

Reimagining the Religious Tourism in Pakistan: A Case Study of Kartarpur Corridor

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to explore, examine and recontextualize the varied features of Religious Tourism focusing on the Kartarpur Corridor in Pakistan, which serves as a symbolic link between Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib and Sikh sanctuaries in India. This paper further encapsulates that Pakistan is bestowed with a diverse tourism industry and offers a fantastic blend of cultural, religious, and natural tourism options. It also elaborates the corridor's historical significance, geopolitical setting, and transformative impact on social, political, and economic sectors. Further, this study also digs deep the historical context of the Kartarpur Corridor, emphasizing its function as a pilgrimage place and its potential to stimulate cross-border connections. The corridor has sparked cross-border cooperation and discourse, demonstrating the diplomatic potential of religious tourism. This study highlights religious

tourism's economic importance, emphasizing its role in job creation and boost in tourism industry. Increased pilgrim and tourist traffic could result in increased revenue, job creation, and infrastructure development in neighboring areas. This paper also examines and explores the questions as: What is the potential of religious tourism in Pakistan? What is historical significance of Kartarpur Corridor? What is the Social, Religious and Political dimensions Kartarpur Corridor? and What is the impact of Kartarpur Corridor on Religious Tourism in Pakistan?

Key Words: Kartarpur corridor, religious tourism, geopolitical context, Sikhism

Introduction

Religious tourism has been an integral and important part of history and human culture for centuries. Moreover, it encompasses traveling to religious destinations and revered as well as sacred places to fulfill religious, spiritual and cultural aspirations.¹ Currently, travel, the boarding and recording of pilgrimage excursions, visit to holy sites, involvement in religious activities and missionary tours in certain regions of the world are all major components of religious tourism which contributes significantly to the global economy. The world's most visited religious places at the moment are Madina and Makkah, Bodh Gaya, Tibet, Thailand, Vatican and Varanasi,²

With pride, Pakistan welcomes common travelers and religious enthusiasts from all over the world and holds some of the most revered and holy religious heritages of the Sikh, Buddhist and Hindu religions. The nation is home to significant religious sites for a variety of religions including the Hinglai Mata Temple, Kartarpur Gurdwara, Hassan Abdal, Qila Katas, Data Darbar, Shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, Nankana Sahib, Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur, and Gurdwara Panja Sahib. Annually, these holy sites are visited by thousands of Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists and Hindu. Religious tourism is typically connected with adherents of specific religions visiting locations deemed sacred; pilgrims and non-religious tourists, visit these sites because of its cultural, historical and religious value³.

Religion and Tourism

Tourism and religion are linked. Nonetheless, religious tourism describes travel intended primarily to engage in religious experiences that inspire religious pursuits such as those related to art, culture, architecture and tradition. As a timeless and fundamental aspect of human history, religion has continuously influenced the course of history, culture, and society. Sacred commemorations have vital role in conserving cultural tradition. They bring organized individuals by giving them a wisdom to be in the right place as well as the promoting collective standards. Commemorations such as in Hinduism Diwali, in Christianity Xmas and in Islam Eid establish cultural practices and traditions within their respective Civilizations. Religion, in

¹ Rabia Bashir & Khalil Ahmad, "Religious Tourism: Experiences of Sikh Yattris Visting Kartarpur Corridor, Pakistan", *Journal of Social Sciences Review (JSSR)*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Spring 2023):112-120.

² Muhammad Asif, Muhammad Naeem, and Muhammad Asif Khan, "Religious Tourism in Pakistan: A Case Study of Sikh and Buddhist Pilgrimage Sites" *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, Vol. (2019).

³ McKelvie Jo, "Religious tourism," *Travel & Tourism Analyst*, No.4 (2005):1-47.

Sheikh Fakhar-e-Alam, "Religious Tourism in Pakistan: The Case of Sikhism & Buddhism," *Modern diplomacy*, December 26, 2021.

addition to its spiritual value, has played an important role in stimulating cultural exchange, bridging nations and generating a distinctive kind of travel- religious tourism. This activity, which dates back to the ancient pilgrimages of early civilizations, has evolved into a significant global phenomenon in the current period, captivating the hearts and minds of millions of pilgrims and visitors alike. As we go on a journey to investigate the complicated connection between religion and tourism, we find ourselves at the crossroads of faith and intrigue, spirituality and leisure, tradition and modernity⁴.

