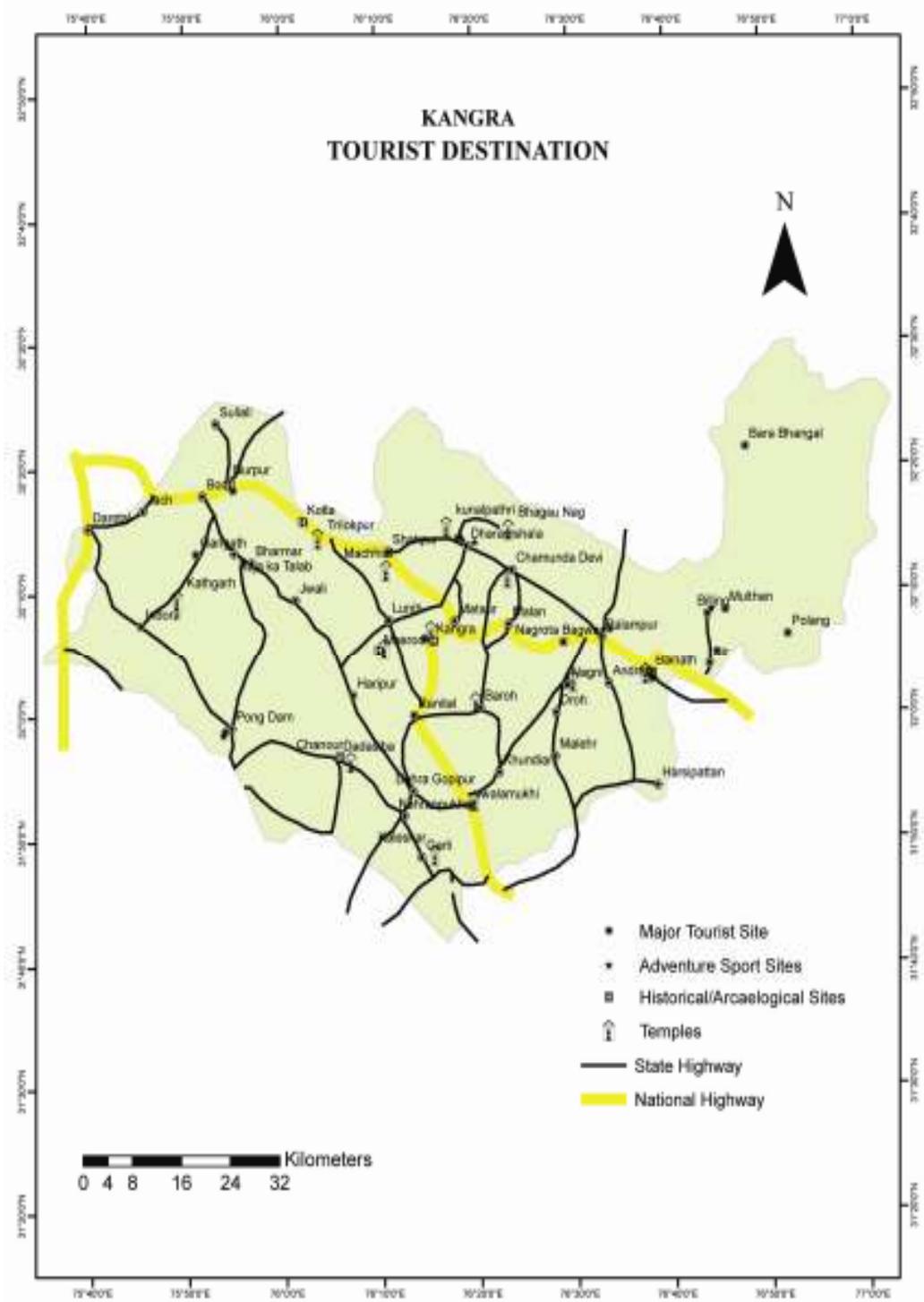


# CHAPTER-X

## SAMPLE STUDIES

Fig. 10.1



**Dharamshala (32.222°N 76.317°E)**

Dharamshala is a city in the upper reaches of the Kangra Valley and is surrounded by dense coniferous forest consisting mainly of stately Deodars. The suburbs include McLeodGanj, Bhagsunath, Dharamkot, Naddi, ForsythGanj, Kotwali Bazaar (the main market), Kaccheri Adda (government offices such as the court, police, post etc.), Dari, Ramnagar, Sidhpur and Sidhbari (where the Karmapa is based).

**Figure 10.2: Dharamshala**



The village of McLeodGanj lying in the upper reaches is known worldwide for the presence of the Dalai Lama. On 29 April 1959, the 14th Dalai Lama (Tenzin Gyatso) established the Tibetan exile administration in the north Indian hill station of Mussoorie. In May 1960, the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) was moved to Dharamshala.

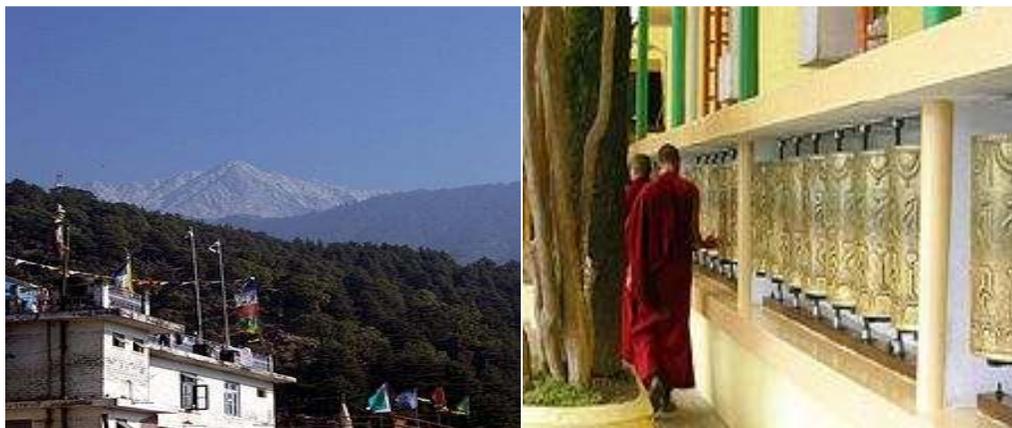
Dharamshala is the centre of the Tibetan exile world in India. Following the 1959 Tibetan uprising there was an influx of Tibetan refugees who followed the 14th Dalai Lama. His presence and the Tibetan population has made Dharamshala a popular destination for Indian and foreign tourists, including students studying Tibet. In March 1849, the area was annexed by the British after the Second Anglo-Sikh War, and soon a subsidiary cantonment for the troops stationed at Kangra was established on the slopes of Dhauladhar, on empty land, with a Hindu rest house or *dharamshala*;

hence the name for the new cantonment, Dharamshala. During the British rule in India, the town was a hill station where the British spent hot summers, and around the late 1840s, when the district headquarters in Kangra became overcrowded, the British moved two regiments to Dharamshala. A cantonment was established in 1849, and in 1852 Dharamshala became the administrative capital of Kangra district. By 1855 it had two important places of civilian settlement, McLeod Ganj and Forsyth Ganj, named after a Divisional Commissioner. In 1860, the 66th Gurkha Light Infantry, later renamed the historic 1st Gurkha Rifles, was moved to Dharamshala. Soon 14 Gurkha paltan villages were established nearby and the Gurkhas patronised the ancient Shiva temple of Bhagsunath.

Lord Elgin, the British Viceroy of India (1862–63), liked the area so much that at one point he suggested it be made the summer capital of India. He died at Dharamshala while on a tour there, on 20 November 1863, and lies buried at the St. John in the Wilderness at Forsyth Ganj, just below McLeod Ganj.

His summer residence, Mortimer House, became part of the private estate of Lala Basheshar Nath of Lahore and was acquired by the Government of India to house the official residence of the Dalai Lama. The original Tea House built by Lord Elgin and catered to by a local grocery store called Nowrojee & Son continues to prosper to this date as a hangout for visitors to McLeod Ganj.

**Figure :10.3**



Himalayan View, McLeod Ganj.

Prayer Wheels at 'Tsuglagkhang Temple', McLeod Ganj.

The twin towns of Forsyth Ganj and McLeod Ganj continued to grow steadily in the coming years, and by 1904 had become important centers of trade, commerce and official work of Kangra District. But much of the town was destroyed by the

devastating 7.8 magnitude 1905 Kangra earthquake at 6:19 am 4 April 1905; close to 19,800 people were killed and thousands were injured in the Kangra area.

