

## **“Tourism, Economy and Environmental Problems of A Religious Town : A Case Study on Haridwar, Uttarakhand, India”**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Tourism is now globally a rising industry during last few decades. But Religious-Tourism is marked by its antiquity. Haridwar ( 29°58' N Latitude & 78°10' E longitude ) is not only a famous religious tourist spot for the Hindus but also attractive for other domestic and foreign tourists because of its marvellous geographic location and physico-cultural tourist resources. Undoubtedly, tourism development leads to economic development of a region. Haridwar is not exceptional to this. As a religious tourist spot it has some speciality also. But it has been observed that there is some negative impact of tourism on the aforesaid region. Of all these, during the religious festivals environmental pollution prevails on a large scale. The main objectives of the paper is to evaluate tourism infrastructure (i.e. transport, hotel etc.), economic significance of Religious Tourism and focus on environmental problems due to tourism development. Besides this, some suggestions have also been given to promote better tourism.*

**KEY WORDS :** *Religious Tourism, Tourist Resources, Environmental Problem )*

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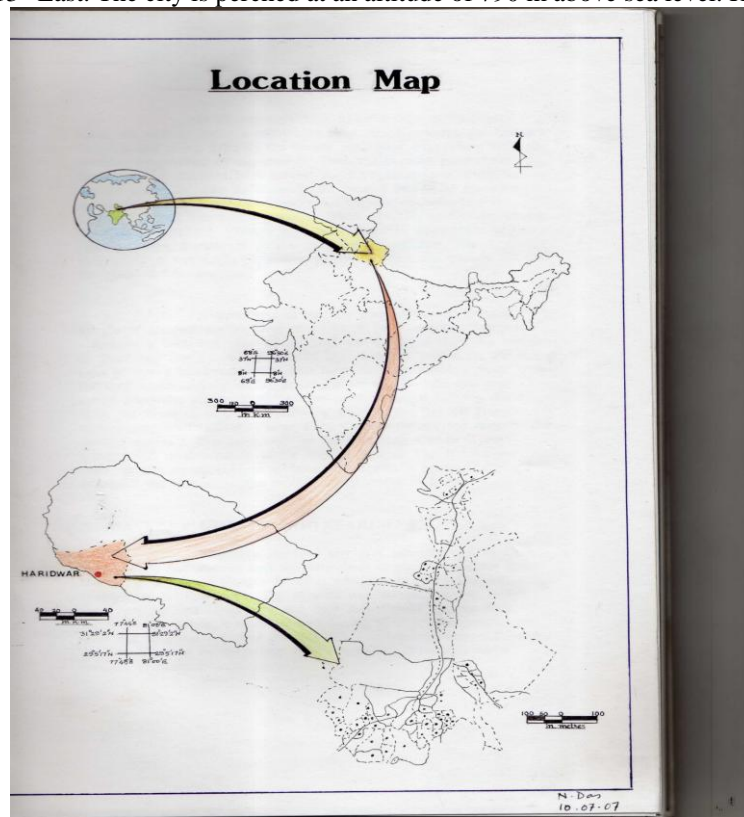
### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Tourism is a developing industry. It is growing day by day in the world. Tourism is defined as the totality of relationship and phenomenon arising from the travel and stay of strangers provided the stay does not imply the establishment of a permanent residence and is not connected with a remunerated activity as defined by Swiss Professor Hunriker and Kraft in the year 1942[1]. Today developmental activities are being carried by all the nations for the upliftment of the lives of their people. Thus, the prime objective of development policies is the increase of national revenue; improving of personal, functional and geographic distribution; increase in productivity, approximation of all full employment situation, greater balance between various sectors of production creating a favourable situation in foreign sector of production, greater development of regions and finally the country[2]. Undoubtedly, tourism development leads to economic development, mainly the local economy. Haridwar is not exceptional to this. But it has been observed that there are negative impact of religious tourism on environment. The aim of this paper is to discuss both the prospects and problems related to tourism development in the concerned area.

### **II. LOCATION OF THE STUDY AREA**

Haridwar's location indicates the geographical position of the north Indian city that is famed as one of India's most eminent pilgrimage sites. Haridwar city is sited in its namesake district. Haridwar encompasses an area of 2,360 sq. km and stretches between the latitudinal parallel of 29°58 ' N and the longitudinal meridian

of  $78^{\circ}13'$  East. The city is perched at an altitude of 790 m above sea level. Haridwar,



a part of the erstwhile Saharanpur Divisional Commission, rests at the foothills of the lofty Shivalik ranges[3].

