

**SOCIAL HISTORY OF SIMLA HILL STATES
DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD**

**A THESIS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN HISTORY
SUBMITTED TO
THE HIMACHAL PRADESH UNIVERSITY**

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that Ms. Alka Gupta has worked for his doctoral thesis work under my guidance and the accompanying thesis entitled "**Social History of Simla Hill States During the Colonial Period**" represents his original work and is worthy of consideration for the award of Ph.D. Degree in History.

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**Dedicated to my
Loving Son**

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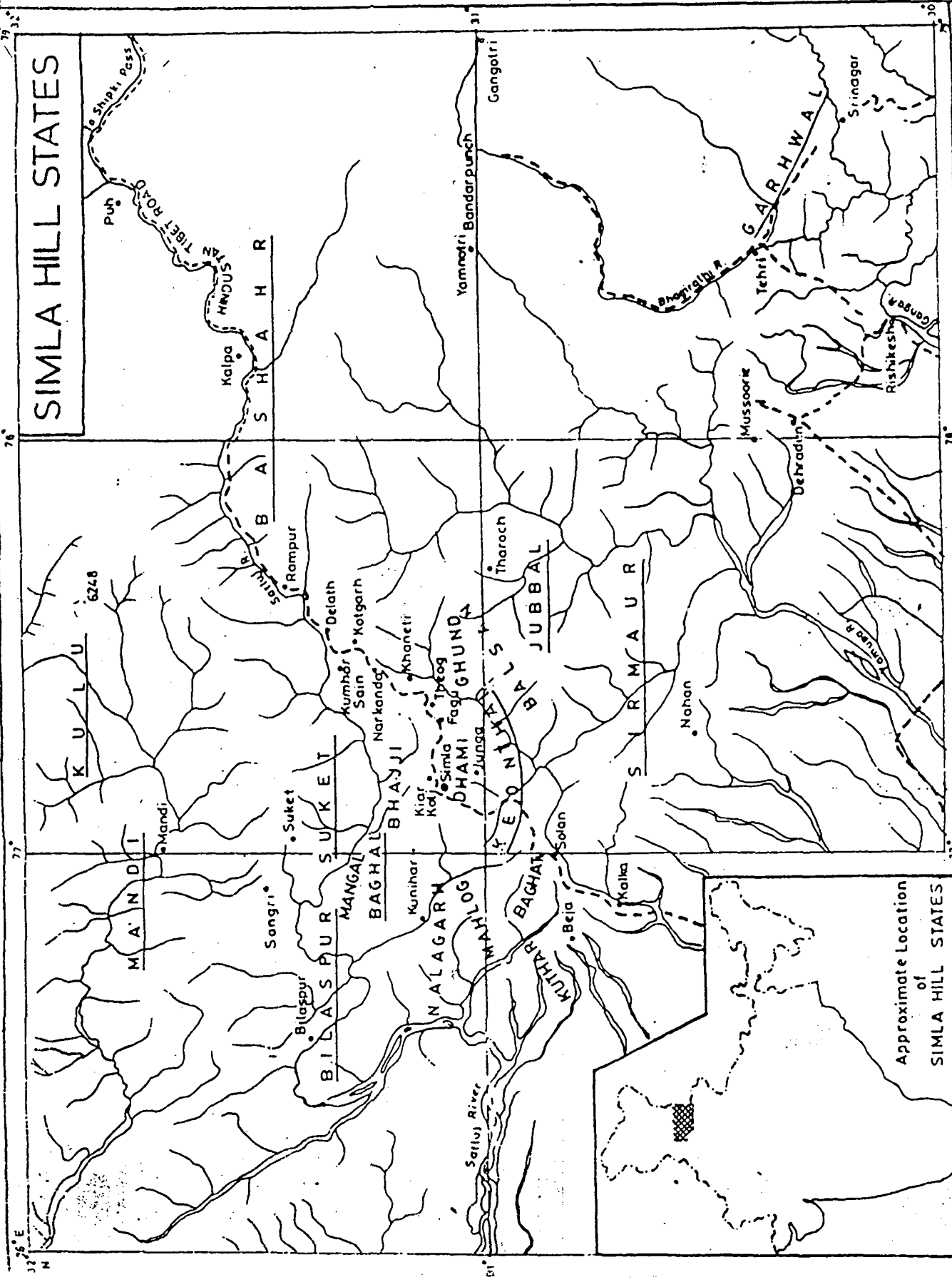
In spite of going through the manuscript many times, certain typographical errors invariably crept in once again, I am thankful to all those who helped me to reduce the errors. A word of praise to **Mrs. Krishna** is due for typing this manuscript.

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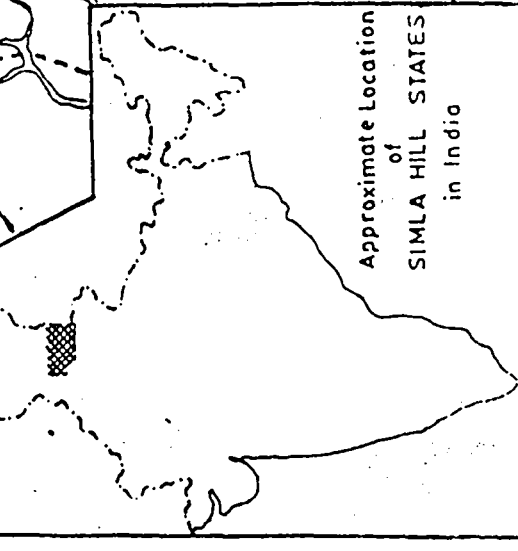
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SIMLA HILL STATES



Scale: 0 to 20 Kms
 Legend: River system (solid line), Cart road (dashed line)

NOTE: Name given in bold letters indicate approximate location of states and principalities. The important states are underlined.



Approximate Location of SIMLA HILL STATES in India

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

History is the record of the life of societies of men, of the changes which the societies have undergone, of the ideas which determine the actions of these societies, and of the material conditions which have aided or hindered their development. Study of history would be meaningless without the appreciation of social significance.

In recent times a lot of attention has been paid by the researcher to explore the regional past of the country. An extensive amount of research is being carried out to study the political, social and economic aspects of life at the regional level. Even though these attempts are problematic and beset with difficulties, nevertheless, it is imperative to know them.

It is important to know about the people living in different parts of the country, their socio-cultural peculiarities and political-economic background, for studying the intra-rational similarities and dissimilarities and for having a better and more precise understanding of the national past of the country.

India itself is a vast country and hundreds of studies have been made on different aspects of the country by using a variety of inter-disciplinary and informal approaches. Himachal Pradesh has been put under the microscope of

analysis-cum-examination due to its importance as a hill state and examination also because it falls in the Western-Himalayas. However, detailed studies have not been conducted and this thesis is a modest attempt to do so from 1815 to 1947. The literature on today's conditions is abundant. But the past of this hill state is hardly known to people at large. Therefore, to study the social history of this reputed hill state needs attention, in order to uncover the gap between the past and the present and the link of the past and present status of Simla State, which remained relatively unstudied by a few historians who otherwise conducted research on comparatively less important aspects, concentrating more on general nature research. These works are Kinnar Desh by Rahul Sanskritiyayayn, Kinnaur in the Himalayas by S.C. Chib, and Polyandry in the Himalayas by Y.S. Parmar. The second category of work pertains to the history of Himachal Pradesh in general and provides just a glimpse other works of this kind are Himachal Pradesh Past, Present and Future by S.K. Gupta and others, History of Himachal Pradesh, Art and Architecture of Himachal Pradesh by Mr. Mian Goverdhan Singh, History and Culture of Himalayan State by S.C. Charak, Party Politics in Himalayan State by Ranbir Sharma and History of Himachal Pradesh by M.S. Ahluwalia. This particular study pertains to the Social History of Simla Hill States during the colonial period. The thesis is divided into a total of six chapters. This introduction discusses the geographical features and people.

The second chapter focuses on the history, highlighting the popular movements during 1815-1937. The third chapter discusses the general social life during that particular period. The fourth chapter focuses on social reforms and welfare work during this period. The fifth chapter is exclusively related to the status of the women.

General Survey

The Western Himalayan tract lying between Tons river, a tributary of Jamuna in the east and Sutlej in the west, was known as Simla Hill States before the formation of Himachal Pradesh in April 1948. This region was occupied by 28 large and small states and Thakurais were spread between 30° 20' and 32° 5' north latitude and 76° 30' and 79° 1' east longitude. The area of these States was about 4800 square miles¹ and according to the 1881 census the total population of these States was 5,02,853.²

Before the coming of the Britishers to these hills, the region was known as Athara Thakurais or eighteen lordships and Bara Thakuraies or twelve lordships.³ The formers Thakuraies were situated in the upper hills and the latter in the lower hills. After the expulsion of Gurkhas from these hills in 1815 the Britishers retained some posts as military posts in the hills. Subathu was one of them. Here, later on, a political agent who was given control of all the hill States was appointed and

the post was held by one Lt. Ross (1819-22).⁴ His headquarter was Subathu. In 1819 A.D. he built a log hut near a village called Simla and made it his summer residence. After him in 1822 A.D., Capt. P.C. Kennedy (1822-35) built a house at the same site which later came to be known as Kennedy House. Subsequently, the village of Simla became a summer headquarter of Political Agent-cum-the Superintendent, Hill States. Their example was followed by many British officers and army men and, much later by 1826, the new settlement had acquired a name, so much so that after the name of Simla these Hill States came to be known as 'Simla Hill States'

Survey of Literature

The earliest visitor to this region was an English man, James Baillic Fraser,⁵ who visited this area in 1814-15. He was a civilian with the army of general Martindell which entered the hills in November 1814 to upulse the Gurkhas. He extensively travelled the area and recorded in detail the geography, history, social and economic life of the people at the time. He was followed by Alexander General, surveyor in the East India Company. General was perhaps the first European to visit Kinnaur. He traversed from Subathu, his observations of Simla village being mentioned in his travel account.⁶ It is a valuable monograph on the upper Kinnaur and Spiti area as is his companion William Lloyds.⁷ Victor

Jacquemont,⁸ the intrepid French explorer visited Sirmour, Simla Hills and Kinnaur during the years 1829 and 1830 when Captain P.C. Kennedy was Political Agent and Superintendent, Hill States.

Major Archer⁹ and Capt. Mundy,¹⁰ who were A.D.C. to Lord Combermere, the commander-in-chief in 1828 A.D. toured Simla Hills with the latter. They have recorded very interesting accounts of the land and people of Simla Hills. These books provide a vast panorama of princely states and people of the hills. George Powell Thomas's account of 1840-46 is an important work for its details of land and life of the region around Simla.¹¹ Similarly, the diary¹² of William Howard Russel a war correspondent of 'London Times' throws sufficient light on the political and economic conditions in the Simla hills after the mutiny of 1857 when William Hay was Superintendent of Simla Hill States.

The other important explorers who left immensely valuable information on a variety of subjects were Thomas Thomson,¹³ Andrew Wilson,¹⁴ a free lance journalist; and Van Der Slean,¹⁵ a Dutch adventurer and many others. The explorers, travellers and adventures have left for us very valuable information on the geography, history, and social, cultural and economic life of the people of Simla hills in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Besides, during the British period land settlements were carried out almost in all the hill States. Reports of these settlements and wajili-ul-vrj were prepared and published. These settlements reports speak of the social and economic condition of the people. These reports are mostly in Urdu.

The great revenue surveys of the middle of the nineteenth century made some attempt in this direction and gave sketchy accounts of social life in this region. Lt. col. E.G. Vace conducted the settlement of Simla District from 1881-83, and published the final report on the first regular settlement of the Simla District in Punjab dated 1881 from Calcutta in 1884. J.D. Anderson again conducted the land settlement of Simla district in 1915-16 and published its findings under title "Final Settlement Report on the Simla District 1916" and it was printed by Government Printing Press, Lahore in 1918.

Simultaneously regular settlements were carried out in Simla Hill States. Some of important settlement reports are as under :-

1. Bihari Lal Report on the 1st regular settlement of the Koti State, 1916.
2. Bhagwan Dass Report on the first regular settlement of Dhami State, 1916.

3. Durga Singh Report on the settlement and new management of the Jubbal State, Simla District, 1907.
4. Laiuq Ram Settlement Report on the Bhajji State, 1933.
5. Amin Chand Settlement Report of the Ghund State of Simla District, 1929.
6. Raghbir Singh Final report of the First regular settlement of the Pahari Ilaqua of Nalagrah State 1924.
7. Amar Singh Report of Kanuni Bandovast Riyast Kahlur (Bilaspur Zila Simla, 1907).
8. Kuthar State Report Bandovast Kanuni Riyast, Kuthat, 1917.
9. Kunihar State Report Bandovast Kanuni Riyast Kunihar,, 1916.
10. Durga Singh Report Bandovast Mailkrarnama Riyast Keonthal, 1901.
11. Baghat State Report Tashkhish, 1920.
12. Bhawani Singh Report Bandovast Kanuni Riyast Mahlog, 1910.
13. Sher Singh Report Bandovast Kanuni Riyast Baghal Zila Simla 1907-08.

Since 1881, regular census were conducted in these hill States after every 10 years. To study the social history of any country, region or particular area, census reports are very important source material. Besides, the census operation department brought out 18 reports, on Kothi, Nichar and Kanam of Kinnaur District, Shakrori Gijari, Shathla, Chirgaon, Chauri, Chaupal of Simla District; Batal and Basal of Solan District; Dabhla Dari and Deoli of Bilaspur District; Pangna, Ranjana, Moginand and Kolar. These villages monographs contain most valuable data on the social history of Simla Hill States. The gazetteer, entitled 'Simla District-Gazetteer', a mine of information was first published in 1888-89 from Calcutta. Its revised and enlarged edition was published from Lahore in 1904. The Gazetteer of the Simla Hill States was first published in 1911 from Lahore and its abridged edition in 1939.

Besides, some large states used to issue annual reports on the administrative activities of the State. In addition to this the village records of Patwaris and Kanungos are very valuable sources of material for the study of social history of the people of Simla Hills.

Geo-Physical Setting

Physiographically, Simla Hills can be broadly divided into three zones.

(i) The Siwaliks; (ii) The Outer or Sub-Himalaya; (iii) and the Mid-Himalaya. The Greater or trans-Himalaya is in the far north. The outer Himalaya or Siwalik range, the youngest and comparatively low stretches from Kangra to Sirmour, some- times in a single fold, sometime double. The Siwalik ranges are composed of highly unconsolidated deposits which easily lend themselves to erosion. These are now thus highly deforested and eroded.

Secondly, the inner Himalayas or Mid-mountains a complex older zone, are of the average height of 4,500 mts. at the summits. This is a thinly populated country of high mountains and narrow valleys. The landscape is always interesting and there is an endless variety to charm the eye. The tree-line reaches upto 3,500 mts. The hills and valleys of the lower ranges stretch far into the distance. Dense tropical forests cover the lower slopes of the mountains in the east, and westward their place is increasingly taken by magnificent coniferous forest the pride of all being the deodars of Bashahr and Jubbal. On the outer fringe of the sub-Himalaya, facing the Indian plains, are hill station like Simla, Solan, Kasauli, Dagshai, and others, altitude varying from 1500 to 2,200 meters. The highest peak in this zone is Choor peak (3647 mts).

The third zone is greater-Himalaya or Alpine zone. This zone remains under snow for about five to six months in the year and this compels the inhabitants to become migratory. ¹⁶

The highest peaks of this zone are Shipki (6,791 mts.) and Paldang (Kannaur Kailash (6,500 mts.).

Simla region is a hilly and mountainous tract. Geographically, it forms part of the western Himalayas and thus presents an intricate pattern of mountain ranges, hills and valleys.

Mountain system

The mountains of the Simla Hill States form a continuous series of ranges ascending from the low hills which bound the plains of Ambala to the great central chain of the Eastern Himalayas. This central chain terminates a few miles south of the Sutlej in the most northern of the States, that of Bushahr which is broken on its northern frontier by spurs from the snowy hills which separate it from Spiti and on the east by similar spurs from the range by which it is shut off from the Chinese territory.¹⁷ Starting from the termination of the Central Himalayas a transverse range - the last to the south of the Sutlej runs south-west throughout the length of the Simla States, forming the water-shed between the Sutlej and the Jamuna, in other words, between the Indus and the Ganges. A few miles north-east of Simla, it divides into two main branches. One following the line of Sutlej in a north-west direction and the other continuing south-east, intel at few miles north of Sabathu, meet at right angles the mountains of outer

or sub-Himalayan system. The whole range for the sake of convenience, will hereafter be referred to as the Simla range. South and east of Simla, the hills lying between the Sutlej and the Tons centre in the great Chor mountain, 11,982 feet high, is itself the termination of a minor chain that branches southwards from the main Simla range.

The mountain system of these States can be mapped out into three portions as follows:

1. The Chor mountain and spurs projecting from it, occupying the south-east corner.
2. Simla range extending from the Central Himalayas to the neighbourhood of Sabathu.
3. The mountains of the sub-Himalayan series, running from north-east to north-west and forming the boundary of the Ambala plains.¹⁸

Valleys

The region of Simla Hills is endowed with magnificent valleys. The most notable among them are - Pabbar valley, Giri valley, Sangla valley, Sutlej valley and Saproon valley. Since early times these Himalayan valleys have given shelter to the pressed people from all sides, mainly from the Indian mainland.

Drainage System

Simla region has the unique distinction of providing water to the Indus and Gangetic plains, as the latter flow, into the Arabian sea and Bay of Bengal.

The principal rivers by which the drainage of these hills is carried off are the Sutlej, the Pabbar, the Giri, the Ghamber and the Sirsa.

Sutlej

The Sutlej enters the Bashahr state from Chinese territory by a pass between peaks, the northern of which is 22,183 feet above the sea level and flows south-east through Bashahr, receiving the drainage from the central Himalayas on the one side and Spiti Hills on the other, till it reaches the border of Kullu a few miles above the town of Rampur.¹⁹ Just next to Rajput, it is joined by the Nogli stream. From Rampur it forms the western boundary of Simla States with Kullu, Suket and then with Kangra. It leaves the hills of Bhakra and enters the plains of Punjab.

Pabbar

Pabbar is one of the principal feeders of the Tons and therefore, of the Jamna rises from Burenda Pass, referred to by

local inhabitants as Baren ghatti²⁰ in the State of Bashahr, having feeders on the southern slopes both of the central Himalayas and the transverse Simla range. It flows southwards and passes into Gharwal, joining with Tons of Tuni.

