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CHAPTER 3 · HP GK

# Social Life & Customs

Himachal Pradesh

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## 01 Land, People & Society

*"Hearken unto me, ye children of immortality, all ye who once dwelt in abodes divine; I have known the supreme person whose light shines forth from beyond the darkness."*

— The Upanishad

The identity of any people is best understood through their **cultural history**. For a long time Himachal Pradesh remained relatively untouched by outside influence, but proximity to Punjab & Haryana and rapid industrial growth have strained its cultural identity. The life and outlook of the people are shaped chiefly by the **climate, flora and fauna** of the hills.

### People & Diversity

Himachalis are generally tall and sharp-featured, and the women of certain regions are noted for their beauty. There is wide diversity of **dress and language**; the 1961 census recorded **210 languages and dialects** in the state. Yet through this diversity runs a consciousness of a common culture and common destiny. The **Khasha** element is the strongest racial component of the state.

### Religious Composition

The vast majority are **Hindus**, with smaller numbers of Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains, Muslims and Christians. There is hardly any cultural disparity between the scheduled castes and other Hindus — they worship the same gods, share the same myths and follow the same rituals with only minor local variations. Society is divided into castes and sub-castes, but conflicts are largely absent because the division rests on the **function** each group performs, making castes mutually interdependent.

#### 2001 CENSUS — RELIGION (WITH DECADEAL GROWTH 1991–2001)

Hindus **95.43%** (16.97%) · Buddhists **1.25%** (18.38%) · Muslims **1.97%** (34.08%) · Sikhs **1.19%** (39.01%) · Christians **0.13%** (73.33%).

### Scheduled Castes & Tribes (% of total population)

| Census Year | Scheduled Castes (SC) | Scheduled Tribes (ST) |
|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1981        | 23.7%                 | 5.3%                  |
| 1991        | 25.34%                | 4.22%                 |

|      |        |       |
|------|--------|-------|
| 2001 | 16.64% | 5.87% |
| 2011 | 28.45% | 6.45% |

### Temples & Religiosity

Temple architecture occupies a high place in cultural life and reflects the people's traditional religiosity. As **H.C. Saraswat** observed, there are temples to good gods, to evil ones, and even to a notorious demon — each carrying a legend of its origin and an unshaken faith in its sanctity. The most popular deities are **Laxmi Narayan, Shiva and Shakti**, and virtually every house and village also has its own separate deity. Muslims, Christians and Buddhists maintain their own places of worship.

## 02 Marriage Customs

Marriage is a major social ceremony. Elders begin searching for matches when a child comes of age, sometimes through a **match-maker** known as **Roovary, Dhamu, Mazomi** or **Rivara**. In the hills the boy's family takes the initiative (unlike the plains, where the girl's family does), because the boy's father pays a nominal sum called **Dheir** toward marriage expenses — the reverse of the dowry system of the plains.

### The Betrothal (first step)

When a match is settled the ritual gift **Tika** is sent. Two main forms of betrothal exist:

**Barni** — the form generally observed among the **upper classes**.

**Sagai / Sotha** — adopted by the **middle and lower classes**; a priest or relative offers a few ornaments and a rupee or two to the girl's parents. Called **Bandha Dena** in Chamba and **Barina** in remoter Mandi.

**Batta-Satta (Atta-Satta Ka Nata)** — marriage by inter-exchange; a man gets a wife in return for a sister/cousin given in marriage. Chains of five or more links may form; breach of one promise voids the whole arrangement. Common among agrarian people of the interior.

**Chharmi Nata / Tihar** — festival gifts of jewellery and cloth sent to the betrothed (Chharmi Nata in Kinnaur, Tihar elsewhere). In tribal areas both parties exchange **Chhang** (rice wine).

#### KEY POINT

Once a betrothal is settled it can hardly be cancelled; the party that backs out must pay all expenses incurred. The wedding date is fixed in consultation with the priest, and in some places the permission of the deities is sought. Preparations are customarily kept secret from the bride.

### Marriage Rules — Endogamy & Exogamy

High-caste people marry within their own caste (**endogamy**) but never within their own clan (**exogamy**). No two persons sharing a common male ancestor within seven degrees, or a common maternal ancestor within five degrees, may marry. The exogamous unit is named:

- ▶ **Gotra** — among Brahmins and Vaishyas
- ▶ **Nukh** — among Rajputs
- ▶ **Kul** — among the lower castes

Inter-caste marriage is still uncommon. Marriage between Brahmin, Rajput and Vaishya is somewhat accepted, but a marriage with a Shudra by any of the three higher castes is not socially approved.

## Types of Marriage

| Type                               | Description & Region                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Polyandry (fraternal)</b>       | The eldest brother marries and the wife becomes common to all brothers. Prevalent in <b>Kinnaur, Lahaul-Spiti</b> and interior Chamba. Justified as inherited from the Pandavas, a tribal legacy, preventing land fragmentation, keeping property intact, and coping with long male absences & fewer females. Now declining; educated women oppose it. |
| <b>Polygamy</b>                    | A man marrying more than one woman — occurs in some areas, but most Himachalis practise <b>monogamy</b> .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Love &amp; Widow remarriage</b> | Permissible except in higher castes; spreading with education.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Reet Marriage</b>               | An already-married woman leaves her husband; the new husband pays " <b>Reet money</b> " to the first, who then allows her to go.                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

## Marriage Ceremonies

**Biah / Brahma Marriage** — the regular, superior marriage as per the Shastras; the girl's father receives no consideration. Largely practised across HP.

**Jhanjhrara** — informal marriage solemnised **without the Saptpadi** (seven steps round the sacred fire); popular among lower castes.

**Gaddar / Paraina** — informal marriages with no religious ceremonies.

**Jhindphook / Jarar Phuki (bush-burning)** — tribes of **Kangra & Chamba**; the couple set fire to jungle bush-wood and walk around it seven times. A runaway marriage done without parents' approval; viewed with disfavour.

**Darosh / Dab Dhab** — tribal system of **Kinnaur**; a girl is forcibly "dragged away" from a fair (a ritual, with the girl feigning resistance). Amends called **Izzat** (Rs.100–500) are paid; gifts of **Reumalang** (chilgoza, dried apricots, chulli garlands) are offered to the mother-in-law (ceremony **Sten rannik**).

**Dam-Chalshish** — lovers elope; the boy's father sends the **Vazom** (matchmaker) with gifts; the son-in-law gives the bride's mother Rs.500 as **Masore** (price of her milk).

