



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Nature Based Tourism in Kaghan Valley: Potential and Problems**

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
<b>Received:</b> May 03, 2021 <b>Accepted:</b> August 23, 2021 <b>Online:</b> August 26, 2021 <b>Keywords:</b> Management, National Parks, Natural Resources, Problems, Sustainability <b>*Corresponding Author:</b> swatiowais4@gmail.com	Kaghan Valley is one of the most beautiful valleys of Pakistan due to its beautiful landscape, pleasant weather and climate, green and dense pine forests, unique flora and fauna, flowing river and streams, waterfalls, legendary lakes, whispering trees, patches of meadows with beautiful flowers and snow-covered peaks. Amidst the mountains, beautiful valleys with fruit orchards and traditional rural life with unique cultures and hospitable and loving local community attract the visitors making them happy with the nature and forget their worries and sorrows behind and become mentally relaxed. This research paper elaborates the natural resources of Kaghan valley like weather, water resources, peaks, forests, wildlife (flora and fauna), minerals and national parks etc. All the problems related to these natural resources are sorted out in this study and at the end their proper recommendations are suggested to manage them as sustainable tourism destinations.

**Introduction**

Kaghan valley is one of the most beautiful valleys of Pakistan, attracting millions of visitors each year to enjoy the natural and cultural beauty of the area. By visiting the mountains, beautiful valleys and traditional rural life with unique cultures and hospitable and loving local community, visitors become mentally relaxed. This compels the repeat visits of tourists to Kaghan valley in huge number.

Visitors enjoy nature as far as it is preserved, when the nature is disturbed by human activities, there may not be any charm for visitors to visit the area and same is the reason visitors are not interested to visit the disturbed environments and seek some new destinations to satisfy their needs.

Up till now there are very few stations in the valley like Balakot, Shogran, Kaghan, Naran and Lake Saiful Malook, which are visited by the tourists, rest of the valley is either unexplored, or inaccessible. Very few visitors use to visit some other destinations. Thousands of visitors are visiting these few selected destinations and putting adverse effects on the natural and cultural environments of the area and the destinations, causing

deterioration of the resources. The objective of this study is to highlight the potential tourist destinations of the area in terms of natural or nature-based tourism, problems caused by this concentrated tourism and ways to overcome the damage to these resources.

### **Literature Review**

Pakistan has no shortage of cultural, religious/ spiritual attractions and some magnificent scenery, yet it has not seen an era of sustainable growth in the field of tourism due to the geopolitical barriers to development (Haq et al. 2008). Northern Areas of Pakistan are the paradise for trekkers and climbers, as many of the world's highest peaks are located there. The lush green valleys, rivers and streams are also attractions for nature and adventure lovers. Three of the world's largest mountain ranges meet in Northern Areas. K-2 the world's second highest peak is also there. The area is full of wildlife and northern mountains of Pakistan are host to 45 species of mammals, 222 species of birds, 32 of reptiles and 6 of amphibians and these unique wildlife species can be promoted for wildlife tourism after careful planning (Israr et al. 2009).

A strict environmental policy to ensure sustainability of nature is necessary. Awareness among the local community regarding tourism is necessary. Infrastructure should be improved and the highest level of security of tourists is crucial (Mondal, 2017).

Kaghan valley culminates in the tree clad high mountains and glaciers in the North- East with varying altitudes from one to five thousand meters above sea level. Authors say that this region is relatively active geophysically and is also biologically diverse due to the altitude and aspect- driven variability in energy and moisture. In such a region a better understanding of changes in land resources, production of agronomic and horticultural crops, use of timber and non-timber products, and livestock structure have important implications and understanding these changes along with the traditional/ indigenous knowledge of the local people, who are the key to sustainable development in that area (Qasim et al. 2013).

Agriculture production is susceptible to weather and climate and hilly regions of KPK province are more vulnerable to climate change. In this study interviews were conducted from the farmers of the valley, revealing that high temperature and rainfall, deforestation, floods and long winters are the most considerable factors which had harmful impact on the agriculture of the valley (Safdar et al. 2014).

