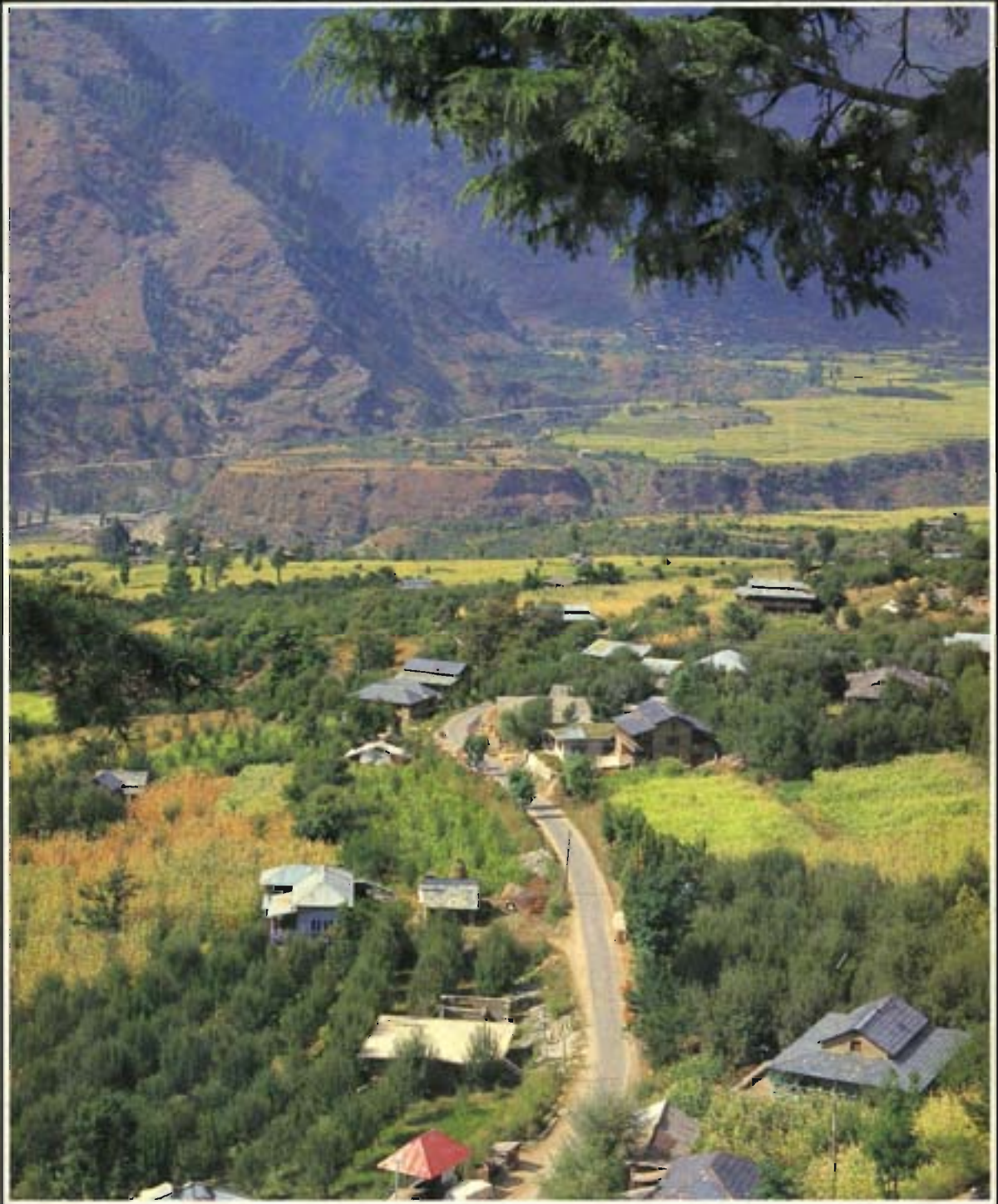


THE KULU VALLEY

Impact of Tourism Development
in the Mountain Areas



Tej Vir Singh

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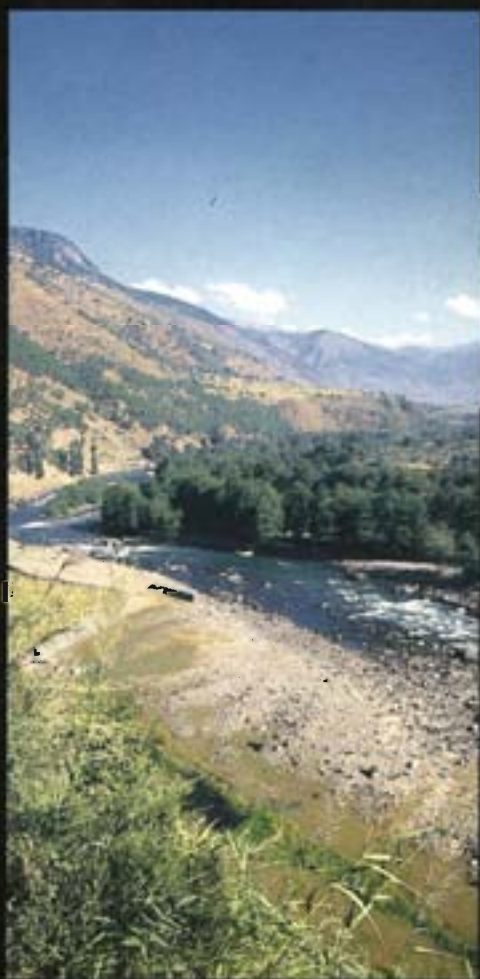
This report on the KULU VALLEY in Himachal Pradesh presents the state of the arts in tourism development in Himalaya's most fascinating pastoral Valley, rich in ecological assets, and cultural heritage. This piece of biosphere remained almost a closed ecosystem until recently when mechanised transport brought tourism in its wake, overwhelming the bucolic Manali with tourists straining capacity in various environments, besides posing psychological problems in the host community. Based on empirical data, this study is a bold attempt to assess various measureable tourism impacts on the host environment in the realms of Ecology, Economy, Society and Culture.

