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The Tribes of *Himachal Pradesh*

A study of the ancient peoples and the eight modern tribal communities of the hill state — their origin, customs, faith and life.

VEDANTA HPGK STUDY SERIES · ART & CULTURE OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

SWANGLA

GADDIS

KHAMPA

PANGWAL

KINNER

LAHAULAS

GUJJARS

JADS

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PART ONE

The *Ancient* Tribes

*The pre-Vedic peoples and half-legendary races of the Himalayan tract —
Dasas, Kinners, Kirats, Nagas, Khasas, Pishachas and Yakshas.*

DASAS

KINNERS

KIRATS

NAGAS

KHASAS

PISHACHAS

YAKSHAS

A stylized, dark blue silhouette of a mountain range with several peaks and valleys, located at the bottom of the page.



THE ANCIENT TRIBES

Ancient Peoples of the Hills

The pre-Vedic and legendary races remembered in scripture, epic and place-name.

PERIOD

Pre-Vedic & Vedic

SOURCES

Vedas, Epics, Puranas

Long before the modern tribal communities took shape, the hills and valleys of present-day Himachal Pradesh were home to a succession of ancient peoples — some historical, some woven into the Vedas and epics as half-legendary races. Their memory survives in scripture, in place-names, and in the customs and deities of the hill folk to this day.

DASAS

The Shivalik hills are believed to have been inhabited during the pre-Vedic period by the **Dasas**. The Dasas — along with the *Panis*, *Asuras* and *Vratyas* — are supposed to be among the authors of the Indus Valley Civilization. *Chamuri*, *Dhuni*, *Pipru* and *Shushna* were their powerful chiefs, who put up a strong resistance to the Aryan advancement. Later on, owing to the constant efforts of Rishi Vishwamitra and Rishi Vashishta, the Dasas were accepted into the Aryan fold.

KINNERS

The word *Kinner* originated from the two Sanskrit words *kim* and *nara*, meaning ‘what kind of strange persons are they’. The look of the Kinnaura is described as that of a ‘half-man and half-horse’ — a people with an *Ashwamukha* (a horse-like face). The Rig Veda has no reference to the Kinners, but they became known soon after; there are references to them in the Mahabharata and in the immortal epics of Kalidas. According to legend, *Pradyumna*, the son of Lord Krishna, was the earliest king of the Kinner, and in his work *Kumarasambhava* Kalidas has mentioned them. Historical evidence of their Munda origin is available in the similarity of their grammar with the Mundari spoken by the aborigines of the Chhota Nagpur area; they are thus held to be speakers descended from an amalgamation of the Munda aboriginals with the Tibetans in very early times.

KIRATS

The *Kaivartas* and *Chandalas* have been mentioned as low-caste people in the history of Kashmir. The Bharvi classic *Kiratarjuniya* is woven around the historical battle that took place between the Kirata king and Arjuna. Later on, the Kiratas came to be known as *Mavanas*, or navies, in the region across the Jamuna and the Satluj. The Kiratas were a well-organized society with a law-and-order system; they lived in towns and built forts. Their powerful king was **Shambar**, who fought against the Aryan king Divodas, whose advisor was Rishi Bhardwaj.



THE FORTY-YEAR WAR

The war between Divodas and Shambar lasted forty years and has been discussed in the Rig Veda by Rishi Vashishta and Vamdeva. In the end the Kiratas had to suffer defeat with the destruction of their ninety-nine forts, and Shambar, along with his ally Verchi, was killed at a place named *Udubraj*.

NAGAS

The Nagas inhabited the Himalayan region at one time in history and were worshippers of the serpent (*naga*). Their famous kings were *Vasuki*, *Kali* and *Takshaka*, and even today there are many Naga temples in Himachal Pradesh. In Hindu mythology there are eight Nagas, viz. Shesh, Takshak, Vasuki, Vajra, Danshan, Karkotak, Kemmali, Sankhu and Kali. *Mansa Devi* is their goddess.

NAGA SHRINES & FESTIVAL

There are a number of shrines dedicated to the Nagas; some famous ones are Nagchala near Mandi town, Rewalsar Lake and Kamru Naga. The most popular festival connected with the worship of the Naga Devta is *Naga Panchami*, falling in the month of July.

KHASAS

The term *Khasa* is found in Vedic and epic literature. The *Khasira* of Nepal, the *Kasya* of Kumaon and Garhwal, and the *Khasa* of the Bhagavata Purana and Vayu Purana are people of the same ethnic stock. Their ancient homeland, *Khasdesh*, was situated between the north-western provinces and Nepal. In the *Brihat Samhita* of Varahamihira, the Khasas were mentioned alongside the Kulutas, Tanganas and Kashmiras. Today the Khasas are distributed in Shimla, Sirmaur and parts of the Kullu and Kinnaur districts of Himachal Pradesh, as well as in the Tehri, Kumaon and Garhwal areas of Uttarakhand; in Kinnaur they call themselves *Khashiya* and associate themselves with the Rajputs.

› Dress

The Khasa community does not have any particular dress, the styles varying according to local conditions. In Kinnaur the men and women use the *Gachi* as well as the *Dohru*; in other areas, though the Dohru is used by the women, the men wear an *achkan* with folds inside.

› Food Habits

Their staple food is wheat, rice, maize and barley, and they use pulses such as *rajmah*, *mah*, *moong*, *arhar* and *channa*, along with all types of green vegetables. The Khasas are non-vegetarian, consuming meat, fish and eggs, and they have a tendency towards both local and non-local alcoholic drinks.

› Marriage System

The Khasas have three types of marriage: *Biyah* (arranged marriage); a love marriage settled in terms of *pranay* (love); and the *Gadar* form of love marriage, in which the bride goes to the house of the bridegroom and the wedding ceremony is observed there. The marriage is dissolvable by mutual consent at any time, and



in some cases the practice of marriage by force is also found. There is no *Tekwa* or *Viyag* system among the Khasas of Himachal Pradesh, though it was found among the Khasas of Jaunsar Bawar, Tehri and Garhwal.

› Religion

The Khasas follow the village-god system. Almost every remarkable hill is considered the abode of some spirit; the village gods are the heads and protectors of the habitat. The *Gur* represents the spirits, and the village gods are made to dance in palanquins made of wood, with sacrifices of goats and rams offered to them and to other spirits. The script of the community in the past was *Tankri*, but they use the Devnagari script now. The Khasas had a system of threefold worship — the *Ishta Devta*, the *Griha Devta* and the *Gram Devta* — the same as is prevalent in Himachal today.

› Community System

The Khasas have the institution of the *Khoond*, the groups acting as distinct classes. Mainly two types of Khoond form the basis of the subgroups: the *Shatha* (the Kaurav group) and the *Pasha* (the Pandav group). Shatha and Pasha are further divided into subgroups such as *Chhabishi*, *Barabishi* and *Pandrabishi*, and so on — these subgroups showing that the availability of warrior young men for battle was the main criterion. The Khasa is, by and large, a pastoral and peasant community; among the Khoonds, head-hunting had also been a practice in cases of mutual animosity. The ancestral property is divided among all the family, but the eldest — and in some cases the youngest — son gets the additional share of a field and the ancestral house; this is called *Jethong* for the eldest brother and *Kaanishong* for the youngest. The rituals related to birth, marriage and death are very important and observed with great intensity.



PISHACHAS

The **Pishachas**, consumers of raw flesh, inhabited the northern frontier and the adjoining Himalayan tract. The tribe known as the *Rakshas* in Vedic times was also akin to the Pishachas.



YAKSHAS

In the Mahabharata there is a reference to the encounter of Yudhishtira and his brothers with a **Yaksha**. The Yakshas were also known as the tree-gods, endowed with mysterious superhuman power.



PART TWO

The *Modern* Tribes

The eight tribal communities of modern Himachal Pradesh — their origin, customs, faith, dress and present-day life.

SWANGLA

GADDIS

KHAMPA

PANGWAL

KINNER

LAHAULAS

GUJJARS

JADS



INTRODUCTION

Tribes in Modern Himachal

Who they are, where they live, and how they make their living.

The Himalayan tract has, since time immemorial, offered shelter to almost every kind of tribe, and the *Khasas* were the only people to gain supremacy over the entire region stretching from Kashmir up to the Kumaon hills. In modern Himachal Pradesh the famous tribes are the **Gujjars, Gaddis, Kinnauras, Lambas, Khampas, Bhots, Jads, Lahaulas, Pangwalas and Swanglas.**

THE TRIBAL SHARE OF HIMACHAL

Tribes occupy roughly **forty per cent** of the total geographical area of the state, yet constitute only about **4.6 per cent** of its total population at present.

The tribals of Himachal Pradesh are mostly engaged in semi-agricultural pursuits, such as the rearing of cows, sheep, goats and buffaloes, and the ploughing of small fields, which form their chief source of sustenance. **Agriculture, supplemented by animal husbandry and trade, is the main occupation** of these communities. The chapters that follow trace each major tribe in turn — its origin and name, language, food, social and marriage customs, rites of birth and death, religion, dress, fairs, the status of its women, and its modern occupation.





TRIBE 01

Swangla

A scheduled tribe of the Pattan valley, living along the Chandra-Bhaga in the Lahaul-Spiti district.

REGION

Pattan valley, Lahaul-Spiti

STATUS

Scheduled tribe

FAITH

Hindu & Buddhist

The Swangla is a scheduled tribe living exclusively in the Pattan-valley tract along the Chandra-Bhaga in the Lahaul-Spiti district. Like several other tribes, *Swangla* is a generic term that includes both **Brahmins and Rajputs**.

Different versions exist about their origin. By one legend, when Taimur invaded this part of the country he drove out the Buddhists and occupied the territory, and the people came to be known as Swangla from *Swarl*, the earlier name of the area. Another version holds that they were immigrants from Chamba who display Mediterranean features — plausible since Chamba adjoins Lahaul-Spiti. Yet another theory says they originally migrated from the *Sangla valley* in Kinnaur, which was subjected to Tibetan subjugation. The Swanglas now live wholly along the remote and inaccessible banks of the Chandra-Bhaga.

LANGUAGE

Two types of language are spoken. The first, *Manchhad*, is a mixture of Tibetan and Hindi, spoken by the Brahmins, Rajputs and Swanglas; the other, *Chinali*, is spoken by the Sipi and the Lohar. *Bhoti* is also prevalent but is spoken only by the Bodh inhabitants of the valley, while a dialect called *Tinan* or *Tinent* is spoken in the Sissu area. Linguistic research suggests that in the earliest times the area was inhabited by an aboriginal tribe resembling the Munda-speaking tribes of Bengal, Bihar and Central India. Hindi is the lingua franca with outsiders, and educated Swanglas commonly use English and Hindi.

FOOD HABITS

The staple food consists of wheat, beans, chapatti, *rongi* and pulses of masur, with millet baked bread called *chilra*; rice is taken occasionally. Salted buttered tea is very popular and is taken at regular intervals. The Swanglas are basically non-vegetarian, eating the meat of sheep, goat, chicken and wild animals; the women cook and eat meat, and consumption rises in winter. Milk in its pure form is taken only by infants, while elders take it in tea and as curd. Fruits are scarce owing to the arctic climate, so edible roots and tubers and kitchen-garden vegetables are eaten; potato is widely grown.



LOCAL DRINKS

Chhang, the local drink, is consumed almost daily by the men, and the women take it occasionally. It is distilled at home and the surplus is prepared during social functions — births, marriages, fairs and festivals. The men also smoke *bidi* and the hubble-bubble (*Hukka and Jhajri*).

