

**MAHASU DEVTA, SHAMANISM, AND CULTURAL HERITAGE: ASSESSING THE SCOPE OF SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL TOURISM IN HIMACHAL PRADESH**

**Nitin Vyas, Priti R Nagal, Aniket Dhanda**  
Himachal Pradesh University Shimla, India.

**Abstract**

The cultural and spiritual identity of Himachal Pradesh has been shaped by Shamanistic traditions for centuries. One of the most visible and lived demonstrations of indigenous spirituality is the worship of Mahasu Devta. This research explores the possibilities for developing spiritual tourism in Himachal Pradesh through the Shamanistic practices of Mahasu Devta, paying careful attention to the spiritual dimension, as well as the cultural dimension, of those practices. What sets Mahasu Devta apart, in addition to being a living example of indigenous spirituality, is not only the richness of the cultural experiences which provide cultural participation, the rituals, festivals, oral traditions and folk-art, but also that it enriches visitor participation and contributes to the heritage preservation. This article demonstrates how embracing spiritual and cultural tourism together creates sustainable, community-based models that include relevant experiences for visitors and positively impact residents.

This paper critically examines the viability of developing spiritual tourism in Himachal Pradesh through an ethnographic and cultural study of the Shamanistic practices of Mahasu Devta. The worship of Mahasu devta is rooted in the indigenous spiritual system known as Dev Niti and is one of the few living expressions of pre-Vedic ritualism tied to governance, divine territoriality, and oral mythos of a community. The article demonstrates that Mahasu Devta's ritual ecology—a complex of divine trances (Dev Vani), symbolic acts of justice, and vibrant community festivals that has the potential to facilitate a type of spiritual tourism that is different than the pilgrimage, religious tourism or managed spiritual tourism.

**Key words:** Dev Niti, Himachal Pradesh, Indigenous Rituals, Mahasu Devta, Shamanism, Spiritual Tourism.

**Introduction**

Spiritual tourism, or travel undertaken primarily for personal spiritual growth and engagement with different/other cultures is on the rise across the globe. Himachal Pradesh is known for its relaxing landscapes, ancient knowledge and varied religious practices, making it a huge but neglected opportunity for tourism. Many readers may associate spiritual tourism in India with temple towns or yoga retreats; however, the indigenous spiritual systems of the

Himalayas, particularly its Shamanic traditions have not been explored through mainstream tourism.

Unlike organized institutional religion, the Shamanic traditions of the region are personal and experiential engagement with the Divine. Both sacred spaces and living cultural practices, the Shaman bridges the Divine and human realms through ritual making, divine trances, and community oracles. The Shaman, or Gur, becomes a living intermediary between the deity and devotee, and the Shaman mediates the cosmic wisdom into earthly solutions usually if not exclusively for social or community outcomes. Some of the experiences are not simply religious or spiritual, but extend to justice delivery, social reconciliation processes, and traditional healing practices.

In this context, Mahasu Devta is a cultural landscape where his worship structure is more of a civilizational ethos than a religious structure. This worship structure has had the opportunity to span several districts in Himachal Pradesh, and in neighbouring Uttarakhand, attracting thousands attending the Daud and during the festivals in as many as 1100 surrounding villages interacting in non-linear ritual or oracular ways each year. Mahasu Devta worship is immersive, and the worship happens through music, dance, offerings and community. As a living cultural practice, worshipping Mahasu Devta provides the conditions for developing responsible tourism based on such cultural authenticity and community, and can be the basis for responsible spiritual tourism businesses.

### **Historical Background Of Mahasu Devta**

Mahasu Devta is recognized as the Kshetrapal (regional deity) of the Jaunsar-Bawar region in Uttarakhand and portions of Himachal Pradesh, including Rohru, Kotkhai, and Jubbal. The oral tradition and the Mahasu Puran tell us that he originally lived in Kashmir, and then was brought to Hanol (current Uttarakhand) by devotees who wanted divine assistance with demons and lawlessness. The four brothers, Botha, Pavasi, Chalda, and Bashik, symbolize the Mahasu spirit, each one sharing the same spirit but in their own temples.