These are primarily pilgrims who walk purposefully in search of significance for causes relating to religion or spirituality. Irrespective of the motivations, intentions, or breadth of their observations, it is spiritual tourism. Pilgrimages, although their intangible nature is an important component of the world's major religions. The majority of the Bible's oldest⁵ book chronicles the journey of the Jewish selected persons, beginning with the voyage from the Nile and going across the desert to the Blessed Lands. Every year, the Israelites made three journeys to the city of Jerusalem. Muhammad urged the Muslims to complete the Journey and participate in it to fulfill the Glory of God. This was inspired by thousands of Muslims' journeys (The Hajj is one of Islam's 5 pillars) to the city of Mecca as well as Madinah, every year for religious fulfillment as well as sacred travel to a holy and spiritual destination.⁶

Hindus offer pilgrimages to the Ganges, which purifies them of all sins; Buddhists go to his places grateful for their existence; Shintoists enter deep forests and are regarded as peaceful; and Christian's travel to sacred sites where the Creator revealed His self or places related to Jesus the Christ and His saviors. A journey of faith is a visit that includes an encounter with faith. All of the foregoing trips to hallowed sites are easily classed as holy tourism because they openly combine prayer with travel. However, defining religious tourism just on the basis of the phrases "religion" and "tourism" is insufficient for grasping the concept of pilgrimage. Because these journeys clearly mix experience and religious travel, it is easy to designate any visit to holy locations as spiritual tourism. Pilgrimages have long been an important part of religious life. A pilgrimage is a travel to a sacred place. Every step of the procedure is logical. Travelers are well mindful that their path is difficult and dangerous. Pilgrimage is not a holiday, along the path of transition, where significant changes are taking place, a new perspective is being provided. There has been an improvement in communication. The healing process is in full swing. Life takes on new significance when the pilgrimage is successful.⁷

Tourism for religion refers to modern patterns of travel to divine places that have their roots in the old-style practice of journey and where individuals are able to meet both spiritual and pleasure increasing area of the tourism business that produces enormous profits due to the nature of tourist attractions.⁸ According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, three

⁴ Alaknanda Munshi, "The Importance of Religious Festivals to Promote Cultural Heritage in Turkey and India," *Al-Adabiya: Journal Kebudayaan dan Keagamaan* Vol 17 No. 1 (June 2022) 41-48.

⁵ The first part of the Christian Bible talks about the Jews, their history, and God's words to them in the time before Jesus Christ was born.

⁶ Muhammad Imran Ashraf, Muhammad Saleem Akhter, and Iqra Jathol, "Peace Building through Religious Tourism in Pakistan: A Case Study of Kartarpur Corridor." *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, Vol. 3, No.2 (December 2019): 205-206,

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Kiran A Shinde, "Religious tourism and religious tolerance: insights from pilgrimage sites in India," *Tourism Review* Volume 70, No. 3 (August 2015), 179-196.

hundred to three hundred and thirty million tourists visit the world's largest holy places every year, particularly Asia contributing to 60 percent of all trips.⁹

Religious Tourism in Pakistan

Pakistan is endowed with a diverse tourism industry. It offers a fantastic blend of cultural, religious, and natural tourism options. Unfortunately, we have fallen behind in terms of branding. Religious tourism, when used wisely, can help significantly to our economy. In Pakistan, there are significant sites associated with three major religions: Islam, Sikhism, and Buddhism. According to PTDC records, the country has 480 tourism locations, 120 of which are religious monuments. Every year, an estimated 900,000 international visitors visit Pakistan. The tourist business employs up to 1.2 percent of the country's workforce and generates \$3,214.9 million, or roughly 1.2 percent of GDP. Local visitor expenditure accounts for 90.8 percent of overall tourist expenditure. Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI) Report of the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2021 ranks Pakistan 83 out of 117 countries. Religious tourism can be greatly increased by providing necessary facilities. In addition to Islamic buildings, Pakistan has numerous Buddhist temples and stupas, as well as Hindu and Sikh temples. Most of these locations frequently host religious rites and rituals. Despite holding some of the most major sacred sites, we have yet to produce significant profits. It's critical to understand that religious beliefs and practices are sacred to their adherents. Recognizing, respecting, and tolerating these views creates a great deal of favor¹⁰.