Community based integrated tourism development is recommended with sectoral blend of Agriculture, Forestry, Horticulture and native crafts. Rural tourism with emphasis on product indigenisation is advocated to ensure active participation of indigenous population.

Ably documented and profusely illustrated with maps sketches and colour photographs this monograph from India's leading tourism scientist attains new heights in tourism impact research.

Cover Picture

An overview of the green
Kulu Valley from Thawa.



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THE KULU VALLEY

Impact of Tourism Development In The Mountain Areas

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Tourism: The Alpine Region — The Himalayas
Socio-Economic — The Nepal Context — The
Sustainable Development — Tourism in
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Tej Vir Singh



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Preface

Experience has shown that the development of tourism creates problem in the pastoral valleys of the mountain areas. Rich in heritage of nature and culture, these are special places where tourism should have no chance to grow in isolation. On the contrary, partnership of tourism with other native sectors (Agriculture, Horticulture, Forestry, Handicrafts and Animal Husbandry) is holistically desired. Since insularity is often their characteristic feature, smallness of tourism adds to their image, and hence limits to its growth becomes a pre-condition for sustainable development. Wherever these basics are ignored, tourism grows destructive by eroding valley's essential features in various environments of ecology, culture and economy, leaving behind ruined paradises to which few tourists return.

If that be the case of the Kulu Valley, then it becomes almost a patriotic duty to enquire into the state-of-the-arts for it constitutes country's most precious heritage area. By all standards, it is a spectacular piece of biosphere where Man and Nature in unison have wrought a unique mountain culture which tourism ought strengthen and conserve as it is irreplaceable, rare and seldom found — a resource highly prized by tourists.

Tourism in the Valley, because of its hard accessibility, came on a leisurely pace but the road showed the way to 'crowd tourism' which began to explode at Manali. A non-descript barrier settlement, three decades before, Manali has abruptly emerged on the world tourist map, which is overwhelmed by tourist population, every summer and autumn season. Spatially

segregated, often phenotypically different, these visitors create visible cultural contrasts in a primitive mountain society which remained almost a closed-system for centuries — *Kulantapitha*. Howsoever resilient the ecosystem may have been, damage is likely, when too many humans, tourists and residents, make heavy demand on its resources, and on particular time.

Still worse of the Himalayan tourism is that it is allowed to pamper amidst tender ecologies with little or any research base, often leading to misdirection, hastening resource decay. Nobly conceived Himalayan pilgrimages and adequately planned hill stations of the Raj days are facing saturation risks with 'blights' that these modern nomads are flocking to these beautiful pastoral valleys of peasant culture, native heritage and rustic charms. Is there any possibility of sustainable and holistic development of tourism in these sensitive areas? Can tourism, by process of integration, bring about healthy environment for community development? Answers to these questions can never be metaphors, they have to be searched, and researched for establishing symbiotic relationship of tourism with physical, cultural and economic environments of the Valley.

Surprisingly, such a beautiful area has escaped the attention of serious scholars. The Valley is still a virgin area of research in many fields of enquiry, particularly Geography, History, Sociology, Ecology and Economics. The British gazetteers and old settlement reports provide a wealth of information on various aspects of the district, including Kulu Valley, but these documents are almost a century old references whereas the area has witnessed dramatic changes during the last few decades.

There is virtual crisis of information in tourism which has emerged a major development potential of the Valley. A few macro-studies provide information on Himachal Pradesh hotel bed capacity, they are indifferent to the development processes of tourism in the sensitive Valleys of Himachal Pradesh. There exists no model to finding impacts of tourism on various

environments, which makes this project a more challenging task.

Acknowledgements

An effort has been made in this report, to explore on the universe of the Kulu Valley in her various aspects of Geography, History, Culture and Ecology which form community's "tourist products". An effort has also been made to assess the hosts and guests interaction in various environments of the destination community. Impact assessment is a complex field of research, nor can the results be measured in a short span of a few weeks or months. This calls forth an Spartan endurance of years' data gathering and monitoring for achieving quantifiable impacts. This would be all too presumptuous to think that this Report shall be an answer to many intriguing questions that the development of tourism poses; this should, certainly, introduce method approach to finding some of the answers for an integrated development of tourism in the mountain valleys.

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Tej Vir Singh
Director

My thoughts go to my Sarda, Puri, and family who cared for my interests at the IITM, Lucknow.

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