CHAPTER 2

STUDY AREA

PHYSICAL ASPECT

Geographical Location

The present study area (Figure 2.1) Shimla city, is the capital of the state of Himachal Pradesh in north India. It is situated in the north of Kalka, on the lower Himalaya at 31° 06’ N latitude and 77° 10’ E longitude at an average elevation of 2,421 meters (7,262 feet) above the mean sea level (Balokhra, 2001). The Shimla city is part of an administrative district bearing the same name. Out of 5,131 square kilometers of the Shimla district, 28.53 square kilometer area is covered by Shimla city (Municipal Corporation, 2001). The Shimla Municipal area has been divided into twenty five wards (Figure 2.2). The population of the city according to the 2001 Census is 1,42,555 living in 37,756 households.

In the north of the city, snow covered mountain peaks of the Great Central Himalaya can be seen in a crescent shape and in the south beyond the lesser and Siwalik Himalaya are the Punjab plains. The city is spread mainly over seven hill tops and the connecting spurs. These are Elysium Hill (2,257 m), Summer Hill (2,070 m), Jakhoo Hill (2,449 m), Prospect Hill (2,175 m), Observatory Hill (2,135 m), Inverarm (2,160 m) (Bhasin, 2007) and Bantony (2,200 m). Besides these the prominent relief feature of city of Shimla is The Ridge.
Figure 2.1
LOCATION MAP OF STUDY AREA
SHIMLA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
2001

Source of map: The Census of India
Figure 2.2
SHIMLA MUNICIPAL AREA
WARD-WISE MAP
2001

Source of map: The Census of India

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Regional Linkages

Shimla is well connected by a network of roads, railway and air from different destinations in the northern India. It is about one hundred and eighteen kms. northeast of Chandigarh, the combined capital of Punjab and Haryana, and about eighty kms. from Kalka, the gateway city at the foot of the Himalaya. Shimla is excellently connected by road. In the year 1856 Shimla-Kalka cart road was built. Shimla has been the only hill station in the northern India which has been served by the rail link since long. On March 31, 1891 the railway line was opened for goods (Kumar, 1993). This present rail link commonly known as the ‘Shimla toy train’ is one century old narrow gauge train. It was opened for passengers in 1903 and it has already celebrated its centenary in 2003. Shimla is also connected by air services since 1987. The nearest airport is located at a distance of twenty kms. from Shimla at Jubberhatti. It has a comparatively small air strip but it offers a regular service.

Climate

The state of Himachal Pradesh lies in the sub-tropics. Its climate ranges from subtropical continental monsoonal climate in the lower areas to frigid continental climate in the higher areas. Climate has played a major role in the growth of the place since the beginning. The most appealing characteristic of Shimla, especially to the Europeans was its climate. Shimla experiences four seasons in a year. A main characteristic of Shimla’s climate is the prevalence of ‘western disturbances’ and related weather during the winter season and monsoons during the rainy season. In the following paragraphs description is given of the weather characteristics of different seasons experienced in Shimla (based on Climatological Tables 1951-1980, India Meteorological department, Government of India).

1. **Winter Season**: From January to March the winter season is characterized by stormy weather along with snow and low average temperatures. The mean minimum and maximum temperatures are 3.83 and 11.43° C respectively. Average relative humidity in this season is around 51.6 %. Frost is a common phenomenon in this season. This season is greatly influenced by the passage of a series of “western disturbances” over the Himalaya.
2. **Summer Season:** This season extends from April to June. This second quarter of the year is characterized by dry and sunny weather along with dust and heat. In this season westerly winds blow in the region filling the air with clouds of dust. Slight rain along with the hail in this season is common and is due to the local thunder storms. Mean diurnal range of temperature is also high in this season. The mean minimum and maximum temperatures are 13.63 and 22.13°C respectively. Average relative humidity in this season is around 43.83%.

3. **Rainy Season:** July to September is the monsoon season with heavy rains and damp weather. Average relative humidity is quite high in this period of the year being around 85.16%. The hills during this season are covered by mist most of the times. The mean minimum and maximum temperatures are 14.4 and 21.76°C respectively. The rains in this season are mostly attributed to the monsoon winds.

4. **Post-Monsoon Season:** From October to December the monsoons withdraw. The months of October and November are calm and bright. December is stormy with winter conditions commencing (Kumar, 1993). The mean minimum and maximum temperatures are 7.33 and 15.26°C respectively. The relative humidity decreases to about 49.6%. Wind direction is mostly southerly in this season.

**Temperature**

January usually is the coldest month of the year and June is the hottest. Then from July the temperatures decrease till December. The maximum temperature reaching to about 32°C in summers and minimum to -4°C in winters (Climatological Tables 1951-1980, India Meteorological Department, Government of India).