**Hari / Har** — kidnapping/elopement, or a dissatisfied wife living with another man. Illegal among higher castes; settled by payment. In Kinnaur called **Dubdub, Kuchis** or **Khutu Kima**.

### GADDI & REGIONAL PRACTICES

The **Gaddis** marry twice — first the **Jooth Pana** (jaggery broken in the girl's name, often a minor of 8–10), then real marriage 5–10 years later; no veil or dowry. Lahaul people are **polyandrous**; **Pangi** people are **monogamous** (the groom's younger brother gives the bride's mother a silver rupee, gaining rights as second husband — shared by no more than two brothers). The special pooja for Har/Jhanjhra remarriage is the **Nuala** to Lord Shiva, popular among Gaddis.

### 03 Divorce System

The Hindu Shastras regarded marriage as an indissoluble bond, and the wife was to worship her husband as a god — there was no divorce in classical Hindu law. The custom of divorce, however, existed among the lower castes, and the **Hindu Marriage Act, 1955** recognised a Hindu woman's right to divorce.

**Reet** — applies to Jhanjhrara & Gaddar marriages. The wife returns to her parental home; if her father reimburses the first husband the marriage expenses plus a rupee called **Chhed Karai**, the marriage dissolves without formal divorce. The girl returns all ornaments and clothes.

**Dehri / Hari / Har** — a tribal divorce held above all courts. The couple **snaps a twig of Shur wood** before witnesses and throws it behind them. In **Lahaul** a thin thread of wood is pulled apart by the little fingers; in some villages a **Sal leaf** is broken in two before fellow-villagers. Followed by Kanets and some low-caste tribes; no dowry given.

#### WIDOW REMARRIAGE — REGIONAL NAMES

**Karewa** (Shimla hills) · **Jhanjhrara / Gudani / Cholidor** (Kangra & Chamba) · **Ghar Karna** ("taking another house" — a widow moving in with someone). Higher castes traditionally forbade widow remarriage; lower castes encouraged it.

Polyandry, polygamy, divorce and promiscuity are unknown among the higher castes. Since independence, spread of literacy has reduced informal divorces and increased love-marriages through courts of law. The **Dehri (monuments)** outside villages recall the old practice of **Sati**, but there has been no incidence of Sati in HP for a long time. Women in Himachal enjoy an independent and high social status, commanding a place of honour in hill society.

## 04 Funeral (Death) Customs

Funeral customs broadly resemble those of North India, with **cremation (burning)** as the chief method since time immemorial — yet HP retains many strange and interesting details.

### General Hindu Practice

- ▶ As death nears, the body is lowered onto ground smeared with fresh cow-dung; the head must point **north**, and **conch shells (Shankh)** are blown to signal mourning.
- ▶ A mustard/linseed-oil lamp (symbolising the dead) is lit and covered with a grass basket or earthen pitcher with a hole on top.
- ▶ The body is laid on **plantain leaves**, bathed, placed on a bier/coffin and taken to the cremation ground; while it lies in the house, no food may be cooked.
- ▶ A halfway ceremony called **Adhmargi** is performed en route.
- ▶ **Patak** — a one-month period when meat, fish, garlic, onion and asafoetida are taboo.
- ▶ **Pind Dan** — ritual offering of rice-sesame-curd balls before cremation; **Lakri Pana** = adding fuel-wood to the pyre.
- ▶ On the 3rd day, ashes are immersed at a holy place (**Haridwar, Rewalsar or Mansarovar**); 10 days of mourning; the **Garud Purana** is recited by a Purohit/Charjee.
- ▶ **Sapindi** — special rite for untimely death; **Kriya Karma** (10th day) for the soul's peace; **Solaha** — community feast after it; annual **Sharaddha**; and **Chatur Varshik (Chauvarsha)** after four years.

### Kinnaur

Three traditional methods were once practised — **Dubant** (drowning the body in a river), **Bhakhant** (exposure in open fields to vultures/birds) and **Phukant** (burning). Today only **Phukant** is widely practised. Villagers gather at night (custom **Drum Rating**); the body is bathed in a large vessel (**Lam Kunyal**), wrapped in white shroud, legs bent at the knees with wooden pegs (to keep out evil spirits), and bread stuffed with dal is thrown on the roof for crows (believed to communicate with the dead). The Lama recites prayers; rituals span the 3rd day (**Chholya**) and 13th day (**Damkochang**); the Lama performs a Havan on the 15th day and the **Fulayach (Dalhyang)** a year later.

#### REFERENCE

Dr. **Gautam Sharma Vyathit** discusses these ceremonies in his book *Folklore of Himachal Pradesh*.

## Lahaul & Spiti

In **Lahaul**, no one touches the body until the Lama arrives; he whispers an invocation into the soul's ear asking it to leave — called **Fuhan**. The shroud is torn into five pieces (four on the pyre corners, one on the forehead); ashes are immersed in the **Chandrabhaga** at **Tandi**. In **Spiti**, a witch-doctor called the **Jhanvar** decides whether the body should be burnt, buried or cut up and exposed on hilltops. An offering of butter is made to **God Trilokinath**. When death is certain, a *sham funeral* may be staged — a barley-dough effigy is cremated — so two (expensive) funerals often take place.

## 05 Birth Ceremony

Childbirth takes place in a separate, usually lower-storey room (in tribal areas a cattle manger / **Gohad**) to shield the mother from cold. There are no professional midwives; experienced village women of any caste assist. The umbilical cord is cut while holding a silver coin or ornament.

**Sootak** — the first 20 (sometimes 10) days of ritual pollution; food/drink from the mother's hands is accepted only by low-caste people.

**Ghutti** — the infant's first tonic; the child is believed to imbibe the giver's temperament, so a good-natured family member administers it.

**Purification** — after Sootak, a cleansing ceremony with a mixture of curd, sugar, cow's urine, milk and Gangajal sprinkled on clothes and tasted by all.

**Goontar** — the well-to-do celebrate with fanfare; special **Sund** (sweet cookies of dry fruit) is distributed.

### Pregnancy Beliefs (Mian Govardhan Singh)

- ▶ The husband refrains from killing an animal with his own hands (though he may eat meat).
- ▶ A pregnant woman must not visit a fire, stream or forest, nor see a dead person's face.
- ▶ No knot-tying rituals; old ornaments are not melted; she must not view a solar/lunar eclipse.

