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# Hindu Religious Motivations in the Kashmir Valley

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This research is an endeavor to assess the Hindu religious motivations in Kashmir valley (in India). Using a quantitative research approach, 267 Hindu pilgrims in Kashmir valley were asked to complete questionnaire to carry out this study. One sample *t* test and linear correlation modulus operandi were introduced for testing assumptions of the study. It is evident from the study context that for centuries, the Kashmir valley has cultivated the religious history of the Hindu faith, which is palpable from the many sacred Hindu sites across the Valley. The study results revealed that the Kashmir valley is a significantly important destination for wellbeing, spirituality and the holy atmosphere of Hindus whereas 'sacred occasions' are of average importance for them. All religious motivations display a considerable extent of variance in the results and overall there is significant association with pilgrims' demographics.

**Key Words:** Hinduism, Kashmir Tourism, Religious Tourism, Religious Motivations

## Introduction

The movement of tourists is synonymous with human existence on the planet. Tourists' requirements are a good starting point to thrash out the visitors' motivation for diverse ways to experience tourism (Brown, 1998). The factor that sets off the whole course of action to go on a tour and to visit a tourist place lies exclusively in the choices and motivations of the tourists (Stoddard, 1996). Earlier, food, shelter and trade were the main travel motivators to roam around, and then religion, education and other things were added to the list. Consequently, traveling for spirituality, belief systems and divine forces are some of the earliest travel determinants (Digance, 2003; Olsen & Timothy, 2006; Blackwell, 2007). Travel for religion and spirituality is constantly among the most common travel motivations; and various famous tourist places have developed mainly in accordance with to their relationships to sacred places, saints and events (Dallen, 2006; Gallagher, 2009:18). In this manner, Kashmir, in the Himalayas, is one of the holiest places for Hindus in northern India. Considering the importance of religious motivations for the Hindu religious tourists, when deciding to visit Kashmir valley, is the key endeavour of the present study. Thus, in the present study, hypothetically, religious motivations are considered insignificant for encouraging Hindu religious tourists to visit the Kashmir valley, and, motivations are not significantly associated with demographics.

The study is quantitative in nature, aiming to assess the motivations of Hindu pilgrims to visit the Kashmir valley. Before accomplishing the objectives, a succinct note on the religious background of the study area is presented. A far-reaching review of literature is laid down as the basis for a structured questionnaire for the survey. Hence, the study results are reliant on the views of 267 religious tourists in the study area and generalisation of the study is based on these results. With the help of SPSS: mean, SD, factor analysis, one-sample *t* test and linear correlation modulus operandi were introduced for data analysis and interpretation.

## Religion

Religion may be defined as a cultural structure of chosen practices and behaviours, worldviews, sanctified places, manuscripts, ethics, divinations, or societies that relates humanity to mystic, spiritual or sublime fundamentals (Morreall & Sonn, 2013; Nongbri, 2013). Similarly, Geertz (1966) stated that religion is set of symbols which act to establish dominant, universal and long-term moods and inspirations in followers by conveying notions of a common order of reality and clothing those notions and conceptions with such an atmosphere of factuality that the moods and inspirations appear inimitably truthful.

According to Raj and Morpeth (2007), religion is a dynamic and ancient concept, comprising the older established faiths, in addition to the appearance of new religious and Quasi-religious movements (secular

**Table 1. Religious Thought**

Thinker	Thought
Tylor and Frazor	Religion is a set of norms that guide people to live meaningful lives while relying on concealed and veiled forces.
Sigmund Freud	Religion is a mass obsession and subsists as a retort to yawning emotive skirmishes and feebleness.
Emile Durkheim	Religion is a collective and integrated organisation of society with common sets of beliefs and practices related to holy things. Durkheim was mainly concerned about the significance of the notion of the 'sacred' and its applicability in social welfare.
Karl Marx	Religion is a delusion whose principal ambition is providing explanations and justification for running a particular society. 'Religion is opium of the masses'.
Mircea Eliade	Religion is all about holiness and sacred contentment. Eliade's thought revolves around the profane and sacredness; and focuses on undying religious practices across the globe. He overlooks the specific historic settings of those practices.
Stewart Elliot Guthrie	Guthrie described Religion as anthropomorphisation gone awry. For him, religion is ascription of human characteristics to divine beings, events or non-human things.
EE Evans-Pritchard	Religion is reliant and gyrates on emotions as it has deep emotional roots.
Clifford Geertz	Religion has direct associations with culture and connotation. It is an imperative element of culture and meaning. Religion constitutes a set of codes which develop deep rooted dispositions and feelings among believers.
Rue	'Religion' is about 'us'. It is to influence our brains so that we could think, feel, and act in conducts that are worthy of us individually as well as collectively.
James Freud	Religion is an offshoot of the relations of the conscious (cognizant) mind with the subconscious (subliminal).
<b>Sources:</b> Durkheim (1965); Padovet (1974); Seiwert (2009); Chattopadhyaya (2006)	

substitutes to religion). It is assumed that religion is a multifaceted structure with many associations to morals, history and social order. It may comprise and utilise superstitions or take advantage of miraculous belief, while unifying them with formal deliberations. Still, there is no intellectual consent over what exactly determines a *religion*.

