Socio-Cultural Development Of McLeod Ganj
The previous chapter had its focus on the land use pattern and the changes in the land use in McLeod Ganj. Spatio-temporal changes and people’s perception on land use were discussed in detail.

The present chapter discusses in detail the socio-cultural development of McLeod Ganj. The social development has been further described in detail by taking into consideration certain social indicators. The living conditions and people’s quality of life have been taken into account along with transportation system, access to clean water and sanitation. Similarly the cultural development has also been discussed in detail mentioning the evolution and change of culture like traditions, beliefs, norms, behavioural patterns and art. The most interesting thing about culture in McLeod Ganj is its multi-culturalism which is discussed in detail. The economic development along with the planning policies has also been described in detail in the chapter.

5.1 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Social development is a process which results in the transformation of social structures in a manner which improves the capacity of the society to fulfill its aspirations. Society develops by consciousness and social consciousness develops by organization. This term can also be referred to as social change which may be an alteration in the social order of the society. It may also refer to the notion of social progress. More generally, social change may include changes in nature, social institutions, social behaviors or even social relations.

When we take social development into consideration from geographical point of view we may call it as development geography. Development geography is the study of the earth’s geography with reference to the standard of living and quality of life of its human inhabitants. Hence this sort of development is a process of change that affects people’s lives. It may involve an improvement in the quality of life as perceived by the people undergoing change. The spatial patterns are studied and it is found out by what
Photo Plate 5.0 (The present Mcleod Ganj)
characteristic they can measure development by looking at economic, political and social factors. Both the geographical causes and consequences of varying development are taken care of. The quantitative indicators are economic which include the per capita, the unemployment rates, energy consumption etc. The social indicators include access to clean water and sanitation and adult literacy rate. The demographic indicators include the birth rate, death rate and fertility rate. While talking about the health indicators we take into consideration the nutrition, infant mortality, availability of health and sanitation facilities.

The qualitative indicators include descriptions of living conditions and people's quality of life.

Having a general view of the social development at McLeod Ganj we take into account the two periods i.e. before 1960's and after 1960's. Before 1960's that is when McLeod Ganj was only a small hill station under the British rule, the social development was negligible. The standard of living and the quality of life of its inhabitants were poor. There was no improvement in the social strata till the arrival of the Tibetans in 1960's. People were small or marginal farmers with one or two produce throughout the year. Some families were into pastoralism while others from the poor background worked as daily wagers. Subsistence agriculture used to be the main activity. Regarding other parameters, the rate of unemployment was high, access to clear water and sanitation was not feasible and literacy rate was quite low. Only one or two government schools used to be in the area with girls not having an access to education and death rate too was high because of poor health and medical facilities. The infant mortality rate, amount of good nutrition and proper sanitation facilities were not available.

The roads and the transportation system was not well developed and the villages were backward with no access to roads and vehicles, totally.

There were only one or two local grocery shops and people used to move to Dharamshala or Kangra for other purchases. Only one medical
Photo Plate 5.1 (Settlements spreading across the town)
hospital existed at Dharamshala while McLeod Ganj and surrounding villages were devoid of health and medical facilities.

A little bit of progress whatever the area made under the British rule, came to an end with the earthquake of 1905. Every little thing was down to pieces. During my interaction with few elderly people, I came to know that after the earthquake of 1905, a famine had struck the area which took toll of thousands of lives. Hence the area was very somber, slow and even unaware about its development.

It was only in 1959, when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, allowed His Holiness the Dalai Lama to settle at McLeod Ganj. Dalai Lama was followed by some 80,000 of his disciples who had come across from Tibet with him. When His Holiness got the Nobel Peace Prize, it was only after that, McLeod Ganj started changing over night. It had become the Head quarters of the Tibetans in exile. Slowly and gradually as the influx of the Tibetans in exile started increasing, so did the number of tourists. New hotels, restaurants, café shops, ministries, offices etc started coming up at McLeod Ganj. Very shortly after 1960's roads and the transportation facilities started getting developed. Now McLeod Ganj can be reached from all the sides by metalled roads and so can be the villages of Naddi, Dharamkot, Gayanki, Bhagsanag and Forsyth Ganj. Local transportation is easily available along with taxis and auto rickshaws which ply to every place surrounding McLeod Ganj. Big restaurants, eating joints, hotels, and café and shopping complexes have come up at the town which caters to the need of thousands of them visiting it every day.

