



---

## **DISTRIBUTION OF URBAN CENTERS BY SITE IN HIMACHAL PRADESH**

**Dr. Vijay Wanti**

Associate Professor Department of Geography

D.A.V. Centenary College Faridabad, Haryana, INDIA

Email id – [vijaywantiresearch@gmail.com](mailto:vijaywantiresearch@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

*With the coming of British power and European traders, the urbanization process started increasing. Urban centers came up with social and economic transformation and shifted to different locations of India. The hill state covers the part of mountainous area of Indian Himalaya and has diverse climate. The location of urban centers changes with different altitude. These geographical factors favour certain sites for location and growth of town. Therefore, location sites of settlement differ from one period of history to other. Change in technology also played significant role in selection of sites for location of settlements in human history. On the basis of site location urban centers in Himachal Pradesh have been divided into four categories: Valley towns, Hilltop towns, Spur towns and Gap towns. The different demographic and economic characteristics of towns are discussed in accordance to site/location. The present study aims to analyze the role of site/location in determining the size, growth and function of towns in hill state of Himachal Pradesh. Examination of urban centers in Himachal Pradesh reveals that some of towns have come up on different sites with different size and with distinctive characteristics.*

**Keywords:** *Urban Centers, Himachal Pradesh, Towns, Sites*



---

## **Introduction:**

“Himachal Pradesh is an enthralling part of the Indian Himalayas and frequently denoted to as the magical cabinet of nature’s majesties. The state is small hill state, with altitude varying from 300 m in Kangra and Una to nearly 7,000 m in Central Himalayan range of Lahaul and Spiti. Being a mountainous state, Himachal Pradesh has a diverse climate that changes with altitude”. (Sharma Ridhima, Tanwar Sakshi, Rizvi Safder, 2018). It covers an area of 55,673 kms and lies in western Himalaya.

Administrative geography of Himachal Pradesh has been saga of several territorial surgeries and shuffling. This hill has colonial past and since its formation on April 15<sup>th</sup>,1948 it has undergone a number of administrative readjustment and alterations. (Chand Jagdish, 2013) On November 1, 1966 when Panjab was reorganized on lingual basis, its Hindi speaking hill areas were merged with Himachal Pradesh. On January 25,1971 Himachal Pradesh was conferred the status of a full statehood. This step provided the necessary autonomy in managing the administrative and development affairs.

The uneven topography and peripheral location of the state poses poor industrial base and other economic development process. There is thus little scope for rapid growth of urban centers. Relatively fast growth of administrative centers is in line with the expansion of territory/ service sector.

The state is yet to see the emergence of big industrial concentration. However, in recent years some efforts done by the government in this direction are paying some dividends. In lower parts of the state, industrial centres at Parwanoo, Baddi -Barotiwala, Mehtpur, Barog, Paonta valley, Kala amba are coming up under the government policy of wooing the industries.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. To study the core historical development in the distribution of towns and economic characteristics in accordance with site/location.
2. To analyze the role of site/location in determining the size and growth of towns in hillstate of Himachal Pradesh.



---

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

The research is based on secondary data exploration in the first step background of the study. 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 are district census handbook economic census district planning report revenue report an investor policies. To comprehend the research work, statistical methods have been used to calculate average size and growth rate at state level and according to site/location

## **Research Discussion:**

In a hill state like Himachal Pradesh, geographical factors favor certain sites for location and growth of the towns. Change in technology also played significant role in selection of sites for location of settlements in human history. Therefore, location sites of settlements differ from one period of history to other. Based on site/location urban centers in Himachal Pradesh have been divided into four categories:

- i) Valley towns
- ii) Hill top towns
- iii) Spur towns
- iv) Gap towns

Different demographic and economic characteristics of towns are discussed in accordance with site/location. What is the role of site/location in determining the size, growth, and function of towns in a hill state? Is precisely the question addressed to here in the following.

## **Valley towns**

In Himachal Pradesh, 41 out of total 59 towns are sited on the riverbank in the valleys. In combine, these make about three-fourth or 69.59 percent of total towns in the state. These accommodated lower proportion of population than their proportional share in total towns in the state. Against three -fourth of their share in total towns in the state only about one half (53.30 percent) of the total urban population reside in these towns. Evidently, valley towns in general were small.



As regards the population growth, these recorded 29.49 percent increase in their population during 2001-11. Against this growth for the state was 12.90 percent.