There is a potential of six types of tourism in Pakistan i.e. Heritage tourism, Religious/ Spiritual/ Pilgrimage Tourism, Cultural Tourism, Adventure or Ecotourism, Wildlife Tourism and Sports tourism (Fakhar, 2008).

Major tools of the planning like land use plans, environmental impact assessment, legislative, regulatory and enforcement measures, monitoring and local participation should be applied and implemented. To achieve the success, political will, far sighted policies, more efficient institutional structure, participation of local community are very much important. Ministry of Tourism should review its tourism policies by considering the ground realities. Government of Gilgit Baltistan should also prepare its tourism master plan for tourism management and development in the area (Karim et al. 2012).

## Natural Resources

### Water Resources of the Valley

Kaghan valley has abundant water resources in the form of river, streams, rills, freshwater lakes, springs, waterfalls etc. (Plates I-VIII). In the following lines some of the water resources of the valley are discussed which may be used for tourism in the valley and for the different recreational activities of the tourists to make their visit memorable.

#### River Kunhar

River Kunhar has its origin from lake Lulusar. The river flows at its peak during summer due to its tributaries and melting snow, whereas in winters it is almost dry (Ali, 2011). River Kunhar is the lifeline of Kaghan valley and is the main river of the valley. It is met by some other streams and rills and meets with river Jhelum at 7 km south of Muzaffarabad (Rasheed, 2009). The total length of the river is 89.77 miles (Masrur et al. 1973). During the winters the river is almost dead, and its water turns deep green and blue but in summers in the months of May and June its water and speed is horrible and flows making loud noises. Kaghan valley and river Kunhar are the part and parcels, wherever you visit or go in the valley the river will not let you alone and will be your companion. It is said that word Kunhar is the combination of two words *koh* meaning mountain and *nahar* meaning stream or waters, so it means waters/ stream coming from the mountains (Rasheed, 2009). This river is also known as *Nain Sukh*, meaning sooth givers to eyes. A legend speaks that Mughal queen Noor Jahan on her visit to Kashmir used the water of this river for the soaring eyes and she got well and named it as *Nain Sukh*. (Rasheed, 2009).

River Kunhar is famous for its trout fishing, which is famous all over the world for its delicious taste and fishing has also been a favorite hobby of the locals and the tourists as well. To preserve the trout fish of the valley there is a trout hatchery farm in the village of Shino in the valley. The river is also famous for its white-water rafting. And due to its nature of flow, offers different grades of rafting, from very easy to the difficult ones at different localities. This river is also a killer one, as every year some tourists are drowned while taking pictures and enjoying the river waters, as they are unaware of the river's environment.

#### Springs

There are number of springs in the valleys which are famous for their healthy and sweet waters. Some of the springs are also famous among the local community as having healing effects. The following table shows an overview of these springs.

**Table 1**  
**Springs in Kaghan**

S. No	Name	Specialty	Location
1	Garlat Spring	Effective in curing the skin diseases	Garlat, Balakot town
2	Dumnaarian Spring	Effective in diabetes	Dumnaarian
3	Hassa Spring	Sweet and healthy drinking water	Hassa, near Balakot town

### **Garlat Sulphur Spring**

In the village of Garlat, Balakot town there is a Sulphur spring. The people since ancient times use to visit and take shower in the waters of this spring, who have different skin diseases. Most of the people are of the opinion that their disease has been cured after taking showers here. At this place arrangements for taking shower are provided and are free of cost. Although the bathrooms and the facilities are very much poor and taking bath here is very difficult, but people use to use it.

### **Dumnaarian Spring**

On the way to Naran, there is a village named Dumnaarian. Here is a spring and among the local community it is famous that the water of this spring is very much useful for curing diabetes. People from different parts of the valley use to come here and take the water of this spring to cure their diabetes.

### **Hassa Spring**

Hassa is a village near Balakot town. Here on the bank of river Kunhar is a water spring having very cold and sweet water in summer season. People from different parts of the valley specially visit this spring during summer evenings and take water with them. People also use to take bath here due to its pleasant water. This spring is becoming a picnic spot and during the season a heavy crowd at every time of the day can be seen here.

