



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Peace Building through Religious Tourism in Pakistan:  
A Case Study of Kartarpur Corridor**

Dr. Muhammad Imran Ashraf\*<sup>1</sup> Dr. Muhammad Saleem Akhter<sup>2</sup> Iqra Jathol<sup>3</sup>

1. Assistant Professor, Department of IR, NDU, Islamabad Pakistan
2. Lecturer HED, Govt. College Shaikhopura, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Centre for South Asian Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan

**PAPER INFO**

**ABSTRACT**

**Received:**  
September 14, 2019

**Accepted:**  
December 25, 2019

**Online:**  
December 31, 2019

**Keywords:**  
Religious, Peace  
Building,  
Tourism,  
Kartarpur,  
Sikhism

**Corresponding  
Author:**

imran.iiu.phd@g  
mail.com  
imranashraf@nd  
u.edu.pk

This qualitative study examines the process of Peace Building through Religious Tourism in Pakistan. Pakistan has many religious sites of shrines and temples. Gurnanak Sahib stayed his last eighteen years of his life at Kartarpur, Narowal, Punjab, Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan addresses the problems of the Sikh community, and the Kartarpur corridor in the Sikh community is innovative for the entire Sikh community. These Sikh communities can visit the holy saints of Kartarpur without a visa. Today, world started to acknowledge Pakistan's efforts towards achieving peace in the country. The findings of the study expose that Kartarpur; a religious place of Sikhism in Pakistan may play a vital role in the peace building image and economic sector through increased international tourist arrivals. Therefore, the Federal Government should consider taking advantage of the country's religious tourism potential, developing strategies to protect religious archeological sites, and providing facilities to tourists to visit sacred sites is needed. Enough hospitality for believers, in addition to generating income, helps to improve the soft image of the country

**Introduction**

You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste..... "We are starting in the days where there is no discrimination, no distinction between one community and another, no discrimination between one caste and creed and another. We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one State".

(Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah)

## Religion

Today, in changing global political landscape, religion is a significant component as a social measure with the complication of the erections and purposes that irritated values and customs. So, it is strong and clear that if there is no sole or simple classification of a complex idea of faith, it is a system of recognized theories and performs that recognize the strength of human beings, allowing people to solve life's problems and not go further (Raj & Griffin Eds., 2015).

Tourism is experiencing significant economic and social growth. Today, all religions confuse the distinction between religious pilgrims and secular tourists (Aziz, 1995).

The foundation is unclear and is linked in different ways to religious pilgrimages, major journeys and other important movements of people from their usual residence to another destination (Lavery, 1987; Holloway, 1989; Towner, 1994). In many countries, tourism is a primary source of earning and we are beginning to tap into this industry.

## Religious Tourism

These are mainly those on the other side of the pilgrimage, who travel consciously for meaning for reasons related to religion or spirituality. It is religious tourism, regardless of the reasons, objectives and scope of their experiences. These religious or spiritual travelers are regarded as a separate group in traditional tourism research, because the search for what Edison considers a "bunk bed" is at best a vague concept of "religious meaning." I tend to. He is only a human nature who expresses himself fully, asking the final question and seeking the final meaning of existence in all its hidden aspects and implications (Giussani, 1997).

Despite such intangibility, pilgrimage has long been an important aspect of the major world religions. Much of the Old Testament is a journey by the Jewish 'chosen people', beginning with their exodus from Egypt, journeying through the desert and entering the Promised Land. Three times a year the Israelites made pilgrimage to the holy city of Jerusalem. Mohamed, inspired by Jewish (and subsequent Christian) pilgrimage, commanded Muslims: 'Accomplish the Pilgrimage and the Experience for God's sake' (Koran, 1996, p. 196). That had motivated by millions of Muslims innovativeness pilgrimage which (Hajj is a one of the five pillars of Islam) to "Mecca and Madinah", each year for Spiritual satisfactions and religious tourism so, includes all types of tourism that is inspired by religion and wherever the purpose is a spiritual and religious sites. The places might not essentially be related with existing beliefs, meanwhile there were many of the religions in the world history that had become vanished some had left behind remarkable work of arts (temples, churches, shrines, statues) and cultural heritages(Raj & Griffin Eds., 2015).

The Hinduism followers offer pilgrimage to the Ganges (the holy river) which purifies them from all their sins, Buddhism followers make pilgrimage to Buddha places blessed by their lives, Shintoists go into deep jungles and considered in peace and Christians go to the holy places where God exposed Himself or places linked with Jesus Christ and His saints (Rebic, 1999).

