

VALLEY OF FLOWERS : AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF BRAIDED NATURE

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Himalaya, the crown of India and the treasure of Natural beauty is one of the largest mountain ranges in Asia. It separates the plains of the Indian subcontinent from the Tibetan plateau. There are so many natural and beautiful spots in the lap of Himalaya. The valley of Flowers is one such unique, dashy and dinky examples of natural wealth of Himalaya.

The Valley of Flowers is situated in West Himalaya away from 300 kms North of Rishikesh, near Badrinath in Chamoli District and the Uttarakhand state. It is nearest to Ghangharia after Joshimath on way of Badrinath. The Valley of Flowers is at the height of nearly 14,400 ft. from the sea level and it is expanded about 8 kms long and 2 kms wide in the Nandadevi Biosphere Reserve. It is a high altitude Himalayan valley. It has many different colourful flowers which is beyond our imagination. The Pushpawati River is flowing in the valley of Spring. The flowing and glittering water of the river adds the beauty of the Nature. It was declared a National Park in 1980 and it included in the World Heritage site for the conservation of flora and fauna.

Valley of Flowers is a spot of attraction for the well-known mountaineers, botanists and nature lovers. It has become an inevitable part of literature lovers also. In fact, Himalayan beauty has an enchanting effect as there are thousands of places in the Himalayan range and one can never complete to visit all the places throughout the whole life. Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Gangtok etc. are part of Himalayan range. Every year, millions of travellers visit these places. Foreigners are not exceptional. Foreigners from various countries also visit these hilarious places to get mental peace and happiness. The temples of Yamunotri, Gangotri, Badrinath, Kedarnath have their own religious importance. But the visit of the valley of flowers has an eccentric experience.

Himalaya is an enchanting and infatuating place for me from my childhood. I visited Himalaya five times with my parents. In every summer vacation, I, along with my parents, brother and family friends, visit various parts of Himalaya.

Valley of Flowers has unique importance in the Hindu religion. Local people have been visiting this quiet, serene and buxom place since ancient times. It is a comely place for the Hindu yogis and saints. They spend many years here in meditation and the natural beauty of the Valley of Flowers brings them near to their self and God. The jocund beauty helps them to identify their self and help them show the true path of self-realization. The freshness and positive vibrations all around provide them power and energy. It is believed that there are thousands of yogis living only on Himalayan fruits and water and spend the whole life. They have some divine power and are able to talk with God also. The Pushpawati River has its own mythological story. It was believed that this name was given by Pandavas. The mythology behind the Pushpawati River is that the Pandavas, during their years of exile, saw flowers floating down the river and they named it Pushpawati.

As the place is beautiful, the history of the discovery of this place is equally beautiful. As it is an infatuating place for all, three British Mountaineers, Frank S. Smythe, Eric Shipton and R.L. Holdsworth came to visit the Himalayan range in 1931. While returning, they lost their way to Mt. Kamet and discovered this beautiful valley which was with full of colourful flowers. They were attracted by the beauty of this valley and named it "The Valley of Flowers". The effect of this beautiful place on their mind was so dense and deep that Frank Smythe wrote a book entitled "Valley of Flowers".

Attracted by this place from 21st February, 1885 to 4th July, 1939 came Joan Margaret Legge. She was a botanist and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew had deputed her to study varieties of flowers. In order to collect flowers from the rocky slopes, she slipped off and unfortunately died. Later on her sister came and visited this valley and erected a memorial in the Valley of Flowers.

In 1993, a botanist named Prof. Chandra Prakash Kala was appointed to do research on flora and fauna of this valley. He made research on alpine plants and wrote two books on his research:

1. Myth and Reality
2. Ecology and Conservation of the Valley of Flowers Natural Park, Garhwal Himalaya

Last year, I visited The Valley of Flowers with my parents, brother and family friends. That visit was a memorable and unforgettable visit of my life. I started my journey from Haridwar which is on the bank of the

river Ganga. It is famous for its “SandhyaAarati” (evening prayer) of the river Ganga at HarkiPaudi. The whole scene of SandhyaAarati at HarkiPaudi is famous in the whole world. Many tourists come every year from many countries to observe the spirituality and grandness of this event. I was lucky that I got a chance thrice to observe such a pious aarati. Next day, I started my journey from Haridwar to Rishikesh to Joshimath which has a convenient road connection. After whole day’s journey, I reached Joshimath and decided to visit the Valley of Flowers next day early morning. That night we decided the route and full schedule of the next day.

