



A Review about Himachal Pradesh as Tourist Destination in special context with Shimla Hills

Purshotam Singh, Research Scholar, Department of History, Punjab University, Chandigarh

Abstract : Referred to as dev bhoomi or "Land of God", Himachal Pradesh is bordered by Jammu and Kashmir on the north, Punjab on the west, Uttar Pradesh on the south and Uttaranchal on the east. The word "Himachal" means the abode of snow. Shimla is the capital of Himachal Pradesh and the total area of the state is 55,673 square km. The state is covered with

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immense natural beauty and is, undoubtedly, one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. A majority of the area is mountainous with lofty ranges, deep valleys, swaying waterfalls and lush greenery. The climate varies extremely from one place to the other, providing heavy rainfalls to some area and no rainfall to others. Being high in altitude, snowfall is a common sight in most parts of the state. There are 12 districts in the state which are further subdivided into blocks and towns and villages for administrative convenience.

Key Words : Himachal Pradesh, Shimla, Tourism, Economics

Introduction : Himachal Pradesh has a rich history because it has been inhabited by several clans of people at different ages from the beginning of civilization. The earliest of all were the people from the Indus Valley civilization, during the second and third millennium BC, and they came here from Gangetic plains only to live life more peacefully. Soon, the Mongolians occupied the region and they were followed by the Aryans. According to the Indian epics, Himachal Pradesh was a conglomeration of several small republics or Janpadas, each constituting a state as well as a cultural unit. Then came the Mughals and kings like Mahmud Ghaznavi, Sikandar Lodi, Timur, etc had conquered many places of the state to establish their supremacy.



After their kingdom started declining, the Gorkhas captured the land but ended up losing the territory to the British in the Anglo-Gorkha war. The British were completely smitten by the sheer beauty of the area and continued with their supremacy over the place from 1858 to 1914. Post-Independence, 30 princely states of the area were brought together to form Himachal Pradesh in 1948. When Punjab got geographically reorganised, some parts were included in the latter. In 1971, Himachal Pradesh emerged as the 18th state of the Indian Union.

Geography

Being situated at the foothills of the Western Himalayas, Himachal Pradesh is located at the higher altitudes around 6500 meters above the sea level. The elevation is from west to the east and from the north to the south. Geographically, the area may be divided into three broad categories: the outer Himalayas (Shivaliks), the inner Himalayas (central zone), and the Greater Himalayas (alpine zone). Wide Valleys, snow clad mountains, exotic lakes and rivers and gushing out streams are the few features that Himachal Pradesh is known for. Around 64 percent of the area is covered by forests that consist of Moist Deodar Forest, Ban Oak Forest, Moist Temperate Deciduous Forest, Coniferous Forest, Alpine Pastures and the Rhododendron Scrub Forests. The climate varies from semi arctic to semi tropical.

Summers stay from April-June with a comfortable climate whereas winters are chilly due to heavy snowfalls. Rainy season enhances the beauty of the place and continues from July to September. Rivers and streams get refilled and a lustrous beauty of the green vegetation is visible all throughout. Major rivers of the area are the Chandra Bhaga, the Beas, the Chenab, the Sutlej and the Ravi. These rivers flow all throughout the year and are mainly fed by the glaciers of the mountains. Bara Shigri, Bhaga, Chandra are the few glaciers of Himachal Pradesh.

Demographics

The total population of Himachal Pradesh as per Census 2011, is 68,64,602 which is only minimal percentage of the total population of the country. Himachal Pradesh is one of those states with the highest Hindu population, about 90 percent. Among them, the main communities are the Rajputs who had come to this place long back and settled here since. The Brahmins and



the Rathis also form a major part of the population of the state. The Ghirth community or the Choudhury community is mainly found in the Kangra district, they are usually the landowners who rent their lands to poor farmers for cultivation and earn revenue from them in return. The other communities that stay here are the Kannets, Kolis, Gaddis, Gujjars, Lahaulis and Pangawals.