Valley towns are mainly located in Kangra valley or along the Beas and Satluj river or in central and southeastern parts bordering Panjab. More than one half of valley towns were in four districts of Kangra (7), Una (5), Mandi (5) and Hamirpur (4) (Table-1).

Fertile river valley had been the most favored settlement sites in ancient and medieval times for freshwater availability, natural transport, agriculturally fertile valley soils and effective administration. In post-Independence period also valleys were preferred as settlement sites. Therefore, valley towns in the state originated either in pre-British or post-British period.

The average population size of valley towns was 8952 persons which was lower than the state average (11669 persons). This implies the predominance of small size towns among the valley towns. Only 4 out of 41 towns were class III towns. Rest were class IV or V or VI towns. No town was qualified for I or II class category of towns.

Majority of such towns emerged from rural service centers. They acquired town status at 1971 census onwards. The rural service centers acquired administrative and central function with time.

Baddi with 29911 persons is the largest among all the valley towns and sixth largest town in the state. Baddi one of the most industrialized pockets of Himachal Pradesh made its entry as sixth largest town of Himachal Pradesh. (Sharma Ridima, Tanwar and Rizvi, 2018). On the other side, Kotkhai with 1,190 persons is smallest of valley towns. The ratio between the largest and smallest town is of 25:1.



**Table-1 Himachal Pradesh: District wise Distribution of Towns by Site / Location, 2011**

State/ District	Number of Towns by Site / Location				
	Valley	Hill top	Spur	Gap	
Himachal Pradesh	41		12	2	4
	2		3	-	-
Chamba	7	-		2	-
Kangra	4		-	-	-
Hamirpur	5		-	-	-
Una	3		1	-	-
Bilaspur	5		-	-	-
Kullu	5		-	-	-
Mandi	-		-	-	-
Lahul & Spiti*	5		4	-	2
Shimla	3		3	-	2
Solan	2		1	-	-
Sirmaur	-		-	-	-
Kinnaur*					

\*No urban center



---

Administrative activities along with trade and commerce are the important functions of such towns. A few of them have come up as industrial/ tourist/ religious/ trade and commerce centers. Such towns include Nagrota, Gagret, Mehtpur as trade centers; Jawalamukhi and Poanta Sahib, Rewalsar as religious; Manali as tourist; Parwanoo ,Shamshi and Baddi as Industrial; and Bhuntar as transport towns. The following points emerged strongly:

i) Maximum number of towns in Himachal Pradesh are in the valleys. And these were evolved either during pre-British or post-Independence period. In pre-British period the valley sites were selected because of natural security and water availability but in post-Independence rural nuclei were raised to town status with the economic development and acceleration of urban activity.

ii) One -half of urban population of the state is shared by the valley towns. The town average size is smaller than the state average. The variation In size between largest and smallest town is of 25:1. No towns of this group qualifies for I or II class category of towns.

iii). The increase in urban population is lower than the state average. Valley towns widely differ in population increase during 2001-2011.

Iv) Administrative activity along with trade and commerce are important functions which they impart to their surroundings. Nearly 60 percent of such towns are administrative headquarters of different status.

### **Hill top towns**

Twelve out of 59 towns were positioned on hill tops. These make 20.33 percent or one -fifth of the total number of towns in the state. They possess 33.02 percent of total urban population in the state. Locationally, with exception of Dalhausie and Bakloh ( Chamba district ) and Naina devi ( Bilaspur district ), the rest fall in three districts of Shimla, Solan and Sirmaur along the Shimla – Chandigarh national highway. No hill top town is located outside these five districts. These generally came in during the British period. The British rulers preferred such sites for climatic, aesthetic and strategic reasons. However, Nahan and Nainadevi are exception to this. They are pre- British period towns. The number of hill top towns have remained the same during 2001-2011 census.



---

Shimla, the largest urban center in the state, is categorized as Urban Agglomeration (UA). Dalhausie also enjoys the same status. There are wide differentials in population size of hill top towns. Shimla UA which had a population of 169,578 persons in 2011 is one hundred and eightyeight times larger than the smallest town (Narkanda, 901 persons). Coincidentally, these two towns have the distinction of being the highest and lowest population size urban centers in the state. The value of coefficient of variability is 223.91 percent.

Hill top towns recorded 14.21 percent increase in their population during 2001-2011. This increase was higher than the average for valley town but slightly lower than the state average. The contribution of Shimla (UA), enjoying the status of state headquarters, is quite significant in this context. Dalhausie (UA), Chaupal ,Nahan and Narkanda towns also registered increase. Chaupal acquired the status of town at 1991 census. Another advantage which the hill top towns have is their location on main transport routes. The accessibility factor along with their attractive natural beauty inviting the tourists has been responsible for their expansion and further growth. Nevertheless, some cantonment towns which lost their importance with changed situation recorded decline in their population. Sabathu CB in Solan district is one of the same examples.