SOCIAL CUSTOMS

The Swangla tribe has a peculiar hierarchical order. As the term is generic for Brahmin, Rajput and Rana living in the Pattan valley, the Brahmins are said to have come from Chamba to serve as official and family priests at religious functions — for which reason the Swangla Brahmins are also called *Pandit*. Other communities like the Rathi, Hali, Lohar, Sipi and Chanal live in the valley but are not yet included in the term Swangla. The Brahmin occupies the top of the order, followed by the Thakur and Rana. Two further groups, the *zand* and *Mundro*, are believed to have arisen from a Rajput marrying a Bodh girl and belong socially to the lower strata.

MARRIAGE SYSTEM

Swanglas are endogamous, everyone marrying within their respective class; marriage outside one's social order is not recognized and the persons are declared outcaste. Hypergamy is not recognized, and the children of a hypergamous union are known as *Mundro* and *Garu*. Marriage with the father's sister's daughter, mother's sister's daughter and mother's brother's daughter is strictly prohibited, as is marriage within three degrees of relationship on both sides. In the past the girl was usually older than the boy — boys married at about 15 and girls between 20 and 25 — but the trend has since reversed.

FORMS OF MARRIAGE

Marriage by exchange — found in families of poor economic resources.

rasa-te-byah — elopement, where the boy and girl fall in love with each other.

Kua-byah — marriage by capture, practised when the boy develops a liking for a married or unmarried girl but the husband or parents are unwilling; he picks her up forcibly with the help of his friends.

Mazmi byah — an ad-hoc marriage in which, if the boy cannot bear the marriage expenditure, he sends his sister to bring the girl and starts living with her.

The actual marriage is performed when the boy is ready to bear the expenditure. Swanglas used to practise *fraternal polyandry*, with the modification that one wife could not be shared by more than three brothers; if the brothers numbered more than three, the fourth would take another wife. With the spread of education, polyandry is now giving way to monogamy. Junior *levirate* and *sororate* are both practised. *Chheti* (giving money to the bride) was once prevalent but is now neither demanded nor paid. Residence is usually patrilocal, though a tendency towards neo-local residence is emerging; where there is no male issue, a son-in-law is invited to look after the property. In a polyandrous marriage all the brothers dress in ceremonial attire and proceed in procession to the bride's house; except for the eldest, the others return mid-way. On the eldest brother reaching the girl's house he is invited for a feast and a drink, and the bride's elder brother applies a



Tilak on the forehead of the bride and groom. On the bride's return she becomes the common wife of all the brothers, and the nuptial ceremony is performed in the groom's house.

BIRTH CUSTOMS

A son is preferred to a daughter, especially as the first child. The expectant mother is given rest and is not allowed to go out in the open during a solar or lunar eclipse. Postnatal pollution is observed for 20 days, after which *Chhati* is observed; at six months the *annaprashana* ceremony is held, in which the child is fed cereal food for the first time. On completion of one year the *Kratricti* or *Kramog* (tonsure) ceremony is performed by either the mother's brother or the mother's father. *Nanched* (puberty rites) are observed for females: at the onset of the menses the girl is secluded for five days and is not allowed near the hearth; on the last day the house is cleaned, the girl is bathed and then allowed to enter the kitchen and perform religious rites.

DIVORCE

Tsud-thvagchi, a distorted form of the Bhoti word *Thagchod-pa*, is the recognized term for divorce, and society approves of it. The couple holds a thin thread that symbolizes the breaking of matrimonial bonds. The common grounds are strained relations, change of religion and mutual consent. If the cause is the wife's infidelity, her paramour has to pay *izzat* money to her earlier husband — the bride's price in the event of divorce being known as *izzat*. Both husband and wife have equal rights; the primary responsibility of bringing up the children rests with the father, though very young children may stay with the mother. There is no prohibition on the marriage of a divorcee, widow or widower. The Swangla woman plays a varied and important role — carrying out economic activities in the fields, ploughing, weeding, harvesting, and collecting and stacking fodder — and participates in all socio-religious activities.

DEATH CUSTOMS

The dead are cremated, with the death rites performed by the eldest male member of the house; the bones and ashes are immersed in the river. The period of pollution is observed for 13 days, after which purification rites are performed; a widow puts on the deceased husband's clothes for eight days, which are considered the main days of mourning.

INHERITANCE — THE LAW OF PAGVAND

Property is inherited in the male line, all the sons inheriting equally; this is known as the law of *Pagvand*. If a person dies issueless, his wife inherits the property for life; if there is no widow or male issue, it is inherited by the daughters. The eldest son succeeds as head of the family. A stepson succeeds his natural father and has no right to succeed his step-father.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL

For maintaining social order, the Swanglas have a traditional council headed by a *Sehna* (chief) and assisted by four other members chosen by a voice vote. The office of the head is not hereditary; only a judicious and socially capable person is appointed. The cases coming before it relate to divorce, petty quarrels, thefts and breaches of community rules, and its decision is final and binding on all. Fines in cash or kind are levied on



the offender and the money is used for panchayat expenditure. Although statutory panchayats have come up since independence, the Swanglas' own traditional council is considered far more important.

RELIGION

Most of the Swanglas profess Hinduism, while some have converted to Buddhism. Those professing Hinduism propitiate their dead ancestors as family deities and keep a separate room called *man* for worshipping them. The village god is represented by *Nag Deota* or *Devta* (the serpent deity), and they also worship the wider Hindu pantheon. The two famous temples of the Swanglas are Trilokinath and Markula (Marikula) at Udaipur. The Brahmin Swanglas also believe in ghosts and evil spirits, and their main sacred centre is Manimahesh in the Bharmaur tehsil of Chamba district. Those professing Buddhism belong to the *Gelugpa* sect; by Buddhist doctrine no animal sacrifice is made, and Buddhists observe both Hindu and Buddhist rituals, with a *Lama* officiating in place of the Pandit.

FAIRS & FESTIVALS

The major fair is the Trilokinath fair, celebrated in the month of August-September. The other festivals are almost the same as in the rest of the country — Shivratri, Holi, Ramnavami, Navratras, Diwali, Janmashtami and Dushehra — all carrying a socio-religious significance. The Swanglas wear the same dress as others do in the valley.

OCCUPATION

The chief economic resources have been land and agriculture, the land being held jointly by the family. Instead of devoting more land to cereal crops, the Swanglas now grow cash crops like potato and hops; as the produce does not suffice for the year, they supplement their income by working as labourers, running tea shops and dhabas, and through small trading. The cash crops find a market outside the valley through the local cooperative society on partly deferred payments, and daily-use items are purchased from Mandi. Children above 10 years help their parents in household activities. All members have access to common water resources, roads, schools, a crematorium, a temple and the Panchayat Ghar, and people are now also entering white-collar professions.

SOCIAL TABOOS & MODERN CHANGE

A Swangla Brahmin would accept only *pucca* food and water from a Rajput or Rana, while the Lohar and Chanal can accept both *kuchcha* and *pucca* food from a Brahmin and Rajput. Brahmin and Rajput would traditionally not eat food cooked in the house of a Garu or Mundro, except food cooked by a Brahmin; the concept of *Sidha* food does not exist. While smoking the *hukka*, the Brahmin and Rajput share the same pipe, but when sharing with a Chanal or Sipi the nipple is removed. A system of ceremonial kinship called *mitr-bhai* exists, the ceremonial kin being expected to behave like a real one. In the past three decades the Swanglas have made good progress; radio, television, telephones and the expansion of roads and the postal network have added new dimensions to the life of the Swanglas of the Pattan valley.



TRIBE 02

Gaddis

The world-famous shepherd tribe of Bharmaur in Chamba, also found across parts of Kangra and the Nurpur tehsil.

REGION

Bharmaur (Chamba) & Kangra

CHARACTER

Semi-nomadic, pastoral

FAITH

Hindu (Shaiv)

The Gaddis of Himachal are world famous. The word *Gaddi* is a generic name, and under it are included Brahmins, Rajputs, Khattris, Thakurs and Rathis. They inhabit the Bharmaur tehsil of Chamba district and parts of Kangra district, with some also found in the Nurpur tehsil.

ORIGIN & THE WORD 'GADDI'

Different opinions have been given about their origin. The word *gaddi* seems to derive from *Gaddar*, a Hindi term for a shepherd or an ewe, or from *Gahar*, an alpine pasture grazed in autumn. Another group claims that the Gaddis came to the hills when they fell victim to the atrocities of rulers in their despotic times, and settled in Bharmaur, which is described as *Kailash*, the seat or throne of their God, Lord Shiva; those who entered the 'Gaddi' of Lord Shiva came to be known as Gaddis. The most widely agreed theory is that *Gaddi* derives from *Gadar*, a Sanskrit word for sheep, from which evolved the words *Gadhern* or *Gadaren*, meaning sheep country — the entire Bharmaur sub-tehsil being named the *gadhern* or *gadiyar* region, the abode of the Gaddis.

There is no unanimity about where the Gaddis migrated from. The Gaddis of Kangra are held to have come from Chamba. The Gaddi Brahmins have a tradition that their ancestors came from Delhi to Bharmaur in the reign of Raja Ajia Varman (780–800 A.D.). Many of the Rajputs are probably descendants of invaders from the plains, while the Gaddi Khattris say that their ancestors fled from Lahore to escape persecution, probably during the early Mohammedan invasions.

'UJRYA LAHORE TE VASYA BHARMAURE'

The couplet *UJRYA LAHORE TE VASYA BHARMAURE* — 'the ransack of the city of Lahore resulted in an influx to Bharmaur' — indicates the place of migration. Whatever the place, the date is not definite: opinions range from the 8th century to the 16th century, or it may have been spread over centuries.

CHARACTER & TEMPERAMENT

Gaddis are simple, honest and God-fearing, and crimes like murder, abduction and theft are very uncommon among them. They are hard-working, stick to their word and are considered good friends. Gaddi women are famous for their modesty and chastity, are bright and cheerful, and some of them, it is said, really look like



queens of the mountains; their beauty is the theme of many a hill-song. Raja Sansar Chand (1775–1823), the well-known patron of Kangra paintings, fell in love with *Nokhu*, a pretty Gaddi girl, and made her his queen. The local people call the Gaddis *Mitra* (friends). Chastity among Gaddi girls is said to be higher than in any other tribe of the Himalayas. They are generally short-statured compared with the people of the plains — a fact wisely attributed by the Imperial Gazetteer of India to a vigorous climate that kills all but the hardest individuals. Verily they are healthy and stout, ready to face the challenge of nature.

Being religious-minded, they do not hurt the feelings of others, and are firm in their faiths and beliefs. Litigation is much less in this community; they fear courts and settle disputes amicably, and due respect is paid to old persons. Gaddis are conservative and somewhat stubborn, decrying modulation; they are magnanimous and commiserative by nature, yet would like to keep their culture un-eroded. With few needs and simple habits, the Gaddi leads an unsophisticated, contented life, far from the madding crowd.

LANGUAGE

The dialect used by the Gaddis is a *Western Pahari* language of the Sanskrit-Aryan families of the Northern group. They can understand Hindi well but it is not normally spoken by them; they use their own dialect among themselves and talk in the Pahari dialect to others. There is no script for this dialect. They are declared a scheduled tribe.

FAMILY

The joint-family system is not so common among the Gaddis, and now with the passage of time the institution of the joint family is breaking up slowly. Being a patriarchal tribe, the man is the sole decision-making body except in exceptional cases where other members are consulted, and he is the owner of property. Children support their parents in day-to-day pursuits. On the death of the father, in a joint family the eldest son becomes head, and the property is distributed among all the children equally. Sheep and goat rearing was adopted as the primary occupation, with cultivation adopted by many alongside. Some Gaddis began migrating from Bharmaur to the lower hills and valleys owing to (a) shortage of fodder; (b) an uncongenial climate in Bharmaur; (c) inadequate land for cultivation; and (d) fewer employment opportunities in the Bharmaur area.