The Giri

The Giri Ganga rises from Kupa peak in the hills north of the Chor mountain range, and collecting the drainage of the whole tract between that mountain and the Simla range flows south-west until meeting the line of the outer Himalayas, it turns sharply to the south-east and passing through the whole length of the State of Sirmur empties itself into the Jamna about ten miles below the junction of that river with the Tons. Ashani is an important tributary of Giri and rises from Mahasu hills near Simla. Gambhar and Sirsa are the streams of lower hills rising from Dagshai and Dun of Nalagarh respectively.

Only the Sutlej is snowfed. During the monsoons these rivers become raging torrents carrying an enormous quantity of water and in winter, when snow hardens and water freezes at the higher attitudes, the glaciers sizes shrinks considerably and alarmingly.

These rivers have been playing a very significant social, cultural and economic role in the inhabitants life of the people of the region.

Lake

The green hills are studded with beautiful lakes, the ones worth quoting are as follows:

Chandra Nahar Lake

This lake is at a height of 4,267 metres on Chanshal Peak in Rohru Tehsil, source of the Pabbar river.

The Karali lake is on the Chhota Shali hillock just on the other side of Shali peak visible from Simla.

Nako Lake

Nako lake is at Nako village of Pooh sub-division at a height of 4300 mts. above sea level. It freezes in winter and the local people enjoy skating on it.²¹

Bradonsar lake is at a height of 17500 feet above sea level in between Dadrakawar and Sangla valley of Kinnaur.²²

Simla region is endowed with magnificent valleys. The most notable among them are Pabbar valley, Shalwi valley, Sutlej valley especially below Rampur, Baspa valley in Kinnaur, Kunihar valley and Saproon valley. Since early times these valleys have given shelter to the oppressed people from all sides, mainly from the Indian mainland.

Climate

Simla Hills States are a mountainous region with elevations ranging from 350 to 7000 meters. The climatic conditions here accordingly vary from the semi-tropical to the semi arctic.²³ The climate of lower hills like Solan, Baghal, Nalagarh, lower Pabbar and Sutlej valley is severe in summer but winter is pleasant and bracing with only a moderate variation between day and night temperatures. Snowfall is rare.²⁴ The climate in the mid or lesser Himalayan ranges is pleasant in summer and quit semi-arctic in winter, the snowfall being heavy. In Kinnaur valley, climate is temperate in summer and semi-arctic in winter. Snowfall normally begins in October and after December the whole valley is under snow till March or April.²⁵ Communication remains cut off and the villages become almost isolated. In winter the inhabitants move to lower hills.²⁶

Flora

Simla Hill region has a diversified and rich flora because of the existence of a variety of climate and a wide range of altitudes. Every type of Western Himalayan flora from Himalayan meadows and high level fir and rhododendron down to tropical scrub and bamboo forests of the low foothills is found. There are three climatic altitudinal zones of natural vegetation as follows:²⁷

- i) Tropical and sub-tropical (300-1525 net)
- ii) Temperate (1525-3650)
- iii) Alpine (3650-4650)

Fruit Trees

The peach, the nectarine, the Himalayan apricot, the greengage and wild pear are the commonest trees. Apples and pears are sometimes grown. But the native of Simla Hills are not successful fruit-growers and irresponsibly cut down according to fruit trees without scruple to make an axe handles. The cherry rus berry, blackberry, barberry, strawberry, medlar, and edible fig are to be found in the more remote tracts, but are practically ignored by the native.²⁸

Fruit ripens in the later end of May and in June. Kela, Kimu, Arti, Alucha and Poja.²⁹

Forest Trees

The forests of the tracts are its most valuable assets as well as its most interesting and picturesque feature. The deodar grows at elevations between 7,000 and 8500 feet, and is seen at its finest in the forests of Bashahr, Jubbal and Throch. Large areas in these States and in Balsan and Kumharsain are verdant in which the Himalayan spruce predominates. The handsome

tree grows to a great height but its timber is inferior and almost unsaleable currently. As a result, many huge trees are seen girdled and left to die to make room for other more lucrative species. The Himalayan spruce extends to a higher elevation than the deodar, as does the pand-rao a slightly more valuable wood. The blue pine is often mingled with the deodar, while on hill slopes from 2000 or less to 6000 feet high the chil is in many places the most distinctive tree. Of the two the Kali produces the better timber. The edible pine is common in Bashahr. The roasted seed of the chil is often eaten and is sometimes mistaken by European travelers for the edible pine nut.

Of oaks the one found highest is the kharsu which often grows above the range of pines. The mohru, which grows at a slightly lower elevation, is one of the most valuable fodder trees in the higher hills. The leaves are stripped once every three years. Both the kharsu and the mohru bear a fruit consumed during scarcity. The ban is used extensively for making charcoal. It also provides stout rafters, and hard wood for making oil presses.³⁰

In the lower Hills the bamboo grows extensively. The shisham, sail, bor, pipal and sambhal are also found. The mango tree is common, but bears fruit of poor quality.³¹

Now to highlights of fauna

No other State in India can boast of such a variety of fauna, due chiefly to the different climates found in the tropical dums, the shiwaliks and other hills, long river basins and alpine heights.³²

Wild Animals

The more remote forests abound with panther and Himalayan Black Bear. The later do considerable damage to crops, often destroying whole fields of buckwheat and will even enter houses in search of food. Leopards are a constant menace to flocks browsing on the uplands. The only valid protection against them are the fierce dogs kept by all who own cattle. One such dog protected by an iron spiked collar will often put a leopard to flight. Snow leopards are hunted in Bashahr. The Brown Bear is found on the snowy hills of Bashahr but is rare. Hyenas are not uncommon as are wolves in sparses numbery with in the States adjoining the plains.³³

The Burrhel is found at elevation over 10,000 feet in Bashahr. The Serow is much commoner and is known to frequent the higher hills near Simla. The Gto Goral and the muskdeer are found throughout the tract. The Sambur sometimes wanders upto the Pabbar valley and temples in the little State of Rawin are full of Sambar horns. The Ibex is

found in the higher portion of Bashahr. Its horns are considered peculiarly appropriate for the adornment of temple walls and gables. The Tahr is abundant in the Rohru tehsil of Bashahr.

As a rule, the boar is the animal most carefully preserved as a rule by the chief when he is a hunter. In Baghal, Bilaspur and Nalagarh, such boars are numerous and cause rampant crop destruction.³⁴

Birds

The white-crested pheasant is common between 5,000 and 10,000 feet. The Koklas and Chair pheasants are slightly less so. The Monal is found above 10,000 feet, particularly on the Chor mountains and on the hills above Narkanda. The Chor is a haunt of the Himalayan snow-cock. The Chakor are common, especially in the hills to the north of Jubbal. Black and gray partridges and jungle fowls are found throughout the valleys and the lower hills.

In the winter, the woodcock is often seen in the valleys of Nalagarh, Bilaspur and Baghal. Duck frequent the rivers all the year round. Pochard have been seen on the Giri in June.³⁵

Fish

The Giri is well-stocked with mahseer of moderate size. The fishing has been poor of late years. The upper reaches of the river are continually poisoned, dynamited and netted. The Pabbar contains larger, but apparently fewer, masheer. It is full of bachwa. There are very large masheer in the Sutlej, but the peculiar colour of the water renders angling unsatisfactory. Fair sport is accessible in the Gambhar, near its junction with the Sutlej. All the rivers and streams hold the so-called Hill of Indian trout, and the Sutlej Pabbar and Giri containing goonch. In the Sutlej, the native use the cast-net chiefly for fishing but also angle for masheer with paste. In the shallow streams the fish are driven into narrowness and killed with sticks. On the Pabbar, nooses are attached in number to strings, laid across the river at short intervals and efforts made to drive the fish upstream into them.³⁶

Inhabitants

Simla Hills have been inhabited by many castes and tribes. The settlers came from all the surrounding areas, but principally from the Indian plains. They came for a number of reasons. The most important of these reasons was the location of holy places in and around the Himalayas and also the people from India and central Asia have always felt drawn to the

Himalayas. Other important reasons for (migration) comprised trade, politics and security.

The kolis are considered to be the original inhabitants of the hills. Probably, they came from the original stock of the Kolirian race which once inhabited the whole of the western Himalayas.³⁷ Perhaps Koli, Hali, Chanal, Dom, and like others are the descendants of that race. The other allied castes are Chamar, Rehar, Badi Channal, Lohar, Sunar, Thathera, Kumhars, Dhaki or Turi, and like others. The distinction between the Kolis and other menial castes is merely occupational. These people are mostly artisan and work as cobblers, basket makers, iron smiths, carpenters, weavers, drummers and tailors. Most of them cultivate land.

The distinction between a Koli and other menials is mainly occupational. Ethnically they are all of the same Jati. Today, with the spread of education and communication, the younger generation has started shunning their ancestral professions and is shifting to agriculture, horticulture salaried employment and business on a relatively large scale. Therefore, it can be said that the various scheduled castes such as Koli, Dangis, Channals, etc. belong to the indigenous stock, which in the course of time underwent certain changes in their original attitudes and qualities.

The second and perhaps the most important element in the population of Simla Hills is its Khasha complex. The

Khashas, originally from the Aryan race, entered western Himalayas through the north-western passes during early Indian history. They settled and established their colonies in the mid-Himalayan belt, stretching from Kashmir to Nepal. Simla hills formed the central part of their expansion afterwards, they being driven deeper into the interior hills by the succeeding waves of immigrants from the Indian plains.

These people were without caste and class distinction. But with the passage of time and under the alien influence, they split into several sub-section and classes. Kanets are one of the important sections. They are identified as Kunindas or Kulindas in ancient classes.³⁸ The other classes were Rathis and Thakurs.

Khashas are generally tall and handsome and have fair complexion, hazel eyes, and regular proportional features. The following proverbs represent their characteristics.

"Khashascha Khashapatrasche Khash pratyaksh rakhasa, sanlushta jawa mushta kashtascha pran ghattha."

"A Khash and the son of a khash is a devil, pleased he gives a handful of barley, displeased he kills."³⁹

The main occupation of these people is agriculture and livestock. Horticulture is also becoming very popular among them. The educated are now taking to other profession like

trade and industry. A fraction of their population is also going in for technical and white collar jobs.

Rajputs and Brahmins emerged much later on the racial arena of Simla hills. They came from the Indian plains, from time to time for a number of reasons, sometimes as an adventure or at times in search of security. The other important reason of such immigration was the location of holy places in and around Simla hills.

The descendants of these Rajputs are now known as 'Mians' in Simla Hills. They fall into an upper and lower class. The former do not plough their fields themselves. Their farm work is done either by hired servants or by tenants. The later work in their fields and are called lalbahu. However, under the compulsion of the present day economic strains, the majority of land-owners have been forced to take to agricultural and horticultural work.

The Rajputs according to some, are indifferent cultivators, and are extravagant and indolent. They are strict and orthodox in their customs and prefer employment to other occupations.

Side by side, the Brahmins also followed the Rajput to the hills to find safer places from the intruders from the north-west in the early medieval period. They are divided into different gotras. They form the chief priestly caste. They avoid agriculture and refuse to handle the plough. Some have taken

to trade and service. There are some agriculturist Brahmins who are looked down upon by those of the higher classes. The Brahmins are indifferent cultivators but owing to their miscellaneous earnings, say as priests of the village gods, they are generally in fair circumstances.

The high caste Hindus like Khattris, Kaisthas Mahajan, Suds, Bohras and like others migrated to the Simla hills during the Muslim invasion of northern India from the 12th to 17th centuries. These are classes are mercantile. The territorial distribution of these people is very well marked. They mostly live in towns and large settlements where they can carry out their business. These people are generally found in towns like Simla, Solan, Arki, Suni, Theog, Rampur, and Nalagarh.

The main tribes of Simla hills are Kinnauras and Gujjars. The Kinnauras are inhabitants of Kinnaur region. The people are locally referred to as Kanawaras or Negis. They are a pastoral tribe. Their main occupation is rearing sheep and goat, the former for wool. Many people are, however, engaged in agriculture and horticulture too. The Kinnauras were wise traders and engaged in brisk trade with Tibet before 1962.

The Gujjars of Simla Hills are mostly pastoral nomads. They entered these hills at a relatively late period. The Gujjars comprise both Hindus and Muslims. A Muslim Gujjar is a nomad and, therefore, has no settled home in any part of this

region. The Hindu Gujjars mostly lead a settled life, having largely abandoned the nomadic mode.

The wealth of Gujjars consists of buffaloes. They live in the skirts of forests and live exclusively by selling milk, ghee and herbal products. During the scorching summer they move to hills and in winter to low valleys for pasture of their domestic animals.

In addition, there are records of other scheduled castes and tribes in Simla hills. The majority of the population of these hills are Hindu, yet those who are Buddhists (especially in Kinnaur), Jains, Sikhs, Muslims and Christians, also enjoy equal respect there. The people of all groups enjoy perfect freedom to pursue their own way of life, customs, conventions and beliefs.

Fraser noticed that there was some difference in character and disposition between the people of Jubbal and Sirmur. According to him the people of Jubbal possessed a certain degree of superior smartness of appearance and those peculiar manners usually attributed to highlanders, in comparison to the inhabitants encountered by him in Sirmur.⁴⁰ "Jubbal is famous for the beauty of its inhabitants; and the Runah and his minister, who came in the evening according to promise, both do justice to its fame. The chief himself is only about twenty five years of age, nearly as fair as European, with very handsome features, 'immeasurably large' eyes that give a

vague and foolish expression to his countenance one which is by no means belied by his intellect.⁴¹

The inhabitants adjoining the Parala village in the Theog, Mundy States, are handsome and stocky, they are remarkably cheerful and have contented dispositions, saluting the chief smilingly as per occasion. The women that he noticed, on the contrary, were 'dumpy' and for the most part grumpy.⁴²

Describing the inhabitants of Kumarsain as peaceful, Gore (1890) writes, "The peacefulness of these hill men is wonderful. They are much more like dwellers upon the plains than mountaineers, and though they have probably never even seen a soldier, and certainly have never heard a shot fired in anger, yet they accept the white man's orders with meek submission and obedience. The carrying of arms or weapons of any sorts is a thing never dreamed of in these hills, for they have no danger from external enemies, and are too cowardly by nature to fight amongst themselves. It is difficult to account for this want of manly vigour, which spreads through the Himalayas from Kashmir to the boundary of fighting Nepal. Probably they were originally plainsmen, who have gradually spread up the valleys, where protected from all external foes, they have never been forced by any increasing want to forage for their needs."⁴³

The people of Kotgarh, William Lloyd observed, were not as fair as he had expected. The men were not infrequently

tall, all of them were strong, but few of them handsome. Many of the women were pretty."⁴⁴

Captain J.D. Herbert (1819), has mentioned briefly about the people of Jaka which is the last village of Chohara in Rohru through which he crossed while on his way to Kinnaur via Gunas pass as under. The village was not large and the inhabitants appeared ill looking and dirty.⁴⁵

People of Kinnaur

In lower Kinnaur the people were of Aryan origin. In upper Kinnaur Mongolian origin was more prominent. "In lower Kunawar (Kinnaur) they seemed to be a gentle and rather timid people who spoke an Aryan dialect though the Tartars of the upper portion of Bussahir (Kinnaure) were of rougher and stronger character, yet they were quite and friendly enough."⁴⁶

Herber writes that the people of Kinnaur were tall and rather handsome, with expressive countenances, they were not however, so fair as he had expected to find them in so cold a climate. Their manners were good and they were open and communicative without being deficient in respect.⁴⁷ Describing the Tartar women of Kinnaur, Herbert further informs us that, "We noticed the tartar women to be much fairer than any we had before seen. They had also rosy complexions that might emulate those of Europe, and their countenances, though

possessing all the peculiar features of that race, yet exhibited variety of character and expression which is not to be seen in Hindustan. The women of the lower mountains possess it also, but in a less degree, no doubt owing to the mixture of tartar blood."⁴⁸

Settlements in Simla Hills

Except for a few towns, there is hardly any urban life in the hills, though of late urbanization is a fast growing trend and the people live mostly in the villages consisting of a few hamlets dotted over the fields. The villages are found wherever an area of arable-land exists, sufficient to support a few families. Occasionally, a solitary house, locally called dochhi or doagri, may house a family and it may stand on a small patch where there is no room for more.

Each village stands in the midst of its farm area of cultivation. In the flat lands, the houses are generally on the same level, higher up they are arranged in tiers, one above another. The houses are generally square or rectangular in shape. In the lower hills, houses are usually single storeyed with thatched roofs while in the upper regions, there are generally two and more storeyed houses with slate roofs.⁴⁹

The villages are generally self-sustained units. Every village has a temple where people congregate for common

worship. The village gods are carried in palanquins, on a number of occasions, to places of religious interest. When in trouble, the people go to the deities to seek their guidance and help. The village god is supposed to watch over the destiny of the village. He protects, rewards, threatens and punishes the people, while they in turn worship him by singing and dancing.⁵⁰

THE INTRODUCTION has given a detailed presentation of Simla Hill states, its geography, its river and lake system, its forest, flora and fauna, finally its inhabitants from times immemorial to the present to enable the reader to place the social history in its extensive and variegated setting. History has to be seen geo-politically, ethnically, culturally to save it from surface historicism which thrives on a recital of events and happenings in a linear graph. The social history of Simla has, therefore, been unfolded in the stream of historicity.

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CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Not much is known about the early history of Simla Hill States. It appears that the princes of adventurous zeal, owing to territorial greed and Muslim tyranny, initially forayed these hills and established themselves on varying territories in accordance with their might.¹

Prior to the appearance of the Sikh, the Gurkha and the British, the history of the Simla Hill States for many generations seems to have been one of continuous petty warfare between two or three of the larger States, with suzerainty over the smaller States. Bilaspur was constantly at war with Nalagarh and Bashahr with Keonthal and Kullu, Keonthal with Sirmur, Sirmur with Gahrwal. All the smaller independent chiefs had acknowledged a certain degree of subordination to one or other of these more powerful States. The nature of the conditions binding upon the lesser chiefs was different in every case, and in no case did a superior resume for himself the lands of a subordinate.²

While the petty wars among the hill chiefs were ongoing, there arose a formidable power in Nepal called the Gurkhas. They extended their dominions greatly during the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. Amar Singh Thapa, the Gurkha leader, occupied Kumaon, Garhwal, Sirmour and even touched Kangra. He was ousted from Kangra

by Sansar Chand and Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab in 1809. After the ousting, Amar Singh established himself at Arki, the capital of Baghal State. Then he turned his army in 1810 to Jubbal, Balsan and Bashahr and occupied the whole area between the Kali Nadi and the Sutlej river.³

The Gurkhas remained in occupation of the Hill States for about a decade and proved hard and grinding masters. They adopted repressive measures to realise revenue and procure provisions. Many families fled across the Sutlej on their approach, and the tract exhibited the greatest marks of devastation and depopulation.⁴

People were tired of the harsh and tyrannical Gurkha rule. They united themselves and took stand against them. The British government also came to their aid in 1815 A.D. The Gurkhas were compelled to leave the country. But British aid was actually a political trap. They compelled the local rulers to sign certain treaties according to which the paramount power of these rulers passed on to the British Government of India.