The majority of people in the world believe in different religious philosophies (Dubuisson, 2007), but the main religions, like, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism share approximately 84% of the world's population (Global Religious Landscape, 2012).

Every religion has its predefined system of practices to undertake in various forms. Religious practices may contain sermons, rituals, festivals, commemoration or honour (of deities), sacrifices, funerary services, feasts, prayers, trances, initiations, public services, matrimonial services, meditation, music, dance, art, or other aspects of anthropological philosophy or culture. Religions have holy histories and stories, which may be conserved in revered scriptures, and identities and sacred places, which aim ordinarily to provide a connotation to life.

The religious thoughts of many social scientists or thinkers establish different foundations (see Table 1) to understand what exactly *religion* is. According to them, *religion* is an answer to what we don't know, it is a spiritual reaction towards social living and surrounding, it is a way to express social needs, it is a belief to consider the omnipresent and most powerful, it is a systematic human institution, it is a direction to determine what is holy and unholy, likewise it is way of survival. Followers believe that *religion* is a *complete code of life*, hence there are strong motivations to follow a particular religion.

### Religious Tourism

Religious tourism is an imperative element of the tourism sector. It is also known as special interest tourism, which is generally associated with devotees who travel to destinations (that are identified as holy destinations) for enlightenment, truth and authentic experience (Olsen & Timothy, 2006). Such places are also visited by non-believers for their historical, cultural and religious significances.

Religious and cultural tourism is used synonymously. That is why several researchers, in tourism literature, have analysed religious and spiritual tourism in the same way as cultural and cultural heritage tourism (Božović, 1975:215; Dugandžija, 1986:110; Vukonić 1996:54; Blackwell, 2007:45). Because most cultural tourists visit religious sites, as a part of their travel itineraries and are thus called as religious tourists, it is difficult to give an exact definition of religious tourism.

Commonly, religious tourism is a type of tourism in which tourists of devotion travel independently or in groups for motivations associated with religion or spirituality in their pursuit for what is important. Religious travellers are frequently overlooked as a separate group by long-established tourism research (Griffin, 2007:17). Religious tourism includes all types of travel that is encouraged by faith and where the place is a religious destination. These destinations may not essentially be related to existing religions, in view of the fact that there are several extinct religions in world history (Blackwell, 2007:37). Because religious tourism constitutes a range of religious and spiritual places and related services, which are visited for secular as well as religious purposes, it can be summed up, that religious tourism is a voluntary, unpaid, temporary, pull by religion which is supplemented by other factors and kinds of travel (Da Graca Mouga Pocas Santos, 2003:40). the place of attraction is a religious destination, but visit to the destination is not always religious practice.

Tourism and religion are interrelated. As people travel for religion they need some basic services (food, accommodation, transport etc.) during their visit (Nolan & Nolan, 1992:69). Today, at a global level, religious tourism is predominantly undertaken by a few religions of the world. They travel to their specific sacred destinations in millions annually to perform religious obligations such as, Christians visiting Jerusalem, Muslims to Mecca and Hindus to Ayodha. Other religions such as, Buddhism, Judaism, Jainism, Sikhism etc. have their own values and norms to abide by at their separate religious places.

Religious pilgrimages have always been one of the key factors encouraging people to travel. Looking back at religious history, the major faiths have spread their wings as they stimulated tourism, which acts as a base for preaching beliefs all across the world (Božić, *et al.*, 2016).

## Motivations for Religious Tourism

Without motivation, travel to any destination does not exist. Travel is to search or fulfil needs that are around us. These needs compel and motivate us to move around and accomplish needs. Every segment and type of tourism has different needs and motivations to travel. Traveling for faith is one of the important motivations since time immemorial (Digance, 2003; Rinschede, 1992) and is defined as a visit to a sacred place (Eliade, 1959; Turner, 1973). Pilgrimage tourism is a subpart of religious tourism; hence, religious motivations diverge from person to person. Pilgrims may be prompted by a feeling of unease, by apprehension of death and penalty after death, or safety requirements, or they may be encouraged towards self-actualisation needs as stated by Maslow, or even esteemed needs such as purification from sin. People visiting sacred and religious destinations may have a social need to fit in and develop relationships with their people or they may desire to know history and culture connected with their religion.

In order to understand the forces determining embarkation on religious travel, we need additional explanations of pilgrims' motivations. A solid body of research has been developed by various researchers (Brown, 1998; Pesut, 2003; Digance, 2003; Eliade, 1959; Turner, 1973), which states that spirituality is one of the vital reasons that why people travel under the banner of religious tourism. In spirituality, people intend to get in touch with God and expect some extraordinary results like peace, prosperity, forgiveness, changed life and so on. These motivations can be described, not in each case, as rather transcendental. Some people travel as contrition for their offenses or even to gain religious merit (Turner, 1973).