In terms of size, hill top towns surpass both at state and valley towns in average size. The average size of a hill top town was 18947 persons. Against this the average for the state and the valley towns were 11669 persons and 8952 persons, respectively. This indicates the predominance of large size of towns in category of hill top towns. Shimla, the only class I town in the state is a hill top town. It shares more than one -fourth or 24.62 percent population of all towns in the state and 74.58 percent of hill top towns. Nahan, another hill top town, finds place in class III group of towns. Rest of the hill top towns are class IV, V and VI towns, sharing only 12.70 percent of population of the state. Thus, three- fourth of total population of hill top towns was residing in two towns of Shimla and Nahan.

In this way, Intra- group variation in population size is glaring in the case of hill top towns. A number of towns in this group are either declining such as Sabathu and Jutog are increasing slowly such as Narkanda, Nainadevi, Dagshai, Nahan and Dalhausie. Notably, all hill top towns are classified as monofunctional towns. Narkanda being bifunctional towns are exception to this. Service is the predominant function of all the hill toptowns.





---

The following points emerge strongly out of the above discussion:

- i) The hill top towns were mainly evolved during the British period. Hill top site was preferred for climatic, aesthetic and strategic reasons by the British rulers. 'Because the hill stations approximated the cold climates of Europe, they became an attractive destination for the new rulers. It became a practice for viceroys to move to hill stations during the summer months. In 1864 Viceroy John Lawrence officially moved his council to Shimla, settling seal to the practice of shifting capital during the hot season. Shimla also became the official residence of the commander-in- chief of the Indian army' (NCERT)
- ii) These towns share 33.02 percent of urban population of the state. The town size is higher than the state average. And the variation in the size of the largest and the smallest towns is glaring. It carries a ratio of 188:1.
- iii) Hill towns as a group are fastest growing towns in the state. However, wide variations in growth of population have been observed within the hill top towns.
- iv) Except and Narkanda, rest of towns are classified as monofunctional towns with service as their dominant function.
- v) Locationally, majority of such towns were sited along the Shimla- Chandigarh national Highway.

### **Spur towns**

Dharamshala and Yol (Kangra district) are the only towns which are sited on spur. Both the towns were evolved during British period for defence purpose. In 2011, the population of Dharamshala and Yol was recorded 30764 and 12028 persons, respectively. Population of these towns account for 5.02 percent of urban population of state against their share of 3.38 percent in total number of towns. Dharamshala towns originated as defence town but gradually acquired administrative function. It is functioning as district headquarters for Kangra district. Yol, however, continued to be the defence center. The population of spur towns increased by 43.12 percent during 2001-11 which is the highest of all categories of towns. Average size of town was 21,396 persons which was the highest of all size categories. The ratio between the highest and lowest town size is of 3:1. Functionally, they differ widely. Dharamshala is monofunctional dominated by service activity. Against this Yol is bifunctional town, having service and primary activity as dominant activities.





---

### Briefly:

There are only two spur towns in the state. Both have their origin in British period, evolved or defence purposes. Yol continues to deliver the same function even today but Dharamshala has gradually changed to administrative function and given smart city status. It functions as district headquarters to Kangra district and sub- regional center for so called ‘new’ Himachal Pradesh. Yol is a declining town while Dharamshala is a dynamic town.

Functionally Dharamshala is monofunctional with service as dominant function. On the other hand, Yol is a bifunctional town with service and primary activity as dominant functions.

**Table-2Himachal Pradesh: Grouping of Towns by Site/Location, 2011**

Name of town	Population	Class size of town	Dominant Function		Period of evolution
			Original	present	
Valley towns					
Sundernagar.	24,344	III	Administ rative	Administrative	Pre- British
Mandi	26,422	III	Administ rative	Administrative	Pre- British
Chamba	19,933	IV	Administ rative	Administrative	Pre- British
Kullu.	18,536	IV	Administ rative	Administrative	Pre- British
Bilaspur.	13,654	IV	Administ rative	Administrative	Pre- British
Una	18,722	IV	Administ rative	Administrative	Pre- British
Kangra	9,528	V	Administ rative	Administrative	Pre- British
Nurpur.	9,807	V	Administ rative	Administrative	Pre- British
Santokhgarh	9,363	V	Administ rative	Administrative	British
Jogindernagar .	5,335	V	Administ rative	Administrative	British
Poanta Sahib.	25,183	III	Religion	Administrative	Pre- British
Nalagarh.	10,708	IV	Administ rative	Administrative	Pre- British
Hamirpur	17,604	IV	Administ rative	Administrative	Pre- British
Nagrota.	5,900	V	Trade	Trade	Pre- British
Rampur.	5,655	V	Administ rative	Administrative	Pre- British
Palampur	3,543	VI	Administ rative	Administrative	Pre- British
Ghumarwin	7,899	V	Administ rative	Administrative	British