The Simla Hill chiefs appear to have enjoyed almost complete independence ever since their first establishment in these hills. They were apparently too insignificant to arouse the jealousy or attract the avarice of the Delhi emperors; and they had the wisdom, while fighting freely amongst themselves, to avoid giving offence to their all powerful Muslim

neighbours, at whose mercy they would have been deemed necessary or desirable.⁵

Prior to the occupation of tract by the British, these States were known as Bara Thakuraies and Athara Thakuraies. These Thakuraies were established by James Baillie Frazer, who was a civilian with a unit of British troops who fought against the Gurkhas in the Anglo-Gurkha war of A.D. 1815. He has provided the following list of these Thakuraies:⁶

Bara Thakuraies

- | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|------------|--------------|
| (1) Keonthal | (4) Kunihar | (7) Mehlog | (10) Kotgarh |
| (2) Baghal | (5) Bhajji | (8) Koti | (11) Theog |
| (3) Kuthar | (6) Dami | (9) Kiaree | (12) Baghat |

Athara Thakuraies

- | | | | |
|---------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| (1) Jubbal | (6) Rawin | (11) Dodra Kwar | (16) Ghund |
| (2) Balsan | (7) Karangla | (12) Saree | (17) Bharoli |
| (3) Kumarsain | (8) Tharoch | (13) Ratesh | (18) Seelee |
| (4) Khaneti | (9) Morni | (14) Koti | |
| (5) Delath | (10) Beja | (15) Mudhan | |

Another list of these Thakuraies has been given by Captain C.P. Kennedy, who was the Superintendent of the Hill States from 1822 to 1835. This list included:⁷

| | | |
|---------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| (1) Keonthal | (7) Mehlog | |
| (2) Baghat | (8) Dhami | |
| (3) Baghal | (9) Koti | tributaries of Keonthal |
| (4) Kuthar | (10) Kiaree | |
| (5) Kumarsain | (11) Kunihar | |
| (6) Bhajji | (12) Mehlog | |

Athara Thakuraies

| | | | |
|--------------|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|
| (1) Jubbal | | (10) Dodra Kawar | |
| (2) Kotgarh | | (11) Theog | Tributaries of Keonthal |
| (3) Balson | | (12) Ghund | |
| (4) Rawin | retained by the British | (13) Punder | |
| (5) Khaneti | are tributaries | (14) Bharoli | was sold to Balsan |
| (6) Karangla | and | (15) Beja | |
| (7) Delath | incorporated | (16) Shangri | |

| | | |
|-----------|------|--------------|
| (8) Saree | with | (17) Darkoti |
| (9) Nawar | | Bushahr |

There was also a third list of the Thakuraies which had been given by Captain R. Ross, who was the first Political Agent of these Thakuraies.⁸ In the above mentioned records and other literature written upto 1830, the twelve and eighteen Thakuraies listed separately were called by the names of Bara Thakuraies and Athara Thakuraies respectively. There were discrepancies in the lists given by James Billie Frazer, C.P. Kennedy and R. Ross. Frazer includes the Thakuraies of Kotgarh and Theog in the list of Bara Thakuraies, which were spread in the upper hill valleys whereas Capt. Kennedy includes them in Athara Thakuraies. The Thakurai of Kumarsain, located in the upper hill valley, had been included in the list of Bara Thakuraies by Capt. Kennedy and Capt. Ross whereas Frazer mentions it in Athara Thakuraies. The major discrepancy in the list of Capt. Ross was that he only includes fourteen Thakuraies in the list of Athara Thakuraies.

The Bara Thakuraies were spread in the lower Simla Hills and the Athara Thakuraies were in the upper hill valleys of the river Sutlej, Pabbar and Tons.

Athara Thakuraies

(1) Jubbal

Among the Athara Thakuraies some were of considerable size and importance, particularly Jubbal.⁹ Tradition has it that before the 12th century, the ancestors of the rulers of Jubbal were rulers of Sirmour. They belonged to the Rathore clan of Chandravanshi Rajputs. Their shifting from Sirmour to Jubbal is accounted for in the following manner.¹⁰ Ugra Chand, the Raja of Sirmour had a summer palace at Soonpur, which is known as Hatkoti, on the right bank of the Pabbar river. While he was having a pleasant time in the company of his three sons, he had to go back to Sirmour on State business. Leaving his family behind, he went thither, but owing to the rains, the river was in flood.¹¹ His capital Sirmauri Tal was swept away by the flood in Giri river, and he and his principal officers found watery graves, and there was none to carry the news to the royal children. A prince of the Jaisalmer house, present there at the time, on pilgrimage to Badrinath, asked his son Sobha to march and occupy the vacant throne. Soon he was installed on the gaddi by the priests of the principality and thus the country was once for all lost to the descendants of Ugra Chand.

The three sons of Ugra Chand - Kuran Chand, Mool Chand and Duni Chand became the founders of the States of Jubbal, Sari and Rawin in the Giri and Pabbar basins.¹²

At the time of the Gurkha invasion, Jubbal was a tributary of Sirmour, but during the occupation it became separated in 1815. Rana Puran Chand was granted an independent *sanad* by the British. The *sanad* prescribed the maintenance of 70 *begaris* at the permanent service of Government. This condition was subsequently commuted to the annual tribute of Rs. 2520.¹³ The area of Jubbal was 288 sq.mile, and the population according to the census of 1921 was 21,172 and the revenue Rs. 1,90,000.

Balson and Ratesh

Balson was for many years a tributary of Sirmur. At the time of the Gurkha invasion, it was, however, subordinate to Kumarsain. Thakur Jagraj assisted the British forces, his principal exploit being the capture of the Nagain fort with an army of a hundred Gurkhas, which he handed over to General Ochterlony. At the close of the war he was granted an independent *sanad*. Jagraj again behaved with loyalty during the mutiny when he sheltered and entertained several European refugees from Simla. In acknowledgment of these services he was given a *khillat* in 1858 and the hereditary title of Rana was conferred on the chief of Balson.¹⁴

The area of Balson was 51 sq. miles, the population according to the census of 1921 being 61,000 and the revenue Rs. 84,000/-.

Ratesh

Thakur Hira Singh of Ratesh in the Simla Hills was a feudatory of the Raja of Keothal and was one of the smallest of the semi-independent rulers of these small States. Before the Gurkhas came, Ratesh was a flourishing little duchy but when General Ochterlony swept these hills, the ruler, Kishan Singh was a boy of six or seven years of age, an exile at Sirmour, and there was no one to look after his interests. Keonthal annexed four of the Ratesh parganas and the remainder was seized in 1820 by the Rana of Balson. Subsequently, the Keonthal Raja was forced by the British to restore the territory to the State of the Ratesh Thakuraies.¹⁵ However, the parganas swallowed by Balson were not restored to Ratesh by the British or the British were so obliged to Balson for the latter's help against Gurkhas and subsequent, unswearing loyalty that Balson retained what it had grabbed.

The area of Ratesh was 12 sq. miles, the population according to 1921 census was 499 and revenue Rs. 625/-.

Delath Thakuraies

Delath was a tributary of Bashahr, paying Rs. 150/- per annum to the Raja in acknowledgement of his supremacy. The wazir of Bashahr was also entitled to receive an allowance of Rs. 30/- from the Thakur of Delath whose gross income was only Rs. 550/- per annum. The chief at the time, Thakur

Narendra Singh, exercised full powers, but sentences of death required confirmation by the Superintendent, Hill States. He had married a daughter of the late Thakur Sarn Chand of Kanethi.

The family was an old one, and was held in high respect by the people of the Simla Hills.¹⁶

Kanethi

Kanethi was situated between Narkanda and Kotgur.¹⁷ When Uggur Chand died, Sansar Chand got Karangla and Sabir Chand and Jai Singh came to Khanethi and started by jointly ruling Kumharsain, Khanethi, Kotgarh and Kotkhai.¹⁸ During the Gurkha invasion, Thakur Rasal Chand fled to Bashahr and received shelter and assistance from the Raja. This circumstance was asserted as furnishing the sole ground for any claim over Khaneti by Bashahr at the end of the Gurkha war.¹⁹

The area of Khaneti was 100 sq.miles ,the population was 2,575 and the revenue Rs. 4000.

Kotkhai Thakuraies

Kotkhai was bounded by independent States, on the north by Bushahr, on the south by Keonthal, on the west by Keonthal, Kumharsain and Balson and on the east by Darkoti

and Jubbal. It forms one of the Athara Thakuraies, and was formerly subject successively to Keonthal and Bashahr.

Theog, Madhan and Ghund Thakurai

Theog, Madhan and Ghund had a common origin. The traditional account holds that a Chandel Rajput of Jaipur, who made a pilgrimage to Badrinath, taking fancy to the hill country, settled at Ram Serai in Garhwal. He afterwards moved to Bilaspur, and had four sons, all of whom founded petty principalities. Janjan Singh founded Ghund, the second son founded Madhan and the eldest son, Jas Chand founded the State of Theog.²⁰

Theog

Jas Chand came from Bilaspur some centuries ago and settled at ^{Jai}Theog, north-east of Simla, becoming a feudatory of the Keonthal chiefs. The Keonthal Raja had no power of interference so long as the Thakur was not in arrears with his tribute. The latter exercised full criminal and civil jurisdiction within the limits of his States, but capital sentences required the confirmation of the Superintendent of Hill States.²¹

Thakur Bhup Singh, great grandfather of the then chief, Padam Chand was removed in 1856 for misconduct and his son

Hari Chand appointed in his stead. A grant of Rs. 500/- per annum was made to the father who died ten years later.²²

The area of Theog was 144 sq. miles, the population was 5,654 and the revenue Rs. 10,000.

Madhan

Madhan or Kiari lay between 31°12'N and 77°21' and 77°26'E.²³

The Thakur of Madhan, who was a tributary of the Keonthal Raja, ruled over half-a-dozen small villages between Phagu and Matiana to the north of the road between Simla and Kotgarh. The then chief Thakur Randhir Chand succeeded his father on the 31st December, 1905.²⁴

The area of Madhan was 9 sq.miles, the population was 3,704 and the revenue Rs. 6000/.

Ghund

The State was a Thakurai, but the late chief Bishan Singh, who died in 1907, was only designated Tikka, because he failed to pay to the Raja of Keonthal the *nazarana* due for his installation. His son Ranjit Singh had come of age, but had not yet been given control of the State. Disorders rendered it necessary to appoint a Government Manager at the death of

Tikka Bishan Singh (seventeenth generation from Janjan Singh) to carry out a regular settlement, and otherwise put things straight.²⁵

The area of Ghund was 28 sq.miles, population was 1927 and the revenue Rs. 2000/.

Tharoch

Tharoch was formerly a part of the Sirmour State. At the time of the expulsion of the Gurkhas, its chief was Thakur Karam Singh. He, however, was old and infirm and the administration of the State was in the hands of his brother Jhobu. On Karam Singh's death in 1819 the State was granted to Jhobu, with the obligation to supply 8 *begaris* imposed by the *sanad*, being later commuted to an annual cash payment of Rs. 288. Jhobu was accused of being guilty of misgovernment in favour of his son Syam Singh. As a result he was made to abdicate in 1841 when the State was incorporated in Jubbal. In 1843, however, it was restored to Ranjit Singh, son of Karam Singh on his agreeing to continue the annual payment of Rs. 288/-.²⁶

Ranjit Singh died in 1871 and was succeeded by his grandson Kidar Singh. He died in 1902 and was succeeded by his minor son, Rana Surat Singh, who was formally vested

with powers in 1908. In 1929 the personal title of Rana was conferred on Thakur Surat Singh.²⁷

The area of Tharoch was 75 square miles, the population according to the census of 1921 was 4200 and the revenue Rs. 1,30,000/-. The State was liable to the operation of the *nazarana* rules upto 1911 when on the occasion of the Coronation Darbar all such levies were abolished.²⁸

Dhadi

The ruling family was a branch of that of Tharoch and it is surmised that the Dhadi village may once have been part of Tharoch State.²⁹

At the time of the Gurkha war, we find no mention of Dhadi and it was in all probability subordinate to the original State of Rawin. After the establishment of British rule in these hills, the district officers of Simla seem to have looked upon Rawin and Dhadi as British territories held by hereditary jagirdars. Dhadi was included in the settlement of Rawin made in 1841 by an amin, Kum Das, under the orders of Mr. Erskine, Superintendent, Hill States, and in the memorandum attached it was noted that the Mian of Dhadi was subordinate to the Thakur of Rawin. In 1866, a dispute of forest ownership between Rawin and Dhadi was settled by Colonel Lawrence as though the contending parties were on equal terms.³⁰ In 1891,

when Mr. Coldstream held his enquiry into the status of Rawin and Dhadi, the former preferred no claim to superiority over Dhadi and the Government's final decision was that the two States were independent of one another, though nominally feudatory to Jubbal.³¹

The annual income of the State was Rs. 1200/- from all sources. Of this amount Rs. 900/- was the forest tilte, leased in 1879 to the Forest Department of the United Provinces, and included in Jaunsar Division of the Dehradun district.³²

The area of Dhadi was 25 sq. miles, the population was 247, and the revenue Rs.1400/.

Sangri and Koti Thakurai

Sangri was situated on the left bank of the Sutlej, above Kotguru, and near Kumharsain.³³ Sangri was originally a tributary of Bashahr, tribute being realized by Raja Man Singh of Kullu some time during the first half of the eighteenth century. In 1803, it was seized by the Gurkhas, but in 1815 it was restored to its chief, Bikram Singh, who died in 1816 and was succeeded by his son Ajit Singh, who died childless in 1841.³⁴ Jagat Singh, an uncle of Ajit Singh and brother of Bikram Singh, should then have succeeded, but as he was an imbecile, the chieftaincy passed to his son, Ranbir Singh. On the latter's death in 1844, Jagat Singh, the imbecile was

recognised as chief but the State was taken under management and so remained until Jagat Singh's death in 1876.³⁵

The area of Sangri was 16 sq. miles, the population according to the census of 1921 was 3200, and the revenue Rs. 7500/-.

Bara Thakurai

Keonthal Thakurai

Keonthal Thakuraies comprised the five petty States of Koti, Theog, Madhan, Ghund and Ratesh, each paying a small annual tribute, though in many aspects practically independent.³⁶

The State had been held by the then ruling family for many generations. The family was Rajput and the family surname was Sen. They suffered the Gurkha invasion early in the present century in common with the other Hill chiefs. Sansar Sen, great grandfather of the then Raja, was born in exile at Suket, where his father took refuge until rescued by the British in 1814.³⁷

The area of Keonthal state was 116 sq.miles, and the population was 22,499 and the revenue Rs 1,00,000/.

Bhagal Thakurai

The ruling family traces its descent from Aje De, a Panwar Rajput, who came from Ujjain and carved out for himself this kingdom in the hills.³⁸ The Gurkhas overran the State between 1805 and 1815 and for seven years the then chiefs, Rana Jagat Singh, lived in exile in Nalagarh. After the Gurkha campaign, he was restored by the British Government, and confirmed in possession of his State by a *sanad*, dated 3rd September 1815, which bound him to assist the British with troops in time of war, and to keep his roads in order. This *sanad* was enforced with one modification, which was that an annual tribute of Rs. 3,600 was accepted in lieu of *begar* or forced labour.³⁹

Jagat Singh was succeeded by his son, Sheo Saran Singh, who died in 1840 and was succeeded by his son Kishen Singh. In 1860, a *Khillat* was conferred upon him in recognition of his services during the mutiny. Men of his State helped to guard the road from Jullundhar to Simla at a time when an attack at Shimla by the mutineers at Jullandhar was apprehended.⁴⁰

In 1877, Kishan Singh was succeeded by his son Moti Singh, who died a few months later, after which his cousin Dhain Singh succeeded him. In 1904, Dhain Singh was succeeded by his son Bikram Singh, and he in 1922 by his son Raja Surender Singh born in 1909 yet powers. The State was administered by a Manager.⁴¹

The area of Baghal was 124 sq. miles. The population, according to the census of 1921, was 25,000 and the revenue Rs. 1,00,000/-. The State was liable to the operation of the *nazarana* rules upto 1911, when on the occasion of the coronation Darbar all such levies were abolished.⁴²

Baghat Thakurai

Baghat Thakurai was one of the twelve Thakuraies. The tract to the north and east of Solan is drained by the Asni Khad, a tributary of the Giri and the rest of the State by the Gambhar and other tributaries of the Sutlej.⁴³

The house of the Baghat, a Rajput family came originally from Dara Nagri in the Deccan, acquiring the State by conquest. The family name, once Pal became Singh. The ruling house had experienced many vicissitudes of fortune. Being an ally of the Bilaspur Raja, Rana Mohinder Singh remained in possession of his territory under the Gurkha rule. He remained loyal to his friends during the Gurkha war and lost five parganas in consequence, which were made over to Patiala. The remaining three lapsed to the British on his death in 1839 without issue.⁴⁴

The area of Baghat was 28 sq. miles, the population was 1927 and the revenue Rs. 2000/.

Bhaji Thakurai

Bhaji Thakurai lies on the left bank of the Sutlej, due north of Simla. The founder of this State came from Kangra and acquired possession of State by conquest.⁴⁵

The Gurkhas overran the country between 1803 and 1818. They were repulsed by the British Government and the Rana of Bhaji Ruder Pal, grandfather of the Rana, was confirmed as ruler of the State by a *sanad* under the usual conditions of rendering service in times of war. It was under this *sanad* that the Rana held the State while he enjoyed powers of administration similar to those of other Simla Hill chiefs.⁴⁶

The Bhaji was 96 sq.miles, the population was 13,309, and the revenue Rs. 25,000/.