The purpose of religious tourism is profoundly reliant on individual behaviour. Therefore, religious tourists often travel to redefine their identities, to understand the meaning of life and death, to reclaim themselves and to understand fundamental realities by going in pursuit of the practices and scriptures of their faith (Macdonald, 2002; Rudolph, 2004). This shows the magnitude of willingness in relation to religious wellbeing (i.e., the relationship with God) among pilgrims (Jafari *et al.* 2010), their personal spirituality (i.e., the level of spiritual integration into daily life) and involvement in sacred sacraments / occasions (Fabricatore *et al.*, 2000).

There are also people who travel to seek healing from disease or declaration of their worldly troubles and miseries (Mornis, 1992, Turner, 1973). Experiencing the holy atmosphere of places, being close to God, exploring places where the messengers of God and other religious heads lived their lives are other motives of pilgrims to roam (Shuo *et al.*, 2008; Collin-Kreiner and Kliot, 2000). There are many other factors that pull and compel pilgrims to travel. Visiting shrines / graves of religious preachers and saints, holy battlefields, events, education, religious art and architecture etc. are other important motivations in the list (Nolan and Nolan, 1992; Smith, 1992; Shackley, 2002).

### India: Home of Hindu Pilgrimage

India is one of the oldest religious destinations in the world. Some of the most prominent world travellers set foot in India to quench their thirst for religion in ancient times. Today, India remains a well-known seat of learning and culture, and is the mother country of several world religions, Hinduism being one of them. At present, India is predominantly a Hindu dominated country and religious travel in the country was institutionalised more than 1,000 years ago, with some sources suggesting that travel to sacred destinations started before that (Blackwell, 2007).

Being the mother country of Hinduism, India houses several sacred places for Hindus. According to customs, traditions and norms, Hindus travel to their pious religious sites to follow the principles of their faith. They visit the Holy Ganges River, to attend the sacred Kumbha Mela and many other places associated with Shraddha (homage to ancestors), and sites of ceremonial rites after death (Gesler & Pierce, 2000).

A vast number of Hindu saints and oracles, in their pursuit for knowledge, play a vital role in the development of a range of holy places and religious tourism sites in India. Over half of the Indian population travel to worship these orators and visit other gods / goddesses. Thus, followers of Hinduism make a significant impact in Indian religious tourism (Flood, 2003). Hinduism is a complicated cluster of rich traditions, rituals, rites, social codes, norms, moral values, glorious history and philosophies (Davidson and Gitlitz, 2002), and all of these are strong motives for Hindu pilgrims to roam around. They visit particular water bodies for holy baths and to put ashes (Asthi) of dead persons into the water as emblematic purification rituals. Like some other religions, Hindus worship statutes in temples. They visit temples or statues as an act of devotion to gods / goddess,

travelling individually, with family or in groups, to attain *Darshana* (revelation). Traditionally, Hindus shatter coconuts, present sweets and fruits, and pour milk over *Shive Linga* (a statue which indicates the private body part of Lord Shiva-most powerful, one of the godheads in the Hindu trinity), etc. in front of statues (of gods / goddesses) in the temples.

Hindus also worship and express their religion in their gods / goddesses through a number of festivals which are directly associated with their faith. Diwali, Maha Shivaratri, Holi etc. are famous and auspicious festivals of Hinduism. Celebrating these events at holy sites is assumed to be more meritorious. On the other hand, Hindu religious stories (Katha) are conveyed to followers by singing and chanting the Holy Scriptures. To attend and listen to these pious orations is considered an estimable act and followers will be rewarded by the God (Poddar *et al.*, 1951). Consequently, millions of Hindu pilgrims travel across the country to participate in different religious events and perform other fundamentals of their faith.

Reflecting on all of the above, there are scores of travel motivations to Hindu pilgrims. Added to these, theologically, Hindus are following four paths to *salvation* i.e., *Bhakti Yoga* (the Path of Devotion), *Karma Yoga* (the Path of Selfless Action), *Jhana Yoga* (the Path of Wisdom or Knowledge), and *Raja Yoga* (the union with God) (Radhakrishnan, 1963). Salvation is one of the high ranked travel motivations of Hindu pilgrims since times immemorial. They believe salvation is freedom from Samsara, the cycle of death and rebirth, whereby the *Ātman* (the individual's soul) attains realisation of the highest spiritual state. Salvation is the definitive goal of Hindus where hell and heaven are unconfirmed. This gives birth to another concept called *Moksha* (i.e., liberation) or *Mukti* (i.e., release) which is ultimate freedom from one's worldly notion of self. In Hinduism, a follower is cremated after his / her death. It is believed that cremation purifies the impure soul by fire. Later on, some ashes and pieces of bones from the cremated body are taken and emptied into the Holy Ganges River or deposited in an auspicious river or the ocean.