Pakistan is the spiritual heart of Buddhism. Buddhist sites of Gandhara and Taxila are well-known throughout the world. There are more than 50 archaeological sites within a 30-kilometer radius around Taxila. Approximately 2,000 Buddhists visit Pakistan's sacred heritage, according to the PTDC. This is significantly less than the full potential. Hindus make up 1.6% of Pakistan's population. As a result, they constitute the country's largest minority group. Shri Hinglaj Mata temple at Hangul Park conducts the major Hindu visit in different parts of Pakistan, with over twenty-five thousand pilgrims every year. There are numerous gorgeous mosques in Pakistan. Lahore's Badshahi Masjid is both a tourist attraction and a religious landmark. Islamabad's Faisal Mosque is the flora and fauna fourth-biggest mosque of South Asia. Pakistan's Sufi tradition is also well-known. Many well-known Sufi adepts lived in the area and are still revered. Sikhs constitute around 0.01 percent of the nation's population. However, there are several religiously significant locations in Pakistan. These include the Gurdwara Nankana Sahib and Kartarpur Sahib, both devoted to the founder of Sikhism. Almost 2,000 Sikh pilgrims from India attend the annual *Baisakhi* festival at Nankana Sahib. Every year, approximately 7,500 Sikhs from India and another 2,000 from other parts of the world visit Pakistan.¹¹

For these factors, we can build a sacred and cultural tourism sector worth millions of dollars by acquiring over 106 celebrated sites, including Taxila Museum's prehistoric curios, Guru Granth

Kiran A Shinde, "Entrepreneurship and Indigenous Entrepreneurs in Religious Tourism in India," International Journal of Tourism Research vol, 12 (January 2010), 523-35.

⁹ Kiran A Shinde, and Katia Rizello, "A Cross-cultural Comparison of Weekend-trips in Religious Tourism: Insights from two cultures, two countries (India and Italy)," International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Vol, 2 No. 2 (December 2014), 2.

¹⁰ Bello Yekinni Ojo, and Bello Mercy Busayo, "Exploring the Relationship between Religion Tourism and Economic Development of a Host Community," International Journal of Business and Management Invention Volume, 6 Issue 9 (September 2017), 41-51.

¹¹ Reema Shaukat, "The economy of religious tourism," The News, May 28, 2023.

Sahib's oldest texts in Lahore Museum, the Katas Raj temple complex, Hinglaj, the Panchmukhi Hanuman temple and others. However, the tourism sector's shaky regulatory and legal structure kills any potential. Heritage researchers and guiders on par with UNESCO models, an organizational and restoration system like the Walled City¹² Project, transportation, visas, and accommodations, and projects like the Kartarpur Corridor can revive the travel economy, soften Pakistan's image, and reawaken pluralism for a rich cultural atmosphere¹³.

Kartarpur Corridor in the Mirror of History

Kartarpur, which means "seat of God," is situated in Narowal District of Punjab's Tehsil Shakargarh. The founding father of Sikhism Guru Nanak, established Kartarpur in 1504 AD¹⁴, therefore, Pakistan is considered to be a holy place for Sikh Community. Baba Guru Nanak spent his remaining 18 years of his life in Kartarpur, and it is the location of the first gurdwara ever established by the Sikh faith when Baba Guru Nanak bestowed the title of Guru-Gadi on the second guru, Guru Angad Jee. In the year between 1521 and 1522, one of Baba Guru Nanak's followers gave him 104 acres of his land. When the soul of Baba Guru Nanak departed on September 22, 1539, the Muslims and Nanak Nam leva Sangat¹⁵ could not agree on how to conduct the final rites cremation or burial and both groups offered the funeral in accordance with their respective customs. This is supported by the existence of a Mazaar and a Samadhi of Baba Guru Nanak. As a result, both Sikhs and Muslims revere the Gurdwara as a hallowed site.¹⁶

Despite innumerable difficulties, this location has stayed alive due to the Muslims who hold Guru Nanak Dev in high regard. The Jatt's, notably the Randhawa tribe in the area, preserved the modesty and sacredness of the site while keeping the edifice and its surroundings clean. Kartarpur story is rich in fascinating facts, because the Ravi River flows close to Kartarpur, and the flood destroyed 16th-century structure. Bhupinder Singh, Maharaja of Patiala (grandfather of Capt. Amarinder Singh, the then Chief Minister of Punjab) gave more than Six lacs for the building of a new structure and rehabilitation of the place. The existing structure was built between 1920 and 1929, however, the region's terrain was altered by India's partition¹⁷.