The earthquake destroyed most buildings in Kangra, Dharamshala, and McLeod Ganj; even the Bhagsunath Temple was destroyed. Thereafter district headquarter offices were shifted to a lower spot, and the town waited another half century before anything significant transpired in its history. In March 1959, Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, fled to India after the failed uprising in 1959 in Tibet against the Communist Party of China. important tourist and pilgrimage destination, and has since grown substantially in population. The Indian Government offered him refuge in Dharamshala, where he set up the Government of Tibet in exile in 1960.

**Bhagsunath Temple** is a medieval temple 3km east of Mcleodganj. Bhagsunath is situated at an altitude of 1770 metres. The ambience of the temple is tranquil and reposed, with plentiful pools around, considered sacred by the Hindu devotees. The annual fair held in September is far-reaching in its reputation. Bhagsunath, an attractive tourist spot, is located at the outskirts of Mcleodganj.

Other major attractions here are a serene spring and a small but majestic waterfall. Many slate quarries are located in and around Bhagsunath. The region offers breathtaking views of surrounding hilly ranges and woody forests. The ambience of the place is dynamic and the atmosphere is cool and pleasant. Cool breeze from the Himalayan ranges soothe the body and mind.

The Dal Lake, Kotwai Bazaar and Bhagsu Waterfall are the attractions in the vicinity of the Bhagsunath Temple.

**Figure 10.4: Bhagsunath Temple**



## **Khanyara**

A picturesque village of grey-silver slates, Khanyara means slate quarrie,situated just 9 km from Dharamsala. The place is noted for its scenic beauty and is a much visited pilgrim spot. Khaniyara is the starting point of the trek route to Bharmaur. Major point of attraction here is the Aghanjar Mahadev Temple. The Indru Nag Temple, situated on the way to the village, is also frequented by devotees. Khaniyara is also well connected by roads to Norbulingka, Chinmaya Tapovan and Dharamsala.

**Aghanjar Mahadev Temple :** This temple is located at a distance of 8.5 km from Dharamshala and just a few meters from the Khaniyara village, famous for its scenic beauties. Once when Arjun, of Mahabarat, was on his way to the Kailash Mountains. Lord Shiva appeared in front of Arjun and blessed him with the Boon of Victory over the Kauravas. At this place Baba Ganga Bharati has fired "Akhand Dhuni" (Sacred Fire).

**The Indru Nag Temple:** This Temple is located on way to Khaniyara Village about 3 kms from Kotwali Bazaar. This temple is dedicated to Nag - the Lord of Snakes and the Lord of Rains. In the Month of July many devotees of the local areas visit the Temple.

**Kareri Lake:** Kareri is a high altitude, shallow, fresh water lake south of the Dhauladhar range approximately 9 km North West of Dharamsala. Its surface is 2934 meters above the sea level. Kareri Lake is best known for being a trekking destination in the Dhauladhars.

**Figure 10.5: Kareri**



Snow melting from the Dhauladhar range serves as the source of the lake and a stream, Nyund is the outflow. Since the source is fresh melting snow and the lake is shallow, water visibility is very high and in most places, the lake bed can be seen.

### **Minkiani Pass, Bhagsu**

The Minkiani Pass trek is an extension of the Kareri Lake Trek. The access to Minkiani pass is from Kareri Lake, located above the Kareri village. The trek from Dharamshala to Kareri Village passes through the pine forests and crosses several tribal villages on the way.

The trail from Kareri Village to Kareri Lake goes through mixed forests of oak, rhododendron and pine. First 2 Km is a level walk and then there is steep ascent along Kareri - Nullah stream which has to be crossed over a number of times over improvised wooden bridges. From the Minkiani Pass, travellers can enjoy the magnificent views of the peaks of Dhauladhar range.

### **Yol**

The town gets its name from YOL (Young Officers Leave camp), a small town established by British Indian Army in 1942. Formerly it was known as "majhaitha" village.

An Army area, known for 12000 Italian Prisoners of War who were detained here during the Second World War. It is located nearby Dharamshala. YOL Camp is an Army base that acts as a life line to Indian Army, in case there is a war with neighbors. YOL Camp stands for Young Officers Leave Camp. It has a interesting history. In the second world war (1939-45) 12 to 20 thousand war prisoners of Italy were kept there. But unlike other camps here prisoners were allowed to move anywhere, even to outside villages. The prisoners enjoyed their stay here.

From May 1947 to July 1947, it was a training camp for Army officers. From August 1947 to October 1947, 12 thousand Muslims were kept there and then transported to Pakistan. From 1949 to 1952, it served as a refugee camp for Kashmiri migrants. Later on it was used for many purposes and recently it houses one of the youngest battalions of Indian Army named Rising Star.

Gyoto Tantric Monastery recently built at Yol Camp, a suburb of Dharamshala -the seat of Dalai Lama in India. 'Chinmaya Sandeepani Himalaya Ashram' is located nearby. There is the huge stone idol of Lord Hanumanji and a temple dedicated

to Lord Rama built in south Indian style. A temple dedicated to 'Anjani Devi' (Mother of The Great Hanumanji) is located between Masrer and Yol Camp.

The mighty Dhualadhars which is part of Himalayan ranges from backdrop for this place. Snowfall often happens on the mountains and getting up everything covered with snow. Whole the structure at YOL was made of wood and is still standing. Stay can arranged at hospitality cell there which is barrack kind of structure converted to very comfortable guest rooms. The amenities there matched any 5 star hotel and the cost of stay for 2 rooms came there to be less than one time meal at a decent hotel.

**Figure 10.6 : Gyoto Tantric Monastery**



### **War Memorial Dharamshala**

War Memorial is adorning the entrance to the great old holy city of Dharamsala. Memorial is placed in a perfect place of peace, amidst the lush green pine trees to pay tribute to Great War heroes from Himachal Pradesh in the Post Independence Era. The war memorial is beautifully decorated and attractive with greenish lawns and artistic landscaping.

This is a revered location to place the patriotic feelings of the visitor to the memory of the great sacrifices. The place is ideally located amid the pine forest. There is also a cafe just close to War Memorial serving fast food and beverages.

### **Chinmay Tapovan**

Chinmaya Tapovan is a modern day ashram situated at the foothills of the majestic Dhualadhar ranges of the Himalayas. Situated on the banks of Bindu Saras, a tranquil meditation complex set up by the great exponent of the Gita Swami

Chinmayananda. The ashram complex has an image of Lord Hanuman, a Ram temple, a meditation hall, a school, and a health and recreation center. A nine foot high statue of great Lord Hanuman stands at the gate, spreading his special message of loyalty and bravery. A mini forest of pine trees, which is a few hundred yards away, is a very good picnic spot with absolutely no noise around.

The Chinmaya Mission was started by Balakrishnan Menon, a young journalist who met spiritual masters like Swami Sivananda and from there began a search for meaning. One of the greatest exponents of Vedanta the world has ever known, the Swami has set up several trusts, schools and meditation centres all over India. Chinamaya Tapovan Ashram is named after his guru Swami Tapovan and is also a centre for the Chinmaya Rural Primary Health and Training Centre.

Discourse and classes are available should you want to experience the Swami's teachings and his shrine is also at the Ashram marking his resting place. Short courses on the Gita can be taken and health workers are trained to help rural people living around the ashram.

Located in the scenic Himalayan mountain ranges, with its cool climate and fresh air, far away from the madness of city life, the ashram provides the environment necessary for meditation, spiritual fulfillment and introspection. People in search for spiritual succor make their way to this ashram from all across the country and the world. The ashram also holds short duration courses on the **holy Gita** (the sacred book of the Hindus), and trains health workers to look after the health needs of the villagers living in the Kangra valley.

**Figure 10.7 : Tapowan**



**St. John in the Wilderness** ( 32°14'50"N ,76°18'39"E ) is an Anglican church dedicated to John the Baptist built in 1852, located near Dharamshala, India, on the way to McLeodGanj, at Forsyth Gunj. Set amidst deodar forest, and built in neo-Gothic architecture, the church is known for its Belgian stained-glass windows donated by Lady Elgin (Mary Louisa Lambton), wife of Lord Elgin.

Though the church structure survived the 1905 Kangra earthquake, which killed close to 19,800 people, injured thousands in the Kangra area, and destroyed most buildings in Kangra, Mcleodganj and Dharamshala; its spire, Bell tower, was however destroyed. Later, a new bell, built in 1915 by Mears and Stainbank, was brought from England and installed outside in the compound of the church.

### **Dal Lake**

Dal Lake, which is 2km walk westwards from Mcleodganj market, is renowned for its scenic beauty and the cool ambience. With an altitude of 1775 m, the lake is situated at the vehicular road between Mcleodganj and the village of Naddi. Surrounded by deep green Deodar forests, it is also a base camp for trekkers in Dharamsala and Mcleodganj.