**Rainfall**

Shimla receives good amount of rainfall every year. Most of the rainfall occurs in the period of monsoon that is from July to September. In March, April and May the rainfall is scanty and mostly due to local thunder storms. In June the westerly winds bring lots of dust from the plains which settle with the onset of rains in July. In December there are hail storms. The relative humidity is the highest (about 85.16%) in the months of July and
September. The average annual rainfall of Shimla is about 1424.8mm (Climatological Tables 1951-1980, India Meteorological Department, Government of India).

**Atmospheric Pressure**

The mean monthly atmospheric pressure in Shimla is the lowest in the month of July and highest in the month of November. In July it is about 776.65 and in November 783.6 hpa (hpa stands for Hectapascal and 1 Hectapascal = 1 Millibar) (Climatological Tables 1951-1980, India Meteorological Department, Government of India). From July it starts rising till November. In December, January, February, and March, the atmospheric pressure does not change very much, and remains stable.

**Winds**

In Shimla the mean wind speed is the highest in the month of March and lowest in the month of August. It is 4.1 kms. per hour in March and 1.7 kms. per hour in August. From August the wind speed rises gradually till March and then it starts decreasing till August. In summer season mostly south westerly wind blows.

**Natural Vegetation**

The vegetation in Shimla is of Himalayan moist temperate type. Shimla, because of its large number of deodar trees, has been referred to as “the hill of deodars” (Kumar, 1993). Besides this, the main species of trees here are pinus, cedrus, rhododendron, fir, and oak.

Shimla Municipal forest has always surrounded the town on all sides. It comprises almost the whole of Shimla, except for the area covered by the buildings, roads, private estates, etc. The total forest-covered area in 1904 was 2,141 acres out of which 457 acres was reserved and 1684 acres was under the unclassed forest. The Municipal forests were divided into three types - deodar forest, ban oak forest, and the chil forest. In most of the places they are sharply defined, except for few where they merge with one another (Punjab District Gazetteer, Simla District, 1904). At present 843.91 hectares (341.525 acres) of area is of unclassed forest within the limits of Municipal Corporation. This is about 8.439 km², which is about 30% of the total i.e. 28 km² of the Municipal area. This mainly consists of deodar, ban oak, blue pine, chir pine, etc. amongst the natural trees. According to the Range
Forest Officer (Department of Urban Forest, Shimla) the area under forest is decreasing year by year due to construction activities and more and more concretization.

**Geomorphology**

Himalaya is a young mountain system with a weak geological configuration. It is prone to crumpling and deformation. It was formed due to the northward thrust of the Indian plate and its collision with Eurasian (Tibetan) plate. This resulted in the uplift of sediments and extensive folding and faulting. The strata have high angles of dip. Geologically Himalaya have been divided into three parts. First is the Northern or Tibetan zone, north of the central axis of the Great Himalaya. It comprises of marine highly fossiliferous sedimentary rocks, ranging in age from Palaeozoic to Eocene. Second is the central or the Himalayan zone, comprising of most of the Himalaya. It is mainly composed of the crystalline and metamorphic rocks like gneisses and schists, which are unfossiliferous. Third geologic division is of outer or the Sub-Himalayan zone. This corresponds mainly to the Siwaliks and the Lesser Himalaya. It comprises of sedimentary deposits of Tertiary period (Wadia, 1975).

Geology of the area is mainly comprised of the carbonaceous system. This comprises of the Krol, the Infra Krol, the Blaini and the Simla slates (Infra Blaini). Simla slates are the lowest beds, they are succeeded by Blaini Group. This Blaini Group is overlaid by a band of black carbonaceous slate. Above this is the mass of quartzite and schist. Above this is the Krol group consisting of carbonaceous slates and carbonaceous and crystalline limestone.

... when the Blaini group was being deposited the spot now occupied by Shimla was a sea on whose surface icebergs floated melted and dropped the stones which they carried on their surface or embedded in the substance (Buck, 1925, p. 1).

Shimla lies in the Lesser Himalaya. It has high altitude, steep slopes, uncertain climate, fragile ecology and a tenuous geology. It comprises of many folds and faults (Kumar, 1993). The crushed native bedrock makes the area weak. The weakness of the area has become more of a concern due to excessive building construction, which is putting more pressure on the weak geological understratum. The problems due to the anthropogenic activities are compounded by mismanagement and ill-planning of the area. The Himalaya are susceptible to soil erosion. The major causative factor of the soil erosion in this region is deforestation. Deforestation is increasing day by day with the increase in the population and
the increasing demand for wood. This process of deforestation forms a positive feedback mechanism in which deforestation results in more deforestation. Changes in the physical configuration of an area have a direct impact on its environment. Shimla has been considered as an “Anthropogenically modified Landscape” (Pirazizy, 1992). Here “anthropogenic interferences have lead to alterations in the pace, frequency and even the magnitude of the modifying process” (Pirazizy, 1992).