Mahasu Devta's temple at Hanol in the Tons Valley recognized the commencement of a more structured spirituality. As centuries passed, Mahasu Devta's influence emerged and spread into Himachal, where the temple became a place of not only worship but also a place of justice and moral order. His temples became centres of justice and worship where spiritual courtrooms organized society and many disputes were resolved under divine power, often seen by the community as final.

Dev Vani refers to the divine speech spoken by Gur or Shaman the community obediently speaks to invoke Mahasu Devta. Rituals are created through trance, drumming, and offerings by worshipers and communities. The rituals remain relevant and alive today which sustain the lives of devotees and families for generations. These traditions have influenced programs in the community that transform spiritual festivals and divine processions into visual performances for tourists to explore a spiritually alive, vibrant, and real world. The palanquin movement of Mahasu Devta ceremonially and physically creates a moving temple that contains music, devotees, and symbolic, coincidently, and pursuit of faith.

This paper seeks to evaluate the potential of Mahasu Devta's Shamanic traditions to facilitate and expand the potential of spiritual and cultural tourism in Himachal Pradesh. It argues that spiritual authenticity and cultural depth in travel experiences can create sustainable and meaningful tourism practice.

### **Literature Review**

While Shamanism has been well described in the anthropological literature of the world, its connection with tourism in the Indian Himalayas is still under-investigated. Early scholars such as Verrier Elwin and Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf have provided foundational ethnographies of Indian tribal and mountain communities that examined their spiritual and ritual lives as part of a larger ethnology inspired by the indigenous perspectives. For anthropological purposes, Elwin and Förer-Haimendorf's studies are useful examples of how Mahasu Devta's traditions operate within people's everyday cultural realities.

More recent research has examined social regulation and collective identity of folk deities, oracles, and local religions of the Western Himalayas, but less scholarship has assessed the consolidation of these traditions and the potential of spiritual or cultural tourism. William Sax's work, especially in regards to ritual authority and divine governance in Garhwal and Himachal, provides constructive ideas of the social systems conditioned by folk deities and how they might contribute to cultural tourism infrastructures.

The Mahasu Puran, being an oral epic with multiple authors and variations over the generations, also still serves as textual practice of mythic and ritual history attached to Mahasu Devta. The Mahasu Puran contains stories about Mahasu Devta's origin, miracles, and fighting demons, and becoming a divine judge and protector. Documentation by the local bards, temple priests, and keepers of oral memory has preserved practices of Mahasu Devta worship. Work by Rahul Sankrityayan has shown value in the continued oral epic, and the mythological history of Himalayan belief systems.

For the purposes of tourism, the Indian Ministry of Tourism policies have called for "Experiential and Spiritual Tourism" that positions indigenous cultures so the cultures are preserved. Too often "experiential and spiritual" policies neglect the non-standard, non-mainstream elements of local spiritual practices that cannot be explained then of 'non-standard' it falls short of reconfiguring moral and ethical dimensions of tourism discourse by disregarding non-standard spiritualities like Dev Niti, causing communities to be excluded from mainstream economy and services.

Tourism studies will increasingly enhance our understanding of immersive and 'community in community-based tourism experiences,' and argue for models of authenticity, sustainability, and responsibilities from hosts and travelers as shared experience. With Mahasu Puran and worship as established cosmological symbols of genuine tradition and moral order, with active community engagement, the community-led rituals and festivals and a series of participatory events offer visitors real-life engagement and spiritual lifeways. Nonetheless, little attention has yet gained a formal basis through recognition of the moral, academic, or policy level conception of local practices. This literature review demonstrates that the present study intends to close an explicit gap: the embedding of indigenous, spiritual systems like Mahasu Devta into spiritual cultural tourism. The purpose of this study will examine the embodied, performed, and ethical dimensions of Dev Niti as a way of contributing to an understanding of how heritage and spirituality can frame inclusive and sustainable community-cantered tourism paradigms in the Indian Himalayas.