Land was also partitioned between India and Pakistan following the secession of the unified India in 1947. Kartarpur was allotted to Pakistan and Gurdaspur Tehsil to India under the Radcliffe Line. The Akali Dal claimed and backed India's occupation of the two holy Gurdwaras of Nankana Sahib and Kartarpur. These requests were made between 1948 and 1959, however the state administration was resisted to some modifications to the government border established through the Radcliffe Award. Sikhs were only allowed to travel to Kartarpur via a bridge that connected Dera Baba Nanak and Kartarpur Sahib. This bridge was damaged during the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965, and border security was tightened. On the 500th anniversary of Guru

¹² The Walled City of Lahore, also known as the Old City, forms the historic core of the city of Lahore in Punjab, Pakistan. It is the cultural center of the Punjab region.

¹³ "Religious Tourism," Dawn News, July 24, 2023,

¹⁴ Muhammad Saleem Mazhar and Naheed S. Goraya, "The Kartarpur Sahib Corridor Reimagining the Relationship with Sikh Heritage & the Religious Diplomacy of Inclusive Pakistan," Pakistan Vision, Vol. 21 No. 1 (2020):515.

¹⁵ Any person who believes in Guru Nanak and follows his teachings in life, irrespective of belonging to any religion is a Nanak Naam Lewa.

¹⁶ Muhammad Irfan, Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur Corridor (Lahore: Orange Productions & PR, 2020).

¹⁷ Akhtar Hussain Sandhu, "Kartarpur Corridor: Divergent Dimensions and Its Impact on Pakistan and India," (February 2019).

Nanak's birth in 1969, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi pledged to negotiate a land trade with Pakistan so that Kartarpur Sahib could be reintegrated into India. The two countries reached an agreement regarding visits to religious holy sites in September 1974. In 2005, the protocol was revised by increasing the figure of tours. Kartarpur, on the other hand, was never added to the list of holy places. The Indian External Affairs Ministry had requested its inclusion, but Pakistani security concerns had prevented it from being granted. There were no religious events conducted at the Gurdwara Kartarpur between 1947 and 2000. There were no personnel to greet its followers. The Gurdwara reopened in September 2004 after the government started repairs in September 2000. The Kartarpur Corridor is the product of the arduous efforts of Bhabishan Singh Goraya. Gurdwaras, or Sikh religious centers, are reportedly planned to remain open by the Pakistani government¹⁸.

In response to the demands of the Sikh community, Mr. Navjot Singh Sidhu, a legendary cricket player from India belongs to Sikh community, went to Pakistan on August 22, 2018, to attend Prime Minister Imran Khan's oath taking ceremony. As a gift from the Pakistani government, both legends consented to the opening of the Kartarpur corridor on the anniversary of Baba Guru Nanak Dev Jee's birth. The Kartarpur corridor groundbreaking ceremony took place on November 28, 2018 at Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur in Narowal. As Chief Guest, Imran Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan, was joined by Navjot Singh Sidhu. FWO completed the Kartarpur corridor project in a record time of 11 months, and on November 9, 2019, with the official inauguration of the Kartarpur corridor, Prime Minister Imran Khan made history. The opening celebration was attended by Navjot Singh Sidhu, Manmohan Singh, the former Prime Minister of India, and a huge number of Sikhs from all over the world. Gurdwara Darbar Sahib, with an area of around 875 acres, has grown to become the world's largest Sikh gurdwara. The Indian Sangat and the Sikh Diaspora can easily visit the Kartarpur corridor. On a permit, Indian Sangat can visit Gurdwara Darbar Sahib from dawn to sunset; no visa is required. The Sikh Diaspora can easily obtain a visa from Pakistan embassies in their different nations. Indian Sikh Yaterees and the diaspora could seek assistance from the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandak Committee (PSGPC) and the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) Shrine department¹⁹.

The Kartarpur corridor not only connects India and Pakistan, but its scope extends far beyond just one minority gaining access to its religious legacy. Kartarpur connects a diverse range of communities in India including Hindus, Christians, Muslims, and others. Sikh ancestry extends beyond religious affiliations. Pakistan's immigration policy is also open, making Kartarpur a little melting pot of regional identities²⁰.