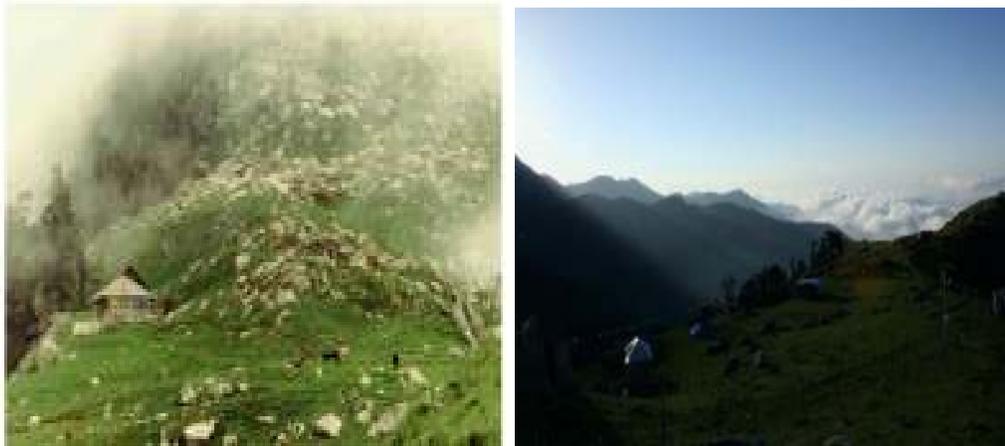
### **Triund** (32.2549104N, 76.3550662E)

Triund is a popular picnic spot at an height of 2827 m. The area is on the foothills of Dhauladhar range and the snow line starts at Ilaqua, which is five kms from Triund. The breathtaking views of the mountains and the valleys make Triund an ideal picnic spot and trekking spot.

The most interesting, the most spectacular trek from McLeod Ganj is the 12 km climb to Triund-a level clearing atop a spur. Massive rocks, exotic mountain plants and ice covered ponds hold one's attention for a while. Below, you can see the Pong Dam in the hazy distance.

Above Triund, the Dhualadhars rise in icy splendor. From the Forest Bungalow at Triund, glorious treks of discovery can be made treks that reveal the Dhualadhars in all their colors and moods.

**Figure 10.8: Triund**



### **Dharamkot**

1 Kilometer Above McLeod Ganj A Village Called Dharamkot Inhabited By The Gaddis (hill Tribals) Nestles Amidst Scenic Beauty At 2,100 Metres Above The Sea Level. Besides Offering A Panoramic View Of The Dhauladhar Range Of Mountains, Kangra Valley And The Pong Dam, The Village Once Had A Gallery Of Paintings Of A Well-known English Painter "A.W.Hallot". Today Dharamkot Is A Favourite Picnic Spot.

### **Indrahar Pass**

Indrahar Pass is a mountain pass in the Dhauladhar range of the Himalayas. Located at  $32^{\circ}17.852'N$   $76^{\circ}22.872'E$  /  $32.297533^{\circ}N$   $76.381200^{\circ}E$  Coordinates: and an altitude of 4,342 metres above mean sea level, near the tourist town of Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh, Indrahar pass forms the border between Kangra and Chamba districts. It is part of a very popular trekking route from Dharamshala. It attracts substantial tourist traffic during the trekking season between April–October.

### **Indrahar Pass Trail**

The trekking trail to Indrahar pass starts from Galu temple near Dharamshala and passes through the popular camping ground of Triund, Laka Got, and Lahesh Caves. Popular camping stops are Triund at 2842 metres and Lahesh Caves at 3475 metres.

On the other side of the pass, the camping sites include Chhata caves at 3242 metres and Kuvarasi village in Chamba at 2260 metres.

**Figure 10.9: Indrahhar**



### **Kunal Pathri**

Kunal Pathri is a small village near Dharamsala, located in the Dhauladhar Ranges. The major attraction here is the temple of Mata Kunal Pathri, dedicated to local Goddesses Durga. This place is surrounded by dense tea gardens and is a perfect place to have a natural walk. The temple premises offer a good view of Dhauladhar Range and low lying lawns. The temple is consecrated to Kapaleshwari. It possesses exquisite carvings of gods and goddesses. Kunal Pathri rock temples ancient temples in the Kangra region developed for offering prayers by tribes.

**Figure 10.10: Kunal Pathri**

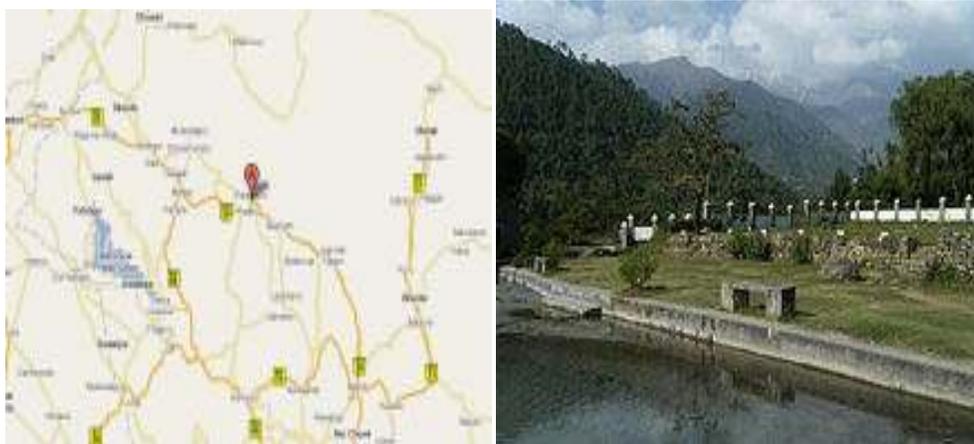


**Palampur** (32°07'00"N 76°32'00"E / 32.1167°N 76.5333°E )

Palampur is a green hill station and a municipal council in the Kangra Valley in the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, surrounded on all sides by tea gardens and pine forests before they merge with the Dhauladhar ranges. Palampur is the tea capital of northwest India but tea is just one aspect that makes Palampur a special interest place. Abundance of water and proximity to the mountains has endowed it with mild climate. It is one of the coolest places to live.

The town has derived its name from the local word *pulum*, meaning lots of water. There are numerous streams flowing from the mountains to the plains from Palampur. The combination of greenery and water gives Palampur a distinctive look. Palampur is at the confluence of the plains and the hills and so the scenery shows the contrast: plains on one side and the majestic snow covered hills on the other side. Behind this town stands high ranges of Dhauladhar mountains, whose tops remain snow-covered for most part of the year.

**Figure 10.11 : Palampur**



### **Adventure Sports**

Palampur is the ideal hill resort for you if you enjoy trekking and Paragliding. There are several trek routes that one can trek on, one important one being over Sanghar Pass to Bharmaur via Holi.

The paragliding site at Bir-Billing in Kangra district near Baijnath is regarded as among the best in the world for Paragliding. Billing (2290 m) is the take-off site and Bir (1400 m) is the village at the landing site. The road distance between the two is 14 km. Bir is sheltered by the Dhauladhar mountains and the ridges behind keep

rising to 3000 mtrs, 4000 mtrs, 5000 mtrs and one after the other so as pilot can fly at 4000 mtrs and still watch the mountains tower above. Bir is a beautiful village surrounded by tea gardens and spectacular scenery, whereas Billing offers unique opportunities for high altitude and cross country flying and flights of 180 km have been achieved from here.

All along the bottom of the ridges runs a parallel road from Mandi to Dharamshala and beyond which assures easy recovery for pilots after landing. The most important feature of this region is its weather. On bad weather days one can still fly 20–30 km and on good days 100 km is not difficult. October & November are the ideal months for flying in autumn and March to May i.e. spring is also flyable but conditions are very strong in spring with thermals of 6-12 mtrs/sec and cloudbase of 4000 to 6000 mtrs.

The small towns of Taragarh, Baijnath and Jogindernagar are close to Bir-Billing and large town of Palampur is 29 km from Bir. Himachal Pradesh is conducting International Paragliding competitions since 2002 at Bir-Billing every year.

**Baijnath :** ( 16 km. from town.) The Shiva temple at Baijnath is one of the most remarkable monuments of the Kangra valley. Ancient name of this town was 'Kirgrama'. Baijnath got its name from Shiva Vaidyanatha. The temple consists of an 'Adytum' surrounded by a spire of the usual conical shape with a 'Mandap' covered with a low pyramid shaped roof. The 'Adytum' contains the Lingam. There is fine sculpture work to be associated with Ravana, who worshipped Shiva at this spot and gained immortality. Baijnath is one of the 'Twelve Jyotirlingams'. Shivratri of Baijnath is a well attended fair.

