

## Socio-Economic Role of Jwalamukhi Temple, Dist. Kangra, Himachal Pradesh

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### Abstract

Jwalamukhi temple is the place of one of the fifty-one Shaktipeethas of Maa Durga. The temple plays an important role in the socio-economic conditions of the state. The temple alongwith an important hub of religious activities has been a significant place of social and economic activities which with the passage of time have increased both in degree and nature. The present paper seeks to look into the socio-economic role of the Jwalamukhi temple both in the lives of the people of the area and also in the state of Himachal Pradesh.

**Keywords:** Shaktipeethas, Socio-Economic Role, Economy, Govt. takeover, Devotion

Most of the goddesses worshipped in and around the western Himalayas are the manifestation of Shakti, Durga. A popular legend is in vogue that Shakti, the consort of lord shiva was burnt alive in the yagnakunda during the performance of yajna by Prajapati, father of the Sati. The lord Shiva was anguished by the event and he danced the death dance with the charred body of Sati in his hands that the organs of the body fell down on earth's surface on different places giving

rise to Shaktipeethas. Thus, there are said to be 51 Shaktipeethas in India and the Jwalamukhi shrine is one among them. From the beginning of the era the Jwalamukhi temple is one of the important shrines of India.

The Jwalamukhi temple is one of the richest temples of India in terms of money and wealth. There are many sources of income for the Jwalamukhi temple. Gold and Silver forms the major part of the donation to the temple. With each passing year, the amount of gold and silver has been increasing. The increase is not only because of the government take-over but due to the improvement in communication, connectivity and improvement in the economic condition of the people. This has increased the number of the pilgrims. Better amenities and better transport facilities have helped the growth of the temple. The people pay a visit to the temple for tonsure (Mundan). The other head of wealth is income from charanpaduka, which was a part of the donation made by the people. Within the temple compound, there are smaller shops where prasad is sold to pilgrims and it is noticed that people leave their shoes at these shops as they feel them secure. These shops belong to the temple trust and rent is taken from them which adds to the economy of the Jwalamukhi temple. In the Jwalamukhi temple, there is a custom of the sacrifice of a goat (Chelu) on the first navratra and on every Diwali. The authorities earn by providing goats for sacrifice, indirectly.

With each passing year, the temple administration tries to provide better amenities and create new source of wealth. Another source is foreign currency. Indians who have settled abroad and who have faith in the goddess, send large amount in the form of foreign currency. People also send their offerings in the form of the cheques and bank drafts. A portion of the income, which remains unspent even after meeting all the expenses, the temple trust has started keeping in the bank, which started getting them interest on the balance and it also expanded the income of the temple. With the government takeover, wealth from fresh sources started pouring in and it has been used in the development of the temple itself.

On the expenditure side, there are certain expenses which can be called traditional expenditures. Langar, construction, repair and dharmrath are such expenditure heads which have been attached to the temple since ages. With each passing year, the expenditure on the langar is increasing. Later pilgrims started donating for langar also. During navratras, there are a large number of people who organize langar at their own expenses. Construction and repair go hand to hand. It is the responsibility of the temple trust for the maintenance of the existing infrastructure, construction and repair which forms the major expenditure head, as new construction has been undertaken. In the new construction, instead of preserving the old structure like gate, pavement etc. new structures like new gate and shed for the pilgrims was constructed from the local bus stand to the sanctum.