### **Methodology**

This study utilizes a qualitative and interdisciplinary research approach drawn from ethnography, cultural anthropology, and tourism studies. It examines Mahasu Devta's Shamanic dimensions in their spiritual, cultural, and touristic contexts, and the auspices of these dimensions for responsible tourism development in Himachal Pradesh.

### **Fieldwork And Participant Observation**

Primary data was collected through immersive field visits to key Mahasu Devta shrines in Rohru, Hanol, Kotkhai, and Jubbal. We witnessed intriguing moments of the annual festivals, engaged in religious experiences of community involvement, and participated in a number of rituals marked by the mutuality of human participation and durable cultural activities which allowed for a creative as well as phenomenological experience of the living Shamanic ways. The attention was also drawn to Dev Vani sessions, where the deity speaks through a usually trance-travelling Shaman or Gur to provide divine rulings, predictions, and blessings. These engagements allowed for firsthand observation of the interaction between deities, shamans.

Observations of the Dev Vani ritual events made clear that the community commonly turns to the deity for more than worship as a form of social arbitration or moral authority. Generally, as a religious Shaman the Gur transferred divine gone effects through rites, emanating from the source of the god's way being storm of collective commonality with call-and-response drumming by participants, chanting, and felt transition the human to its medium for the phenomenal identification of the living voice of the deity. These events tended to resemble a spiritual courtroom where disputes were resolved and decisions were collectively consented to without question—emphasizing the sociocultural strength of Mahasu Devta.

In addition to this valuing of local participation in the research, the conversations and interactions with local villagers, elders, temple priests, and other participants during festivals together provided a rich participatory aspect to the research, which enhanced knowledge about the performative spirituality of the area where faith meant strong participation in everyday life instead of passive engagement. Whether it was elders respectful reverence or the youth parade through cultural expression to participate in traditional dance and folk songs, the devotion demonstrated by the community was present both in ritual and through actively passing on cultural knowledge. Such a strong immersion through observation also identified the opportunity for spiritual and cultural events as good experiences for tourist, in particular for tourists who have the desire to connect with the indigenous peoples, moral attractions, and local forms of knowledge.

### **In-Depth Interviews**

In-depth semi-structured interviews were undertaken with a breadth of four stakeholders in order to portray the religious, cultural, and development rationale that apply to the Mahasu Devta tradition. Included within this line of questioning were Gurs (Shamans), who provided excellent questioning about trance rituals, and a more nuanced understanding of spiritual mediation and the ethical codes governing the agency in these forms of Dev Niti, and other research participants who provided valuable understandings about the metaphysical dimension of the medium for the divine, and the social responsibility that it also expertise itself. Along with the interviews with temple priests and caretakers about ritual protocols, mythic story, and continuity in practices over many generations, as well as tangible additional layers of detail, adding important contextual layers. Community elders, who are often perceived as the custodians of oral history, provided lived memories of the historical role of Mahasu Devta's interventions in community governance, dispute resolution, and the emergence of community identity. Their memories depicted the

interconnectedness of spiritual authority, agency in practical decision-making, and customary law.

Furthermore, interviews with governing tourism officials and NGO representatives involved in heritage and rural development provided another contextual view of the current and potentially future impact that Mahasu Devta worship may have on spiritual tourism. These participants engaged in frank discourse with regard to infrastructure, cultural sensitivities, and sustainability while being aware of the uniqueness of such live traditions in the development of tourist engagements that would be attractive to travellers looking for meaning-making and experience. The interviews were conducted in the local dialect and in Hindi, and the audio-recorded with the consent of participants, transcribed, and qualitatively analysed by themes. That is, the qualitative way of working resulted in variation among themes such as sacred authenticity, community-based tourism, ritual continuity, and moral dimensions related to the commodification of spiritual experiences. The nuanced, layered responses that were produced and gathered from the interviews provided another significant piece of the analytical framework for the study, situating the role of Shamanic traditions across spiritual and socio-cultural space.