**Figure 10.12: Baijnath Temple**



**Neugal Khad :** ( 2 km. from town.) Neugal Khad provides a fine view of the Dhauladhar range. It is roaring in the rainy season and gurgling all the year round. Himachal Tourism cafe provides food and a fine view from its restaurant. It is a famous picnic spot and ideal for a day escape from busy life.

**Bundla Stream :** ( 2 km. from town) Bundla stream with wide chasm of more than 100 metres, swells up and rises madly in monsoons taking stones and boulders along with it making a loud noise like that of continuous thunder. This is a lovely walk from Palampur to Bundla.

**Bundla Tea Estate:** ( 2 km. from town) This is one of the most beautiful tea estates of Palampur, which covers Bundla, Aima and Lohna Panchayat. The road to Neugal Cafe from the town leads from this estate. The lush green tea gardens are at its best in the monsoon. People can be seen plucking tea from April till October. The old Bundla Tea Estate complex, which is over 200 years old can be seen from the road.

**Andreta :** ( 13 km. from town ) It is the home of the famous artist, late Sardar Shobha Singh and late playwright Norah Richards. This presents an excellent view of the Dhauladhar Range.

**Shobha Singh's Art Gallery :** It is situated in Andhretta which is 13 km. from town. Chamunda Maa: Temple complex is around 20 km from Palampur

**Saurabh Van vihar :** (4 KM from town) Named after the valiant Army officer, Captain Saurabh Kalia, Saurabh Van Vihar is in Neugal near Palampur. Managed by the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department, the Van Vihar was set up with the purpose of providing information to the tourists about the nature and environment. The Vihar sprawls on an area of 35 acres and there is a green park located here. The area is surrounded by the Dhauladhar mountains and offers scenic views of the surrounding.

**Mata Ashapuri Temple(Maa Ashapuri):** Mata Asahpuri temple is very famous temple in Distt Kangra. It is located at the top of hill. My village Suan is very small town surrounded by hills and located right down the Hill of Mata Ashapuri Temple. On-Foot it takes around 1 hour and by bus it takes around 3 hours to reach Mata Ashapuri Temple from my village. On-Foot there is shortcut way to reach the temple. Suan town comes under Tehsil Jaisinghpur. Its populations is approx. 500 peoples. Bus service is available for Mata Ashapuri Temple from Palampur and Panchrukhi Bus stations. Approximately it's 2-3 hours run in bus from Palampur to Mata Ashapuri temple. Bus service is available on specific times. You can consult at

Palampur Bus Stand Counter regarding bus service queries and timings. I wish you a very happy journey to Mata Ashapuri Temple. .

Recently, the deodar trees in Palampur are drying up with abnormally fast speed. Palampur is the only hill station in India where deodar trees grow within heights of 3000 feet to 4000 feet from Mean Sea Level.

### **Bir**

Bir was ruled by Pal dynasty of Chandravanshi lineage the last Raja or Rai was Raizada Prithi Pal who was a descendant of the Rajas of Bhangahal, who appear to have maintained their rights until the time of Raja Prithi Pal in the early part of the eighteenth century. Raja Prithi Pal fell a victim to his father-in-law, Raja Sidh Sen, who in 1728 invited him to Mandi in the pretext of seeking his assistance against the Raja of Suket. He was kindly received but within a month of his arrival he was beguiled into the Damdama Fort, and there murdered.

Local accounts indicate that Bir was first settled by immigrants from Bengal around 1600 C.E. These families settled in Bir proper. Other groups migrated in much more recently, starting in the early 20th century C.E.

**The Tibetan Colony:** In 1966 the third Neten Chokling (1928-1973), an incarnate lama of the Nyingma lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, brought his family and a small entourage to Bir. With the help of foreign aid Neten Chokling purchased over 200 acres of land and established a Tibetan settlement where 300 Tibetan families were given land to build houses.

### **Prominent institutions and attractions**

There are several institutions in Bir that attract students, tourists, volunteers and other visitors from around India and from abroad:

**The Deer Park Institute** is a 'centre for the study of classical Indian wisdom traditions' established by Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche in March 2006 under the patronage of the Dalai Lama. The Institute hosts frequent guest lectures and workshops with reputed scholars and meditation teachers.

**The Dharmalaya Institute** is an eco-campus for service-learning and contemplative practice. Dharmalaya is an Indian charitable society (NGO) 'devoted to education, service, and compassionate living, with a practical focus on sustainable village development, contemplative service-learning, and immersive ecotourism'.

Dharmalaya hosts work retreats and meditation retreats, providing opportunities for long-term volunteers and meditation students to do karma yoga (mindful service work with an unselfish, altruistic intention) for various charitable projects to benefit the local community and the natural environment. Programmes include green building, green job skills training for local villagers, organic farming, and a tree-planting project.

**Chokling Gompa** is the monastery of Neten Chokling Rinpoche, a reincarnate lama in the Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism and the director of the film *Milarepa* (2006). The Tibetan architecture and large stupa are the principal attractions for casual visitors. In addition to its ongoing programmes for its full-time monastic students, the monastery periodically hosts Buddhist ceremonies open to the public. There is a guest house and restaurant on the premises.

**The Bir Tea Factory** is a longstanding Bir cooperative, which offers tours for those interested in the process of tea production.

The Bir-Billing area is a popular destination for ecotourism and adventure travel, offering paragliding, hang-gliding, trekking and camping.

### **Paragliding**

The Bir-Billing area is noted as a popular site for paraglider pilots, both Indians and visitors from all over the world. The flying season is from September to November, with some flying also done in October. The village continues to host periodic international competitions and events. The paragliding launch site is in the meadow at Billing (14 km north of Bir), at an elevation of approximately 3890 metres), while the landing site and most tourist accommodations are in the village of Chowgan (also spelled Chaugan), on the southern edge of Bir.

### **Chamunda Devi**

Chamunda Devi is a Shakti shrine, 15 km from Dharamshala, on the Ban Ganga River. This colorful shrine has a wrathful form of Durga. The idol in the temple is considered so sacred that it is completely hidden beneath a red cloth.

With all the natural surroundings ideally suited for meditation prayers and spiritual attainments. This was the cremation ground for 22 villages and supposed to be a place which gives solace, spiritual attainments in the form of Mahakali Chamunda. Here Lord shiva is present in the form of death, destruction & dead bodies

along with Devi Chamunda. Devotees offer prayers, worship and give offerings for their ancestors. It is thought to be sacred to take a dip in Ban Ganga and to read and recite the writings of Shat Chandi. In the old days, people used to offer sacrifices also to the deity. Kanyas (unmarried baby girls) are worshiped. Also Lord shiva is worshiped with Holy water from Ban Ganga

### **The Past**

Chamunda Devi is located at a spot where the famous battle described in the Devi Mahatmaya took place. It is heard that Kali killed the two generals of Shumbha and Nishumbha. Their names were Chanda and Munda. As a result of this battle Kali received the name Chamunda. The temple was originally located in dangerous remote spot. It was relocated to its current location.

Around 400 years ago the king and a Brahmin priest prayed to Devi for permission to move the temple to some easily accessible location. Devi appeared to the priest in a dream giving her consent. She directed him to dig in a certain spot and an ancient idol would be found and that idol should be installed in the temple and worshipped as Her form.

The king sent out men to bring the idol. Although they were able to locate it but were not able to lift it. Again Devi appeared to the priest in a dream. She explained that the men could not lift the holy relic because they considered it an ordinary stone. She instructed him to get up early in the morning, take a bath, wear fresh clothes and go to the place in a respectful manner. He did as he was told and found that he could easily lift what a large group of men could not. He told the people that it was the power of the Goddess that brought the idol to the temple.

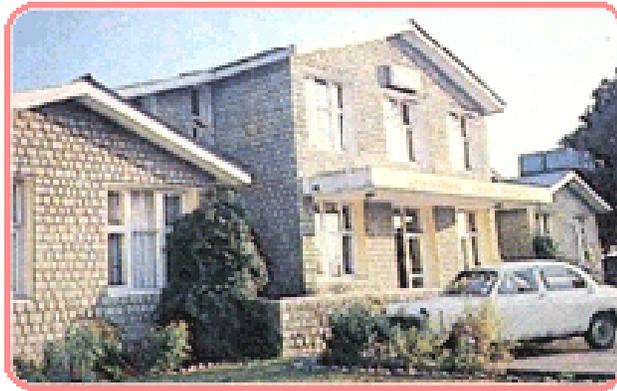
In the temple now one can see scenes from the Devi Mahatmya, Ramayan and Mahabharata. On either side of the Devi's image is Hanuman and Bhairav.

