

Chamba District in Himachal Pradesh - A Profile

Ms. Pallvi Pandit

Ph.D. Research Scholar,

Department of Education, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh

Paper Received on: 09/06/2012

Paper Reviewed on: 16/06/2012

Paper Accepted on: 21/06/2012

Abstract

Chamba is the northwestern district of Himachal Pradesh, in India and its headquarters is in Chamba Town. In this paper, the researcher covers the current, historical, geographical and demographical profiles of the district. According to the 2011 Indian census, Chamba has a population of 20,312 people. It is Located at an altitude of 996 meters above the mean sea level. The town is situated in the banks of Ravi River, at its confluence with the Sal River. Chambial were the rulers of Chamba State. Chamba is also well noted for its art and crafts, particularly its Pahari Paintings, which originated in the Hill Kingdoms of North India between the 17th and 19th Century.

Introduction

Chamba was the only princely state in Northern India which preserves a well-documented history from Circa 500 A.D. The high mountain ranges have given it a sheltered position and helped in preserving its centuries old relics and numerous inscriptions. The temples erected by Rajas of Chamba more than a thousand years age continue to be under worship and the land grant-deeds executed on copper plates by them continue to be valid under the law.

Early History

Regarding the early history of this region, it is believed that this area was firstly inhabited by certain Kolian tribes and later subjugated by the Khasas. The Khasas too after a time came under the sway of Audumbaras (2nd Century B.C.). The Audmabarar had republican form of government and worshiped Shiva as their principal deity. From the Gupta

Period (4th Century A.D.), the Chamba region was under the control of Thakurs and Ranas who considered themselves superior to the low tribes of Kolis and Khasas. The Rajput Dynasties came into power with the rise of Gurjara Pratihara (7th Century A.D.). A legendary hero named Meru Varman migrated to North-West from Kalpagrama (a mythical place from where majority of the Rajput dynasties claim their descent) and founded Brahmaputra (Bharmour) in the valley of the Budhal river (seventy five kilometer to the east of present Chamba town) in Circa 500 A.D. His successors continued to rule over the country from that capital city for over three hundred years until Sahil Varman shifted his capital from Brahmaputra to the more centrally located plateau (Chamba) in the lower Ravi valley. The town Chamba was founded by Raja Sahil Varman in the beginning of 10th Century when he conquered the lower Rani valley from the petty chiefs called Ranas and Thakurs. According to Kalhan's Rajtarangani the original name of the town was Champa. It is believed that the town Champa named from highly fragrant Champaka trees which were guarded by Goddess Champavati and popularly known as Chameshni. Chameshni/Champavati temple was built by Raja Sahil Varman in honour of his daughter Champavati and after that it became the family temple of the ruling family. Now, Champavati is worshipped as a goddess in Chamba. His rani voluntarily offered herself as a sacrifice to bring water for the town's people through a running channel which takes origin at a place called Bhalota. The layout of the plan of Chamba seems to be in conformity with the ancient texts. From then on the rajas of Chamba continued to rule from here in an uninterrupted and direct line of descent.

The Muslims never invaded Chamba, though; it had its occasional fights with the neighboring states in the hills having similar cultural background. Thus, the damage to Chamba from these invasions was seldom serious and never beyond the possibility of repair. Even the powerful Mughals were kept at bay on account of difficulties involved in communications and long distances. Akbar tried to extend a loose control over the hill states including Chamba and attached fertile tracts of these states to the imperial territory south of Dhauladhar. Aurangzeb once issued orders to the Raja of Chamba, Chatter Singh (1664-1694 A.D.) to pull down the beautiful temples of Chamba. But instead of this, the raja of Chamba in his clear defiance to the Mughal ruler placed gilded pinnacles on the temples. He was ordered to come down to Delhi to face the imperial wrath. But Aurangzeb himself had to leave for the Deccan from where he could not disentangle till the end of his life. In a story of Chamba tells that the Raja Prithvi Singh (a gallant Knight) was favorite of Shahjahan (1641-1664 A.D.) and Shahjahan visited the imperial court with him many times. He only introduced the Mughal style of court life including Mughal-Rajput art and architecture in

Chamba. On the whole, the Northern India experienced comparatively the peaceful situations and conditions during the Mughal regime (<http://www.hpchamba.nic.in/history.htm> on 30/04/2010).