### Birth of a Son vs Daughter

A girl's birth is not celebrated with great joy, though girls are respected and given special pooja and gifts during Navratras and at fairs. A son's birth is a great occasion: **Mura** (sugar/parched grains) is distributed, women sing **Sohar Badhaiyan**, and the father is offered turf leaves with a rupee — the custom **Badhai** (he keeps the leaves, returns double the rupee). In **Kinnaur**, deities' palanquins are brought home and villagers feasted — custom **Shukud** (a goat may be sacrificed).

### Name & Other Ceremonies

- ▶ **Namkaran** (naming), **Chudakaran** (first snipping of locks), **Annaprashan** (first tasting of cereals) — performed among Brahmins.
- ▶ **Karan-bedh** — ear-piercing; girls' nose pierced with a gold ring (**Balu/Tili**).
- ▶ Horoscope casting is essential; children born in the **Gandmool** hour are deemed unlucky. Marriages need matched horoscopes.

- ▶ Lower-caste boys are often named after the day/month of birth (Manglu < Mangal/Tuesday; Budhias < Budhwar; Braistia < Brihaspati; Chatia Ram < Chet). Common suffixes: Ram, Lal, Das, Chand, Singh.
- ▶ **Jatloo** — first hair-cutting (3rd/5th/7th year) offered at a goddess shrine, Shiva temple or holy river.

## 06 Dress & Costumes

HP shows remarkable communal harmony — people of different faiths live together with mutual respect and no communal clashes. Dress reflects climate, tradition, the influence of adjoining areas and returning migrants. Wool dominates because of the cold, making *sheep-breeding, spinning and weaving* major occupations — spinning being the hill people's resort whenever their hands are free, especially in winter.

### Sources of Historical Evidence

Paintings, wood-crafts, stone images, folk songs and icons reveal old dress. The **Barsailla** stone slabs of Mandi (memorials of dead Rajas) and the **Pahari paintings** are of special interest. Travellers like Vigne, Moorcroft, Forester and (recently) Lady Chetwode described hill dress; folk songs such as *Gangi* and *Chhori* evoke women's attire.

### Common Wear

Men wear woolen shirts, long coats and sometimes a sleeveless jacket, the **KamARBund** (waistband) being almost universal. Women wear **Kameez/Kurta and Salwar** in distinctive Himachali style with a **Dupatta / Dathu / Scarf** over the head. In winter come the famous **Kinnauri or Kullu shawl** and the **Himachali cap** (often with tikema flowers). Multi-coloured patterned socks & gloves originated in **Lahaul**, introduced by Moravian missionaries over a century ago.

### Woolens & Shawls

Himachali woolens include shawls, topis (caps), **patoos** (homespun tweed), **dohrus** (woolen saris fastened with two silver pins called **bhoomni**), lohiyas, mufflers, jackets, **moja** (socks), **zomba/pichaya** (woolen shoes), **chhauli** (blankets) and gudmas.

#### SHAWLS — KEY FACTS

**Kullu shawls** owe their origin to **Kinnaur**; once in checks, Kullu/Kangra weavers later adopted stripes, leaves and flowers. The standard **Kinnauri shawl** (2m × 1m) originated from a **1974 experiment** by the HP State Handloom Corporation, borrowing patterns from Kinnauri pattoos & dohrus; woven at **Kalpa, Nichar, Rekong Peo & Jhangi**. Kinnauri shawls feature angular geometric patterns (pyramids, triangles, squares) with **no floral patterns**.

**Bhutti Weavers Cooperative Society (Bhuttico)** was formed in **1944** at Shamshi near Bhunter (~8 km from Kullu). Kinnauri/Kullu shawls, pashmina, dohrus & pattoos were once traded to Tibet and sold at the famous **Lavi Mela** (Rampur).

## Pattu (blanket) — patterns & motifs

- ▶ **Phooldar pattu** — flowered pattu (phool-work also called **Bushashri dhari**, first introduced at Rampur Bushahr).
- ▶ **Lungi dhari** — check pattern; **Mothra** — border combination of dharis.
- ▶ Types: **Mahin Chitru** (fine checks), **Ula-Sulta** (right & reverse), **Dhumkuru** (smoke-work, black & thick), **Kanghu** (comb-like pattern).
- ▶ Motifs: Gulab (rose), Danedar (dotted), Lahria (wave), Chabi (key), Sirki (stairs), Mandir (temple), Chinidiwar (Wall of China), Tara (star), Guddi (doll), Chiria (bird), Bulbul Chashme, Ganesh, Jura hua Ganesh. End-fringes are called **Chulku**.

## Notable Traditional Garments

| Garment                 | Description / Region                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Turban & Cap            | Turban = the "better-off"; cap = commoner. Famous: <b>Kullu topi</b> & <b>Bushahri topi</b> .                                                                                                       |
| Jhaggi                  | Knee-length woolen women's garment with trousers, tied with a <b>gachi</b> (woolen rope). Mandi, Kullu, Rampur Bushahr.                                                                             |
| Choli / Ghagra & Suthan | Choli covers the breast (embroidered, with glass & beads); Ghagra (petticoat) & Suthan (long trousers) popular with Mandi women.                                                                    |
| Dhattu                  | Square head-cloth worn by most rural women, in various colours.                                                                                                                                     |
| Anga / Chapkan / Chopta | Anga = knee-length over-garment (Mandi, Kangra). Chapkan = frock (Rohru). Chopta/Chhupta = V-neck gown for both sexes (Rampur, Kotkhai, Kotgarh).                                                   |
| Pishwaz / Cholu         | Pishwaz = fine muslin coloured gown (Mandi, Chamba). Cholu = long male garment of Kangra valley (with Kacch breeches).                                                                              |
| Chuba / Reshta          | Chuba = male frock-dress, upper Shimla & Kinnaur (with gachi, chadaru blanket). Reshta = long pleated women's gown (Rohru).                                                                         |
| Loia / Gudma            | Loia = woolen gown of Sirmour (HP University adopted Loia & Pahari cap as convocation robes). Gudma = quilt-warm garment of <b>biang wool</b> (Tibet/Kashmir).                                      |
| Pollans / Pullans       | Grass & hemp shoes (called <b>zomba</b> in Kinnaur); thick soles for walking on ice; finest from Pangri (goat/sheep-skin soles).                                                                    |
| Luanchari               | Special cotton gown of Kangra & Chamba.                                                                                                                                                             |
| Doru / Chola            | Doru = wrapped like a sari (Kinnaur). Chola = woolen long coat tied with a black rope ( <b>Dora</b> ); the waistband holds a <b>Kulhari</b> (axe), <b>Bansuri</b> (flute) and <b>Drat</b> (sickle). |

|                     |                                                                                                               |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pang / Bushahri cap | Special Kinnauri cap; outside Kinnaur called the Bushahri cap (head-dress of both men & women).               |
| Chamba Rumal        | Embroidered handkerchief — a form of miniature painting, favoured in the Mughal darbar, preserved in museums. |

#### URBANISATION & CHANGE

Shimla is the most urbanized district. Urban population: 2001 — **9.80%** (5,95,581); 2011 — **~10%** (6,88,552, decadal growth 15.16%). The young increasingly favour Western dress; pageants like **Miss Himachal & Dance Himachal Dance** have reshaped dressing sense.

