



## RELIGIOUS AND TOURISM IMPORTANCE OF HARIDWAR, UTTARAKHAND

Dr. Praveen Joshi

Assistant Professor History, Govt. PG College Kotdwara, Pauri Garhwal,  
[joshigdc@gmail.com](mailto:joshigdc@gmail.com)

**ABSTRACT:** The *Devbhumi* Uttarakhand is a land of God and Goddess which abounds with natural beauty and cultural heritage. Every place of Uttarakhand has some religious or cultural or tourism or pilgrim or spiritual or socio-economic importance. The well-known place Haridwar, is one of the most important destination for pilgrim and religious people since ancient time. In this paper the religious, cultural, social, pilgrimage, spiritual and tourism importance of Haridwar is discuss.

**KEY WORDS:** Haridwar, Religious, Shiv, Temple, Tourism

The prominent spiritual centre of Uttarakhand, 'Hardwar' is known as Devbhumi, Tapobhumi, Sripur, Bhrampur, Suwarngotra, Khasmandal, Khasdesh, Kartikeypur, Kedarmandal, Kedarkhand etc. in legends and myths. The Hardwar city is situated in the lap of nature, replete with wide mountain ranges, natural glory, transcendental beauty and spiritual surrounding and lie just 292.7 meter from the sea level and exists in 29<sup>0</sup>25' latitude and 78<sup>0</sup>10' longitude on the bank of river Ganga and in the middle of Neel Parvat and Bilv Parvat and the other side of the Shivalik mountain chain (Fig 1).

Abound in the natural beauty, cultural heritage, temples, ashrams, arena and river wharf, the prominent Hindu shrine 'Hardwar' is supposed to be among four famous 'Mahakumbh' fair spot, seven savior pilgrimage, 51 sanctified places, 108 Divya shakti places, Vighrah and 84 seats of Ballabhacharya since ancient time (Kalyan Terthank, January,1957). That's why it is a prominent shrine for all communities like Vaishnav, Shaiv, Shakti, Nath and Sidh etc. Since it's thousands years of existence, Hardwar was known by its different name as *Gangadwar*, *Kapilalar*, *Swargdwar*, *Mayapur*, *Haridwar*, *Kutildarra*, *Panchpuri* and *Choupali darra* (Naithani,1994,). Its existence found in myths, religious literature like Van Parva and Anusashan Parva (Ch.26/12) of Mahabharatha.

गंगाद्वारे कुशावर्ते: विल्वके नेमिपर्वते,

तथा कनखले स्नात्वा धूतापाप्या दिवं ब्रजेत ॥ (Anusashan Parva, Ch.26/12)

Resembling to its name, Haridwar is assumed such a holy place, where not humans but also God, Gandharva and Saints get the fruit of meritorious action by living here.

शुभेदेशो महाराज पुण्ये देवर्षि सेविते,

गंगाद्वारे महातेजा देव गन्धर्व सेविते ॥ (Van Parva, Ch. 87/13)

In another verse of Mahabharata, calling Swargadwar (way of heaven) to it is explained that the tract of *Devbhumi* Mahagiri which begins to northern wards to Gangadwar is equal to Swargadwar. Theologies again say with evidence.

ततो गच्छते धर्मज्ञ नमस्कृत्य महागिरिम्,  
स्वर्गद्वारेण यतुल्यं गंगाद्वार न संशयः ॥ (Van Parva, Ch. 87/23)

Hardwar is also called a perfect place because there stays Lord Shiva along with Shakti (Power). As Mayapuri is the paternal place of Mahamaya, daughter of Daksh Prajapati so Kamkhul is supposed to be the in-laws house of Lord Shiva. According to myth it is assumed that there are five places of pilgrimages in Haridwar i.e. Hari ki Pauri, Kushawart, Vilvkeshwar, Neel Parvat and Kankhal.

**Hari Ki Pairi :** Haari ki pairi is a most ancient mythological place of Haridwar. According mythological Patrick, during the sea delving, there was scribbling for nectar between devas and demons, at the moment some drops of nectar fell down in four places i.e. Haridwar, Prayag, Uijain and Nasik. Since then after every twelfth year Kumbh fair is celebrated in Hardwar when sun and moon enter in Aries and Jupiter in Aquarius (Pandey,1989). The Kumbh (Purana Kumbh) is also described in Atharveda (19/53/3) as-

पूर्ण कुम्भोअधि काल अहितत्स्तं वैश्षयामो बहुधानु सन्तः,  
स इमा वि वां भुवनन्ति प्रत्यकालं तमाहुः परमे व्योमन् ॥ (Atharveda, 19/53/3)

Beside Puranas Kumbh, Half Kumbh (*ardha kumbha*) fair is also held here after every six years alternatively. Along with these fair on the occasion of other important festivals and days, millions of devotees take a dip of holy bath in the sanctified Ganga and get the fruit of meritorious action. Bathing on the occasion of Kumbh is similar to hundreds of Vedic horse sacrifice, hundreds of offering and reverence of earth<sup>2</sup>. The importance of Kumbh Perva is also describe in Skandapurana (3/5)-

तात्येव यः पुमान् योगे सोअमृतत्वाय कल्पते,  
देवा नयन्ति तनस्थान् यथा रंका धनाधियात् ॥ (Skandapurana 3/5)-

The people who take holy dip during *Kumbh*, Yoga get savoir.