Like other religions of the world, Hindus place utmost value on their sacred places, and flock to them. Hindus follow centuries old traditions of Tirthayatra (pilgrimage) for purification of thought, piouness, salvation, charity etc. Because the Vedas, the Hindu religious scriptures, states that Tirthayatra (religious travel) is an act of merit, the devotees abide by this (Jha, 1978). The Holy places of Hindus in India are



**Figure 1 : Pahalgam Valley**

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f6/Pahalgam\\_Valley.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f6/Pahalgam_Valley.jpg)

omnipresent and it seems that the whole of the land is a vast sacred and sacrosanct space for religion and pilgrimage (Bhardwaj, 1973). The most sacred sites where Hindu pilgrims undertake their visits in India are: the Four Dham pilgrimages (*Badrinath* in Uttarakhand, *Puri* in Odhisha, *Dwarika* in Gujrat, and *Rameshwaram* in Tamilnadu), the Kumbha Mela sites (*Haridwar*, *Nashik*, *Ujjain* and *Allahabad*), and the seven ancient temple cities (*Ayodhya*, *Haridwar*, *Rishikesh*, *Vrindavan*, *Mathura*, *Allahabad* and *Varanasi*). Other important sites include Vaishno Devi and Amarnath Yatra in Jammu and Kashmir, Tirumala Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh and several others (Poddar *et al.*, 1951).

Therefore, there are many religious motivations for Hindu pilgrims to visit India (Poddar *et al.*, 1951). Thus, religion is a vibrant motivational factor for visiting India which has resulted in a strong upsurge in such tourism in India (Vijayanand, 2012). After observing this growth, religious tourism is now considered as an Indian form of domestic and international tourism that includes all religious and spiritual activities (Rao & Suresh, 2001).

### **Kashmir Valley: Area of the Study**

Kashmir valley is one of the three divisions of Jammu and Kashmir, the northern most state of India, and it also houses the summer capital of the state. This is one of the most beautiful landscapes of the world located in the Himalayas (Figure 1). It is believed that Kashmiri Pandits / Brahmin (upper caste of Hindus), also referred to as the Saraswat Brahmin community, are the original residents of the Kashmir valley (Koul, 1972; Bamzai, 1994; Lyon, Peter, 2008:99). Their contribution in formation of social life and consolidating the Valley as a whole is highly significant (Dutt, 1999:35-50). However, since time immemorial, Kashmir has been considered as one of the holiest places in India. In ancient times, Kashmir was believed to be a land of Goddess Parvati who later on was known as Rishi Bhumi (Wakhlu, 1998:195). This transformation process slowed down when Islam became established in the Valley and it became 'Peer Vaer' which means '*An abode of Saints*'. While the existence of Islam diluted the influence of Hinduism in Kashmir, some of the most sacred sites of Hindus are located in this area (Bruce, 1999:106). Apart from the their religious character, Hindu temples from the 3rd to



**Figure 2 : Tents near Amarnath Cave**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tent\\_near\\_Amarnath\\_Cave.JPG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tent_near_Amarnath_Cave.JPG)

**Figure 3 : Ice Lingam at Amarnath Cave**

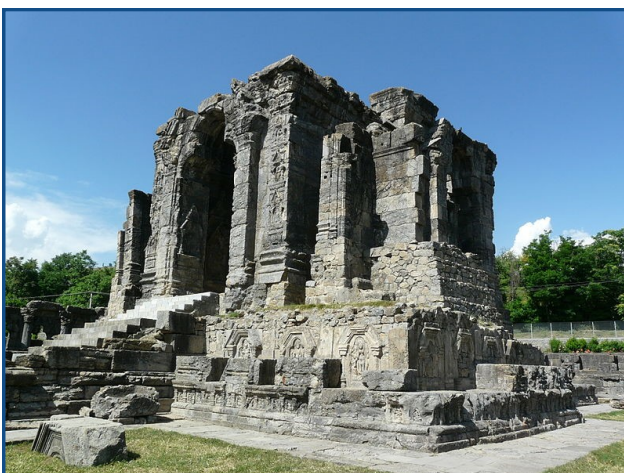
[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/af/Lord\\_Amarnath.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/af/Lord_Amarnath.jpg)

the 8th century represent the great architectural skills of Kashmiris which are also considered to be divine in nature (Sinha, 1999:153-155).

The Hindu pilgrimage to Kashmir valley is the backbone of the local tourism industry. The region receives solid number of Hindu pilgrims every year from across the globe. For Hindus, visiting sacred places in Kashmir is very meritorious. The high importance of these religious sites attracts pilgrims and pushes the tourism sector of the region. Some of the most important religious sites of Hindus in the Kashmir valley are briefly discussed below:

### *The Holy Cave of Shri Amarnath*

The most sacred and famous religious attraction of Hindu pilgrims in Kashmir is the Holy Cave of Shri Amarnath (Figure 2). The cave is located in south Kashmir near famous tourism site *Pahalgam* (Figure 1). There is a five foot tall Shive Lingam, made of ice, inside the cave and pilgrims undertake Darshan (seeking vision) when visiting this sacred ice-lingam (Figure 3). There are other ice formations within the cave that symbolizes other Hindu deities. These ice formations are made in summer days and wane and wax along with the moon. The traditional Yatra (pilgrimage) normally takes place from June to August every year (Wakhlu, 1998:196).

