



Distribution of Urban Centres by Evolution in Himachal Pradesh

Dr. Vijay Wanti

Associate Professor

Department of Geography

D.A.V. Centenary College, Faridabad, India

Abstract: Himachal Pradesh, a foothill state, has been inhabited by the people and has flourished since the beginning of Indus Valley Civilization. The natural beauty and climatic conditions have been the attraction for the people. In the beginning of British rule, the hill state served as a cantonment and capital for the British during the summer. The development of settlement by British paved the way to the people towards the hills. Thus, evolution of urban centre in Himachal Pradesh spreads over in different periods of Indian history. These urban centers have been classified into three groups: pre-British towns, British towns, post-Independence towns. The present study attempts to highlight and identify various characteristics of towns in accordance to the period of their evolution based on secondary data. It is observed that the period of evolution plays an important role on site, size and growth of population in towns of the state whereas little or no impact is observed on the function of the towns. This is due to peculiar topographical and location situation of Himachal Pradesh where topography, climate and locational factors put great impediments in the way of industrialization process. The largest number of towns evolved in the post-independence period followed by that in the ancient period.

Index Terms – Urban Centers, Himachal Pradesh, British, pre-British.

I. INTRODUCTION

Himachal Pradesh, a foothill state, has been inhabited by the people and has flourished since the beginning of Indus Valley Civilization. The natural beauty and climatic conditions have been the attraction for the people. In the beginning of British rule, the hill state served as a cantonment and capital for the British during the summer. The development of settlement by British paved the way to the people towards the hills. Himachal Pradesh is endowed with physical resources typical of a hill state, water, forest and scenic beauty. A variety of climate, admirably suited to fruit cultivation and off-season vegetables is experienced. Climate plays a negative role also in higher altitude. It acts as a hinderance in agricultural and infrastructural development. The development of the hill stations began when the hills were announced as the summer capital by the British (Bansal, K., and Chhabra., 2019). After independence, many hill stations came under the jurisdiction of the states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. (Shekhar, R., 2018)

The first hill station emerged in 1820s and more hill stations emerged in the subsequent decade. The speed of emergence of hill station declared in later decades maximum addition in hill station during the colonial period took place in the first half of the century and in the latter half experienced sluggish rate of growth. In post-Independence period many new hill stations have come up and many more in states like Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh.(Shekhar Ravi, 2018).To accommodate the ever-increasing population tremendously in hills which led to the development of various infrastructure facilities. But drastic increase in the population of hill stations, resulting in the haphazard development due to low carrying capacity of hills and unavailability of buildable land.(Kumar Ashwani, 2016).Himachal Pradesh being a hilly state has several geographical impediments coupled with low scope of industrialization, which engender problems of unemployment and poverty (Sharma, Tanwar and Rizvi, 2018). These studies focused on evolution of hill stations in different period and their problems and challenges. The present study has examined the period of evolution of hill towns and role of evolution of site, size and growth of population in the towns.

II Objectives

1. To study various towns in Himachal Pradesh in accordance to period of their evolution.
2. To study the evolution of urban centres which is supposed to have an important bearing on their demographic and economic characteristics.
3. To study the impact of evolution on site, size and growth of population in towns of the state.

The research is based on secondary data and has focused to explore the need to set up the urban centres in mountainous state of Himachal Pradesh. The secondary data consists of both published and unpublished information in the form of government department documents, books, journals, research project report, government documents are the important sources which form the basis of secondary data and district census handbook economic census district planning report revenue report an investor policies were also explored for the base of the study. The statistical methods have been used to calculate average size and growth rate at state level and according to evolution period of urban centres in Himachal Pradesh.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Notwithstanding the low level of urbanization in Himachal Pradesh, urbanization has a long history. It goes back to ancient period of Indian history. Chamba, Kangra, Kullu, Mandi and Bilaspur are some such towns which originated in ancient period. Therefore, British period is well marked for development of a number of new towns in claim and quiet hill environment. Cold climate, scenario beauty and strategic reasons attracted the British to relatively isolated hill areas. In the post- independence period when planned development through five Year Plans was adopted as strategy of socio- economic transformation, towns were given the important role of acting as nodal centres for the surrounding countryside.

In the way, the objectives as well as technology different from one period of history to another. Hence, the evolution of urban centres is supposed to have an important bearing on their demographic and economic characteristics.