Koti Thakurai

The Koti State adjoins Simla on the east. It was bounded on the north and east by Bhajji, on the west by Patiala, British Simla and Keonthal, and on the south too by Keonthal. Its area was 44 sq. miles and population in 1901 was 7959.⁴⁷ Rana Raghubir Chand was a feudatory of the Keonthal chief. His grandfather received the title of Rana for services rendered during the mutiny. His father Rana Bishan Chand assisted in guarding the station against the approach of the Nasiri Battalion of Gurkhas, whose behaviour at Jutogh, when ordered

to proceed to the plains, brought them under the suspicion of disloyalty, and he afterwards gave shelter to many Europeans who had left Simla.⁴⁸

Dhami Thakurai

The Dhami State lies to the west of Simla about six miles from Jutogh. The Rana was a Rajput, his ancestors having fled from Rajpura near Patiala and settled at Dhami, when Shahab-ud-din Ghauri's invasion of India took place in the fourteenth century. The State was originally a feudatory of Bilaspur but became independent after the expulsion of the Gurkhas in 1815.⁴⁹ The *sanad* of independence was granted to Rana Gobardhan Singh, who at the age of twelve fought under General Ochterlony against the Gurkhas. The Rana's loyal services in the mutiny were acknowledged by a remission of half the State tribute of Rs. 720/- for his lifetime.⁵⁰

The area of Dhami was 26 sq.miles, the population was 4,505, and the revenue Rs. 10,000/.

Mehlog Thakurai

The Thakurs of Mehlog were Rajputs and had established themselves in the Simla Hills for some hundred of years. The founder of the State came from Ajudhya and eventually settled at Pata, which had been the capital of the State for twenty one

generations. The State used to pay tribute to the Mughal Emperors through Bilaspur. It was occupied by the Gurkhas from 1803 to 1815.⁵¹ During the Gurkha occupation Thakur Sansar Chand of Mahlog took refuge in Nalagarh. He was restored in 1815. The obligation to supply 40 *begaris* imposed by the *sanad* was later commuted to an annual cash payment of Rs. 1,440/-.⁵²

Sansar Chand, to whom the *sanad* was granted, died in 1849 and was succeeded by Dalip Chand, who was followed by Thakur Raghunath Chand.⁵³

The area of Mehlog was 43 sq. miles, the population was 8,968, and revenue Rs. 25,000/.

Kunihar Thakurai

On the expulsion of the Gurkhas, Thakur Mangreo Deo was confirmed in the chieftaincy of Kunihar. Mungree Deo died in 1816 and was succeeded by his son, Kishan Singh, who died in 1866. Kishan Singh was succeeded by his son Tegh Singh, who died in 1905. Tegh Singh was succeeded by his son Hardeo Singh, who was born in 1898. Thakur Hardeo Singh succeeded as a minor and received ruling powers in 1917.⁵⁴

The area of Kunihar was 80 sq. miles, the population, according to the census of 1921 was 2000, and the revenue Rs. 18,000/-.⁵⁵

Kuthar Thakurai

In early times Kuthar seems to have been tributary in turn to Nalagarh and Bilaspur. At the time of the Gurkha invasion it was however tributary to Keonthal. During the Gurkha occupation, Rana Gopal Singh took refuge at Manimajra in the Ambala district. He died on his way back to Kuthar at the end of the war and the State was conferred on his son Bhup Singh. The *sanad* granted to Bhup Singh prescribed the maintenance of 40 *begaris* at the service of the Government. This number was later reduced to 30 and was commuted to an annual cash payment of Rs. 1,000/-⁵⁶

The area of Kuthar was 20 sq.miles, the population was 4,195, and revenue Rs. 16,000/.

Beja Thakurai

Beja was a small State of four sq. miles lying on the western slopes of the Kasauli hill.⁵⁷

On the expulsion of the Gurkhas, the State was restored to Thakur Man Chand. The obligation to supply 5 *begaris* imposed by the *sanad* was later commuted to an annual cash payment of Rs. 180. This was reduced by Rs. 56/- per annum in 1892, as compensation for a small area of land incorporated within the Kasauli cantonment.⁵⁸

The area of Beja was 4 sq.miles, and population was 1,131 and revenue Rs. 6000/.

Mangal Thakurai

The Mangal State lay on the bank of the Sutlej, near Bilaspur, to which it was once a tributary. The Rana was declared independent in 1815 after the expulsion of the Gurkhas. He exercised sovereign powers subject to the usual political supervision of the Superintendent of Hill States.⁵⁹

The area of Mangal was 12 sq.miles, the population was 1227 and the revenue Rs. 900/.

After the expulsion of the Gurkhas in 1815, by the British Government with the help of the chiefs of Hill States, these States came under the protection of British Government. The Hill States were formed in accordance with the British Government's decision to restore as far as possible, the position of affairs existing at the beginning of the Gurkha occupation, with the reservation of the States to be independent of one another and subject to the British Government.⁶⁰

The British Government granted *sanads* to the chiefs of the Thakuraies. The Thakuraies of Kumarsain, Balsan, Kuthar, Mangal and Dhami were constituted into separate chieftainships and granted independent *sanads* while the

Thakuraies of Khaneti and Dealth were conferred upon the State of Bushahr. The Thakurai of Rawin and Dhandi were given to Jubbal and those of Koti, Theog, Madhan, Ghund and Ratesh to Keonthal. The States in which the cantonment and forts of Subathu, Kotgarh and Rawin were situated were, however, retained by the British Government.⁶¹

The following were the dates of the *sanads* granted to the Thakuraies and the names of their chiefs:⁶²

| | | | |
|-----|----------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. | Bilaspur | Raja Maha Chand | 6th March, 1815 |
| 2. | Baghal | Raja Jagat Singh | 3rd Sept., 1815 |
| 3. | Kuthar | Rana Bhup Singh | 3rd Sept., 1815 |
| 4. | Baghat | Raja Mohinder Singh | 4th Sept., 1815 |
| 5. | Bhajji | Rana Ruderal | 4th Sept., 1815 |
| 6. | Dhami | Goverdhan Singh | 4th Sept., 1815 |
| 7. | Mehlog | Thakur Sansar Chand | 4th Sept., 1815 |
| 8. | Beja | Thakur Man Chand | 4th Sept., 1815 |
| 9. | Keonthal | Rana Sansar Chand | 6th Sept., 1815 |
| 10. | Balson | Thakur Jog Raj | 6th Sept., 1815 |
| 11. | Nalagarh | Raja Ram Singh | 20th Oct., 1815 |
| 12. | Jubbal | Rana Puran Chand | 18th Nov., 1815 |
| 13. | Shangri | Rana Bikramjeet Singh | 16th Dec., 1815 |

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 14. | Mangal | Rana Bahadur Singh | 20th December, 1815 |
| 15. | Darkoti | Rana Sutes Ram | 1815 |
| 16. | Kunihar | Thakur Mangan Deo | 1815 |
| 17. | Kumarsain | Rana Kehar Singh | 7th Feb., 1816 |
| 18. | Bushahr | Raja Mohinder Singh | 8th Feb., 1816 |
| 19. | Tharoch | Thakur Jobhu | 31st Jan., 1819 |

By these *sanads* the chieftaincies of the Hill states were put under certain obligations towards the British Government. They were to allow free passage to the British Government, and to the British merchants and their goods in their territories. They also had to furnish *begaris* and construct roads and repair old ones in their respective territories. The bigger States were bound to join the British army with their armed retainers and hill porters when called upon to do so at the time of war. They were required to redress the grievances of their people, promote their welfare and improve the working conditions in general and to ensure the safety of the roads. The chiefs exercised full ruling powers in their respective territories but the capital punishment passed by the chiefs was required to be confirmed by the Superintendent Simla Hill States before it was carried out.⁶³

Darkoti was the only Thakurai, which was not under any obligation in respect of *begar* or supplies for the use of British troops.⁶⁴

Bushahr was the only State from which an annual tribute of Rs. 15,000/- was exacted (*Sanad* No. III) by the British Government on the restoration of the States to the Hill chiefs. In 1847, this tribute was reduced to Rs. 3,945/- as a compensation for the abolition of transit duty.⁶⁵

After the establishment of British control and influence in this region, twenty eight Hill States came to constitute the Simla Hill States. The following were the Simla Hill States :

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| (1) Bilaspur (Kahlur) | |
| (2) Bushahr | |
| (3) Delath | Feudatories of Bushahr |
| (4) Khaneti | |
| (5) Nalagarh (Hindur) | |
| (6) Keonthal | |
| (7) Koti | Zaildar of Keonthal |
| (8) Theog | |
| (9) Madhan | |
| (10) Ghund | |
| (11) Ratesh | |
| (12) Jubbal | |
| (13) Kumarsain | |

- (14) Bhajji
- (15) Mehlog
- (16) Balson
- (17) Dhami
- (18) Kuthar
- (19) Kunihar
- (20) Baghal
- (21) Baghat
- (22) Mangal
- (23) Beja
- (24) Darkoti
- (25) Tharoch
- (26) Shangri
- (27) Rawin
- (28) Dhandi

Feudatories of Jubbal

These States were placed under the supervision of Lieutenant Ross, the Assistant Political Agent posted at Sabathu. He was followed by Capt. Charles Pratt Kennedy who remained Political Agent from 1822 to 1835. After Capt. Charles Pratt. Keneddy, Col. Tapp became Political Agent. The

Political Agent was redesignated as Deputy commissioner of Simla and Superintendent of Simla Hill States, subordinate to the President, Delhi (and after 1911, Ambala). From 1858 to 1935, the Deputy Commissioner of Simla was also *ex-officio* Superintendent of twenty eight small hill States, known as Simla Hill States. From October 1936 till August 1947, the Simla Hill States were placed in direct relation with the Government of India. The Political Agent, Punjab Hill States Agency stepped into the shoes of the Superintendent, Hill States. This was the crucial and last phase of British Paramountcy.⁶⁶

II

In the foregoing pages, an overview has been given from the eighteen Thakuraies in the upper Simla Hills which existed in British times beginning from 1815 to 1947. It should, however, be noted that these Thakuraies were not created by the British, but in fact existed for varying spans of time prior to the coming of British and consolidation of their paramountcy through the years. The paramount power made no significant changes in their structure and administration. The changes they carried out pertained to altering the feudatory relationship of certain small States with the big States or they removed certain rulers for reasons of misgovernance, appointing in their place their sons, brothers of kith and kin, never violating the so-called royalty paradigm.

The very fact that there were so many Thakuraies by the standards of Rajasthan, Punjab, MadhyaPradesh small, medium and large though not extensive in area shows that in terms of social history life and culture remained essentially localised. The outlook of the people inhabiting these States, small, medium and large was primarily localised which reflected in the institution of the worship of the village devtas - a custom which fortunately continues to this day. The writer of this dissertation has had many opportunities to talk to scores of elderly people who lived in the States during these times. The writer was told that the people of different States used to be jealous of one another with each State inhabitant asserting the superiority of his or her State. They indulged in criticising other states no end. Though this assertion of superiority and shadow talk, a favourite pastime has disappeared with the abolition of the States and their integration into what is called Himachal Pradesh, but the residual effect of this fractured, fragmented legacy still continues. This localism, in fact sub-localism should be noted because in the neighbouring Punjab, the Punjabies do not split themselves socially and culturally into such fragments. To this day we have not experienced the genuine emergence of a Pan-Himachal mystique or outlook.

It must, however, be stated that with the undisputed rule of the paramount power the localised Himachalies from 1815 to 1947 began to realise though dimly or in a crepuscular way, that there existed beyond the narrow confines of their small

States a big wide world. With the passage of time and especially with the coming up of the Praja Mandal movement, which began to challenge the arbitrariness of the local rulers on one hand and begar, in particular, and the might of the British empire on the other, the localised awareness received here and there a few pulverising blows. Hundreds of Himachalies fought in the First World War and the Second World War and naturally, upon returning home, they had an impacting loosening effect on the rigid local mores.

Another positive effect of the Paramount Power in the history of Simla Hill States, is that it put an end to skirmishing, feuding and 'sabre-rattling' on the part of the Rajas and Ranas. For centuries the chief feature of the State's history was the perennial triangular contest between Keonthal, Sirmour and Bashahr in the course of which first one and the then another became supreme, and in turn lost its position. Such past times became a thing of the past. Perhaps, the origin of the stone pelting affair, described on page 211, lies, speaking historically, in the conflicts among the Rajas and Ranas before British rule which granted a degree of autonomy.

To encapsulate, the British Raj definitely made a dent on the insular localism of the inhabitants of Simla Hill States. It sliced and cut into the local culture - its customs and mores. As time passed, the impact increased, people being exposed to the movement of the British and Indian traders and to outsiders. The dwellers/inhabitants realised that outside the

narrow boundaries of their claustrophobic States, there was the big, wide world out there.

The British Raj has to be welcomed not only because it rid Simla Hills of the tyranny of the lawless, despotic rule of the Gurkhas, but also because it ensured an overall uniformity of law and administration.

III

Popular Movements in Simla Hill States

Hill people have always resisted the alien elements and internal oppression. Raja Bidhi Chand of Kangra organized a confederation of all the hill chiefs between Jammu and Kangra in 1588-89 A.D. against the supremacy of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, which result in rebellion. In 1594-95, there was another rebellion against the oppressors led by the Rajas of Jasrota and Jaswan. Nurpur's chief, Raja Basu, his son Raja Jagat Singh and grandson Raja Rajrup Singh also revolted against the Mughal authority of Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjahan respectively. Such rebellions were of frequent occurrence among the hill chiefs.⁶⁷

Revolt of 1857

The 1857 War of Independence had its echoes in these hills too. Raja Shamsher Singh of Rampur Bashahr refused to pay tribute, offered no aid and even refused ordinary supplies.

Only the non-availability of troops prevented the Deputy Commissioner of Simla from coercing him. He, however, recommended that the Raja be deposed, and that the State be taken under direct British management.

In 1857 a battalion of British army stationed at Jutogh, which mainly consisted of hill Rajputs and Gurkhas, revolted against their British officers. Subedar Bhim Singh also revolted along with his platoon at Kasauli and reached Jutogh. The British, then living at Shimla, panicked. Ultimately, the revolt was crushed. Subedar Bhim Singh was sentenced to death but he escaped to Rampur. On hearing of the failure of revolt, he committed suicide. All these events slowly and steadily aroused a feeling of patriotism among the hill people.

Hill States people also took up arms against slavery and feudalism. There were many instances of the people revolting against the rule of terror and injustice. In 1859 the people of Rampur Bushahr revolted against the high-handedness of the government officials in recruiting forced labour. In 1876, the people of Nalagarh rose against the atrocities committed by Ghulam Qadir Khan, the minister of the State. In 1883 and 1930 the subjects of Bilaspur revolted against the rule of oppression, injustice and high handedness by the State officials. In 1905, the people of Baghal State too revolted against their chief.

In 1939 a session of All India State peoples conference was held at Ludhiana in which it was decided to form 'Prajā Mandals' in the hill States. As a result of these steps a general awakening grew among the hill people. Praja Mandalas were organised in Chamba, Mandi, Bilaspur, Bushahr, Jubbal, Sirmur and other small hill States.⁶⁸

IV

Dhami Firing Tragedy

Soon after the formation of various Praja Mandalas, the Dhami Praja Mandal decided to test its strength. It passed resolutions asking for abolition of begar, reduction of land revenue by fifty percent, and grant of civil liberties. The resolutions further demanded the establishment of a responsible government in Dhami and removal of the restrictions on the State subject.

The people of the small State of Dhami united and formed an association named 'Prem Pracharini Sabha Dhami State' in 1937. Initially, this organisation worked for the social upliftment of the masses, but after two years changed into a political organisation under the name 'Dhami Riyasti Praja Mandal' (13th July 1939) and shifted its centre from Dhami to Simla for political activities.

The Dhami Praja Mandal, under its leader Sita Ram, presented a charter of demands⁶⁹ before its ruler Rana Dalip Singh, which, however, was rejected. Later, a deputation led by

Bhag Mal Sahota marched towards Dhami on July 16, 1939 for the realization of their demands. The Dhami Rana arrested Bhag Mal near 'Ghang Ki Hatti'. The confrontation between Praja Mandalists and the Dhami ruler led to the Dhami firing tragedy, resulting in the death of two persons and injuries to many others.

The Dhami firing tragedy proved a turning point in the hill people's struggle for social and political reforms. The national leaders, Pt. Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi, were informed about the tragic happenings who condemned the firing and directed the Standing Committee of the Congress and All India States People Conference to hold an enquiry. The Enquiry Committee presided over by Lala Duni Chand, Advocate gave a number of suggestions.⁷⁰

Whatever the other results of the Dhami firing tragedy might have been, it cannot be denied that the tragic event exposed the miserable conditions not only in Dhami State but in the other Hill States also. The event occupies an important place in the growth of social and political consciousness against the Hill State rulers and British imperialism.⁷¹

V

Praja Mandal Movement**Bilaspur**

Unrest amongst the agriculturists, was invariably a potent cause of development of political consciousness and excessive land revenue generally acted as an igniting spark. The first land revenue settlement in 1905 had already doubled the incidence of land revenue as compared to that in the adjoining British territories of Kangra and Hoshiarpur District.⁷² There were other grievances too, such as high rates of *nazarana*, fishing licence fee and other taxes, indiscriminate policy of forest officers and high-handed behaviour of the revenue staff who were publicly accused of molesting village ladies.⁷³ As a result of the failure of the authorities to satisfy the people, the unrest took the form of an organised rising against the unjust and unfair imposition of the council.⁷⁴

Postwar political developments in India and the return of Indian National Army personnel to their homes in the State had its repercussions. A few young men from the State stealthily attended the Udaipur session of AISPC, and, on their return tried to secretly enlist members of 'Bilaspur Rajya Praja Mandal' which had been organised by the people of the State working and living in Simla. It issued a number of tracks and pamphlets pinpointing the deterioration of the situation as a result of the absence of civil liberties in Bilaspur.⁷⁵

Bashahr

The people of this State too, as of other States, were burdened with numerous levies and executions. In general such burdens were tolerated. However, in rare circumstances, people would organize a 'Dujm' (Satyagraha) to register their protest against some State officials and also to express their resentment at unredressed grievances.

The 'Himalaya Riyasti Praja Mandal' was organised in December, 1939, and was made responsible for directing the activities of the political and social workers in numerous Hill States.⁷⁶ To rouse people, it undertook to organise public meetings at different places in various Simla Hill States, publish tracts and pamphlets, collect data about injustices on the hill people to represent their case before the Political Agent and the Rajas and Ranas through deputation and memoranda, and encouraged people to refuse to pay unjust taxes and perform Begar.⁷⁷

A Wazir of a State wrote, "They were advised by the Praja Mandal people that the kolies should go to jail and die for the cause, but should never yield to the prescribed begar."⁷⁸

Entry of Praja Mandal workers began to be banned by the Ranas of small States like Ghund, Theog, Balson, Baghal, Bhajji, Beja, Darkoti and Keonthal under the pretext that the policy of their State was that no outsider should be allowed to represent the case of their State subjects.