RELIGION

The religion of the Gaddis is Hinduism; they are *Shaiv*, and Lord Shiva is the principal God. They believe that Shiva's blessings can remove mental illness, ailments, misfortunes and natural calamities and cast away ancestral punishments, and the mention of Shiva is found in all their religious ceremonies.

OTHER DEITIES & SPIRITS

Autar — the spirit of an issueless person.

Kelang — considered the king of all snakes, propitiated in the form of a sickle called *Darat*, kept by a Gaddi while shepherding.

Gugga — associated with cattle and considered their protector; worshipped by offering a goat.



They also believe in *Rakshash*, *Yaksha*, *Jogini*, *Birs*, *Sidhs*, *Khetarpal* and *Baital* or *Bataloo* (the spirit of rivers and springs), as well as in *Sati* worship — there being a number of *Dheradies* (small temples) of Satis in the Kangra and Chamba districts. Gaddis believe in superstitions and cling to their traditional ways; the birth of a male child is considered necessary, while girls are regarded as the property of another house. The dead are cremated like other Hindus, but a person suffering from leprosy is never cremated and is buried instead, since they feel that cremating a leper spreads the disease and brings calamity.



MARRIAGE SYSTEM

Marriage is a must among the Gaddis, and five types are prevalent:

THE FIVE FORMS OF MARRIAGE

Elopement / Jhind Phunk / Brar Phuk — if a girl elopes with her lover without the parents' consent, they solemnize the marriage by burning a bush of wood and going round the fire eight times hand in hand, or with the bride's sheet tied to the boy's girdle; no ritual is performed and, though recognized, it is not considered a healthy practice.

Jhanjrara — marriage by elopement, consent and mutual understanding, associated with a married woman. When a woman elopes, the new husband fixes a date and neighbours are invited; it takes place at night with a feast. A former husband may file a suit, the new one paying compensation through the court or *biradari panchayat*. Performed with the younger brother of a deceased soldier (if unmarried), it lets a war-widow retain her pension.

Ghar Jawantri — the boy works as a domestic servant in his would-be father-in-law's house for a compulsory two to eight years; the marriage takes place only after he has retired from that service, and the couple then stays at the boy's house. This form is now very rare.

Batta-Satta — marriage by exchange — the boy gets his partner in exchange for his real sister or a cousin; it is considered inferior to *Dan Pun* marriage.

Dan Pun — the most common type. *Dan* stands for charity and *Pun* for *punya*; the girl is given as a *Dan* to her husband through *Kanyadan*, and the marriage has all social, religious and administrative sanctions.

A man should marry within one's caste and sub-caste; it is positively forbidden to intermarry within the same *Gotar*, and clean and unclean caste distinctions are very strict. Gaddis are monogamous; polyandry is never practised, and polygamy is not favoured unless the wife is barren or dead. Dowry is prevalent but is never demanded or insisted upon — the bride's father gives it and the bridegroom's father receives it with great respect. The word for divorce, *Talag*, does not exist in the history of the Gaddis; they use terms like *Dua Ghar Kari leva ha* (settled with a second husband), *Chhari ditti he* (permitted his wife to settle with someone else) and *Fargati dei dethi ha* (agreement to remarry). Such cases are generally decided by the duly constituted Birdadari panchayats.



FAIRS & FESTIVALS

The festivals celebrated by Gaddis are common with those of the other inhabitants of Kangra and Chamba: *Baishakhi* or *Bisu* (1st of Vaishakh, in July); *Sair* (1st of Asuj, Sept-Oct); the Minjar / Patroru Yatra (Bhadon, Aug-Sep); Mani-Mahesh (August); *Lohri* (January); Shivratri (February); Holi (March); Dushehra; and Jan-



mashtmi. Singing has an important place in their social life; their folk songs have survived through generations and depict their habits, customs, tradition, beauty, simplicity, humour, pathos, passions, love, culture and religion. As theirs is a patriarchal society, the caste of the child is determined by the caste of the father; untouchability is not very severe, the only barrier being on entering the houses of Brahmin, Rajput and Khatri Gaddis.



DRESS & DAILY LIFE

The traditional dress is typical, making the community easily distinguishable. *Chola* and *Dora* are their popular traditional dress, worn on most festivals and occasions; a few Gaddis engaged in agriculture have started wearing *Kurta* (shirt) and *Pyjamas* (trousers). The *Dora* is the most important part of the dress: its maximum length for an adult male is about 60 metres, for an adult female about 50 metres, and for children from 10 to 25 metres. Both cap and turban are used; the most common *topi* is the woollen *Bushahri cap*, on which they stick a *Kalgi*, keeping flowers on their turbans during marriages and fairs. A *Chadaru* is used by the *gaddan* to cover the head. Their rough but durable shoe, made by local cobblers, is called *Jutta*.

Women prefer ornaments, silver being more common than gold. Gaddis take their food four times a day: breakfast is called *Nuhari* or *Duteloo* (maize or wheat bread taken with dal or vegetable); a midday meal called *Kallar*; and dinner, called *Baili*, which includes rice or bread of maize or wheat with dal or vegetable. They are fond of drinking the local liquors *Sur* and *Jhol*. The Gaddis are, in sum, a **semi-nomadic, semi-pastoral and semi-agricultural tribe**.



TRIBE 03

Khampa

A Tibetan-origin Buddhist people, scattered across Kullu, Chamba, Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti.

ORIGIN

Tibet ('Kham')

FAITH

Lamaistic Buddhism

2011 CENSUS

2,456 persons

The Khampa are not the original inhabitants of Himachal Pradesh; they are believed to have migrated from Tibet. *Kham* is the name of a state in Tibet, and the people of that state are known as *Khampa*. They constitute only a microscopic minority of the population.

It is believed that they came to India about a hundred years ago as itinerant traders from Tibet and moved in the upper part of the Himalayas, which they included in their annual nomadic beat. The Khampas who stayed back in India are referred to as *Gyakhar* or *Gyagar* (a Tibetan term for India) by their brethren across the Himalayas. Their families are scattered in the Kullu, Chamba, Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti districts.

POPULATION

According to the 1981 census their number was 1,221 (including Jads and Lambas); in 2001 it was nearly 1,850 only (a growth rate of about 2.80 per cent, or 0.03 per cent of the total population); and in the census of 2011 they were recorded as **2,456 persons**.

REGIONAL NAMES

Bauddh / Tibtees — in the Kullu valley and some other parts.

Shah Khampa — in Uttarakhand, in the Darma and Byans villages of Pithoragarh.

Piti Khampa — in the Spiti division.

Kunnu Khampa — in Kinnaur.

Neondi Khampa — in Kullu.

Thava Khampa — in Chamba.

Gharia Khampa — in Lahaul.

Nekhor Khampa — the nomadic section — 'the people who come for pilgrimage' (*ne* means pilgrim places and *Khor* means journey).



The Khampas have been included in the category of scheduled tribes. The dialect spoken among themselves is also known as *Khampa*; with others they speak Hindi, and can also write, read and speak English. Their traditional script is Tibetan, but nowadays Devanagari is used while communicating with outsiders.

SOCIAL HIERARCHY & MARRIAGE TIES

The Khampa is a generic category that includes many territorial groupings. Though there are no perceptible restrictions on matrimonial ties between the sections, the economic status of the negotiating families is taken into consideration. In terms of local social hierarchy the Khampas rank at par with the other Rajput communities, with whom some have started entering matrimonial ties; opinion on social equality is divided. In Spiti, Lahaul and Kinnaur — areas of Buddhist dominance — people accept them at par; but in Kullu, Chamba and Shimla, where Hinduism dominates, they are not treated at par. The community is divided into a number of exogamous classes or sects that denote origin from a common ancestor. For establishing marriage ties, the immediate relations of the mother's side are avoided; beyond this, endogamy is practised at the community level, and village endogamy is also practised, family status being the only consideration. Parallel or ortho-cousin marriage is prohibited, while cross-cousin marriage finds prevalence; junior levirate and sororate are also practised. Marriages take place in the early twenties, the ideal age gap between husband and wife being 3–4 years.

MARRIAGE SYSTEM

The Khampa is a monogamous tribe; polygamy is resorted to only when the first wife is unable to bear a child. Till a few decades back, polyandry of the fraternal type was the prevalent form, with only the brothers sharing a wife in common, but this has been replaced by monogamy. Marriages are generally fixed by a negotiator known as *phaktum*. The Khampa has no symbol of marriage, and the practice of dowry or bride-price is not prevalent; parents give gifts to their daughters according to status and capacity. The usual form of residence is patrilocal. Divorce (*Jatsari-Jha-dal-va*, *Khatal-je-or-Kheje* or *Jha-cho-che*) is permitted when initiated by either party with the consent of the community council; the grounds include adultery, barrenness, infertility and maladjustment or maltreatment. The panchayat decides on the alimony, usually the return of gifts plus an amount in cash. Infants remain the mother's responsibility while grown children stay with the father, and widow, widower and divorcee remarriage is permissible.

On the day of the marriage (*phanktun*), the bridegroom goes in a procession to the bride's house. Before reaching it he is stopped on the way by the girl's friends, who block the road with stones; the girls sing *titm-de-luh* (a question-answer song) whereby questions are passed to the boy's side, and if they answer correctly they are given the way. They are held back once more before entering the house, where a fresh set of questions is posed. The groom's father ties a *thodkar* (white turban) on the heads of relatives, and the bride and groom are made to sit side by side and to feed each other *desil* (a sweet preparation of rice and curd) amidst the chanting of verses from scriptures by the lama, after which the marriage is declared solemnized and the bride accompanies the groom to his house.

RELIGION

The Khampas believe in all four sets of Lamaistic Buddhism, viz. *Galuka*, *Ningma-pa*, *Sakya-pa* and *Karguda-pa*. They visit Buddhist monasteries and Gompas, which function as religious teaching institutions. Their family deity is known as *Chhadna-Dorge*, a famous Buddhist deity worshipped by all; besides this there are many other deities in the shape of boulders, trees, caves and bushes. In case of illness they often consult the



lama, who advises them to make Puja and to read the Buddhist *Pragya Paramita Vajrachhedika*. Almost every house possesses its own family deity, represented by a stone slab or pillar on which a bough of junipers is placed and worshipped daily with the smoke of juniper leaves. Lamas, besides acting as sorcerers, also act as sacerdotal specialists and officiate at the rituals connected with the life-cycle. The Khampa often go on pilgrimage to Sarnath, Kushinagar, Nepal, Bodh Gaya and Rewalsar, and visit the monasteries in Lahaul-Spiti and Chango, which they consider their sacred centre.

◆ DRESS

The traditional dress consists of the *Chhuba* (a long gown, black for males and brown for females), the *banjug* (shirt) and the *siring kingar* (cap). The men also wore the *along* (an ear-ring made of gold, about two inches in diameter, with blue and red beads). In the recent past a clear change has taken place: young men now put on shirts, pants, suits and jeans, whereas the old still prefer their traditional dress.

◆ FOOD HABITS

The staple food is chapatti, rice and pulses of Urad, Chana and Malka along with vegetables. Khampas are non-vegetarian, taking the meat of goat, sheep, chicken, fish and eggs; the meat of Yak, pork and beef is a taboo. They also take edible roots and tubers like *bhalku*, *linger*, *nokhi*, *chatu* and *gucchhi* (mushrooms). Their earlier staple diet was thugpa and momo, but now they have changed to chapatti, momo being cooked on festive occasions. Besides apples, apricots and plums, which are widely grown, they consume the wild fruits *jami*, *vami*, *aarvi* and *chuli*, locally available in abundance.