HUMAN AND SOCIAL ASPECTS

Demography

Although no regular census was done in India until 1881, yet there is evidence to show that the population of Shimla has been increasing ever since the establishment of the town. Decadal population figures Shimla are available since 1901. The population of the town in 1901 was 13,960. Then there was a sharp increase in the population of the town in 1951, when it was 46,150. The reason of this rise was after Independence shift of the capital of Punjab government to Shimla and the influx of refugees from Pakistan. The population then declined in 1961 due to the shift of Punjab capital to Chandigarh (Pobby, 1996). Since 1961 the population has been increasing constantly. According to 2001 Census the population of the Shimla Municipal Corporation area was 1, 42,555 comprising 81,186 males and 61,369 females. The Sex ratio then was 756 females per 1000 males.

Population density in the town has recorded an increase. Population density was 4,171 persons per sq. km. in 1991. According to 2001 Census it was 4,996 persons per sq. km. The literacy rate according to 2001 Census was 83.54 %. Female literacy was 75.56% and 85.66% was the male literacy rate. Hindus at present (as per 2001 Census) form the majority of the population and are the largest religious group. Some 93.41% of the total population is Hindus. Other religious groups are Sikhs (2.98%), Muslims (1.55%), Buddhists (1.34%), Christians (0.58%) and Jains (0.13%).

Social Aspect

Before the 19th century (pre-colonial) India was characterized by a feudal society and an economy that was more or less self sufficient (Kanwar, 1999, pp. 40-41). As the economy changed there occurred changes in the society also. In the feudal society, people produced for their own needs and were not dependent on the market. Then the hill stations
came up, which was seen as a phenomenon of 19th century. Hill stations in India mostly came up during the British rule and were viewed as a ‘social place’ (Kanwar, 1999) for the British to escape from the sultry weather of the plains as well as the natives. Emergence of hill stations was the social response of the colonial community. With the intrusion of the British, there occurred some changes in all spheres of life in the hill stations and they no longer remained a self-sufficient economy and a feudal society.

The British tried their best to replicate the social environment of their homeland in the hill stations. The names they gave to the residences in Shimla evoked a picture of European countryside. In the hill stations the British ignored their officialdom, which was being carried out in the rest of the Subcontinent. Even the daily pattern of life was very much different from the rest of the Subcontinent. They had a wide array of social institutes to keep them entertained. These included assembly halls, residential clubs, gymkhanas, libraries, theaters, sports and recreation clubs, etc. Besides the social institutes there was a centrally and prominently built church, which acted as the place for religious activities (Kennedy, 1996).

The British had always regarded good education as an essential part in the upbringing of their children. This factor resulted in most of the hill stations in the country coming up with many good educational institutions during the period. The British got their families, along with their children to these hill stations, most of which had excellent climate, for good health, along with the advantage of good education. In Shimla also, there are some old schools, built during the British times, still running with a good reputation. There were four printing presses in Shimla which were set up during the British time. News papers like ‘Simla News’ and ‘The Pioneer Bulletin’ were famous. But in general, the education level of the natives was poor and there were very few who could read and write (Punjab District Gazetteers, Simla District, 1904).

When formulating the rules to govern this place, the British did not pay much heed to the cultural values of the natives. This could be seen in some incidences where a person was honored when he breached some rule of the culture of the natives. Although slaughtering of cows was prohibited by the native law, but the breach of this rule was honored (Barr and Ray Desmond, 1978). In short, the British created an English (Christian) enclave that was surrounded and served by the natives, but ruled by the British law. The British were dependent on the indigenous population for the services to sustain their day to day lives.
Shimla was set up by the British as a home away from home, and so it was imperative that they would exploit the services of locals (indigenous) as much as possible. Pre-Independence Shimla society saw the work being extorted out of the indigenous population through a system called “Begar”. This work was done through the locals without paying them any wages for the same. At that time, the British befriended the class of society which was at the top of the self made pyramidal structure. In the pyramidal society the higher castes or the village deity were at the top and the rest of the castes were placed below them. Segregation was a prime feature of the society of Shimla at that time (Kanwar, 1999). So in this type of social structure exploitation occurred of the lower most strata of the people. It were the people at the bottom of the societal pyramid who were most affected by the begar system.

In the post-Independence period the society started changing. Social systems like begar vanished but the exploitation did not finish totally. The place of the British rulers was taken, to an extent, by the local elites. The lower strata of people in the society kept serving. But this time they provided services to the local elites. The government implemented many reforms in the society to stop exploitation but it has been a gradual process.

