

Environmental Science and Engineering

Vishwambhar Prasad Sati

# Sustainable Tourism Development in the Himalaya: Constraints and Prospects

 Springer

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Vishwambhar Prasad Sati

Sustainable Tourism  
Development  
in the Himalaya:  
Constraints and Prospects

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# Preface

Tourism, mainly pilgrimage tourism, is a centuries-old practice in the Uttarakhand Himalaya. The description of the highland and river valley pilgrimages is mentioned in the famous religious wisdom of Hinduism such as the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Historical pieces of evidence depict that the Pandavas while proceeding to the Swarga (heaven) from Uttarakhand constructed the Kedarnath temple during the Dwapar Yuga.<sup>1</sup> Although the Badrinath temple was very ancient, it was renovated by Adi Guru Shankaracharya during the nineteenth century (820 AD). Likewise, the temples of other pilgrimages were constructed during the ancient period, and many of them were renovated by Shankaracharya, such as the temples of Jageshwar and Adi Badri. The Ganga River, a lifeline and a way of life for the people of Northern India, is pious and eminent. It originates and flows from the Uttarakhand Himalaya. The Hindus call it ‘The Mother Ganga,’ and it is one of the most important pilgrimages. Most of the river valley and the highland pilgrimages are situated along the Ganga River. The word ‘Ganga’ is pronounced in all the rituals and performed by the people on a day-to-day basis. Its water is pious, life-supporting, and used in all the auspicious occasions from birth to death. It is symbolized as nectar, which provides immortality.

Besides the world-famous pilgrimages, the Uttarakhand Himalaya is bestowed with numerous natural locales for practicing natural and adventure tourism. The landscape is spectacular with varying topographies from the river valleys to the middle altitudes, the highlands, the alpine meadows, and the snow-clad mountain peaks, which are the geographical components of tourism. The national parks and wildlife sanctuaries are the other major eco-tourism destinations. The natural locales include famous summer resorts, where climatic conditions are very feasible during summers. The tourists from the Ganges valley and the rest of India visit these natural locales during the summers to escape themselves from the sunstrokes. Adventure tourism including river-rafting, mountaineering, trekking, and skiing is very popular in the Uttarakhand Himalaya. During the winter season, heavy

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<sup>1</sup>According to Hindu mythology, there were four Yugas—Satyuga, Tretayuga, Dwaparyuga, and Kalyuga. Now, we are living in Kalyuga.

snowfalls up to the middle altitudes (1600 m); therefore, the tourists visit these destinations. Besides, rural and health tourism are growing areas with enormous prospects.

‘Atithi Devo Bhavah,’ Guest is God, is the key mantra (belief) of people of the Uttarakhand Himalaya, which they have been following for the centuries. Here, the people are peace-loving, welcome the tourists/pilgrims as God. Further, various cultural components of tourism—pilgrimages, fairs, and festivals—support sustainable tourism development. Folklores—songs and dances, foods and beverages, and art and crafts—are the other prominent aspects of tourism development. Sustainable tourism can be practiced by integrating folk culture with the natural attraction of tourist locales.

The entire Uttarakhand Himalaya is known as the ‘Land of Gods and Goddesses’ (Dev Bhumi). The mountains, rivers, and forests are named after Gods and Goddess and the fairs and festivals are celebrated to appease them, almost every month. A proverb ‘Where folk dances with nature’s rhythm’ is very popular and befitting to this region. This is also the reason behind the peace-loving nature of the people. The strong background of rich culture and custom further accelerates the high potential of sustainable tourism development of the region.

Although the Uttarakhand Himalaya has plenty of natural and cultural places of tourists/pilgrims’ interests, it lags in substantial infrastructural facilities—transportation, accommodation, and institutions—for tourism development. Inaccessibility, remoteness, and fragility of the landscapes are the major hindrances for the development of infrastructural facilities. Roads are traversed only along the river valleys and in the middle altitudes. Further, the road condition is bad. Landslides along the roads are very common, mainly during the rainy season. This leads to severe roadblocks and accidents. Accommodation facilities are not adequate. Tourists/pilgrims face an enormous shortage of accommodation during the peak tourists/pilgrims’ seasons. Similarly, institutional facilities for tourism development are yet to be provided. There are several panoramic landscapes situated in the highlands, which have lots of potential for tourism development. However, these areas are unexplored and unpublicized due to lagging institutional facilities.

