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Rituals and Festivals: A Case Study of Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract

Himachal Pradesh is the northernmost state of India. The state is situated in the Western Himalaya. Due to its remote location and hard terrain, or topography, the state remained largely uninfluenced by Western culture. The state, on account of fairs and festivals and the presence of hundreds of thousands of deities, is known as "Dev Bhoomi " (meaning "abode of God "). The people of this state celebrate its rich culture, social diversity, and traditions with great pomp. The paper will throw light on some of these rituals and festivals, including the International Dussehra of Kullu, Chamba's International Minjar Fair, Rampur's Lavi Trade Fair, Sujanpur's Holi Fair, the International Mandi Shivratri Fair, and so on.

Keywords: Himachal, Dev Bhoomi, Festivals, Rituals

Introduction

Himachal Pradesh is a state in northern India that is anciently known as Dev Bhumi (the abode of gods) and is rich with natural luster. The word Himachal is a combination of the Sanskrit words "Hima" and "Anchal," which mean snow and lap, respectively. It is no coincidence that the state of Himachal Pradesh is located in the lap of the Himalayas. It is also located between the latitudes of 30° 22' 40" north to 33° 12' 40" north, and the longitudes of 75° 45' 55" east to 79° 04' 20" east. The entire region of Himachal Pradesh is hilly, with an altitude ranging from 350 meters to 7,000 meters above sea level. The state has also shared an international border with China in the east. Additionally, Himachal, the home of eternal snow, is unreliable for diversity, both traditionally and in cultural aspects. It is also a land of fairs, rituals, and festivals. Fair and festivals play a very significant role in an individual's life because they strengthen ties between the person and his community. The persistence of traditional social life keeps local communities well integrated. A number of fairs and festivals were identified in various places, along with the traditional way to celebrate them and the traditional foods that are being served on these days. with the celebration of different fairs, customs, and practices. In some parts, people prepare a traditional community meal called "Dham" to commemorate the function (Mohan2009).

Major fairs and festivals

Chamba's International Minjar Fair

Chamba is located in the north-west of Himachal Pradesh. This district of Himachal Pradesh is well known for its beauty, fairs and festivals. Khajjiar, the Switzerland of Himachal Pradesh, is located in Chamba. Several types of fairs and festivals are organized and celebrated in Chamba. Minjar fair is one among them. This fair has been organized in Chamba since the 9th century A.D. This fair was started during the reign of Sahil Verman, famous king of Chamba. Sahil Verman defeated Kirat and drove them out from Chamba. On the return of the King the people of Chamba gifted him Minjar (Flower of maze) to the king. Therefore, this fair has been organized by the people of Chamba since the 9th century A.D. Both Hindus and Muslims participated in this fair. Therefore, this fair is a symbol of Hindu-Muslim harmony as well. Recently, the government of Himachal Pradesh declared this fair an international fair (hpchamba.nic.in).

Mandi's International Shivratri festival

Mandi is the central district of Himachal Pradesh was formed with the merger of these two princely states Mandi and Suket on 15th April 1948, when the state of Himachal Pradesh came into existence. The region is well known as choti Kashi and famous for its beauty, fairs and festivals. Shivratri is an International fest celebrated by the people in this District in order to ward off evil spirits. A festival accredited to the worshiping of Lord Siva also has many local celebrations at all Shiva temples, on this special occasion the preparation of poode, and the mystical "Bhang" served as Lord Shiva's prashad to ladies and men equally (Sharma, 2016)

Kullu's International Dussehra Fest

Kullu is a well known District of Himachal Pradesh. Located on the west side of Himalaya. It is also famous for its natural beauty and various festivals. Dussehra which is popularly known as Vijaydashami is one among them, where hundreds of Gods and Goddesses dress up with their retinue for week-long festivals at Dhalpur Grounds. The folk flavor of the festivities, rituals, and traditions here make it totally different from Dussehra celebrations elsewhere in the country. This fest is dedicated to lord Raghunath ji. Its History dates back to the 17th century when local King Jagat Singh set up an idol of Raghunath. After that, God Raghunath is declared as the ruling deity of the valley. Recently the state govt. has accorded the status of International festival to the kullu Dussehra, which attracts tourists in large numbers. This festival in Kullu valley is unique because it shows immense gratitude toward its culture and tradition (Singh June 2014).

Rampur's Lavi Trade fair

The Rampur Bushahr, which is located in district Shimla and lies in the foothills of the western Himalayas. The socio-economic and demographic profile of the state and district is given as under in order to acquaint with the location of study. The district is located between the longitude 77 78 O-19" east and latitude 30-45" and 31-44" north. It is bounded by Mandi and Kullu in the north, Kinnaur in the east. The elevation of the district ranges between 300 to 600 meters above sea level. Rampur is well known for The Lavi Trade fair which is held on the River's banks of satluj, has international craze and fame happen in November. Accredited as a major center for trading and stopover for the old routes such as Ladakh, Afghanistan, and Kinnaur in old days. Those days, For the purpose of trade, stalls were set up by Kinnaur and Tibetan traders in this particular area. Present days, Lavi Fair is simply an attempt to resurrect that old glory. And in this healthy event Traders from all corners come to sell utensils, and many other consumer goods (Thakur 2020).

Conclusion

The people of the state have moved to different parts but still those who have their bloodline here take pride in the celebration and in active participation of fairs, festivals and the traditional rituals. The society is tilted towards Western culture in each and every aspect so therefore, there is a need to admire and make tourists aware about the fair and festivals of the state by advertisement. So with the above suggestions the Tourism department may lay more focus on the state's tourism.

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