## 07 Ornaments & Jewellery

Love for ornaments is universal. In Himachal, ornaments are a sign of **Suhag** (happy married status) for a married woman; only widowhood deprives her of their use. Urban ornaments tend to be light and in gold; in remoter parts they become heavier, bolder and mostly of **silver** (gold being rare, women satisfy their craze with silver). A village woman may wear ornaments weighing from 2 up to **10 kilograms**.

### Head & Forehead

**Chaunk / Chak** — silver or gold ornament fastened on the head; very popular with mature women.

**Chiri** — silver ornament fastened to the hair by a chain (called **Dora** in the hills, **Shrinagratti / mang-tikka** elsewhere); components are pipal-leaf / star-shaped metal pieces.

**Chip** — silver ornament clipped in the hair.

### Ear Ornaments

- ▶ **Phers** — four-to-five small earrings worn in each ear (a pair weighs 15–30 g).
- ▶ **Balis** — golden earrings.
- ▶ **Jhumkas / Karanphul** — plaque + bell-shaped pendant; without the bell called **Dhodku/Dedi Jumka**; geometric type called **Kanta/Kanti**; **Braga** (bigger, two pearls + turquoise); **Dandi**; **Litkani**; **Gol** (favourite among Gujjars); **Chalik/Kante**; **Kanbali** (bigger); **Kan-phul** (bunch of silver flowers).

### Nose Ornaments

| Name         | Description                                                                                                    |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Koka         | Small gold knob (~1–2 g) with thewa glass/jewel; favoured by young ladies.                                     |
| Phuli        | Nose ornament worn like a Tili/Koka.                                                                           |
| Laung        | Gold studded nose-top, clove-shaped, convex disc; popular in Mandi & Bilaspur (5–10 g).                        |
| Balu / Besar | Large nose ring with imitation stones; up to 40 g and 10 cm; supported by a hair-chain; for special occasions. |
| Tili         | Small nose top (~1 g); the most popular ornament of daily use.                                                 |

Baluk = golden nose ornament hanging from the centre; Nath = simpler ring preferred for daily use.

Baluk /  
Nath

## Necklaces & Garlands

- ▶ **Necklaces:** Jo-mala, Champa Kali, Chauki, Kapoori Mala, Chandan Har, Kantha, Ralu, Manj, Dodmala, Nodi.
- ▶ **Coin garlands:** Chhota Aar / Kandu (Mandi); also Hamel, Mahel, Paoli; in Kinnaur **Sitri** / **Daroli** / **Chandramalang** studded with moonga (coral) or pheroza (turquoise).
- ▶ **Kantha/Kanthi** (silver beads on thread, ~50 g; also Mala/Kandhri/Upalka); heavier version **Kach**/ **Patkachong/Kachong**.
- ▶ **Chandrahar** — star-shaped chain units with enamel-work plaques.
- ▶ **Locket/Ranihar** — heavy neck ornament of rich ladies. **Tandeera/Hansi/Hanseeri** — solid metal (35–50 cm). **Singi** — pipe-shaped, brings good luck. **Dhol** — cylindrical; rural women prefer it, urban women prefer **Nam** (betel-leaf plaque pendant).

## Bracelets, Rings, Anklets & Toe-rings

**Bracelets** — Nalians, Toke, Bangas, Kangrus, Gajru, Maridoo. **Bang/Churi** = commonest wrist-wear; **Band** = wider/heavier (with drops = **Pariband Chhankangani** / **Ghungrool**); **Chura** = largest (12–15 cm, 300–350 g, silver).

**Rings (Mundri)** — called **Anguthi** generally; **Lakshap** in Kinnaur; Mundari / Mundi / Chhap in lower hills (5–10 g).

**Anklets** — **Ghumkrus** (copper); **Jhanjar** (hollow star-ended rings that jingle); **Tora** (chain like pajeb, no drops); **Pajeb** (silver, ~250 g; varieties Shakuntala Chain, Gulshan Patti, Phulu).

**Toe-rings** — **Anguthari** (toe), **Anguthare** (big toe); **Chhalla** includes Bichhu, Phullu, Guthara.

### NOTE

Ornaments like **tabiz**, **tillis**, **pazeb** and **chanki** are influenced by the **Mughal style**; most Pahari jewellery is shaped by its environment. As the hills retain population (people turning to horticulture rather than migrating), the tradition of ornaments is likely to survive longer here than in urbanised areas, though women now favour light fancy pieces to avoid theft/snatching.

## 08 Folk Dances & Drama

Folk dances are believed to originate in *harvest festivals and rituals*, when gods were invoked through music and dance. They are performed not only at fairs and festivals but at every community function — marriage, childbirth, worship — and **all people irrespective of caste, creed or sex partake in communal dancing**, women as freely as men. Dances are both **solo** and **group**; the general style involves backward-forward steps in a circle of dancers holding hands, or two opposing groups.