Modern History

By the late 18th century the Sikhs under Maharaja Ranjit Singh controlled the hilly region, placed a garrison at Chamba and forced the hill states to pay tribute to them. Ranjit Singh deposed the hill princes even from the most powerful Kangra ruler Raja Sansar Chand Katoch but spared Chamba because the Wazir Nathu of Chamba who was an important ambassador in negotiations with Katoch in 1809 and saved his life in 1817 by succumbing his horse to King Ranjit Singh during a winter campaign in Kashmir. After Ranjit Singh's death, Chamba became unprotected and was drawn into the vortex of the disintegration of the Sikh Kingdom.

In 1845 A.D., the Sikh army invaded the British territory and the troops of Sikh army which were stationed in Chamba were withdrawn. When Sikh's were defeated, it was decided to merge Chamba in Jammu and Kashmir but on account of the timely intervention of Wazir Bagha of Chamba, it was taken under the British control and subjected to the annual tribute of 12,000 rupees. The Treaty of Lahore was signed in 1846 in which the Rajas agreed to cede the territory of Chamba district. The Rajas who saw something of British hegemony were Sri Singh, Gopal Singh, Sham Singh, Bhuri Singh, Ram Singh and Laxman Singh. Their relations with the British political officers seem to be cordial and Chamba witnessed many reforms.

Many progressive reforms and developments were made in Chamba under the British Government. In 1863, the first post-office for a daily mail service and a primary school were established in Chamba. A hospital was opened in December, 1866 by Dr. Elmslie of the Kashmir Medical Mission, Kashmir. In the late sixties, the two new roads to Dalhousie via Kolri and Khajiar were made. Raja Gopal Singh who ruled from 1870 to 1873 (after abdicating) builds the Grand Jandarighat Palace as his summer residence. Subsequent to India becoming an independent nation in August, 1947, the princely state of Chamba finally merged with India on April 15, 1948 along with the other princedoms of Mandi-Suket, Sirmour and all of those in the Shimla hills.

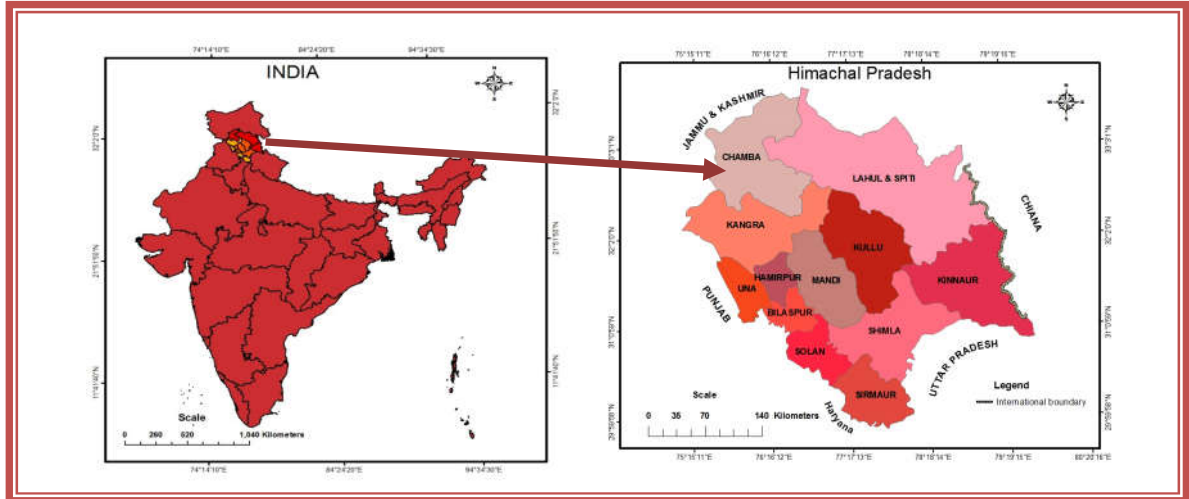
Before Raja Sahil Varman, the Chamba region was divided into bits and pieces of territory called Rahnu occupied by numerous Ranas and petty Chieftains who carried on relentless warfare with each other. Raja Sahil Varman subjugated the Ranas and unified the

territory. Therefore, for a better administration Chamba was divided into five zones known as ‘mandlas’ and these ‘mandlas’ were later on renamed as ‘wizarats’. This fivefold division of Chamba region is existing and continuing till today. The wizarats are now called tehsils. These were Bharmour, Chamba, Bhattiyat, Churah and Pangl and presently they are seven in numbers (<http://www.hpchamba.nic.in/history.htm> retrieved on 12/05/2012).