### III. OBJECTIVES OF THIS PAPER

- [1]. To focus on potential tourist resources mainly the cultural tourist resource.
- [2]. To evaluate the existing tourism infrastructure (i.e. transport -communication, hotel and restaurant etc ) of this place.
- [3]. To assess the impact of religious tourism on local economy and people (e.g. hotel and transport workers, guide, travel agency who are directly involved in tourism).
- [4]. To focus on environmental problems related to the tourism development.
- [5]. Finally, a conclusive suggestion on Geographical perspective to overcome the problems.

### IV. DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY

The main methodology of this paper is divided into two parts : a) descriptive b) Statistical and Cartographic Both primary and secondary data have been used here. Primary data have been collected by field survey and the secondary information have been taken from various books, scholarly articles and websites. Data have been cartographically represented by means of graphs and cartograms. Some maps and photographs are also given to justify the descriptive analysis.

### V. TOURISM RESOURCES

Haridwar is enriched both in natural and cultural tourism resources. It's greatest power comes in the beauty of its nature and the majesty of the Ganges. The town is surrounded by natural resources----- river, hills and forests which enhance the scenic beauty of the town. The Chila Wildlife Sanctuary (10 Km away) and part of the Rajaji National Park, cover an area of around 240 sq. km. It has vivid flora and fauna species like elephants, tiger, leopards and jungle cats[4]. Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) has undertaken 'Cultural Resource Mapping of Haridwar District'. The list includes 164 cultural resources in Haridwar, 78 in Kankhal and 32 in Jwalapur. These identified resources are further categorised as Temples, Ashrams, Dharamshalas, Haveli, Ghat, Water body, Gurudwara, Trees and others. The major places of pilgrimage are-----

**Har ki Pauri:** One of the holiest spots on earth for the Hindus, the ancient bathing ghat (Steps) is of prime importance. A majority of the present ghats were largely developed in the 1800s.

**Sati Kund:** It is the well-known mythological Sati immolation heritage situated in Kankhal.

**Daksheswara Mahadev Temple:** The ancient temple of Daksha Mahadev, also known as Daksheswara Mahadev Temple, is situated in the south of Kankhal town and is a tribute to the legends of Sati's self-immolated and king Daksha's death and later life with a goat's head.

**Maya Devi Temple:** This temple of the Adhithatri deity of Haridwar is considered as one of the *Siddhapeethas* and is said to be the place where the heart and navel of Goddess Sati had fallen. It is one of the few ancient temples still standing in Haridwar, along with Narayani Shila Temple and Bhairav Temple.

**Sapt Rishi Ashram and Sapt Rishi Sarovar,** where Ganges split herself into seven currents so that seven great sages on its bank would not be disturbed by the flow.

**Bhimgoda Tank:** This tank, where Bhima is said to have drawn water from the rocks by thrusting his knee into the ground, is situated at a distance of about 1 km from Har-ki-Pauri.

**Chandi Devi Temple:** The present temple, commemorating the ancient Chandi legend, was constructed in 1929 AD by the Dogra King of Kashmir, Suchat Singh; it can also be reached through a ropeway.

**Mansa Devi Temple:** The temple dedicated to Mansa Devi, a form of Shakti draws many pilgrims. There are two ways to reach the temple - trekking or it can also be reached through a ropeway.

