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**Gorakh Hill Station**

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|  | The Gorakh Hill Station is Sindh’s highest point. It is a high altitude (5,688 ft (1,734 meter) plateaus on the border between Sindh and Baluchistan. It spreads over 2,500 acres of land of which 1,440 acres are in Sindh and 1060 acres are in Baluchistan.  In Sindh, it is located in the Kirthar Mountains 93 km north west of Dadu city or approximately 500 Kilometers from Karachi. |

The Plateau also serves as gateway for the villagers of Khuzdar District, Baluchistan, who come over to the village, Wahi Pandi, in Sindh's segment of Kirthar, about a third way downhill from Gorakh Hill Station... for purchasing food and other Utilities. It is a very attractive and unique tourist spot for nature-lovers, owing to its temperature weather and beautiful surroundings. Gorakh’s elevation gives it a special climate, with minus 03°C to 05°C during winter and 16°C during summer (June and July) with about 120 mm of average annual rainfall. It is said if Murree is the Queen of Hills, then Gorakh Hill, is a lonely, majestic king. But this king faces many crises: underdevelopment, lack of basic amenities and predominance of gargantuan problems due to the negligence and inefficiency of the government.

# History and Origin of Name:

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|  | Different opinions have been given about the history and origin of the hill station. Some local folklore says that a Hindu Saint of medieval periods; Sri Gorakhnath ji extensively wandered in these hills and region, he had great yogic powers, and people followed him, while other lores define him as a Buddhist Yogi, having a following in all the local, muslim and non-muslim tribes. These lores are the reason why |

many places are named after him. He wielded tremendous influence on people across all sects, castes, professions and classes. Such was his yogic power. Nandu, an authority on Sanskrit, says about the meanings of the Word Gorakh that it is the etymology of the Sanskrit Word, Gorakh which means Shepherding (Gorakh/sha)of sheep, cow and goat etc. This relates to herding in particularly difficult terrain and intricate pastures which makes practical sense, because, local tribesmen do take their flocks to Gorakh Hill for summer grazing. And the local people state that Gorakh is derived from Balochi word "Gurkh". In this context, they say that Gorakh Hill and its surroundings were the abode of wolves. So, first it was called Gurkh and afterwards its pronunciation was changed as Gorakh.

There are confusions about the name and historical background of Gorakh. It needs discussion in the light of different traditions and opinions. Locally it is stated that Gorakh is derived from Balochi word "Gurkh" but the Balochi word "Gurkh" is perversion of Persian word "Gurg" which means wolf. Regarding this, it is said that Gorakh hill and its surroundings were abode of wolves. So, first it was called Gurkh and afterwards its pronunciation was changed as Gorakh. This supports the Shepherd Terminology origins. When we consider this opinion, we can understand that, in the past wolves were not only in the area of Gorakh hill but those were also in the whole Kheerthar range and its neighboring deserted area of Kachho and a danger to Sheep and cows. Therefore, Sanskritik Gorakh/sha is not considerable and justified, as an opinion about the name of Gorakh hill. Taj Sahrae, a renowned researcher and historian writes in his book "Lake Manchhar" that "Gorakh peak derives its name from one of the twenty-four Tirathkarans of Jainism, Sri or Guru Gorakh Nath.

# Gorakh Hill Excursion from Karachi:

Currently The Gorakh Hills summit can only be reached with 4x4 vehicles. The last small town before the Gorakh Hill is Wahi Pandi, settled in the foot of the Kirthar range. The road takes mountain turns and ascends slowly at the milestone of 53 km when one enters the Yaroo Pass (In Sindhi: Yaroo Sain Jo Luck).

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|  | After crossing this pass 2,500 ft (760 m) above sea level, the journey continues in the mountains and at the milestone 76 km one reaches the base camp of another highest pass of the Kirthar range. It is known as Khanwal Pass (KP) on the elevation of 3,000 ft (910 m) and at the top of the KP the elevation is 5,000 ft (1,500 m) above sea level. The distance |

between the KP base camp and the KP top is four kilometers. The four-kilometer journey is too zigzag. After reaching the top of KP, drive continues to the Gorakh Hill top, which is the 13 km ahead. At the top of the hill there is a small rest-house, the only facility so far made available.

The Sindh Segment of Kirthar Mountains, has a large number of Mountain Peaks over 5,500 feet (1,700 m) high, and before Shaddan Shah's Discovering the highest peak in Kirthar, at an elevation of 7,056 feet (2,151 m), another Peak, in Sindh's Northern segment of Kirthar; known as Kuttay ji Qabr, at 6850, [plus/minus a few feet] was considered the Highest Peak. It is now the second highest peak of Sindh. There is very interesting story behind this name **kuttay ji qabar,** story of a loyal dog.

Shaddan Shah, as the discoverer of the exact location and height of the highest mountain peak in Sindh, over 7,056 feet (2,151 m) high, has, in paying his tribute, named it Koh-i-Benazir, honoring Benazir Bhutto.