About 2000 years ago, performing hard penance in this region, King Vikramaditya's brother also got savoir on the wharf of holy Ganga. In his memory, king Vikramaditya's constructed staircase here and therefore this region was called 'Hari Ki Pairi'(Kalyan Terthank, January,1957). According to Vishalmani Sharma during the Muslim regime after 1565 Sawai Man Singh prepared the ladders cutting the foot hill of Shivalik peak (Sharma,1990). According to another mythological script, performing the hard penance, king Swet requested God Brahma to grant a boon to him "to remain in the place with three deities and all shrines". That's way it is known as 'Brahmkund'. It is explained in Vanparva (Chapter 82, verse 13) that deities, kings, emperors, Gandarvas and saints used to come to this place to take a

holy dip in the river Ganga. Cunningham has also narrated about the hill of Vishnu's feet or *Pairighat* (Kohpairi) for Hari ki Pairi (Cunningham, 1975).

Two wharfs Kushawart and Gaughat established in the south wards to Hari Ki Pairi are also almost spiritual importance. It is belief that sage *Duttatreya* performed a hard penance on Kushaghat, standing on one foot. This pilgrimage has also been described in Chapter 26, verse 12 of Anushashan Parva of Mahabharata. It is believed that by offering of *Sharad* (annual rite for dead people), libations and *pind* on this wharf, paternal ancestor (dead person of family) get eternal satisfaction (*Moksha*). Vanparva 83 of Mahabharata states that Bheeshem came here to perform moksha yagna for his father Shantanu and this place became popular as Shantanuteerth.

पिता मम् महातेजा शान्तनुर्निधनं गतः,  
तस्य दित्सुरहं श्राद्धं गंगाद्वार मुपागतम् ॥ (Vanparva, 83/2)

While Gangaghat is assumed to release from the killing of a cow. Along with these, Ramaghat, being seat of Bailabhacharya Mahaprabhu and Vishnughat, being the penance land of God Vishnu, both are of utmost spiritual importance.

**Kanvar Mela :** Ten days before Shivratri, during the Hindu months *Shravan* or *Phalgun*, corresponding to the months of July and August, thousands of devotees throng Haridwar, all the way walking bare feet, to collect holy water of the river Ganga. Then they carry it back to their hometown and offer it at the local Shiv temple. Colorful shops spring up and Haridwar sound to the chanting of hymns.

**Vilvakeshwar :** On the eastern site of Hari Ki Pairi, a mountain peak known as Vilvak is situated whose description has been given in chapter 26, verse 12 of Anushashan Parva of Mahabharata. According to mythological script, Uma Gauri, daughter of the Himalaya, made penance here for years to meet Lord Shiva and become popular by the name Aparna. At present there is a Neem tree and beside it a temple constructed by Adi-Guru Sankaracharya. On the other corner there is an idol of Gauri devi. The stream which is flowing between these two temples is Called Shividhara that has been described in chapter 107 of Kedarkhand Purana.

**Dakseshwar Temple :** The belief about Kankhal where Daksheshwar temple is situated is that- the God Shiva was invited in the offertory, organized by the king Daksh, father of Siva's wife Sati. Therefore insulted Sati sacrificed her in offertory pit (*havan kund*), then angry Shiva devotee Veerbahdra killed the Daksh king but later on Shiva itself rescued the king *Daksh Prajapati*. After the king Daksh accepted his blunder and established God Shiva here (Regved 10.72-4.5). Besides it, its evidences are also found in Mahabharat Shantiparva 25/3 and Bhagwat Puran 4-3-7. This temple was renovated by queen Dhankunwar, wife of Landoura king Ramdayal in 1810 and later on was repaired by Mahanirvan Panchayat Akhara.

**Mahamaya Temple :** After sacrifice in offertory pit of where ever Sati's limbs fell a *Shakti peeth* was established there and it is believed that naval part of Sati fell in the premises of Mahamaya temple and here was established a *Sakti Peeth* (Naithani, 1994). Its description is also found in many Purans and religious books.

**Mansa and Chandi Devi Temple :** Mansa and Chandi Devi Temple are situated on Vilva and Neelgiri peaks respectively. It is believed that wherever would be Mansa Devi there must be Chandi Devi. Mans was the daughter of Sage Kashyap and sister of Vasuki Naga, she was married to Jartkaru Saga and they had a son named Astik.

आस्तिकस्य मनर्भाता भगिनी वासुकेस्तथा,  
जरत्कारु मुनेः पत्नी मनसा देवी नमोस्तुते ॥(Shastri,1975)

According to the description of Brahmvaivart Purana 3-51, Mansa is the Goddess to depress the snake bites. According to Devi Bhagwat, Jamejaya, worshipped Mansa Devi to escape from Takshak snake bites. There is an image of *Astha Nag Vahinee* having three face and five arms in the temple Mansa Devi is called tenth *Shakti* (power) in Navchandi. There is ancient pond called *Suraj Kund* behind the Mansa Devi temples, which is supposed to be penance land of God Sun. Beside the *Suraj Kund* there is an ancient temple of five face Hanuman. It is said that when child Hanuman tried to swallow the Sun God during the penance, Sun God hit him with mace and where Hanuman fell down at that place there is five facial Hanuman temple (Bhatt,2004).