In the light of above discussions, this paper attempts to discuss various characteristics of towns in Himachal Pradesh in accordance to period of their evolution. According to period of evolution towns have been classified into following three groups:

- i) Pre- British towns
- ii) British towns
- iii) Post- Independence towns

Pre- British Towns

Twenty out of total 59 towns in the state are pre-British towns in their origin. Evolved as capital towns of princely states, these acquired various functions over the time. They make over one-third or 33.89 percent of the total towns in the state. However, they accommodate higher proportion of population (42.24 percent) than their share in total number of towns in the state.

It is interesting to note that majority of pre-British towns in the state are sited on river banks. Only six towns namely Nahan, Nainadevi, Solan, Arki, and Theog are exception to it. Former two of these are hill top towns and latter three gap towns .

In 2011, Solan which was the largest of all the pre- British towns had a population size (39,256 persons) which was 33 times of the second smallest (Nainadevi, 1204 persons) in the group. In fact, Nainadevi was the second smallest towns in the state. Narkanda is the smallest towns having only 901 persons.

Pre- British towns recorded an increase of 7.94 percent in their population during 2001-11. Against this, state average was 10.03 percent. In this way, pre-British towns grew slower than the urban centers in the state as a whole in general.

Within the group, there are wide variations in population increase. The highest increase of 31.91 percent was recorded in Poanta Sahib towns and the lowest 0.03 percent in Rampur town. Palampur, Chamba, Mandi, experienced decrease in urban population. Palampur experienced -11.55 percent and -1.68 and -1.94 percent in Mandi and Chamba. 12 towns of this group are categorized as towns experiencing positive growth (more than 60 percent towns). Indora new town was added in 2011.

From the functional angle, majority of pre- British towns service and trade and commerce as their dominant functions. This again confirms their origin as administrative centres. Seven towns are classified as monofunctional eight bifunctional and remaining five multifunction.

British towns

Thirteen towns owe their evolution to British period. They make more than one -fifth or 22.03 percent, accommodating nearly two-fifths or 38.28 percent of total urban population in the state. Like pre- British towns average size of British towns (1992 persons) was higher than the state average (11670 persons).

In their spatial distribution, the hill top towns were distributed in Shimla , Solan , Kangra and Chamba districts. Seventy one percent of such towns were confined to these four districts. No town evolved in Hamirpur or Kullu districts in this period.

Of the British towns, Shimla and Dalhousie were declared urban agglomerations (UA) by the Census in 1971. Shimla is the largest town not only among the British towns but also in the whole state. On the other side of scale, Bakloh is the smallest towns of this group. The ratio between the largest and smallest town is of 82:1. This ratio for pre-British towns was of 32:1.

Interestingly, British towns registered the highest increase (19.03 percent) during 2001-2011. However, this is mainly because of rapid growth of population of Shimla UA which is state headquarters and most flourishing town in the state. Dharamshala and Ghumarwin also registered quite high increase. In contrast, Sabathu and Jutog registered decrease in their population. Sabathu, a cantonment town started registering decline with the shift of military batallion from here to other places as well as with the emergence of new service centers on newly constructed road routes in the surrounding area. Marked here, once a center of largest business activities gives a deserted look now.

Not only in population increase, but also in average size the British towns surpass all categories of towns in the state. The average size of the British towns is 1992 persons which is not only higher than the state average but also of pre- British towns (14541 persons). It indicates that British towns are most dynamic towns in the state. It has, however, been observed that it is more a result of the presence of Shimla town in this group, the largest and only class I town in the state. Nearly one-fourth or 24.62 percent of the total urban population of the state is in Shimla town alone. It makes more than 65.23 percent of the total population

of British towns as a group. In fact, with the exception of Shimla, Dharamshala is second growing town in this group share 11.83 percent population and experienced 61 percent increase during 2001-2011. The selection of Dharamshala for Indian government's Smart City project and its designation as the winter capital of Himachal Pradesh added to the pace of growth (Meenakshi, Kapoor, 2021). And rest of the British towns are small in size, falling in class V or VI category of towns.

The dominant function of these towns is services. Eleven towns of the group are classified as monofunctional, one bifunctional and remaining two multi-functional towns (Table-1).