◆ SOCIAL RITUALS

The child is named by the Dalai Lama or an Avtari Lama after consulting the sacred text and almanac. The *Raldak* (tonsure) ceremony is observed before the child is two years of age, on a date decided by the lama; the hair is cut by the mother's brother or, in his absence, the parents, and a feast is arranged. The role of the Lama in the birth and death ceremonies is very intensive. The disposal of the dead is decided in consultation with the Lama; generally the dead are cremated, while infants are kept in a wooden box and immersed in the river. Impurity lasts in the house for only a day, after which the lama is called to perform purificatory rites. Rituals connected with death are also observed on the *chizik* (fourth day), *duzik* (seventh day), *shipchu sherku* (49th day) and *logar* (one year), when alms are given and prayers offered for the peace of the departed soul.

◆ FAMILY & INHERITANCE

The Khampas have the extended type of family. Parents avoid calling their daughter-in-law by name and vice versa; the daughter-in-law observes avoidance with her husband's elder male relatives, while a joking relationship exists with the wife's younger sister and brother, and husband and wife use teknonymic terms to address each other. Property is inherited in the male line, all sons sharing equally. In the event of no male issue, the property is inherited by the daughter on the condition that the son-in-law agrees to stay with the in-laws; if the daughter also has no male issue, the property passes to the collateral. A widow has the right to enjoy the property for her lifetime, after which it devolves to the son, but she has no right to sell, gift or mortgage it.



STATUS OF WOMEN

The Khampa women are enterprising; they assist their menfolk in economic activities and also carry on economic activities independently, working as hoteliers and shopkeepers dealing mostly in foreign goods — these shops and restaurants being manned by the women while the men assist by getting them goods. The Garja and Piti Khampa, who are agriculturists, are assisted by their womenfolk in almost all spheres except ploughing, and the women also bring fuel and fodder. The social position of Khampa women is high: they are in charge of the house and manage the family affairs, and decisions on vital issues are invariably taken after consulting the wife. Though divorce is rare, at the time of divorce the gifts brought by the women at marriage have to be returned along with a fine decided by the traditional council. Traditionally they were not allowed to hold any post in the council, but indirectly influenced its decisions through their husbands; nowadays they have representation in the statutory panchayats, though seldom able to give an independent decision. Old women can be seen rotating turquoise beads in their hands, chanting the mantra of Lord Avalokiteshvara.

FAIRS & CRAFTS

The major fair is *LOSAR*, their New Year's Day, observed on the 24th or 25th of February according to their calendar; *Galde Gamche* is observed in the month of May, the day being devoted to the memory of the Buddha. Prayers are also offered on the *panchami* (fifth day) and *dashmi* (tenth day) of each fortnight; in Spiti and Kinnaur the *Goetr* and *Ladarcha* fairs are held, in which the Khunu and Piti Kampas take part. The art of the Khampas is visible in their craft, especially the weaving of carpets on which they make exquisite designs, the most popular being the *dragon*, made in dominant shades of red and black. The weaving is done by both sexes, though more women are involved; they are also skilled knitters, and weave *suktu* (a woollen shawl) and *sukdan* (a woollen bed-sheet) mainly for self-use, whereas carpets are made for commercial purposes. The Khampas have oral traditions, and the songs sung on the occasion of marriage are called *yanva* or *time luh*; the women dance on festive or marriage occasions.

COMMENSAL NORMS & JAJMANI

The Khampas observe strict commensal norms. They exchange both the *Kuchcha* and the *Pucca* food from a Brahmin and Rajput, but do not accept *Kuchcha* from other communities except when it is cooked by a person of Brahmin or Rajput status; other communities, however, can accept both types of food from the Khampas. The Khampas do not suffer from any sense of untouchability among their territorial groupings; previously the Brahmin used to observe social distance, but this stigma has disappeared, and in the urban situation no discrimination is observed even towards the Sippi and Lohar. A *Jajmani* relationship exists with rural communities like the Lohar and Beta, who render traditional services for which they receive a fixed amount of foodgrain at harvest time. Modern linkages have brought the Khampa into contact with other communities; the educated among them have entered professional or Government office, while the illiterate work as labourers. They also render mutual help in the construction of new houses, the repairing of old ones, the stacking of stones to form protective walls, and at social functions.

OCCUPATION

The traditional occupation of the Tibetan Khampas was sheep herding, while later they took to trade with India, leaving their traditional occupation; they brought to India *pashmina* wool, sheep, goat, yak and other



items laden on mules, and on return took back carpets, *moonga* and so on. But since the Indo-China conflict and the closing of the border, the traditional trade with Tibet came to an end, leading to the end of their nomadic life and their settling down as agriculturists and orchardists; some have opted for independent business such as shopkeeping and running restaurants, keeping foreign goods which they get from across the border. Others are employed as labourers in road construction or in mule-taming. The majority of the Garja and Piti Khampas own land and work on their own fields, while the Thava and Khunu Khampas are in trade and business; children below 15 years help their parents. The Khampas are of a very positive attitude, sending their children to schools, taking the benefits of various developmental schemes, and having no prejudice against family-planning programmes — today they are very much at par with the people of lower Himachal.

THE KHAMPA COUNCIL — SHUZAM CHUNGI

The Khampas have a traditional council known as *shuzam chung*, headed by a *GOVA*. It consists of five old and learned persons of the community who settle divorce and family disputes and penalize the guilty for breaking traditional norms. The council functions as a model of a quasi-judicial organ of tribal India, where male and female participate without distinction — earlier only male members were allowed to dominate the proceedings.



TRIBE 04

Pangwal

The people of the remote Pangi valley of Chamba — a generic name covering all who live in that high, hazardous tract.

REGION

Pangi valley, Chamba

STATUS

Scheduled tribe / area

2011 CENSUS

20,693 persons

The Pangwals are the residents of the Pangi valley of Chamba district. It is a generic name used for all the residents of the valley, including Brahmin, Rajput, Lohar, Hali, Badi and Chanal, but the Rajput population outnumbers all the rest.

ORIGIN — THREE VERSIONS

The origin of the Pangwal is shrouded in mystery; three unconfirmed versions give only a faint idea. By the **first**, from time immemorial the settlers of Lahaul and the lower Chenab valley faced heavy pressure on land and pastures, and in search of better land and green pastures finally migrated to Pangi, which had plenty of both; the Pangwals are said to be their descendants. The **second**, found in the Census of India 1961 village monograph on Kupha, Pabams, Tamoh and Malet (Singh 1961), holds that because of the difficult terrain the authorities considered the area the best place for sending criminals condemned to lifelong sentences; it is presumed that their children and grandchildren established the settlements collectively called Pangwals — a view supported by the resemblance of the traditional Pangwal *topi* to the one provided to prisoners. The **third**, which appears more plausible and historically correct, is that in the days of Muslim domination certain Rajput nobles, fearing persecution by the Mughals, sent their families to Pangi along with security soldiers; most of the Rajputs who remained behind died in battle, and when all hope of their return vanished, the Rajput women ultimately married servants and soldiers — the Pangwals today being said to be their direct descendants.

A SCHEDULED, WELL-GRANTED AREA

Pangi is an area of difficult and hazardous terrain, mountainous and subject to severe winter, heavy snowfall, strong icy winds, frequent avalanches and landslides. It has been declared a scheduled area and receives adequate grants, and a resident Commissioner has been appointed to look after the immediate demands of the people. The Pangwals have been declared a scheduled tribe; the Brahmin and Rajput constitute the bulk, the Rajputs being more numerous. They accounted for about 16,000 people in the 1991 census and 20,693 persons in the 2011 census, residing mainly in the Pangi tehsil with a scattered population in adjoining Lahaul and Kullu.



FOOD HABITS

The staple food is barley and *alu* (potato). In the lower regions of Kullu and Chamba *Makki-ki-Roti* (maize chapatti) and *Kadhi* are taken, and on every second and third day wheat chapatti and *chilra* (bread made of phullan) form the staple. They are fond of pulses like *mah* and *rardengal*, mostly purchased from the market; for vegetables, herbs like *Chhatrian*, *bichubuti* and *guchhies* (mushrooms) are plucked from the jungle, and with new methods they now grow cabbage, cauliflower, carrot, potato, onion, capsicum and spinach in the summer months. The Pangwals are basically non-vegetarians, taking the meat of sheep, goat, *monal* (impeyan pheasant), *tarmol* (jungle goat), *Kasturia* (musk deer), pigeon, *Chaktir* (meisner) and hen. During winter every household slays one or two goats and, after skinning, hangs the meat to be consumed gradually. They have a moderate consumption of fruits like *chir* (apricot), *chur* (apple), *miri* (hazelnut), *than* or *khori* (walnut) and *thangi* (carylus columba). Walnut oil and *ghalit* oil (extracted from apricot seeds), along with *desi ghee*, form the cooking medium.

Some households buy tea leaves from the market, but most use *choga*, a local spice, to prepare salted buttered tea; every household possesses a *choori* (a cross between yak and cow), whose milk is little and is mainly used for *lassi* and curd. *Arack* is consumed universally and is brewed from wheat or barley in every house. The Pangwal's festive food includes *unes*, *maudaj*, *luchi*, *bakru*, *beer* and *Kuron*.

LANGUAGE

The language spoken among themselves is *Pangwali*, while with others they speak *Himachali*. They do not have their own script, but nowadays the Devnagari script is commonly used with outsiders.

SOCIAL SYSTEM

The Pangwal Brahmin are divided into three sections, viz. *Gaur*, *Sungria* and *Kalia*. The Gaur Brahmin traditionally earned their livelihood by collecting alms and rank superior to the other two groups. Next in the hierarchy are the Sungria Brahmin, who perform sacerdotal services and officiate at birth and marriage ceremonies. The Kalia Brahmins are considered the lowest of the three and officiate only at mortuaries. The main basis of differentiation is occupational, and each section is further divided into exogamous sections called *gotra*. The Gaur and Sungria perceive their superiority over all other communities of the area, a fact acknowledged by others, while the Kalia Brahmin are considered a low community at par with the scheduled castes, though they are not scheduled caste. The Rajput Pangwals have three main subdivisions, namely *Rana*, *Thakur* and *Rathi*; intermarriage among them is fairly common, though the Rathi are regarded as inferior to the former two. They are further subdivided into a number of exogamous *gotra*, claim descent from *Suryavanshi* and *Chandravanshi* Rajput, and place themselves among the Kshatriyas. Numerically and socially they are a powerful group, only ritually lower in status than the Brahmins; for all practical purposes the Rajput and the Brahmin Pangwals have both connubial and commensal relations with each other.

MARRIAGE SYSTEM

The Pangwals are endogamous in the sense that a Pangwal will always marry a Pangwal; exogamy is maintained at the village and *gotra* level. Junior levirate and sororate are also practised. Traditionally, marriage was prohibited between kin up to three degrees on the father's side and five on the mother's side, but now only seven generations on the father's side and three on the mother's side are avoided. The average age of marriage for boys and girls is 22–24 and 18–20 respectively.



FORMS & SYMBOLS OF MARRIAGE

bari shadi — marriage by negotiation — the most popular form.

pith-chuk / chori — marriage by capture.

doghri — marriage by exchange.

topi lana — widow remarriage.

Common symbols — *balok* (nose ring), *fararu* (ear-ring), *lal chipper* (red shawl), and nasal ornaments like *laung*, *phulli* and *tikki*.

Monogamy is the prevalent form of marriage; a second marriage is resorted to only when the first wife is unable to give an heir. The residence is patrilocal, but where there is no male issue the daughter's husband is invited to stay with the in-laws and the girl continues in her parental home — such a resident son-in-law is called *gharjawai*. Earlier *retti* (bride-price) was in existence, but now this practice is more or less non-existent. Dowry is not demanded; gifts to the daughter — common agricultural implements, utensils, sheep and goats — are made at marriage, the quantity varying with the economic status of the bride's family.