### **Lakes**

There are number of lakes in Kaghan valley, some smaller and some larger. All are freshwater lakes, famous for their tremendous beauty and the natural landscape in which they are located. Most of the lakes are not easily accessible and are in the remote areas of the valley, to reach them one has to trek or hire a pony. Some of the lakes like Saif-ul-Malook are famous all over the world for its beauty. Some of the lakes also have legends associated with them. Some of the lakes are located in very remote areas and mostly nomads know about them, who use to graze their sheep there. In this section, eleven lakes of the valley are discussed to highlight the potential of tourism associated with these lakes and the area, which may satisfy the varying needs of the tourists.

### **Aansu Lake**

The shape of this lake is like a tear, so it has been termed as *Aansu* (tear) lake. *Aansu* in Urdu language means a tear. It is a very beautiful lake and is the origin of river *Manoor*. This lake is situated at the height of more than 16100 ft and covered with snow at most time of the year. The area is lifeless, so keep food items and warm clothing with you as weather changes at once here (Khan, 2011). There are different treks leading to this lake but the easiest way to reach here is from lake Saiful Malook via Kachch Gali.

### **Jatti Lake**

This is a lesser-known lake at the distance of some 5 km from Naran. It is a small bowl-shaped lake having deep green water. In summer there are potatoes fields and different beautiful flowers increasing the beauty of the area (Khan, 2011).

### **Saiful Malook Lake**

At the height of 10, 200 ft, this lake is located at a distance of 8 km from Naran. (Khan, 2011). This is world famous lake and tourists mostly visit this lake. In recent years the increased tourism is putting adverse effects on the beauty of this lake and its beauty is degrading day by day. The length of this lake is 1430 ft and width is 440 ft (Khan, 2014). The interesting aspect of the beauty of this lake is that its water keeps changing its color with breeze and the full moon nights are amazing here. In the waters of the lake the nearby snow-covered mountains reflection presents beautiful views. A legend of Badri-ul-Jamal and prince Saiful Malook is also associated with this lake. Local story tellers used to tell the said story at the side of this lake in their traditional style to entertain the tourists.

### **Jalkhad Lake**

Some people call it *Katora* or *Piyala* lake as well, due to its bowl shape. *Katora* or *Piyala* in local language means a bowl. This lake is a very small and is at the distance of 51 kilometers from Naran. It's a very beautiful lake and its water is deep blue and with the air, waves are produced in the lake which are fascinating. It is famous that a mad man rubbed his heels over here and when he struck his foot on this area, water started flowing from this place, resulting in a lake (Khan, 2011).

### **Doodipat Sar Lake**

At a distance of 60 km from Naran this is a beautiful lake at an altitude of 11500 ft above sea level. The name Doodipat Sar in local language means white water lake. The lake is located in a deep silent area and the landscape presents like a fairy meadow (Khan, 2014). This lake is the origin of Purbi Naar stream. This is located in a very remote and lifeless area, having no facilities of accommodation and restaurants.

### **Lulusar Lake**

This magic lake is at an altitude of 11200 ft from sea level at a distance of 52 km from Naran. Lulu in local language means long and sar means lake, so it means a long lake. This lake is the greatest and long in the whole valley, so it is called Lulusar. Its length is 2 km and depth is 150 ft, its water is blackish in color. A legend is associated with this lake that a blind daughter of Akbar the Great, got shower here and she got her eyesight back. This lake is the source of river Kunhar. The surroundings of this lake are very mysterious and magic like and here is a deep silence all the time which create a fear as well to the visitors of this area. Along with this lake bear, deer, *Nafa Hiran* (musk deer), Monal (*murgha e zareen*) and nightingales are also found. Here a plant locally called *chahoo* is found, if you smell it you lose senses (Khan, 2011).

### **Sangar Lake**

This lake is a hidden pearl of Kaghan valley. Very few visitors visit to this lake due to its remoteness. It is situated at an altitude of 13,200 ft above sea level. The name Sangar is given by Amir Rasheed, a photographer of the valley but local also call it Praatoo Ghol. This lake can be reached through ponies/ horses. This lake is also known as "best kept secret of the valley" (Rasheed, 2009).