The Jwalamukhi Temple Trust is running a dispensary (established in 07-03-1987) and one Sanskrit college (established in 07-03-1987) for the welfare of the society which can be grouped under the expenditure on charitable institutions. The temple trust did not get away from these two traditional expenditures, with which it has been associated since long. A degree college for the welfare of the students of the area was opened in the Jwala Ji town on dated 06 May 1999 and the same was taken over by the state govt in June 2016. The third division which is given in the data is the payment to the baridars. Baridar is a part and parcel of the temple and, at one time, they happened to be the managers of the temple. They were getting 40% of the income and that included the daily income of the temple. It only includes cash and not the foreign currency, cheque, gold silver. The counting of offerings is done on a daily basis. The box is opened at the end of the day, in front of the baridar, Tehsildar (temple officer) and the head clerk and 40% of the share is taken by the baridars who have their turn or bari on that particular day. In addition to the above-mentioned sources of income, another major source of income for the temple is temple fairs. Fairs are the most important limb of the temple, which bring in large number of visitors. Temple fairs hold very important place in all Shaktipeethas of Himachal Pradesh. During the fairs, people come

from far off places and are instrumental in increasing the income of the temple by leaps and bounds. So, the trust started incurring certain amount, under the head, the head of the fair.

As the income of the temple increased, the temple Trust started increasing various welfare schemes like construction of link road, Yatri Niwas, Satsang Bhawan, canteen block, construction of retaining wall near the nala, renovation of old temples located in close vicinity of the Jwalamukhi temple, opening of handicrafts centre and running a degree college etc., undertaken by the temple trust. In addition to the above-mentioned enterprises, the Jawala Ji temple trust has also started its handicraft centre which is a place where all handicraft goods made of wood and thread work are sold at reasonable price. This handicraft centre provides employment to the people and is also a source of income the same time. The temple has a well-built library which works as a learning centre for the pilgrims. The library has large number of books which are mostly related to scriptures and religious texts. The temple library is a place where the pilgrims get their spiritual thirst quenched.

The temple of the Jwalamukhi, a religious institution from the economic point of view, is acting similar to a welfare institution. The general intention behind all the relevant activities is not profit making. It has a charitable character which is evident from the welfare activities conducted by the temple. The income generated from the temple has been used for the improvement of the temple and to meet out the requirements of the pilgrims and for the fulfillment of charitable duties. The temple trust takes due care to ensure that adequate facilities are provided to the devotees so that the devotees should not carry with them an impression on their minds that the temple is running as a commercial institution and not as a profit-making entity. The motive of the temple is charitable, to work for the well-being for the people.

As the Jwalamukhi temple is a sacred place of millions of Hindus living in Indian and abroad, it receives a large amount of money and wealth offered by these people. When the state took over the temple as per its policy, each and every offering made by the devotees is taken into

government account and it is accounted for. The money and wealth collected in the temple is as such is used for the welfare plans and projects and for the maintenance of the temple and its surroundings. Resultingly, it has led to the development of not only the temple itself but to the development of the whole area where it is located.

The Jwalamukhi temple is famous and is held in high esteem not only because of its religious value and sacred fervor, but also because it has been a preservative of the rich local culture and is also instrumental in promoting the unique cultural heritage of the area. The temple had worked since the ages and is still working as an agency for the purpose of social integration, economic development, moral upbringing and sustenance of the value system in the people of this area. Anyone visiting the temple is full of piety in his feelings and emotions and the negative emotions get driven away by this.

The Jwalamukhi temple has played the significant role of an employer by giving employment to hundreds of people who work in various capacities such as servants, artisans, supervisors, musicians, gardeners, shopkeepers, cooks etc which are engaged and employed by the temple itself. The temple has been extending patronage to musicians and drummers and reciters of sacred hymns and directly helping in the growth in the true sense of the term. In an indirect way the temple is a place of great tourist attraction and is thus instrumental in generating livelihood and creating business for thousands of people who work as various shopkeepers, dhabha and hotel owners, their workers and many other people.

The Jwalamukhi temple is regarded as a permanent major consumer of goods, of items such as coconuts, sandal, rice, incense, beetle, pulses, sugar, cloth, bangle etc. These items are needed in large quantities daily in the temple. With better connectivity and provision of better and organized facilities for boarding and lodging, streamlined procedures for performing puja and different rites and rituals, naturally, the number of pilgrims to the sanctum has increased significantly.