### **The Legend**

The Goddess Chamunda was enshrined as chief Goddess with the title of Rudra in the battle between demon Jalandhra and Lord Shiva which made this place famous as "Rudra Chamunda". Another legend has it that "Savarni Manamantra" battle between the gods and demons, Chamunda emerged as Chandika from an eyebrow of Goddess "Kaushiki" and was assigned the task of eliminating the demons

“Chand” and “Mund”. Chandika fought a fierce battle with these two demons and at last killed them. Goddess Chandika took the slain heads of the two demons “Chand” and “Mund” to the Goddess “Kaushiki” who being immensely pleased, blessed Chandika and bestowed upon her the title of “Chamunda”, the name which is famous all around the world

**Figure 10.13: Yatri Niwas Chamunda**



### **Nurpur**

Nurpur is famous for an old fort and a temple of Brij Raj. Nurpur acquired its name in 1672, when Jahangir, the Mughal Emperor named it after his wife Nurjahan. Built in the late 16th century by Raja Basu the Nurpur Fort is massive and sprawling. It spreads across a long flat plateau forming the western end of the ridge and bears signs of great architectural designs. The fort overlooks the Jabhar Khud, a tributary of the Chakki rivulet and the vast valley formed by it. Earlier name of Nurpur was Dhameri, later changed to Nurpur after Empress Nur Jahan who took a fancy to the beautiful valley. Inside, the palace walls, though crumbling, have deep niches, decorative arches and the faint signs of some paintings. The northwest walls of the fort have some deeply carved panels showing animals. Particularly graceful are the bulls in their various actions like pulling a cart, or walking in a file; there are also figures of men, women, children, the kings, gods and goddesses and birds. The overall impact of the fort is one of awe and wonder.

**Figure 10.14: Nurpur**



### **Kotla fort**

Kotla fort is another heritage monument on the State Highway between Shahpur and Nurpur. Kotla fort stands on an isolated peak, impressively looking around the deep valleys. The fort was built by the Guler Rajas. The road to the fort winds upwards and is not too difficult; the climb going through the dense forest of pine is pleasant. At the main entrance is the Bagulamukhi temple, one of the incarnations of Durga. The idol inside the temple is magnificent. There is also a small temple dedicated to Lord Ganesh with roundish roof resembling Bengal roof architecture. Inside there is a unique Ganesh idol. The temple has wall paintings on the outer walls. The deep arches have superb workmanship, paintings and carvings. One particular wall with three arches and niches standing amid ruins displays a kind of grace and originality that is unique to the fort.

### **Maharana Pratap Sagar (32°01'N 76°05'E 32.017°N 76.083°E)**

**Maharana Pratap Sagar** was created in 1975, by building the highest earth fill dam in India on the Beas River in the wetland zone of the Siwalik Hills of the Kangra district of the state of Himachal Pradesh. Named in the honor of the patriot Maharana Pratap (1572–1597), the reservoir or the lake is a well-known wildlife sanctuary and one of the 25 international wetland sites declared in India by the Ramsar Convention. The reservoir covers an area of 24,529 hectares and the wetlands portion is 15,662 hectare .

The Pong Reservoir an important fishing reservoir in the Himalayan foothills of Himachal Pradesh. This reservoir is the leading sources of fish within the Himalayan states.

### **Ramsar site**

Pong Dam Lake was declared a Ramsar Wetland site on account of its rich waterfowl diversity for conservation and sustainable use of the wetland. This recognition was based on a proposal formulated by the Himachal State Council for Science, Technology and Environment, Shimla submitted to the Ramsar Bureau, Switzerland through the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests of the Government of India.

The large reservoir and its strategic location in the extreme north-west of the northern plains has attracted migratory birds from the plains of India and Central Asian countries and Siberia. More than 220 bird species of 54 families have been recorded. The interception of the migratory birds on their trans-Himalayan fly path, during each migration season, has enriched the biodiversity values of the reservoir. The Pong reservoir and its catchment have the following rich flora and fauna.

The reservoir seasonal water-level variation between the maximum water level and the minimum draw-down level does not permit growth of much emergent vegetation, but some amount of submerged vegetation has been noticed.

The reservoir was declared as a bird sanctuary in 1983. A 5-kilometre belt from the periphery of the lake has been declared as buffer zone for the management of the bird sanctuary. The national, as well as international, significance of the sanctuary is enhanced because of its waterfowl diversity, which was evidenced by the increase of water fowl species from 39 prior to the reservoir to 54 species at post-reservoir stage. The number of birds reported, particularly during the winter period of November to March, has steadily increased over the years. The main bird species reported are the barheaded geese (Goose), *Anser indicus*, northern lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), ruddy shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*), Northern pintail (*Anas acuta*), common teal (*Anas crecca*), Spot-billed Duck (*Anas poecilorhyncha*), Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*, red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps griseigena*), Black-headed gulls, plovers, Black Stork, terns, water-fowl and egrets.

The avian habitats in the reservoir area are categorized under the following heads:

The receding shore-line form Mudflats and mud spits from October onwards which provide organic matter, worms, insects and mollusks for wintering birds and plovers. Wagtails, Sand Larks and Pipits also use the mudflats.

1. The shallow water on the margins of the reservoir and the open deep water are used by dabbling ducks (Anatinae) and some long-legged waders
2. In the sandy banks near the reservoir periphery with dry sand banks strewn with small boulders, with little or no vegetation, stone curlew and pratincoles feed here.
3. Below the outfall of the dam, swamp habitats and water side vegetation are used by birds such as ducks, coot, warblers, babblers, munias, kingfishers and predators.
4. In the reservoir draw down areas, which are also cultivated by local people during winter, Bar-headed geese and ruddy shell duck feed.

Around five thousand tourists visit the bird sanctuary during the winter season, and most of them come to watch migratory birds for the first time. Efforts are being made to encourage eco-tourism to attract more tourists to the reservoir.

### **Water sports**

A regional water-sports centre has been established in the Pong Dam Reservoir, which offers focused activities such as canoeing, rowing, sailing, and water skiing, apart from swimming. Training programmes are organized in water safety and rescue measures with three-tier water-sports courses: the basic course, intermediate course, and advanced course. Modern infrastructure facilities have been created with a 75-bed hostel and a 10-suite rest house. It is said to be the only centre of its type in the country.

**Figure 10.15: Wild life**



Chute Spillway



Barheaded geese



Ruddy Shelduck

## **Kathgarh**

Lord Shiva temple at Kathgarh is in Indora Tehsil of District Kangra, has something interesting and unusual. The temple has a large 'Shivaling', which is vertically split in two parts. The distance between two parts keeps increasing and decreasing from time to time. The larger portion is worshiped as Lord Shiva and second one as Mata Parvati .

According to one of the myths, once 'Lord Vishnu' and 'Lord Brahma' got engaged in a battle to decide supremacy. To stop the warring Gods 'Lord Shiva' intervened in the shape of a fire pillar and made the warring Gods stop the battle. The large "Shivaling" at Kathgarh is believed to be the same fire pillar.

According to another story in Indian epic 'Ramayana' - The king 'Bharat', the brother of lord Rama, use to pay obeisance to Lord Shiva at this pillar on his way to his grandparents in Kashmir.

Kathgarh temple also seems to have some connection with Greek invaders when they stopped there. The statue is about size of a human above the floor, and it is believed that same length is buried under the floor. It could be one of the statues of Apollo, which Alexander the great is described to have built and worshiped on high platforms to mark the spot from where he retreated.

**Figure 10.16**



## **Masrur Rockcut Temple**

Masrur is 32 km from Kangra on Nagrota Surian link road and is famous for remarkable group of rock cut temples. They form a group of 15 monolithic rock cut temples in the Indo Aryan style and are richly carved. These richly ornamented cave temples are the only rock shrines in the northern part of India. The main shrine

contains three stone images of Ram laxman and Sita but the presence of the figure of Shiva in the centre of the lintel affords a strong presumption that the temple was originally dedicated to Mahadeva.