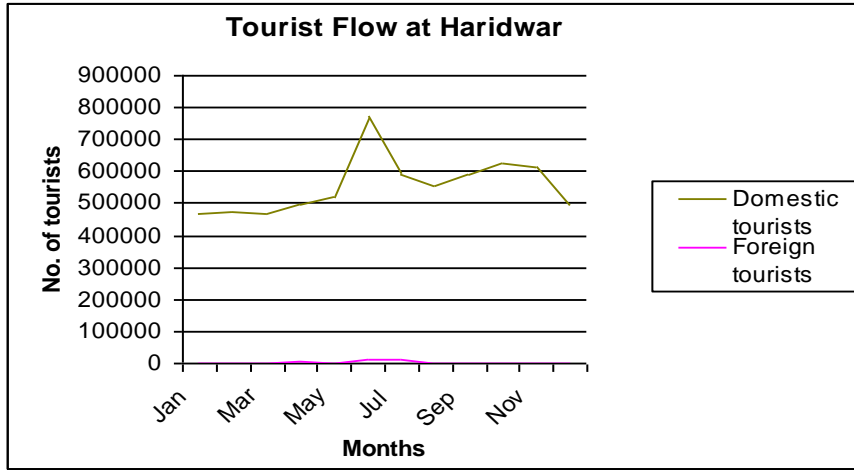
**Piran Kaliyar:** This famous 'Dargah' (Shrine) of Hazrat Alauddin Sabir Kaliyari, a 13th century Sufi Saint of Chishti Order, was built by Ibrahim Lodhi, a Delhi Sultanate ruler. Also known as Sarkar Sabir Pak, it is located in Kaliyar village, 7 km from Roorkee, and is a living example of religious harmony in India; it is visited by devotees from all over the world, during the annual 'Urs' festival, which is celebrated from 1st day (of sighting the new moon) to 16th day of Rabe-ul-awwal month of Islamic calendar.

**Ram Mandir:** This Ram temple is under construction at Bhupatwala and would be the biggest in size in India.

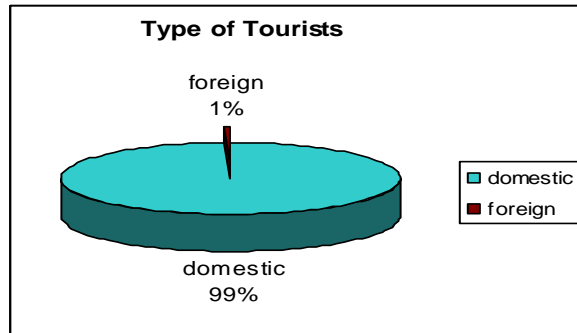
**Religious festivals and fairs :** Being a place of intense religious significance, Haridwar also hosts several religious festivals throughout the year; popular among them are the Kawar Mela, Somvati Amavasya Mela, Ganga Dashara, Gughal Mela, in which around 20-25 lacs (2-2.5 million) people take part. Apart from these, there is the mammoth Kumbh Mela [5] which takes place once in every twelve years, when the planet Jupiter (Brihaspati) comes into the sign Aquarius (Kumbha). First written evidence of the Kumbha Mela can be found in the accounts of Chinese traveller Huan Tsang or Xuanzang (602 - 664 A.D.), who visited India in 629 AD. The 2010 Maha Kumbh Mela saw more than 80 million pilgrims visiting this city, to take a dip in the holy river Ganges.

## **VI. TOURIST FLOW AT HARIDWAR**

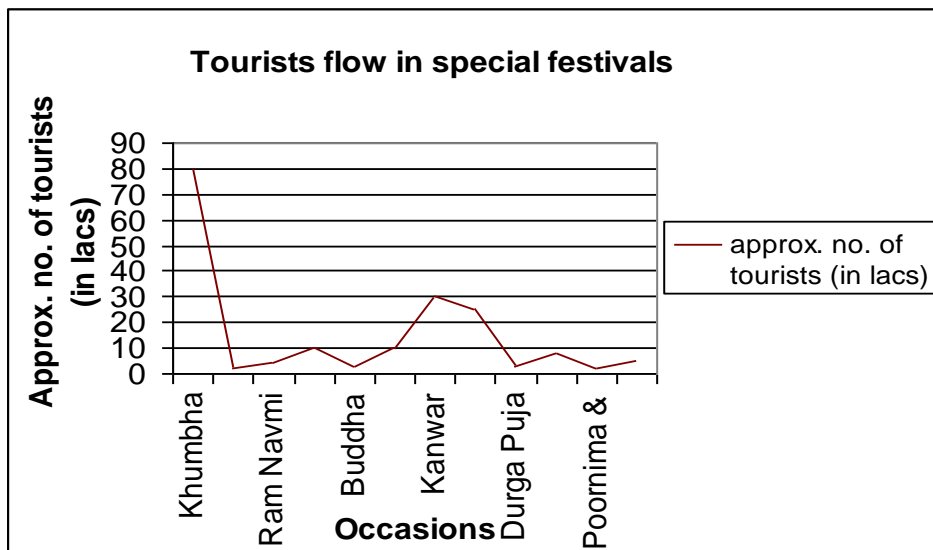
Tourists come in millions to Haridwar from all over India and the world throughout the year. The total tourist arrival in 2003, 2004, and 2005 was 56.2 lakhs, 62.9 lakhs and 75.3 lakhs respectively. Now the number is almost 90 lakhs per year.