Sociopolitical Impact

In order to stimulate economic development, promote social cohesion, address global concerns, drive social change, resolve conflicts and advocate for human rights and social justice, it is necessary to study the social and political components of society. These aspects of any civilization are also critical for comprehending, analyzing, and improving the way a community operates. These dimensions are not separate but intertwined, and a thorough understanding of

¹⁸ Farzana Zaheer, Sultan Mubariz and Asia Saif Alvi, "Religious Tourism Backing for Economic Salvation: A Study of Kartarpur Corridor between Pakistan and India," *Journal of Indian Studies* Vol. 6, No. 1 (January – June 2020): 141.

¹⁹ Muhammad Irfan, *Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur Corridor* (Orange Productions & PR, 2020).

²⁰ Aminah Gilani, and Aliya Talib. "Kartarpur Corridor: A Step towards Regional Cooperation in South Asia". *The Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences* 28, no. 2 (December 31, 2020): 64.

them is required to create a more just and equal world. These elements are inextricably intertwined and play an important role in defining our reality. The social dimension probes the fabric of human interactions, cultural norms and values helping us to comprehend the dynamics of relationships, communities and individual behavior. The political component, on the other hand, reveals the power structures, governance institutions and policy decisions that shape a society. These characteristics, when considered together, provide a full picture of how civilizations function and evolve. They are critical for well-versed citizenship because they enable individuals to actively participate in democratic processes and hold leaders responsible²¹. They also drive social change by informing policies aimed at redressing disparities and injustices. Furthermore, the study of these characteristics is critical to conflict resolution, economic development, social cohesion, and global collaboration on issues such as climate change and human rights. To summarize, studying social and political elements prepares us to understand, analyze and positively contribute to the advancement of our society and the globe at large²².

The Kartarpur Corridor is a remarkable case study illustrating the importance of researching the social and political dynamics of a specific location. It demonstrates how religious and cultural heritage may shape diplomacy, impact bilateral ties, boost a country's soft power, raise security concerns and serve as a platform for peace building. By investigating these variables, we get vital insights into how society and politics interact in a complex global setting²³.

To argue that India and Pakistan have always struggled with the issues brought about by the 1947 boundary is hardly a huge brag. Rather than encouraging division, the gap keeps highlighting the existence of a shared history and putting up fresh ideas for how both nations may resolve this dilemma. Even while a problem like the disputed region of Kashmir would seem unsolvable, there are areas of mutual interest where the two nations can work together to make agreements, boost trust, and move toward greater stability regardless of how obstinately they may do so. In order to formalize the Kartarpur Corridor, officials from Pakistan and India convened at the International Border Zero Point on October 24, 2019. Indian pilgrims are granted visa-free entry to the holy site in Pakistan through this corridor which links the Dera Baba Nanak shrine in India's Punjab to the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan's Punjab. The corridor was first planned by officials from both nations in November 2018, however since then, as a result of the Pulwama incident, the Balakot airstrikes and India's intention to remove Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir, bilateral tensions between the two countries have increased. In response, Islamabad halted train and bus services as well as reduced its diplomatic representation in New Delhi. This followed an aerial battle between the two nuclear-armed neighbors in February that left many fearing for their lives²⁴.

Despite these challenges, the construction and opening of the Kartarpur Corridor, together with the parties' capacity to work together, should be seen as encouraging developments and signs of optimism. The Kartarpur Corridor might represent a step towards restoring trust in the politically

²¹ Putnam, Robert D, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

²² John Paul Lederach, "Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies," summary, by Tanya Glaser, Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997,

²³ Jaswal, S. S. (2020). Kartarpur Corridor: People-to-People Diplomacy. *The Diplomat*.

²⁴ 3 Rushali Saha, "The Kartarpur Corridor and Its Impact on Indo-Pak Relations," *South Asian Voices*, November 5, 2019.

tense and historically contentious relationship between India and Pakistan, despite the lengthy route to its completion marked by major conflicts over technical and logistical concerns. The Kartarpur Corridor has the ability to increase religious tourism, encourage interpersonal interactions to reduce mistrust on both sides, and may be help to resolve disputes by maintaining channels of communication. Both countries' policy leaders are dominated by national security threats, and operationalizing Kartarpur does not imply that "bilateral conversation will begin" or that other very difficult problems between the two nations, including Kashmir, would magically get resolved²⁵.