Manali	8,096	V	Tourism	Tourism	Post-Independence
Chauri Khas.	3,770	VI	Administrative	Administrative	Post-Independence
Dera Gapingpur.	4,816	VI	Administrative	Administrative	Post-Independence
Jawalamukhi.	5,361	V	Religion	Religion	Post-Independence
Nadaun.	4,430	VI	Administrative	Administrative	Post-Independence
Tira Sujampur	7,943	V	Administrative	Trade	Post-Independence
Gagret.	3,847	VI	Trade	Trade	Post-Independence
Daulatpur	3,763	VI	Trade	Trade	Post-Independence
MehtpurBadis ehra	9,218	V	Trade	Trade	Post-Independence
Bhuntar.	4,475	VI	Trade	Trade	Post-Independence
Rohru.	6875	V	Administrative	Administrative	Post-Independence
Parwanoo.	8,758	V	Industrial	Industrial	Post-Independence
Sarkaghat.	4,715	VI	Administrative	Administrative	Post-Independence
Rajgarh.	3,040	VI	Trade	Trade	Post-Independence
Tallaii.	2,372	VI	Trade	Trade	Post-Independence
Jubble.	1,640	VI	Administrative	Trade	Post-Independence
Bhautta	1,453	VI	Trade	Trade	Post-Independence
Seoni.	2,591	VI	Trade	Trade	Post-Independence
Rewalsar.	1,821	VI	Religion	Religion	Post-Independence
Banjar.	1,414	VI	Administrative	Administrative	Post-Independence
Kotkhai.	1190	VI	Trade	Administrative	Post-Independence
Shamshi.	8,870	V	Tourist	tourism	Post- Independence
Indora.	4,534	VI	Administrative	Administrative	Pre- British
Baddi.	29,911	III	Industrial	Industrial	Post- Independence
<b>Spur town</b>					
Dharamshala.	30,764	III	Defence	Administrative	British
Yol.	12028	V	Defence	Defence	British
<b>Hill top</b>					
Shimla	169,578	I	Administrative	Administrative	British
Nahan.	28,899	III	Administrative	Administrative	Pre-British
Dalhausie MC.	7051	V	Tourism	Tourism	British
Daslhausie CB	3549	VI	Defence	Defence	British
Kasauli.	3885	VI	Defence	Defence	British



Sabathu.	3,685	VI	Defence	Defence	British
Dagshai.	2904	VI	Defence	Defence	British
Bakloh.	1805	VI	Defence	Defence	British
Jutog.	2062	VI	Defence	Defence	British
Nainadevi.	1204	VI	Religion	Religion	Pre-British
Chaupal.	1851	VI	Administ rative	Administrative	Post-Independence
Narkanda.	901	VI	Tourism	Tourism	Post-Independence
<b>Gap town</b>					
Solan	39,256	III	Administ rative	Administrative	Pre-British
Theog.	4353	VI	Trade	Trade	Pre-British
Arki.	3040	VI	Administ rative	Administrative	pre-British
Jhakhri	4,655	VI	Tourism	Tourism	Post-Independence

### Gap towns:

Remaining four towns, namely Solan, Theog, Jhakhari and Arki are gap towns, sharing 8.5 percent of total number of towns of state and 7.5 percent of total urban population. All the gap towns were evolved during pre- British period. Solan and Arki are administrative headquarters while Theog, trade centers and Jhakhari tourist center. Solan and Arki fall in Solan district while Theog and Jhakhari in Shimla district. (Table-2)

The average size of urban centers is 12826 persons which is slightly higher than the state average (11669 persons). However, it is also higher than the average size of a valley town (8952 persons). Solan is a class III town and rest are class VI towns. Solan alone shares 5.7 percent of urban population of the state and 76.5 percent of urban population of gap towns. 'It is the largest Municipal council of Himachal Pradesh, but now it is upgraded to Municipal Corporation which will be second in the state, after the capital, Shimla MC. The town is located on the Kalka Shimla National Highway, NH 21, at a distance of about 50 kilometres from Kalka and 48 kilometres from Shimla. It is well connected and conveniently linked to Nalagarh, Bilaspur, Shimla, Rajgarh ,Nahan and Chandigarh. Solan is a base for nearby tourist destinations including chail, Dagshini, Sabathu , kandaghat Churdhar peak'. (Mehta Ritu Dr., Nadda Mallika Dr., 2016) Remaining three towns share only 24.5 percent of total urban population of gap towns.

