

CONNECTING HISTORY AND TOURISM: ROLE OF THE HISTORY OF CHAMBA IN TOURISM OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

The historical evidences in Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh, in forms of art, carving and sculptures, describes it as one of the ancient human settlements of the state. Present paper seeks to analyze historical genres of art and literature so that more facts could be brought to the surface and various historical links behind these immense creations could be searched of. The paper also focuses on the need of ways and mechanism to unravel the intact domains of these places so that it could be opened for research and tourism industry to attract worldwide scholars and tourists.

KEYWORDS: Folk Culture, Tourism Industry, Art And Architecture, Research, Tourism Destination.

The history of Chamba and tradition of Chamba go back to the earliest dawn of human civilization. Chamba has very old history of the migration of people from the Indian plains and from Central Asia which used to be the hub of settlement. It is believed that the hilly regions of Himachal, including Chamba were inhabited by certain Kolian tribes, which were later, subjugated by the Khasas. Later Khasas too came under the sway of Audumbaras. When Rajput dynasty came into power in North-West of India, Meru Verman, one of the Rajput kings, established his supremacy on the upper Ravi valley in the mid of 6th century A.D. with capital of Brahmpura.

Tourism can never be separated from history. Moreover, research in the domain of history particularly of culture, art and architecture and other native specialties make the tourism widened to be explored worldwide. The paper briefly outlines the significance of art,

architecture and sculpture of hill town Chamba and initiatives taken to explore the tourism in hill town. Archeology has mentioned records of the early proto-historic period that reflects the progression of life, living environment, life-styles of native people, their past with societal traditions and customs, historical evolution and changing trends of art and architecture and folk cultures and dances to allure not only the tourists but also researchers across the world. There are myriad of objects in the history of Chamba that have worldwide recognition viz. Chamba Rupal with its charismatic embroidery and the engineering and styles of temples particularly built before 10th A.D. and the emergence and flourishing of painting in the historical state Chamba which all are the chief motives of the paper to be highlighted. Commencing with the temples of Chamba, the history of the settlement of Chamba seems clearly visible in the styles and art of the temples.

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Maximum temples of Chamba have been built in the *sikhara* style, which explore the influence of Rajputas and Chandels. In the nineteenth century, during the hey days of the colonialism in India, the first church, Church of Scotland-a Presbyterian Church, know as St. Andrew's Church, was established by the first missionary in Chamba, the reverend William Ferguson, who served, there between 1863 and 1873. This historical process of missionary functioning is another source of tourism in the district.

K. P. Sharma in his book *Folk Dances of Chamba* describes the proto-historic settlement of Himalaya as "in the third millennium B.C. more powerful people from the North West entered the racial arena of the Himalaya, who left their impact on the history and culture of Himachal Pradesh"(154). It is the matter of further historical exploration that how the aboriginals before the emergence of Aryans lived in mountainous conditions. Moreover, how the amalgamation or enmity of aboriginals and Aryans influenced the life style of each other. This is also an intact domain for historian and world tourism

Chamba, rich with its cultural diversity, grand heritage and inimitable history, is a world famous culture tourism destination. The focal point of Chamba's attractiveness as a destination is its diverse ethnicity in the form of folk lore, painting, art and architecture. In Chamba there are many historical places, ancient temples, mosques, churches and gurudwaras are the example of its cultural tolerance and sharing. Diversity in this small district is visual in the folklore where the life is seen in images, paintings, sculpture, miniature, dances etc. the centuries old history of engineering and chemistry can be observed in the temple like Laxmi Narayan Temple (built in 10th century by king Sahil Verman), Lakshna Devi temple (Bharmour, constructed by Raja Maru Verman in 680 A.D.) and Shakti Devi temple (Chhatradi, constructed during 680 A.D.).

J. Ph. Vogel, an eminent ideologist, and expert on the history of Chamba state, proposed the Bhuri Singh Museum (founded in 1908 A.D. in the kingship of Raja Bhuri Singh) to preserve a number of valuable inscriptions, mostly in sarda script, which contained some rare information about the medieval history of Chamba, the prashastis of Sarahan, Devi-Ri-Kothi and Mul Kihar are still preserved in the museum, which attracts the historians and tourists from home and outside the world. Places like Akhand Chandi Palace (an exemplary of the fusion of Mughal and British architectural style, constructed between 1747 to 1765 by Raja Umed Singh), Laxmi Narayan Temple (built in 10th century by Raja Sahil Verman), Chmpavati Temple (constructed in Shikara style of architecture in 10th century by Raja Sahil Verman), Chourasi Temple complex (built in Shikhara style of architecture in approximately 7th century A.D.) etc. that has been the center of the archaeological department of India. In spite of these historical the folk culture of Chamba like traditional songs, traditional dances, fair and festival, customs, historical miniature and handicrafts of Chamba attract the tourists. This culture has a strong historical background which dates back to centuries. These places receive tourists in large numbers from all over the world because of their historical connection with rest of the world.

The heritage destinations in Chamba basically calls for a closer look as the following options are some of the greatest landmarks in the world of culture and ethnicity of the country of ancient glory and grandeur.