There is a strong caste system that prevails in the rural part of the state but it is changing with the advent of modernity. Himachal Pradesh has a good number of Tibetans staying there and hence Buddhism is the next religion that is followed strongly after Hinduism. They, being refugees from Tibet, stay at the Lahaul and Kinnaur districts mainly en masse. Since the state shares a common boundary with Punjab, several people from the Sikh community are found to stay in the towns and the cities. Muslims are the minority community in the state.

Society & Culture

Himachal Pradesh is a multilingual and a multicultural state of India. Since many races have come and settled here from earlier times, the culture of the state is diverse, colourful and rich in heritage. It is exhibited in colourful clothes, musical melodies, festive celebrations, rhythmic dances and a simple yet rich lifestyle. Arts and handicrafts form an integral part of the culture. The state specialises in preparing pashmina shawl which is exported to foreign countries on a regular basis. Other than that, wooden potteries, metal jewellery, utensils, vessels and many more are prepared by the locals. Music and dance are an integral and essential part of life for the Himachalis. Folk songs are mainly sung to invoke the deities. Special types of songs known as samskara songs, based on Indian Ragas, are popular among the people. Some exclusive dance forms of the state are Shona, Gee, Burah, Losar, Naati etc. Festivals are celebrated with great zeal and grandeur. The international Himalayan Festival is celebrated annually at Dharamshala. Local festivals like Cheeshu and Lahaul for the Lahaulis, and Haryali at the Kangra district are celebrated with pomp and vividness. National festivals like Diwali, Lohri, Baisakhi and Christmas too mean a lot for the people of Himachal Pradesh.

Language



Being a state located in the northern part of the country, Hindi is widely spoken and understood among all the inhabitants of Himachal Pradesh. Other than that, Pahari or "the hilly language", known to be derived from Sanskrit and Prakrit, is the second most widely spoken language among the people. There are three different forms of the language, northern Pahari, western Pahari and the eastern Pahari. Out of these, the second form is adopted by the people of Himachal Pradesh and they speak it in different dialects. Few of the dialects of Pahari used in Himachal are Churahi, Himachali, Mandeali, Kuluhi, etc. Punjabi is another popular language which people speak, due to the state's proximity to Punjab. English is the medium of instruction in most of the central board affiliated schools and fairly used among the elites. Other than these, Kangri, Dogri, Kinnauri are also used by the natives of the regions. The Tibetans who have migrated from their place prefer to speak in Tibetan languages. Other than that, people from other state of India, who have settled there, like Marwaris, Gujaratis, Biharis, Bengalis, etc, speak in their own languages among their small communities

Tourism

Undoubtedly, Himachal Pradesh is one of the best places to visit due to its vast geo-topographical diversities. The snow-topped mountains, the green forests or the red apple orchards, and the freshness of pure air - the state has everything that attracts people from all over the world. Shimla, Manali, Chamba, etc are those places which draw most of the honeymoon couples all through the year. Otherwise, tourists who love mountain adventures can also enjoy river rafting, trekking, ice skating, para gliding and skiing, apart from spending a peaceful vacation here. There are temples, churches, monasteries, rivers, hill stations, architectural masterpieces and markets which will surely be a traveler's delight.

Dharamshala is one of the coldest hill stations where one can witness snow covered valleys at a stretch, lush flora and fauna and freshness that Mother Nature offers to humans. When in Shimla, tourists can enjoy the Jakhoo hills, the ridge, the Lakkar bazaar, St. Michael's cathedral, state museum, or simply roam around the mall road. Mashorba, Kufri, Fagu, are few suburbs which gives enchanting scenery of the beautiful state to a nature lover. Kullu, Chail, Kasauli,



Manikaran, Dalhousie, etc are also places worth visiting in Himachal Pradesh. Nagar, Paharpur and Rukkhala offer rural heritage and charm to the urban visitors.

Shimla - India's Most Fashionable Hill

The revered hill station, Shimla, is the capital of Himachal Pradesh. The capital is the most celebrated and lionized hill station in India. What attracts to tourist is Mall area, holy shrines and hosts enormous adventure activities. The ever horded capital also celebrates many gleeful and soulful festivals. The capital, Shimla, can be phrased as 'market of handicrafts'. The capital has many handicrafts shops for tourist that sells alluring woven carpets and shawls. Being in Shimla and enjoying a joyful ride in toy train adds more memorable experience in the trip

Shimla dominates the entire southern part of Himachal Pradesh and is the ideal holiday retreat during the summer season.