Huge number of monasteries, art galleries, nunneries, recreation centers and libraries has come up at McLeod Ganj which attracts the tourists. But the most important of them all is the temple of His Holiness, The Dalai Lama. While visiting McLeod Ganj one finds as if one is at Tibet, as the aura of the place is such. That is why McLeod Ganj is also referred to as “Little Lhasa”.

128
Photo Plate 5.2 (Parking a Major problem at Mcleod Ganj)
Photo Plate 5.3 (Small shops in the main street)
The schools and higher educational institutes that have come up at McLeod Ganj and around it, have given educational opportunities not only to the Tibetans in exile but also to the local population.

The best one of them being the TCV (The Tibetan Childrens’ Village), which houses more than 2500 students from all walks of life. The offices under the Central Tibetan Administration give employment to hundreds of youth in exile. Most of the local population is also involved in secondary and tertiary activities and agriculture practice has minimized.

The locals have raised their social standard by getting into business and by opting better living conditions. The houses are no more built on the same old architectural plan. They are fully furnished and most of the families of the local inhabitants run a guest house or have given a part of their home on rent. The per capita income of the area has increased to such an extent that if the Tibetans go back such hard will be the impact on the area that McLeod Ganj will come back to its older days. Employment rates have increased.

The social indicators such as access to clean water and sanitation have become better. With education facilities, the adult literacy rate has increased and so has the literacy rate for females. This has also led to a check on the population explosion of the Tibetans in exile. Since the younger generation of the Tibetans in exile has higher literacy rate, this has curbed to some extent the rise in the infant mortality rates, high fertility rates and death rates also. The health facilities have improved a lot at McLeod Ganj. Where once there used to be no medical centre, now McLeod Ganj boasts of three clinics for traditional (Tibetan Medical and Astrological Institute), the Dharamshala Earthville Institute, (Charitable, N.G.O) offering basic medical care to the needy and other small clinics which provide basic medical care to the inhabitants. Hence with the rise in the health facilities, the nutrition and sanitation problems have been curbed.
It also came to notice during the field visit that McLeod Ganj has no new space to be occupied for new ventures. Hence the areas surrounding it which once used to be typical villages have started converting into sub-urbs. Naddi & Dharamkot still have title development as compared to Gayanki, Bhagsanag and Forsyth Ganj which have started coming under the Urban sprawl. These areas where once no vehicle used to go are now connected with roads and all facilities are available here. People of these villages whose survival was once beyond imagination after the earthquake and famine of 1905, are too over occupied in their business ventures. You can find them earning hotels, restaurants, café shops, guest houses, parlours, internet and cyber shops from either their residences only or they have also converted their agricultural lands into business ventures. The author came across a family from Dharamkot, who have their own taxi-operator service running to and fro from McLeod Ganj to the surrounding areas.

Hence the overall social development of the place is good and its increasing every day. However with the space is getting rare to find in the near future. The present policy of the Tibetan government is to motivate the refugees to go back to Tibet after 2-3 years of their education so that they can spread the knowledge of culture and their rights in their homeland. However, due to the grim situation still existing at Tibet, many Tibetans choose to settle down in other parts of the Indian sub continent after finishing their education. Regarding the local population, they are so much engrossed into the development and better living facilities that agricultural practices have come to a halt with few families going in for commercial plantation of vegetables only.

5.2 CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Cultural development is the change or evolution of the culture like traditions, beliefs, norms, behavioral patterns, arts and everything that relates to human thought and work. The development of culture started since the existence of man. It started from the Stone Age up to the computer age. Every
Photo Plate 5.4 (Most of these small shops sell Tibetan Artifacts)
Photo Plate 5.5 (Big Hotels have cropped up at Mcleod Ganj)
Photo Plate 5.6 (Apartments on rent at Mcleod Ganj)
Photo Plate 5.7 (Garbage littering a main problem)
race has its own cultural development that has evolved and improved as years went by. The only difference in the cultural development is the pace of development. When we consider cultural development with respect to geography we find out that cultural geography is the study of cultural products and norms and their deviations across and relations to spaces and places. It focuses on describing and analyzing the ways language, religion, economy, government and other cultural phenomena vary or remain constant, from one place to another and on explaining how humans function spatially.

Talking about the cultural development at McLeod Ganj the most important and interesting thing about McLeod Ganj is its multi-cultural. Multiculturalism is the appreciation, acceptance or promotion of multiple cultures, applied to the demographic make-up of a specific place, usually at the organizational level e.g. businesses, neighborhoods, cities or nations. Hence multiculturalism approximates to respect for ethnic diversity. Multiculturalism focuses on interaction and communication between different cultures and centre on diversity and cultural uniqueness.