Geographical Profile of Chamba District

Chamba is the North-Western district of Himachal Pradesh in India and it does headquarter in Chamba town. Geographically, the town Chamba is placed on the bank of Ravi River between two mountain ranges, the Dhauladhar range and Zanskar range. The main natural divisions of Chamba district are the Ravi valley (which includes the Chamba valley including Brahmaur, the Chaurah area and the part of Bhattiyat tehsil) and the Chenab valley (which comprises Pangl, inclusive of Chamba, Lahaul and the Beas region which takes in the rest of Bhattiyat). The important towns located in this valley are Chamba, Bharmour, Dalhousie and Khajjiar. The district is epitome of natural habitat dubbed as mini Switzerland of India has most challenging terrains and climates and the story of officials being paid death allowance on their appointment in certain regions like: Pangl, highlights the same. Adjoining to the Chamba valley is the Pangl valley, extending along the Chenab River as it cuts through the Pir Panjal and off shoots of the main Himalayan ranges. This is one of the remotest and most beautiful tracts of the Western Himalayas. The district is bordered by Jammu and Kashmir to the North-West and West, the Ladakh area of Jammu and Kashmir and Lahaul and Bara Banghal to the North-East and East, Kangra to the South-East and Gurdaspur district of Punjab to the South. Figure-1 is showing the geographical information of the Chamba district in Himachal Pradesh with its North Latitude 32°10' and 33°13' and East Longitude 75°45' and 77°33'.

Figure 1: Himachal Pradesh District Map in India and Study Area: Chamba District



Source 1: The maps for the image of India, Himachal Pradesh and Chamba districts are retrieved from <http://www.google.co.in/#sclient=psy-ab&q=loc>.

Source 2: The maps for image of Indian States, Himachal Pradesh and Chamba District are retrieved from <http://www.google.co.in/#sclient=psy-ab&q=loc> on 20/11/2011.

Lying mostly astride the main Himalayas and touching on the fringes at one corner of a bit of the Shivalik, the plains commerce on the other side of the border and the territory is wholly mountainous with altitudes varying from about 2,000 feet (610 meters) to about 21,000 feet (6,400 meters) above the mean sea-level. It has an average elevation of 3,301 feet (1,006 meters). The greatest length from South-West to North-East is about seventy miles; and the greatest breadth from South-East to North-West about fifty miles. The total area of the district is 6528 sq. km.

The scenery is of picturesque and varied character presenting many delightful sights. The land is covered with vastly fragrant Champaka trees. In the lower parts, the trees grown are wild olive, pomegranate and fig trees mingling with the acacia, shisham, pipal and some other trees. On the mountain slopes, the fields are usually small in size and are arranged in terraces, the lower boarder of each being formed by a rough wall to make the ground more level for ploughing. In most part of the Chamba valley only two crops are reaped per year. There are rice fields in the lower level with maize, wheat, barley and other cereals high up. Northern mountain slopes are covered with forests, while Southern are often quite bare. The Chamba valley is famous for medicinal herbs and varieties of flowers.

The Chamba is placed on the higher hilly parts of Himalayas. The climate of Chamba in general is temperate with well defined seasons. However, there may be variations because of micro-climatic systems depending upon altitude and mountain aspect. The winters last

from December to February and usually three main seasons are rotted throughout the year. Winter season lasts from October to mid of April and a cool and dry weather and snowfall happen at higher altitudes during these months. Summer season lasts from mid of April to last week of June or first week of July when monsoon season breaks-in. Monsoon season continues till the mid of September. During the monsoon season, the weather becomes misty and cloudy. The maximum temperature in Chamba district is 38°C and the minimum is 0°C. In the winter from November to March usually the areas with higher altitudes are covered by snow and considered as the best tourist season to trek on mountain hills round the year. Tourists like to undertake winter trekking from November to March when the higher reaches of the district are snow clad and access to most of the villages is on foot.

Demographical Profile of Chamba District

In the demographic profile of Chamba district, the total population, according to 2001 census, in the district was 4, 60, 499 persons and according to the 2011 census, it has a population of 5,18,844 persons. The percentage share of Chamba district in Himachal Pradesh was 7.58% (2001 census) and 7.57% (2011 census). The percentage decadal rate of growth is 11.92 % and change in percentage share over the decade (2001-11) is -0.01%. Table-1 shows the status of censuses 2001 and 2011 by growth in population, percentage share, percentage decadal rate of growth and change in percentage share over the decade as here in:

Table 1: Status of Censuses 2001 and 2011

Census	Total Population	Percentage Share of Chamba District	Percentage Decadal Rate of Growth for the Censuses 2001-2011)	Change in Percentage Share over the Decade 2001-2011
2001	4,60, 449	7.58	11.92	- 0.01
2011	5, 18, 844	7.57		

Source: Chamba District Population Census 2011, Himachal Pradesh is retrieved from <http://www.census2011> on 23/05/2012.