### **Sat Sar Maala (Necklace of Seven Lakes)**

These are seven lakes within a locality and water of one lake drops into another one and so on in the form of a necklace, same is the reason these lakes are called *Sat Sar Maala* (necklace of seven lakes). *Maala* in local language refers to a necklace. These are very legendary and beautiful lakes and located in a far-flung area, where a common visitor cannot reach, only adventurer can take this step to reach over there. The first lake of the *maala* is located at the height of 13350 ft having blue water and the last lake of *Sat sar maala* is located at the height of 14000 ft (Rasheed, 2009). The seventh lake is now disappeared, and the locals say that the seventh lake has disappeared due to unknown reasons. It may be climatic or geological reasons happening in this area. Recently here is a little pond except the lake. Among these lakes some are small, and some are large, and the velvet grass patches and the beautiful flowers along the lake enhance the beauty of the area and the lakes.

### **Lakes in Batogah**

Batogah is an alternative route of Chilas bypassing the Babusar pass from Kaghan valley. Batogah top is located at the height of 14000 ft and on the other side of Batogah is Chilas (Rasheed, 2009). Near Batogah top there are three lakes, two of these are a bit small while one is larger. The first lake which is also called Batogah lake is situated at the height of 13500 ft, having deep blue waters and reddish plants on the sides (Rasheed, 2009). The second lake which is located at the height of 13850 ft is smaller than the first one. The third lake is called Bazon lake by locals and is located at the height of 14000 ft (Rasheed, 2009).

### **Sambak Sar and Dharam Pat Sar**

These two lakes are found in a vast plain of Gittidas. The heights of these lakes are 13500 ft and 13150 ft respectively (Rasheed, 2009). These lakes have a very beautiful landscape, and their blue waters have deep attraction for the visitors but due to being in a very remote area and lack of infrastructure very little tourism is done here.

### **Ratti Gali and Saral Lakes**

These two lakes are in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) near the border attached with Kaghan Valley. These are also very much beautiful lakes. It is easier to reach to these lakes through Kaghan valley instead of AJK. So, the tourists who want to trek and see these lakes prefer to go through Kaghan valley route.

### **Peaks of Kaghan Valley**

Kaghan valley is a mountainous region so there are number of peaks which may be potential destinations for adventure lovers. Some of the famous peaks of the valley are discussed in the following line:

#### **Makra Peak**

Makra peak is one of the legendary peaks of Kaghan valley. It can be reached from a less famous village of Ghanool and from Paae- a famous destination in Shogran, Kaghan

valley as well. The height of Makra Peak is 14000 ft from sea level. From this peak one can view the mountains of AJK in southeast, Malika Parbat in north, Thandiani and Miranjani in south and Moosa ka Musalla in the north. All the way long to Makra there are beautiful meadows blossomed with wildflowers and herbs, nomads along with their cattle and *hakim* and *sanyasi* to collect and searching the medicinal plants can be seen and enjoyed here.

In the forests of this area Black bear, brown bear, wild cats, *Markhor* (wild goat) can be found. In bird's species *Ram Chakor* (partridge) and snow *Teetar* (partridge) are common (Khan, 2011). It is a famous tradition of mountaineers of this peak to carve their names when reach at the peak of Makra. This tradition lasts since ancient times and on the peak one can find a lot of carved names.

### **Malika Parbat**

This is the tallest peak of Kaghan valley, having the height of 17360 ft (Khan, 2014). Due to its height and uniqueness this peak is known as Malika Parbat- meaning queen of the mountains. Mostly this peak is covered with snow throughout the year. This peak has a lot of attractions for mountaineers, but difficult to climb as there is a fear of falling avalanches and same is the reason locally it is famous that to climb this peak is to invite death. In the foothills of this peak is located the legendary lake Saiful Malook.