At McLeod Ganj one can easily locate the inter-mixing of cultures from Tibetans in exile, from India especially the local culture of the place and westernization which is the concept new to a town as small as Mcleod Ganj. The interaction and communication between different cultures at McLeod Ganj is a daily affair and the author was astonished to find out that this has further strengthened the multiculturalism. People from all the varying societies are keen and interested to know and learn about the other culture. This has led to a strong cultural development at McLeod Ganj.

McLeod Ganj is a curious meeting of worlds. Though it is the home of the Tibetan government in exile, yet it resides in the Indian Himalayas. Once you enter McLeod Ganj you find the Hindu signs replaced by the Tibetan scrawls. Saris replaced by the burgundy robes of Tibetans. The influence of westernization quickly became apparent from the fact that tutoring is the most
Photo Plate 5.8 (Street congestions another main problem)
viable option as just about everyone in McLeod Ganj wants to learn English. I was amazed to see the taxi operators, the newspaper boy, the small tea shops and to my utmost surprise the beggars also conversing with you in English for alms. With the acceptance of the Tibetan government in India, an unique tradition was maintained, the inclusion of yet another culture into the mosaic of ethnic diversity of India. Walk through McLeod Ganj and you find narrow crowded streets and stores filled with endless tea and pots of unknown curries ever known to Dharamshala. The author was astonished to see the localities enjoying the Tibetan cuisines such as string beans with Potatoes, momos, Thupka and soups of all kinds. The Tibetans on the other hand are seen savoring the daal-chawal, roti and subzi and noodles, samosas and what not. The picture of His Holiness in every Indian restaurant and even the local street vendors selling Tibetan artifacts was found.

Moving in the entire market the author could not locate out any shop selling purely Indian food, clothes or accessories. Very thing had a touch of Tibet be it bags carrying the tag line of ‘Save Tibet’ or the dresses, or even the incense sticks and stones. While passing through the prayer wheels, it could be seen at all the people from different walks of life rotating them. During my survey the author talked to severed local people of different age groups and also from the questionnaires the author came across people saying that they participate in each other’s functions, marriages, religious festivals and even protest for their freedom. The instances of local male marrying Tibetan females came to my notice but were very few. On the contrary there were many Tibetan women who had married local men, some of the Tibetan men had even got married to foreigners. The prominent example of cross-culturalism at Mcleod Ganj which the author came to know from the questionnaires was the change in food habits and change in costumes. The younger Tibetan generation in exile prefers to wear western dresses and same is with the youth of the local area.

If we come to religious practices, one very strange thing that I noticed was, minimum participation of Tibetans in religious activities of locals and
more in Easter and Christmas. The western people on the other hand were too over religious for the Tibetan religion and not for the local deities. While every local family visited the temple of His Holiness once in month, two or three months and some went weekly also.

Language is not a barrier at McLeod Ganj. You will find people talking to you in English, Hindi, Punjabi, Spanish, and Tibetan etc. The locals especially the taxi operators have learnt Tibetan language in order to make communication easy during their drive with Tibetan passengers. Coming to education, I found children of foreigners studying in the Tibetan schools along with the children of Tibetans in exile. The young people from Tibet in exile either go to Dharamshala for higher education or to Bir, and even to various parts of the country.

Many N.G.O.’s and government aided bodies are working together for better cultural prospects. The Tibet-Bharat Manch, The Garlichead, The Mountain Cleaners, The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, Gu Chu Sum and The Tibetan Youth Congress are some of them which have been toiling a lot to bring every culture together and to work for the betterment of Mcleod Ganj. With their efforts the ties have been built strong.

As far as the concept of social development is there, it is taken as a positive attribute in the society at McLeod Ganj. But this cross culturalism is not appealing every body’s eyes. I had a chance to talk to people from both Indian and Tibetan communities and foreigners also who commented on the concept of cross culturalism at McLeod Ganj.

Mr. Sanjay Kumar, a local shopkeeper running a small grocery shop said that no doubt people are getting better opportunities and there has been a rise in the standard of living of people but the cultural identity of ours is diminishing. Our youth is getting swayed away from their roots and are getting involved into drug addiction and crime. The moral values, the rituals and beliefs are coming to an end. The reason he gave was the influx of western people into the town.
who have introduced westernization to such an extent that it will be difficult for our youth to come back to their original culture. He further said, ‘I am happy His Holiness is here that a little bit of fear exists amongst the Tibetan youth otherwise there will be a bloodshed anytime, His Holiness leaves McLeod Ganj’.