Heritage tourism enables the tourists to learn about and be surrounded by, local customs, traditions, history and culture. In a broader sense this includes travel to archeological and historical sites, parks, museums, and places of traditional or ethnic significance. This phenomenon is also known as cultural, historic, ethnic, archeological or cultural heritage tourism. Historical and cultural heritage, which contains unique spiritual

values, ways of thinking and imagination of the nation, embodies the vitality and creativity of the Indian nation, is not only a valuable non-renewable resources, but also the name of family wisdom and a treasure of mankind civilization. A country should have a great history if it to shine on the cultural front. Culture brings name and fame to the history of a land. It is history that has to accommodate culture and that uphold culture. "Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Our cultural and natural heritages are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration." UNCO-United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization as cited by (Web).

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Indian paintings began in the caves of Ajanta, and evolved into the Pala and Jain styles in due course. Mughal paintings influenced Rajput paintings, which developed under the patronage of the Rajput princes in the seventeenth century to the first quarter of the nineteenth century the Punjab hill states nurtured an art of paintings, marked by a lyrical style full of rhythm, grace and beauty. Pahari paintings, as it is called, are the culmination of the Indian tradition of paintings. Chamba lying to the immediate South of Jammu & Kashmir generally enjoyed long and continued periods of peace and stability. Its celebrated

brass images, close to life size in dimension and exhibiting high artistic excellence and art historians the world over. Chamba an erstwhile ancient principality of North -Western Himalayas had the rare fortune of escaping the attacks of the invaders in the past with the result that not even an iota of its rich cultural wealth has been lost. Raja Sahil Varman transferred the capital from Brahmpura to Chamba and named it, according to the oral traditions, after her beloved daughter Champavati.

The art and architecture of Chamba is influenced by Kashmiri art, because the rajas of Chamba had matrimonial relationships with Kashmiri Rajas, and they are also counterparts of each other. Great historian Karl Khandalavala state that, "Chamba is famed for its wooden carved temple and a characteristic type of wood sculpture seems to have existed in the seventeenth century in Chamba and probably also in other hill areas"(13). There is a great influence on wooden temples of Bharmour and Chourasi of Post-Gupta mannerism. The bronze idol of Ganesha, Narsimha, Mahishasuramardini of Bharmour and Shakti Devi of Chhatradi represent close relation with the sculpture of Kashmir. The wood sculpture style has been given the general nomenclature of the Basohli kalam and most of the work done by local *tarkhans*. They are belonged to the carpenter caste but they were also skilled in wood sculpture, architecture, silver and gold craftsmanship. This craftsmanship of metals came into existence as V.C. Ohri argues, "the preference for metal over stone for making images in the hills was probably due to the paucity of stone good enough for fine sculpture"(20).

The name 'chamba rumal' conjures up instantly a picture before us just like a pahari paintings done on cloth. A short account of the popularity of this artistic craft in Chamba in the beginning of the twentieth century perhaps was responsible for the connecting this art with Chamba and, the name Chamba rumal came into use. Dr. J. Ph.

Vogel was, perhaps, the first scholar who appreciated the aesthetic value of these embroidered pieces of cloth. It is also known that the artistic pieces of Chamba rumal were taken by the Raja of Chamba Bhuri Singh to Delhi darbar held in the years 1907 and 1911 AD respectively. This was most probably the first general appreciation of these embroidered cloth pieces and thus Chamba earned the name. The following collage of art and experience exposes the history of handicraft in Chamba(Web).

Chamba is one of those places where Basohli effect actually reached. An important festival held in Chamba is known as 'suhi jatra'. It is held annually in March-April for four days to commemorate the sacrifice made by the queen of Chamba with her life, to bring water to the town. Another popular festival held in Chamba is the minjar mela held on the second Sunday of the Shravana month. It marks the triumph of the Raja of Chamba over the ruler of Trigarta in 93 A.D., and also celebrates the paddy and maize crops grown at this time of the year. Folk dances and music performances known as kunjri malhar are part of the festivities. Chamba and surrounding district have many local customs in dancing, illustrating the differences in geographical, anthropological and social cultures and religious belief in the area. A solo dance or a dance of two people such as the khad-dumbi is commonly performed during the nuwala ceremony and other important occasions, such as marriages etc. Notable female dances include the ghurei, dangi, til-chouli etc.

CONCLUSION

The rich heritage of district Chamba requires to be through research and modern ways of media. The research has been taken place around

Chamba and Bharmour but geographically and culturally rich Pangi and Churah belts are still intact. Fewer steps have been taken by the state government to promote tourism in the district. The rich culture of the district abounds in history where folk songs, art and architectures, myths and folklore show distinctive experiences of human beings in the early, medieval and modern period. Government is required to be more sensitive for preserving and exploring this rich cultural heritage. History of the region should be brought into the domain of research. Tourism can neither flourish nor can be explored without understanding the history of the district by and large. Young generation is needed to be interactive with their own history and culture so that a frantic step could be taken to develop tourism from the native to international level.

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