The temple has an impact on its surroundings which witnessed a boost in their economic activities. It has given a worthy shape to the town and opened new vistas of employment. Hotels, dharamshalas (night shelters), markets, restaurants, shops etc. have shown a mushrooming growth in the town due to the temple. From a tiny village in the olden times Jwalamukhi has assumed the stature of big township, the reason being the rise in population and opening of new vistas due to the temple. All this has been made possible because of the great sacred value the Jwala Devi holds in the hearts of the people who throng the temple in the millions during the whole year and particularly during the navratras- which are held twice in a year. It can be concluded from all this that the Jwalamukhi temple is a regulator of social, cultural, moral, educational and economic aspects of the blessed land where the temple stands majestically with its head held high and, of course unwavering faith and unflinching reverence in the believers from all walks of life both from inside the country and also from abroad.

#### **Detail of the Income of Jwalamukhi Temple Distt Kangra H.P. from 1987 to 2006**

1	Total Income from 1987 to 1996	9,93,09,898-35
2	Income from Gulaks (Dan Patras)	24,57,26922-00
3	Charity received for Langar	1,78,58,425-00
4	Charity for New Construction	72,20,257-00
5	Bank interest	44,57,265-00
6	Charity received from the gulaks (Dan Patras) of Shaiya Bhawan	40,76,122-00
7	Income as money order or Bank Drafts	35,33,788-00
8	Charity received for renovations	29,37,799-00
9	Fund received from Govt of Himachal Pradesh	25,00,000-00
10	By exchange of old notes	10,91,543-00
11	Charity received as Foreign Currency	10,47,101-00
12	Income from other sources	8,99,951-00
13	Rent from Yatri Niwas	8,00,622-00
14	Fund from Tourism Department	8,00,000-00

15	Charity received from Shaiya (Bed of the Goddess)	7,90,408-00
16	Income by sale of Goats	7,60,238-00
17	Income by sale of Coconuts	5,04,946-00
18	Charity received from the gulaks (Dan Patras) of Tara Devi Temple	4,50,997-00
19	Rent from shops	4,35,664-00
20	Fund from Govt of India	3,77,000-00
21	Income From Tonsure Slip (MundanParchi)	1,89,955-00
22	Income by contract of Toilets	1,87,898-00
23	Income from the tenders	1,31,510-00
24	Income by the sale of Clocks and Fans	1,30,900-00
25	Income by sale of steel Utensil	46,639-00
26	Income by sale of cloths	38,825-00
27	By sale of Chunni's (Scarf)	36,200-00
28	Income from the auction of the old material	28,585-00
29	Income from KundanaParchi	22,707-00
30	Income from sale of Handmade Paintings	14,356-00

### **Detail of the Expenditure of Jwalamukhi Temple Distt Kangra H.P. from 1987 to**

**2006**

1	Total expenditure from 1987 to 1996	6,76,30,558-00
2	Payment of the share holders	6,79,59,536-00
3	Salary of the employees	4,41,46,877-00
4	Langar expenditure	2,21,97,228-00
5	For the management of degree college	1,59,42,000-00
6	Expenditure on Construction work	1,47,07,300-00
7	Expenditure on different works	77,69,896-00
8	Expenditure on Renovations	53,18,237-00
9	Payment of Electricity Bill	28,92,618-00
10	Expenditure for the management of different fair and festivals of the temple	24,70,132—00