Service is the dominant function of gap towns. Arki and Jhakhari are classified as nonfunctional; Theog bifunctional; and Solan is the multifunctional towns.



---

## **Conclusion:**

The following conclusions emerge quite strongly out of the discussions in the chapter:

- i) Valley followed by the hill top is the most favoured site for location of towns in Himachal Pradesh. Valley towns are ubiquitous in their distribution while hill towns are mainly confined to three districts of Shimla, Solan and Chamba. Majority of them were sited along Chandigarh- Shimla national highway.
- ii) Valley towns find their origin in pre- British or post- Independence period. Against this hill towns were mainly evolved during the British period. Spur towns also owe their origin to British period. In this way, urbanization in the state has a dual character 'alien' and 'indigenous'.
- iii) In size also there were wide differentials among towns of various site groups. Average size of spur town is nearly twice of the average size of valley towns. Again, it was nearly double of average for gap town. Average size of valley was lower than state average and higher of gap towns while reverse was true for spur and hill towns.
- iv) In population growth too, there were wide variations. It varied from a highest (43.12 percent) average increase in case of spur towns and 27.50 percent and 14.21 percent increase in case of Gap towns and Hill top town to a lowest (11.61 percent) in case of valley towns. In this way, average increase in population of spur towns was four times of valley towns. The former has become thus more dynamic and the latter the least dynamic towns of the state. Presence of Dharamshala, the most flourishing town in the state and considered as smart city for the development, accessibility and natural beauty attracting the tourists were some of the factors which have significant role in higher growth of such towns as a group. Nevertheless, some of the hill top towns such as Sabathu is declining town. Individually, Dharamshala town registered highest increase while Sabathu highest the decrease in population during 2001-2011.
- v) Given the topographical features of Himachal Pradesh, there were not much differences in functional characteristics of towns in the state. Almost all the towns have service as the most dominant function. On the whole, administrative services dominated in case of valley towns and defence in case of hilltop towns. This is because of poor



---

industrialbase. As a result, majority of urban centers were monofunctional. Primary activities dominated in many valley towns.

In this way, site/ location shows its greater influence on size and growth of towns than on functional character of towns.

### Reference:

1. Bala, R. (1986). *Recent Trends in Urbanisation*. Jaipur: Rawat Publication.
2. Chand Jagdish. (2013, November). Changing Geography of Himachal Pradesh. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Science*, 2(11).
3. Census of India. (2001). Retrieved from <http://www.census2001.co.in/census/state/himachal+pradesh.html> Last Visit 23 09 15.
4. Govt. of India. (1981). *Census of India*. Govt. of India.
5. India, G. o. (1971). *Census of India*.
6. India, Census of India. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.census2011.co.in/> Last Visit 28 09 15.:  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324044362\\_Growth\\_of\\_urbanization\\_in\\_Himachal\\_Pradesh\\_A\\_statistical\\_analysis](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324044362_Growth_of_urbanization_in_Himachal_Pradesh_A_statistical_analysis)
7. Krishan, G. and Verma N.R. (1980). Site Analysis of Hill Towns. In G. a. Krishan. Transaction of the Institute of Indian Geographers.
8. Mehta Ritu Dr., Nadda Mallika Dr. (2016, October- December). A Historical Study of Urbanisational Development (A Case Premise to Solan town of Himachal Pradesh). *International Journal of Social Science and Humanites Research*, 4(4), 212-226.
9. NCERT. (n.d.). *Theme Twelve: Colonial Cities, Urbanisation, Planning and Agriculture*.  
Retrieved from <https://ncert.nic.in>: <https://ncert.nic.in/textbook/pdf/lehs303.pdf>
10. Sharma Ridhima, Tanwar Sakshi, Rizvi Safder. (2018, January). Growth of Urbanisation in Himachal Pradesh: A Statistical Analysis. *International Journal of Engineering and Technology*, 39-46.