### **Moosa Ka Musalla**

A legendary peak which is visible far from distant areas in the shape of a grave, is the famous peak of Kaghan valley known as Moosa ka Musalla. Its height is 13500 ft (Khan, 2011). Local traditions speak about the origin of the name of this peak as, a shepherd named Moosa used to pray here while grazing his goats and after his name this peak became famous as Moosa ka Musalla (Musalla in local language is referred to a praying mat or praying place).

Moosa ka Musalla has a very beautiful landscape and meadows and having beautiful treks for the trekkers to explore and enjoy the area. Here wildlife is also unique and is a paradise for the hunters. This place can be accessed from Paras and from Siran valley (Dadar and Jabori, the attached valley on the western side of this destination). There are number of treks from different localities to visit the area. Here no accommodation and restaurant facilities are available, so the visitors must prepare themselves.

### **Forests**

In Kaghan valley on 9% of the area are forests and the beauty of the valley is its forests. These forests are found between the heights of 5000 ft to 8000 ft mostly. From Paras to Naran there stretches a patch of forests (Khan, 2011). The forests of Kaghan valley are spread over an area of 15905 hectares. The forests in the valley are categorized into following four distinct types:

Pure *Chir* Pine Forests

Pure Blue Pine Forests

Fir and Spruce Forests

Mixed Deodar, Blue Pine, Fir and Spruce Forests (Akbar, unpublished)

These forests accommodate unique flora and fauna and are a paradise for the researchers in the field of botany, zoology and tourism etc. Having unique wildlife, are always under threat of hunters (locals and from neighboring valleys). Hikers and trekkers also have a great potential to trek and hike through these dense forests and enjoy the flora and fauna and explore the nature. A comprehensive detail of the Kaghan valley forests can be seen in the working plan of the Kaghan Forest Division. The forests of Sharan and Darshi, Manshi and Malkandi and Kamal Banr are not only famous for their natural beauty but also famous for their unique flora and fauna in the valley.

### **Wildlife (Flora and Fauna)**

For the students of botany and zoology, Kaghan valley is an open laboratory. The valley is also a paradise for *hakims* and *sanyasis* as well. In summers not only students and researchers came here but *hakim* and *sanyasi* also come to search for the herbs used in their medicinal recipes. In the valley different types of plants, herbs, shrubs can be found. The local community use to use these herbs and shrubs for medicinal purposes. And this traditional knowledge of the locals is transferred from generations to generations and local community uses these recipes since ancient times for different ailments.

Similarly, Kaghan valley is also unique in its fauna. Here different animals in the form of pets, wild beasts, birds, seasonal/ migratory birds, and the creepers could be found. The valley also inhibits some of the world-famous species of pheasants like *Monal* and the animals like deer etc.

The detail of wildlife of Kaghan valley is so comprehensive and is available in literature. The detail of the valley's wildlife (flora and fauna) can be seen in the literature related with botanical aspects of the valley, discussed in the literature review of this study and further details can also be seen in the sources (Khan, 2011; Khan, 2014) *Working Plan of Lulusar Dudi Patsar National Park* (2017) by Wildlife department and *Working Plan of Kaghan Forest Division*(Akbar, unpublished).

### **Minerals**

Minerology is a field which is neglected like tourism in the valley. There are number of mineral resources in the valley which need proper survey and planning for development. These minerals can also contribute in the uplifting of local and country economy as well as research and tourism. In Sat Bani- a neglected village on the left side of Balakot town, has the graphite resources. Hangrai- also on the left bank of river Kunhar on the way to Naran, has iron resources. Mahandri and Kaghan has *Abrak* (Mica) and Sang e Mar Mar (marble) resources. Batakundi has zabarjad (Peridot)and topaz which are used in jewelry. Near Jalkhad lake there are Peridot and *Neelum* (blue sapphire) are available and *Yaqoot* (beryl) is found near Ratti Gali, which are precious stones and are used in jewelry (Khan, 2011). There are coal mines in the village of Jabri Kaleesh, in lower Kaghan valley.



