

K U L U V A L L E Y

1

In view of the importance which the Kulu Valley holds on account of its geographical position, its resources and as a potential summer resort of very great scope, the improvement of roads is one of primary need and it should be attended to before any development can be achieved. I understand that a great deal of money has already been spent on trying to rebuild the roads and bridges which have been swept away by the disastrous 1947 floods. Yet as it stands at present, I doubt that the present roads would ever stand up to any excessive monsoon in these parts of the Himalayas.

The main Kulu road skirts the Beas River and in places it is only a few feet above the low waterlevel. Since 1947 the river has changed its course in many places and unless the present contours of the river bends are changed and straightened out by training the river on to a straighter course, every increase in the water volume would threaten to bring down the road wherever the bank is at right angles to the water current. I have noted many such turns in the present river bed and any road which follows the river bed at these bends will eventually find itself engulfed by the rising water. It would seem that in order to solve the problem of the road in a more permanent way, the road would either have to be built at a much greater distance from the river or the river would have to be trained to change its present bed and follow a straighter course. I believe it would be cheaper to do the latter by building sufficiently strong dams against which water could deposit sand, silt, debris of rocks, etc. and thus build up a natural embankment which will straighten out the river course.

As regards bridges, for instance the Naggar Bridge, which has already come down seven times since 1947 and has now become much longer than the original bridge of pre-1947, even this last bridge is not expected to last with any increase in the water level and

moreover it is threatened to be cut off by a new water channel which has formed behind the bridge and which had to be bridged in its turn. It would seem that the bridge ought to be moved to a place somewhere higher up the stream where both embankments are sufficiently high not to be affected by the rising waters.

Since Kulu is only accessible by means of one motor road, which runs along the river bed, any kind of traffic except by mules or by foot along difficult caravan tracks. Fruit export which is one of the most important produce of Kulu Valley and for which the Valley is justly renowned, is very adversely affected by the bad state of the roads. The perishable nature of these exports demands an immediate transportation and any delay due to the blocking of the road results in heavy loss. The road from Mandi to Aut from where the Kulu Valley begins is in a better condition, as it has not suffered as much at the time of the 1947 floods.

I feel the question of roads is very urgent, as it should be attended to before there is any unusual rise in the water level of the Beas River.

To recapitulate:--

- (1) The river is to be trained by means of embankments, and dams.
- (2) The road to be built sufficiently high to avoid the risk of the water rising up to the road level.
- (3) All bridges to be revised and make ample allowances for sudden rise in the water level.

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KULU VALLEY:

If the valley is to be properly developed for Tourist Traffic, the most important problem to overcome will be the problem of transport and secondly accommodations. After my recent visit to the valley, I have found that considerable progress has been made in improving the roads both from Mandi to Kulu as well as in the Kulu Valley itself.

New jeepable roads will open up the areas which were only approachable by pony or on foot. The important Parbati Valley can also become a new centre for tourism not only because of its natural beauty, but on account of its famous hot springs. Likewise if the road is completed over the Rhotang Pass, it will connect the important Lahoul Valley and facilitate the approach to Spiti. The road has been completed upto Koti, 8 miles beyond Manali. I feel and I strongly recommend that an aerodrome be built at Bahl in Mandi. The Bahl Valley is very well suited for this purpose and can have a first class airport, which will serve the entire countryside and all neighbouring mountain valleys. Bahl is only a couple of miles from Mandi Town and is connected by road with Simla, Bilaspur, Kulu, Kangra and other important places which radiate from Bahl.

The present air strip at Kulu is very small and will hardly ever become anything more than an auxiliary aerodrome while Bahl would also permit Kulu fruit for which the valley is so famous to be exported directly with little loss and wastage on the way. This aerodrome at Bahl will bring all the neighbouring valleys within easy reach of Delhi and the rest of India and help enormously to develop the potential wealth of Kulu and the neighbouring areas.

I suggest that Mandi Town should have a first class Hotel which would accommodate tourists arriving at Bahl before they disperse to the adjoining regions. The present road from Mandi to Kulu though greatly improved lately should be considered as only one of the approaches to the valley and the other two roads through Katola and the old Baboo Pass must be also developed. This will give an auxiliary access to the Kulu Valley in case of some

4 12

accident to the main Mandi-Kulu road and provide a short cut to Kulu, one from near Drang and the other one from Gunma. These short cuts enter the Kulu Valley at points higher up the valley than the main Mandi-Kulu road which follows the Beas river.

The next problem is accommodations for tourists. I suggest that hotels may be built first at Manali (at the head of the valley) which is perhaps the most convenient place for tourists to stay at on account of the many walks along fairly level country with beautiful forests, glens and its proximity to the Rhotang Pass which leads to Lahoul. At the present moment, we have a few very inadequate Dak Bangalows at different points in the Kulu Valley supplemented by a few small hotels which have not been developed and remain as they were since when they were built prior to the world war. Some of these hotels are not functioning at the present moment and they could never cope with an increased tourist traffic. The Government has built a small Tourist Rest House at Manali and erected two aluminium houses, one at Sultanpur and one at Manali, which will help to take care of a dozen or so tourists. However, should the tourists' traffic really increase, there will be no adequate accommodations at any point in the Valley. The problem of food will also have to be considered as at certain seasons, vegetables, eggs and chickens have to be brought into the Valley, and this needs organization. I suggest that the hot springs in Kulu such as at Kalat and Vashist at Manali may be properly developed as they will be a great attraction to tourists if properly maintained. Kulu Valley being well known all over India as one of India's finest fruit growing centres, its fruit (which comprises most of the European varieties) can be an important additional attraction to tourists, Trout fishing, hunting, mountain climbing and excursions to the neighbouring valleys, visits to Lahoul and Spiti, which are easily accessible from Kulu, are great attractions to many a traveller. Spiti and Lahoul are typical of the Tibetan valleys and uplands yet within easy reach of the main Kulu Valley.

The Kulu and its neighbouring valleys are extraordinary rich in vegetation and many valuable types of timber grow along the mountain slopes. The timber can provide excellent material for Cabinet Makers, Carpenters, Wood carvers and, perhaps, revive the old wood carving craft which was so widely practised throughout the valley. The famous Kulu Pashmina Shawls with their beautiful traditional designs have found a ready market throughout the country and abroad and even found imitators in other parts of India. These and many other allied crafts could be revived and developed through tourism and the demand which is created through greater tourists traffic. The excellent climate with a light rainfall in the Summer and snow in the Winter is exceptionally healthy and has been commended for Sanitoriums. In this light, the hot springs can acquire an additional interest as some of them are sulphur springs with definite medicinal properties. The climate of Spiti has been specially mentioned as suitable for Lung Diseases. The Kulu Valley has been known from time immorial as a source of valuable medicinal herbs and we hope that this important source of indigenous drugs may further be developed through adequate plantations which may be established at various alleviations. Special attention may also be paid to the breeding of Pashmina Goats which supply the valuable Pashmina wool and the breeding of Spiti Ponies for which Spiti was so famous in the past. Many other important small industries can be developed in the Valley and with the advent of Electricity, these developments will be greatly facilitated. The electric power has already reached the upper valley and before long we may expect the entire valley to be electrified.

Kulu has considerable mineral wealth which has not been developed. Several mines are known in the Parbati, Malana and Spiti Valleys, as well as the extensive iron deposits and the rock salt mines in Mandi. It is difficult to give an adequate enumeration of all the attractions which the Valley contains, but it is my opinion that Kulu and its neighbouring valleys are ideally suited for tourism and for all those who love nature at its best.