Beyond Mansa Devi, Chandi Devi temple established on the *Neel Parvat* across *Neel Dhara*. According to mythological script, Chandi Devi the power of incantations has killed *Shumbh* and *Nisumbh* namely two demons on the place. This is certified by existence of *Shumbh* and *Nisumbh* peak on this mountain chain. Some people believe that the temple was constructed by a famous tantric of Kanpur in 1858 while some people believe that it was built by Suchit Singh, the king of Jammu.

**Saptrishi (Seven sage) Region :** By the Vanparva (3.139,2) and Vanparva (47.39) description it is known when Ganga originated on the earth and reached to this place, Ganga was compelled to

एष गंगा सप्तविद्या रजते भरतर्षभ,  
शंदक सप्तमी त्वनुगा तासा दक्षिणेनष भगीरथी ॥ (Vanparva 3.139,2)

divided in to seven streams to save the penance lend and cottage of seven sages viz Kashyap, Atri, Vasisth, Vishwamitra, Gautam, Jamdagni and Bhardwaj.

**Piran Kaliar :** Piran Kaliar, situated 23 km south of Haridwar, on the outskirts of Roorkee is a *Dargah* (tomb) of Hazrat Makdum Allauddin Ali Ahamed ‘Sabir’. This tomb is famous for its mystical power and is visited in large number of Muslims and Hindus both. In fact this place is a living example of Hindu-Muslim unity. During the Ramjan month of Islamic calendar Urs is celebrated from the first day of sighting of moon to the sixteenth day.

**Jain Temple :** Bhagwan Chintamani Parshwanath temple is situated at Bhupatwala, apart from the beautiful idol of Bhagwan Chintamani Parshwanath the foot prints of Bhagwan is present behind the temple under a rain tree. The footprints are said to be the sign of unseen Ashtapad *teerth*. It is a new temple famous for its art, design and the huge campus. The two-storied temple is made of the yellow stones brought from Jaisalmir. The idols of Bhagwan Shri Shantinath and Sri Neminath are also placed in the same hall.

**Gurudwara :** Beside Shahi Gurudwara, there is Guru Nanak Dev Gurudwara in BHEL. It was built by the Sikh employees of BHEL. These Gurudwara Sahib provide accommodation to the pilgrims on the way to Hemkund Sahib.

Beside above mentioned places mythological narrations Haridwar is abound by many Ashrams, Niketan, Areana, Satighat, Sureshwari Devi Peeth and God Shankar temple. It is in vogue about this place that there Gorakhnath God performed the penance, Shantanu and Ganga got married, Dron and Drupad learned to play arrow bow, study and fostering of *Bhesham Petamaha* was completed here, marriage of Arjun and Allopi was also organized here and it was also the residential place of Guru Nanak.

Descried scene and sights are of pivotal importance for the domestic and foreign masses which are able to attract a vast number of tourists in the town. The tourist flow can be seen by the following table (data including pilgrims):

Year	Indian Tourist	Foreign Tourist	Total
2008-2009	11356250	17854	11374104
2009-2010	12049450	19967	12069417
2010-2011	11204275	1509	11219884
2011-2012	13454650	26722	13481372
2012-2013	15231875	26875	15228750
2013-2014	12763650	22611	12786261
2014-2015	15456550	20992	15477542
2015-2016	19332025	15615	19350640
2016-2017	20486775	21322	20508097

Source : [www.haridwar.nic.in](http://www.haridwar.nic.in)

**Conclusion :** It is clear through above mention description that the penance land and working place for God, Goddess, Sages, Saints and great persons, entrance of four prominent shrines of Uttarakhand, Yamnotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath, Haridwar is not only centre of religious faith but also is the prominent tourist place of domestic and international tourists. Thus the Haridwar provide a platform to maintain the religious, cultural and social brotherhood while, it give the opportunities of income generation for different peoples and communities and also play a key role in the economy of the sate as well country.

#### References :

1. Bhatt T.C. (2004) Uttarakhand ke Devalaya, Taxsila Prakasan, Delhi.
2. Cunnninghem A. (1975) Ancient Geography of India, Varanasi.
3. Kalyan Terthank (January 1957) Geeta Press Gorakhpur,pp.466-488.
4. Naithani, S.P. (1994) Uttarakahand ke Teerth evam Mandir, Pavetri Prakashan, Srinagar Garhwal.
5. Pandey Rajbali (1989) , Hindu Dharma Kosh.
6. Sharma Vishalmani (1990) Uttarakhand Himalaya Yatra.
7. Shastri, S. (1964) Prachin Charittrakosh, Puna.
8. [www.haridwar.nic.in](http://www.haridwar.nic.in)