Table-1

Himachal Pradesh: Grouping of Towns by Evolution, 2011

Name of town	Population	Class size of town	Population Growth	Dominant Function	
				Original	present
Pre-British					
Sundernagar.	24,344	III	1.5	Administrative	Administrative
Mandi	26,422	III	-1.7	Administrative	Administrative
Chamba	19,933	IV	-1.9	Administrative	Administrative
Kullu.	18,536	IV	1.3	Administrative	Administrative
Bilaspur.	13,654	IV	4.6	Administrative	Administrative
Una	18,722	IV	17.7	Administrative	Administrative
Kangra	9,528	V	4.1	Administrative	Administrative
Nurpur.	9,807	V	8.2	Administrative	Administrative
Poanta Sahib.	25,183	III	31.9	Religion	Administrative
Nalagarh.	10,708	IV	13.4	Administrative	Administrative
Hamirpur	17,604	IV	2.0	Administrative	Administrative
Nagrota.	5,900	V	4.3	Trade	Trade
Rampur.	5,655	V	0.03	Administrative	Administrative
Palampur	3,543	VI	-11.6	Administrative	Administrative
Nahan.	28,899	III	10.9	Tourism	Tourism
Solan	39,256	III	14.8	Administrative	Administrative
Theog.	4353	VI	38.0	Trade	Trade
Arki.	3040	VI	5.7	Administrative	Administrative
Indora.	4,534	VI	7.9	Administrative	Administrative
Nainadevi	1204	VI	3.7	Religion	Religion
British					
Dharamshala.	30,764	III	60.9	Defence	Administrative
Yol.	12028	IV	11.6	Defence	Defence
Shimla	169,578	I	18.9	Administrative	Administrative
Dalhousie MC.	7051	V	-5.04	Tourism	Tourism
Daslhausie CB	3549	VI	80.7	Defence	Defence
Kasauli.	3885	VI	6.9	Defence	Defence
Sabathu.	3,685	VI	-35.6	Defence	Defence
Dagshai.	2904	VI	5.6	Defence	Defence
Bakloh.	1805	VI	-0.3	Defence	Defence
Jutog.	2062	VI	-14.8	Defence	Defence
Santokhgarh	9363	V	16.5	Administrative	Administrative
Jogindergarh	5335	V	5.7	Administrative	Administrative
Ghumarwin	7899	V	38.1	Administrative	Administrative
Post-Independence					
Manali	8,096	V	29.2	Tourism	Tourism
Chauri Khas.	3,770	VI	25.0	Administrative	Administrative
Dera Gapipur.	4,816	VI	11.1	Administrative	Administrative
Jawalamukhi.	5,361	V	8.7	Religion	Religion
Nadaun.	4,430	VI	0.6	Administrative	Administrative
TiraSujanpur	7,943	V	12.2	Administrative	Trade

Gagret.	3,847	VI	20.9	Trade	Trade
Daulatpur	3,763	VI	12.2	Trade	Trade
MehtpurBadisehra	9,218	V	6.8	Trade	Trade
Bhuntar.	4,475	VI	5.0	Trade	Trade
Rohru.	6875	V	4.7	Administrative	Administrative
Parwanoo.	8,758	V	1.7	Industrial	Industrial
Sarkaghat.	4,715	VI	27.2	Administrative	Administrative
Rajgarh.	3,040	VI	20.3	Trade	Trade
Tallaii.	2,372	VI	17.9	Trade	Trade
Jubble.	1,640	VI	21.8	Administrative	Trade
Bhautta	1,453	VI	-1.3	Trade	Trade
Seoni.	2,591	VI	69.5	Trade	Trade
Rewalsar.	1,821	VI	33.0	Religion	Religion
Banjar.	1,414	VI	12.0	Administrative	Administrative
Kotkhai.	1190	VI	3.6	Trade	Administrative
Shamshi.	8,870	V	10.4	Tourist	tourist
Baddi.	29,911	III	32.3	Industrial	Industrial
Jhakhri	4,655	VI	--	Tourism	Tourism
Chaupal.	1851	VI	22.8	Administrative	Administrative
Narkanda.	901	VI	26.4	Tourism	Tourism

*Indora ,Shamshi and Jhakhari added new towns during 2011.

Post- Independence town

Till 1971, the number of towns remained almost same. Only two towns were added between 1941 and 1971 ¹. However, following 1971, as many 11 new towns emerged during 1971-81.