## **National Parks**

There are two national parks in the valley, covering an area of 30,375 hectares. Lulusar-Dudipatsar National Park (LDNP) was declared as park in 2003, with a view to protect the wetlands and their associated biodiversity. Lake Saif-ul-Maluk has been declared as National Park in 2005 by the provincial government. The wildlife of these parks is unique accommodating some very rare species of animals. The wildlife includes Golden eagle, Rock pigeon, White wagtail, Common sandpiper, Himalayan griffon vulture, snow pigeon, Snow leopard, Brown bear, Red fox and Wolf etc. The vegetation of the alpine zone comprises of Pencil cedar, Common juniper, Willow, Prickly rose, and Poa grass etc. (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wildlife Department, 2017).

Unfortunately, the parks do not offer good tourist facilities and the measures to control over the negative impacts of heavy tourism. If properly planned, these parks may become not only the best destinations of the valley, but the country as well.

## **Potential Destinations (Natural and Eco Tourism) of Kaghan Valley**

In the following lines some of the destinations having unique landscape and natural beauty, flora and fauna and rural life are discussed. These destinations are well preserved and mostly inaccessible, to highlight the potential of natural and eco-tourism of the valley for the satisfaction of visitors (Plates).

### **Shankiari Hut**

The old name of Shankiari hut was Danna, which is at the height of 8500 ft. Its distance from Balakot is 32 km. Shankiari hut can be reached from Ghanool. From Shankiari hut a trek leads to Barnar Gali and Makhairan which are legendary meadows in the area having fine patches of grass and nomadic life can be seen. From Makhairan a trek leads to famous Makra Peak. Shankiari hut is a place having natural beauty and from here Pakhal plain of district Mansehra can also be seen and enjoyed. At Shankiari hut there is a beautiful rest house of British period (Khan, 2011).

### **Sharan**

At the distance of 15 km from Paras (located on the main road) on the left bank of river Kunhar while on the way to Naran, a very good potential destination, ideal for camping, hiking, trekking, and enjoying wildlife is located, known as Sharan. Its distance from Balakot is 43 km and is 7500 ft high above sea level (Khan, 2011). A jeep trek leads to this destination. This site is famous for its flora and fauna. Here is a forest rest house, a youth hostel and a TCKP's camping site. It is an unpopulated lonely area.

Before Sharan at the distance of 4 km is located the famous forest of Darshi, famous for its dense forest and for the love story of Munshi and Darshi, which still echoes in the forests of Kaghan valley and in the local oral traditions. This forest is also famous for its flora and fauna.

Manshi is another forest in Sharan, along with Darshi. These are very old forests and very old trees can be seen here. This area is known for its greenery, flowers and

crystal-clear waters. The environment of Sharan is very pleasant, and it is not less than in beauty from any famous hill station of Pakistan.

Sharan is home for different beautiful birds and the songs of birds make the environment more pleasant. The migratory birds also stay here. Among famous birds are *murghaabian* (geese/drake), which are hunted by locals (Rasheed, 2009). Illegal cutting of the forest in the past, has destroyed the nature and beauty of the area to some extent but due to current government policies there is a control on the illegal cutting of the forest, so the nature is back now. This is not a populated area and devoid of facilities, so tourists have to bring food items with them.

### **Manoor Valley**

Manoor is a sub valley of Kaghan valley- a potential tourist attraction, rich in unique cultural and natural heritage – a paradise for natural and cultural lovers. This valley is still beyond the reach / access of tourists due to inaccessibility and lack of infrastructure.

From Mahandri- a village on the main road while on the way to Naran, along the river Manoor this valley is located. Mahandri is 5100 ft above sea level and its distance from Balakot is 42 km. A jeep road turns towards the right along with Manoor *nahla* (stream) to reach the valley. This valley is covered with dense forests and natural landscape. It offers the visitors a lot of attractions like dense forests, meadows full of flowers, rural life, springs, waterfalls, beautiful birds flying in the skies. Bela Manoor, Seri Manoor, Biyari, Revri hut and Peer Dher are beautiful attractions of Manoor Valley. World famous wildlife like *Murgh e zareen* (Koklas pheasant) and *Nafa Hiran* (musk deer) can be found here. A pyramidal peak in Manoor valley catches the attention of visitors. Rural life of the valley, its wooden bazar, wooden houses are very attractive. In the valley there is a plain area called Revri, here a forest rest house of British period can be found. Its height from sea level is 8400 ft (Rasheed, 2009). Most of the trekkers to this valley stay here. From Revri a trek leads further to Manoor Gali and Kachch Gali and further leading to Aansu lake and Saiful Malook lake.