**Masroor** (57 Kms) is known for its Ellora styled rock-cut temples. **Pong Dam** (80 Kms) is a national wetland and is renowned for its bird life. More than 240 varieties have been identified. Comfortable day excursions are possible to Dharamshala (60 Kms), Mcleodganj (68 Kms) -residence of his Holiness Dalai Lama and Palampur (95 Kms) with a vista of green tea estates and the artists' complex of Andretta. Haripur Guler (27 Kms), the cradle of Kangra school of paintings, is nearby. The indomitable Kangra Fort is easily achievable. For the spiritually inclined, Pragpur offers the ancient altars of worship of Brijeshwari (40kms), Jwalamukhi (25 Kms), Chintpurni (25 Kms) and Bagulamukhi (35 Kms). The Bajnath Temple beyond Palampur is amongst the oldest Shiva shrines. Kangra Valley is served by the beautiful narrow gauge train system that runs from Pathankot to Jogindernagar. Guler and Ranital stations are nearest to Garli- Pragpur (30 Kms).

## Trilokpur

**Figure10.17**

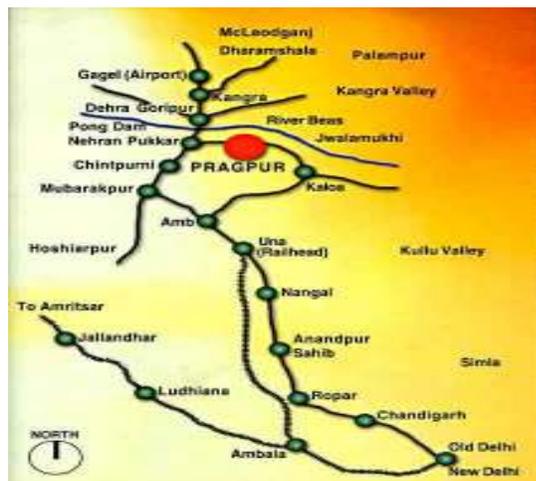


A Natural cave temple dedicated to Lord Shiva is famous for its stalactite and stalagmite formations. Here is natural cave at the base of hill, photography inside is prohibited. The cave has natural lime formations of centuries old and a temple of Lord Shiva is established since long time. Outside, the water stream which flow very strong in rainy season, has cut the stones in very magical shapes. The point is interesting and holy.

**History:** Once in ancient times, Lord Shiva was in deep meditation in this cave. At that time, the natural pillars that can be now seen around the Lingam of Lord Shiva, were of gold. Exactly above the Lingam of Lord Shiva was the shelter of the Lord Sheshnag . At that time, milk used to pour out of the mouth of the Lord Sheshnaga to the hairs of Lord Shiva, as if Lord Sheshnaga has spread hood of thousand mouths. At that time a shepherd came grazing his cattle in this dense forest and entered the cave. Seeing the golden pillars, greed crept to the heart of shepherd. Shepherd thought to cut some gold out of the pillars and take the same away while old man (Lord Shiva) was asleep. The shepherd cut some gold and came out of the cave. When he came out of the cave, he became blind. However when he would leave the piece of gold in the cave, he could see again. He tried this many times and every time with piece of gold with him, he would become blind and without piece of gold he could see again. When in meditation, Lord Shiva saw that the shepherd was committed to take the gold with him, Lord Shiva cursed him and shepherd along with all his cattle turned into stones. Lord Shiva thought that if such kind of things could happen in Satyuga, when 'Dharma' was at its peak, even worse would happen in times to come. Thus he converted the golden pillars into stones. Similarly in place of milk, water started pouring out of the mouths of Sheshnaga. This cave has been preserved in same natural form.

**Pragpur- Heritage village**

**Figure 10.18**



The area of Garli -Pragpur came within the Jaswan kingdom whose rulers were the cadets of Katoch of the Kangra lineage. Around the 16th" –17th century, bands of marauders started lying waste the pretty and peaceful foothills of the Kangra Valley. Prag Dei, a princess of the royal house of Jaswan, successfully organized resistance to these marauding bands. To commemorate this princess, an area was selected using ancient Indian shastras (texts) which, it was believed, received the good astral influences of prayers said for thousands of years at nearby shakti (primordial energy) temples of which three" Brajeshwari (Kangra), Chintpurni and Jwalamukhi are famous.

Here, Pragpur was founded and its lay- out carefully planned. Various clans and communities were allotted distinctive living spaces and by and large this continues to date. One of the important communities that settled at Garli-Pragpur and nearby hamlets such as Rakkar, Pir Salui etc. were some of the 52 clans of the hill Soods. Being enterprising, many made their fortunes at other destinations, especially Shimla. They, however, did not forget their root. At Pragpur and Garli, they built elegant havelis, mansions and Italianate buildings that are interspersed amongst lovely mud-plastered and slate-roofed houses which lie alongside streets paved with dressed cobbled stone. They also invested in schools, dharamshalas and water systems. In course of time, they settled where their economic interests lay (Thakur 1997).

In December 1997 the Government of Himachal Pradesh notified Pragpur as a Heritage Village and followed this up by making Garli -Pragpur Heritage Zone in 2002. This Heritage Zone has now been brought under a Special Area Development Authority (SADA) and is integrated with the national wetland -Maharana Pratap Sagar (Pong Dam) Tourism Development Project. Located at an elevation of 2000 feet above sea level, Heritage Village Pragpur is ideally suited to explore the Kangra Valley.

### **Heritage Zone**

**The Taal** - Dating before 1868, the Taal or pond forms the core of Pragpur village and serves as a recreational space for young and aged alike. It was constructed by the village brotherhood known as the Nehar Committee, which has records of its meetings since 1864. This body continues to be responsible for the maintenance of this ancient water system.

**Butail Niwas** -This is a unique building. Over a hundred years old, it was built by Lala Buta Mal, a scion of the Chaujjar Sood clan. It includes six identical apartments built for his six sons. These lie around a sunken courtyard. In warmer weather, this courtyard is flooded with water to provide cooling. The water for this has been brought by the Butails from the nearby Nalsuyah Khad and provides drinking water to several villages along the way.

**Nakki**- This is the one of the entrances to Heritage Village Pragpur. Since ancient times, the Rerumal family provided a water point for common use, the overflow of which falls into small tanks where the village people bathed and washed.

**The judge's court** -Completed in 1918, this is a splendid country manor designed in Indo- European tradition. The visionary behind this bold structure was Justice Sir Jai Lal. It stands in 12 acres of greens, and is just a short walk from the village core and the Taal. It is now run by the owning family as a heritage hotel. other places of interest within heritage village pragpur are Lala Rerumal Haveli built in 1931 by a Rais of Pragpur which has a Mughal style garden, pleasure terrace and a large water reservoir; Butail Mandir; Chaujjar Mansion; Courtyards of the Sood Clans, an ancient Shakti Mandir bearing inscriptions in the largely obsolete Tankry script; and Atiyalas or public platforms. The area is inhabited by many crafts people - weavers, basket makers, silversmiths, painters, musicians and tailors etc. The residents of Garli -Pragpur are hospitable. There is always a warm welcome for tourists and the area provides a safe passage.

### **Around Pragpur**

**River Beas** with its unspoilt beaches (6 Kms) offers a possibility of boating, swimming and angling during season. Seri and Naleti (4 Kms) are epitome of pastoral tranquillity. Natural underground seepage feeds both Garli and Pragpur. Lovely country walks radiate from Garli and Pragpur. These include meandering country paths through rolling hills and valleys with gurgling brooks and a meadow where mint grows wild. Rakkar (6 Kms) and Pir, Salui (20 Kms) are old Sood settlements. Other places worth visiting are Kalesar (16 Kms by road / 6 Kms by walk) on the banks of river Beas. It is famous for its panchtirthis waters and parasmani (touchstone).

**Kalesar:** 6 km from the Judge's Court. Local lore traces the origins of this temple complex to the exile of the Pandavas, an episode from the ancient Indian epic,

the Mahabharata. By the banks of the river Beas, this has some ancient temples and water pools. It is also quite a scenic spot for picnics.

**Figure 10.19: Kalesar**



**Jwalamukhi jee (Altitude: 1,737m)**

**The Flaming Goddess**Jwalamukhi is 34-km from Kangra and 56 km from Dharamsala. Recognised as one of the 51 Shaktipiths of India, Jwalamukhi's Devi Temple, tended by the followers of Goraknath, is set against a cliff.

The picturesque temple, built against a wooded spur, in the Indo-Sikh style, has a dome that was gilded by Mughal Emperor Akbar.

**Figure 10.20 Jawalaji Temple**



An eternally burning flame that issues from a hollow rock in the sanctum is considered the manifestation of the goddess Devi. During March-April and September-October every year colorful fairs are held during the Navaratra celebrations.

**The legend of Jwalamukhi**

Jwalamukhi is a famous temple of goddess Jwalamukhi, the deity of flaming mouth, built over some natural jets of combustible gas, believed to be the

manifestation of the Goddess. The building is modern with a gilt dome and pinnacles, and possesses a beautiful folding door of silver plates.

