

A Hill Town in Nature to Urban Sprawl: Shimla (HP) India

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Abstract : The mountain system makes the one fifth of the world's landscape and is the home to the 600 million people. Though hills and mountains contain about 10 percent of the total population of the country, yet almost half of the country's population living in or adjacent to the mountain areas depend directly or indirectly on the resources of the hills. Mountain environments are essential to the survival of the global ecosystems, as they sustain the economy of India through its perennial river system and precious forest wealth. Hill areas, with distinct climate, diverse vegetation and valuable flora & fauna are distinguished primarily by unique eco-system, rich both in bio-diversity and visual resources. These areas have special significance in terms of environment and economy. Still the irony is that these mountain ecosystems are fragile and highly susceptible to disturbance, with a low ability to rebound and heal after damage. Hills are home to endangered species, biological diversity and an essential part of the ecosystem. They are extremely sensitive to any human related development. Natural systems are the most ignored in the hills. The way the cities and towns have encroached them today has the serious repercussions on the climate. Amidst immense resources and constraints of nature, the town had a fantastic diversity of cultural and ethnic characteristics nurtured through ages along river basin and valley strung across the length and breadth of this Himalayan setting.

Keywords : eco-system, bio-diversity, urban sprawl, vernacular landscape

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