

SUNDAY

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PANCHERI: The Misty Paradise



■ NUTAN RESUTRA

It was June hot in Jammu; sweating, soaring, making one feel very uneasy. The temperature was something around 42 degrees, only respite being that of the air conditioners. With an intent to escape it all, we undertook a journey of about three and a half hours, covering a distance of 87 kilo meters in our small car and reached at not too famous nearest hill station of Jammu: Pancheri. Hardly had we unpacked and sat in our Home Stay, the sky was filled with dark clouds and a thundering hail storm followed. It lashed whole of the area along with surrounding mountains with heavy downpour. With in no-time, it lowered atmospheric temperatures and we were forced to wear woollen clothes in the month of June! But then this is one of the aspects of beauty of Pancheri!

Pancheri is a small town situated on a mountain akin to Patani Top or Natha Top and is surrounded by different small peaks of the Shivalik Mountain Range. Last year, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir declared it a Tourist Village and called upon the local people to make provision for Home Stays for the facility of tourists visiting there, making provision for their (local people's) monetary incentives also. This provided them with opportunity of self-employment and generated sources of revenue, opening the floodgates of hotel and hospitality industry; although it's still in infancy.

The road you follow from Jammu takes you on the four lane National Highway number 44 up to Udhampur where from you have to take an uphill turn on the military area called Supply Morh. Just seven kilo meters on the internal road and one passes along the archeologically famous Pandav Temples of Krimchi. From there on it is a steady climb of twenty plus kilo meters up to Kainth Gali, the top most point of the hill from where a road to Mougari separates. Up to here, the road journey is very comfortable, even though it is a single but Pacea tarred road. The four kilo meters plus patch from Kainth Gali on wards makes you doubt your decision of coming to Pancheri.

The road is totally kaccha with stones and pebbles scattered hither and thither. There are clear signs of landslides on this patch. One cannot drive at a speed exceeding ten to twenty an hour which is enough to dishearten you when you are driving your own small car! With great exertion and pushing, we crossed that awful patch to at last reach our promised land. But this effort was worth its effort. Reaching on

the destination reminded us of the title of Thomas Hardy's famous work Far From the Madding Crowd.

The best spot of this area and without which the talk of Pancheri cannot be complete is this place's thick cover of forest area. Locally known as Dayari Jungle, it is a forest full of Deodar trees spread over a vast area. The moment one enters Dayari Jungle, he is literally transformed in to another world; a world that was prevalent in our State more than fifty years back. Where ever one sees, one finds rows and rows of tall standing Himalayan Cedar or Deodar trees, their branches swinging with soft rhythmical movements as if extending warm greetings to the guests. The sound of blowing of winds appears as if a stream is flowing nearby. It is a scientifically proven fact that the wood, resin and bark of Deodar trees have been known for their anti-inflammatory, anti-oxidant and anti-cancer properties. Its wood has also been used to treat fever, insomnia, pulmonary and urinary disorders. But a common man when sits on the lush green grass in Dayari Jungle does indeed feel inhalation of air that is full of fragrance of these trees. This gives him a feeling of freshness, serenity and rejuvenation.

At the start of the Jungle is a small wood hut belonging to the public works department. This is sufficient for just two couples and is used by senior government officials only. A walk of five to ten minutes from this hut takes you to a small temple that sans any boundary wall. Spread in an area of barely ten feet by ten feet, it has a unique entrance of just two poles with a small bell tied across. The temple has a small stone engraving of Nag Devta.

A visitor to temple is filled with a mystic feeling while standing in the temple surroundings. Just one walk in the jungle is sufficient to make any one spell bound in that enchanting environment. This jungle is indeed a feast for eyes and satiation of soul for every nature lover. It is fast growing a day picnic spot for people of Udhampur and Jammu also.

Yet another place of a visitor's interest in Pancheri is the temple of local deity, Sankari Devta. Situated on top of the hill that is at a higher altitude to Pancheri, one always encounters cold winds and ice-cold water there. The temple is very well maintained and presents a neat and clean environment. A devotee feels the presence of some Supernatural Power while meditating or even sitting there. An interesting feature of this temple is a flat stone carving of two horse heads just outside the main



entrance of the temple, clearly depicting their reins also. Besides, one can also see some very old stone carvings lying there which amply suggest the ancient existence of this temple. An interesting feature of Sankari Devta is that during rains, a person standing at the Temple sees clouds rising from down below ultimately touching him at the temple. We hardly find this phenomenon at any other hill station these days.

