

Introduction

The development process, today, is a cause for great concern throughout the Third World. The evidence of acute deprivation and almost inhuman degradation is present everywhere. Shortage of good arable land, pressure due to rural population, inefficient agricultural systems, regional disparities, rural-urban migration, and rising unemployment are all attributes of the development process in most third world countries which demand urgent attention in order to be solved.

The problems brought about by the settling of the hilly areas in India are entirely different from those in the plains. So the solutions, therefore, have to be necessarily unique and specific. The fundamental question/problem that hill area planners and policy makers face is how to meet the basic human needs without simultaneously destroying the resource-base and the ecosystem from which these basic needs must be met. The environmental objective of development is to conserve and improve the productivity of natural and human resources. Therefore, while designing the much needed new economic development policy for hilly areas, one should not forget that there will be no sustained development or meaningful economic growth, without a clear commitment to conserve the fragile mountain ecosystem and promote rational use of resources. Keeping in mind the above points, in this paper we will critically examine the past development strategies in Himachal Pradesh (a hilly State in India), so as to draw lessons for the future which may be useful in planning activities in Himachal Pradesh and other hilly areas having similar socioeconomic and physical conditions.

Broadly speaking, Himachal Pradesh is a hilly territory. On the basis of climatic and topographic conditions it can be divided into three regions.

- o Outer Himalayan Region - The boundaries of this region touch the plains of the Punjab and Haryana. The annual rainfall varies from 60 to 70 inches. This region has many valleys with groups of sparsely populated villages. Each village group is separated from the other by a hill or a stream.
- o Interior Himalayas - This zone has got narrow valleys interspersed with steep mountain ranges. The annual rainfall fluctuates between 30 to 40 inches. The area, mostly along the river banks is thinly populated with scattered villages having cultivable land.
- o Alpine Pastures - This region is very sparsely populated. As the area is covered with snow for about 5 to 6 months in a year, most of the population migrate to the lower reaches during the winter and return to their houses during summer. The nomadic buffalo breeders and shepherds take their migratory herds and flocks to the alpine pastures for grazing during late summer and the rainy season after the snow has melted.

Agriculture is by far the major occupation of the people of Himachal Pradesh as it provides direct employment to about three fourths of the total working population. The valley areas of the State are most suited for growing foodgrains. Elsewhere, due to climatic conditions varying from sub-tropical to temperate, the agro-climatic conditions are suitable for growing a wide variety of cash crops such as temperate fruits, potatoes, vegetables, ginger, etc. Since the scope for extension of cultivation is limited, emphasis has to be laid on increased production by maximizing output per unit area available for cultivation.

In countries where a mixed economy exists, as in India, the process of development is initiated and sustained by the Government through planning. Himachal Pradesh, along with other States in India, introduced planned economic development in 1951 through a series of five year plans to tackle the problems of poverty, unemployment, inequality, and infrastructural backwardness. An ex-post-facto evaluation of government efforts is given through the analysis of plan allocations and the objectives of development as spelt out in the different five year plans.