Under the gaze of the Dhauladhar range and set amidst the undulating hills that character sub-Himalayan Himachal Sati's tongue is believed to have fallen at Jwalamukhi and the goddess is manifest as tiny flames that burn a flawless blue through fissures in the age old rock.

Raja Bhumi Chand Katoch of Kangra, a great devotee of goddess Durga, dreamt of the sacred place and the Raja set people to find out the whereabouts of the site. The site was traced and the Raja built a temple. The burning flames and the complex have come to be known as Jwalamukhi. No idol is located in the temple but only the flames, which come out from the crevices of the rock, are worshipped. They are natural jets of combustible gas.

There is a small platform in front of the temple and a (check usage) big mandap where a huge brass bell presented by the King of Nepal is hung. Usually milk and water are offered and the ahutis or oblations are offered to the sacred flames in the pit, situated in the centre of the temple in between the floor pillars supporting the roof.

The deity is offered Bhog of Rabri or thickened milk, Misri or candy, seasonal fruits, milk and arti is done. There is a mystic Yantar or diagram of the goddess, which is covered with; shawls, ornaments and mantras are recited. The puja has different 'phases' and goes on practically the whole day. Arti is done five times in the day, Havan is performed once daily and portions of "Durga Saptasati" are recited. Maharaja Ranjit Singh paid a visit to the temple in 1815 and the dome of the temple was gold-plated by him. Just a few feet above the Jwalamukhi temple there is a six-foot deep pit with a circumference of about three-feet. At the bottom of this pit there is another small pit about one and a half feet deep with hot water bubbling all the time.

**Taragarh:** Formerly known as Alhilal (land of the crescent moon). Taragarh Palace was built in the early 1930s as a summer resort. It was bought by the royal family of Jammu & Kashmir in 1951 for the Dowager Maharani who lived there for several years. It is now run as a hotel by the present royal family. It is 45 Kms from Dharamsala.

## **Buddhist Circuit**

### **Dharamsala**

#### **His Holiness' residence**

The Residence of His Holiness Dalai Lama is opposite the Tsuglag Khang, or the Central Cathedral, which is about ten minutes' walk from McLeod Gunj. Time permitting; His Holiness receives visitors in public audiences. Visitors can apply for public audiences at the Branch Security Office in McLeod Gunj, near Hotel Tibet. Applications for private audiences, however, need to be made in writing to His Holiness' Secretary several months in advance.

#### **Exploring Tibetan Culture**

The cultural life in Dharamsala is colorful and rich in tradition. The fairs and festivals are occasions for relaxation. To the local Indian traditions, Tibetan refugees have added their own festivals such as Losar (Tibetan New Year) and His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday which is celebrated on July 6 with the performance of Tibetan, Nepali and Gaddi dances revealing the cultural mosaic that McLeod Gunj is. More recently, tourists and students from the west have added rock music, stage musicals and contribute other Western influences to this melting pot of peoples and cultures.

#### **Tibetan institute of performing arts**

TIPA is about fifteen minutes' walk from McLeod Gunj. Established in 1959, TIPA was the very first institution in exile. It is the home of Lhamo, the arrestingly colorful and unique folk opera of Tibet. TIPA preserves a wide repertoire of musical, dance and theatrical traditions from Tibet. To balance the weight of tradition in its repertoire, the institute has a modern Theater Troupe which puts on contemporary plays. TIPA also maintains its own workshops for making costumes, masks and musical instruments.

#### **The Norbulingka institute**

The Norbulingka Institute of Tibetan Culture was founded by the Department of Religion and Culture to preserve and promote Tibetan art and culture in exile. It derives its name from the His Holiness the Dalai Lama's beautiful summer residence, the Norbulingka (Jewel Garden), set in parkland two kilometers from Lhasa. Fearing

for the future of Tibet's cultural heritage, the Seventh Dalai Lama, Kelsang Gyatso, established institutes of arts and science there in 1754.

Today, with occupied-Tibet undergoing the bleakest period in its history, the Norbulingka Institute in Dharamsala has taken the initiative to preserve the roots of Tibetan culture in exile. The institute is sited in a scenic valley below Dharamsala. When completed, it will include a Centre for Higher Tibetan Learning.

### **Tibetan medical and Astro institute**

In 1961, a small dispensary of traditional Tibetan medicine was opened in Dharamsala to cope with the flood of Tibetan refugees arriving every day. Now situated near Gangchen Kyishong, the Tibetan Medical Institute is a huge complex in a spacious compound where the fundamentals of traditional Tibetan medical practice are taught to over fifty students per year. The TMAI has a dispensary, an in-patient unit and a surgical ward. This clinic, as well as its branch in McLeod Gunj, treats patients from all over the world.

About two hundred different pills are produced at the institute and distributed to thirty six branch clinics in India and Nepal. They are also mailed abroad to meet the growing demand for herbal medicines in the west. The phenomenal growth of the institute is an indication of the reputation Tibetan medicine has acquired in international circles. Tibetan medicine dates back more than 2,500 years, and respected physicians and researchers worldwide are increasingly recognizing the effectiveness of these natural cures.

The institute today is staffed by a group of Tibetan physicians \_ including His Holiness the Dalai Lama's two personal doctors \_ who carry out research and chemical analysis on over 2,294 drugs. TMAI physicians also go abroad at the invitation of universities, medical institutions and groups of patients.

### **Tibetan astrology**

TMAI also has an astrological department. Besides providing training in the exacting science of Tibetan astrology, it publishes an annual lunar calendar based on the Tibetan system of astrological calculations. The tradition of Tibetan astrology dating back more than two thousand years. Individual horoscopes are made by the department on request.

### **Tibetan handcraft centre**

This carpet-weaving centre is a non-profit venture established to promote the traditional Tibetan craft of carpet-making and to generate employment in the Tibetan community.

The Handicraft Centre is near the McLeod Gunj Post Office. It has a showroom in the town's main street.

### **Namgyal monastery**

Namgyal Monastery was founded by the Third Dalai Lama in the late sixteenth century to assist him in carrying out his religious activities. Since then, the monastery has exclusively served the Dalai Lamas. In Tibet, the 175 Namgyal monks and their monastery were located in the Potala Palace, performing spiritual duties and religious ceremonies for both the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government. A distinctive feature of this monastery is its diversity of practice: prayers and rituals of all the major schools of Tibetan Buddhism are performed by Namgyal monks (Handa 2004).

The monastery is now situated next to the Central Cathedral. On the path along the monastery, young monks can often be seen playing badminton and in the afternoon and evening practicing debate in the courtyard leading to His Holiness' residence. At present, the monastery has more than 180 monks, of which the younger monks study the major texts of Buddhist Sutra and Tantra.

Namgyal Monastery has also a cafe, bookshop and guest house adjacent to the Tsuglag Khang.

### **Tsuglag Khang (central cathedral)**

Though a plain and utilitarian substitute for its far more splendid namesake in Lhasa, also known as the Jokhang, the Tsuglag Khang is nevertheless fascinating and peaceful. Situated opposite the residence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Tsuglag Khang is known to the local Indians as the Main Temple. It houses three main images: that of the Sakyamuni Buddha, Padmasambhava and Avalokitesvara, the Buddha of Compassion, of whom the Dalai Lama is the current emanation. The principal image is that of Sakyamuni Buddha, measuring three meters high and made of gilded bronze. To its right are the images of Padmasambhava and Avalokitesvara which are both facing Tibet.

The image of Avalokitesvara has a moving history. The original jewel-encrusted image in the Jokhang (Central Cathedral) in Lhasa, was commissioned by King Songtsen Gampo in the seventh century. Since then it had become an object of unparalleled devotion for people throughout Central Asia. When Red Guards ransacked the Jokhang during the Cultural Revolution, this image and others were tossed into the streets. From these heaps of broken statues and other religious artifacts, some Tibetans managed to salvage and smuggle out a wrathful and a peaceful aspect of the face images of the Avalokitesvara. Passing through many hands, these face images finally found their way to India via Nepal in 1967. One year later, another wrathful image of Avalokitesvara and one of Amitabha, the Buddha of Boundless Light, reached India through Nepal in a similar way.

These faces are encased as precious relics into the newly-sculpted image of the Buddha of Compassion in Tsuglag Khang. The new Avalokitesvara image, which was consecrated in 1970 (the Iron Dog Year of the Tibetan calendar), is made of silver and has eleven faces, a thousand arms and a thousand eyes.

In addition, Tsuglag Khang houses the entire set of the Buddhist canons, Kagyur and Tengyur. Kagyur is the direct teaching of the Buddha while Tengyur is the collection of later commentaries on Kagyur by Indian Buddhist scholars.