(Data source: Tourism Dept. of Haridwar)



There is higher tourist influx during the summers as this season marks the beginning of pilgrimage, 'yatra', of Badrinath and Kedarnath after the dip in the holy river at Haridwar which continues till October. There is a steady increase in the number of Indian tourists while the trend is fluctuating in case of foreign tourists. Being primarily a religious tourist destination, large proportion of tourists arriving in Haridwar belongs to middle income and lower income groups. The period of stay of the tourists ranges from a few hours to about a week. During the special religious festivals like Khumba and Ardh Khumba Mela, Kanwar Mela, Ganga Dussehra and Kartik Poornima, a sudden excessive tourist influx is observed in Haridwar and adjacent areas excessive tourist influx is observed in Haridwar and adjacent areas.



(Data Source : Urban Development Department, Government of Uttarakhand)

## VII. TOURISM & LOCAL ECONOMY :

Undoubtedly tourism development leads to economic development of a region. Haridwar is not exceptional to this. 180 Dharamshalas, 400 hotels, and 220 Ashrams together provide accommodation for 89,000 tourists per night (*Source Tourism Department, Haridwar*). During Mela, the dharamshalas make additional provisions to accommodate more number of people. Evidently, the accommodation now available is far too short of the requirement particularly during the peak mela days. Almost 90% of the hotel and restaurant owners and the workers are local people. According to Uttarakhand Transport Corporation at present there are 930 Tempos/Vikrams, 706 taxis and 746 Auto rickshaws in Haridwar city. Most of the workers are local people. Horse-cart is a popular mode of local transport. It is specially notable that almost cent percent of the horse-cart drivers are Muslims who live at Jwalapur near Haridwar.

Many Transport Agency\* offices are found in Haridwar. The very travel agencies cover local tourist spots like Deradoon, Museriri, Risikesh, Laksmanjola etc and also outer tourist spot. Some travel agencies are Himalayan Tour and Travels, Anupam Travel, Shibalik Travels and Devasri Travels etc. Maximum transport agencies are newly established. 60% agencies are established within 1995 to 2000. 60% agencies have 5 to 8 cars and buses. 90% employees are male and 60% employee's duty is shiftable. Expenditure of 80% agencies is Rs. 3000 to 4000 per month where only 20% agencies have the expenditure of Rs. 5000 per month. Monthly income of 40% agencies is Rs. 5000 to 8000. 40% agencies draw Rs 8,000 to 11,000 per month where >11,000 income includes only 20% travel agency.

As Haridwar is a renowned religious tourist spot for the Hindu Community so the guide\* plays a vital role in case of making the outsider's visit to the sacred places. 60% guide belongs to 25 to 30 age group. 20% are of 31 to 35 and the remaining belongs to the age group of 36 to 40. All the guides are male and 60% among them are married. All the guides are educated (60% graduate and 40% post-graduate). 40% guide attend 20 to 25 tourists per day where 10 to 15, 15 to 20 and 25 to 30 people are attended by each 20% guide. 60% guide belongs to the income group of Rs 5000-10000 per month where above 10000 income group includes 40% guide. All the guides are Hindu and they are local people.

(\*Data collected by Stratified Random Sampling Method during Field study )