**Figure 4 : Martand Sun Temple Central shrine**

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/20/Martand\\_Sun\\_Temple\\_Central\\_shrine\\_%286133772365%29.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/20/Martand_Sun_Temple_Central_shrine_%286133772365%29.jpg)

### *The Sun-Temple of Martand*

The temple of Martand, the most important and remarkable of all the temples in Kashmir, is situated in south Kashmir. This, more than sixteen hundred years old, temple is dedicated to *Suriya* (Sun). The Sun-temple of Martand in Kashmir is one of the three Sun temples of Hindus in India (Figure 4). The sacred temple is surrounded by beautiful snow capped mountains on all the sides and decorated with attractive gardens and sacred streams. The architecture styles of the temple are masterpieces of work which resembles the faces of several gods/goddesses and other features of the Hindu faith (Wakhlu, 1998:199; Bruce, 1999:107).



Figure 5 : Kheer Bhawani Temple



[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/14/Kheer\\_Bhawani-2.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/14/Kheer_Bhawani-2.jpg)

### ***The Holy Shrine of Kheer Bhawani***

Kheer Bhawani temple is located in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district. The temple is dedicated to goddess *Maharagya Devi*. The temple is made of marble stone and is beautifully located in the middle of a spring against the background of mesmerizing natural scenery. According to Wartler Lawrence (cited by Wakhlu, 1998:205) Kheer Bhawani shrine is seen as a very holy location, but it is little known that the cult of worshiping this goddess began from a cyclone. The temple is one of the most important temples of Hindus. Brahmins and other Hindu pilgrims from other Hindu castes worship at this temple and pay visits from all corners of the country to undertake *Darshan* (meritorious vision) at the place. Most pilgrims flock to the shrine, during the annual 8 day festival conducted in the month of May. Devotees offer milk and Kheer (sweet dish made of rice and milk) to the sacred spring (Wakhlu, 1998:206; Sinha, 1999:84).

There are several other popular Hindu temples in the Valley, such as, Shankaracharya Temple, Sharika Devi Temple (Hari Parbat), Avantisvara Temple, Avantisavami Temple, Pandrethan Temple etc. that all attract pilgrims. Besides these temples, there are various sacred springs and lakes worshipped by Hindus in Kashmir. Most of the springs in Kashmir are called 'Nags' (in Sanskrit, *Naga* means snake) since they are dedicated to snake gods. Sites such as Veri Nag, Kokar Nag, Kousarnag, Sheshnag etc. are quite famous (Bruce, 1999:109; Sinha, 1999:90). The other sacred water bodies of Hindus in Kashmir are Nund Kol Lake, Gadsar (in Sanskrit, *Sar* means lake), Gangbal Lake, Kishansar, Krishansar lake etc. that are all visited and worshipped by Hindu devotees.



Table 1: Demographics of Respondents

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents											
Variable		No.	%	Variable		No.	%	Variable		No.	%
1. Age	Less than 20	7	2.6	2. Occupation	Student	24	9.0	3. Gender	Male	173	64.8
	21 to 40	85	31.8		Govt Employee	59	22.1		Female	94	35.2
	41 to 60	129	48.3		Self Employed	26	9.7		Total	267	100
	above 61	46	17.2		Retired	53	19.9	4. Marital Status	Married	195	73.0
	Total	267	100		Homemaker	61	22.8		Unmarried	72	27.0
			Unemployed		44	16.5	Total		267	100	
					Total	267	100				

Table 2: Rotated Component Matrix of Pre-visit Importance of Religious Motivations to Kashmir Valley

A. No	Dimension	Loadings	M	SD	Eigen value	Variance	$\alpha$ value
1 Self Well-being							
1	Gaining religious merit, salvation or penitence for sins	.781	3.89	.973	6.034	35.49	.721
2	Desire to become a better person	.505	3.03	.915			
3	Adding meaning to life	.500	4.65	.591			
2 Spirituality							
4	Seeking miracles and healing spiritual help and solace in the face of misfortune	.925	3.79	1.112	3.376	19.87	.801
5	Understanding and / or strengthening spiritual being	.893	3.28	.999			
6	Seeking enlightenment	.886	3.85	1.066			
7	Getting closer to god(s) and / or divine forces	.717	3.84	.875			
8	Suitable atmosphere for mental relaxation and evaluation of self, self-discovery	.581	4.07	.803			
9	Engaging in ascetic practices (spiritual improvement)	.245	4.01	.604			
3 Sacred Occasions							
10	Religious events	.453	3.38	.609	1.665	9.79	.863
11	Commemoration of the deceased	.342	2.10	1.030			
12	Opportunity to participate in sacramental rituals and ceremonies	.311	2.76	.947			
4 Holiness of Destination							
13	Obligations to visit the religious site	.881	3.75	.994	1.442	8.49	.681
14	The feeling of community (religious, ethical and cultural) associated with the site	.686	4.13	.749			
15	Freedom to practice religion	.639	3.67	.919			
16	Prominence and prestige of the site	.544	3.98	.849			
17	Experiencing the holy atmosphere	.236	4.19	.688			

