Uttarakhand's Journey Towards 2047: Charting the Course

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ABSTRACT

This research article examines Uttarakhand's 25-year journey since its formation in 2000 and charts a roadmap toward 2047 as a developed, inclusive state. The authors analyze the state's governance transformation under Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, highlighting innovations in citizen-centric administration, legislative reforms including the Uniform Civil Code (2024), and economic diversification through tourism, green energy, and cooperative empowerment. While acknowledging achievements in transparency, digitalization, and women-led development through initiatives like "Lakhpati Didis," the paper identifies critical unresolved issues, particularly the demand for a permanent hill capital at Gairsain and persistent out-migration from hill districts. The authors propose an eight-point framework for sustainable development emphasizing regional balance, climate resilience, local livelihoods, youth empowerment, and cultural preservation. The study argues that Uttarakhand's next phase must evolve from infrastructure-building to institution-building, balancing ecology with economy and tradition with technology to realize the vision of "Viksit Devbhoomi" by 2047. This analysis offers valuable insights into governance challenges and opportunities facing Himalayan states in India's federal structure.

Keywords: Uttarakhand, Future Strategies, Public Policy, Uttarakhand@2047

ARTICLE

When the state of Uttarakhand emerged as a separate state on 9 November 2000, it was more than an administrative realignment. It represented the culmination of decades of struggle of hill communities asserting their cultural identity, their demand for balanced development, and a governance system that could respond to their problems and aspirations. The formation of the state was not just about a new boundary on the map, but about the promise of responsive governance rooted in local ground realities.

Today, as the state marks its quarter-century milestone, it stands at a crossroads in terms of identity and governance. On the one hand, it has made commendable advances in institutional capacity, democratic decentralisation and policy innovation. On the other hand, one of the main demands of the statehood movement-the establishment of a permanent capital in the hills remains unresolved. That gap signals a tension between governance as rhetoric and governance in practice.

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In the early years after statehood, Uttarakhand's priority understandably lay in building infrastructure, setting up administrative machinery and stabilising governance in a new terrain. As time passed, the state has embraced innovations in transparency, decentralisation to urban local bodies (ULBs) and panchayati raj institutions (PRIs), and e-governance initiatives. Under the leadership of CM Pushkar Singh Dhami, the mantra of sarlikaran (simplification), samadhan (solution), and nistarikaran (disposal) has reflected a shift toward outcome-oriented governance, anchored in the concept of "minimum government, maximum governance."

In recent years, Uttarakhand has positioned itself as a laboratory of governance innovation. The Dhami administration has focused on aligning administrative reforms with citizen-centric outcomes. Initiatives such as the CM Helpline 1905, Apuni Sarkar Portal, and the Chief Minister's portal have made government services more accessible and accountable. The emphasis is not just on digitisation but on delivering measurable improvements in grievance redressal and service efficiency.

The SETU Aayog, modelled on the lines of NITI Aayog, has institutionalised evidence-based policymaking. By integrating data analytics, impact evaluation, and policy feedback mechanisms, the state aims to ensure that governance becomes more result oriented. This reform-oriented mindset reflects a deeper cultural shift in governance as a continuous process of innovation rather than as static administration.

One of the most remarkable features of the Dhami government's tenure has been its decisive legislative interventions. The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) 2024 is a first-of-its-kind initiative in independent India. It has placed Uttarakhand at the forefront of progressive reform rooted in constitutional equality and cultural integrity. Complementary measures such as the anti-conversion and anti-land-encroachment laws have sought to reinforce social harmony and the rule of law, strengthening citizens' faith in the justice system.

Parallelly, economic governance has also undergone transformation. Through the Uttarakhand Global Investors Summit 2023, the state successfully showcased itself as an investment destination, securing commitments worth thousands of crores and generating employment opportunities across sectors. The theme "Peace to Prosperity" encapsulated the state's aspiration to balance growth (economy) with environmental sustainability (ecology). More than a dozen investor-friendly policies have collectively nurtured a transparent business ecosystem.

Tourism remains the bedrock of Uttarakhand's economy, and the state is now leveraging it as an engine for rural development. The Homestay Policy, Manaskhand & Kedarkhand Projects, and Wellness and Yoga Tourism have reinvigorated local livelihoods and positioned the state as a global spiritual destination. In addition, emerging sectors such as green energy and startups have infused new dynamism into the development narrative. The Uttarakhand Startup Policy 2023 has encouraged youth as well as women-led entrepreneurship and self-reliance, while the government's promotion of solar energy through CM Saur Swarojgar Yojana reflects its commitment to sustainable growth.

Another defining aspect of Uttarakhand's governance transformation lies in cooperative and grassroots empowerment. The state's cooperative

institutions have become vehicles of inclusion and self-sufficiency. Initiatives like Deendayal Upadhyaya Sahkarita Kisan Kalyan Yojana and the digitalisation of 671 cooperative societies exemplify this shift. The emergence of over 1.7 lakh "Lakhpati Didis" through self-help groups highlights how women are becoming economic stakeholders, not just beneficiaries.