Marriage is first negotiated from the boy's side: his father or uncle visits the prospective bride's house with a bottle of liquor and *sattu* and asks for the girl's hand; if the proposal is acceptable the gifts are accepted, and this is followed by *mangani* (engagement). On the fixed day the groom's party comes to the bride's place, where *puna* (a sacred marking with flour) is made and *totus* (made of flour) are placed around it; two of these are shaped into a cup and filled with honey and ghee, the *mama* (maternal uncle) covering them with his hand and asking the bride and groom to eat them — the one who finishes first is considered to have the upper hand. A lamb is sacrificed and meat given to all. Marriage is performed in three stages, viz. *pillarn* (engagement), *fekki* (betrothal) and *chakki* (marriage); Vaisakha, Asadha, Kartika, Pausa, Magh and Phaugan are considered auspicious months, and a Sungria Brahmin officiates.

DIVORCE

Divorce (*chorde*) is recognized, and there are two forms. In the first, a paramour pays a certain sum of *izzat* to the woman for seeking release from her husband. In the second, the husband gives his consent before the respectable men of the village and then breaks a dry stick in two over his wife's head as a token of having broken the marriage alliance; the amount of compensation is decided by the *panchayat*. The common grounds of divorce are barrenness, infidelity and maladjustment. Remarriage of widow, widower and divorcee is permitted; *Topi lana* is the common term for widow remarriage, permissible a year after the death of the husband, the first right to claim the widow's hand resting with the deceased husband's brother, nephew or cousin, who presents her a *joji* in the presence of two respectable men — her taking of the *joji* signifying acceptance.

BIRTH CEREMONY

Prenatal restrictions are placed on the expectant mother, who is forbidden heavy work. The house remains *asudh* (impure) or *jooth* for nine days in the case of a male child and twelve days for a female child; the purification ceremony takes place on the third, ninth or twelfth day, when the house is cleaned and holy Ganges water is sprinkled all over. The *naam sanmskar* (naming ceremony) is held after the first, third,



seventh or ninth month, the child being named by the father after looking into the almanac. The *Shik-Vade* (tonsure) is held with the naming ceremony or separately, before the first year, and can be postponed to the third year if a *sukhna* (a wish kept in the name of a deity) requires the tonsure to be done at the temple. The first hair is cut by the maternal uncle, followed by the father's brother and five other relatives; a goat is sacrificed and the tonsured hair is buried in a basket known as *Kilta*. On the third day the head is again shaved, leaving a *choti* (cue) on the occiput. The *Janeu* (investiture) ceremony is held at the age of 10–14 years, the sacred thread being brought from Haridwar; the child is then expected to observe certain taboos throughout life.

DEATH CEREMONY

The dead are cremated and pollution is observed for seven days, the Kalia Brahmin officiating at the mortuary rites; children below the age of eight years are buried, and the last rites are normally performed by the eldest male member. On the death of a male the house remains polluted for nine days and for a female seven days; on the seventh day all the male family members get their heads shaved, and a lamb or goat is sacrificed with its blood sprinkled on all. At the funeral procession the bier is prepared by a Chanal known as *dwaru*, who also carries fire in a pot. The ashes and bones are immersed in the Chandra-Bhaga (Chenab) river. On the third, ninth and thirteenth day after death a *Kathi* or *Kirya* ceremony is observed. Pangwals put up a stone slab called *dhaj* in memory of the dead in the courtyard of the house, bearing an inscription and usually prepared by the Gaddi shepherds; Pangwals worship their ancestors.

STATUS OF WOMEN

Women enjoy a fair amount of freedom in Pangwal community and are virtually in charge of domestic affairs. Pangwal women are beautiful and hard-working, performing domestic chores as well as taking part in agricultural operations; their economic potential is socially recognized and they are an economic asset to the family, also collecting fuel and fodder. Their social position is high in view of their freedom of leaving by choice, in which case they ultimately have to pay the *mudda* or *izzat* to the husband. In religious spheres, however, they do not have any say: the fact that they cannot worship their clan deity along the traditional family line is indicative of their lower profile, and they cannot officiate as priests or perform sacerdotal services. In the political sphere they do not have major representation, though senior women are invited when the *Biradari panchayat* is convened to discuss socially relevant issues; in the traditional council they have no representation. The Pangwal community has a joint-family system in which the elder male member heads the family; there is no strict observance of *purdah*, and women have considerable freedom of movement and speech.

RELIGIOUS LIFE

Pangwals are religious by nature; the Pangwal Brahmins belong to the Vaishnava and Shaivite sects, and every family has a deity. Besides worshipping the deities of the wider pantheon, they have more regard for regional, village and clan deities. The village deities Nag and Nagin are propitiated by all members of the family for warding off evil influences, and the regional deity is the Goddess Durga, who is propitiated by sacrificing a goat. Their *pujaris* are Brahmin or Rajput who officiate at life-cycle rituals, the office being hereditary; they are entitled to take away the eatables and the left leg and liver of the sacrificed animal. *Durga* and *Singhasni Mata* are offered goats and brass bells as *sukhna*. The famous sacred centres are the Kandwa Nag Temple at Mindhal, the Sheetla Devi Shrine at Luj, the Trilokinath temple and Masan Devi at Purthi.



The *Jatras* (religious journeys) are very popular: *Twaan* (celebrated in Magh or Phalgun), *Union* and *Sainch* (held in Chaitra), *Darkhan* and *Baria* (held in Shravan) and *Phool Jatra* (held in Kartika). Some important festivals are *Tyane* (held in Asadh, August), *Dikhrain* (in Savan) and *Parvach* (in Bhadon). The fair of Masan Devi at Purthi is of special significance and is celebrated by all communities with much enthusiasm. Pangwals believe in evil spirits, ghosts, magic, charms and amulets, and take recourse to a *Chela* whenever afflicted. Their well-known festivals are Sanitarian, Puranmashi, Shivratri, Sheel (observed on the amavasya of Phalgun or Chaitra), HISHOO (the new year's day) and Miniach. The sacred centre of the community is the temple of Lord Avalokiteshware at Trilokinath in Lahaul, which was once a part of Pangi.

◆ DRESS

Pangwals have their own peculiar dress, which provides them an easy identity. The men's dress consists of a *topi*, *kameej* or *chola*, *lekhar* (a long coat buttoned up to the knee), *majhir* (a black woollen cord wrapped around the waist), *Chalan* or *suthan* (cotton or woollen trousers, loose up to the knees but tight below) and *pul* (locally prepared grass or straw shoes). The women's dress consists of *Kameri* or *Choli joji* (a head dress colourfully embroidered with cotton and silk threads, with a tail attached to it that is tucked into the hair plait), *Chadru* (dupatta), *Kamarband*, *Chalan* or *Suthan*, and a shoe made of grass or straw.

◆ INHERITANCE

Inheritance is governed by their customary laws of *pagvand* and *chundavand*. In the former, all the male offspring of a wife share the property equally, whereas in the latter the property is divided in the first instance according to the number of wives and then equally among their respective male children. In the event of there being no male issue in the family, she enjoys the property for her lifetime only, and after the death of the father the eldest male member succeeds to the authority of the family.

◆ OCCUPATION

The mainstay of the Pangwal is agriculture, supplemented by the herding of sheep and goat. Traditionally the natives of the Pangi valley had *hak-barden* (subsidiary rights) in the forest, which have now been restricted but are nevertheless still practised — they can collect dry and fallen branches for fuel, use free pastures, and take free timber for house construction; the wool sheared from the sheep is usually kept for self-consumption. Every family has a loom and weaving of woollen clothes and blankets is done regularly; the traditional rights over natural water still exist, allowing them to construct water mills. The land is owned individually by the family heads; the Gaur Brahmin do not cultivate land themselves and give it on *adhi* (half). Bee-keeping is also practised, and Pangwals collect forest products and herbs like *zira* (*carum carvi*), *pateesh* (*Acoritam chasmanthum emadii*), *chora*, *guchhis* (*morchella esculenta*) and *mitha tilla*. No big market exists; the nearest is located 60 km away at Tarela, and the earlier barter system has been replaced by cash. The traditional patron-client relationship exists with the Chanal and Lohar; schools have functioned in the area since 1959.

**COMMENSAL RULES**

The Pangwals accept both *Kuchcha* and *Pucca* food from the Rajput. From a Chanal and Lohar a Brahmin would accept ghee, *sattu*, roasted potato, *sidha* and liquor only if served in a *kanse ka bartan* (bronze utensil); they would not sit on the same mat while eating. There are separate water sources for the Lohar, Chanal, Brahmin and the Rajput.



TRIBE 05

Kinner

Also Kinnaura, Kinara, Kanawara or Kinnaurese — the people of Kinnaur, described in classical lore as demigods between man and god.

REGION

Kinnaur district

STATUS

Scheduled tribe

LINEAGE

Demigod / Kimpurusha

The inhabitants of Kinnaur district are known as *Kinnaura*, *Kinara*, *Kanawara*, *Kannaurese* or *Kinnaurese*. Many tribes in India claim a divine origin, and the Kinners are one such tribe; the famous Sanskrit classic *Amarkosa* mentions Gandharvas, Yakshas, Vidyadhavas, Apsaras, Sidhas, Guhayakas, Kinners, Bhutas, Pishachas and Rakshasas, so the Kinners as a race find mention in classical literature.

In mythological and legendary accounts the Kinners are described as a distinct race of demigods, somewhere between human and gods; some depict them as half-man and half-bird, while others describe them with a human body and a horse's head. According to the *Bhagwat Purana*, the Kinners trace their origin from the shadow of Lord Brahma; another legend says they sprang from the toe of Brahma along with the Yakshasa, while the *Bhavaricopnished* says Devi created them with Brahma, Vishnu, Maruta, Rudra, Gandharva and Apsara. In the Mahabharata they are grouped with the Gandharvas, while the *Matasya-Purana* focuses on their kinship with the Kirata and the Yakshasa. The Encyclopaedia of Religions and Ethics depicts the Kinners with a horse's head and the Kimpurshas with a human body; the word Kinner (किन्नर = किम + नरः) means 'what kind of human beings'. Whether or not the present inhabitants of Kinnaur are descendants of the mythical Kinners, the legendary account is sufficient evidence to establish the antiquity of the Kinner race, which goes back into prehistory.

A SCHEDULED TRIBE OF THE HIGH HIMALAYAS

The Kinnauras have been declared a scheduled tribe, while the *Chamang* (Lohar), *Domang* (Koli), *Badhi* and *Nagalu* living in the same area are scheduled castes. The community occupies a valley of mountainous topography, cold climate, dense forests, heavy snowfall and low rainfall. The Kinners, now called Kannaurese, are also known as *Khas* or *Khasia*.

LANGUAGE

The Kinnaura speak the Kinnauri dialect, which, according to G.A. Grierson, comes under the Himalayan group of the Tibeto-Burman family of languages. At present they have Hindi as the second language; besides, Bhoti is also spoken in upper Kinnaur, and with the spread of modern education English is also understood and spoken by educated Kinnaurese. Kinnaur is called *Khunu* by Tibetans; *Khunu* or *Kunu* means a mountain in some Dravidian languages, and the tract has also been referred to as *Kurpa*. The folklore con-



tains many accounts going back to the Mahabharata period: the five Pandava brothers are said to have passed a good part of their twelve years' exile in Kinnaur, and the frescoes of Ajanta, which carry pictures of the Kiratas, Kinnars and Guhayakas, have great historical significance. In the *Vayu Purana* the Kinnars are said to be inhabitants of the Mahand mountains. The book *Vimanvathu* by Sutpitak, written in the second or third century B.C., contains a verse supporting this view; *Kimpurushwarsha* was the name of a Himalayan kingdom that existed in the ancient past.