In other words, a pilgrimage can be considered as any trip with a religious experience. All these trips to religious places are easy to consider as religious tourism, because these trips are clearly a combination of religious experience and travel. However, the definition of religious tourism based solely on the combination of "religion" and "tourism" is of little help in understanding the phenomenon of pilgrimage. It is easy to qualify all travel to religious places as religious tourism, because these trips are clearly a combination of experience and religious travel (Davies & Davies, 1982).

Through out of history Pilgrimage has been an important part of the religion for centuries. Pilgrimage is a ritual journey with a sacred purpose. Each step of the method makes sense. Pilgrims know that traveling is difficult and there are life-threatening problems Pilgrimage is not a holiday. The path of transformation in which significant changes are occurring, new perspective is being offered. A deeper understanding is gained. New and old places of mind are coming. He receives blessings. Healing is going on. When the pilgrimage returns, life can be seen in a different way. There is nothing left (Wiederkehr, 2001)

### **Religious Tourism in Pakistan**

Most Pakistani Muslims are located in a region where for three centuries there have been three of the most important religions in the world: Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism. In addition to Sikh Gurdavars of historical interest, the country of South Asia offers travelers the opportunity to discover the historical heritage of one of the oldest civilizations in the world and visit a rich collection of Sufi mosques and saints, Hindu temples, Buddhist monasteries and Christians. (Musfa, 2019) The Kartarpur Corridor, a joint initiative between India and Pakistan, is located in the Punjab. It is intended to link a Gurudwaradarbar Sahib, the Indian border. The potential of religious places in Pakistan, especially those related to Sikhism and Buddhism, is likely to increase and requires further efforts. Today Pakistan is a meeting point for a variety of previous religions (Baloch, 2007).

Punjab is home to five most important pilgrimage sites for Sikhs. They include the birthplace of Baba Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion who was born in 1469 in Nankana Saheb district, and Gurdwara (monastery) Punja sahib in Hasan Abdal town, where the handprint of Guru Nanak is believed to be imprinted on a boulder at the monastery.

In Pakistan, Hindu and Sikh religious sites attract pilgrims. Religious tourism plays an important role in reviving the country's economic activity.

Thousands of people attend ancient Hindu and Sikh temples, mainly the Gurunanak Temple. The opening of the Kartarpur corridor (Narowal) attracts more religious tourists to Pakistan.

### **Religious Places of Sikhism**

Guru Nanak was the founder of the Sikh faith and Darbar Sahib was his last resting place therefore Sikhs consider Pakistan is a holy places for all sikh due to their sacred place where their religion began. Its Punjab province is home to five most important pilgrimage sites for Sikhs including

1. Kartarpur sahib
2. Gurdwara Panja Sahib
3. Gurdwara Dera Sahib, Lahore
4. Nankana Sahib
5. Samadhi of Ranjit Singh, Lahore

### **Kartarpur Sahib**

The Kartarpur sahib aims to provide informal access for pilgrims visiting the sanctuary. The Indian side of Dara Baba Nanak with Kartarpur in Pakistan, but pilgrims visiting Kartarpur Gurudwara do not need a visa and can enter on id cards. Pilgrims can travel in groups or travel individually. The Indian Railways Darbar Baba Nanak has also been upgraded to make pilgrimage to Darbar Baba nanak Station smooth.

Nanak sahib settled down at Kartarpur , where spread the fire of the love of God and love of man, all over the Punjab. Guru Nanak's face shone with the simplicity and serenity born of the saintliness in him. He was a laborer, a tiller of the soil, a servant of the poor and lowly. The life at Kartarpur was a blend of willing work and worship, love and labor, silence and song. (Singh, 1981) Last year on 9, Nov. 2019, Pakistan hosted thousands of Sikhs from across the world for one of their religion's most sacred festivals, the 550th birthday of Sikhism founder Guru Nanak. Where they celebrated birth anniversary, the November 9 was the opening session also of a long-sought visa-free corridor to a holy temple in Pakistani border village of Kartarpur ( Narowal) that promises pilgrims from India a reason for elation. To get to the village where the guru died, they had to first secure a visa, travel to the eastern city of Lahore and then arduously drive to the temple or be content with viewing it through binoculars from India. Now, up to 5,000 Indians were allowed access daily through the corridor, which includes roadways, an 800-metre bridge over the Ravi River and an immigration office.