The Chamba district had 4th rank and sex-ratio was of 959 females for every 1,000 males (2001 census) and now, it has 6th rank and sex-ratio is of 989 females for every 1,000 males (2011 census) as compared to the other districts in Himachal Pradesh. The district-wise ranking for the sex-ratio in Himachal Pradesh is shown in Table-2.

Table 2: Ranking of District by Sex-Ratio for the Censuses 2001 and 2011

District	Rank in 2001 Census	Sex-Ratio (Number of Females Per 1,000 Males)		Rank in 2011 Census
		2001	2011	
Hamirpur	1	1,099	1,096	1
Kangra	2	1,025	1,013	2
Mandi	3	1,013	1,012	3
Chamba	4	959	989	6
Bilaspur	5	990	981	5
Una	6	997	977	4
Kullu	7	927	950	7
Lahaul & Spiti	8	802	916	12
Shimla	9	896	916	9
Sirmour	10	901	915	8
Solan	11	852	884	11
Kinnaur	12	857	818	10

Source: Provisional Population Totals of Himachal Pradesh (2012).

According to 2001 literacy census, the district had literacy rate of 62.91% and at present, it is 73.19%. It is 11th highest district in the state by literacy rate. The district is belonging to Hindi belt Area and people speak also Bhattiyalli, Dogri- Kangri, Pahari etc. (Chamba District Map-Maps of India (<http://www.mapsofindia.com> on 12-04-2012). Table-3 shows the percentage of the literacy rate in the district as here in:

Table 3: The Percentage of Literacy Rate in Chamba District for the Censuses 2001 and 2011

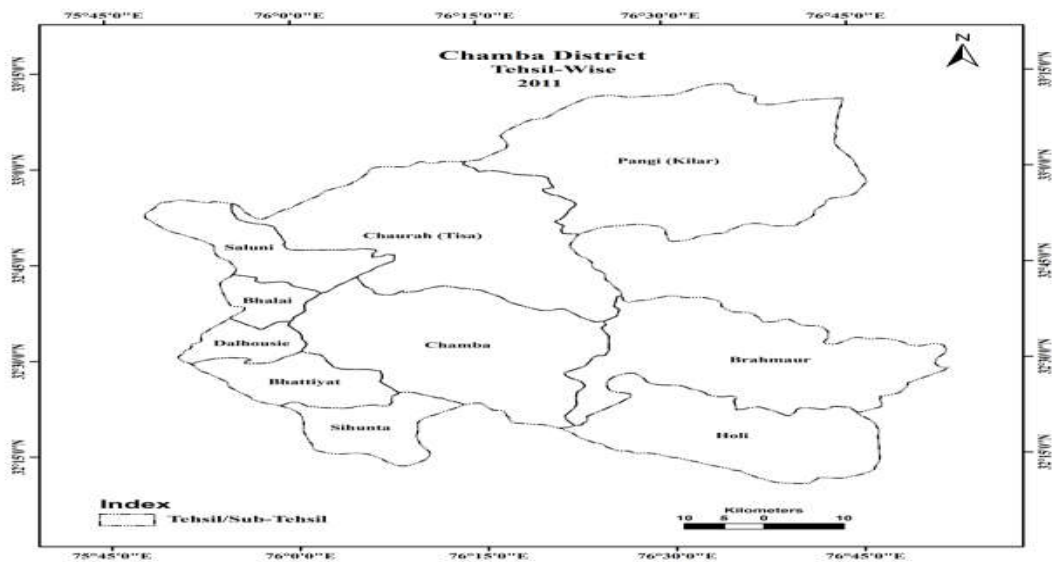
Chamba District		Persons (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Gender Gap (%)
Literacy Percentage	Census 2001	62.91	76.41	48.85	27.56
	Census 2011	73.19	84.19	62.14	22.05

Source: The figures for the district-wise population in Himachal Pradesh are retrieved from <http://www.hillpost.in/2011/04/district-wise-population-and-in> on 13/05/2012.