### **Textual And Oral Literature Document Review**

Where possible, a critical textual analysis was undertaken on the Mahasu Puran, the important oral scripture central to the Mahasu Devta tradition, to examine mythological connections, ritual obligations, and moral imperatives that govern the worship of the deity. This indigenous puranic text, passed down for generations orally, contains numerous stories, including the birth of Mahasu Devta, his aids from the gods, his fights against evil, and the establishment of sacred rule in Jaunsar-Bawar and Himachal region. The review examined prominent topics such as divine justice, the support of dharma, ethical communal life, and the role of the deity in preserving social order.

Besides the text review, considerable documentation of local stories and folklore was accomplished by working with village bards (Bhatt) and hereditary custodians of temples, who are important transmitters of oral tradition in the Mahasu Devta canon. These tellers recounted region-related versions of the Mahasu stories, each with a particular local symbolism, moral, and sociocultural focus. The oral accounts were recorded, transcribed, and interpreted in their ritual and performative contexts, thus providing a textual layer of witness and ethnographic data to it as a mythic corpus.

Thereafter, a comparative analysis was conducted to position and compare the indigenous sources with academic literature that includes anthropology, religious studies and Himalayan folklore. Looking through this comparative lens

we outlined cultural continuities that reaffirm the authenticity and endurance of these traditions through time, despite outside interference and contemporary developments, as well as some striking gaps—especially by noting how mainstream academic dialogue has tended to either overlook or dilute the complexities of such traditions. By situating the Mahasu Puran and its oral literature in a wider scholarly and cultural landscape, the project updates understanding not only how myth and memory function as spiritual motivators, but also as dynamic and active catalysts of cultural identity, ritual performance, and the potential for tourism development.

### **Visual Ethnography**

Photography and video were used extensively in the different Mahasu Devta traditions on ritual performance, deity processions, sacred architecture, iconography, community gatherings, and cultural fairs and festivals. This expansive visual collection and database can support the narrative deconstruction and reflection of these historical and cultural phenomena. Furthermore, the visual archive is also important for producing cultural maps of Mahasu Devta traditions, which contributes to their preservation and further promotion as a heritage tourism experience.

### **Tourism Impact And Swot Analysis**

A systematic SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) framework was used to understand the potential for integrating Mahasu Devta worship traditions into the growing spiritual tourism potential already developing in Himachal Pradesh. This SWOT analysis encompassed a number of key factors, including, for example, the current state of tourism services and access to the area, especially within the remote highlands where the Mahasu Devta shrines are located. The assessment included evaluating community readiness, community willingness, and community reservations necessary for engagement in any sustainable or heritage tourism approaches; environmental and ethical sustainability/improvement was a serious concern to preserving the integrity of ritual spaces and minimizing negative ecological impacts in sensitive mountain regions. Contextual comparisons were also drawn from successful case studies, such as integrating tribal heritage into cultural tourism in the Ziro Valley, Arunachal Pradesh, or promoting Baul spiritual traditions in West Bengal, which offered instructive insights into managing authenticity, while building economic opportunity. The SWOT analysis therefore offered a preliminary framework to identify the idiosyncratic regional strengths, such as mythology and natural landscape, potential weaknesses and threats/challenges, while eventually illuminating a sustainable road-map for heritage based spiritual tourism surrounding the Mahasu Devta worship traditions.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Community consent was acquired prior to data collection as well as agreement to fully respect private rituals and sacred practices; and in instances of engaging community members, identities have been anonymized when reasonably deemed necessary to support the preservation of privacy and uphold ethical research practice. Indeed, throughout the entire length of this research, every effort was made to ensure that the sacred traditions associated with Mahasu Devta would be approached with an appreciation for cultural sensitivity in that it did not promote exoticism or commodification of the community's sacred traditions. Quite the reverse actually; engagement and research were conducted to honour the community's spiritual perspectives and promote a respectful and accurate representation of their intangible heritage.