In 1992 a new prayer hall was added to the Tsuglag Khang complex with fine frescoes of the Kalachakra tantra cycle. The Central Cathedral is also the site of public prayers, sermons and certain religious festivities, including monastic dances. A constant stream of devotees turn prayer wheels as they circumambulate the cathedral.

### **Namgyalma stupa**

Surrounded by prayer wheels, this Buddhist stupa, is located in the centre of McLeod Gunj. Erected as a memorial to those Tibetans who lost their lives fighting for a free Tibet, Namgyalma Stupa stands as a monument to the determination of a suppressed people to preserve their distinctive way of life against overwhelming odds. With a statue of the Sakyamuni Buddha enshrined in a small chamber, the stupa is built in the tradition of the third century Indian Emperor Ashoka and represents peace and progress. Day and night, devotees turn prayer wheels as they circumambulate the stupa, reciting mantras.

### **Gaden Choeling nunnery**

Gaden Choeling Nunnery, near Yongling School, on Jogiwara Road, was started in 1973 by two devoted nuns, Ngawang Chozin and Ngawang Peldon. Beginning with only twelve nuns, the present strength of the nunnery is over a hundred. The daily routine in the nunnery consists of meditation, prayer and debate, the reading of scriptures, the performance of religious ceremonies and the training of young nuns.

### **Dolma Ling and Shugseb nunneries**

These nunneries were founded in the early 1990s to house and educate nuns escaping religious repression in Tibet. Shugseb lies in a quiet forest setting; take the path beside Om Restaurant and descend for around a kilometer.

Nuns from the original Shugseb nunnery, near Lhasa, have spearheaded many courageous freedom demonstrations and are today either expelled or imprisoned. Shugseb in Dharamsala is a tranquil retreat for 42 nuns from Tibet, many of them former political prisoners, who follow the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism. The original Shugseb was founded by the legendary twentieth century female saint, Ani Lochen (or Jetsun Rinpoche), who died aged 130 in 1950.

Dolma Ling is a twenty-minute ride south-east of Dharamsala, neighboring the Norbulingkha Institute. The four-acre site, designed to accommodate up to 300 nuns in future, currently houses over 100 "new arrival" nuns from Tibet, many former victims of Chinese torture and oppression. Phase Two of this ambitious project will add a temple and Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies to the current accommodation infrastructure.

### **Dip-Tse-Chokling monastery**

The idyllic, golden-roofed Dip-Tse-chokling monastery can be seen in the wooded valley from the Central Cathedral and several other points in McLeod Gunj. It is located below McLeod Gunj. Apart from the Tibetan monks, Tsechokling has a small number of foreign Buddhist students who study and reside there. It also offers a guest house.

### **Nechung monastery**

Just below the Tibetan Library in Gangchen Kyishong is the splendid new Nechung Monastery, the seat of Nechung, the state oracle and protector-deity of Tibet. Nechung has acted as spiritual guide to the Tibetan Government since the eighth century. The physical medium is called Nechung Kuten. When the medium enters into a trance-like state, the protector-deity, Dorjee Drakten, takes possession of his body and gives advice and predictions to the Dalai Lama and Tibetan leaders in exile. He is especially associated with the Dalai Lamas and plays an important role in the search for the incarnations of each Dalai Lama. About seventy monks study here and carry on the secret and sacred ritual surrounding the medium.

The original Nechung Monastery in Lhasa had 115 monks in 1959. The monastery was razed to the ground during the Cultural Revolution. However, six monks managed to escape to India to continue the complex traditions of the Nechung institution. Nechung Monastery also runs a popular guest house and cafe.

### **Gadong monastery**

Located in Gangchen Kyishong, Gadong Monastery is the seat of the Tibetan Government's second oracle, known as Gadong. Today Gadong Monastery has fifteen monks and is largely supported by its restaurant and guest house.

### **Tushita retreat centre**

Founded in 1972 by the late Lama Thubten Yeshi, the spiritual director of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, Tushita is situated just above McLeod Gunj in a very quiet and peaceful wood, a characteristic which makes it an ideal place for meditation and spiritual retreats. The centre is residential and open throughout the year for both individual and group retreats.

Tushita provides frequent courses on various aspects of Tibetan Buddhism. A schedule of upcoming courses is always available. In the late 1980s, a young Spanish boy, born in Barcelona, was recognized as the reincarnation of Lama Thubten Yeshi.

### **Tibetan Children's Village (TCV)**

The Tibetan children's Village runs a chain of fifteen schools, with over ten thousand students, in different parts of India. The main village, known as the Upper TCV, is based on a hill two kilometers from McLeod Ganj. It educates and looks after

the upbringing of about three thousand students, most of whom are orphans and new refugees from Tibet.

Upper TCV consists of thirty eight homes, four hostels and a baby room to care for months-old infants through to boys and girls of sixteen. It has modern school buildings ranging from nursery to high school, sports grounds, staff quarters, a dispensary, a handicraft centre, etc. These are spread over an area of about forty three acres.

### **Trekking in Kangra Valley**

Trekking in Kangra valley is an amazing experience for those who spend the time with nature's praise worthy gifts of landscapes, springs, mountain ranges and lush green environments. There are many trekking trails in Kangra that are very challenging for the novices and interesting for the experienced trekkers.

All the treks which commence from Kangra Valley cross the Dhauladhar Range and terminate in the adjoining Chamba Valley at one one point or another. Most important among these are Laka Pass (also called Inderhar or Inderhara) trek and the Minkiani Pass trek are the most popular owing to their commencement at Dharamsala/McLeodgunj.

#### **Trek -I Dharamshala-Laka Pass (strenuous)**

A short, popular and strenuous trek of 5-6 days, entailing steep ascent/descents of hundreds of meters every day, even after crossing the pass. Generally open after the first week of June, the passage becomes easier between 20 August and 30 September, when there is less snow.

Cave shelters and rest houses en route; a small group (4 to 6 persons) need not carry tents. The path is well defined all the way and a porter or guide is not necessary but could be helpful. Combining this crossing with a return over the Minkiani Pass makes an ideal circular tour of about 10 days.

#### **Trek -II McLeodgunj-Minikiani Pass-Chamba (hard)**

A pleasant, moderately strenuous trek of 5-6 days across the Dhauladhar; 3 nice lakes en route. Best period: 20 May to 30 June and 20 August to 10 October.

#### **Trek -III Dharamshala-Talang Pass (strenuous)**

Takes seven days and is fairly strenuous and less frequented. Dadh, a small village on the Dharamsala-Palampur road, is the starting point. Best period: 1 June to 30 June and 15 August to 30 September.

#### **Trek -IV Baijnath-Parai Jot (hard)**

A moderately strenuous outing of 5-6days. Parai Jot, also called Jalsu or Sureh Pass, is the first crossing open over the Dhauladhar in a normal season; from mid May to mid October. Best period: 15 May to 30 June and 20 August to 10 October.

#### **Trek -V Bhim Gasutri Pass (strenuous).**

From McLeodGanj to Chamba, roughly midway between the Minikiani and Laka Passes. Rarely crossed, even by Gaddis living in this district; however, of notable scenic interest. On the N side one can descend directly to the main road beside the Ravi river, or traverse NW into the vally of lakes descending under the Gag and Minikiani Passes, down to Drakund and Donali.

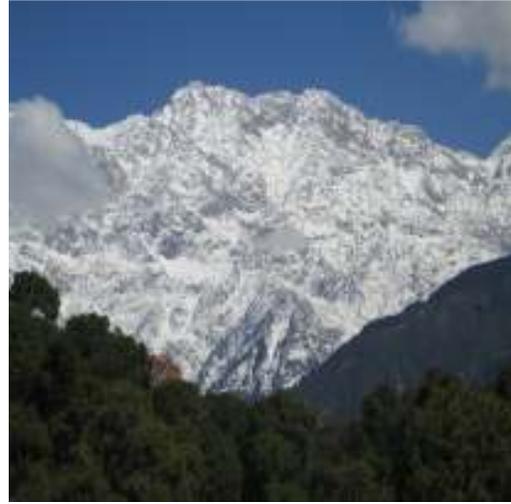
#### **Billing to Rajgundha day trek**

This trek, also known as the Shepherds trail trek, is limited to people experienced in travel in rugged backcountry and with good know-how of hiking and camping. One of the more challenging routes, it takes one from the lush green Kullu valley to the stark landscapes of Bara Bhangal range. But for the trouble, it is a very fruitful trek that people looking for an isolated, in-tune-with-nature routes.

**Figure 10.21: Birds in wild**



### 10.22: Majestic View of Dharamshala



**10.23: The Beauty of Pong Dam**