The Pakistani government was credited for opening the access to the Sikh sacred spot. Political Scientists observe it as a key to regional integration. Kartarpur provides new insights for peace, but the Indian Government is not taking it seriously. No Indian leader or BJP Minister visited Kartarpur for the opening ceremony. Due to his ego and the Hindu-Muslim divide, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not advance a dialogue. According to the Indian Government, this corridor will have no influence on India-Pakistan tensions. This corridor can help India and Pakistan reduce tensions while also improving their economic, social and environmental links. As noted in the RSCT, India and Pakistan must re-examine and rethink the notion of security²⁶.

Socio-Economic Impact

In order to fulfil their religious obligations, thousands of Sikh devotees from India and other countries go to Pakistan every year. Pakistan has taken major action to provide a safe haven where the Sikh community may travel, reside and carry out religious ceremonies. Roughly twelve thousand Yaterees participated in inaugural ceremony of Kartarpur Corridor in November 2019. The rights of all minorities in Pakistan have been upheld, necessary efforts and measures have been taken to maintain and defend religious freedom. This project was launched at the time of Baba Guru Nanak's 550th Birth Anniversary, this Corridor is a massive Government-sponsored project that does not require outside funding. It enables the Sikh community to attend the Gurdwara on the holy day. For the development of the Kartarpur Corridor, the Federal Govt. purchased a 1500-acre area for about Rs. 15 billion. Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur infrastructure has been built with consideration for all historical needs. The Sikh community's religious scholars helped to finish the project in order to protect Baba Guru Nanak's heritage. Transport is also carefully arranged to assist Sikh pilgrims during their stay in Pakistan. Reviving the tourism sector and promoting economic prosperity are anticipated outcomes of the Kartarpur Corridor. Both nations wanted to see the area grow and live in peace, both inside and outside their boundaries. Pakistan's soft image has become better globally and its new economic zones is gained covertly from the opening of the Kartarpur border. Pakistan has always welcomed its neighbors; it even participated in China's Silk Road initiative. Pakistan is a developing nation that is searching for fresh ways to strengthen its economy. In addition to help the local companies, the corridor connecting India and Pakistan is also increasing foreign exchange reserves. Tourists are expected to earn up to \$365, 000. The service costs from the

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Muhammad Saif Ullah, Ghulam Sarwar, and Umar Daraz, "Kartarpur Corridor: Re-defining Security in South Asian Region," *Annals of Human and Social Sciences* Vol. 3, No. 3 (Oct-Dec 2022), 5.

Yaterees are worth 259 Crors in Indian rupees per year and roughly 555 Crors in Pakistani rupees will be generated as additional revenue²⁷.

It would be highly beneficial to ameliorate the plight of financial constraints. Since Pakistan has granted permission for 5,000 religious visitors to travel to Kartarpur, it would be able to charge each Yaterees a \$20 service charge, making \$1 million (about Rs 71 lakh) a day. One US dollar is worth Rs 281 in Pakistani currency in a single day. The expected earnings are close to 2.85 crore in Pakistani rupees. Pakistan has no time constraints Religious Tourism Supporting Framework. Yatters are permitted on all 365 days of the year. The estimated salary is \$3,650,000. India and Pakistan reached an agreement to make it easier for travelers to travel between the two countries' borders. A pilgrim's web portal has been established and Yaterees are added to the portal. Within three to four business days, they will receive an SMS or email with their travel confirmation and registration information. In future, when reaching the Passenger Terminal Building, Yaterees need to bring their passport and Electronic Travel Authorization. Both nations consented to permit Indian Sikhs to use the Kartarpur Corridor to visit Gurdwara Darbar Sahib without visa. Travelers would be fumbling for their passports to enter the hallowed Gurdwara. Approximately 5,000 Yaterees may visit the Gurdwara each day; during certain festivals, this number may be increased. Pilgrims will be able to access the corridor year-round. They can come alone or in groups, and admission is free²⁸.