## VIII. RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES AND GANGA POLLUTION

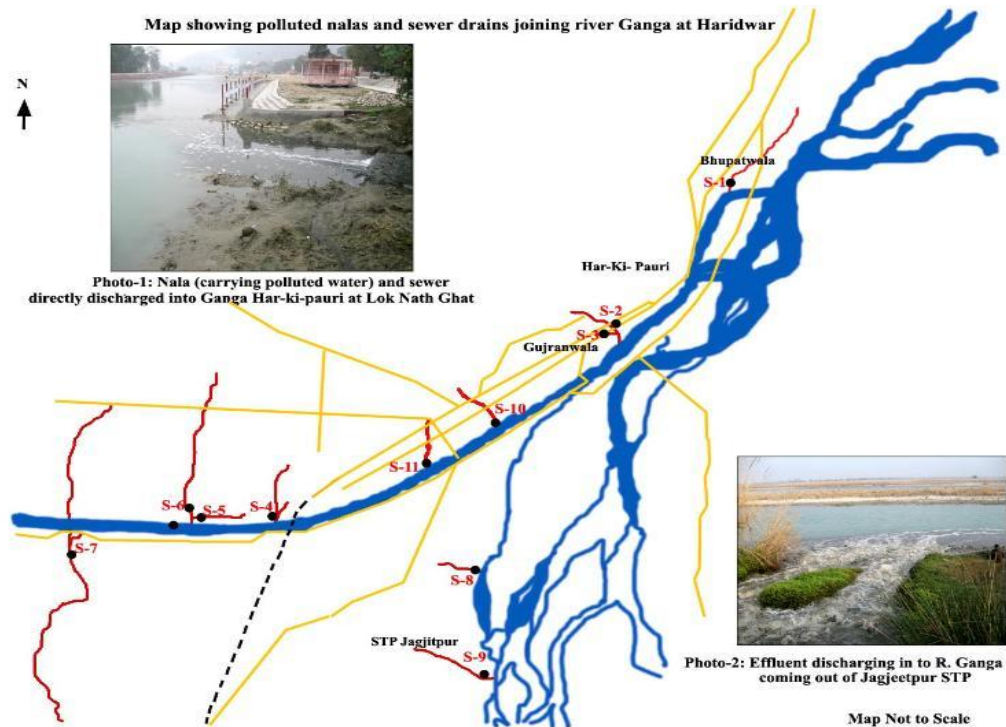
The Ganga, one of the most sacred of rivers for Hindus, has become polluted for some years now. But a recent study by Uttarakhand Environment Conservation and Pollution Control Board says that the level of pollution in the holy river has reached alarming proportions. Nearly 89 million litres of sewage is daily disposed into Ganga from 12 municipal towns that fall along its route till Haridwar. The amount of sewage disposed into the river increases during the Char Dham Yatra season when nearly 15 lakh pilgrims visit the state within May and October each year.

### Sewer Drain at Jwalapur, Balmiki Nagar





Mass bathing is frequently held in India. On certain religious occasions, special importance is assigned to it and a very large number of people take bath during a short period in specific stretches of rivers, lakes, tanks and sea coast. 'Kumbh' and 'Ardh-Kumbh' are such occasions when millions take dip at sacred spots. Recent Kumbh Mela beginning from January 14, 2010 to April 28, 2010 includes 11 bathing dates in between, at Haridwar, where fast-flowing Ganga enters the plains from Himalayan. Nearly 80 million people bathed along the 15-kilometre (nine-mile) stretch of the river Ganges in Haridwar during the Kumbh Mela festival that lasted 104 days, organisers said on April 29, 2010 as the event drew to a close. Nearly 1.45-crore pilgrims took a dip in the Ganga on April 14, 2010, the day of Baisakhi\_ only. Water quality is severely affected by mass bathing. Deterioration of river water quality may injure health of the people taking the dip and also the population downstream who use the river as a source of water for drinking and bathing[6].



Holy Bath in Ganges (Haridwar)

## IX. MAJOR FINDINGS

### Strengths And Opportunities :

- [1]. Haridwar has beautiful and scenic surroundings, rich cultural heritage as well as historicity.
- [2]. Religious character of the town and holy Ganges attract million of pilgrims and tourists.
- [3]. There is scope of utilising open space to promote cultural events.

### Weakness And Threats :

- [1]. Tourist infrastructure not able to support sudden swell of pilgrims and sudden influx of tourists leads to degradation of urban environment[7].
- [2]. Inadequate civic services for the tourists.
- [3]. No long term plan for heritage conservation and preservation as many of the structures are private properties.
- [4]. Vehicular movement disrupted during the religious fairs.
- [5]. Poor sanitation facilities likely to cause health hazards.

## X. IN CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The city of Haridwar aspires to be "*A city of Hope, Faith and Spirituality*". But it is a matter of fact that people who visit the city and stay there are almost cent percent Hindus. Due to some religious restrictions, Haridwar, till now is not popular for the tourists of other religious faith. Keeping the restrictions and environmental problems aside if Haridwar outstretches its benevolent arms to all people, irrespective of caste, creed and religious faith then it can truly be "*BHARAT-TIRTHA*" in the words of Rabindranath Tagore.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Haridwar Municipality  
Survey of India  
Tourism Dept. of Haridwar  
Urban Development Department, Government of Uttarakhand