Present day society of Shimla is working-class dominant society. The pyramidal structure of society due to caste and religious system has diluted and now the society structure is primarily money and income based. Wealth has replaced caste in the setup.

**Economy**

Since its establishment, Shimla has remained an important center of trade because of its location especially along the Hindustan-Tibet route. The analysis of Shimla city’s economy is understood to reflect the economy of the surrounding region as well. The area surrounding the city acts like hinterland of the city. Both work in unison with each other’s development and are interdependent. The city is the highest order service centre for the whole Shimla district. The flow of services and goods occurs between the city and the hinterland. The people from the hinterland come to the city to sell their produce and avail the facilities of a well-organized service centre. The entire Shimla district feeds the economy of the city and vice-versa. Thus the city acts as a growth pole for the hinterland.
Agriculture and horticulture are the mainstays of economy of Shimla district. The total geographical area of Shimla district is 5,07,000 hectares. Out of this the total cropped area is 97,400 hectares which is 19.21% of the total area and the total forested area is 1,28,500 hectares which is 25.34% of the entire area (Statistical Outline of Himachal Pradesh 2003-04).

Apple and potato are the major agricultural products in the district and thus a major source of income for the local population. Apple export of Shimla district was 18,482 tones in 1999 which in terms of boxes was 10, 16,510 units. In the year 2000, on the other hand, 2,46,650 tones of apple (1,35,65,777 boxes) was exported. Production of potato was 76,000 tones in 2000-01 and 44,160 tones in 2003-04. It is anticipated that Shimla will continue to act as a major collection and distribution center, along with fast increasing production of fruits and cash crops in its hinterland.

The geo-climatic features of the district are quite congenial for the development of horticulture. During recent years, horticulture has become a prime concern of economy. A shift of focus from agriculture to horticulture in the economic pattern has revolutionized the economic condition of people of the district. This has led to commercialization, industrialization, marketing and urbanization of the district.

Besides agriculture, the presence of a number of factories and enterprises directly reflect the economic status of any area. In the year 2001 Shimla district had a total of 152 factories including small scale and large scale units, with 3,853 people earning their livelihood through these. The number of factories increased to 154 in the year 2003 with the number of workers increasing to 3,926.

Shimla district had a total of 15,186 industrial and commercial enterprises in 1998 out of which 1,225 were agriculture-based. The total number of individuals working in all the enterprises was 43,005, out of which 2,219 people were involved in agriculture based jobs and the rest in non agriculture based (Statistical Outline of Himachal Pradesh 2003-04).

The road services (especially the passenger transport) of any state which can ensure a smooth and orderly flow of people transportation is essential for the economic growth of the area. Shimla city has a total of 273 bus services plying (as on July 2008) on a daily basis going to the rural areas. Considering that on an average a bus carries 44 people, a total of 12,012 persons come to the city daily using the government transport services (Data from Himachal Road Transport Corporation). This is the direct reflection of the economic interdependence of the city and its immediate hinterland.
**Tourist Attraction**

Shimla has been on the national and international tourist map. It is famous as a summer resort and a tourist place. Its scenic beauty and the British heritage are major attractions for the tourists. Shimla is famous for its snowfall. In winters when the city is covered with a blanket of snow, it looks like a ‘city of dreams’. Not just the city itself but many places around Shimla are also major attractions. The valleys on either side of The Ridge are deep and covered with forest. There are a large number of tourist places around Shimla. These include Kufri, Fagu, Mashobra, Naldehra, Carignano, Chail, Kasauli, Narkanda, etc.

The number of tourists coming to Shimla has been increasing. The number of total tourists in the year of 2005 was 18,22,059. Out of this, foreign tourists were 64,752 and Indian tourists were 17,57,307. There occurs a seasonal variation in tourist flow. The peak of the tourist inflow to the city is in the months of summer from May to July. Again it increases in the month of October and is the maximum in December near Christmas.

One of the biggest attractions of Shimla is the Summer Festival, for which tourists come from all over the country. Besides this, other attractions in the city and its surroundings areas are fairs held in various places around it like the Sippy fair of Mashobra. There are natural beauty spots like Glen and Chadwik falls; religious places like Jakhoo Temple, Dhingu Temple, Kali Bari Temple, Kamna Devi, Tara Devi, and Christ Church. The Ice Skating Rink is a major attraction during the winters. Places of interest all through the year are The Mall, The Ridge and famous ten walks of the city (Bhasin, 2007).

‘The Ridge’ is the popular flat span above The Mall Road, between the Christ Church on one side and the Scandal Point on the other. It was constructed in 1875. There is a large water storage tank under The Ridge. The Ridge slopes towards The Mall Road. The Mall has been the main business center of the city since the beginning. It has been famous as a shopping area for the elites of the society. During the British period it was mainly a shopping place for the Europeans. In the present times the Europeans have been replaced by the local elites. The traders and the shopkeepers here have played a major role in the establishment and the growth of the town.