In short, Manoor valley has a very rich potential to satisfy the varying needs of tourists and is an ideal place for eco-tourism in the valley.

### **Kanshian**

The beautiful potential tourist destination of Kanshian is in lower Kaghan valley. Its distance from main road is almost 7 km. This destination consists of forests and meadows spreading over a huge area. On the top of the mountain ridge there is Gehal meadows which separate it from AJK. The forests of Kanshian are called as Kunji Banr. Loe Dandi and Buti are famous spots of Kanshian. In Loe Dandi there is a small enclosure related to Hazrat *Kangal Baba*, a saint who is known to have meditated here. Some other shrines of Kanshian are *Pashtun Baji* and *Baba Lal Khan*, the ancestors of the local tribes.

The specialty of this destination is its beautiful landscape, forests, waterfalls, springs and streams, beautiful meadows, treks and wildlife. From Kanshian there are number of treks leading to AJK and towards upper Kaghan valley and the hunters also use to visit this destination for hunting. At the top of this destination there are wide meadows

also used as playgrounds. In these playgrounds, in summers different sport competitions are held between the teams of AJK and Kaghan valley. The traditional sports like *Kabaddi* or *Kodi* and the modern games like cricket are played here. Spectators from the nearby villages came to watch the matches.

This destination totally devoid the tourist infrastructure. Currently road is under construction, which may open the doors for visitor arrivals in this area in future. The need is again to plan the destination immediately before it is spoiled by tourism and tourist activities.

### **Kund Bangla and Nadi Bangla**

*Bangla* in the valley represents the British period rest houses. Kund Bangla is located at the height of 8,200 ft and here a British period rest house could be seen built in 1930. There are number of ways to reach Kund Bangla, one is from Sharan via Shudal Gali, the other is from Shankiari located in Siran valley through a jeep. In the forests of Kund Bangla number of wildlife is found specially beasts (Rasheed, 2009).

Here a stream (locally called *nadi*)- same is the reason the place is called Nadi Bangla. It is located at a height of 8000 ft and rest house was built in 1930 (Rasheed, 2009). Nadi Bangla is famous for its meadows, hiking treks, forests and wildlife. From Kund Bangla via Shudal Gali it can be reached to Nadi Bangla. From Nadi Bangla a trek also leads to Sharan passing through thick and dense forests. All these destinations are interconnected through treks and through trekking / hiking their natural and cultural beauty can best be enjoyed. These destinations are no doubt paradise for trekkers and hunters.

### **Batogah, Gittidas and Babusar Top**

Batogah is located at Kaghan valley at Kohistan/ Chilas border 5 km ahead of Lulusar lake a jeep trek turns towards left and at the height of 14,100 ft reaches a pass called Batogah top/ pass (Rasheed, 2009). In Batogah, the nomadic settlements can be seen. Batogah is relatively a plain area and is famous for its beautiful landscape, red flowers and for the view of beautiful surrounding mountains. From here view of Nanga Parbat (the killer mountain) of Northern Areas of Pakistan is amazing. In Batogah there are three small and large lakes.

Gittidas is almost the ending point of Kaghan valley, where the valley is at its climax in beauty. Gittidas village is at the distance of 11 km from Lulusar lake. The whole area around is known as Gittidas. This is last abode of Kaghan valley inhabited by Chilasi community in summer. At the height of 12500 ft this is the vast and charming landscape of Kaghan valley (Rasheed, 2009). The area has lush green meadows where springs and streams and wildflowers are in abundance which welcomes the visitors to this area. In the summer, the beauty of this area is worth seeing. In Gittidas there are number of lakes among them Sambak Sar and Dharam Pat Sar are very much attractive. A polo ground is also there. This area is lacking complete tourist infrastructure.