The Bashahr Praja Mandal was reactivated after its long hibernation in 1945. During this period, other organisations like 'Bushahr Sudhar Sammelan', 'Sewak Mandal, Delhi' and 'Bushahr Prem Sabha' were also organised by the people of Rampur Bushahr. The Bushahr Praja Mandal launched a satyagraha in March 1947.⁷⁹

A Prem Pracharni Sabha, Dhamsi State' was organised in 1937. It converted itself into 'Dhamsi Riyasti Praja Mandal' on 13th July, 1939. These resolutions asked for the abolition of begar, reduction of land revenue by fifty percent, recognition of Riyasti Praja Mandal, Dhamsi and the grant of civil liberties.⁸⁰

VI

Kunihar

A few public spirited men who raised their voice against the highhanded ways of the Rana in 1920, were charged with sedition and were imprisoned. On their release in 1928, these workers shifted to Simla and carried on their work from there. A Praja Mandal was organised in 1939 at Simla which decided to move into the State territory. 'The Kunihar Praja Mandal' was declared an unlawful body by the Rana on 13th June, 1939. A deputation waited upon the Rana on 8th July, 1939, to acquaint him with their demands. The Rana decided to accept the demands and agreed to preside over a meeting of the Praja Mandal on 9th July, 1939. Not only the people of Kunihar but

also of Dhami, Bhajji, Nalagarh, Mehlog and Baghal also attended. The General Secretary of Simla Hills Riyasti Praja Mandal, were present at the meeting. The 'Rana' publicly declared the acceptance of the demands. In this largely attended meeting, the Kunihar Praja Mandal was recognised and declared lawful and given the authority to nominate members on the said committee.

Namol Tragedy

The workers of the newly organised Praja Mandal lost no time in rallying the people and launching a formal agitation against the State authorities for the protection of their fundamental rights. The workers, led by Pt. Padam Dev, Sada Ram, N.D. Shastri, Daulat Ram, Shyamanand, Thakur Dutt Shastri and others marched from Simla to Bilaspur State to present their case before the Raja. But on the State boundary, they found their way barred by a force of about three hundred strong militia with Raja Anand Chand as its head. The processionists were attacked and beaten mercilessly.⁸¹

The agitation for a democratic set-up in Bilaspur, however, continued. On 2nd December, 1946, the Bilaspur Praja Mandal leaders submitted a memorandum to the Raja requesting the latter to end the policy of repression and to introduce reforms in the State, failing which a satyagraha would be launched. A report was also sent to the All India

States People's Conference about the atrocities of the Raja and the deteriorating situation in the State.⁸²

Pajhota Andolan

Apart from the Praja Mandal, some Kisan leaders, inspired by the ongoing Quit India Movement, formed a Kisan Sabha for the protection of the economic interests of the cultivators. The workers of the association, led by Lakshmi Singh⁸³, Vaid Surat Singh and ChuChu Main⁸⁴ etc., organised protest movements in the forms of satyagraha and non-cooperation. Their main demands included: (i) improvement of farmers condition by providing agricultural facilities; (ii) democratisation of administrative machinery; and, (iii) the establishment of a responsible government in Sirmour.

The kisan movement, started under the leadership of Vaid Surat Singh in October, 1942, was popularly known as the Pajhota Andolan.

The Pajhota Andolan was so well organised that the State imposed martial law in the Pajhota area. The people were hunted down, harassed and beaten in several villages. The Pajhota Andolan was both agrarian as well as political in nature. Its political stance in particular, found ready sympathy and assistance from the Praja Mandal leaders. In all probability, the leader of the Kisan Sabha only wanted the redressal of their grievances directly by the ruler, but the

latter's powerful advisors misled him into the false belief' that the agitators were bent upon humiliating him.⁸⁵

To refer again to the Praja Mandal activities, the demand for self-government in Sirmour gathered momentum around 1945 when the leaders of the Himalayan Hill States Regional Council and Simla Riyasti Praja Mandal attended a large conference at Nahan on 24-25th August, 1945 and passed a resolution asking the Sirmour chiefs to associate people in the State administration. Due to the mounting pressure from the praja mandalists, the ruler finally agreed to the formation of a Rajya Parishad.

The State, however, through a clever legal manoeuvre, debarred several voters on the basis of a mandatory year's continuous stay in the State. The Praja Mandal leaders sent reports to the All India State People's Conference for further guidance for the State agitation. It was decided by the Praja Mandal to boycott the constitutional reforms of the Rajya Parishad. The campaign for a democratic set-up and removal of the ruler, continued till 13th March, 1948 and finally the goal of the merger of Sirmur State in Himachal Pradesh was achieved after the merger document was signed in the presence of about thirty thousand people.

The unpleasant chapter of the despotic and autocratic rule of the hill chiefs thus ended mainly due to the effort of the Praja Mandal leaders and workers.

The last ten pages or so provide a fast paced survey of the Praja Mandal Movement, its groundwork being laid during a 1939 conference held in Ludhiana. Under this aegis, the Praja Mandal Movement became a part of the freedom struggle, giving a clarion call to the people in the Simla Hill States people. The subject of this dissertation is the rise and revolt against begar, injustices, and iniquities of the local Rajas. In the hills the first Praja Mandal Movement was formed in Bashahr from where it spread to Nalagarh and Bilaspur respectively, but after the Dhamsi firing incident the spark turned gradually into nearly a conflagration, i.e. the movement became well-nigh pervasive, and in due course the Praja Mandal became not merely a forum for majority rights but also, as already mentioned, an integral part of the freedom movement of India. The history of Simla Hill States from 1857 to 1947, shows that the Simla Hill States passed from a dark-age under the rulership of chieftains to a certain measure of protection with the British and finally a massive awakening with a greatly larger All-India identity.

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CHAPTER III

GENERAL SOCIAL LIFE

The preceding chapter dealt with the defeat of the Gurkhas from Simla Hills by the Britishers—a cakewalk as it was not a protracted, long-drawn out war. The Gurkha rulers of the Simla Hills and their armies were remnants of General Thapa's army which had been decisively licked by Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his troops in alliance with the Dogra soldiers of Maharaja Sansar Chand of Kangra.

So, the British established themselves easily in the Simla Hills. In any case, they did not go for any radical surgical change in the existing system of Thakuraies, content to bring about certain minuscule changes in the existing feudatory system, according autonomy to certain Thakuraies including some very small States. Without interfering in the internal affairs in any obtrusive way, they, however, established the rule of law and a respect for governance with the passage of time. The paramount power retained the right of capital punishment with itself and through their Political Agent ensured the Thakuraies' rulers proper behaviour. In lieu of its control, the British Government or the paramount power exacted a certain revenue varying from Thakurai to Thakurai in accordance with their financial position. The paramount power also required from time to time a certain number of begaries for transport for the comfort of their administrative

officers and entourage as well as for official itineraries throughout Simla Hills.

With a new turn in history, which historians emphasise, the social life of the people did not undergo a sudden change. In any case, the establishment of the paramount power could not have brought about any great social change. The Britishers did not disrupt the existing socio-cultural patterns of caste and religion. The British were unlike Spaniards who foisted Christianity with blood and sword on the original natives of Mexico, Latin America South America with the exception of Brazil was conquered by the Portuguese. Both Spain and Portugal, however, allured and used force with proselytizing zeal.

So, the social cultural life of the people of Simla Hills continued uninterrupted and undisrupted as it had been for centuries. Officially, the Simla Hill States peoples were predominantly Hindu with Buddhism operative on the sidelines as it is today in Kinnaur. At this point, we shall throw light on Buddhism before examining the predominant Hindu faith around which the socio-cultural life of the people was organised in pageantry and colour of spectacle and music.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the hill society was deeply involved in various finishing their native religion. They were not like Portuguese who imposed through religious beliefs and practices. Regarding the religion and

religious beliefs of the people of Jubbal, Fraser (1815) noticed that they practiced Hinduism, but were overwhelmed by superstitious beliefs and adoration of devis and devtas. Likewise, he found the people of Bushahr and Kumharsain Hindus while the Kinnaur people were Hindus who generally observed the Lama religion as an instance of religio-cultural mixing. All the inhabitants of Bushahr and Kumharsain as well as those near the plains were Hindus. They worshipped the chief Hindu deities, adored and protected the cow, and somewhat blindly followed, according to Frazer, the practices and rites of Hinduism but were Hindus in a different from (which Frazer interpreted as degraded) and were thus of a 'truly ignorant' state, mingling religion with superstitious beliefs. In every village, there were temples of different Hindu divinities, varying from Mahadev or Shiva, to Ganesh, Bhawanee and Kali. However, there was an infinite variety of village deities of their own to whom they played much adoration and their temples were found everywhere.¹ Regarding the religion and religious beliefs of the people in Theog area, Gore (1890) writes : "Indeed the Hinduism of these hill men is sadly unorthodox, for though Hindus in name, and honouring the names of the Hindu divinities, they are practically demon worshippers, whose religion is in proportion to their superstition. The true believer is called upon to put his faith in deos and devis, the divine being, the Rishis and Munis whose good deeds have earned for them a place in heaven, and in

Jognis, the forest fairies and Nag, the serpent god ! But it is truly faith without words, for the chief efforts required by their religion in the feeling of the holy man of village, to prevent calling down the wrath of the gods upon their many shortcomings. No doubt the priests live here, as often enough elsewhere, upon the ignorance of the people, and the curious processions of deotas at the fairs are all mysteries to work upon the superstition of the unenlightened peasant."² Needless to mention that Alexander Gerard (1820-21) has provided a noteworthy description about the religion and religious beliefs followed in Kinnaur in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. He observed that in lower Kinnaur the religion of the mass of the inhabitants was Hinduism, while in upper Kinnaur Lama religion was more predominant. Describing the religion of the Kinnaurees, Alexander Gerard adds that, "the religion of the mass of the inhabitants is Hinduism, but they have no minute distinction of caste. They either burn or bury the dead at some distance from the villages, where they erect grave stones. Some of them prefer the Lama religion, but that properly belongs to the Tartars."³ Further about the religion of the Tartars of Kinnaur he observed that the religion was Buddhism, and they were very superstitious, paying great regard to lucky and unlucky days. The Lamas in Kinnaur were of three sects: Geloopa, Dookpa and Neengma.⁴

According to Fraser the Kinnaurees were generally considered, Hindus but most of them followed the Lama

religion. The Lama priests were active in that area as no Brahmins had ever reached or settled there.⁵

According to Gerard, the Geloopas or Gelookpas were reckoned the highest, since the heads of their religion at Teshu Lambu and Lhasu were of the same sect. They wore yellow cloth garments, and caps of the same colour, both -gelugpas and dugpas went bare headed, the two former did not marry, but there was no restriction on the Neengmas. The Lamas admitted proselytes at all ages, and any person could become a Dooka, Geloopa, or Neengma at his pleasure. They were commonly initiated at the age of 7 to 10. All the Lamas could read and write. In the upper parts of Kinnaur it was common for one person from each house to be educated as a lama.

To come now to the predominant faith of Hinduism, which is essentially pantheistic, henotheistic, pluralistic. The terminology varies according to one's perspective subscribed to by one and all, excluding a small minority of Sikhs, Muslims and Jains.

Hinduism, as practised in the Simla Hills, however, is not that of the main-stream Hinduism as practised in the rest of India. It is not that the inhabitants of Simla Hills did not believe in the cosmic trinity- Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, it is not that they did not subscribe to Durga, Kali and the related goddess emanating therefrom but the institutionalisation of Hinduism has remained to this day peculiar and unique. They

have the system of village devtas or godlings. The godling is worshipped in a village temple by the devotees. But from time to time, all too frequently, special celebrations take place in the temple precincts where the godling speaks through the gur or *malli* or *diva*. Music with played drums, trumpets, *karnals*, *ransinghas*, *nagaras*, *bhanas*, *thalies*, etc. is played for the *malli* for him to come into trance or what is called in sufism hal or waziad. Once the *malli* is in trance, the devotees of the devta pose their problems to him. The problems, for the most part, pertain to family functioning, altercation and land disputes as well as some iniquity being perpetrated against some weak member/members of the community. The *malli* oracles in trance, diagnosing the problem, and prescribing certain codes and a shift in conduct. Invariably in course of time the recipient is provided a solution to his/her problems, mitigating misery or at least varied kinds of relief.

Since time immemorial, there has been a steady and perceptible process of humanisation of god. The village gurs are human beings. They eat, drink, walk, live and dance with their worshippers. The deity talks with them face to face. Every village god has a number of ashta-dhatu, golden and silver or brass mohras (masks). One of them is invariably the main and principal mask which emerged in the beginning and represents the devta himself. These mohras are decked in a wooden rath or palanquin which stands already well furnished with coloured silken clothes, ornaments, plants and flowers.

When necessary the deity, in such a position, undertakes an occasionally short or long journey over the shoulders of the worshippers. Baidra of Kotkhai and Mahasu of Simla go to Kedarnath, Badrinath and Haridwar on pilgrimage after a lapse of eight years from their sthana in Kotkhai near Kiari and Jubbal.⁶

The deities are always accompanied by his goors (disciples) with long hair and one of them is invariably a malegha (head goor). He is the devta's spokesman. At the pertinent moment or on special occasions he gets into trance and in his religious frenzy shakes himself vehemently. It is then, considered that the spirit of the deota has entered him. He is, then considered and addressed as a deota. In that state, whatever he speaks is taken to be the voice of the deity concerned. He gives answers to all sorts of queries.

Local deities are known by different names, such as Mahasu, Maishu, Shirgul, Bijat, Nagas, Narain, Jamlu, etc. The legends relating to gods and goddesses are numerous. They depict their origins and miracles. The stories, in praise of the deities, are sung on special occasions.⁷

Special feature of the village gods was their feudal form of administration. Every feudal lord had dependent, subordinate feudatories. They owed their allegiance to the higher authority, not only by way of regular homage to it, but also by paying *kut* i.e., revenue fee for the land assigned to

them. It is, almost, a political hierarchy-baradeo (higher god) at the top, small gudlings as his wazir (ministers) below him, their birs (body guards) still at lower level and the bhors (officials or servants) at the base. For example, Junga was the chief deity of the old Keonthal State. He had five feudatory States. Further below were eighteen tracts of deotas like Kalaur, Manuni, Kaneti, Baldeo, Kawalideo, etc. None of his subordinates could hold a jug without specific permission of Junga devta. Similarly, Chaturmukh of Kotgarh has five chief devatas, namely Benu, Janeru, Khoru, Merelu and Basara. Shirpal is his wazir. The five minor deotas are known as bhors. They work as chowkidars. Khachli Nag is his guru. Usually, the wazirs (ministers) occupy smaller temples adjoining the main temple or even at some distance away from it or in some cases his image is placed near the door.⁸

The ancient inhabitants of these hill States probably cherished an early form of Shaivism, but it is not known whether the Shiva of Himachal Pradesh was an offshoot from the Indus valley or he was of local origin. The question raised above, however, is only of academic importance. Sometimes, the mainstream devata is adopted locally. The adoption is not made by a Professor of history. It happens. The adopted Shiva, let us say, goes through a period of change and development through folk imagination. Conversely, there is a local cult, indigenous to the areas. In course of time the figure enshrined

in local cult gets linked with the mainstream deity. It is a two way process.

In Himachal Pradesh there are remotely situated caves having Shiva-lingas, which are considered to symbolise the creative power of God. There is no doubt that Shiva has been a popular deity of Himachal Pradesh and has been worshipped not only in the villages but also in the valleys and on the peaks. Shiva is known by many names in Himachal Pradesh. The most popular name is Mahadev. Since ancient times Kinner-Kailash in Kinnaur, Manimahesh in Chamba, Churi-chandani in Sirmour - Chopal are important centres for pilgrimage.

Closely connected with the worship of Shiva, and far more widely spread, is the Shakti cult. Shakti is known by many names such as Bumi, Maheshwari, Parvati in addition to Durga and Kali, etc. The Goddess is thought to be the benevolent universal mother and protectress of all the living creatures, and is also known as Uma, Devi or Parvati. There is, however, another more violent aspect to her character, which is indicated by names such as Kali, Durga and Mahishasurmardini. The Shitla, the goddess of smallpox, and other goddess of disease are also the manifestation of the same goddess, Mahadevi, the great goddess, Maharani, the great queen and Devi Maior Devi Mata, the goddess mother. The important places of Devi worship are Hatkoti in Jubbal,

Bhimakali at Sarahan in Rampur Bushahr, Chandika Devi at Kothi and Usha at Nichar in Kinnaur. Outside Simla Hills there is Ambika at Nirmand and Naina Devi in Bilaspur.

According to a local legend, the great battle between the Shakti Mata Durga and Mahishsura took place near Bilaspur in Himachal Pradesh and after slaying the fearful demon, Durga threw his head in a nearby Brahm Kapali Kund on shraavan ashtami i.e., eighth of the bright-half of Shraavan month. A great fair takes place every year in Naina Devi temple, where she first appeared. Nearby, at the Kali temple in Pangana a buffalo-bull used to be slain every year on the 8th day of Navaratra actually symbolizing the slaughtering of the demon Mahishasur.⁹

Simla Hill was one of the principal centre of serpent worship in India. The cult of Nagas goes back to the ancient times in western Himalayas and undoubtedly it is one of the indigenous cults of the area. Nagas have a large number of worshippers. Their shrines are numerous, and there are also Nagani (female Naga) shrines, but the latter are not so common. The image in these shrines is usually of stone in human form with the figure of snake entwined around it and a serpent canopy rising over the head. The shrine also contains figures of snakes in stone, wood and iron. Water springs are believed to be under the control of the snake godlings. Many

Naga godlings are believed to have the power to grant rain and in times of drought are diligently propitiated.

Before the British period, the village devtas had all spiritual and temporal authority. They were vested with all powers, and there was absolutely no necessity of a court or a judicial system. Every problem of an individual or of the society as a whole, was decided by the verdict of the devta. Even during British rule or in free India today, civil and revenue cases pending in the court could only be decided by resorting to the old tradition.

Hinduism as it is practised in the institution of Gaon Devta is participatory, communitarian, psychological and cultural in the widest and the deepest sense. Unfortunately, today, participative Hinduism is beginning to be eroded in a very significant way by the incursion and invasion of main stream Hinduism and the aggressive diffusion of outside sects, e.g. the Sai and Radhasoami cults. Urbanisation and considerable shrinkage of the *malli* base, decrease of vocal and instrumental musicians of the toori class- now turning to other professions as the traditional professions are not sufficiently remunerative-are great contributing factors as well.