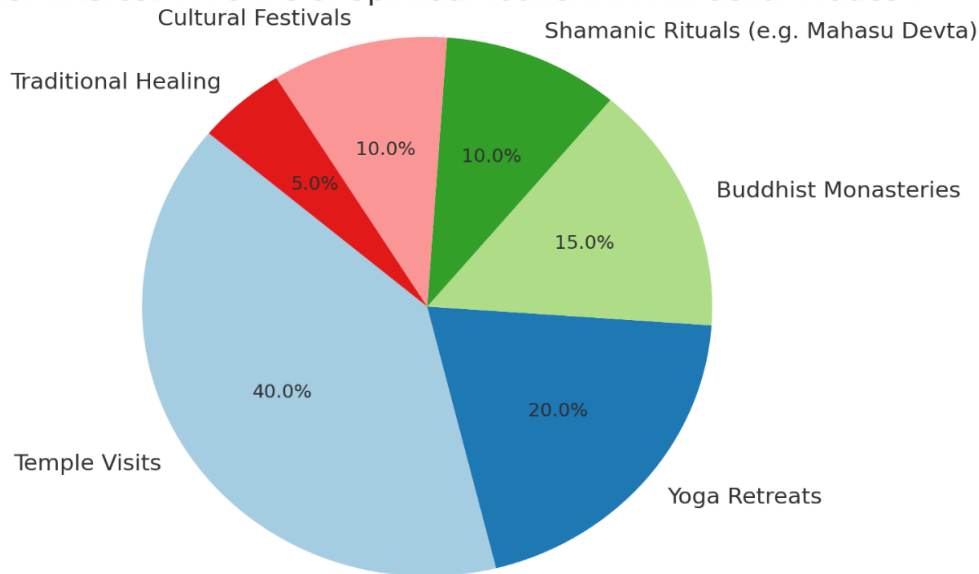
### **Shamanism And Spiritual Tourism In Himachal Pradesh**

Shamanism in Himachal is expressed through oracular practices, rituals, and divine connection through human beings called Gurs. The Shaman undergoes initiation and training to become an object of divinity in the ceremony. Elements of performance are oracular drumming, chants, and trance states. The practice is an education in spirituality and plays a role in social cohesion and traditional justice in rural communities, in the complex and deeply rooted structure of spirituality that exists in Himachal.

In Himachal Pradesh, religious and adventure tourism is more developed than spiritual tourism. Spiritual tourism, based on inner peace, cultural participation, and indigenous knowledge, is still developing. Many temples, monasteries, and pilgrim paths attract many tourists seeking meaning and peace. Shamanic practices that have been a part of culture and spirituality throughout Himachal are appealing to spiritual tourism because of their mysterious elements, depth of culture, and their potential to engage tourism. For example, Mahasu Devta's shrine.



Tourist Interest in Forms of Spiritual Tourism in Himachal Pradesh



### Dev Niti And Shamanism: Foundations For Spiritual Tourism

The practice of Dev Niti, a traditional system of divine law and spiritual governance, is inherently linked to the Shamanistic features of Mahasu Devta worship. The Devta is said to provide justice, advice, and blessings, through trance, performance by Gurs. Dev Niti and the activities surrounding Mahasu Devta embody the moral and spiritual order of the community. For spiritual tourists, this living tradition offers tourists a unique experience to observe ancient ethical -spiritual order, and observe the ability of human beings to act humanely in a ritual and economically isolated community. The tourists will experience the divine meaning of Dev Vani, witness the resolution of inter-village disputes in the court of the Devta, and participate in festivals expressing divine socially and cosmically aligning traditions. Using the idea of spirituality tourism, expands the potential stories and experiences associated with Dev Niti in respect to the ethical-spirituality living traditions that invites tourists to enact a complex interplay between understanding the meanings of human existence and relationship to human cultures and heritage.