Mr. Amar Pal Rana, a taxi operator said, its good the government has given them a place to live here and the localities are getting benefitted but the culture is finished. He says McLeod Ganj and Dharamshala are not the places where the people are open to overnight changes. The youth is spoilt, they have no knowledge about their own culture and customs. They are following what the Tibetan and foreigners are doing.

Mr. Tsering Llama a monk at the monastery adjoining the temple of His Holiness said, it’s bad that the Tibetan youth are forgetting their mission. The mission being, to set their country free. Instead they are becoming criminals, drug addicts and vagabonds. He was appealing to the parents of the youth to teach them the morals of Tibetan culture and to keep inciting them with a feeling that they are in exile and they must fight for their nation’s freedom.

Mr. Pempa Tsering, a teacher at the TCV, said he is happy that the young Tibetans are getting a chance to educate themselves properly as the Indian government and Tibetan government in exile are giving them enough opportunities. Now it’s the mindset of the youth where it goes. They should not forget their values and customs.

Ms. Palmela Friedrich from Australia, who was at McLeod Ganj for a research work, was very sorry to see the state of the Tibetan youth and the locals. She said it is shocking to see the youth swaying and hanging around doing no work. Smoking, drug addiction and copying lavish life styles from foreigners is not a way to acclimatize your-self. The Tibetan government in exile must take care of its youth and special jobs and tasks should be created where the youth can be kept busy.
Hence, there is cross-culturalism at McLeod Ganj but the roots of the indigenous cultures are diminishing people are trying to copy what others are doing forgetting that they have their own customs, rituals, beliefs and traditions. But on the whole this cultural development has given McLeod Ganj a new place on the world map where in on small piece of land you find yourself in another world.

5.3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

At McLeod Ganj the economic development will be taken into consideration by studying the location, distribution and spatial organization of economic activities across the world. The subject matter investigated is strongly influenced by the researcher's methodological approach. I will take into account the social, cultural and institutional factors in the spatial economy. Given the variety of approaches, we may take different subject matters, including the location of industries, economies of agglomeration (also known as linkages), transportation, international trade and development, real estate, gentrification, ethnic economies, gendered economies, the relationship between the environment and the economy.

Let's take into account the gentrification, which is process involving inflow of capital investment into real estate of an already exiting place in the region whose values are depressed. It is a kind of an urban renewal and is related to the decay of the place. The process arises from the decisions of property owners not to invest in places when they are located in depressed areas of the city. Same is the case with McLeod Ganj. Its growth is about to come to a halt since there is no more place for the town to grow as its already too congested.

As far as the industrial set up is concerned and may be regarded as one of the subject matters in economic development, McLeod Ganj has no big industrial set up.
Socio-Cultural Development of McLeod Ganj

The economic development of Dharamshala has rapidly transformed from one of the most backward in the country to one of the most advanced, ranking fourth in respect of per capita income. The economy of Himachal Pradesh is developed in all aspects from its self sufficient agriculture to the infrastructure being built, along with horticulture, transport, forest and hydel resources.

The agricultural sector of the Dharamshala economy contributes over 45% to the net state domestic product and nearly the entire population of the state depends directly upon agriculture. The Dharamshala Economy makes a lot of profit from raising cash crops. The main food crops grown are wheat, maize, rice, barley, seed potato, ginger, vegetable, vegetable seeds, mushrooms, chicory seeds, hops, olives and fig. Fruit cultivation also provides an economic boon to the farmers. An efficient irrigation system, availability of cheap credit and organized marketing facilities are very important for the development of agriculture in Dharamshala. Tourism is another factor that has helped in the economic development of McLeod Ganj. This is because of the importance of tourism in the economy and the hope of government that tourism will lead to economic growth and development. One of the chief reasons that the state government is supporting and promoting tourism is that it has a positive impact upon economic growth and development. It is generating employment and income at McLeod Ganj. Tourism at McLeod Ganj has also led to a generally increased level of economic activity and has also stimulated the supplying sectors of tourism. The tourism policy of 2005 by Department of Tourism and civil aviation, Govt. of Himachal Pradesh has helped a lot in giving boost to the tourism of the state. Demand driven tourism infrastructure in Himachal Pradesh has come up in some of the major tourist destinations like Shimla, Dalhousie, McLeod Ganj, Kasauli and Chail. The state government has proposed to upgrade the civil infrastructure in the above towns on priority.

