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## QUALITY OF LIFE IN HIMACHAL PRADESH: A CASE STUDY OF BAIJNATH BLOCK, KANGRA DISTRICT

Doctoral Dissertations Abstract (2018)

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Since the very inception of planning in the country, the objectives have been to accelerate economic and social development, alleviate poverty and unemployment, raise the standard of living and quality of life and build a just, equitable and egalitarian society. It is often observed that countries with high per capita Gross National Product (GNP) can have astonishingly low achievements in the quality of life. As such, in the present study, development in terms of tangible goods is measured through levels of social and physical infrastructure while the level of satisfaction among the people about their living condition is assessed in terms of quality of life index. Himachal Pradesh, being a hilly region, has developed very slowly and its overall infrastructure including physical, social and economic was poorly developed in the initial phases of its formation and has led to regional imbalances in the level of infrastructural development in state. In this study, Baijnath Block of Kangra District has been taken as study area as it is least developed in terms of social and physical infrastructure. The study tried to make a deep insight into the socio-economic development of the study area for the two selected decades of 1991 and 2011 in terms of demographic factors such as population growth, density, sex ratio, child sex ratio and

literacy. The study also attempted to analyse the socio-physical infrastructural development of the study area for the decades of 1991 and 2011 and in order to get qualitative information about the quality of life, a composite index has been computed on the basis of people's perception.

### Objectives

The study aimed at realizing the following objectives:

- to examine the socio-economic development in the study area in terms of change in selected socio-economic indicators.
- to find out changes in spatial pattern of development in terms of selected socio-physical infrastructural indicators.
- to analyse people's perception about their quality of life.

### Database and Methodology

The study is based on both primary as well as secondary sources of data. The secondary data of 1991 and 2011 census years and other related information, at the block level has been collected from different departments and corporations of the Himachal Pradesh. The primary data about the quality of life have been collected through comprehensive household's interview schedule to know family structure,

social structure, educational structure, occupational pattern etc. On the basis of the requirement of the study, various suitable and justified statistical, cartographic techniques and tabular methods have been applied. The representation of data has been done through maps and diagrams.

### **Organisation of material**

The study has been organized into six chapters. The first chapter is the introductory which tries to outline origin of research problem, objectives, research questions, data base and methodology used and the review of the concerned literature. The second chapter deals with geographical setting of the study area. The third chapter has been devoted to understand the levels of socio-economic development in the study area. The fourth chapter deals with the spatio-temporal patterns of infrastructural development in the study area. The fifth chapter dwells upon the peoples' perception on quality of life in Baijnath block. The summary, conclusions and policy imperatives have been stated in the sixth and the final chapter.

### **Major Observations**

While analysing the socio-economic development of the study area, it has been found that among all the fifteen C.D. Blocks of district Kangra, Baijnath has been at the last rung of socio-economic development. However, this doesn't reveal the complete truth as the scenario within the block is quite different. This areal differentiation, without any doubt can be attributed to the geography of the study area, which further causes regional variation in the socio-economic development of the villages. When the population density is examined for all the blocks, Baijnath has lowest density. It is because the vast area of the block is uninhabited. Therefore, the population

density in the inhabited area was calculated and found 168 persons per km<sup>2</sup> in 1991 which increased to 210 persons per km<sup>2</sup> in 2011. The development which has taken place in social sector can be attributed to the increasing literacy rate that improved from approximately 12 per cent in high and very high category in 1991 to approximately 50 per cent in 2011. Though the sex ratio has also shown improvement in 2011 over the 1991 figures, yet a marginal decline of 3 per cent in child sex ratio has been noticed. The work participation as economic indicator has also registered a substantial increase in high and very high category. The gender disparity was also studied in order to see the levels of socio-economic development. It has been very satisfying that the gender disparity in literacy in high and very high categories became almost zero in 2011 which was 15 per cent in 1991. Similarly the gender disparity in work participation also decreased considerably in high and very high categories during the study period. Overall, it can be said that the study area has experienced a noticeable development in terms of social and economic indicators.

Power is the only sector which has shown outstanding changes. The rest of the sectors, like education, health, transport or communication all have shown gloomy results. The infrastructural development pattern of the study area also exhibited strong coherence with the geography of the study area as the lower regions such as Baijnath, Paprola Khas, Kothi etc. exhibited more development as compared to the villages of higher regions such as Dharjot, Kukar Gunda, Raj Gunda, Multhan, Bara Bhangal etc.

It is possible that an area may be developed technologically and infrastructurally, but may not be able to provide adequate facilities to the residents and thus affects their quality of living. The qualitative aspect of the

phrase quality of life can be best ascertained by getting through people's perception. In the present study, it is clear that quality of life is multifaceted and it is not possible for a person to bring all these dimensions to equal level. Moreover, the satisfaction for one person may be the cause of dissatisfaction to others. Conversely the present study tried to generalize the overall perception of a group of people about certain essential aspects of good quality of living. It is evident from the study that, on the social front people are more satisfied with housing, family, personal relationships, psychological conditions and status of females while dissatisfied with health, drinking water,

and sanitation and education policies of the government. On the economic front the residents seemed to be affected by the geographical conditions of the block. The residents of relatively plain areas seem to be satisfied about the economic condition and development, while with growing altitude the satisfaction level goes on decreasing.

On the whole, the study area provides good quality of life when all the aspects are compositely taken into consideration. It is also evident from people's perception that the study area has improved much in all spheres in last few decades, however the pace of development has been slow.

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