

**Environment, Socio-Cultural System and Economic Development
in Cold Desert of Western Himalayas
(A Study of Spiti Valley of Himachal Pradesh)**

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ABSTRACT This paper is based on a study in the Spiti sub-division of Himachal Pradesh and it aims at suggesting guidelines for development programme in such cold desert area. The environmental limitations of the cold desert restrict raising crops more than once in a year and that too under assured irrigation. The economic activities in the area also remain limited to summer season (April to September). The study suggested that to combat the environmental and ecological stress, the water conservation should find highest priority in our planning process for the overall development of the valley. Secondly, immediate afforestation is needed on large scale to cover the denuded, rugged, treeless uncultivable land for providing greenery, fuel-wood and fodder. The domestication of cash animals and improvement of milch animals may open new vistas of economic activity in the desert region. Besides, the psycho-social approach is required to make the tribals aware regarding agricultural development and the environmental degradation in order to develop the cold desert on economic front.