Another three towns were added up during 2001-2011. In all 26 out of 59 towns are post - Independence towns in the state. They make more than two- fifth or 44.06 percent of total towns in the state. A large majority of such towns were small towns. As a result, their combined population make only nearly one-fifth or 19.81 percent of the total urban population in the state.

Most of these towns emerged in the valleys of Beas, Satluj and Giri rivers, Chaupal, Narkanda and Jhakhari are the only exception to this. They are in fact hill top towns.

These towns are distributed in all the districts. However, 56.6 percent or more than one-half of such towns were concentrated only in four districts of Una, Hamirpur, Kullu and Mandi.

These towns recorded an increase of 33.75 percent in their population during 2001-2011. The increase was more related to emergence of three new towns during this decade. Most of these towns came up as (i) hydal project township such as pandoh; (ii) industrial township such as Mehtpur Badsehra and Parwanoo; (iii) rural service centers declared urban centers, such as Gagret, Daulatpur, Kotkhai, Tallai, Bhautta and Chaupal ; and (iv) tahesil and sub-tahesil headquarters such as Nadaun, Tira Sujampur and Bangar.

They differ widely in terms of population growth. It varied from a highest increase of 69.45 percent in Seoni (Shimla district) to a negative growth of -1.29 percent in Bhautta (Hamirpur district) during 2001-2011. The average size of post -Independence towns was the lowest of all. It was only 5248 persons against the state average of 11670 persons. The average size of British towns was more than four times of post- independence towns. Baddi is only class III town and other are small towns dominate this category of towns. “The urbanization scenario in surrounding regions, such as Baddi, Nalagarh, is a result of developing modern settlements in the space, resulting in random advancement nearby and hopeless foundation and demands for daily luxuries. (Singh Varinder, Singh Surrender, 2021). Manali, Jawalamukhi, Rohru, Shamshi, Tira Sujampur, Mehtpur Badsehra and Parwanoo are the towns falling in class V category of towns (5,000-9,999 persons). Rest of them fall in VI category (less than 5,000 persons).

The ratio between the population of highest and lowest towns is of 33:1. Baddi with 29,911 persons is the largest town of this group and Narkanda with 901 persons, the smallest town. The sixth-largest city in Himachal Pradesh, Baddi, is one of Himachal Pradesh's most industrialised areas. (Kumari Veena, Dr. Verma Paras, 2019).

Service and primary activity are the predominant functions. The services provided by these town were locally oriented. These may truly be called as ‘ruurban ‘ centers. Fifty four percent towns were classified as bifunctional 141.6 percent mono functional and remaining 8.3 percent as multi-functional towns.

V. Conclusions

The evolution of urban center, in Himachal Pradesh spreads over all the three periods of Indian history. No period is over / under represented. However, largest number of towns were evolved during post- independence period. The next place goes to towns evolved during ancient period.

Site differential was the marked feature in evolution of towns in the state. Majority of pre- British towns were sited in valleys. In contrast, British towns were sited on hill top. Effective administration, defence and water supply were the major considerations in former case, natural scenic beauty in latter case. Pre- British towns shared about 42.23 percent of the total urban

population against about one third share of total towns in the state. However, these towns were growing slowly as against the rapid growth registered by the British towns.

Post- independence towns, majority of which emerged in response to expansion in administrative services and to serve market needs of surrounding countryside, had the smallest average town against the largest average size recorded by the British towns.

In terms of population distribution, British towns had the highest variation in this regard. The reverse was the case of post-Independence towns. The ratio between the largest and the smallest town was of 1:82, 1:32 and 1:33 in case of British, pre-British and post - independence towns, respectively. Thus, British towns as a group differ widely in population size, while pre-British and post- independence towns differ with same ratio.

As expected, service is the most dominant function of all variety of urban centres in the state. This is mainly because of poor industrial base in the state. However, primary activities were quite prevalent in the case of post- independence towns, since a majority of rural centres got urban status from their rural service centre background.

In this way, the impact of evolution was more on site, size and growth of population of towns in the state. Functionally had little or no impact on period of evolution of towns in the state. This is due to peculiar topographical and location situation of Himachal Pradesh where topography, climate and locational factors put great impediments in the way of industrialization process. Balancing the needs of growth with social and environmental sustainability will perhaps be among the greatest challenges ahead for Himachal Pradesh.(The World Bank, 2015)

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