### **Nankana Sahib**

Nankana Sahib is the holiest and popular place for Sikhs around the world. At the time of Guru Nanak's birth, the city of Talwandi was called Rai Bhoie and

also Raipur. Rai Bular Bhatti was the leader of this region and the father of Baba Nanak was the employee of Rai Bular. The divine qualities of Baba Nanak were first discovered by his sister Nanaki and Rai Bular Bhatti. Rai Bular donated around 20,000 acres of land around Talwandi in Guru Nanak and the city was called Nankana Sahib. The city currently has nine Gurdwaras, including Gurdwara Janam Asthan, the birthplace of Guru Nanak Dev. Each of the Gurdwaras is associated with important events in the life of Guru Nanak. Around 30,000 Sikh pilgrims visit the city each year and around 15,000 gather in the high season around Guru Nanak's birthday (Sikh Holy Sharines, 2006-09).

Pilgrims have always held an important position in the lives of all believers, not just Christians. Throughout history, Christians have always been there to celebrate their religion in places reminiscent of the Lord and important moments in the history of the church. They came to the sanctuary in honor of those who continued to use the example of the Virgin Mary and the Saints. Her pilgrimage was a process of conversion, a desire for intimacy with God and a confident attraction to her material needs. Pilgrims have always been gifts of grace to the church in different ways (Rebic, 1999).

1. Holy Trinity
2. St. Patrick's Cathedral
3. Christ Church
4. St. Lawrence Church
5. Sacred Heart Cathedral

Pakistan's second largest minority also worshiped the water of a Katas Raj temple after Christians because they believed that the lake was filled with tears from Shiva, one of the most important deities in Hinduism. The Katas Raj Temple in the northeast of the Chakwal District and the Sadhu Bela Temple in the south of the Sukkur District are the two most visited religious places of Hindus around the world.

1. Katas Raj
2. Jagannath temple
3. Shudavelly
4. Shree Karishnamandir
5. Shiv Mandir
6. Vishnu Temple
7. Nandi Mandir
8. Shri Devi Mata Mandir
9. Karishna Temple (Lahore)
10. Kali Mata temple

Jain buildings and their architecture in Pakistan are still under investigation. Regular field visits are planned at ground level to visit the Jain

heritage and monuments in different parts of the country. Detailed documentation follows the on-site visit after exploration. A separate monument database is being prepared, which will allow us to examine the main features of the architectural tradition that was introduced or adopted by the Jain community in Pakistan (Chawla, Hameed, & Syeda, 2019).

1. Jain Temple
2. Nagar Bazaar temple
3. Bhodesar Jain mandir,
4. Karoonjar Jain mandir
5. Virvah Jain mandir,
6. Virvah Gori mandir
7. Jain mander
8. The Quint 800 years jainTample
9. Nagaparkar Jain Tample

Some of the main attractions in Taxila are Dharmarajika Stupa, Bhir Mound, Sirkap, Jandial Temple and Jaulian Monastery. Relics that relate to the Buddhist heritage of Taxila are presented in chronological order in the Taxila Museum. Thousands of tourists are attracted each year to explore the Buddhist heritage. Takht-i-Bhai is a picturesque city 160 km from the capital Islamabad and is the most visited by Buddhists. The large to medium stupas of Gautam Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, and other cultural heritage sites from the northern region of Gilgit-Baltistan to the tourist valley Swat are reminiscent of the region's antiquated civilization. The most visited and holiest places for Bhudism are:

1. Dharmarajika Stupa
2. Sleeping Buddha
3. Takht-i-Bhai
4. Stupa OfMankiala
5. Gandhara civilization

### **Peace Building in Pakistan and its impact on South Asia**

We can see how foreign policy has improved over the years, with the creation of an economic corridor with China along the Karterpur Corridor and now a "social" corridor against the adversity of India's neighbors. The Sikh religious affection is not affected by the expectations of an Islamic republic. Pakistan knows how to respect other religions and recognizes the need for religious freedom, unlike India, which has many conflicts over ethnicity and religion every year. According to Article 36, the Constitution of Pakistan guarantees that the state will protect the legal rights and interests of ethnic minorities. The development of the kartarpur corridor is part of the same effort to promote religious freedom and harmony of ethnic minorities.(Khan, 2019) The

government of Pakistan is facilitating religious tourism with the shared message of peace, harmony and understanding amongst all religions in the world.

Imran Khan's new administration has started very positive efforts to create a friendly environment for long-term construction with all neighboring countries. His first speech after the elections gives hope, as he has shown an understanding of Pakistan's problems and its regional dimensions, mainly peace with India and peace in Afghanistan. The continuous competition between India and Pakistan is one of the biggest challenges of South Asia, a tragedy that has damaged the progress and the correct development throughout the region. The hostility between the two countries spreads across borders, destroying significant socio-political development and many opportunities for trade relations. From there, everyone in the SAARC region would benefit (Kamboh, Kamal, Nisar, & Kamboh, 2018).