Family Structure and Inheritance of Property

Joint family system

The joint family system was the common family unit. This was approved by social tradition.¹⁰ In such families parents lived with their married or unmarried sons.¹¹ It had been seen in these Hill States that as long as only the eldest son was married, they lived together. But when the sons got married or the parents died, the family disintegrated and in the event of sub-division, the property was divided equally.¹² The eldest male was the head of the family. He supervised and regulated family affairs. He commanded great respect among the members of the family and everybody obeyed him.¹³

Houses

Simla Hill States houses were designed on a traditional basis.¹⁴ Village houses were made of stone and timber. No lime, sand and water was used for joining stone or bricks. Houses were double or three storied.¹⁵

"All the houses were floored with planks thus procured and the woodwork of their balconies with every piece of flat timber in use, costs them this exercise of labour and loss of time and of material."¹⁶

Occupation

The main occupation of the people of Hill States was agriculture, with ninety four percent of the population dependent on it. The best lands were, however, with the rulers while most of the farmers had to be content with patches.

Food and drinks

People of these Hill States took their meals thrice a day.¹⁷ The staple food of villagers was Barley Sattu.¹⁸ Barley was taken from April to October. Rice and Maize were consumed during winter. Besides millets like Koda, Chulaie, Kawani, Bajra, Ogla, Bathoo, China were also in the menu.¹⁹

Rice was boiled and taken with pulse or vegetables. Kawani and Cheens grains were cooked as rice and balls made of it. They were greatly relished with whey. Koda and Cholai were mixed and grounded to flour, their roti known as Chaloti.

Pulses

Mash, Masar, Moong and Chana were the kind of pulses cooked by boiling in water.

Vegetables

Vegetables were eaten more during the monsoon when seasonal vegetables were grown.

Special dishes

Sidoo, Patandey, Poldu, Badey, Shakdi, Sattu, Kheer, Halwa were a number of special dishes to be prepared on festive occasions.²⁰

Wine

Description of food habits will remain incomplete without referring to wine. Wine was taken by almost every elderly person in each family. The common wine was a local one made from Futra and Koda grains. The people were so addicted to wine that the local production could not meet their requirement. A country wine liquor vend, locally called thair, existed in some villages.²¹ In the Koti State no festival was complete without wine. The Puja of goddess Chandika was incomplete unless accompanied by an offering of wine and it was wine again that was given as charnamrit to the devotee of the goddess.²²

Smoking

Smoking was fairly widely prevalent among the people of Simla Hill States. Men smoked hukka or cigarettes. Among women only old ones were habitual smokers.²³

The people were so fond of smoking that during travel they carried their smoking device along with them, If they did not have any hukka or cigarettes or bidis, they carried a pouch full of tobacco . When they wanted to smoke they, dug two holes in the ground and covered these two holes with mud. In one of the holes they placed tobacco and burning embers and inhaled from the hole at the other end lying flat on the ground.²⁴

Clothing

The clothing of the people of Simla Hill States was essentially the product of the climatic condition of the region. Those living in a warm climate required little or no clothing, while those living in a cold region needed heavy protective garments.²⁵ People of these States dressed up simply and mostly in homemade woollens in winters and cheap cotton in summers.²⁶

Male Clothing

Tota : It is a famous Bushahri cap. It is a woollen cap with the velvet portion of a cloth turned upwards. The flap was let down in cold weather to protect the ears. In Kinnaur the head dress for men and women was the same woollen cap called the pang in the local dialect.²⁷

Kurta : It was a cotton shirt with or without collars and a pocket on the above left side of the chest.

Sadris : Sadris were of cotton or woollen cloth. This was like a waist coat worn during winter and summer.²⁸

overcoat : *toio*

Band-Gale-ka-coat

Buttoned up woollen coats worn in winter.

Achkan

Older men prefer to wear long coats. In some States it was called Jurkhi. These were made of cotton, woollen and of Khaddar cloth.

Pyjama

Rebdar and churidar Pyjamas were almost similar with the only difference that the latter was tighter below the knees.²⁹ On the occasion of marriages, a specially embroidered Chhuba of white colour was prepared. This dress was worn by the bridegroom

Chhuba-Gala : Its borders were embroidered with different colours

Buraka Pared : This was a special type of Gachang of silken fabric and fine texture.

Tepang : The tepang with which the bridegroom was adorned was different from the one commonly used by villagers. It was a black round cap.

Takase-Nayanlukh : This was a white woollen chadar with cross, i.e. embroidered checks of different colours.

Takose-Suthan : This was a tight woollen churidar suthan with coloured checks and other design on the lower portion down knees.

Gulmeta : This was a special type of muffler woven in different designs and colours.

Takose Chukh : These were woollen shoes with coloured designs.³⁰

Women's Clothing

Dhattoo : Women of these Hill States wore two types of Dhattoo as head-dress. The first type and the most traditional one was made of two parts. The first part was called topi, a round cap about nine inches in diameter. The second kind was the talla, a large white piece of cloth folded over four times.

The topi was put on and then tala was wrapped round the head tied to one side, the smooth side falling over the forehead. This appears to be a peculiar head dress.

Kurta : It was a cotton shirt called jumper. A gray miletia cloth was quite commonly used for kurta.

Sadri : During winter, few women used woollen waist-coats inside the Jurkhi, it being called sadri.

Jurkhi : It was a woollen achkan. Sometimes it had upturned sleeves with red silk lining and hem. During summer, cotton jurkhis were used.

Gochhi : Women wrapped a piece of cotton called Gochhi, about fifteen feet long, a shade of mauve colour, around their waist.

Suthan : It was a woollen Pyjama of gray or brown shades.

Salwar : Some young women put on cotton salwar.

Rebdar Suthan : It was a cotton pyjama, tight at the bottom.

Othroo : Old women wear traditional woollen half pyjama upto the knees.

Ceremonial Dress

There was a slight difference in the ceremonial dress. During fairs and festivals, the most liked colours among women were black, yellow or pink.³¹

James Baillie Fraser wrote "On crossing the Bisharee Nullah we observed that the dress of the inhabitants was completely changed, and their appearance somewhat altered. Instead of the dirty cotton cap and gown of Sirmour they wore a black cap of shaggy wool, somewhat like a highland bonnet compressed; a pair of trousers of thick dark stripped woollen stuff, very loose from the waistband, where it is tied with a string to the knees, but it becomes closer to the leg below, and reaches to the heels in small wrinkles. Their chief garment is a coat of similar blanket stuff, which reaches down to the knees gathered tight round the waist, and falling round the lower parts and thing in many folds, somewhat like the scotch highland philibeg. The better sort usually wear a piece of cotton, much as the Hindus wear the doputta, and frequently wrap it round the shoulders as a plaid. Their shoes were formed of a sort of close net-work, or twill of woollen thread attached to a leather sole."³²

Ornaments

Among the people of Hill States even husbands like wives used to possess important items of ornaments to be used on fairs, festivals or during ceremonies. They felt crestfallen if their wives did not possess a few. Sometimes they took the step of mortgaging their land or landing themselves into debt. In these States the Kolis were not allowed to put on gold ornaments.³³

Women had an instinctive fondness for a variety of ornaments. The ladies of the swarn or upper castes used gold ornaments, whereas those of lower castes were content with silver ones. The traditional ornaments used to be heavy and more lavish.

People of Simla Hill States invested a large part of income in the ornaments because they utilized them at the time of emergency by selling them.³⁴

Ornaments for the Head

Chak : This was a hollow-cup-shaped gold/silver ornament with different floral motifs used by married women, weighing about 100 grams.

Shangdi and Tikka : These were silver bends for the forehead with a small silver- carved disc which fell on the forehead. The

disc, called Tikka, was studded with five meenakaris of blue or green colours over it. In some States it was called Dora.³⁵

Junti : It was a long attractive silver ornament used on hair plaits.

Linjoo : These were long silver stripped ornaments used on the head. One clip was fixed to the head and the other two ends fixed to the two ears.

Ornaments for the ears

Mungri : This was a thin gold or silver wire circled together to about 2 inches diameter with a hook for the earlobe, a favourite among the old women.³⁶

Phool : This was an ornament made of thin silver leaves pinned to the hair and spread over the ears. This had become a jewel of the past.³⁷

Dandia : These were small earrings made of gold or silver, for earlobes, numbering twelve or more at the upper portion, worn by elderly women.³⁸

Kantali : These were round thin silver ornament, for the upper parts of the ears.

Kantey : This was a common silver or gold ornament used by women.

Ornaments for the wrists

Kangnu : This was a thick bracelet of silver weighing 100 to 120 grammes. In some States it was called Dhugley.

Churian : Churian were of gold and silver.³⁹

Gajra : These were flexible bracelets made of silver. A gajra weighed 100 grams.

Dhagley : These were silver bangles.⁴⁰

Ornaments for the Fingers

Guthi : This was a plain ring studded with a coloured stone, made of silver or gold in varied designs.

Arsi : This was a large silver ring which sometimes had a small mirror fixed to it.⁴¹

Dharotu and **Kodolu** were also the ear ornaments used by women.⁴²

Ornaments for the Nose

Balu : It was a large nose ring made of gold.

Bulak : Bulak was a bigger nose ring and was worn through the hole in the cartilage, in between the nostrils.

Long : It was a gold ornament, button shaped, worn on the right side of the nose.⁴³

Tilli : The smallest form of long may have a few tiny beads used by the married women.⁴⁴

Ornaments for the Neck

Kanthi : This was a locket of bristling brass, gold or silver. Kanthi, made of brass, were purchased from the market but gold and silver Kanthies were made on order by the goldsmiths.

Kach : This was a silver or gold necklace.

Dorg : This was a large necklace(haar) of silver rupees and small precious stones. It was hung from the neck right down to the breasts.

Champakali : This was a necklace of silver bearing pendants which looked like bands of champa flowers.

Chandar Haar : It was a heavy silver necklace.⁴⁵

Hansli : It was also known as Tandiri. This was made of silver. Old women use this ornament.

Jantar : A small hollow rectangular silver casket having crude carving of local deities tied round the neck.⁴⁶

Ornaments for the Toes

Polries : This was a flat silver ring worn on the toes of the feet just by the ladies.

Ornaments for the Ankles

Paizeb : A silver band weighing about 200 grams and worn round the ankle.

Some of the ornaments, e.g. Koka and Tilli, (earrings and rings worn on the fingers) were used daily, while others were reserved for marriages or other festive occasions. A woman would remove ornaments of nose and ears only when some male member of the family died and put them on again after the kirya.⁴⁷

Dress Ornaments

Digra : This was a decorative silver sari-clip-cum-sari-pin used by the women to hold the two ends of chhanti.

Tumuch : This was another type of silver ornament used for binding the two ends of a Dhori near the left shoulder.⁴⁸

Birth, Marriages and Death Customs

Birth Customs

Birth customs in Hill States were simple. No prenatal ceremony was performed. The expectant mother led a normal life, but was not allowed to carry heavy loads nor exert herself very much otherwise.⁴⁹

Delivery

Delivery took place in the ground floor and was helped by an elderly woman (performing, naturally, the role of a midwife or dai), well versed in handling such cases. After the delivery, the mother was given hot ghee and milk for nourishment.⁵⁰

If a son was born there was great joy. Guns were fired. Jaggery was distributed among those present and friends. The happy news was sent to relatives. The midwife, if engaged, got Rs. 5/- and a piece of cloth. The neighbourhood woman assisting in the delivery, was given Re. 1/- and grains.⁵¹

Days of Birth Purification

Before bringing the mother to pand, she was given a spoonful mixture of ghee, milk and the cow's urine gonch. This mixture was sprinkled in the pand with the twigs of bikri

shrub. The mother and child were confined to pand for 15 days. After this they were taken to the upper storey, where she was given a spoonful of the same mixture. This was sprinkled all over the house as shuddhi. If some relative or a pandit happened to visit the family during days of impurity, no meals were served to him from the family kitchen for the first three days. The meals were supplied to him from a kitchen in a separate house. Even the family devta was not worshipped for the first three days.⁵²

The diet of the mother

The diet of the mother for a month was simple i.e., easily digestible as per her constitution. This consists of bari, rich in ghee and overboiled rice. The poor families used mustard oil in place of ghee and the sturdy women digested it. The rich families had by then giving soonth, cooked in pure desi ghee to the mother.⁵³

Koti-ki-Juriki

After birth, the child was wrapped in a piece of cloth for two or three days. Then the child was dressed in small home stitched clothes known as koti-ki-jurki.⁵⁴

Nam Karan

The child's name was either given by the family priest or by the eldest member of the family. It was usually given any day after nine months or one year.

Bandejh

On the advice of the priest, the parents used to make a promise to the family deity for the long-life of the child. This was known as bandejh.

Anna Prashni

When the child was about 8-9 months old, solid food was given to the child for the first time. Earlier, the child was fed on breast and cow's milk. On this day a hawan was performed by the priest. The child lay in the mother's lap and with the aid of a one rupee silver coin, kheer was touched to the tongue. A thread was tied to the wrist of the male child. This was known as Dhali.⁵⁵

Mundan ceremony

The child's hair were cut after one or three years of birth. The household on a particular day held a simple

ceremony in which friends and neighbours participated. The barber was called to shave the head of the boy. The hair were collected in a basket and the parents offered incense. This basket was carried away and buried in the ground. Jaggery pieces were distributed among the gathering. The barber was given Rs. 1.50⁵⁶

Janeo

This was a sacred thread worn just by Rajputs and Brahmins. The priest gave an auspicious date and a simple ceremony was held. Guru mantra was whispered into the boy's ears during the thread ceremony. The priest was given almost or about Rs. 5/- and some grains, while a feast was given in the afternoon.

Piercing of ears and nose

A girl's ears and nose were pierced when she was about four years old. This was done with a needle or thorn.⁵⁷

Superstitions

There were certain superstitions about birth customs. If a child always kept crying or remained inactive, the family devta was consulted. Prayers were held so that the child may get rid

of all evil spirits called dak or dani. In some cases the family Pandit was also consulted, who gave a charmed thread to be tied round the neck or forearm of the child. If a woman constantly lost her child, the devta was consulted through oracle. Whatever the devta directed, was performed by the family. The devta was given some grains and five rupees. In some cases the Pandit charmed either a mole on the woman or some other mark on her body. After this, the woman began to bear children that lived.⁵⁸

Marriages

The study of marriage customs of a society renders deep insight into the social as well as cultural organisation of that society. Patriarchal society has a different impact on the economy than the matriarchal. The bride price, gifts, dowry and other exchanges on this occasion effect redistribution of wealth and resources and, thus, by affecting the vital organs of the economy, bring about change in the economic status of the social unit. Nevertheless, the basic fact remains that marriage or matrimonial alliance is the fundamental basis of social existence. A study of marriage customs in Simla Hill States would not only throw light on the hill society, but would also help in establishing a link between their present and their prehistoric ancestral society.

In Kinnaur, marriage by negotiation was known as Janekana or Janetang marriage. Under this form, the father of the boy looks for a suitable match for his son. In many cases three girls were considered for this purpose. With three different flowers, one each for each girl, the father went to the village deity for final approval. The devta approved one girl. The names and addresses of the other two girls were never made public. This practice is now limited only to extremely orthodox families.

In other cases, a particular girl was selected for this purpose. If the girl's parents showed an affirmative inclination, two middlemen, called majomis in local usage were made to approach the parents of the would-be bride. In Kinnaur, the maternal uncle of the bridegroom played a major role in matrimonial alliances, therefore, making him invariably a majomi.

The go-between or middlemen of the girls parents presented a bottle of liquor and some cash (generally five to ten rupees) as a token in case the girl's parents agreed to the proposed marriage. The bottle of liquor was essentially capped with butter, it being considered a sign of a happy wedded life, prosperity and good luck throughout Kinnaur. When the bargain was struck, a gold ornament was presented to the girl's side as barni which binds the parents to a promise. On this occasion, there was a feast for the middlemen, consisting of

ghanti and sumptuous food. Subsequently, the marriage date was set in consultation with the Lama or good *grokch*. During Phaguli celebrations, the boy's father sent pottu to the girl's parents. This was known as phaguli banta. Similarly, during the month of Magh a he-goat was slaughtered and its intestines were sent to the girl's parents as a special gift called *chharmi banta* of *chharmig*.

Darosh dub means to waylay or drag forcefully (*darosh*). In the days when primitivism prevailed, forceful capture of a female, where the man would take her to his cave or dwelling was a practise for sexual relations, marriage being no part of it. Our mythological literature speaks of Rakshasas who did the same thing on many occasions. So greatly, in fact, that at a later stage matrimony achieved this way came to be known as 'Rakshasa Vivah', i.e. demonic marriage. Nonetheless, it cannot be called marriage in the strict sense of the word. It was largely a primitive tradition which still yet links various stages between primitive man and modern man. In these hill States, it was just a tradition, with the Kanuras at the time, but later with the passage of time it came to be recognised as a form of marriage.⁵⁹

The following three types of marriages were prevalent in these hill states. These were :

- (i) Marriage by negotiation
- (ii) Badni

(iii) Reet

Marriage by negotiation was the most accepted. Marriage proposals were initiated by the boy's parents. A middleman, usually the relative of the girl, conveyed the proposal to the parents of the girl. He made an informal agreement with the girl's father. Apart from the family status, caste and economic factors played a greater role in deciding the relationship. There was too great an emphasis on horoscopes.

Betrothal

After an informal agreement between both the parties, a simple engagement ceremony was held at the girl's parents house. This was done in the presence of relatives. This ceremony was held according to the time worked out by the family purohit. The boys parents sent kares, or langlesa ring and clothes to the betrothed thereby sealing an obligation for both the parties to honour their words. Betrothal took place even when the boy and girl were minors. The marriage was held when the boy and the girl came of a marriageable age. Marriage was held on an auspicious date worked out by the astrologer. It was done many months earlier when both parties agreed to the proposal.⁶⁰

Marriage preparations

As the marriage date drew near, preparations began. There was a great hustle and bustle in the respective homes. Houses were white washed. New clothes were stitched for everybody in the family. A couple of weeks earlier, collection of dham material began in right earnest. Ornaments for the bride were prepared by the boy's side. A langnotri was prepared by the purohit. This served as a guide to perform the right ritual at the right time.