Conclusion

Chamba district is divided into 6 sub-divisions (Chamba, Tissa, Pangi, Brahmaur, Dalhousie and Chowari), 7 tehsils (Chamba, Chaurah, Pangi, Brahmaur, Bhattiyat, Saluni and Dalhousie), 3 sub-tehsils (Holi, Sihunta and Bhalai), 7 developmental blocks (Chamba, Mehla, Chaurah, Bhattiyat, Brahmaur, Pangi and Saluni), 270 Gram Panchayats (GPs) and 1591 villages. Pangi tehsil is the smallest tehsil by population with 1,59,399 people according to 2011 census. The five wizarats/tehsils of Erstwhile Chamba state namely Chamba, Bhattiyat, Chaurah, Pangi and Brahmaur are now form the sub-divisions of Chamba district (<http://www.hpchamba.nic.in/administration.htm> on 12/04/2012). The tehsil map of Chamba district includes its sub division and blocks is shown in Figure-2 as:

Figure 2: Chamba Tehsil Map



Source: The figure for Chamba Tehsil is retrieved from <http://www.mapsofindia.com> on 12/04/2012.

References

- Bhuraita, O. P. (2009, December). A report on alternative approaches and strategies for basic literacy. National Literacy Mission (Research Report No. 06.3, pp. 1-89). Shimla: State Resource Centre.
- Bhuraita, O. P., Aggarwal, M. L., & Bakshi, N. (2010, June 30). Preparation of Agenda Items for Saakshar Bharat Mission-2012 in Chamba District of Himachal Pradesh. In M. K. Sharma (Chair), Agenda Items: Report of activities of SRC, Shimla since 30th March, 2010. Discussion in the meeting of Governing Council of Rajya Gyan Vigyan Kendra (State Resource Centre), Shimla.
- Bhuraita, O. P., Pundeer, S., Sharma, B., & Sharma G. (2012, March 30). International and national priorities with special focus on Saakshar Bharat Mission-2012. In M. K. Sharma (Chair), Agenda Items: Implementaqtion of SBM-2012 in Chamba district and requirements of the personnel with geographicalcoverage areas. Discussion in the meeting of Governing Council of Rajya Gyan Vigyan Kendra (State Resource Centre), Shimla.
- Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. (2009, August, 15). A report on Saakshar Bharat Mission-2012, a centrally sponsored scheme. Retrieved from <http://saaksharbharaat.nic.in/saaksharbharaat/homepage> on dated 08-09-2009.
- Director Census Operations, Himachal Pradesh. (2012,). Population growth of districts and their rank during 1991-2001 in Himachal Pradesh. Retrieved from <http://www.himachal.nic.in/tour/census.htm> on dated 23/05/ 2012.
- Director of Census Operations, Himachal Pradesh. (2011). Census of India: Provisional Population Totals of Himachal Pradesh. Shimla: Directorate of Census Operations, Himachal Pradesh.
- Government of Himachal Pradesh. (2011). Chamba district population census 2011, Himachal Pradesh. Retrieved from <http://www.census2011> on dated 23/05/2012.

NIC Chamba. (2010). Chamba: History. Retrieved from the official website of district Chamba, Himachal Pradesh, India <http://www.hpchamba.nic.in/history.htm> on dated 30-04-2010 & 12/05/2012.

Sharma, D. D. (2012). Chamba district map. Retrieved from <http://www.mapsofindia.com> on dated 12/04/2012.

Sharma, D. K. (2011, April). District-wise population and literacy in Himachal. Population and literacy: District-wise scenario in Himachal Pradesh and early policy diagnosis for Twelfth Five Year Plan. Retrieved from <http://www.hillpost.in/2011n/04/district-wise-population.....literacy-in-himachal/27291/> on dated 13-04-2012 & 13/05/2012.

..... (2011). Demographic profile of Chamba district. Retrieved from <http://www.hpchamba.nic.in/administration.htm> on dated 12-04-2012.

..... (2011). Himachal Pradesh-Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved from http://www.en.wikipedia.org/Himachal_pradesh on dated 27-04-2011.

..... (2011). Himachal Pradesh-Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved from http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/chamba_himachal on dated 18-09-2011.

..... (2012). Himachal Pradesh district map and the location of Himalayan States in India: The image of Himachal Pradesh districts. Retrieved from <http://www.google.co.in/#sclient=psy-ab&q=loc> on dated 17-03-2012.

..... (2012). Himachal Pradesh district map in India: Chamba District: The image of Indian states, Himachal Pradesh and Chamba district. Retrieved from <http://www.google.co.in/#sclient=psy-ab&q=loc> on dated 13-04-2012 and <http://www.google.co.in/#sclient=psy-ab&q=loc> on dated 20/11/2011.

..... (2012). Himachal Pradesh district map and the location of Himalayan States in India: The image of the location of Himalayan States. Retrieved from <http://www.google.co.in/#sclient=psy-ab&q=loc> on dated 17-03-2012.