## Data analysis and interpretation

Table 1 illustrates the demographics of the respondents. Pilgrims visiting Kashmir mostly belong to the 41 to 60 years age group (48.3%) followed by 21 to 40 years (31.8%), above 61 years (17.2%) and less than 20 years (2.6%) age groups. A total of 64.8% were male while 35.2% were female respondents. From the occupation homemakers formed 22.8%, government employees - 22.1%, retirees - 19.9%, unemployed - 16.5%, self-employed - 9.7% and students - 9%. 73% of respondents are married against while 27% are unmarried.

### Importance of Religious Motivations before visiting Kashmir

The results of *pre-visit importance of religious motivations to Kashmir* are given in Table 2. The KMO value (.741) is greater than 0.5 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is also significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) for the given data. Thus, the attributes are condensed into a number of related dimensions by factor analysis modus operandi.

The first dimension is labelled as *Self Well-being* which constitutes gaining religious merit, salvation or penitence for sins (.781), desire to become better person (.505) and adding meaning to life (.500) attributes. The second dimension is named as *Spirituality* which contains seeking miracles and healing spiritual help and solace in the face of misfortune (.925), understanding and / or strengthening of spiritual being (.893), seeking enlightenment (.886), getting closer to god(s) and / or divine forces (.717), suitable atmosphere for mental relaxation and evaluation of self, self-discovery (.581) and engaging in ascetic practices (spiritual improvement) (.245) attributes. The third dimension is named as *Sacred Occasions* which includes attributes such as Religious events (.453), commemoration of the deceased (.342) and opportunity to participate in sacramental rituals and ceremonies (.311). Lastly, the fourth dimension is identified as *Holiness of Destination* which represents obligations to visit the religious site (.881), the feeling of community (religious, ethical and cultural) associated with the site (.686), freedom to practice religion (.639), prominence and prestige of the site (.544), and experiencing the holy atmosphere (.236) attributes.

The first dimension comprises an Eigen value 6.034 and explains 35.49% of total variance. Similarly, Spirituality, the second dimension holds an Eigen value

of 3.376 along with 19.87% of total variance while as the third dimension, sacred occasions, comprises Eigen value 1.665 and elucidates 9.79% of the total variance. On the other hand, the fourth dimension, holiness of destination, takes account of Eigen value 1.442 and explains 8.49% of total variance of the data.

According to the Chronbach's Alpha, the covariance and internal consistency among the attributes in the Self Well-being, spirituality, sacred occasions and holiness of destination dimensions is *good* (.721), *better* (.801), *better* (.863), and *ok* (.681) correspondingly.

*Adding meaning to life* (4.65) was a highly important motive for pilgrims to visit Kashmir followed by *Gaining religious merit, salvation or penitence for sins* and *Desire to become a better person* (3.03) as neutral aspect from the first dimension, *Self-wellbeing*.

In the second dimension, *Spirituality*, *Suitable atmosphere for mental relaxation and evaluation of self, self-discovery* was marked as important for pilgrims' motivation to visit Kashmir with the highest mean score (4.07) followed by *Engaging in ascetic practices (spiritual improvement)* (4.01), *Seeking enlightenment* (3.85), *Getting closer to god(s) and / or divine forces* (3.84), *Seeking miracles and healing spiritual help and solace in the face of misfortune* (3.79) and *Understanding and / or strengthening spiritual being* (3.28).

*Religious events* were important aspects for pilgrims to visit Kashmir with a mean score 3.38 in *Sacred Occasions*, the third dimension. However, they were indifferent regarding aspects such as *Opportunity to participate in sacramental rituals and ceremonies* (2.76) and *Commemoration of the deceased* (2.10) when deciding to visit Kashmir.

In the Fourth dimension, *Holiness of Destination*, *Experiencing the holy atmosphere* (4.19), *The feeling of community (religious, ethical and cultural)*

Table 3: Significance of results

Dimension	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Self-wellbeing	3.86	.411	.025	7.301	.000
Spirituality	3.80	.498	.031	2.001	.000
Sacred Occasions	2.76	.704	.043	.980	.000
Holiness of Destination	3.94	.358	.022	3.501	.000

Table 4: Association between Derived Motivations and Demographics of the Pilgrims

Attributes		Self-wellbeing	Spirituality	Sacred Occasions	Holiness of Destination	Overall Association
Age	PC	.039	.571	.373	.132	.279
	p value	.002	.000	.000	.031	.008
Gender	PC	.406	.683	.485	.422	.499
	p value	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Marital Status	PC	.310	.853	.780	.404	.587
	p value	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Occupation	PC	.180	.514	.309	.095	.274
	p value	.003	.000	.000	.001	.001

NOTE: 1. PC= Pearson Correlation

2. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

associated with the site (4.13), *Prominence and prestige of the site* (3.98), *Obligations to visit the religious site* (3.75), and *Freedom to practice religion* (3.67) were identified as imperative motivations for Hindu pilgrims before going on holy trip to Kashmir valley.