### Dances of Kinnaur & Tribal (Buddhist) Belt

| Dance                     | Region & Feature                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Demon (Rakshasa) / Chhamb | Kinnaur. Masked dance with 3/5/7/9 demon masks (similar to Punjabi Bhangra); leader called <b>Ghure</b> ; also "Lama Devi dance" / devil dance; the sacred Chham is danced by Lamas in monasteries.    |
| Kayang                    | Kinnaur. Men & women in semicircle round a musician. Types: <b>Naga Kayang</b> (snake-like), <b>Herki Kayang</b> (fast, romantic), <b>Shina Kayang</b> (slow + fast).                                  |
| Bakayang                  | Kinnaur. Two-three rows facing each other; mostly by women.                                                                                                                                            |
| Banyangchu                | Kinnaur. Free-style male dance; women provide vocals.                                                                                                                                                  |
| Jataru Kayang             | Kinnaur. Group dance connected with ceremonial songs.                                                                                                                                                  |
| Chohara                   | Kinnaur & Mahasu. Both sexes; at all important festivals.                                                                                                                                              |
| Shand & Shabu             | Lahaul (Buddhist). Performed in memory of Buddha; Shand = prayer-song; the masked monastery dance is <b>Chham</b> (devil dance) of the <b>Yellow-Hat</b> sect founded by Tasong-Kha-pa (1357–1419 AD). |
| Lang-dar-ma               | An "evil king dance" — a dance-drama on the murder of king Lang-dar-ma. <b>Black Hat &amp; Red Tiger</b> dances are of pre-Buddhist origin.                                                            |
| Japro                     | Hangrang Valley (Kinnaur); both sexes at fairs/festivals.                                                                                                                                              |

#### OTHER KINNAUR DANCES

Shon, Gyukshon, Katakapa, Shabra, Shumgyak, Yando-Mando, Rekshung, Yulba, Lushen, Tali-lamo, Tinger, Laka-Kurchi-Cheja, Mon-Shou.

## Dances of the Lower & Western Hills

**Jhanjar** — Chamba Valley; both sexes; slow start rising to an exciting climax.

**Dodra Kavar** — Mahasu; "people and gods dance together."

**Nati** — Kullu, Sirmaur, Mandi, Shimla, Chamba. Like classical **Kathak**; of the **Lasya** variety; may last 3–4 days/nights. Sub-forms: Dheeli, Dekhi, Feh, Bakholi, Kahika, Dahari, Lahauli, Chambiyali, Banthada, Loodi. In Kullu = **Siraj Nati**. Place-named natis: Kullu Nati, Bushahri Nati, Mandi Nati. The orchestra has 2 **dhols**, 2 **Nagaras**, 2 **Karnals** & one **Shehnai**. Famous types: Lari (bride), Shawni, Lilima.

**Jhoori, Gi & Rasa** — Sirmaur; with Jhoor, Thadair, Swang, Tegi, Draudi, Padua. **Swang Tegi** danced at Diwali (with wooden tiger masks); **Dharvedi** & **Drondi** are religious dances.

**Burah** — Sirmaur; 10–15 persons; ballads of heroic battle deeds.

**Keekali & Bhangra** — areas bordering Punjab; Keekali = young girls spinning on toes; Bhangra (male) & Gidda (female) popular in Kangra, Hamirpur, Una.

**Kullu Valley dances** — Kharait, Philli, Ludi, Banthda, Basahri, Lahauli, Ujagjama, Chandhgebrikar — collectively called **Nati** (for amateurs, danced for own pleasure).

## Folk Drama

- ▶ **Banthara** — Mandi region.
- ▶ **Jhanki & Hanter** — dramas of Chamba.
- ▶ **Kariyala & Swang** — Bilaspur, Solan & Shimla hills.
- ▶ **Bura & Sih** — "ballet & opera" of Jubbal & Rohru valleys (Shimla hills); tales handed down orally.

## 09 Musical Instruments

The true colour of HP's instruments survives best in the tribal areas. Training in instrumental music passes from generation to generation, in the absence of any formal institute. Instruments fall into four groups.

### (a) Wind Instruments

Ranasingha, Karnal, Turhi (bugle), Flute / Bishudi, Algoja (twin flutes), Shehnai / Peepni.

**Bansuri (Flute)** — bamboo, keyless; associated with **Lord Krishna**. The North Indian **Bansuri** has 6 finger-holes + 1 embouchure; the South Indian **Venu/Pullanguzhal** has 8. Popular among **Gaddi** tribes.

**Shehnai (mangal vadya)** — double-reed oboe of wood with a metal flare bell; creates auspiciousness; widely used at marriages, processions & temples; similar to South India's **Nadaswaram**; a quadruple-reed woodwind with 6–9 holes.

**Kangdum / Kangling** — a liturgical instrument made from the **thigh bone** of a human corpse, decorated with silver & bronze; the bone of a woman who died in pregnancy (a **Khanduma**) is most valued for conjuring benevolent spirits (decided by a learned Lama). Also: **Been**, and ancient instruments **Kindari** (Mahasu), **Granvang** & **Jamang** (Lahaul-Spiti).

### (b) Stringed Instruments

Ektara, Kindari, Devatara, Gramyang / Robab, Sarangi, Jumang, Ruman, Rumals.

#### SARANGI

A bowed, short-necked instrument used in Hindustani classical music; said to most resemble the human voice (imitating **gamaks** & **meends**). Carved from a single block of **tun (red cedar)** with three hollow chambers — **pet** (stomach), **chaati** (chest), **magaj** (brain). About 2 ft long, 6 inches wide.

### (c) Percussion Instruments

Jhanjh (large cymbals), Manjira (small cymbals), Chimta (tongs), Ghanta (gongs), Ghariyal, Thali (platter).

**Manjira (manjeera/taal/jalra/khartal/kartal/Gini)** — pair of small hand cymbals of bronze/brass/copper/bell-metal joined by a cord; accompanies bhajans; an ancient instrument. The larger version is the **Taal**.

**Chimta** — literally "tongs"; with permanent brass jingles; used in Punjabi folk, Bhangra & Gurbani Kirtan; in HP used for religious functions and bhajans.

### (d) Bells & Drums

Bells: Ghunghru, Kikatha, Murchang (a bowed stringed instrument with a bell), wooden castanets (kahdtal).  
 Drums: **Dhol, Dholku, Nagara, Dammama, Damanghat, Nagrath, Gajju, Doru, Hudak, Dhaunsa**. The Gaddis play small round drums called **Dafale** at weddings; in the plains large drums called **Tamak** are played at fairs by the **Bharai community**.

#### **DHOL**

Played with two sticks — the thick bent **dagga** (bass side) and the thin flexible **tihli** (treble side); slung over the neck with a woven cotton strap. In HP it is popular statewide, used at marriages, wrestling grounds and recreations.

## 10 Fairs of Himachal Pradesh

Himachal is a land of **Devis and Devtas**, and most fairs are mythological in nature, yet they also carry trade, agricultural and seasonal dimensions. At present there are **20 State / National / International-level fairs** recognised by the Government and **11 District-level fairs**. At fairs, marriages are settled, matches made, and farm & artisan goods change hands; people watch dances, animal fights, wrestling and the famous **Thoda (archery)** game.