On governance ethics, the state has adopted a zero-tolerance approach to corruption. Over ten thousand complaints have been addressed under the anti-corruption framework, with strict action against erring officials in the last three years. Financial management reforms supported by the World Bank have further strengthened fiscal transparency and accountability. Similarly, the introduction of "Green Cess" and sustainable mining policies have made Uttarakhand one of the few Himalayan states integrating environmental prudence into fiscal policy.

The past 25 years represent a journey from aspiration to achievement. The next phase must aim for excellence. By 2047, Uttarakhand envisions itself as a developed and inclusive state where governance is not just about efficiency but empathy, not just about growth but harmony. With a foundation built on transparency, innovation, and cultural rootedness, the state is poised to contribute meaningfully to the national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

As the state moves from its silver jubilee in 2025 toward its golden in 2050, the mountains now resonate with a new resolve to make Devbhumi a beacon of good governance and sustainable progress.

The Next 25 Years: Roadmap for a Sustainable and Inclusive Uttarakhand

The silver jubilee offers not just a chance to celebrate, but to pause and rethink. The next 25 years will decide whether Uttarakhand remains a state of missed potential or becomes a model of balanced, hill-centric development. The path forward demands a careful blend of policy innovation, ecological wisdom, and social inclusion.

1. Permanent Capital at Gairsain and Regional Balance

The unresolved question of the permanent capital remains central to Uttarakhand's administrative identity. Strengthening Gairsain as a functional hill capital, supported by sustainable infrastructure, can ensure that governance truly reflects the aspirations of the hilly people. Balanced regional development, reducing the Dehradun/Halawani centric model, is essential for long-term stability.

2. Addressing Migration through Local Livelihoods

Outmigration continues to hollow out the hill districts. Reversing this trend requires creating dignified employment at the local level. Promoting agro-based industries, hilly agriculture, forest-based enterprises, and eco-tourism can transform migration from necessity into choice. The focus must be on "local to global" value chains where a farmer in Chamoli or Pithoragarh sees real economic reward for local produce.

3. Education, Skill, and Youth Empowerment

By 2047, the youth population will define Uttarakhand's developmental trajectory. Strengthening higher education, technical training, and

entrepreneurship incubation centres in the hills can convert demographic potential into productive capacity. Linking education with employability, and creating hilly region-focused research institutions, especially in environment and disaster studies, can give the state a unique knowledge identity.

4. Health and Connectivity for All

Access to quality healthcare and reliable connectivity remains uneven. Expanding telemedicine, improving district hospitals, and integrating traditional medicine with modern care can bridge the gap. Road and digital connectivity, particularly in high-altitude areas, must remain a top priority. Every village should be digitally connected as early as possible, ensuring access to both governance and opportunity.

5. Green Energy and Climate Resilience

As a Himalayan state, Uttarakhand must lead India's climate action. Expanding solar and small hydro projects while protecting fragile ecosystems will define sustainable growth. Programs like CM Saur Swarojgar Yojana can be scaled up to make the state energy self-reliant. Climate-resilient agriculture and eco-sensitive tourism should form the backbone of environmental planning.

6. Women-Led Development and Cooperative Strength

The success of Lakhpati Didis and self-help groups has shown that women's participation is key to inclusive development. The next step is to institutionalise women's leadership in local governance, cooperatives, and entrepreneurship. Economic empowerment combined with political participation will create a more resilient social fabric.

7. Cultural Identity and Ecological Stewardship

Uttarakhand's strength lies in its spiritual and cultural identity as it is widely known as Devbhoomi. Preserving local languages such as Kumauni/Garhwali/Jaunsari, folk traditions, and community-based conservation models must go hand in hand. The Kedarkhand/Manaskhand Mandir Mala Mission is a promising beginning, but similar efforts are needed in Kumaun and Garhwal both to link heritage with livelihood.

8. Governance with Empathy

Future governance must combine efficiency with emotional intelligence. Transparency portals and data dashboards are vital, but what will sustain progress is a sense of belonging between the administration and citizens. Governance in 2047 must mean that no citizen feels unheard, and no village feels unseen.

The Roadmap Towards a Viksit Devbhoomi:-

Uttarakhand's journey from statehood to silver jubilee has been one of steady rise.The next 25 years demand an evolution from infrastructure-building to institution-building; from short-term schemes to long-term systems.

If the past was about creating the state, the future must be about shaping its soul like a Devbhoomi that balances faith with modernity, ecology with economy, and tradition with technology.

By 2047, Uttarakhand can stand as a model of sustainable governance and resilient hilly development where progress is measured not by GDP

alone, but by the dignity and wellbeing of its people.

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