According to Table 3, the derived motivation dimensions are statistically significant as the *p* values of *Self-wellbeing*, *Spirituality*, *Sacred Occasions* and *Holiness of Destination* dimensions are less than the assumed alpha ( $p < .05$ ). Hence, the acknowledged religious motivations are significantly important for the Hindu religious tourists to visit Kashmir.

The results in Table 4 exemplify the relations between the demographics and religious travel motivations of Hindu pilgrims to visit Kashmir valley. According to the table, the relationship of *Age* with *Self-wellbeing* ( $r = .039$ ), *Spirituality* ( $r = .571$ ), *Sacred Occasions* ( $r = .373$ ) and *Holiness of Destination* ( $r = .132$ ) is positive. The linear relationship of *Gender* with *Self-wellbeing* ( $r = .406$ ), *Spirituality* ( $r = .683$ ), *Sacred Occasions* ( $r = .485$ ) and *Holiness of Destination* ( $r = .422$ ) is also positive. On the other hand, the linear relationship of *Marital Status* with *Self-wellbeing* ( $r = .310$ ), *Spirituality* ( $r = .853$ ), *Sacred Occasions* ( $r = .780$ ) and *Holiness of Destination* ( $r = .404$ ) is also constructive. Similarly, the linear relationship of *Marital Status* with *Self-wellbeing* ( $r = .180$ ), *Spirituality* ( $r = .514$ ), *Sacred Occasions* ( $r = .309$ ) and *Holiness of Destination* ( $r = .095$ ) is found to be positive, like other demographics and religious motivations of pilgrims.

Based on Table 4, demographics and religious travel motivations are significantly associated with each other ( $p < .05$ ). Their direction of association is positive, that is, these variables tend to increase together. However, the magnitude of their association across the variables is moderate ( $r < .5$ ) in most of the cases. Therefore, religious travel motivations are significantly associated with the demographics of the Hindu religious tourists.

## Generalization

Religious travel motivations vary among the religious tourists (Chen, 2004). The magnitude of every motivation depends on the scale of importance of motivation for pilgrims (Yooshik & Muzaffer, 2005). Hence, the study aimed to understand the importance of religious travel motivations for Hindu pilgrims before visiting Kashmir valley. Generally travel motivations: oblige an individual to act for travel (Goossens, 2000), become deriving forces of travel (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004) and more importantly connote the travellers' state of mind and needs (Dann, 1981).

As stated by the results, dimensions of religious travel motivations i.e., *Self-wellbeing*, *Spirituality*, *Sacred Occasions* and *Holiness of Destination* in the present study were significantly important for pilgrims before travel. This states that, customarily, pilgrims have several travel motivations at a time to visit a specific destination (Marts, *et al.*, 2011; Zhong, 2013; Wang, *et al.*, 2015).



Results of **Self-wellbeing** motivation revealed that, largely, pilgrims travelled for adding meaning to life, becoming better a person and gaining religious merit. This directs that self-wellbeing through religious activities is obvious to: explain and resolve challenging situations, augment a sagacity of self as effectual, and establish the base for a sense of personal identity and meaning (Bailey, 1997; Behere, *et al.*, 2013). Sporadically, the unwanted behaviour of tourists pulls them out of their routine habitat for self-wellbeing and moral virtues (Klenosky, 2002; Zhong, 2013), but in most cases, visiting a holy place becomes crucial in changing one's life (Jafari, *et al.*, 2010). Afterward, generally, these kinds of people are often focused on the betterment of others (Bergin, 1983; Vorzsak & Gut, 2009).