Shimla has a rich cultural heritage. Along The Ridge and The Mall, the British established unique heritage features. Some of them have been marked as ‘Heritage buildings’ by the Department of Town and Country Planning, Shimla. Some of these are the Vice Regal Lodge, now named as Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Rothney Castle,
Railway Board Building, Gaiety Theatre and Gorton Castle. These heritage buildings also act as an attraction for the tourists.

**Heritage Features**

**Bungalows**

Bungalows were typical of the hill stations, established and developed by the British. The British were fond of bungalows as these would present a landscape similar to their homeland. The bungalows had unique architecture and settings. The British preferred beautiful natural surroundings with commanding sites and with maximum sun for the bungalows. Every bungalow was distinctly named. These bungalows were constructed with locally available material like mud, stone, wood and tin. They had a typical architectural style with roof, chimneys, windows, doors and façades, dormers, bay windows, etc. Many of these single storied residential bungalows are still being used as such, e.g. Oak Over, Rothney Castle, etc. Some of them have been converted into office buildings like Barnes Court, which earlier was a residential bungalow and now is the office-cum-residence of the Governor of Himachal Pradesh; the Dalzell House (presently known as Dalziel) was a residential bungalow earlier, but now is being used by the State Bank of India.

**Office Spaces**

Other than bungalows many government office buildings were also constructed during the British period. Some of them are still being used for the same function. For example, the Railway Board Building, Gorton Castle, etc.

**Walks**

The heritage buildings, bungalows and various other complexes made by the British generally have independent approaches. During the British period, there were only few automobiles in the town, and these belonged to the elite class of the society. The rest walked or used rickshaws. Thus the town’s layout is mostly pedestrian. Most of the heritage buildings are approached by beautiful walks (Bhasin, 2007), which enhanced their European architecture. These walks are lined by trees of oak, pine, cedar, rhododendron, and naturally...
landscaped by ferns and mosses. These walks are mostly along the sealed or restricted roads* which have very little vehicular traffic.

The Mall

One prominent walk is along The Mall Road. The concept of the Mall has been borrowed from the west. It means 'a sheltered walk' or 'promenade' (Heritage Report, 2005, Town and Country Planning Department, Shimla, H.P), bordered with trees. It has a major social function as it acts as the centre of interaction for the locals. The Mall Road starts from Boileauganj and passes along the Vice Regal Lodge (Indian Institute of Advanced Studies), Peter Hoff, Cecil Hotel, Gorton Castle Building, Railway Board Building, Dalzell House, Telegraph Building, Town Hall, Gaiety Theatre, Clarke's Hotel, Chalet Day School Building, Oak Over and Chhota Shimla Post Office. It joins the Cart Road at Chhota Shimla. It is a six km long road covered in about one and half hours by walk (Heritage Report, 2005, Town and Country Planning Department, Shimla, H.P; and Bhasin, 2007).

As the town of Shimla grew through the 19th century, The Mall Road also developed as the primary street and the hub of the social life of the town. It has a row of shops and important public establishments. Architecturally, this stretch is often compared with the English 'home counties' small-town marketplaces (Municipal Corporation, Shimla§).

The Ridge

The Ridge is another socio-cultural space, located in the centre of the city. It commands a panoramic view of the surroundings on all sides, as well as the snow covered peaks of the Greater Himalaya to its north. The important features around The Ridge are the Scandal Point to the west; Lakkar Bazaar, State Library and Christ Church in the east; and the Town Hall on the southern side. The open space of The Ridge is used for different local, national and state level events.

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* To avoid traffic congestion some inner roads of Shimla town have been either sealed (no vehicular access) or restricted (access only to permitted vehicles).
SHIMLA

Historical Background

Nomenclature

There are several stories regarding the origin of the name Shimla. Some say that it has been derived from the word ‘Shyamalaya’ meaning ‘The blue house’ (Heritage Report, 2005, Town and Country Planning Department, Shimla, H.P). The house was built of blue slate by a faqir at Jakho. This was the only house in Shimla before this place was discovered by the British. Some say that the town name evolved from the word ‘Shamla’ meaning a ‘Blue Female’ a synonym of goddess Kali (Sud, 1976; Bhasin, 1992 and Bhasin, 2007). Others say that the place derived the name from, ‘Shumlah, ‘Shimlu’ or’ Shemlah’.

