PREFACE

"Mountains have entered the inner core of society since the dawn of human awareness. All the major and many minor religions render mountains spiritually significant. And despite the spread of modern scepticism, these emotional, religious or spiritual forces prevail throughout much of the world. For development agencies to ignore them is not only to court failure and exasperation but is also to risk the loss of a vital part of our world heritage and to reduce a critical pillar of our cultural diversity. The human mind continues to derive inspiration from the mountain experience."

——Mountain Agenda

The mountain ecosystems are the unique creation on this planet having altogether different characteristics. They have been regarded as the abode of gods, symbol of peace, tranquility and austerity and cradle of civilizations. They are inhabited by the richest human cultures. In Hindu mythology the mountains have been considered sacred, connecting the three levels of existence: heaven, earth and hell. Every aspect of mountain land and life excites human imagination. Yet, the mountain world today is in a perilous ecological state. The study area typically symbolizes the same. It forms the southern aspect of Dhauladhar Mountain Ranges within Gaj khad and Manuni khad extending from Gharoh to Sidhwar on southern line. The area is fastly degrading due to biotic pressure, development and anti-nature consumerist life styles. Unique locality factors of the area include second highest rainfall in India, highest seismicity, loose and sliding strata. The seat of Tibetan Government in exile under spiritual head — The Dalai Lama and vast tourism potential and nearest snow line with panoramic view of Kangra Valley — one of the most beautiful and open valleys of the world, further add to the importance of the place. But pressures are exceeding the carrying capacity of the area and a state of uncertainty has reached. Nothing planned and concrete has been/being done in a synergized, holistic and participative manner except few attempts of planning by the Britishers.
in pre independence era. Most of the sectors/institutions are working in isolation and there is no collective agenda to attend the issue of environment management in an integrated manner.

“Mountains are the water towers to modern civilization. Their degradation is a matter of the utmost gravity and threatens development sooner or later in most areas of the world”, warns the Mountain Agenda discussed in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development at Rio de Janiero in June 1992. Mountains still provide the mechanism which causes precipitation from the global circulation. But, owing to ecological degradation, the regional hydrological cycle is being seriously affected and, if this continues, mountains role as water towers will be ceased. The “green house effect” in the mountains will have serious repercussions. Says the Mountain Agenda. “A warming trend in mountain regions that support glaciers and ice caps would not only cause an increase in the altitude of the snowline, it would also increase water runoff by melting ice and snow....The glaciers themselves are reservoirs and were they to melt the runoff regime would change dramatically and serious water shortage may occur.”

Present research is a timely response to such situation. Major focus in this probe is on (i) action examination of current policies pertaining to the environment (ii) environment impact assessment of the study area and (iii) evolving an integrated strategy/model for managing the environment. The whole scheme of things is divided into six chapters. First chapter elaborates the concept and trends of environment management. Second one refers to the review of literature, nature and scope, objectives, research methodology and limitations of the study. In third chapter environment status and policy framework are reviewed. Chapter four details the twelve case studies in four key areas for the impact assessment of the research area. Fifth chapter is on the issue of conflict resolution while sharing natural resources and managing ecology. The concluding chapter sums up the summary, findings,
conclusions and suggestions. An integrated strategy for managing the area in an ecologically sustainable manner has been evolved. Apart from discussing sector-specific models, a perfect, integrated, dynamic, strategic and replicable model for the management of environment in the study area has been innovated. A twin-track sheet for assessing intra and inter-sectoral integration has also been devised.

It is believed that present research will be of much practical utility to the environment managers, planners, administrators and researchers and help to the communities as a sustainable survival strategy.

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