### The Four International Fairs

#### REMEMBER

The four International fairs of HP are: **Kullu Dushehra**, **Mandi Shivratri**, **Rampur Lavi** and **Renuka Fair** (Renuka declared international in October 2011).

### Major Fairs in Detail

| Fair                                    | Place / District & Key Facts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Minjar</b> <span>State</span>        | <b>Chamba</b> (Chaugan), August (2nd Sunday), week-long. Maize-flower (minjar), coconut, coin, fruit & paddy offered to <b>Varuna</b> in the Ravi. Attributed to Raja <b>Sahil Varman</b> (10th c.) and the victory of Raja Pratap Varman over a Kangra ruler.                                                                                     |
| <b>Kullu Dushehra</b> <span>Intl</span> | Begins on <b>Vijay Dashmi</b> , 7 days. Idol of <b>Raghunathji</b> (brought from Ayodhya in 1651 AD by Damodar Dass, installed by Raja Jagat Singh). Cannot start until goddess <b>Hidimba</b> arrives from Manali. Concludes with burning of "Lanka" + animal sacrifice (buffalo, cock, fish, goat, crab).                                        |
| <b>Lavi</b> <span>Intl</span>           | <b>Rampur Bushahr</b> , Oct–Nov, 3 days. "Lavi" = sheet of woolen cloth / sheep-shearing. ~300 years old; biggest trade fair of the hills. Historic Tibet–Kinnaur trade ended with the 1962 Chinese aggression.                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Renuka</b> <span>Intl</span>         | <b>Sirmaur</b> (tehsil Pachhad), November, 6 days, 10 days after Diwali. Commemorates the annual meeting of <b>Parshuram</b> (6th incarnation of Vishnu) and mother Renuka. Declared international October 2011.                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Shivratri</b> <span>Intl</span>      | <b>Mandi</b> , February, week-long. Hundreds of gods brought in raths to <b>Bhutnath</b> temple. <b>Madho Rai</b> (silver Vishnu image by goldsmith Bhima, 1648) is presiding deity. Bhutnath temple built by Raja <b>Ajbar Sen</b> (16th c., founder of present Mandi, 1526). CM <b>Vir Bhadra Singh</b> made it a state then international fair. |

Gugga

Snake-cult worship (effective in snake-bite). Prevalent in Kangra, Hamirpur, Una, Bilaspur, Mandi. Famous at **Gehrwin (Bilaspur) & Balokhar (Hamirpur)**; sung from Raksha Bandhan to **Gugga Naumi**.

|                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Jwalamukhi</b>                              | Kangra; twice a year during navratras; worship of the spontaneous <b>Eternal Flame</b> . Legend: Emperor <b>Akbar</b> failed to extinguish it, offered a gold canopy (changed to iron).         |
| <b>Naina Devi</b>                              | <b>Bilaspur</b> , August; 8 km from Gangual Power House; most delightful fair of the district.                                                                                                  |
| <b>Holi (Sujanpur Tira)</b> <span>State</span> | <b>Hamirpur</b> , March, week-long festival of colours.                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Nalwari</b> <span>State</span>              | <b>Bilaspur</b> , March. Idea conceived by <b>W. Goldstein</b> (Superintendent of Shimla Hill States) in <b>1889</b> to improve cattle/bullock breed. Also famous at Sundernagar, Jahu, Gasota. |
| <b>Chintpurni</b>                              | "Mata-da-Mela"; <b>Una</b> district, near Bharwain. Legend of <b>Mai Das</b> ; offerings of Karaha (halwa) & Chhattar on the 8th of navratras.                                                  |
| <b>Sissu</b>                                   | Buddhist Himalayas; masked monastery dance — Sissu Gompa (June), Gemur Gompa (July), Mani Gompa, Gondhla (August).                                                                              |

#### BAIJNATH NEVER CELEBRATES DUSHEHRA

In Baijnath (Kangra), Ravna's effigy is never burnt — legend says those who tried died before next Dushehra. Ravna was a great devotee of Lord Shiva (who restored his 10 heads). The **Baijnath temple** was built in **1204 AD** by merchants **Ahuka & Manyuka** (under ASI protection); the town has no goldsmith's shop.

### Other Important Fairs (place & month)

| Fair                     | Place / District                                | Month                 |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Bharmaur Jatra           | Chamba                                          | August                |
| Skodi (Sati fair)        | Dohg, near Joginder Nagar                       | April (26–28 Chaitra) |
| Chhatrari Jatra          | Chamba                                          | September             |
| Sui (women only)         | Chamba town (Naina Devi temple, Shahmadar hill) | April                 |
| Taradevi (Durga Ashtami) | ~8 km from Shimla                               | Sept–Oct (navratras)  |
| Solan Mela (Shulini)     | Solan (Solan Gaon)                              | Last week of June     |
| Sari (bull-fighting)     | Arki, Solan                                     | July                  |
| Buffalo Fair             | Kufri, near Mashobra, Shimla                    | September             |

|                                 |                                                   |                        |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Sipi                            | Near Mashobra, Shimla                             | May                    |
| Purag                           | Kot Khai, Shimla (Mahadev Devta)                  | April                  |
| Pathar-ka-Khel (stone-throwing) | Halog, Shimla                                     | Oct–Nov                |
| Rohru Jatar                     | Rohru, Shimla                                     | April                  |
| Jorna (Bishu)                   | Pul Bahal, Chopal (Devta Shirgul)                 | April (14–15 Baishakh) |
| Thalog (Bishu)                  | Chaupal (Devta Rahatna)                           | End of Baishakh        |
| Trilokpur                       | Near Nahan, Sirmaur                               | September              |
| Phul Yatra                      | Killar, Pangi (Chamba)                            | Sept–Oct               |
| Sayar (buffalo-bull sacrifice)  | Bakloh (Kangra), Karsog (Mandi), Subathu (Shimla) | September              |
| Dal Fair                        | Dharamshala, Kangra (Ghirths & Gurkhas)           | August–September       |
| Gasota                          | Hamirpur                                          | May                    |
| Panch Bhisham                   | Jayanti Mata temple, Kangra (Kangra Fort)         | 5-day festival         |
| Nalwari / Dungri / Sarhi Jatra  | Manali / Naggar, Kullu                            | May                    |
| Banjar & Bhuin Mela             | Kullu                                             | May–June               |
| Markanda                        | Bilaspur                                          | April                  |
| Ghund (archery)                 | Shimla (Devta Mahasu & Shirgul)                   | Ashadha (June–July)    |
| Manali Winter Carnival          | Manali (upgraded to national by CM P.K. Dhumal)   | Dec–Jan                |
| Hatkoti                         | Jubbal, Shimla (Durga)                            | navratras              |

**FIRST JAGANNATH YATRA**

Taken out in Shimla town on **27 October 2012**; later organised at Hamirpur and Nahan.