Socio-Cultural Impacts

The values, customs, ways of living, morality, belief systems, language usage, rituals, and interpersonal relationships of both visitors and host communities are impacted by religious tourism. Stereotypes and conflicts between the two can be reduced by the sociocultural interaction of individuals representing the two distinct cultural streams. Through reviving events, rituals, costumes, music, dance, festivals as well as the gastronomic pleasures of their diverse cultural settings, the relationship enables the celebration of regional uniqueness. Additionally, it helps smaller towns improve their regional planning and administrative capabilities. Locals' civic engagement in a range of activities that both the host and the visitors are participated can be fostered by this kind of tourism. Due to the need for a skilled and knowledgeable workforce in tourism-related businesses, several opportunities for skill and education development for the local population arise. Given the circumstances, India and Pakistan exhibit notable sociocultural parallels stemming from their mutual historical background. They are related on both sides of the border, speak several languages, and enjoy many of the same foods, dances, songs and folktales. Kartarpur has the potential to be more than just a corridor of peace and harmony. It may also be a crucial place for bringing together disparate groups of people with common interests, fostering interfaith cooperation, and lowering religious fanaticism²⁹.

The religious tourism business in Pakistan has tremendous potential to attract Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs especially with the recent visa-free Kartarpur corridor opening for Sikh pilgrims. Sikhs globally, roughly 25 million, are inclined to visit their sacred shrines in Pakistan, potentially

²⁷ Farzana Zaheer, Sultan Mubariz, Asia Saif Alvi, "Religious Tourism Backing for Economic Salvation: A Study of Kartarpur Corridor between Pakistan and India," *Journal of Indian Studies* Vol. 6, No. 1 (January – June 2020), 132–133.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Naila Masood Ahmad, Ramsha Sohail, and Muhammad Masood Ahmad, "Impact of Religious Tourism on the Development of Smokeless Industry in Pakistan," *Global Social Sciences Review (GSSR)* Vol.7, No. 2 (Spring 2022), 80-82.

bringing over 300,000 Sikh pilgrims annually and generating the revenue an estimated \$300 million. However, problems such as site conservation, visa issues and visitor security have stymied the industry's growth. Nonetheless, religious tourism can promote sustainable development, heritage awareness, and cultural peace, while also promising economic growth and greater links amongst Punjabis on both sides of the border. Interaction among Punjabis can improve agricultural trade, selling religious mementos and local handicrafts. Furthermore, promoting Pakistani handicrafts, offering diverse tourism packages and highlighting the country's cultural and historical heritage are critical for realizing this potential, as a World Bank study estimates that religious tourism has the potential to produce PKR 1.2 billion annually alongwith 40 thousand jobs³⁰.

Conclusion

To summarize, the Kartarpur Corridor is a noteworthy development in the context of religious tourism in Pakistan. This corridor links the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur in Pakistan to the Sikh sanctuaries of Dera Baba Nanak Sahib in India, has not only facilitated religious travel but also opened up new opportunities for social, political, and economic contacts. The Kartarpur Corridor's impact may be seen from a variety of angles and it is clear that this endeavor has resulted in beneficial developments on a number of fronts.

The historical significance of the Kartarpur Corridor which is based on Guru Nanak's teachings, emphasizes its value as a religious pilgrimage site. It serves as a symbol of religious tolerance, harmony, and peace. The positive role of the media, particularly within Pakistan, has aided in the promotion of a unified narrative surrounding the corridor, which has led to a more favorable image of the country in the global arena.

From a social and political standpoint, the Kartarpur Corridor has fostered cross-border exchanges. It has transcended political divisions, serving as a practical example of how diplomacy may lead to improve cooperation and conversation. Furthermore, the corridor has had a significant influence on local communities by providing new economic possibilities and increasing religious cooperation among people.

Economically, the corridor has the potential to considerably improve Pakistan's tourism industry. As more pilgrims and tourists visit the Kartarpur Corridor, there is the possibility for greater revenue, job creation, and infrastructural development. This has the potential to improve the livelihoods of local population while also stimulating regional economic growth.

Kartarpur Corridor has a significant sociocultural cultural impact. It has brought the people together from all cultures and traditions, encouraging a dynamic exchange of ideas and customs. The corridor's impact on the region's religious and cultural landscape demonstrates the transformative power of religious tourism and its potential to promote harmony. As religious tourism becomes more popular, the Kartarpur Corridor demonstrates the potential for such projects to promote peace, prosperity and harmony in our diverse globe.

³⁰ Farzana Zaheer, Sultan Mubariz, Asia Saif Alvi, "Religious Tourism Backing for Economic Salvation: A Study of Kartarpur Corridor between Pakistan and India," *Journal of Indian Studies* Vol. 6, No. 1 (January – June 2020), 145.