CASTE SYSTEM

The Kinnauras belong to different ethnic groups. Among them the Rajputs (also known as Kanet, Khas, Khasia or Khasa) are the dominant group; next come the Koli, who are weavers, artisans, leather workers and ploughmen (Hali), followed by the Lohar, Badhi and Nagalu, who are ironsmiths and silversmiths, carpenters and masons, and basket-makers respectively. The Brahmins are conspicuous by their absence. In general the Kinnauras have two broad categories, *Khasia* and *Beru*. *Beru* is further subdivided into the *Domang* (which includes the Lohar and the Badhi) and the *Chamang* (which includes the Nagalu); the ethnic Rajputs inhabiting the upper part of the Pooh subdivision, being Buddhists, are called Jad or Zad. The Khasias or Rajputs have three *Khel* (status groups), viz. *Orang*, *Morang* or Maorang and *Waza* — endogamous status groups based on their hierarchical positions and found only in the Hindu-dominated areas. The Khels are subdivided into a number of lineages or *Khandans*, which are original and immigrant; the latter are families who came and settled in villages as wives or as *Makpa* (son-in-law), or who came on migration. The functional difference is that while the former can directly take part in social, economic, political and religious functions, the latter cannot.

INTERCOMMUNITY LINKAGES

In the Himalayan setup, intercommunity linkages are very important. The traditional economic linkage between the Kanet and Koli had been that of landlord and tenant. The *savarna* do not allow outcastes to enter the sanctum-sanctorium of the temple premises. The Rajputs accept food and water only from their own community, but they can accept tobacco, *bidi*, cigarette and fruits from the Badhi, Lohar and Koli; a Koli can accept food from all except the Nagalu, whereas the Nagalu accept everything. Inter-community marriages are not socially recognized, however these restrictions are breaking down.

CEREMONIAL FRIENDSHIP

jokheya — ceremonial friendship between a man and a woman (and between a man and a man).

konech — ceremonial friendship between two women; established by exchanging garlands of fruits (*jokheya un* or *konech un*) on an auspicious day and by exchanging food and home-brewed wine.

kokheya / rinkchje / dharambhai — ceremonial brotherhood and sisterhood within the same ethnic group and status (but not the same khandan); during one's distress, one's *kokheya* comes forward to help.

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

Each *Khel* follows Khel endogamy. In earlier days all three status groups were strictly endogamous, but with the passage of time inter-Khel marriages have started taking place, and now Orang and Morang can have matrimonial relations. Khandans are the marriage-regulating, exogamous units, and marriages between



members of two sub-Khandans are prohibited. The members of a superior Khandan prefer to marry into a superior Khandan and the inferior into the inferior; marriage within seven generations of the father and three generations of the mother's Khandan is forbidden. The marriage age of the boy is from 16 to 30 years and 15 to 25 for girls. *Kinner society practises four forms of marriage.*

THE FOUR FORMS OF MARRIAGE

Janekang / Janetang — common arranged marriage.

Damchalshish / benang hacchis / Jushish — love marriage.

Darosh / Dubur / Nyamsha dapang / Huchis — marriage by forceful or consented capture.

Har — enticing away someone's wife.

Janekang or Janetang is the most common, legal and widely practised system. The father of the boy looks for a suitable match; in many cases three girls are considered, and with three different flowers, one for each girl, the father goes to the village deity for final approval, the *Devta* approving one (this is followed only by extremely orthodox families). Otherwise one particular girl is selected, and if the girl's parents show a positive desire, two middlemen known as *majomi* are made to approach the parents — in Kinnaur the maternal uncle invariably plays the role of a *majomi*. The *majomi* goes to the girl's parents with a bottle of liquor and some cash as a token of present, the bottle being capped with butter, which is considered auspicious for prosperity and a happy married life. On acceptance of the proposal, a gold ornament is presented to the girl's side as *bari*, which binds the parents to a promise, and the marriage date is fixed in consultation with the lama or *grokeh*. If the date is to be postponed, a ritual known as *Jinsi* is performed. *Nyotang Merang* is a form slightly different from Janekang, in which only two persons go in the marriage party; it is followed by poorer families, and the wedded couple can go for Janetang later if they become prosperous.

Damchalshish means to have real relations; it starts with a love affair between a young boy and a girl who elope to some unknown place. After some time the boy brings the girl back to his parents' house for their consent and to start negotiations; if the parents do not agree, the presents are returned, but the boy and girl are accepted as husband and wife by the community. **Darosh** means to drag (*dub dub*) forcefully. In the primitive period, when there was no recognized marriage system, man used to capture woman; our mythological literature speaks of Rakshasas who did the same, so that matrimony achieved this way came to be known as *Rakshasa Vivah*. Capturing a girl with the consent of the girl or her parents is not looked upon as a crime in the Kinner community. In the would-be bridegroom's case it is his prerogative to touch the girl first; the girl raises a hue and cry but no one interferes, and if her struggle to escape succeeds she can be proud of it. Once the girl gives her consent, the boy's parents send a *majomi* to the girl's parents requesting pardon for the outrage. This type of marriage is often resorted to by people of lower Orungs who want to marry into families of higher Orungs so as to ensure their elevation in the social hierarchy, but with the greater role of government administration and the fear of legal punishment such marriages are vanishing.

Har is a form of love marriage in which the woman is essentially married and develops a liking for another man; she is first required to get divorced from her husband or husbands, and the paramour pays *izzat* money decided through mutual deliberation. Once the amount is paid, the husband and wife catch hold of a dry 20-to-25-cm-long twig of the *Shur tree* in their right hands, break it with a jerk and throw the pieces backwards — this ritual is known as *shing tag tag*, i.e. breaking up a twig. An issueless woman gets back her dowry articles or their price; if she has borne issue she gets back neither dowry nor children.



The marriage ceremony is an elaborate affair. The day the marriage is fixed, the boy's side sends an ornament known as *Fyayaz* to be hung on the forehead of the bride, all other ornaments being given to her only when she reaches her in-laws. The bridegroom proceeds with the marriage party to his prospective in-laws; in poorer families the bridegroom walks on foot, while in well-to-do families he rides a well-decked horse. The marriage party is welcomed by lighting lamps and burning incense, then feasted with *ghanti*, festive dishes, meat and butter. After the meals the exchange of gifts takes place, a ritual known as *sening kunnu*; the mother-in-law is greeted and offered customary gifts of *dolangchin*, also called *nazrana* or *yume dalgom-ming*. Next morning a group dance locally called *manchhang froshimu* is organized, and at its conclusion the bride is led out of her house; the ladies from the bride's side sing a very sad and pathetic song signifying that the girl is henceforth dead for her parents. To ward off evil spirits, a *gasto* lamb is sacrificed at every bridge of the rivulets (now coconut and a bottle of *ghanti* are offered instead). The most important marriage ritual is the turban-tying ceremony.

POLYANDROUS MARRIAGE — THE U-PAGEY CEREMONY

In a polyandrous marriage all the brothers sit in a row and the bride sits before them — this is the *U-pagey* ceremony. The groom and bride are garlanded with *obal* (a garland made of locally available white dry fruits); the maternal uncle of the groom then takes a piece of white cloth and ties a *pagri* on the head of each brother, which indicates the marriage of all the brothers with a common wife. In the evening the *bisy-oshimig* ceremony is performed. It may be mentioned that no vedic rites, such as going round the fire, are performed in the solemnization of marriages in Kinnaur.

Hangrang valley, which is close to Tibet, has the greatest impact of Tibetan culture: there the Darosh type of marriage is called *Namkuza*, Janekang is known as *Namaroza*, the marriage party is called *Paghlen*, and the ceremony of *dolangchim* is termed *Chhakpecha*. The inhabitants of Hangrang seem to be purely Mongoloids, and for this reason the people of lower Kinnaur never entered into matrimonial alliances with them. The symbols of married women among the Hindu Kinnauras are ornaments, a red mark on the forehead and vermillion in the parting of the hair. Descent is reckoned in the male line; unmarried children belong to their father's Khandan, and after marriage the sons return to their father's Khandan but daughters accept their husband's. Though polyandry of the fraternal type is practised as a norm, monogamy is no less common, being practised by those who are the only sons in the household and those who left Kinnaur and settled outside.

DIVORCE

Divorce is locally known as *shingtickashimig* or *thagchocha* and is permitted to both husband and wife. It is usually demanded by the husband because the wife is quarrelsome, adulterous, does not like to work or suffers from a contagious or incurable disease; it is sought by the wife if the husband is unable to feed her or tortures her, is debauched or suffers from an incurable contagious disease. The divorce proceedings are initiated by the aggrieved party in the Biradari or Gram Panchayat, who, after hearing them, make them stand face to face holding the two ends of a *dingi* (small stick) and ask them to break it — the break of the *dingi* signifying the breaking of marital relations. There is no restriction on widow remarriage, provided the widow stays in the deceased husband's house for one year and none of the kin marry her during that time.



PROPERTY & INHERITANCE

Among the Kinnauras the property is inherited according to the *jathong* and *kanchhong* rules. Under this rule, before the partition actually takes place, a good part of the agricultural land is given to the *jathong* (eldest) brother and the ancestral house to the *kanchhong* (youngest) brother, and thereafter the property is equally divided; the last wish of the dying man, known as *tonglong*, is usually honoured. A widow in the absence of children can inherit the property but cannot sell it. If a man has no son, property can be transferred to the daughters by making a *hibba* (will) while he is living.

BIRTH CUSTOMS

In the absence of a Brahminical order, the rituals and ceremonies are dominated by the Lama cult. The Lama makes a charm and hangs it around the neck of a pregnant woman, mostly written in the Tibetan language on *bhojpatra* (birth leaf). In almost all over Kinnaur the prospective mother is confined to the *Khudd* (cow shed) soon after she starts having labour pains; the indigenous midwife, the *dai*, looks after the mother and the newly born baby, and the cutting of the naval cord and disposal of the placenta is her responsibility. The family where a child is born is deemed unclean and not allowed to participate in religious functions for a period ranging from seven to fifteen days; even if this tradition is unintentionally violated, the family has to undergo *Khepa* (punishment) and is required to sanctify the *devta* by sacrificing a sheep or goat. After the period of confinement, the *Shudhi ceremony* takes place: cow-dung is pasted on the floors, incense herbs are burnt, and the Lama names the child and sprinkles *charnamrit* (water mixed with so-called nectar-like water of an esteemed stream).

DEATH CUSTOMS

As in the case of other customs, there is no similarity in the death customs all over Kinnaur; those observed in Lamaistic upper Kinnaur are quite different from those in Hinduistic lower Kinnaur. The old customs such as *dubant* (drowning), *phulkant* (burning) and *bhakhant* (eating by vultures and birds) are rapidly making way for the cremation practice, which is invariably practised all over the country, except in the case of infants, whose corpses are buried or sunk. In the upper Kinnaur valley, immediately after a death the Lama is called; he, along with his co-partners, starts reciting narrations from the *pothee* (a book dealing with Buddhist scriptures). In Hangrang valley the Lama recites *PHOA* (a narration whispered in the ears of the dead body with the purpose of paving the path to heaven for the soul). The funeral procession is led by the Lama and musicians; a white banner known as *OM KAFRA*, held by two persons, is taken to the cremation ground, where the dead body is placed on a *dursa* (pyre made of wood) and lit by a close relative. The ashes are collected the next morning and sent for immersion — earlier in the sacred Manasarover lake, but now at Rewalsar in Mandi district or in the Ganga at Haridwar. The *Khanma* lama, i.e. the astrologer lama, forecasts the rebirth of the departed soul; the same evening the bereaved members throw a mixed pudding prepared from loaves and pulses on the roofs of their houses, under the belief that through crows and other birds the food would reach the departed soul — this act is called *thuning*. The family remains in mourning for one year; after eight days the *chhopta* ceremony is held, and after thirteen days the *chhantyama* ceremony, after which members start taking normal food. In some villages, stone pavements called *Katangas* are erected on hilltops in memory of the departed soul.