Evolution

From its origin as a feudal society, Shimla has come a long way and reached the present stage of urbanization. The history of Shimla has been profoundly shaped by its political role as the summer capital of the British India (Kennedy, 1996). However, initially it gained fame only for its pleasant climate. Shimla was one of the resorts built by the British during early 19th century, but it began its journey as a small hamlet. Its first recorded reference was as ‘Semla, a middle sized village’ in 1817, in the diary of two Scottish officers, Lieutenant Patrick Gerard and Lieutenant Alexander Gerard, as they surveyed and mapped the area. According to some it was first sited by a British officer, in 1816, who was taking his Gurkha troops from Sabathu to Kotgarh. For others its history goes back to the period of Anglo-Gurkha war in the beginning of 19th century. Gurkhas were defeated by the British and were expelled from the hill territories. Shimla was taken from the Jhind Rana in 1815 and was given to Raja of Patiala for the assistance given by him to the British during the war (Municipal Corporation, Shimla).

In the beginning the hill station was described “as a land capable of infinite care and acceptance, a land seemingly content within itself, a land yet unaware of its place in the episode of Empire” (Bhasin, 1992). It was for certain ‘the resort of the idle, the invalids and the rich’, as one writer puts it. It was also referred to as a ‘Health Resort’ (Buck, 1925). Its climate was good, but as one medical officer pointed out there was less oxygen at such altitudes. Nevertheless this did not hamper the growth of the town. At that time there was no other town in the whole of the northern India, which could be placed next to it in terms of
weather, cleanliness and beauty. It was viewed as a fascinating hill station which was pure and simple. It managed to hypnotize all its viewers with its beauty. Shimla offered the British a location that reminded them of the way the things were back home including the famous ‘London Fog’. Shimla had a bracing climate, well adapted to the Europeans. It was a ‘landscape of memory’ (Kennedy, 1996) for the British and was placed in a charming setting, with snowy hills, gushing cascades, and meadows around it. Many of the springs, were, converted into ‘baolis’ (small water reservoir) by the villagers. The oldest ‘baoli’ in Shimla is said to have existed just above the United Services Club (the U.S. Club). All the above mentioned factors ensured that Shimla had the potential to substitute the native place for the British (Aiken, 1987). This was the fact which immensely contributed towards its popularity as a sanatorium (Sud, 1992 and Bhatt, 1998).

By 1824, European gentlemen and the invalids, had started pouring in and taking asylum in the town for recuperation. Despite the difficulties of traveling on the track to this place, the British used to visit Shimla every summer season because of its pleasant climate. The first Governor-General who was impressed by the exotic charm and the weather of this ‘dreamland’ was Lord Amherst, who came here in 1827. After this a continuous influx of people began to this place. The natural landscape of the pre-nineteenth century period was completely transformed (Kennedy, 1996). The Indian hill stations set by British Empire either had a strategic importance to serve as military posts or were sanatoriums for soldiers. Places such as Shimla, had the potential to substitute the native place of the British and thus obviated the need of sending convalescents back to Europe. Once established, social and cultural factors also played a major role in the success of hill stations. The social institutions that the British set up in these places were made with the utmost attempt to duplicate the same back in Europe. This setup gave them a feeling of their homeland.

In 1830 the British Indian Government directed that negotiations should be done with the chief of Patiala and Rana of Keonthal to whom the land of Shimla originally belonged. As directed, the then political agent, Major Kennedy, negotiated an exchange with the Rana of Keonthal for his portion of the Shimla hills comprising thirteen villages. This exchange was then effected and the British started coming in. Gradually more and more people kept coming into the town and houses sprang up. The number of residents increased from sixty in 1831 to one hundred in 1844. Rapid growth led to necessity of providing amenities and services.
Many like John Lawrence, one of the Viceroy, decided that Shimla was fit to be the most appropriate hill station as the summer headquarters of the Government of India. His choice of Shimla as the summer capital stemmed from its domination of the northwest frontiers and that the climate reminded the British of their native land. British Empire had always been apprehensive of Russians ambitions. Punjab provided the key to the security of the newly established Empire against the problem of a Russian advance, either from the Mediterranean or from Central Asia. Throughout their stay in India, British feared an attack from Russia through Afghanistan and northwest India. Shimla, due to its geographical location and terrain had the potential to safeguard the northern frontiers as well as to develop Indo-Tibetan trade, and exploit the rich mineral resources of Tibet.

In 1864, Shimla was formally made the summer capital of the Government of India. From here, the troops could be rushed to Delhi and deployed in the plains even during the rainy seasons, as the events of 1857 had demonstrated. After 1857 the strategic value of the hill stations was realized (Kennedy, 1996). Thus Shimla appeared to be a logical choice for a summer capital. This was a turning point in the history of Shimla.