Scenic Hill Destinations

Himachal Pradesh has many pacific hill stations with ace scenic nature. The state thus deserves kudos for everything that it has stored and preserved for nature lovers and adventure seekers. The climate and aesthetic beauty of the state gives memorable moments for those newly wedded celebrating honeymoon away from hustled city life. Manali is counted as one of the best hill station most visited in India. Located in Kullu Valley, Manali is famously known for Yak Safari. Lahaul, Spiti, and Kufri are more crowded with adventure seekers. This hill stations gives opportunities for adventure activities like skiing, mountaineering, trekking, et al. Dharmasala is another popular hill station in the state. This place is known for being more pacific. Another heart touching place is McLoedanj.

The charming hill station, Manali, is a typical honeymoon spot which can keep any couple going for a week .This attractive location is a gateway to two stunning valleys Lahaul and Spiti. For daring tourist, white water rafting and Chandrakhani Pass are fascinating and worth seeing destinations.



Dalhousie is famous for its thick deodars trees, pine and rhododendrons. This hill resort is off the beaten track from all hustle life. There is as different as chalk and cheese people and nature of the place. The colonial style houses are grab attention and ensure to interest you. This is a perfect destination for newly wedded couple seeking for lonesome time in the lap of nature. A stay of two days is more than enough in this picturesque location.

Holy Cities

Himachal Pradesh is dotted with various holy sites that are revered by people of many faiths. The most famous tourist place is the Tabo and Key Monastery in Lahaul and Spiti. Different temple attractions include Naina Devi Temple, Chamunda Devi Temple and Ramachandran Temple. There are many churches and monasteries too that adorn the land of Himachal Pradesh.

Dharamsala is the abode of the Dalai Lama. This place is known for its scintillating scenery and spectacular landscape. The snow capped Dhauladhar Mountains is a sight to behold. You will see different kinds of tourists at these spots from the honeymoon couples to families. The climate is fantastic throughout the year. The Tibetan culture is a major attraction here. Tourists love to try the Tibetan food and learn their culture.

Adventure Destinations in Himachal - The Beaten Trail

Himachal Pradesh is one of the crowd-pleasing with the umpteen options of adventure that tourists can indulge during their holiday in the state. A tourist can commence their adventure tour from the Bir and Billing in Kangra valley (known as Para Gliding Capital of India). For golf lovers, Shimla and Naldehra are the ultimate destination. Kufri and Manali are the most favored skiing destinations in Himachal. Rohtang pass and different other passes are best suited for mountain sports while the valleys of Himachal can be visited for those who enjoy water sports.

Conclusion :

Himachal Pradesh is the ultimate travel destination of India for tourists, artists, pilgrims and adventures since time immemorial. The natural scenic beauty, architecture, fair and festivals, salubrious climate and environment, snow-capped peaks, lakes, rivers, glaciers, adventure sports,



temples of the region have emerged as the main tourist attractions in this region. Those who are hungry for the scenic beauty, this region offers its cultural richness and antiquity with amusement and environmental variety. The booming tourism industry in Himachal Pradesh is an engine to economic growth in rural areas of the state. Tourism planners need to moderate the level of risk at the destination through risk avoidance or enhancement policies in an attempt to satisfy tourist's motivations. Tourism has multiplier effect on the economy of Himachal Pradesh. The tourism industry of Himachal Pradesh is making substantial contribution to generation of employment and earning foreign exchange and the government has accorded due priority to ensure its growth over the years. The government of Himachal Pradesh have initiated various developmental plans for the development of infrastructure like railways, air transport, road transport and communication networks in order to promote the tourism in the main tourist destinations. Keeping in view the prime importance of this industry in the state of Himachal Pradesh, through the present study, an effort has been made to study the trend of tourist inflow, assessment of the services/facilities available to the tourists and analyze the attitude of the domestic and international tourists towards these facilities in various tourist destinations.

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