## 11 Festivals of Himachal Pradesh

Himachal is often called a "**mini India**" — a composite of cultures where festivals enliven social life and unite people. As Hindus form the bulk of the population, most festivals have direct origins in religion, myth and popular faith. On festival days people keep free from routine work, cook special food, bathe, wear clean clothes, and worship at the temple, with songs and dance a common feature.

| Festival                       | Time / Region & Significance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Chet (Dholru)</b>           | First month of the lunar year; first day brings happiness & prosperity. Dhaki/Turi/Shehnai-caste people sing village to village. Called <b>Chatrali</b> in Kullu, <b>Dholru</b> in Bharmaur (Chamba).                                                                                         |
| <b>Navratras</b>               | Observed twice a year; all Shaktipeeths visited. <b>Durga Ashtami</b> is of great importance.                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Baishakhi</b>               | Generally <b>13 April</b> . Called <b>Bisowa</b> (Kangra), <b>Bissue</b> (Shimla hills), <b>Lisshoo</b> (Pangi-Chamba). Holy dips at Haridwar, Tattapani, Banganga, Markanda. <b>Mala dance</b> performed in upper hills.                                                                     |
| <b>Haryali</b>                 | 1st Sawan (~16 July). Called <b>Shegtsum</b> (Lahaul), <b>Dhakhrain</b> (Jubbal & Kinnaur), <b>Cheeren-di-Saaji</b> (Mandi, Bilaspur, Hamirpur, Una, Kangra). Grains sown in a basket; insects burnt with cow-dung balls. In Lahaul, sattu & butter offered to <b>Gephan / Guru Ghantal</b> . |
| <b>Rakhi</b>                   | Full moon of Shrawan. Called <b>Rakhrunya</b> (Bilaspur), <b>Salunnu</b> (Mandi & Sirmaur), <b>Rakhpunya</b> (Shimla hills), <b>Rakhri</b> (new HP).                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Chrewal (Prithvi pooja)</b> | 1st Bhadon (mid-August), full month; oxen not yoked. Called <b>Bhadranjo</b> (Kullu), <b>Pathroru</b> (Chamba — a festival of flowers, girls dance).                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Jagra</b>                   | Rite to a village deity, 4th day of the bright moon (Sept, at night). <b>Mahasu Devta</b> worshipped in upper Shimla, Kinnaur & Sirmaur; the <b>Birsu</b> song sung.                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Phulech</b>                 | Bhadon / early Asauj, <b>only in Kinnaur</b> . Flowers collected from hilltops, offered to deity; priest forecasts crops & seasons.                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Sair</b>                    | September (new HP); a <b>Bara-din</b> of the hillmen; barbers show mirrors; local deity worshipped.                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Jidjed / Guitor</b>         | October; Thang-gyud / Kee, Tabo, Dankar & Pin (Spiti) monasteries; <b>masked dance</b> to protect from disease & epidemics.                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Dushehra</b>                | Sept/Oct; on <b>Dashmi</b> , effigies of Ravna, Kumbhkarna & Meghnatha burnt — victory of good over evil. <b>Kullu Dushehra</b> world-famous.                                                                                                                                                 |

**Diwali**

Oct–Nov. Called **Diali** / **Bari Diali** in Kullu. In Lahaul called **Kaojala** (month of Magha) — Mashal (light) thrown; leaves of deodar offered to Gephan & Bayresh Wari Devi. Patan-valley Lahaulas celebrate on the **full moon** (not amavasya).

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Lohri</b>     | 1st Magh (mid-Jan), called <b>Maghi</b> / <b>Saza</b> ; 8 days. Famous at <b>Paragpur (Kangra)</b> — celebrated for princess <b>Parag Dei</b> of Jaswan state (late 16th/early 17th c.); first state-level Lohri at Heritage Village Pragpur on <b>13 Jan 2010</b> . Paragpur notified a <b>heritage village</b> (9 Dec 1997); dominated by the <b>Sood</b> community; "Judges Court" heritage hotel (structure by Justice Sir Jai Lal, 1918). |
| <b>Gochi</b>     | Gumrang, Kothi (Keylong); Jan–Feb; date fixed by Lamas; celebrated by families where a male child was born the previous year.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Lossar</b>    | Tribal belt & Tibetan colonies (Manali, Shimla, Dharamshala, Solan, Baijnath). Buddhist New Year, last week of February. <b>Yak dance</b> & Chhaam performed; Rewalsar (Padmasambhava) a pivotal attraction.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Shivratri</b> | February. HP is " <b>Dev Bhumi</b> "; images of Shiva & Parvati made of cow-dung/earth; <b>Paja &amp; Karangora</b> branches fixed on the door to keep evil away. <b>Mandi Shivratri</b> ranks above all (100+ gods on Paddal Ground).                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

## 12 Malana & Jamlu Devta

The isolated village of **Malana** in Kullu's Parvati Valley sits at about **2,743 m (9,000 ft)** beyond the Chandar Khani Pass. Still introverted and conservative, it is often called the ***oldest democracy in the world***, where inhabitants run their own village administration without outside interference. Its total area is about **679 hectares**, with snowfall of 5–10 feet.

### Jamlu Devta

The divine ruler of Malana is **Jamlu**, whose original name was ***Rishi Jamdagni***. Villagers hold him in profound, almost superstitious reverence and dare not disobey him. According to legend, in ancient times a Rakshasa named **Danu** inhabited the area; Jamdagni Rishi came from **Batant (Spiti)**, first settled at **Hamta** in Naggar valley, then Malana, defeated Danu, and granted his plea that the people would speak his language as long as the village exists — which is why the Malana tongue is unintelligible to outsiders. A hunter is said to have first discovered the village; outsiders named it "**Malana**" meaning "*to join*" (the village joined others beyond its periphery). The remoteness of Kullu valley has preserved its distinctive heritage and spiritual peace.