Tel Batna

Three, five or seven days earlier 'Tel Batna' ceremony was held on both sides performed by sisters and other members of the family. The Purohit attended to many other rituals like 'Kalash Sthapan' 'Ganesh Puja' . Oil was put on the head of the bridegroom with Druba. Batna was applied on the body of the groom before he took his bath.⁶¹

Shanti

After 'Tel Batna', 'Shanti' was performed, along with Hawan and Navagranthi Pujan. The marriage feasts began from the day of 'Shanti'. Relatives brought cooked food and flour. The maternal uncle of the boy participated, spending large

amounts. He arranged the feast and bore the expenses. Clothes were also given by him to the boy. Shehra Bandi was done strictly according to the time worked out by the Purohit. The groom then put on the best of his clothes. Kangan of a mouli, cowrie shell, an iron ring and a pierced piece of supari was tied round the wrist.⁶²

Yarivatra

The marriage party consisted of 50 to 100 people who were the brethren, relatives and friends of the groom's side. The bridegroom was taken in a palanquin which was carried by four persons. These carriers belonged to scheduled castes.

At the Bride's House

As the marriage party approached near the brides house, the marriage party was accorded a warm welcome and led to a separate house where the seating arrangement was ready.⁶³

Lagan

At the appointed hour, the bridegroom was taken to the mandap, accompanied by his father, purohit and members of the marriage party. Women sang marriage songs befitting the occasion. The purohit and the bridegroom sat close to each

other. A havan kund was placed in the centre of the vedi. A red cloth was tied from four sides and the vedi was decorated with flowers, pipal leaves and buntings. The bride was brought to the vedi a little later and sat close to the groom with her face veiled. A long thin piece of cloth was tied round the bride's waist. The other end of the cloth was tied to the bridegroom's. While all this was ongoing, women mostly sang marriage songs and the village bajantries did their bit at short intervals. Kanyadan was invariably done by the parents of the girl.⁶⁴

Pheras

Now it was time for the pheras - the irrevocable seven steps. The bride and the groom were required to go round the sacred fire seven times. Three rounds were taken when the havan was lit and after a short interval three were repeated. In the sixth round the bride led the groom, they being tied together with a cloth, but in the seventh and the last round she follows the groom and thus becomes his ardhangni or better half forever.⁶⁵

Shayadan

The dowry items consisted of a charpoy, beddings, utensils and clothes.

Bidai

The departure of the barat was a touching scene. The near ones of the bride were seen fussing around her. Many among them, especially the women wept. Then she was carried to Dola. The musicians led the marriage procession. The departing songs were so full of pathos that every eye had a touch of sentiment, emotion and sadness.

When the bride and the groom reached their home they were affectionately received.

Teeka

Friends and relatives offered a teeka to the groom. The amount of teeka was not standard and could vary. It depended entirely on the closeness of the relations and friends.

Jal-Yatra

The bride was taken to the bowli by the maternal uncle of the bridegroom. She was also taken to the water source in a procession attended by the boy's aunties.⁶⁶

Kewalti Sbana

On the next day of the marriage, Kewalti-Kali plants along with banana branches and pipal leaves were taken to the water source along with the couple.

Daronja

The return of the bride to her parents was called 'Daronja'. It was done on the third day of Vadhu Pravesh. The bride accompanied by her husband visited her parents house.⁶⁷

The hill marriage, the ritualisation preparatory, in the course of its performance and post-marriage is not different from the traditional hindu marriage but for minor variations in the enactment. The symbology of the hill marriage perhaps should be unravelled in semiotic perspective by future scholars. The semiotic studies on cultural 'texts' have been done in the Department of Anthropological Linguistic at Punjabi University, Patiala and at Jawaharlal University. The French perspective has been inaugurated and carried out by Professor H. S. Gill. It must, however, be pointed out that ordinary people participate in the rituals, viscerally, as it were. On this point one is reminded of Carl Jung who when urged to explain the archetypes to Indians snapped that the latter lived the archetypes. A pointed intention of it is made by Miguel Serrano in Hse and Jung.

Badani

Another kind of marriage was 'Badani'. In such, rituals were not observed in great detail as in the case of a regular marriage. The bridegroom did not go the bride house. She was brought by 3 or 4 persons. An arati of seven earthen lamps was lit. Six lamps were oilfed, but the seventh, in the centre, was filled with ghee. The 'arai' was taken before the bride and the groom. The family purohit was invited to perform a brief ceremony.

Reet

The last type of marriage was known as 'reet' or 'dheri'. In reet, if a woman disliked her husband, she was at liberty to marry another person of her choice. The second husband had to pay some compensation to the first one. The amount was mutually agreed upon in the presence of a few relatives. This was known as reet or dherilena. The reet institution in its positure and negative aspects has been dealt in depth and detail in the subsequent chapter.

Death Ceremonies

Birth, love, and death are fundamental realities. So the transition from marriage to death should not be viewed as dismal.

Age-old customs die hard and more particularly in the countryside where change is very gradual. The disposal of a corpse was a very elaborate and extremely tedious practice, performed according to the complexity observed in Hindu society. The corpses were cremated, whereas those of children below 2½ years were buried on the banks of the river. There was a separate cremation ground for different castes, though the rites were practically the same. No custom of floating corpses in the river existed. The corpse was taken in a procession in which the entire community participated and paid their last respects. Relatives and friends assembled on the occasion and followed the procession which was led by the village Turis who played narsinghas, nigaras and trumpets.⁶⁸

Period of mourning

The period of mourning lasted about 13 to 16 days, but it was observed for a whole year in the house where death had taken place. Among the Dumnas, Rehars and Turis, the period of mourning was of three days. When a person was dying, he was laid on the ground, and the head was kept towards the

north. Generally, the people were lifted from the charpoy and placed on the floor before death. But even if he or she happened to be lying on the bed at the time of death, the body was immediately removed and laid on the ground. It was considered inauspicious to die on a charpoy. The moment the person breathed his last, panchrata gold, copper, silver, moonga and ganga jal was poured into his mouth to ensure a better life afterwards. A lamp was lit at the time of death and vigil was kept there for nine days. Before taking the body to the cremation grounds, it was bathed either in cold or lukewarm water. An arthi was prepared by the Dumnas. Coffin cloth of two colours of white and red were used, indigenously known as dhoa and masruh. The white coffin cloth was spread out on the arthi and the red one was used to cover the corpse.⁶⁹

Pind Dan

The first pind dan was performed in the house when the arthi was lifted to be carried to the cremation grounds. The pinds were given to the Brahmins-in-charge continuously for 11 days, the number of pinds increasing proportionately till it reached eleven on the final day. Coins were also thrown over the body when it was being carried to the cremation grounds. The funeral pyre was then prepared with firewood, and the corpse was placed on it. Some ghee was then sprinkled and the pyre was lit generally by the eldest son. When part of the body

was consumed by the flames. Kapal Kriya was performed by the eldest son.⁷⁰

Immersion of Ashes at Hardwar

A very important rite was the immersion of ashes, which were carried to Hardwar by the eldest son, or, in his absence, by some other individual. There, a series of rituals were conducted by the Panda.

Chobarkh

This was the 4th death anniversary Brahmins were given a feast and they were given household articles by way of charity in the name of the deceased.⁷¹

Social life in a traditional society is many-layered. It is determined not merely by occupation, dress and ornament, but by immemorial rituals governing birth, marriage, and death participation therein by the community. This chapter therefore has focused on the varied component the chapter following it will present the changes which took place in hill society with the advent of modernity. The two chapters together afford a rounded picture of Simla Hill States.

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CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL REFORMS AND SOCIAL WELFARE WORKS

The early twentieth century is also marked by the establishment of non-official organisations in Himachal Pradesh for the removal of social evils and redressal of people's grievances. Congress agitation in British India along with the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi on the national political scene over a period of time, impacted immensely on the State people's movement. In spite of the oppressive rule and the ruthless tyranny of the Indian princes, the hill people decided to stand on their own feet. They started their work by setting up Sewa Samitis, Hitkari Sabhas, Night Schools, Reading Rooms and Circulating Libraries. Every opportunity was availed of for creating public opinion against the oppressive laws and personal rule of the princes.¹

Among the most important social reform organisations, attention must be drawn to the Rajput and Brahmin Sabhas, Sanatan Dharam and Arya Samaj Sabhas, Sewak Sanghas, Sudhar Sammelans, Prem Sabhas and Sewa Samitis. These associations undertook the task of launching campaigns to eradicate such evil social practices as reet, untouchability, and child marriage to encourage widow remarriage.²

Attempts were made by some of the Simla Hill States to end the custom of reet by legislation. The social reformers and

public associations did all they possibly could to carry on intensive campaigning against this custom. The Rajput Sthaniya Sabha, the Himalaya Vidya Prabhandini Sabha and the Hind Conference Simla brought this subject to the forefront of public attention and approached the highest authorities for its suppression.

To abolish these evils, social customs-cum-practices, the rulers of Simla Hill States, constituted under the Chairmanship of Baghat's Raja, an Executive Council. This council recommended a number of reforms in the Hill States against the evils referred to above.

Widow Remarriage

Widow remarriage was recognised in the upper Hill States by all classes. The widow remarriage ceremony was celebrated with as much pomp, pageantry and splendour as the first marriage. In almost all cases the second husband was ordinarily the younger brother of the first, but kanets also allowed a widow to marry her late husband's elder brother. When a widow's second husband was a stranger, it was usual for him to pay one or two rupees as reet to the first husband's family. This special reet was called nakhtal. Women who were to remarry or those who wished to, did so with heirs or relatives of their husbands. In Bashahr State especially, the custom of widow remarriage, left the women sole heir to all

entitled through her first husband. This condition was applicable to their son/sons as well.³

Untouchability

Untouchability was also practised in the hills as in the plains. The relationship with lower castes was viewed taintedly as upper castes Rajputs, Brahmans and the high clan of Kanets shunned lower castes to the point of abhorrence. Scheduled castes were debarred from participating in the social and religious functions on an equal footing. Until quite recently (in so far as the period under discussion is concerned) they were not even allowed to enter the temples, the gods being viewed as the personal property of just the higher castes.⁴ The scheduled castes were even denied access to and usage of common water source. A man of this caste had to keep his head covered. He was also not allowed to sit on a cot with a *swaran*. If a Harijan by caste crossed a *swarans* path, he used to take off his shoes and bow in respect. In the houses of certain Rajput families, Kolis were not allowed to enter the compound, the less said, the better, with respect to the house. Their women were not permitted to wear gold ornaments.⁵

But untouchability did not restrict all Harijans. Harijans also had their own hierarchy some lower, some higher.⁶ Scheduled Castes were previously not permitted to play the orchestra, nor could the bridegroom ride a horse. The changed

era has not left them untouched altogether. Scheduled castes are now becoming aware of their rights. Most are aware that untouchability has been banned under law.

Sati Pratha

We have no clear idea about the Sati system of Bushahr State. No evidence of Sati practice was found in the upper Simla Hill States. It flourished to some extent in the plains and Bushahr State. The condition of women was better in the upper Simla Hill States than in the other parts because, as stated earlier, she was free to remarry. Sati was a unique feature, however abhorrent, of the Rajput society. 'Sati' was performed by the Rajput widows. It was viewed as marking the unfailing devotion of a wife to her husband.

The rite of 'Jauhar' was performed when the Rajput women, wives as well as daughters burnt themselves to death to escape dishonour at the hands of invaders. The situation differed in Bushahr State as no one invaded and thus, Bushahr State never came under the rule of the other rulers, so there was no need for Hill State women to indulge in the practice of Sati and Jauhar. Rajput women performed a jauhar by flinging themselves into fiery flames when their menfolk left to face death.⁷

Frazer (1811) has referred to a peculiar type of Sati practiced in Bushahr. He states that twenty-two people performed Sati with the Raja of Bushahr. This number included two ministers and one chobedar, besides three queens and twelve khawasis.

It was on account of the efforts of Raja Ram Mohan Roy that the practice of Sati was declared illegal during the time of William Bentick.

Begar System

Begar was a practice in the Simla Hills whereby forced labour was taken from a subject by the ruler of the State or Landlord.⁸ *Begar* is a Persian word which means unpaid exploitation of labour.⁹ In the Hill States, wheeled vehicles did not exist, so import and export of essential goods were carried by camel and mule. A particular class of porters as well earned subsistence by carrying loads, for ordinary purposes. However, for transport of travellers' luggage only human labour was available. Cultivators of the soil, as a condition of tenure, were bound to part with a portion of such labour to the State whenever required.

Artisans and other non-agricultural residents holding garden plots which actually belonged to the Raja, were bound to serve him in entirety.¹⁰ Other regular land holders were also

liable to provide service of this kind, including military menial work.

The *begar* system suited well the conditions of the Hill States as the currency was limited and the resources of the people slender.¹¹

Begar system was prevalent throughout the hill area between the rivers Yamuna and Sutlej. *Begar* system evolved not only from land and its ownership, but also from the topography of the Hill States, local conditions, and the needs of the people. The villages were located quite high upon the slopes with narrow and dangerous paths where even carriage of daily needs and other essentials by mules and ponies was impossible. Therefore, the only means of transport was human labour.¹²

The rulers of the Hill States also felt the need, from time to time, to build and repair palaces and forts essential to exercise control over their territory necessitating permanent labour, which the peasantry was being obliged to render free service both to the State and Landlord in the form of land revenue as well as normal revenue.¹³

As time passed, such forced labour became a permanent feature, taking the name of *beth* and *begar*. Moreover, due to this long standing imposition, the people regarded such as one of the normal conditions of existence. As long as *begar* was within tolerable and legitimate limits, people were content to

render it. Certain classes were exempted, the major burden falling strictly upon agriculture classes.

But the meanest and the most burdensome forced labour was to carry heavy loads.¹⁴ In 1815, after the Gurkha war, the area between Yamuna and Sutlej, by virtue of conquest, came under the East India Company. The British Government later returned the territories to the respective rulers but in the form of sanads. Under the sanad, the hill chiefs had to provide certain obligations such as allowing free passage to British merchants and their goods and to provide a certain number of *begaris* as well as construct roads in their respective territories with their help.¹⁵

Soldiers of the largest State, like Bushahr were bound to join British forces with armed retainers and hill porters during war time as and when required.

After the Gurkha war, the British Government kept Kotkhai, Lolgarh, Simla and Bharoli as British posts for military purposes. They discontinued *begar* except for roads and bridges. Lt. Col. E.G. Wace, who conducted the first regular settlement of Simla district, mentions :

"All the residents will help in the repair of roads, especially as the Government had not assessed on the tracts any roadcess. As to the labour (*begar*) required for the post and Government camps, the residents were liable to furnish that also. The deputy Commissioner

could excuse an individual from petty demands of labour, but for the Government or a military camp, or building of large bridge or any other great work everyone had to help whether ordinarily exempted or not."¹⁶

Begar, though originally a personal obligation, later became associated with land possession, its form becoming part and parcel of the revenue system, which represented the ruler's claim to personal service.¹⁷ The system of *begar* or unpaid forced labour logically extended the theory of partnership in all assets extant, including the physical power of the people. Man's physical strength was considered to belong to the Raja as much as to its owners. It was obligatory for every household to provide a healthy man for State labour, yet this had to be limited to one individual per household. The burden was so severe that large households and joint families were encouraged and partition discouraged.¹⁸

People of the agricultural sector were financially poor on the whole and even opportunities to earn cash from labour other than *begar* were inadequate. Thus, they found the system suited them well at the time. But due to this unsound economic policy, revenue and other miscellaneous dues essential for administration could not be realised from the masses in cash. As such, nominal cash revenue was levied and the remainder remaining in the form of labour. So, *begar* was the only alternative for administrative purposes. Without it, the States

customary ceremonies, of marriage, funerals, and the like, could not be performed.¹⁹

By the beginning of the 19th century, *begar* was widespread in India, with some exceptions, where British Thanas of the Police had been established. The British Government gave official recognition to this arbitrary practice.²⁰ After the Gurkha war, the British Government availed the facility of *begar* for individual officials and troops in the Hill States.

With the completion of the Simla-Tibet road and the growth of Simla as a hill station under the British government, the visits of officials and non-officials in the interior of the Hill States for trips and sports, further increased the burden of the *begar* system on the peasantry of Hill States. They were permitted to make use of the *begar* of the hillman and even the Englishmen settled in the hills began to avail of the self-same privilege. The visiting officials paid for everything they received at the dak bungalow during their stay, but did not pay the poor hillman for his services.²¹

In addition to the pervasive *begar* in general, there were specific categories of *begar* described below.

Kinds of begar

1) **Athwar Begar** : It was a personal *begar* to the ruler under which compulsory unpaid labour could be taken from any person for any purpose. Usually it was used for supplying firewood to the darbar, for the ruler and his family and grass for their cattle and horses. It was mainly used for the cultivation of the ruler's basa lands.²²

2) **Batrawal Begar** : This was taken for public works carriage of building materials and resultant construction or repair of the State buildings and bridges, etc., one *begari* from each house chosen. Jagirdars were not allowed to exercise this form of *begar* as they had earlier misused the privilege given to them by Bushahr State. Instead of taking one *begari* from each household, they had exploited the cultivators by taking two and sometimes even three *begaris* from a single house.²³

3) **Jaddi-Badi (Hela-Mela)** : Jaddi Baddi was an occasional *begar*, a custom under which all the subjects were to be present at the darbar for bringing grass, fuel, and performing other labour on the occasion of marriages and deaths in the rulers' families and in the crowning of the new rulers. Jaddi Baddi, however, was equitable and everyone including Brahmins were treated alike and those present were given Rations. Jaddi-Baddi

was taken into account during the assessment of the revenue which was remitted to some extent in proportion to the labour rendered.²⁴ This custom reflected the personal respect of the State subjects to their ruler and was obligatory for zamindars, lambardars, and other officials too.

4) Begar for the chief when touring the State

During the visit of the chief and his family within the State territory the *begar* consisted in providing *begaris* for carrying camp and other paraphernalia loads not only for the chief, but also for the entire family in the course of the entire tour.

5) Begar for political officers and high officials

The *begar* services for political officers and high officials was similar to that provided to the chief and his family while traveling within the State. The *begar* involved carrying loads and the camps of political and high officials during the tour. Records show that "when the Deputy Commissioner or Political Officer goes on tour, everyone with them expects to be treated as a Deputy Commissioner."²⁵ The above shows that the poor *begaris* had to serve several masters instead of one.

6) **Begar for State guests** : Whenever any powerful chief visited the States as a guest, he was provided with *begar* labour to carry luggage and cater to his other requirements as well. The people of the pargana through which he passed, had to make every arrangement for his tour and camp.