The economic development at McLeod Ganj in particular is only through tourism. The influx of Tibetan in exile at McLeod Ganj and the tourist
Photo Plate 5.9 (Tourism activities being promoted)
have led to the prosperity of the area over night. Not only McLeod Ganj but the
villages surrounding it are also benefited from the development by tourism.
This can be held from the fact by comparing the two periods of time before
1960’s when the development was just negligible and after 1960’s, the things
have changed entirely. This can be seen from the rise in the standard of living
of the people. Economic growth has the indirect potential to alleviate poverty,
as a result of a simultaneous increase in employment opportunities. Same is the
case at McLeod Ganj where every household has risen from poverty.

While talking about the Tibetans in exile, their economic growth lies
with the facilities being provided by the Indian government, the government of
Tibet in exile and by the huge influx of money that comes as donation from the
western countries. During my field visit, I had a chance to talk to few people
from various departments under the Central Tibetan Administration especially
the department of finance. The official annual revenue of Department of
finance is US $ 22 million, with the biggest shares going to political activity ($
7 million) and administration ($4.5 million). The Central Tibetan
Administration’s department of finance is made up of seven departments and
several special offices. The department of finance operates in 24 businesses,
including publishing, hotels and handicrafts distribution companies. However
the Minister of finance for (CTA, Mr. Tsering Dhondup said the amount
received by the countries as donation is remarkably low. But it’s is
acknowledged that CTA receives millions of dollars. The Tibetans in exile are
mostly into business activities. Selling woolens, Tibetan handicrafts, artifacts
and herbal medicines is the main business. They have survived in the exile with
these petty business activities all through the years.

Hence the economic development of McLeod Ganj lies basically with
the tourism, business opportunities and huge amount of donations coming in
every day from around the world.
5.4 PLANNING POLICIES

A planning policy is used to help determine planning applications what can be built, where and how. It is also used to plan strategically, looking at future needs to be addressed, what change is likely to happen and where and what policies are needed to achieve this. Planning policy exits at the national, regional and local level.

Several policies have been framed for the development by the government. Some of them have been mentioned as:-

i) Policy on Development of New Townships in Himachal Pradesh:

This policy has been framed by keeping in mind the unplanned new urban centres that are gradually coming up in some of the areas of the state like McLeod Ganj, Mandi Dalhousie etc. There is also a need for a clear cut policy on new townships in order to regulate the development of naturally growing new/urban centres and encourage private sector participation. The main aim of this policy is planned and eco-friendly development of new settlements.

ii) New Industrial Policy 1999:

The government is fully aware of the need to create a congenial industrial climate, conducive for speedy industrial growth. Through the successive industrial policies and other investor friendly measures, the state has been striving to accelerate the flow of investment into industrial sector. Due to geographical factors the industrialization is concentrated in the border areas and gate ways of Himachal Pradesh. Inspite of the best efforts, other areas of the state have been relatively unaffected by the process of industrial development. The existing infrastructure facilities are inadequate to meet the requirement of new investment. Hence significant efforts are required to improve the infrastructure.
iii) **Himachal Pradesh Environmentally Sustainable Development Policy Loan Project**

The objective of the Himachal Pradesh Environmentally Sustainable Development Policy Loan Project is to assist the government in the implementation of policy and institutional reforms towards environmentally sustainable development. The World Bank estimates the total project cost at US $ 200 million.

iv) **Himachal Pradesh Forest Sector Policy and Strategy 2005.**

The government of Himachal Pradesh has developed the forest sector policy and strategy 2005 in consonance with the government of India policy guidelines. The endeavor in the Forest Sector Policy is to achieve the vision of the Himachal Pradesh Government which aims to harmonize relations between people and environment. It seeks to address the aspirations of the people by making forestry a vibrant sector contributing towards livelihood enhancement of forest dependent communities through the departments working on natural resource management.

v) **Tourism Policy 2005 Department of Tourism and Civil Aviation.**

The main thrust of this policy is to make tourism a prime engine for economic development and as a major means for providing employment. It also aims to encourage a strong and sustainable private sector participation in creation of tourism infrastructure especially through public/private partnerships. It also focuses on promoting sustainable tourism which is not only environmentally compatible but also leads to economic betterment of the rural people.
5.5 REFERENCES:

M. Adam; (1998) *Indicators of Sustainable Development*

Jordan-Bychkov, Terry G; Domosh, Mona; Rowntree, Lester (1994). *The human mosaic; a thematic introduction to cultural geography.*

M. Shulman; 1998, *Cultures in contrast*

N. Mc Gurty; (2000). *Ethnic interaction and cross -culturalism*

K. Marciniak; (2004). *Postmodernity and Cross-Culturalism*

K. Siddharth. McLeod Ganj – *A haven for Tibetan Refugees in India.*


Planning Policies; Himachal Pradesh website