## 13 Cult of Shirgul, Bijat & Mahasu Devtas

The cults of **Shirgul** and **Mahasu** are derivatives of **Shaivism**, limited mainly to the Shimla hills. Shirgul's renowned home is the **Chur (Churdhar) peak**, visible from Shimla; Sirmaur (and erstwhile Jubbal State) are the chief worshippers. The name "Shirgul/Sargul" may be a corruption of "**Sri Guru**", fancifully linked to **sard** (cold) — the deity has power over cold and jaundice.

### Legend of Shirgul

Born to Chief **Bhokru of Shadga (Sirmaur)** after an Aswamedha Yajna, Shirgul and his brother **Chandeshwar** defeated the demon **Neshira/Kirmat**. Shirgul created a horse **Shanalwi**, recited incantations to turn it into a stone (still standing), met his devotee **Chooru** on Choor, and took up abode there. During Mughal rule, he killed a butcher to save a cow, defeated the emperor's soldiers, and was finally honoured by the emperor. After a 150-year reign he disappeared with Chooru (who became **Chooru Bir/Pir**) and became **Shrigul Deota**. His kingdom was divided among Devi Ram (minister) and his sons Rabbu & Chhinu. Grain collected for him from every household (a **patha**) is called **Dhinakra/nazrana**. Like many hill deities, Shrigul exercises civil & criminal "jurisdiction"; false oaths in his temples (Sarahan, Jorna) bring calamity within 3–6 months.

#### SHRIGUL TEMPLES

**Manal** (built by Dewas Ulga & Jojra; image floated on the Jalal river, brought by Bidan; 12 images, principal studded with 100 rupees & 11 gold mohras), **Deona & Bandal** (first-class image allowed only from Bandal), plus Jamna, Naoni, Sanglathan, Jaitak & Jorna.

### Bijat & His Sister Bijai

**Bijat** is the **lightning god**, connected with Shirgul: when the Asur Agyasur attacked Choor, the Shakti fell as lightning (**Bij**) and an image fell at **Sarahan**. A stone idol was taken to **Deona** (principal image, high divine power; 27 brass images). Fairs in Baisakh (April) at Deona & Sarahan. At **Bandal** there are now **52 brass images** of Bijat with human faces. His sister **Bijai** has a seven-storeyed temple at Batroli (brass image, woman's face, no fair). The related goddess **Ghatriali** has a temple at Panjahan. Legend: Kanet chieftain **Bija of Tahawa** brought three images (Bijat, Bijai, Ghatriali) from Jamlog. Bijat always gives Bijai twice as much as she gives him.

### Mahasu Devta

#### In Sirmaur

Headquarters at **Sion** village (Renuka tehsil), temple on a hillock above the Giri. One large brass idol + smaller ones; among them **Sirmauri** (God of Sirmaur, no temple of his own) and Devi **Shimlasan**; the rest represent Mahasu. The temple opens only on **Sunday, Wednesday & Sankrant**, at 11 a.m. (dhup dina) and sunset (sandhia). On death (mitak/patak) or birth (sutak) in a Dewa's family the temple closes for 20 days. At a **Jagra**, the Deota is

light if pleased but immovable (even by 4–5 men) if displeased; the possessed explains the cause and the guilty make vows.

### In the Shimla Hills

Headquarters at **Anel**. Legend: between the **Tons & Pabbar** rivers dwelt evil spirits under chief **Kirmat Danu**, who claimed victims. Two pious Brahmins of Madrat lost six sons; the wife (possessed) revealed that **Mahasu of Kashmir** would save the seventh. **Una Bhat** journeyed to Kashmir (via Pundit Nag of Hatkoti) and prayed to Mahasu, who appeared from five furrows ploughed with a silver plough & gold share. From the furrows came the four Mahasu brothers — **Bhotu, Pabasi, Bashik & Chald** — and their heavenly mother with an army, who destroyed Kirmat Danu at Niwara (Dhadi state). Because Mahasu arrived a week early, Una Bhat's plough injured three: **Bhotu** (lamed, rules at Anel), **Pabasi** (ear cut, six pithas in Garhwal), **Bashik** (eyes obscured, British Garhwal tract). **Chald** — unhurt — was free to roam and is the **Mahasu venerated in the Shimla hills** (Balson & Kot-Khai). He tours 12 years; every house gives Rs. 1-8 to his ministers, plus music, silver ornaments and grain.

## 14 Maintenance of Parents & Dependents Bill, 2001

Modern life has eroded social values, family ties and cohesiveness. To counter this, the HP Government, under CM **Prem Kumar Dhumal**, passed the *Maintenance of Parents and Dependents Bill, 2001*, fulfilling the purpose of **Articles 38 and 41** of the Constitution — that public assistance be secured in old age, sickness, disablement and undeserved want.

### LANDMARK

Himachal Pradesh became the **first state of the Indian Union** to curtail the neglect of aged/infirm parents and dependents by legal binding. The Act applies to all domiciled Himachalis **except Muslims**.

### Dependents covered by the Act

- ▶ **Child** — including a child born out of an extra-marital relationship, adopted and step child, below 18 years.
- ▶ **Parents & grandparents** — so long as they cannot maintain themselves.
- ▶ **Wife** — so long as she does not remarry.
- ▶ **Son / son of predeceased son** — while a minor and unable to obtain maintenance.
- ▶ **Unmarried daughter** (or of a predeceased son) — while unmarried.
- ▶ **Widowed daughter** — if unable to obtain maintenance from her husband's estate, her children, or her father-in-law/grandfather.
- ▶ **Widow of a son** (or of a predeceased son's son) — while she does not remarry.
- ▶ **Son/daughter born out of an extra-marital relationship** — while a minor.

The Act aims to re-infuse responsibility among society's constituents and protect those needing care. Alongside legal provisions, **social awareness** is held equally important to discourage the trend of nuclear and solitary living.

### QUICK REVISION — FIRST/IMPORTANT FACTS

• **210** languages/dialects (1961) • Strongest racial element: **Khasha** • **4 International fairs**: Kullu Dushehra, Mandi Shivratri, Rampur Lavi, Renuka • Kinnauri shawl standard form — **1974** • Bhuttico — **1944** • Nalwari conceived by W. Goldstein — **1889** • Baijnath temple — **1204 AD** (Ahuka & Manyuka) • Raghunathji idol to Kullu — **1651 AD** • Malana = world's "oldest democracy", Jamlu = Rishi Jamdagni • Maintenance Bill **2001** — HP first state, applies to all except Muslims.

— *End of Chapter 3* —

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