I spent about 30 years of my early life in the remote part of the Uttarakhand Himalaya and have travelled the entire region several times. While growing up, I noticed beautiful landscape features, rich culture and customs, and poor socio-economic conditions of the region. Besides, I have also experienced the occurrences of the atmospheric events from time to time, mainly during the monsoon season, which leads to severe catastrophes. The rich natural and cultural components of tourism development in the Uttarakhand Himalaya are not harnessed optimally and thus, it could not receive a progressive position in tourism development. Keeping all these constraints and prospects of tourism development in mind, I decided to write a book on overall aspects of sustainable tourism development in the Uttarakhand Himalaya. Although academic works were carried out on various tourism-related issues in the forms of research papers and articles, no concrete work with high impact on sustainable tourism development in the Uttarakhand Himalaya had been done. This study elaborates on the geographical and cultural components

of tourism development scientifically. The description related to tourism development in the Uttarakhand Himalaya is based on the data, collected from the secondary source—Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board, Dehradun. Also, I have been working on different aspects in the environment and development of the Himalaya for the last 30 years. In the tourism aspects, I have already contributed substantially. However, this work is unique because it incorporates all aspects of tourism development in geo-environmental and cultural perspectives. It is a noteworthy work, useful for all the stakeholders who are involved in tourism development such as the policy-makers, academicians, development agents, and the students at different levels. I acknowledge the support of Ms. Vishwani Sati, who edited all the chapters of the book thoroughly. Finally, I dedicate this work to my beloved parents—Late Smt. Saradi Devi Sati and Late Shri. Shiv Dutt Sati for their encouragement, support, and blessings before and after their death.

Chakrata, India  
January 2020

Prof. Vishwambhar Prasad Sati, D.Litt.



# About This Book

This book, titled *Sustainable Tourism Development in the Himalaya: Constraints and Prospects*, presents insights and a detailed description of tourism development in the Uttarakhand Himalaya. Here, ample geographical and cultural components of tourism support the basis for sustainable tourism development. The snow-clad mountain peaks, the alpine meadows, the highlands, the Middle Himalaya, the Shivalik ranges, the river valleys, and the Doon valley provide unique features and spectacular landscapes. Forest landscapes are panoramic. The rich culture and cultural heritage, supported by fairs and festivals, are among the major tourists/pilgrims' attractions. However, tourism support systems (carrying capacity)—transportation, accommodation, and institutions—are not sufficient. Therefore, tourism has not developed substantially although it shares about 50% of the GSDP.

This book is divided into 12 chapters—Introduction, Geographical and Cultural Components of Tourism, Types of Tourism and Tourist Places, Trends of Tourism, Major Tourism Circuits, Case Studies of Major Tourists/Pilgrims Routes, Infrastructure Facilities for Tourism Development, Homestay Tourism, Tourism Carrying Capacity, Sustainable Tourism Development: Constraints and Prospects, and Conclusions. The chapters are supported by substantial tables, figures, and models. It is unique, first of its kind, a detailed study of all the aspects of tourism development in the Uttarakhand Himalaya. The book is quite beneficial for all stakeholders—students, scholars, academicians, and policy-makers.

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## About the Author



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# Acronyms

ABS	Asan Bird Sanctuary
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BRO	Border Road Organization
BWS	Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary
CECC	Cultural and Economic Carrying Capacity
CNP	Corbett National Park
CWS	Chilla Wildlife Sanctuary
DDUGAHS	Deendayal Upadhyaya Griha Awaas Home Stay
DoES	Directorate of Economics and Statistics
ECC	Environmental Carrying Capacity
EPI	Environmental Performance Index
ESI	Environmental Sustainability Index
GBPIHED	Govind Ballabh Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gangotri National Park
GMVN	Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam
GWS	Govind Wildlife Sanctuary
ICC	Institutional Carrying Capacity
INR	Indian Rupees
IT	Information Technology
KMVN	Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam
MoT	Ministry of Tourism
NDBR	Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve
NDRJY	Nanda Devi Raj Jat <i>Yatra</i>
NH	National Highway
NHAI	National Highway Authority of India
NHIDCL	National Highway and Infrastructural Development Corporation Limited



PRASHAD	Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive
PWD	Public Work Department
RJNP	Rajaji National Park
SGDP	State Gross Domestic Products
SWOC	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges
TC	Tourism Circuit
TCC	Tourism Carrying Capacity
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNSDGs	United National Sustainable Development Goals
USD	United State Dollar
USN	Udham Singh Nagar
UTDB	Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board
VFNP	Valley of Flowers National Park
WTO	World Tourism Organization