DRESS

The Kinnauras are very colourful in attire. The *Thepang*, popularly known as the Himachali cap, is a common dress of men and women in Kinnaur. *Chamru kurti* is an ordinary shirt worn by men, *Chhuba* is a long woollen cloak worn in winter, and *Chamu Sutan* is a woollen pyjama worn by men. Women use *dhori*, *choli*, *chhanli* and *gacchang*: the Choli is akin to a full-sleeved blouse, the Dhori is a type of woollen sari with a girtle, and the Chhanli is a shawl wrapped around the shoulders with two ends fastened together near the breast by a silver hook called *digra*. In Hangrang valley the Kinnauras prefer dark red or dark brown colour. The dress of children includes *Ra Ghoya* and *Chutan* (akin to a baby shawl). The Kinnaurese are very fond of ornaments — in olden days thick bracelets, large ear-rings, heavy silver chains and various kinds of beads and precious stones were the proud possessions of a Kinner dame — but Kinnaura men generally do not use ornaments, though some old people wear an ear-ring known as *murki*.

RELIGION

Kinnaur is a place of the curious existence of Hinduism and Mahayanaist Buddhism. People embracing Buddhism belong to the *Nyingmapa*, *Dukpa*, *Karyupta* and *Gelukpa* sects; on entering a Buddhist village one finds a tomb and a *chorten* or chosten in various directions of the village and in individual houses, meant to ward off evil spirits, and the centre for their religious activity is the *gompa* or *labrang*, headed by a Lama. The central feature of Kinnauri Hinduism is its numerous *devta* or *devi*: each household has a deity called *Kinshu* and the village deity is called *ghori*. The principal deity, the *ghori*, exercises control over all the deities under it. The major deities are Maheshwar, Chandika, Badrinarayan and Dabla; while the Kinshu is worshipped in the corner of a room of every household, the other deities have their abode in the *santhong* (temple premises). There are 18 major deities of the Kinnauras, who are said to be the progeny of Banasur and Hidimba. The Kinnauras also believe in spirits — *Bakharshuna*, *Banchis*, *Chous* and *Khunkch* are spirits who reside in high-altitude forests, deodar and kail trees, particular stones on a highway, and cowsheds respectively; *Churail*, the spirit of a pregnant woman, is warded off by wearing amulets and charms. The Thatha ceremony is held every two to five years to ward off evil spirits, and if a person is overpowered by a spirit, a shaman (oracle) is called.

FAIRS & FESTIVALS

Fairs and festivals are an integral part of Kinnaura society. The blocking of the area by mountains, the severe winter with heavy snowfall, and the suspension of agricultural operations have all contributed to the social awakening of a peculiar type, resulting in communal recreation and amusement. In this god-cult-dominated land, all fairs and festivals are ceremonised with a view to appease and worship the gods and goddesses, many such occasions being accompanied by community feasts. Their important festivals are Ukhyang, Phaguli Dakreni, Deewal, Losar, Mahang, Sango, Khepa, Bal, Chota Deewal Shirken, Kanjyur, Zalma, Lama Zulka, Eratang Udavaning, Peetang, Puja, Chhayang, Kulma, Saura, Vaishkhang, Shivratri and Toshim or Toshing.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL

For maintaining law and order in the community, the Kinnauras have a traditional council called *char-bhai*. It consists of the *char*, *halmendi* and *tokniya* besides a *mukhiya*; the post of mukhiya and char always belong to the Rajput, whereas that of halmendi and tokniya are filled by Koli. This council awards punishment to the



guilty, culprit or offender; when a conflict occurs between two persons concerning economic, social, religious or other affairs, the case is referred to the charbhai. In the caste council the village deity also performs a major role as judge through *grokch*, and the verdict of the deity is final and supreme. The guilty are punished with excommunication or fined according to the severity of the crime; the Kinnauras follow an unwritten code of conduct, and women never become members of the charbhai.

FORMS OF PUNISHMENT

Izzat money — a penalty imposed for kidnapping, divorce or blame; if somebody gravely violates the tenets of society he or she becomes outcaste.

Tichla — awarded for grabbing someone's immovable property.

Michig — for grabbing someone's movable property, getting married in a forbidden family or violating the *devta's* direction.

Chhetpa — for not coming when summoned by the deity, or for coming late.

Ti Darang Shishe — an exemplary punishment for an incorrigible errant — the culprit is summoned to the shrine before all villagers, a shower of cold water from the *Krow* (a bowl kept in the shrine) is thrown on him, and he prays for his downfall.

STATUS OF WOMEN

Women in Kinnaura polyandrous society form the pivot around which all other members of the family move. Based on her ingenuity and tactfulness she tries to please all her co-husbands and children; she is self-respecting and not to be tied down to an unliked environment. The eldest married woman of the family is called *goine* (mistress of the house), while the eldest man is known as *gortes* (master of the house); the *goine* is in control of the household and is also the treasurer of the family. The women in Kinnaura society are the chief economic asset of the family: they practically do all the agricultural activity except ploughing, collect fodder for the milching cattle, cook food and bring up children, and being the common wife of all the brothers she is greatly loved and cared for by all. She has an equal right in religious activities, and works falling in the exclusive jurisdiction of women are never interfered with by men, such as the offering of collective prayer by the women of the village to the *devta* if the rains fail. Whereas the men are given to excessive drinking, the women do all sorts of jobs. Till a few years back women were hardly willing to participate in political activities, but now, with the spread of education, more and more women are joining the mainstream.

OCCUPATION & CHARACTER

The Kinnauras have primarily been an agro-pastoral tribe; the traditional occupation had been agriculture, trade and sheep rearing, but nowadays different occupations like cultivation, sheep and goat rearing, spinning and mule-tethering are combined together. Most of them own land, though the average landholding among the Rajput is higher than among the Kolis; under the *shingmo* or *hala* system the Koli cultivates the land and does all agricultural work of Rajput families in lieu of a fixed amount of cereals. The *Jajmani* system among the Kinnauras is known as the *bianana* system — a system of mutual cooperation between the Rajput and Koli, Lohar, Badhi and Nagalu; with the Kolis they have *bonu* and *sui bianana*, under the former of which the Kolis are given wool to weave cloth and under the latter cloth is given for stitching,



in lieu of which they get cereals and sometimes cash. Besides *bianan*, the *bhoara* and *mokomokheyasimig* systems also coexist. Prior to the closure of the border, trade was carried on with Tibet, which has since stopped; now the Kinnauras market their produce through the *Lavi* fair and middlemen to Shimla. The Kinnauras are dexterous in the art of weaving, knitting and basket-making.

The staple food of the Kinnauras consists of chapatti of buckwheat and barley or maize with *rongi* or *mah*; chapati of *ogla* and *phapra* (varieties of buckwheat) is also prepared, and potato is the staple vegetable. Fruits like apple, apricot, pear, grape, peach and nuts are grown and consumed during the season. This district may be the most backward district in the whole of India, but there are numerous features of the human stuff living in this isolated land which make it altogether a different composition. Integrity is a proud possession and intrinsic attribute of an average Kinnaura: they are brave, hardy, courteous, hospitable, honest and sincere, acute and punctual, but liberal and unsuspecting, and every person is safe in Kinnaur. They are respected for their honest dealings; theft and dacoity are unknown in this part of the world, and an average Kinnaura can miss a meal or starve but will never resort to stealing. With the spread of education, health facilities and exposure to modern means of transport, communication and television, some awareness for cleanliness and hygiene has also developed. The introduction of apple and off-season vegetables has added a new dimension to the economy of the state.



TRIBE 06

Lahaulas

The dwellers of Lahaul, a barren, windswept frontier tract above 3,500 metres — a mixed Aryan-Tibetan race.

REGION	ELEVATION	FAITH
Lahaul-Spiti	3,500 m+	Hindu & Buddhist

The dwellers of the Lahaul area are known as *Lahaulas*. Lahaul-Spiti, a unique sociological unit, is one of the frontier districts of India; it is a barren, desolate and windswept region lying at an average elevation of over 3,500 metres. The people of Lahaul are a mixed race and are mainly Buddhists, their dialect resembling Tibetan.

At some point of history, Tibetan settlers came into the head of the Bhaga valley and the head of the Chandra valley, while Aryans and Semi-Aryans also came from West to South into the valley and started living there. It therefore seems that the present Lahaulas are the ultimate product of the amalgamation of these different races. But unlike the Lahaul valley, the Spitians are purely of Tibetan stock, and no race of Hindu or Aryan blood is found there.

CASTE SYSTEM

The caste system is prevalent among the Lahaulas, and their caste system, traditions and social structure are akin to the Pangwals. The Lahauls who inhabit both the Lahaul and Spiti regions include some castes divided into two major categories: the upper classes consist of Rajputs, Brahmins, Thakurs and Rathis, while the lower class includes Halis, Bhots and Lohars. Lahaulas are endogamous and polyandrous. In Lahaul there is arranged marriage (*Tabhagston*) as well as theft (*Kumai Bhagston*): in the former case the parents arrange the marriage, whereas in the latter the boy and girl are given freedom of choice. They do not permit marriages within three degrees of relationship on both the father's and mother's side. Lahaulas have evolved from the cross-breeding of Aryan and Mongolian racial types. The joint-family system is mostly prevalent among Lahaulis, and except *gotsi* no other birth customs are observed.

DRESS

They wear a white or brown coloured *Kattar* (a long loose Tibetan gown), while the younger generation is wearing a coat; *Tobri* (the Kullu cap) is a common head gear, and *Suthan* (warm tight trousers) is used to cover the lower part of the body. The Lahauli women adorn their dresses with ornaments on head and neck to look more attractive. The Lahauls are mostly non-vegetarians and do not consider any food or drink as tabooed. *Lugri* is a local name for a drink.



MARRIAGE SYSTEM

Lahaulas have their own marriage system. Negotiations for a betrothal are conducted by the father and the maternal uncle of the boy: they take a pot of *chang* and visit the parents of the girl they have picked out, explaining their intentions. The mother then goes to ask her daughter, and if she is agreeable to the proposal, her parents accept and partake of the *chang* — a refusal to drink means a final rejection. The *chang* is, however, sent on two further occasions, and at the third time of asking, the payment and acceptance of a rupee settles the matter, and the day is then arranged. The fetching away of the bride takes place at night: on arrival at the bride's house the bridegroom, accompanied by eight or ten friends, has a little encounter with the servants of the house, who will not let him in until he has paid them a fee. Once inside, the bridegroom unfolds his gifts, *chang* is passed round, and the bride's dowry is presented — it may consist of up to eight or ten complete outfits of clothing, a sum of money, all the utensils required for her new home, a cow or a hybrid yak, and a pony or two.

COUNTERACTING EVIL — THE LHAPA

As the wedding party are bound to bring some hidden evil with them from the road, the *lhapa*, or spirit medium, is engaged to counteract the evil influences of the demons (*shrinom*). After invoking the benevolence of the *lha*, this man throws a live sheep from the top of the house before the wedding party waiting outside; the sacrifice is seized, the heart and liver quickly torn out, cut up and eaten raw. The *lama*, meanwhile, proceeds with reading the *chos* to scare away the evil spirit, eventually breaking a small pot containing a dough effigy of the demon to 'kill' it. The party then enters the house and partakes of the marriage feast.