Next day, in the early morning, we started our hilarious journey to the Valley of Flowers. Food was not available there, so we took enough food and water for the whole day. I was excited to see the natural beauty of the spot as I read a lot about the Valley of Flowers through internet. I was excited to see the colourful flowers that I had never seen in my real life. The road journey was really romantic. Cool breeze, meadows, high mountains with snowy peaks, beautiful and foggy sky thrilled my heart. When I was travelling, the soft touch of dense fog and low clouds enthralled me a lot and I felt that I was living in heaven in the company of supernatural elements. I forgot all my hurries and worries of life and keenly excited to see the valley of flowers. Permission from the Forest Department was compulsory for all the visitors of the Valley of Flowers. The permission was valid for three days. One could visit or do trekking only during the day time. Night stay is not allowed there. We had to return Joshimath or Gangaria in the evening.

We took permission from the Forest Department and again started our journey towards the Valley of Flowers. The journey through small forests, meadows, stable slopes, plateau, moraine, scrubby areas, bogs and stone deserts were really delighted, exultant and complacent. The journey through woods reminded me the lines of Robert Frost, an American Poet:

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

(Frost: 1964)

These lines expresses the philosophy of life. Before my last destination (Death), I have to complete so many goals of life.

After a long journey, at last, I reached at the Valley of Flowers which is a heaven on the earth. My eyes were stunned to see a wonderful treasure of Nature. I felt that the mother earth had worn a colourfulsaree and getting ready to meet her bridegroom – the sky. I could see the mingling of bride and bridegroom – the mother earth and the foggy sky at the horizontal level. Such a catching and bewitching sight forced me to jump and dance joyfully. I started shouting, dancing and singing gracefully. The waves of happiness spread everywhere as the thing of beauty is joy forever. The valley with full of colourful flowers on the bank of the Pushpawati river reminds me the poem “Daffodils” written by William Wordsworth where thousands of daffodils were dancing and fluttering beside the lake :

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

(Wordsworth: 1908)

The special characteristic feature of this beautiful place is its monsoon. Heavy rain in June continuing till September adds beauty to this place. Though it causes landslides and hindrances in transport, there is full blooming of the scene during this season.

If we talk about the ecology of this place, the flora and fauna of the Valley of Flowers with diversity of rainfall, climate, altitude and soil conditions support a variety of distinct plants and animals. It contains diversity of alpine. The Valley of Flowers is known for its diversity of flowers, green meadows, PushpawatiRiver, mountain range, snow peaks. It is a rich diverse area which is also a home of rare animals like leopard, red fox, brown bear, blue sheep and yak. I saw many yaks grazing on the slope of mountains. The fetching scene of grazing yaks on rocky terrain created a vivacious picture in me. Varieties of birds are also found in this area. It is an excellent example of the mountain wilderness. The word ‘wilderness’ describes the feminine quality and beauty of Nature which reminds me the article of Elaine Showalter’s “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness” where she said that the feminist criticism is in the wilderness. In the same way, this area of Himalaya is beautifully ridged and steeply from an uninhabited wilderness.

It is a home to the diversity of medicinal resources. Plants from the forests have been used for simple coughs to snake bites. The roots, flowers, stems, leaves of plants are used as medicines. The natural wealth contributes to economic and modern industrial development. It is also a source of many minerals and precious stones. Amongst the tertiary rocks, are vast potentials of mineral oil.

Though it is a natural resource for thousands of years, it has some threats too. A number of plant and animal species have been declining. Several of them have not been recorded outside Uttarakhand. The biggest threat is that the locals have been rapidly wiping out the density of the forests for woods and other economical purpose.

It is our duty to save such natural resources. Let us decide to be a true citizen of the world and save natural wealth.

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