### Assessing The Potential: Mahasu Devta And The Potential For Spiritual Tourism

The present study, informed by primary data collected from 250 respondents who are part of a study of villages with direct associations to Mahasu Devta worship, indicates strong and growing potential for developing a formal model of tourism based on these traditions of Mahasu Devta. The temples of Mahasu Devta, and festivals associated for worship, especially the Mahasu Jatra, which is celebrated annually in July, continue to bring thousands of visitors to Mahasu Devta temples. This festival goes beyond a religious event; this is a considerable

amalgamation of ritual devotion, folk sports, theatrical re-enactments, and cultural showcases that resonates strongly with local communities and spiritual seekers external to the area.

The key primary data refers to the manner in which festivals and events in the region foster a sense of community participation and collective identity while also contributing to the rural economy. A number of local respondents highlighted the escalating benefits of homestay tourism, local cultural food offerings, handicrafts, and guiding, and perceive them as viable livelihood options. Furthermore, many residents conveyed their excitement if the opportunity were available to preserve and share their cultural identity and practices, as long as the new forms of tourism would respect their spiritual protocols and ecological sustainability.

Our research shows the potential to develop a full-blown spiritual heritage circuit linking Mahasu Devta alongside other local deities and sites of spiritual significance. A spiritual heritage circuit can provide visitors with an overarching experience drawing on mythology, contemporary local ritual practices, and indigenous worldviews, while also promoting sustainable tourism within local communities. The observations gathered through the surveys illustrate that with appropriate planning, public infrastructure support, and ethical frameworks, Mahasu Devta traditions have the potential to be the start of a responsible and enriching model for spiritual heritage tourism in Himachal Pradesh.

### **Visual Aids And Cultural Mapping**

In the promotion of Mahasu Devta traditions in spiritual tourism, it is important to be creative and culturally appropriate with tools to facilitate understanding and engagement. Including impact statements and developing information-rich visual aids of infographics or ritual flow charts that present the sequence of a Shamanic ritual linked to Mahasu Devta, along with its symbolism. These visual aids can assist in unravelling the process of preparing and calling the deity, namely bhav aana, the Gur (the oracle), and purification sequence of the ritual, for tourists while maintaining its sacredness.

Digital maps that highlight the locations of Mahasu Devta temples, sites for major festivals, such as Hanol or Jaunsar-Bawar, date of major events like Mahasu Jatra, could be developed and presented as interactive maps. Finally, be able to include oral tradition and the local narrative, through audio clips, folk songs, or recordings of interviews with the temple custodians or bards (Bhatts), to provide depth for those doing virtual or actual travelling.

Importantly, curated photo exhibitions as well as short documentary videos that showcase live action from the festivals, such as Gur trance, traditional sports,

ritual dances, feasting, and offerings. This multimedia not only draws in culturally curious audiences, but expands their experience of Mahasu Devta tradition, respect the spirituality of indigenous peoples, including themselves in the conversations about protecting indigenous spiritual practice, while interjecting ancient ways of knowing to modern audiences, through immersion, respect, and a way into the sacred cultural landscape of Himachal Pradesh. These collective efforts can promote Mahasu Devta traditions as a framework for spiritual heritage tourism promoted vertically through state tourism and tourism for academic outreach, and horizontally through heritage tourism programs.

### **Policy Recommendations**

To evolve Mahasu Devta traditions toward a model of respectful, inclusive and sustainable spiritual tourism, we need a framework, and bright ideas for policy recommendations. The framework should be guided by principles of cultural awareness for sustainability in the long term, employing a resource of community, and application of contemporary modes for engagement and experiences.