There is no fixed age for marriage, but at present it is 20 to 25 for boys and 17 to 20 for girls. As a rule matrimonial ties are not broken, and divorces or separations are rare. If a marriage turns out childless, a second wife is taken, but the first wife retains the position of honour in the house and the second has to do the outdoor work. If a man wants to divorce his wife he has no claim on her dowry and has to pay her a sum of money fixed by the elders of the society; on the other hand, the wife who desires divorce has to pay that sum to her husband. A divorce is completed when the ceremony of *kudpa chadche* has been performed: the pair makes a thin thread of wool, holds it by the little finger and pulls it apart, saying that from henceforth they will have no more to do with each other; they may then remarry. Polyandry is very general, monogamy being however the more usual form of married life, and there can be no doubt that woman is really respected in Lahaul much more than in any other society.

FOOD HABITS

The daily meals are usually three in number. Early in the morning pancakes made from buckwheat flour are eaten; at midday a porridge of barley flour mixed with dried buckwheat leaves; and the evening meal consists of buckwheat cakes eaten with meat or soup when procurable, or with curds. Wheat flour sometimes takes the place of buckwheat, and on high occasions such as New Year and marriages, wheat is used for manufacturing beer (*chang*), the ferment used being called *phap*. A kind of whisky is also distilled from barley, which is drunk in its rawest form and is never allowed time to mature. Cattle are not slaughtered nowadays, but five or six sheep are killed in each house at the beginning of winter; the flesh dries and will then keep good for any number of years, and the older the meat, the greater the delicacy to the taste of a Lahaula. All the people of Lahaul will eat sheep that have died a natural death, and the Dagis will eat dead



cows and bullocks, but the Hesis will not. Vegetables are now cultivated all over Lahaul-Spiti except Khoksar, where it is very-very cold, and the Lahaul valley has also become famous for potato production.



OCCUPATION

The Lahaula does not stay at home to cultivate his crops, and a large proportion of the population is absent whatever the time of year. Before 1962 a very large section of the Lahaula population used to go to Tibet to purchase wool and pashmina and to despatch their own sheep, the latter being sent back to Tibet for winter grazing; but now restrictions on the international border have curtailed these activities, and for business purposes they go to Kullu, Kangra, Chamba, Jammu and Kashmir and many other parts of the country. Nearly all Lahaulas can knit stockings, and weaving is done in almost every home; the cloth is however very narrow, the wider and better stuff being all woven by immigrants from Upper Bushahr and Kinnaur. *Karru* (gentian), *patis* (aconite) and other roots are dug in the waste lands and profitably sold in Kullu and adjoining areas. The Lahaulas are honest, hospitable and peace-loving; they are robust and quite healthy. Basically they are agriculturists, but mule rearing, weaving and spinning occupations are also carried on. Both Hinduism and Buddhism are the dominant religions in the Lahaul and Spiti regions; the Spiti area is predominantly Buddhist-dominated, and even Hindus visit Buddhist monasteries and offer worship.



TRIBE 07

Gujjars

A pastoral people of probable Central-Asian (Kushan) descent, found across the state as both Hindu and Muslim communities.

ORIGIN

Central Asia / Kushan

COMMUNITIES

Hindu & Muslim

LIFE

Pastoral & agricultural

The Gujjars are identified by General Cunningham with the Kushan or Yachi or Tochari, a tribe of the Eastern Tartars. About a century before Christ, their chief conquered Kabul and Peshawar, while his son Hema Kadphises extended his sway over the whole of upper Punjab and the banks of the Yamuna as far down as Mathura and the Vindhya; his successor, King Kanihska, the first Buddhist Indo-Scythian prince, annexed Kashmir to the Kingdom of Tochari.

The probability of the Gujjars being descendants of the ancient Yachi or Kushan is suggested by the fact that, besides the Jat, they are the only numerous race of foreign origin in the North-Western part of the Indian subcontinent known to have been powerful during the early centuries of the Christian era. The origins of the Gujjars are still shrouded in mystery, but the majority of scholars are of the view that these people migrated to India during the sixth century from Central Asia, along well-established trade routes; they inhabited the western part of India, where the province of Gujarat exists after their name, and the Gujjar rulers founded the city of Gujarat in Akbar's reign. Most historians believe that the Gujjars were a Rajput community and are supposed to be the descendants of the 'Huns' of Gurjaras; the first mention of the Gujjars in historical records is found from the 5th century onwards along with the Huns. It is very difficult to fix the exact date of this nomadic race's conversion to Islam.

HINDU & MUSLIM GUJJARS

The Hindu Gujjars of Himachal trace their origin from Yashoda, the mother of Lord Krishna, and are found mostly in the districts of Mandi, Kangra, Sirmaur, Solan and Bilaspur, whereas the Muslim Gujjars are dispersed in Chamba, Mandi, Bilaspur, Solan and Sirmaur. The Hindu Gujjars speak the dialect of the region and use the Devnagari script in writing; the Muslim Gujjars speak the Gujjari dialect among themselves — a mixture of Gujarati, Urdu and Dogri — but use broken Hindi when conversing with others, their script being Perso-Arabic.

FOOD HABITS

The Hindu Gujjars are usually vegetarian, and their diet depends upon the availability of cereals; they are occasional non-vegetarians, taking the meat of goat and chicken. Their staple diet consists of wheat or maize chapatti, dal of urad and gram, vegetables or milk products and curd; milk and milk products occupy an important position as their own produce. They are occasional consumers of alcoholic drinks, and



smoking is a common habit among men and women. The Muslim Gujjars are mostly non-vegetarian, but mutton is consumed only occasionally due to lack of availability; eating pork is a taboo, and they do not eat beef or buffalo meat. Their staple food consists of maize, chapati, pulses of urad, mah and gram, roots and leafy vegetables; preparations of milk products like lassi and dahi also form a part of their daily diet. As per the tenets of their religion, taking an alcoholic drink is a taboo, but a few do consume it, and smoking is a common habit. Special dishes are cooked for marriages and festive occasions — preparations of mutton, sweetened rice and dal of *mah* or *chana*.

SOCIAL CUSTOMS

The Hindu Gujjars are divided into a number of exogamous *gotra* like Khatana, Chauhan, Gursi, Didhar, Bhumphal, Kalarya, Parswal, Malehria, Koli, Kautiya, Motte, Chaichi, Bhunch, Bargat, Kalas, Chhore, Ladi, Chai, Bajar and Baddhena; these *gotra* denote their ancestry and regulate marriage alliances, and they place themselves along with the Kshatriya, though other communities place them a grade lower. The Muslim Gujjars have two groups, the *Bhatariye* and the *Bhanariye*, which do not intermarry; they are further segmented into exogamous gotras, viz. Bhatti, Chandel, Chauhan, Banja, Lodha, Kasana, Bhensi, Chopra, Chichi, Khatana and Padha, which indicate their Rajput clans. The prohibition against clan endogamy is lacking these days, probably due to the greater Islamization of the Gujjars, which permits marriages between cousins of all levels.

MARRIAGE SYSTEM & DIVORCE

Among the Hindu Gujjars marriages take place now on adulthood; the common symbols of marriage for women are *koka*, *choori*, *tikka* and *bala*, and after marriage the residence is patrilocal. The distinctive feature of Muslim Gujjars is that consanguineous marriages take place — a boy can marry his cousin either on the father's or mother's side, provided they have not in their infancy suckled from the breast of the same mother. Marriages take place by *nikah*, in which both the boy and girl agree to each other in consideration of an agreed amount of *mehar*, which has to be paid in the event of dissolution of marriage; both junior levirate and junior sororate are permissible. Divorce is permissible among both Hindu and Muslim Gujjars, and both widow and widower marriages are practised. The traditional joint-family system exists in both Gujjar communities; the elders in the family are given respect and regard, the *Purdah* system is prevalent, and a joking relationship exists. The family property runs along the male line; a daughter can claim the property of the father in the absence of a son, while under normal circumstances property is equally divided among the sons, with the widow having a right to maintenance.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN

The role of Gujjar women is very significant in both communities. They are hard-working, and besides household chores do other work like tending the cattle, making cow-dung cakes, plastering the walls and floors of the house with cow-dung, and bringing potable water, fuel and fodder of the cow and buffaloes. The Muslim Gujjari milks the cow and makes *ghee*, *panir*, *khoya* and other milk preparations, often also taking them to the market. Gujjar women, known as 'Gujjaris' in the local language, are tall with a graceful figure and are very attractive. The marriage system among Hindu Gujjars is regulated as per Vedic rites, and among Muslim Gujjars according to their own tradition as elsewhere in India.



OCCUPATION

The Hindu Gujjars lead a settled existence and practise agriculture; the majority of them are landowners. It is customary for each family to keep a cow, but the milk is only for self-consumption and not for sale, because of the fact that they trace their origin from the famous Yaduvamsha to which Lord Krishna belonged, whose fondness for cow-herding is well known to all. The majority of Muslim Gujjars are pastorals, and they eke out their livelihood through the sale of milk and milk products; they have herds of buffaloes with which they keep migrating from low to high and high to low altitudes during the summer and winter seasons in search of green pastures. The *ghasia* (pastoral land) at these altitudes is allotted to them by the Forest Department and is owned by the government.

PARVATIA ADIM JATI SEVAK SANGH

In Himachal Pradesh, the Gujjars are members of the *Parvatia Adim Jati Sevak Sangh*, founded in 1956 to extend welfare activities among the tribes of the area; the various schemes initiated by the state and central governments for the welfare of tribes have started showing results in this community also. The Gujjars are skilled in embroidery with coloured thread on caps and Jawahar jackets, and decorate the walls of their houses by making flora and animal designs. The Gujjars have a typical appearance — a Gujjar keeps a beard and wears a special type of turban — and have their traditional *bhaichara* panchayats, whose members are elected on the basis of age, experience and knowledge.



TRIBE 08

Jads

A small Buddhist, polyandrous people of the Pangi and Chamba tract, near kin in custom to the Pangwals.

REGION

Pangi & Chamba

FAITH

Buddhist

SOCIETY

Polyandrous, patrilineal

The Jads are Buddhists. They have occupied the area of Pangi and Chamba and, like the Pangwals, they are a polyandrous and patrilineal tribe.

Being dwellers of a cold region, they always prefer woollen clothes. They earn their income from agriculture and the wool trade. Like other tribal groups, Jad women are also more hard-working than the men. Marriage and divorce, with some variation from civil society, are recognized among the Jads. Unmarried girls in the region are known as *Jomo*, and the place of the Lama (priest) is very high in the routine matters of the family.



IN CONCLUSION

Tribes in Himachal Pradesh

The common threads that bind the hill communities together.

The tribes in Himachal Pradesh are of almost similar habits and traits, irrespective of their region or area. They are based on the need for protection, on ties of blood relationship and on the strength of a common religion. Some are *monogamous* (one husband, one wife) while others are *polyandrous* (more than one husband) or both; a few tribes are *endogamous* (marrying within the caste), but all are **patrilineal** (recognized through the father, or males alone) and **patrilocal** (a custom where the wife goes to stay with the husband's family). The division of labour beyond simple sex and age differentiation is almost non-existent; the socialization of the young is carried out within the family and through the intimate relationship of day-to-day living. The caste system and untouchability are a common sight, and the dowry system and bride-price are prevalent.

They are superstitious and little educated, yet crimes such as murder, looting and arson are very, very rare among the tribes of Himachal Pradesh. The staple food consists of maize and wheat flour, local cereals, *dal*, vegetables, meat, milk products and fruits grown in the area, and tea is quite common — though the Lahaulis take their tea without sugar and add butter and salt to it. Smoking is a common habit among all sections of the tribes, both male and female, and the home-brewed drink is taken frequently on both festive and sad occasions.

A TALE OF TWO ALTITUDES

Leaving aside a few towns and district headquarters, where local people have come into contact with the educated and service class, the social setup of the tribals and other classes living in the higher hills has not changed much; their habits, manner and outlook are still much different from those of the lower parts.



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