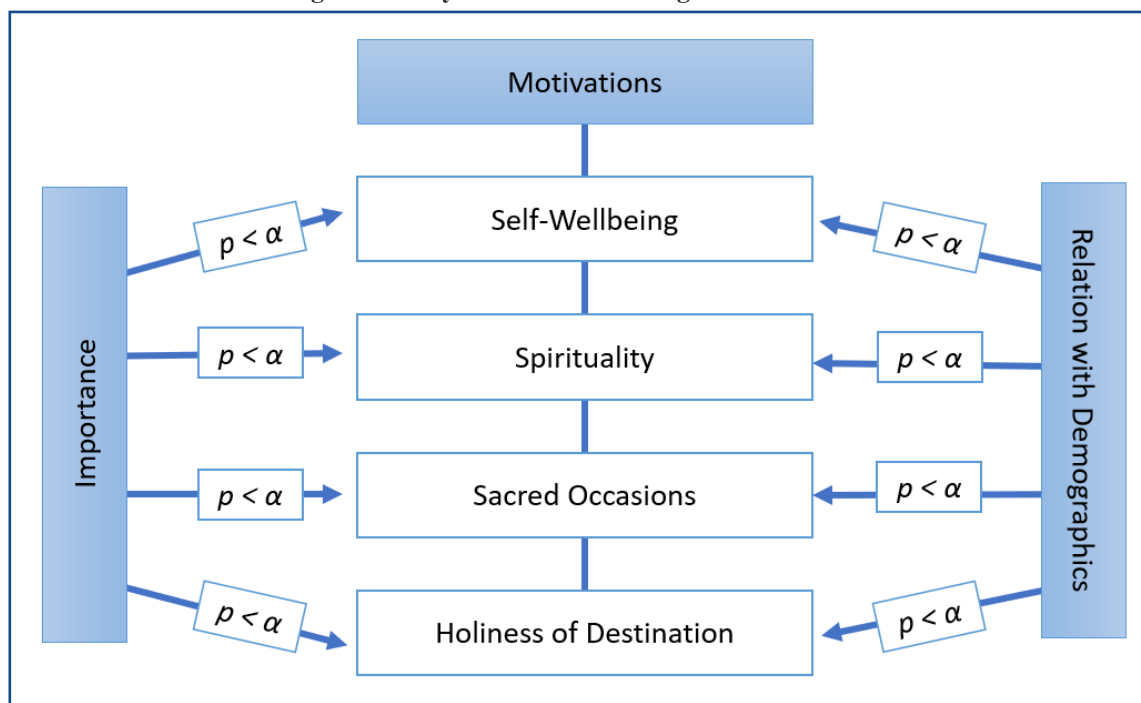
Spiritual life is considered peaceful and divine, where an individual is connected / closer to God (Fisher, 2010). Spirituality results in this study revealed that visiting for mental peace, self-discovery, ascetic practices and seeking enlightenment were very important motivations for pilgrims. These motivations direct a follower to alleviate his / her daily sufferings and hardships (Neff, 2003). Consistent with the results, **Seeking Miracles, Understanding Self-spiritual Being** and **Getting Closer to God** were moderately important motivations for pilgrims, since they usually had reasonable spiritual well-being (Hsiao *et al.*, 2010). Without getting closer or connecting to the God, spirituality aspects were incomplete (Fisher, 2013) and

followers sought to access the God through religion (Behere *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, the results specified a divine and holy triangle of God - Religion - Spirituality where a pilgrim searches for peace and cessation of miseries.

Every religion has a set of sacred occasions to observe (Zhong, 2013). There are some occasions that are only observed far away from a devotee's home at a particular destination (Fabricatore *et al.*, 2000). Visiting for religious events, commemoration of the deceased and participating in sacramental ceremonies were important travel motivations for pilgrims, as stated by the study results. This outlines that the results are supported by Fabricatore *et al* (2000) and Zhong (2013). According to the findings, **Religious Events** were more important for pilgrims than other motivations, since a believer is largely motivated by religious whys and wherefores (Rinschede, 1992).

Holiness is another crucial aspect denoting why the individuals visit a particular destination or site (Cohen, 1979). Cohen's (1979) argument backs the study results as **Feeling of community associated with the site, Prestige of the Site** and **Holy Atmosphere** were highly important motivations for pilgrims to travel. Besides, there are certain religious obligations that compel a pilgrim to travel and abide by his / her religion freely in a secular atmosphere (Smith, 1992; Wong *et al*, 2013; Lankford *et al*, 2005).

Figure 1 Study Path Model of Religious Motivations



The significant association between pilgrims' demographics and travel motivations in the study results (Figure 6) indicates that self-wellbeing, spirituality, sacred occasions and holiness of destination were highly ranked travel motivations for pilgrims irrespective of their gender, age, marital status and occupation demographics.

### Conclusion

This study provided a detailed exploration of the Hindu religious context of Kashmir valley by way of examining religious motivations of Hindu pilgrims. Illumination of the study results specified the holy and sacred character of the destination, which has numerous ancient sanctified Hindu sites dotted in all directions. In line with the study results, Hindus consider Kashmir valley to be a significantly important destination for self-wellbeing, spirituality and its holy atmosphere. Seeking miracles, spiritual healing help, and solace in the face of misfortune, from the spirituality dimension, are marked as the most important motives across the study. However, Kashmir is observed as a less important destination for Hindu pilgrims when it comes to sacred occasions or events. These motivations demonstrate a considerable variance in the results. Demographic attributes and religious motivations of pilgrims are significantly associated with each other which illustrates that the both sets have tendency to increase together.

Pilgrims had assorted motives to travel. To change their lives by alleviating daily sufferings and hardships, they seek peace and cessation of miseries. The free and peaceful atmosphere of the Kashmir valley is essential for effective religious tourism.

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### **Links**

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