# Some more details:

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|  | According to Taj Sehrai's understanding of Hindu mythology Gorakhnath is popularly believed "Being an incarnation of Shiva and that historically he was a yogi, who founded Shivite cult in 11th century A.D". Taj further writes, that "before partition Hindu yogis generally used to visit this peak on their way to yet another place of worship called tirath kumb. There 'was' a small temple on top of a hill |

standing over Kumb (spring). Hindus generally visited the temple and Kumb, and performed their religious rituals". (Page no: 149-50). Taj Sahrae has stated without any reference or quotation of any certified book. Anyway, there are no remains or signs of any temple except the destroyed tomb of Miandad Fakir. Neither there was a temple nor history talks about the visit of yogis in this area. Kumb, is certainly named after Kumb Yatra, in Banaras.

On other hand, Tirath Kumb is too far away from Gorakh hill on the bank of river Gaj... instead of the Confluence at Banaras. It is thus possible, that before partition, local Hindus might have visited and performed rituals just like Kumb Mela yatra at Banaras on a small scale, but there is no historical evidence of such Yatra being performed at Gaj.

Since most of our historians have followed the opinion of Taj Sahrae who, linked the name of Gorakh, with Sri or Guru, Gorakh, by adding 'Nath' to it, as to give it Credibility in a Yogi's name. Therefore, we should think over, the origin and the actual meanings of a... Sindhi language word, "Gorakh".

In Jam-e-Sindhi lughaat, volume five by Dr: NA Baloch, published by Sindhi Adabi Board Jamshoro, the given meanings of the word Gorakh, are: a difficult, a labyrinth, a tangled, unsolvable problem, highest, biggest etc. (page no: 2356). Apparently, Dr. N.A. Baluch has relied on the Sanskritik roots, in his Definition of Gorakh/sha. In, Go/w=Cow and Raksha=Service, hence, Gorakh's logical meaning.

And the English Sindhi dictionary, by Permanand Mevaram, published by Institute of Sindhology, Jamshoro has used English words: "intricate and difficult" for the meaning of the word Gorakh. (Page no: 473). Obviously, Premanand, relied on the Sanskritik Meanings... and instead of Gorakh... "Sha" added "Nath,' meaning Master, in accommodating the Hindu belief... in the naming of Gorakh Hill, after Kirshen, the cow-herd.

In light of the above, meaning, in the context of a Sindhi word, Gorakh; can be hypothesized as being the true origin of the name of Gorakh hill, and that it is essentially derived from Sindhi... Since Gorakh is a Pasturing Area, with difficult tracks, curvy and dangerous ways, labyrinthine ascents or inclines and intricate passes like Khawal, and too difficult to reach or cross casually. The Hill Station receives winter snowfall and is among one of the only places in Sindh to have snowfall in winters. The mountains were completely covered with a blanket of snow in 2008 winters. That is why Government has decided to upgrade this place into a hill station so that people from Karachi and Hyderabad could see snowfall without going far flung areas of the country. The local shepherds, fearing wolves, therefore, would have named it, Gorakh, within the background, and meaning, of the Shepherds used Sindhi term of expression. Thus, we are correct, in our thinking, that Gorakh hill was indeed named within the background and meaning, of a Definitive Term of Sindhi, Defining a ...Sindhi word... Gorakh, as explained.

# Problems faced by Tourists:

It takes too long to reach to the top of Gorakh hill station. The main reason for such a lengthy journey is the poor condition of roads — a common problem throughout Sindh. From Karachi to Jamshoro it is a fairly smooth ride but the road from Sehwan, the seat of the Qalandar, to Dadu is under construction. However, the road (if at all it can be called that) from Johi, the last major town in route to Gorakh, to Wahi Pandi, the last village before taking the road to the hill, is absolutely treacherous.

When Gulzar Khushik, Project Director of the Gorakh Hills Development Authority in Dadu, was asked about the pitiful condition of the roads, he said that road maintenance was not within the purview of his department.

Criminal minded people are a great problem for tourists at the Gorakh Hills, especially for females. They sell drugs, make thefts and harass females in different ways openly. A more visible security presence is also required. Police posts have been constructed, but they need to be manned and patrols need to be initiated for the security of visitors. If the government ensures a provision of security and maintenance of law-and-order situation, the area will develop to a great extent.

Tourism is one of the best sources of revenue for a country and God has blessed Pakistan with such exotic and rare natural beauty, but unfortunately, our government has failed to develop such beautiful places. The Government should take interest and take initiatives to develop Gorakh Hill Station completely to attract foreign and local tourists by providing fundamental needs and facilities such as wide and straight roads, public transport, 5 Star hotels, motels, chair lifts, zoos and parks, etc. There is an utmost need of a market like Murree’s Mall Road, a residential area, an educational institute and a mountain safari. A website containing comprehensive information about the hill is essential. In this way we can develop our tourism industry and can generate income of millions of rupees annually.

A VIP rest house exists along with a regular guest house, while staff quarters and tourist huts are under construction. While the weather in Dadu and Johi below was pleasant, on Gorakh Hill it was absolutely nippy. And as the sun came down, the cold started to bite. Late at night, as load-shedding hit and the wind started howling on the pitch dark hilltop, the feeling was otherworldly.

# References

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