#### **1. Create An Integrated Mahasu Devta Spiritual Tourism Circuit**

To make a 'Mahasu Devta and allied deities' 'Heritage Circuit' that unites the sacred sites of Shimla, and the surrounding Uttarakhand regions under a distinct and common brand of Mahasu Deva and allied deities. The route will include Hanol, Kotkhai, Jubbal, Jaunsar-Bawar where Mahasu worship is practiced. The circuit can build an integrated experience, through common brand, signage and narrative strategy, to pilgrimage and spiritual tourist pilgrims' journeys across sites of socio-cultural connection of Mahasu's development. In addition, seasonal pilgrimage themes - i.e. Mahasu Jatra, Jagra, and Bishu themed pilgrimage experiences, can also be accommodated to enhance pilgrimage experiences.

#### **2. Professionalize Cultural Interpretive Practice Through Local Guides And Shamans**

The current local Gurs (shamans), temple priests and storytellers, needs preparation for additional training in cultural interpretation practice, language skills and hospitality of tourism through good capacity development programs to be financed by the state. The government can work with tourism authorities, universities, and regional cultural institutions to develop certification modules semi-autonomously, to promote that the experiences of spirituality and stories are to be correctly articulated without diminishing the sanctity of those experiences. Once educated, folks can be promoted as the "Cultural Ambassadors" of the region.

### **3. Support Eco-Spiritual Homestays And Themed Rural Retreats**

Eco-appropriate spiritual homestays should be promoted in the major temple towns across the region to include local traditional architecture, traditional indigenous cuisine, and eco-friendly approaches. These may include curated retreat packages that will create opportunities for morning pujas, village walks and evening program storytelling. Overnight stays may also serve to benefit women's self-help groups (SHGs) by performing tasks of cooking, making crafts, and hospitality thus outlining standards of livelihood diversification.

### **4. Launch A Broader Digital Initiative In Cultural Mapping**

A strong digitization and enhanced digital platform should exist that includes interactive multilingual content including Temple Historical, Ritual Glossary, Oral Histories, Festival Calendar and Community Interviews. This could entail partnering with academic institutions, local youth clubs and digital humanities initiatives. Virtual pilgrimages and augmented reality experiences can also be developed for educational institutions and a global diaspora.

### **5. Taking Care Of Ritual Completeness With Lay Advisory Boards**

In order to protect sacred traditions from tourism, local advisory boards could be created for consultation. This board could include trustees/public dignitaries, respected village parents, active Gurs, and youth, to navigate tourism programming and decisions; the advisory board would serve as culture custodians with the responsibility of determining the ethical bounds of decision making, and giving permission for tourist access to experience rituals, film, and promote commercially.

### **6. Creativity In Cultural Immersion Interventions**

Cultural short-term immersion residency programs could be designed for domestic and international tourists, students, and researchers. Examples might include participating in local musical forms, learning ritual dance traditions, understanding some ethnobotanical knowledge, and engaging in local devotional practices of art making. In the lean months, spiritual storytelling camps could be started, or themed folk performance festivals/representations of Mahasu Devta lore could be established to sustain year-round interest for tourists.

### **7. Establish Policy Incentives And Institutional Structures**

Policy incentives like awareness to govt initiatives for MSME programmes and skill development, microcredit assistance, or regional development support can be leveraged for local entrepreneurs working on spiritual tourism infrastructure, particularly eco-lodges, community museums, and cultural centres. The Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (HPTDC) with district administrations can also establish a Spiritual Tourism Cell to facilitate these initiatives. A state-level task force can be formed to track progress, facilitate

cooperation between departments (tourism, culture, forest, panchayati raj), and measure socio-cultural impacts.

