67
		Improper	113	75.33

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The above table delineates the housing environment of the surveyed households. It has been found from the survey that the household respondents associated with tourism activities are in a relatively better position in terms of types of houses, the number of rooms in the house and the sanitation facilities than the non-tourism households.

Table 6: Food Habits of the Surveyed Households

Variables	Respondents	Food Habits	Number	Percentage
Staple food in Household	Tourism (150)	Rice	131	87.33
		Wheat	19	12.67
	Non-Tourism	Rice	142	94.67
		Wheat	08	5.33
Number of Meals per day	Tourism	Three	101	67.33
		Two	49	32.67
	Non-Tourism	Three	134	89.33
		Two	16	10.67
Drinking-Water facilities	Tourism	Tape	97	64.67
		Well	38	25.33
		Other	14	9.33
	Non-Tourism	Tape	62	41.33
		Well	54	36.00
		Other	34	22.67
Health Issues	Health Problems			
	Tourism	Cough	56	37.33
		Fever	48	32.00
		Cardiac	33	22.00
		Other	13	8.67
	Non-Tourism	Cough	41	27.33

Fever	67	44.67
Cardiac	18	12.00
Other	24	16.00

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The above table describes the food habits of both groups of surveyed households. More numbers of households in both groups are found to take rice as their staple food and the majority of them have been found to be taking three-time meals per day. In terms of drinking water facility, most of the households in both the groups have been found to be using tap water but the number of household from the tourism group was comparatively more whereas in terms using water from well the number of households from the non-tourism group was found to be more.

Table 7: Major Assets of the Surveyed Households

Major Assets	Respondents	Type of Assets	Number of Households	Percentage	
Major Assets	Tourism	Land	31	20.67	
		Homestays	19	12.67	
		Guesthouse	11	7.33	
		Travel Agency	7	4.33	
		Shop	36	24.00	
	Non-Tourism		Livestock	31	20.67
			Vehicle	15	10.00
			Land	87	58.00
			Shop	14	9.33
			Livestock	43	28.67
		Vehicle	06	4.00	

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 7 shows the major assets possessed by the surveyed households. It is observed from the table that there is a difference in terms of types of assets possessed by both groups. The tourism group has assets in the form of shops, guesthouses, travel agencies, vehicles and the like whereas the non-tourism group has major resources in the form of land, livestock and the like. Thus, the findings of the household survey show that the BPL population who are actively associated with tourism activities have access to comparatively a better socio-economic status than the households which are associated with non-tourism activities like

agriculture and other allied sectors in terms of types of house, sanitation facility, average per capita income, educational qualification, relativespending in different domains like education, food, health and the like.

### **Conclusion and suggestions**

It has been found from the analysis of Seven Point Mechanism that tourism has been significantly contributing towards the socio-economic development and alleviation of poverty in Leh. After analyzing the data related to poverty and tourism development it was found that poverty has reduced in the areas where tourism activities have increased. The tourist flow in Leh in the year 2001 was 19699 and the poverty was 25.61% which decreased to 22.12% in the year 2011 as the number of tourists increased to 179491. It was also found from the survey of tourism enterprises as well as the BPL households that a good number of BPL population has been benefitted from the growth of tourism in Leh and that the BPL households which are actively associated with tourism activities have been enjoying comparatively a better socio-economic status than the households which are associated with non-tourism activities like agriculture and other allied sectors. However, as tourism activities as well as benefits have been found to be mostly concentrated in the town areas a few suggestions have been forwarded to spur the growth of tourism in the far-flung areas of the District too so that the people living there are also equally benefitted.

There is a need for the recognition of the tourist sites which are not still in the map of the Tourism Department like the Gurwarapather Sahab, Sindhu Ghats and the Shahi-Hamdan Mosque, the confluence of Zaskar and the Indus, the Ranchos School. There should be an effort to open the Siachin glacier for tourists and the development of water sports on the rivers like Nubra, Zaskar, and the Indus, etc. Moreover, there is a need for the development of tourist infrastructure like accommodation units, regular transport service (both private and public) in the tourist areas which are located outside the town, the installation of the public lavatories on the major roadsides like Srinagar-Leh & the Manali-Leh roads and the roads connecting different destinations within the district. There is an urgent need for these facilities in destinations like Tsommorri Lake, Tsokar Lake, Hemis Gumpa, Alchi Gumpa, Stoke palace, etc. The tourist circuits should be developed in such a way that the tourists can spend a good amount of time in the countryside so the people of these areas can also be benefitted from this growing industry. The religious tourism should be developed as the area is having a lot of Buddhist cultural and religious sites. This can be a driving force for the Buddhist population

of the world and the same should be applied for the Muslims as Ladakh is having one of the oldest mosques built by one of the famous Sufi saint Shahi-Hamdan which could be the point of attraction not only for the Muslims of India but also for the Muslims of Central and South Asia. The Gurudwara Pather Sahab is one of the famous Gurudwaras for the Sikh community and the Hindus are having the river Indus (Sindh) as a sacred river so the people of Sikhs and the Hindus can also be attracted through promotional activities.

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