Our travelogue of Pancheri will surely be incomplete if we do not talk about Home Stays. Although a good number of such home stays had started when Pancheri was declared Tourist Village, even today there are a dozen plus home stays functional that can easily cater to the needs of tourist influx. The Home Stay where we had put up was at a stone's throw from Dayari Jungle. Although we had had a good experience of home stays at different places of Himachal Pradesh; this one was unique. The owner Sham Ji had got some rooms constructed with all modern amenities along with traditional room accommodation. He himself catered to all food needs of guests. A delight of stay was the existence of chullah with firewood burning and food cooked on it which reminded us of our childhood memories. We were also served makkhi ki roti made by the women folk on the chullah.

Although Pancheri is yearning to welcome tourists, there are certain grey areas that need immediate attention of the authorities. The very first eye sore is the disheartening, shaky ride on mulbaand debris laden road between Kainth Gali and Sankri Devta. The tourist does seem to repent why did he plan for Pancheri. Once this patch is made macadamised, it will definitely attract a much large number of tourists. The second difficulty faced by outsiders is the presence of hardly any eat points in the locality, not even some dhabas.

Now that this area is getting fame, the local people need to be encouraged to open eat points, small restaurants or dhabasto cater to needs of not only the ones who are staying but also the day picnickers. Nowadays, tourists of all regions demand fast foods and snacks and other eatables besides main course meals which are not catered to at present in this hill station. The government has also constructed some six one BHK wooden huts which are yet to be put to general public use. Sans proper utilization, these hutments are facing the wrath of weather and negligence. Their commissioning shall not only bring revenue to the government but also provide good accommodation to tourists who otherwise may not prefer home stays.

Smiling depression: Signs in teens parents should note

There's a lot that we hide under the guise of a smile - sadness, sorrow, stress and grief. But as long as we talk it out and learn to deal with these feelings and emotions, we're most likely to be able to move forward in life. However, when we choose to suppress our feelings, refuse to talk about it, we may cause a lot of damage to our mental health. That's what something like a 'smiling depression' can do to us.

What is smiling depression?

Smiling depression refers to when people mask their depression behind a smile. Usually, when we imagine a depressed person, we think of someone who looks tired, disinterested in life, and seems withdrawn. However, smiling depression is a form of depression in which a person appears to be happy but is suffering from the inside.

While it is not recognized as a medical condition, it is said to be dangerous, given that symptoms are not always visible.

Know the dangers of smiling depression in teens

According to Newport Academy, the biggest danger of smiling depression is that it can go unnoticed and therefore untreated. "Because smiling depression doesn't fit the stereotypes most people have about depression, family members and close friends often fail to notice what's going on. Teens can seem cheerful, optimistic, successful, and high energy even while living with depression that may be quite severe," the mental health portal explains.

It also adds that without treatment, teens with this type of depression may have a higher likelihood of self-harm and death by suicide.

How to recognize smiling depression in teens

While smiling depression may not have the noticeable symptoms, there are certain physical and behavioral changes you can watch out for in teens. These include:

- Loss or changes in appetite
- Sleeping too much or too less even during day time
- Frequent headaches
- Irritability and restlessness

These symptoms are often similar to classic symptoms of depression. However, you should also be aware of other noticeable signs of depression.

- Sadness and hopelessness
- Low self-confidence and self-worth
- Mood swings
- Anxiety
- Difficulty concentrating and indecisiveness
- Suicidal thoughts

What people with smiling depression struggle with

- Feeling responsible for other people's feelings and one's own
- Living in denial or rejecting one's emotions
- Conflicting feelings - attempting to appear happy outside but not really being content
- Inability to or difficulty in expressing



Given that smiling depression is deceptive, people suffering from it may look like they're having a blast, but actually they're dealing with negative feelings and emotions.

What parents can do to help

Teens with smiling depression require a strong support system. They need people who do not judge or criticize them and provide guidance when they need it the most.

As parents, you need to be patient and understanding. You must leave communications open so your children can reach out to you whenever they feel vulnerable. As long as you keep conversations going, you're likely to know all that is going on in your teen's mind. Having said that, build an environment that promises trust and loyalty. You must teach your child to be self-reliant and confident, while letting them know you're there to provide a helping hand.