### **Conclusion**

Pakistan is home to some of the huge historical and religious tourist attractions that can help Pakistan increase religious tourism in Pakistan. Pakistan has six UNESCO World Heritage Sites, according to the file. They celebrated this year in the middle Ages by drawing on natural and cultural resources introduced by modern art. Since 2015, it has listed the list of the world's most willing to travel. Pakistan is a religious place of great interest to Sikhs, Hindues, Buddhists, gains and other nations of the world. The latest report released by Gallup in 2014 was released at the cultural site in Pakistan consisted 1.6 million visitors in 2014 to the fastest growing visitors. These initiatives can be promoted in other provinces to attract and encourage tourism. Tourists find Mosques, Buddhist sits, churches, archeological sites of different civilization that leave great impact on each tourist to visit their sacred place in Pakistan. Therefore, the federal government should plan to use the country's potential for religious tourism and develop a strategy for preserving religious places and providing services to tourists who come here to visit holy places. Adequate hospitality for believers, in addition to generating income, will help improve the country's soft image.

One of the famous magazine names, wonderlust: Pakistan should be heaving with tourists. The country has it all: the most magnificent mountains, surprisingly good and undeveloped beaches, awesome ancient history, a remarkable mix of cultures, one of the world's greatest road trips, and warm and welcoming people," the British magazine wrote (wonderlust, 2019).

### **Recommendations**

1. The govt. of Pakistan must take primary responsibility for realizing the hope of the Sikhs and the peoples of the world. The spirit of the Pakistan can be supported by taking measures based on religious harmony, in the truest sense of the word.

2. Preservation of heritage along with religious tolerance is key to restoring the confidence of pilgrim-tourists. Religion, especially minority religions, should not suffer because of cultural domination. The contemporary Buddhist population in Pakistan is around 1492. Though many foreigners used to visit Pakistan
3. Pakistani government should recruit Sikh personnel along with other Pakistani officials for Kartarpur. Pakistan ought to devise a mechanism to ensure respect and security of the Sikh visitors.
4. The Pakistani policymakers should work out the contingency plan to counter any emergency and embarrassing situation. The facilitation of the Sikhs and other minorities should be the main objective of any policy designed or to be designed by the Pakistani authorities.
5. Ensure that the cultural, linguistic, social and nutritional needs of visitors are also taken into account.
6. Therefore, the Federal Government will consider taking advantage of the country's religious tourism potential, developing strategies to protect religious archeological sites, and providing facilities for tourists coming here to visit sacred sites is needed. Enough hospitality for believers, in addition to generating income, helps to improve the soft image of the country.

## References

- Aziz, H. (1995). Understanding Attacks on Tourists in Egypt. *Tourism Management* 16(2): 91-95
- Baloch, Q. B. (2007). Managing tourism in Pakistan: A case study of Chitral valley. *Journal of Managerial Sciences*, 2(2), 169-190.
- Chawla, M. I., Hameed, M., & Syeda, M. H. (2019). The Jain History, Art and Architecture in Pakistan: A Fresh Light. *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, 56(1), 217.
- Davies, H. & Davies, M.H. (1982). *Holy Days and Holidays, the Medieval Pilgrimage to Compostela*. Bucknell University Press, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania.
- Giussani, L. (1997). *The Religious Sense*. McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, Canada.
- Holloway, J.C. (1989). *The Business of Tourism*. Pitman, London.
- Kamboh, A. Z., Kamal, Y., Nisar, Q. A., & Kamboh, M. A. (2018). Kartarpur Corridor: A New Role for Political Marketing. *Journal of Indian Studies*, 4(2), 233-238.
- Lavery, P. (1987). *Travel and Tourism*. ELM Publications, Huntingdon, UK.
- Raj, R., & Griffin, K. A. (Eds.). (2015). *Religious tourism and pilgrimage management: An international perspective*. Cabi. Paris.
- Singh, K. (1981). *The Jap Ji: The Message of Guru Nanak* (Vol. 5). Sk Publications.
- Towner, J. (1994) *Tourism history: past, present and future*. In: Seaton, A.V. (ed.) *Tourism: the State of the Art*. Wiley, Chichester, UK.
- Wiederkehr, M. (2001) *Behold Your Life: a Pilgrimage Through Your Memories*. Ave Maria Press,