Babusar Top is the ending point of Kaghan valley and the gate way of the northern areas of Pakistan-where weather is harsh and extreme and due to freezing winds, one cannot stay more than few minutes at the top. The magnificent pass is at a distance of 81 km from Naran and 161 km from Balakot. The height of this pass is 13690 ft. British for the first time made a horse trek here before the Karakoram Highway (KKH) (Rasheed, 2009). From Babusar top, Nanga Parbat can also be seen but this is very demanding and challenging. On the way to Babusar pass one can enjoy the beautiful landscape of Kaghan valley. The amazing meadows full of beautiful wildflowers, the grazing animals and the snow-clad mountains leave everlasting memories in the minds of the visitors.

Apart from these potential tourist destinations some other villages of Kaghan valley like Sohch, Batakundi, Ghanool, Hangrai, Panghian, etc. are also potential destinations of the valley, where nature and cultures are at their best. Here one can enjoy the natural and cultural heritage and the rural life of these villages.

### **Problems**

There are number of problems associated with the tourism resources of Kaghan valley. Some of the major problems (plates IX-XIV) are discussed as under.

#### **Lack of Infrastructure/ Basic Facilities**

There is lack of some basic facilities like roads and proper accommodations etc. There is no proper access to some beautiful destinations and the overall road condition is also poor in the valley. Similarly, in the heavy tourist season, there is shortage of accommodations and tourists spend their nights on the roads or in very poor accommodations, where basic facilities are not available even.

#### **Cleanliness and Hygiene**

Cleanliness is a very big issue of the valley. In the heavy tourist's season, there is garbage all around which is deteriorating the resources and beauty of the valley as well. There are no dust bins available in the valley nor there is any arrangement of recycling of the garbage. There are high cleanliness problems at famous destinations like Naran, lake Saif-ul-Malook, Shogran, at riversides and in the bazaars of the valley. The waste of hotels and restaurants and drainage is directly thrown in the river, so it is also creating the problem for marine environment and the local community residing riverside, as they use the river water for drinking and other domestic purposes.

#### **Unpredictable Weather**

Weather of Kaghan valley generally and in monsoon especially, is unpredictable and sometimes heavy rainfall creates a lot of problems, not only for the tourists but also for the local community. The lower Kaghan valley is in the range of heavy monsoon rains and sometimes heavy rains in upper parts of the valley cause floods in the rivers, streams and rills and cause land sliding as well. These floods damage the roads and due to land sliding roads are also blocked. In early winters, sometimes these rains are backed by snow or land sliding, resulting in the blockage of the roads and the local community and the tourists in upper valley are blocked there and cannot move downwards.

### **Lack of Planning and Management**

Most of the tourism related issues and problems are due to lack of patronage and planning on the part of government. Policies have been formulated for tourism development but still need implementation. Due to this lack of interest, planning and management, the tourism resources have been destroyed or at the verge of destruction. Similarly, there is also lack of coordination among the government departments and different stakeholders, due to which tourism resources are depleting day by day.

### **Conclusion**

Kaghan valley is one of the most beautiful valleys of Pakistan, having abundant natural tourism resources. Due to its unique tourism resources and pleasant weather, every year millions of tourists visit this valley to satisfy their varying needs. Due to lack of planning and overcrowding, the natural resources of the valley are under heavy threats and are depleting rapidly. If proper measures are not taken well in time, these resources will be vanished forever soon. The current study can be utilized to know about the potential of nature-based tourism and the problems associated with natural resources can be overcome by considering the recommendations to promote sustainable tourism in the valley.

### **Recommendations**

Following recommendations are suggested for the conservation, planning and development of tourism in the valley.

- There is a dire need that tourism should be properly planned, and policies be implemented without any delay
- Relevant Government departments and all the stakeholders should sit on one table and coordinate and cooperate with each other
- Government should provide proper infrastructure
- Haphazard and construction without planning should be banned
- Safety measures should be taken along the river and streams to minimize the threat of flooding and erosion of the natural resources
- Land sliding issues should be considered
- Some more destinations in the valley should be developed so that overcrowding on few selected destinations in the valley should be reduced
- Awareness among the local community is needed, so that they take care of their tourism resources.

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