### **Conclusion**

Finally, there are lots of ways that the incredible opportunities for representing and comprehending Mahasu Devta's shamanistic picture of reality can be assimilated into spiritual tourism options in Himachal Pradesh. However, these recommendations, and a clear way forward, need to be understood. Firstly, because Mahasu Devta is a unique cultural property that has not been confused with other cultural properties like Vaishno Devi, it should be formalized with the "Mahasu Devta Heritage Circuit" allowing clients to move between all the places of cultural significance (Hanol, Kotkhai, Jubbal and Jaunsar-Bawar). This lane can be developed, and marketed as a single theme under the character of mythology, ceremony, and folk heritage that Mahasu Devta represents. Attention to combining cultural stories with sacred geographies can be confined with embodied experiences that stem from the local belief system.

In establishing "Spiritual Tourism Guidelines", it is essential to base them on cultural ethics. They should state what behaviour is expected from visitors, what the local community decides to allow visitors to photograph / film, the need to protect the sanctity of rituals being performed, and finally, what (eco-friendly) construction methods are appropriate in the vicinity of sacred sites. There is a need for these guidelines to be prepared through series discussions with local community groups using advisory bodies composed of Gurs, Temple trustees, members of women's self-help groups, and youth groups.

In relation to the economic mission situated within spiritual tourism, micro-finance opportunities designed to train local villagers as business entrepreneurs focus on setting up eco-spiritual homestays, craft stalls, and local food experiences. The eco-spiritual homestays should aim to be culturally immersive experiences for guests, allowing them to witness rituals (with permission), eating traditional food, completed by folk story and narrative experiences but also by eco-friendly processes. At the same time, local guides and Gurs need to improve the culture's interpretive experience through development training corresponding with language, hospitality, and an ethical awareness for tourism.

A dedicated Mahasu Devta Cultural Interpretation Centre should be developed at a central location in Rohru or Hanol, to provide community exhibits, archival research, educational workshops, and visitor orientation. The centre would seek to preserve and curate traditional cultural objects, ritual instruments, folklore, and memories of community, as well as establishing a knowledge exchange platform for scholars, guests, and local community.

To sustain cultural heritage, there also needs to be consideration placed on how to include indigenous knowledge within the formal education system. With some cultural integrity, university curriculum on tourism should incorporate local oral traditions, folk and/or mythic stories, and age-appropriate rituals, while tourism and hospitality institutes should deliver modules about spiritual and cultural interpretive approaches to Himachal's indigenous traditions, in the hope of developing a new generation of cultural guides, planners, and researchers who will be able to honour the continuing community legacy project of Mahasu Devta as culture bearers with a sensitivity and responsibility to the traditions.

In summary, the shamanistic and spiritual traditions representing Mahasu Devta provide a significant opportunity for Himachal Pradesh to reposition itself as an exclusive spiritual tourism destination of engagement in transformational ways. These traditions, developed through hundreds of years of oral transmission, community collaboration, and ecological awareness, offer a diverse way to recreate and redefine the tourist-experience not as observant spectatorship, but rather as a respectful engagement with living heritage. However, it will take more than an infrastructure or a promotional push to achieve this goal. It will take an understanding and respect for the integrity of culture, the importance of community decision-making, and a long-term vision for sustainability. The commitment of this research is that there is an urgency for designing inclusive, ethically conscious, and led by cultural guardians' tourism models. If Himachal Pradesh can attain this, the Mahasu Devta tradition can become a reference for reimagining culturally aware tourism, where respect meets renewal, tradition meets influence, and faith meets inclusion for all forms of growth.

### **Contributors**

Prof. Nitin Vyas, Institute of vocational studies (Tourism), Himachal Pradesh University Shimla, India; Dr. Priti R Nagal, Institute of vocational studies (Tourism), Himachal Pradesh University Shimla, India and Aniket Dhanda, Institute of vocational studies (Tourism), Himachal Pradesh University Shimla, India.

### **Corresponding Author**

Dr. Priti R Nagal, Institute of vocational studies (Tourism), Himachal Pradesh University Shimla. Contact: [kanwarpreeti.nagal@gmail.com](mailto:kanwarpreeti.nagal@gmail.com)

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