The emergence of Shimla as the summer capital resulted in the acquisition of several old buildings by the government for its offices. In addition, construction of new buildings started. A new Secretariat building, very close to The Mall Road was constructed on the site of Gorton Castle. In 1840, Peter Hoff became the official residence of the Viceroy and remained so till 1888 when a new residence, Vice Regal Lodge was constructed. Amongst all the constructions, the construction of the Combermere Bridge was the first step towards the improvement of Shimla (Buck, 1925).

Some social institutions through a central authority promoted the formation of the Municipal Committee in Shimla in 1851. The Committee was responsible for the establishment of the Town Hall with a library, a theatre (Gaiety Theatre) and a police station. Municipal market and fire brigade services were also provided in the subsequent years. The British government framed rules and regulations for the proper development and functioning of the town. Cleanliness had always been their top priority and especially The Mall Road was kept dust free by all means.

In 1882, for election purposes the town was divided into two wards - Station Ward and the Bazaar Ward. Besides signifying the physical division it also demonstrated the social division between the two communities. The Bazaar Ward consisted of all the five bazaars - Boileaugunj, Kaithu, Lakkar Bazaar, Chotta Shimla and Lower Bazaar. This
comprised of the Indian population. On the other hand the Station Ward consisted of about four hundred private cottages with British population and character (Kanwar, 2007, pp. 48 and 111).

In 1864, in view of strategic location of the town, the decision was taken to maintain army headquarters permanently in Shimla. As a result the officers attached to the army headquarters were also permanently located in Shimla. In 1871, the Punjab government also decided to use Shimla as its summer capital.

By mid 1870's Shimla had grown considerably, mainly extending along the entire length of The Ridge, the extreme ends of town being separated by a distance of six miles. Limits of the town were bound by the states of Patiala, Keonthal and Koti on the North-West, South-West and North-East respectively.

As the population of the town was growing, so was the responsibility of the Municipal Committee. In 1874, a bullock cart service for transporting goods and a tonga service for mails and passengers between Kalka and Shimla was started. In 1901 the Municipal Committee installed powerful water pumps at Churat Nallah near Sanjauli. These pumps were capable of lifting up to 200,000 gallons of water daily. Until the year 1902, there was only one medical facility in Shimla in the form of Ripon Hospital which was built in 1885. To accommodate the increasing population, Walker Hospital was opened in 1902. In 1903 a revolution in the transportation and communication system of the town took place as the first passenger train service was started between the stations of Kalka and Shimla. In the same year the electrical lighting system was also introduced in the town and the first place to benefit was the Shimla railway station itself. To cope up with the increasing population and consequently increasing demand for water, in 1913 two steam pumping engines were installed at Churat Nallah. These supplied additional 1,50,000 gallons of water daily. ‘Chaba Hydro Electric Power Generation Station’ with the generation capacity of 1,750 KW was installed in the year 1914 on Sutlej (Satluj), to supply electricity to the town (Heritage Report, 2005, Town and Country Planning Department, Shimla, H.P).

The opening of the road and railway line to the plains at the turn of the century resulted in massive increase in the population of Shimla town. The increase before and after 1891 was significant. Even though there was no traffic problem at that time but the rise in the population from 24,170 in 1889 to 30,405 in 1895 was drastic and irreversible (Pubby, 1996 p. 44).

Shimla like most of the hill resorts set up by the British, served multiple functions of being a defensive site, social refuge (Kenny, 1995), administrative center and the most important, a sanatorium (Bhatt, 1998). However, Shimla has been referred to as a migratory...
and a service town (Kanwar, 2007). People from various corners of the country had started visiting and settling in the town. Many were involved in the service sector. In 1904, out of the total working population, 26.4% were in government service, 33% in domestic service, 16.8% were laborers, 8.6% were artisans and 14.8% worked as traders and shopkeepers (Kanwar, 2007, p.132).

Shimla was changing its looks rapidly. Deforestation along with developmental process had started at a good pace. This in turn was affecting many other things. Wildlife which was abundant earlier had either retreated to the jungles or had perished due to the sports of military officials (Barr and Ray Desmond, 1978). Deforestation and construction activity in the fragile Himalayan terrain led to problems related to slope instability. Mass movement and land subsidence was taking place at many locations in and around Shimla. Although these phenomena had begun since the establishment of the town, yet for the first time such sinking in Shimla was reported in 1942, in Lakkar Bazaar area (Pubby, 1996).

As the town was growing there was increase in construction. This along with the increasing population was leading to congestion in Shimla. Lady Dufferin referred to Shimla as a small ‘claustrophobic’ town (Barr and Ray Desmond, 1978). Even though the number of problems in the town was growing, the town remained a dreamland for the British. On the other hand for the indigenous people it was a place lacking even the basic amenities.