11	Expenditure on the salary of Home Guards and Temporary employees appointed for the management of fair and festivals.	23,09,618-00
12	Transfer of money in Central Pool	20,90,000-00
13	Expenditure for the facilities of the Pilgrims	20,08,823-00
14	Advance payment to the employees	18,10,599-00
15	Expenditure on Advertisements	16,42,699-00
16	Expenditure on Worship Material	12,88,138-00
17	Expenditure on different court cases	12,61,815-00
18	Amount transferred as a loan in Central Pool	10,00,000-00
19	Expenditure on the management of Dispensary	8,98,594-00
20	Audit Fee	7,15,208-00
21	Expenditure on purchase&Maintenance of the vehicle for the temple, and light Yard	6,73,407-00
22	Construction and Maintenance of temple road and light Yard	6,21,865-00
23	Stationary expenditure	6,11,746-00
24	Expenditure on Musical Fountain	4,63,142-00
25	Telephone Bill	4,36,274-00
26	Purchase and repair of the Generator set	4,23,997-00
27	Donation in Chief Minister Relief Fund	3,51,000-00
28	Expenditure on Economic Help Of the needy Peoples	2,70,997-00
29	Amount paid to the shopkeeper who are terminated by the temple authorities from the shops of the temple	2,61,600-00.
30	Construction of shed for the Goats	2,32,263-00
31	Expenditure on the management of Sanskrit College	1,73,983-00
32	Expenditure on Library	1,60,460-00
33	Amount paid as income Tax	1,43,275-00
34	Expenditure on temple Website	91,747-00
35	Expenditure on Park near Musical Fountain	56,370-00

36	For the purchase of cooking Utensil	42,120-00
37	Commission paid on exchange of old Notes	18993-00
38	Commission paid on Drafts	5430-00

From the detail of income and expenditure mentioned as above it is evident that the temple continued to be a centre of great socio-economic activities in terms of its income received from various sources such as Income from Gulaks (Dan Patras), Charity received for Langar, Charity for New Construction, Bank interest, Charity received from the gulaks, (Dan Patras) of Shaiya Bhawan, Income as money order or Bank Drafts, Income from Gulaks (Dan Patras), charity for New Construction, Income as money order or Bank Drafts, Charity received for renovations, Fund received from Govt of Himachal Pradesh, By exchange of old notes, Charity received as Foreign Currency, Income from other sources, Rent from Yatri Niwas, Fund from Tourism Department, Charity received from Shaiya (Bed of the Goddess), Income by sale of Goats, Income by sale of Coconuts, Charity received from the gulaks, (Dan Patras) of Tara Devi Temple), Rent from shops, Fund from Govt of India, Income From Tonsure Slip (Mundan Parchi), Income by contract of Toilets, Income from the tenders, Income by the sale of Clocks and Fans, Income by sale of steel Utensil, Income by sale of cloths, By sale of Chunni's (Scarf), Income from the auction of the old material, Income from Kundana Parchi, Income from sale of Handmade Paintings etc. All these sources of income are related to a lot many social activities associated with the temple whether in the form of shops rented out by them to various people, sale of goats, auction of goods like utensils etc.

As far as the expenditure of the temple is concerned, the temple acts like a philanthropist agency and spends a lot of money on social welfare activities like Langar expenditure, For the management of degree college, Expenditure on Construction work Expenditure on different works, Expenditure on Renovations, Expenditure for the

management of different fair and festivals of the temple, Expenditure on the salary of Home Guards and Temporary employees appointed for the management of fair and festivals, Expenditure for the facilities of the Pilgrims , Expenditure on the management of Dispensary, Expenditure on purchase & Maintenance of the vehicle for the temple, and light Yard, Construction and Maintenance of temple road and light Yard, Purchase and repair of the Generator set, Donation in Chief Minister Relief Fund Expenditure on Economic Help of the needy Peoples, Construction of shed for the Goats, Expenditure on the management of Sanskrit College, Expenditure on Library, Expenditure on temple Website, Expenditure on Park near Musical Fountain, For the purchase of cooking Utensil etc.

Thus from the above mentioned it is quite evident that the Jwalamukhi temple is a centre of great socio-economic activities since ancient times. It has been source of employment for many people who are associated with the temple in connection with various activities. The temple also kept on a centre of social hustle and bustle not only for the local people but also from pilgrims from India and abroad. .

**Conflict of Interest:** The corresponding author, on behalf of all authors, confirms that there are no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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