**Post-Independence Period**

Nursed and popularized alike by the government, the elite, the traders and the tourists, the town continued to grow in importance and size when India became independent in 1947. Shimla remained as one of the most important hill stations of the world. After India’s partition in 1947, many of the Punjab government offices from Lahore, which went to Pakistan, were shifted to Shimla. In 1966, after the re-organization of the territory of the state of Punjab into Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, Shimla became the capital of Himachal Pradesh. Since then Shimla has flourished as capital of the state and has continued to be an important tourist resort of India and the world.

Gradually with the rising number of vehicles, traffic problems in the town increased. The Cart Road that was not initially designed for the heavy traffic is now being used for all types of vehicles. This has resulted in congestions, traffic jams and chaos. Water shortage in summers and electricity cuts in the winters have become common. Increasing congestion
has led to incidences of fire which has destroyed many heritage buildings (Kumar, 1993). The construction rate is high in the entire city and none of the hill slopes is left without construction. Frequent landslips in many areas of the city highlight the fact that the hill slopes are unstable and lack vegetation. Ill-planned construction and lack of proper drainage system are the reasons of such landslips as in case of Lakkar Bazaar area (Guleria, 2005). The decay of Shimla has mainly been due to the malfunctioning of the Municipal Corporation, especially after Independence (Pubby, 1996) and the steady increase in local population (Sharma and Bhandari, 2006).

At present Shimla has become a multifunctional city along with dominance of tourism, administration and institutional activities. Like other towns of the country it has become prey to large-scale urbanization which has affected its environment adversely. Still considered the star of India’s hill resorts, Shimla is dominated by 19th century colonial buildings. It is the largest hill top city in the Himalayan region. Located on the Chandigarh-Kourick National Highway-22 and Shimla-Dharamshala National Highway-88, it is expanding by leaps and bounds. As a primate city of the state it holds about one-fourth of total urban population of the state of Himachal Pradesh.

Presently Shimla, neither holds the same makeup as that of a British town nor the one of an old Indian town. It is a mixture of the both. One critic has gone to the extent of describing it as ‘a show window of the worst form of Victorian and modern architecture’ (Pubby, 1996).

Shimla Municipal Corporation*

Municipality is the basic building block of the administrative set up of an urban area, a town, a city, etc. (Bourne and Simmons, 1978, quoted by Exline, et al., 1982). Shimla Municipal Committee / Corporation is one of the oldest institutions of its type in the country. The Municipal Committee was constituted in December, 1851, under the provision of Act XXVI of 1850. Initially government officials were appointed as Municipal Commissioners. First election for the Committee was held on August 26, 1855. The elected committee comprised of a deputy commissioner, a medical officer, a senior assistant commissioner, an executive engineer and house proprietors.

*Most of the information regarding the Municipal Corporation is from the website of Municipal Corporation www.shimlamic.org, accessed on 1/5/07
The income of the municipality came from taxation. Heavy taxes were imposed on different kinds of properties. People were taxed on ground, horses, ponies, wheeled vehicles, dogs, servants, etc. The rate of taxes in Shimla was the highest among all Indian hill stations and the amount kept increasing every year (Punjab District Gazetteer, Simla District, 1904).

The Shimla Municipal Committee was declared as a Class I Municipality on July 31, 1871. In 1874, it was brought under the Punjab Municipal Act (IV of 1873) but the committee had grave objections to this constitution. In 1884, the Punjab Municipal Act (XII of 1884) was introduced and the town was divided into two wards - the Station Ward and the Bazaar Ward.

After Independence, Shimla was divided into fifteen wards. Of these, fourteen were single member wards and one was double member ward. All the members representing the wards were to be elected and the president was in turn to be elected by the members from amongst themselves. Elections in 1953 and 1960 were held on the basis of this system. In view of the substantial increase in population of the town, advisors to the Committee were appointed and subsequently the number of members representing the wards was increased. After reorganization of Punjab, Shimla became a part of Himachal Pradesh.

In 1968 the government ordered the delimitation of Municipal Committee area into ten wards. In the meanwhile, Himachal Pradesh (Development & Regulation) Act 1968 (Act No. 22 of 1969) was passed and it converted the Municipal Committee into Municipal Corporation with effect from June 29, 1969. With the passing of the Himachal Pradesh Municipal Corporation Act, 1994 (Himachal Pradesh Municipal Corporation Act, 1994) government further revised the delimitation of wards into 21 wards and conducted elections for the same.

At present, Shimla Municipal Corporation consists of 25 wards (2001 Census) (Figure 2.2). Besides the area of the Municipal Corporation, there are around Shimla Special Area Development Authorities (SADA) working in the immediate hinterland of Shimla. There are three such areas: Kufri, Ghanahati and Shoghi. These are outside the Municipal limits and fall in Panchayat.