7) **Gaonsar Begar** : It consisted in villagers carrying the bundles, etc. of Tehsil, Police and other State and Government officials from village to village on their tours. This type of *begar* prevailed not only in Simla Hills but everywhere in India.²⁶

8) **Road Begar** : Road *begar* also a form of gaonsar *begar* involved maintenance of bridle tracks and roads built in their respective territories by the *begaris*.²⁷

9) **Shikar Begar** : This consisted in furnishing *begar* to high officials or friends of the Ruler who went to the forests to hunt game. However, on occasions when the Viceroy went out for shooting, he distributed bakshish to the beaters which was roughly equivalent to their daily wage.²⁸

10) **Mule begar** : Shopkeepers and others kept mules in many States for trade purposes. However, they had to supply mules to the State free of charge - a requirement

11) **Religious Begar** : Religious *begar* consisted of labour involved in ceremonies and celebration of festivals of the local dieties. Such ceremonies formed part of religion of the people and, therefore, the people had to contribute on such occasions.²⁹ Perhaps, in the strict sense, such *begar* would not be considered important due to willing participation in great number.

Beth System

Beth was an obligation to render personal service in return for certain cultivation rights. The Serfs, like cattle, were transferred from one owner to another and were locally called *bethus*.³⁰

The *bethus* received meals from their master twice or thrice a day, a suit of cloth once a year, a house to live and a few bighas of land to cultivate for their own profit. In return they cultivated the entire fields of their master and rendered menial services to him.

The *bethus* consisted of following three classes.

Beth system was closely associated with the *begar* system as it also involved land tenure. In this system the *bethu* tilled the land that belonged to the Raja and a portion of it for his existence.

The *bethu* was exempt from revenue yet the profits were received by the Raja. In addition to tilling, the *bethu* was also responsible for carrying loads.³¹

Bethus were also kept by Zamindars for whom they tilled their lands and performed other services. These were as follows:

(1) The first class of *bethus* constituted those who cultivated the *basa* land, which included all the processes of cultivation of *basa* land, but the produce belonged to the Ruler. This class of *bethu* were directly under him.

The *bethus* also worked for the Jagirdars under the same arrangement.³²

(2) This second class of *bethus* were, however, better placed than their counterparts employed by the State because they were in direct contact with their masters whereas the latter had indirect contact with their masters through a host of intermediate State servants.

3) The third class of *bethus* were indebted due to loan-interest (from their master). As such, they were required to supply goods. This class unfortunately, to our shame is still

present and prevalent - bonded labour in India. This class was hereditary, and the servitude passed on from father to son as long as cultivation was helpful and of sufficient production. *Bethus* rendered satisfactory services to their masters. Such *bethus* were treated like beasts.

In addition to collection and carriage of wood and grass for the darbar, to working in the fields, they had to perform other miscellaneous duties in addition and chores too for their masters.

Abolition of Begar System

Prior to the arrival of the British, the *begar* system was common and widespread. During the British regime in the hill region, efforts were made to reduce the *begar* burden legally but proved greatly arduous due to geographical locale, and terrain, social customs and societal difficult conditions in general. So it was not possible to enforce the anti-*begar* laws effectively.

The *begar* system was an evil beyond dispute. All the settlement officers condemned *begar*, particularly *athwara*, as an unmitigated evil oppressive of the people adversely affecting and seriously interfering with their cultivation.

The cruel custom of *begar* came to the notice of the British authorities during the visit of General Ochterlony in the

cis-Sutlej area. Wherever he went, he received a lot of complaints against the practice of *begar*. He thought of abolishing the evil. He ordered the commanding officers to stop the use of *begar* labour for the carriage of the luggage of the troops, and that adequate alternative arrangements be made in its place. To prevent any delays in an army on the march, the chiefs who lived along the road were asked to furnish every required assistance, while British troops were to pay for whatever assistance they received.³³

The burden of *begar* of Hill Chiefs, imposed by the treaty of 1815, was relaxed partially by commuting it into cash. Initially, *begaris* were provided touring British officers and officials but with the opening of the Hindustan-Tibet road, the hill chiefs were forced to extend the services to British visitors too as a result of which the burden of *begar* on the people remained the same even after concessions were granted to the chiefs.³⁴

Abolition of the *begar* system proved extremely difficult as it affected not only the economy and the revenue system, but also the capacity to pay for such free long-existent services.

With respect to *begar*, many States had several settlements between 1884 and 1932.³⁵ People suffered heavy losses as the system interfered with the working of peasants during their crop season. In the light of the above, Athwara (duty at the darbar for six months in a year) a form of *begar*

existent prior to these settlements was completely abolished in many States and commuted on the basis of land revenue. It was 10% in Nalagarh and Mahlog, 12.5% in Kumarsain, Bhajji and Kunihar, 11% in Baghal and Beja, 10% in Dhami, 13% in Khaneti and 20% in Koti States and 14% in Keonthal State.³⁶

In other States the duty under Athwara form of *begar* was reduced to one month per annum without cess. As per the settlement of 1914-1915 the period was reduced from one month to 15 days with cess 1/4th of the existing commutation fee.³⁷

During the fourth decade of the 20th century, the athwara *begar* was totally abolished in Jubbal, Baghat and Kuthar. Athwara was neither abolished nor commuted in Balson, Mangal, Darkoti, Tharoch, Delath, Ratesh, Rawingarh and Dhodi as a result of which the Crown Representative considered it desirable to frame a general policy to deal with hardship caused by *begar* and *bethu*.

A political agent was appointed for purposes of enquiring about *begar* for its total abolition as well as that of *beth* and send his suggestions to the Crown Representative. Then, on the basis of these enquiries and suggestions, a "Model Policy" was framed.³⁸

A meeting with the representative rulers and Diwans of the Hill States was convened on 24th August, 1943, under the

Chairmanship of the Hon'ble Resident of Punjab Hill States and thus a policy was adopted by each Hill State.³⁹

With respect to *begar*, all forms of unpaid labour were abolished and certain States which were bound to provide free forced labour under their sanads, were relinquished by the Crown without commutation and where the abolition of unpaid labour was not practicable, it was to be paid in cash at minimum rates published by authority.⁴⁰

With effect from May 1948, *begar*, paid or unpaid, was prohibited within the territory of Himachal Pradesh.⁴¹

Due to increase in political consciousness among the people of Hill States by organisation of Praja Mandals and increase in facilities of education, means of communication and transport development in the Hill States, the *begar* system which had heavily suppressed the people for generations came to an end.

With respect to *beth*, rendering personal services in lieu of land tenure opposed public conscience as an element of slavery. The hardships of employed *bethus* were removed and *beth* was completely abolished with the exception of *palki* service, for ladies of ruling families. This service too was to be paid for.⁴² *Bethus* who had tilled the land for three generations were given occupancy rights. The land revenue for occupancy rights was double the normal land revenue plus if the dwellings of tenants were too close to those of the rulers, the latter had

the right to exchange such land with land further off. The *bethus* who didn't have possession of land for three generations were then made to pay rent in the form of cash.

Under the Punjab Tenancy Act 1887, if a *bethu* went to the court, the court would never decree in favour of the personal service rendered as it was legally enforceable. So forced labour, by this time, was not abolished in totality had a form of *bethus* employed by Zamindars, actual status but any hardship arising therefrom was to be considered in the next settlement.

The model policies on beth and *begar* were forwarded to the rulers of Simla Hill States in October, 1944 after the approval of the Crown Representative.

The rulers had to furnish a half yearly report (i.e. on 15th December and 15th of June every year) ⁴³ regarding the progress achieved after implementation of the policy. With the adoption of the policy, unpaid forced labour was abolished but paid forced labour existed for various purposes. “

By the extra Provincial Jurisdiction Act of 1947 the Central Government conferred the occupancy rights specified in Punjab Tenancy Act 1887, on all *bethus* who had been in cultivatory possession of land in Hill States for three generations on payment of rent equal to 1/4 that of the land revenue and cess chargeable on land by payment of a sum

equal to 10 times the land revenue and cess assessed on such lands; the proprietary rights were then granted to such *bethus*.

Social Welfare Work

The education, health and economic conditions are considered as the major measurements for determining the standard of socio-economic life of the general population of the Simla Hill States. In considering the contribution of education, therefore, it would be worthwhile to begin by recalling the main system of education in the former princely States and area under the British till 1947.

Before the advent of British rule, the system of instruction was mostly connected with religious institutions. The main emphasis in ancient India, however, was on moral, religious and spiritual education. This was provided in Pathshalas, in temples by the Hindus. Like Hindus, the Muslims too had deep respect for learning and revered learned men.

Education after the coming of Britishers

On the conclusion of Gurkha war in 1815 A.D., the Hill States lying between Yamuna and Sutlej rivers came under the protection of the British Government in India. They granted

the sanads to the hill chiefs and urged them to work for the welfare of their subjects.⁴⁵ They paid their attention to the education of the masses. Dr. J.G. Gerard of 1st Nussereer Battalion submitted a detailed report on education in the Hill States to Captain C. P. Kennedy, Assistant Deputy Superintendent, Hill States.

The credit for modern education goes to the British and various Christian missionaries. The first British house in the hills was built by Captain C.P. Kennedy in 1822 in Simla. Thereafter, many British army men and civilians started visiting Simla and built houses there. Lord Amherst, the Governor General, came to Simla in 1827 and held a durbar of Simla Hill States rulers.

The British Government started a Government High School at Simla. With the growth of the Hill States, the population of the main city began increasing. The first High School in the hills was opened in Simla in 1848 to provide teaching upto matriculation standard.⁴⁶ After some time two primary schools, one in Boileauganj and another on the cart road were established. These branches imparted education upto lower primary standard. There was a boarding house in the main school building which had a capacity to accommodate 35 students.⁴⁷ Thereafter, many convent and public schools, one after the another, came into being in and around Simla.⁴⁸

The school system was taken over by the Government of India in 1857. The oldest public school 'Bishop Cotton School' was founded by Bishop Cotton on 28th July, 1859 as a "Thanks giving to Almighty God for the preservation of British people doing the mutiny of 1857."⁴⁹

In the later nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the following schools were founded one after another in Simla

- (1) Christ Church School for boys.
- (2) St. Michael's Day School for boys.
- (3) St. Joseph's Day School for girls.
- (5) Loretto Convent (Tara Hall) School for girls (1895).
- (6) Auckland School for girls (1866).
- (7) The Park's Boys School.
- (8) S.P.G. Christian Girls School.
- (9) Mayo Orphange School for girls (1869).
- (10) Ayrelfi School for girls (1877).
- (11) Union Church School.
- (12) St. Edward School for boys (1925).
- (13) Convent of Jesus and Mary School for girls (1864).
- (14) Baptist Mission School for boys.

These are the schools that used to exist in the Hill States and some of them still do.

With the establishment of so many English and vernacular schools in Simla, some, but not all, Hill Chiefs started sending their children to the schools in Simla, and encouraged others who could afford to do likewise, the schools being located at Simla, Kotkhai, Subathu for the natives. Some public school educated princes encouraged such modern education. The bigger States like Bashahr, Jubbal, Bilaspur, Baghat, etc., took keen interest as these were bigger in area, population and had a good source of revenue. The other States were small in area, population and their incomes were very meagre.

Bashahr State was the largest State of Simla Hill States. Raja Shamsheer Singh was a learned man. He encouraged a modern system of education in the State and opened many schools in the State. At the turn of this century, there were three schools in the State—an Anglo-Vernacular Middle School with 112 scholars and Hindi school for religious instruction with 32 scholars in Rampur, the capital, and a primary school with 27 scholars in Rohru.⁵⁰

Jubbal : Among the Simla Hill States, some were of considerable size and importance, particularly Jubbal. Rana Karam Chand succeeded to gaddi in 1849 and reigned upto

1877. He was a lover of Hindi and Urdu and had encouraged the reading and writing of these languages.

The successive rulers paid sufficient attention towards the spread of education. In 1909 a middle school was set up at Deohra which later on was rechristened as Anglo Vernacular Middle School. English was made a compulsory subject.⁵¹

In Keonthal State no satisfactory information on the education system of Keonthal is available, but at the turn of the century, when Raja Bijai Sen (1901-1916) was the chief, vernacular primary schools were maintained at Junga, Fagu, Matiana, Rawin and Punar.⁵²

Baghal State had one Anglo-vernacular middle school at Arki with 145 pupils. It had a boarding house. There was also a girls school at Arki with 36 pupils.

Baghat State Raja Dalip Singh (1860-1911) was well educated, popular and public spirited and the State was well administered during his region. There was one Anglo-vernacular middle school at Solan with a staff of four teachers and an average attendance of 80 boys.⁵³ Dalip Singh's son, Raja Durga Singh, paid special attention towards the education of his subjects.

Bhajji State : Till the reign of Rana Durga Singh (1875-1913), there was no school in the State. Rana Bir Pal Singh, son of Rana Durga Singh, opened an Anglo-vernacular middle school

at Suni in which during the year 1934 there were seven teachers and about 100 students.

Koti State : There was no school in Koti State and boys from the State used to attend school at Simla.⁵⁴

Dhami State : Dhami State had a primary school at Halog, Simla. As Simla and Jutogh were close by, some boys from the State used to attend school at these two particular places.

Theog State : The Arya Samaj of Simla maintained a boy's school at Shali, established in 1916 to defray the expenses of the State grants.⁵⁵

The other States of Simla Hills, e.g. Kaneti, Delath, Madhan, Ghund, Ratesh, Rawingarh, Dhadi, Mahlog, Balson, Kuthar, Kumharsain, Beja, Darkoti, Tharoch and Sangri were very small in area and population. Their income was very meagre. They were in no position to provide even a primary school to their subjects.

The rulers of the Hill States gave priority to education. A college by the name of S.D. College was opened by Shri Rana Padam Chand of the State of Jubbal. Raja Bhag Chand of Jubbal contributed the bulk of finances towards the setting up of the college and was also aided by Raja Durga Singh of Baghat. Resultantly, no fee was charged from the students of Jubbal and Baghat State in the S.D. College. In addition to remittance of fee, Raja Jubbal set up and provided

scholarships to brilliant students from his State. A student who passed the eighth class was given a scholarship of Rupees ten; a student studying in intermediate, Rupees twenty; and a student getting a B.A. Rupees thirty. The State bore the entire expense of the brilliant students who chose professional education in medicine or engineering.

Rai Bahadur Jodhamal also opened a college in Summer Hill, Simla.

Public Work

Simla was under the charge of Simla provincial division of the public works departments with an Executive Engineer leading, along with two or more Assistant Engineers. The division was in charge of the Kalka-Simla cart road (58 miles), Hindustan Tibet Road (199.5 miles), Narkanada-Luri-Kumarsain road (13 miles) and Mashobra-Luni road (25 miles). All public offices and the residence of His Excellency (the Commander-in-Chief), His Honor (the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab), and of the members of his executive council, were under the maintenance of the public works department.⁵⁶

The Simla municipality also managed its own public works except sewerage and sludge, which fell under the general public works department. A separate Executive Engineer was incharge of public works, i.e., they later on being put under the

Simla Municipality. The water supply was obtained from four zones. The upper Gravity Zone was in Koti Ilaqa from where the water was first brought to Dhalli and then to Sanjauli. The lower Gravity Zone had a pumping station at Cherot, commissioned in 1893. Then there was chair pumping zone supply and, lastly, the Guma pumping zone, with its water pumping plan at the highest elevation in the world at the time.

The Simla municipality was the oldest in Punjab with that at Bhiwani. It was constituted in 1851 and consisted of only government officials but in 1855 an element of election was introduced, but the franchise limited only to the house owners. In 1871 the municipality was raised to the status of a first class municipality.

The Committee was licensed to generate electricity from Chaba power station at Simla. The committee looked after the town hall, the municipal market and the shops of Edward Ganj Grain Market. It also maintained two parks on the Mall and 49.00 miles of Road length, both metalled (23 miles) and unmetalled (26 miles). The fire brigade was maintained by the Committee, both the Union and State Governments contributing. The committee also maintained its own food laboratory under its health officers.⁵⁷

The Bashahr State in 1914-15 had a budget of Rs. 4900/- for public works. A tehsil building and dispensary were

completed during the year at Chini and various minor works were carried out in different parts of the State.

Some irrigation projects were also carried out and started. The Sangla Kuhl in the Bespa valley (the channel laid from Bespa river) was built along the side of the valley for irrigation of the existing fields adjacent to the village of Sangla and Kamroo. The channel had an approximate length of 4 miles and irrigated fields on the way along most of its length. The construction of Tharaj kuhl in Rohru tehsil and Nirsu kuhl were started.⁵⁸

The project of Nirsu kuhl running from Taklech in the Nagligad to water the land lying about the Sutlej and Nirsu between Nirath and Rampur was completed on the budget of the public works department in the following two years. The channel had a span of 13 miles and the State was assisted by the Executive Engineer, Simla District, for construction of the same (Nirsu kuhl).⁵⁹

The Baghat State Public Department was under the control of State Officers who constructed the water storage tank and they were made operational in December, 1941. Fortunately, they are still functioning satisfactorily.

The Development Board, Solan, which functioned on the lines of a Municipal Committee, continued its activities with satisfactory results, supplying water and maintaining sanitation

and road along with the vital issue of public health concurrently.⁶⁰

Medical

The medical care of District Simla was in the hands of a Civil Surgeon assisted by a Joint Civil Surgeon. There were two Civil Surgeons at Simla, between both of them jointly in charge of medical services in a divided manner.

A charitable dispensary established in 1844, was the only medical institution in Simla situated in an ill constructed building at Lower Bazar. It could only accommodate twenty patients, seventeen males and three females.⁶¹

There was a Leper Asylum at Sabathu and a Lock Hospital at Kasauli under the cantonment Magistrate. Incidentally, Samuel Stock first served as a Christian Minister at this Leper Asylum in Subathu. The two Lock Hospitals in Simla, one at Kasauli and another at Sabathu, were founded in 1870 and 1872 respectively.

In 1885, Ripon Hospital opened at Simla, where both European and native patients were treated. The Ripon Hospital had accommodation for sixty six beds. Afterwards, in commemoration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the female ward of Ripon Hospital was converted into "The Lady Dufferein Hospital" under the charge of a qualified female

doctor. The Ripon Hospital was a Municipal Institution founded by Municipal funds and a Government grant of Rs. 1,500/- per annum.

In May, 1902, the Walker Hospital was opened by Sir James Walker for Europeans. It had a staff of House Surgeons, a Lady Superintendent and six nurses. A military Assistant Surgeon was provided free by the Government who acted as a House Surgeon.

There was also a smallpox Hospital on the south side of Jakhoo below the Mall. There was a Government dispensary at Kotkhai, a dispensary of Ludhiana Mission at Sabathu and Kakarhati and a dispensary of the Church Mission at Kotgarh.⁶²

A hospital existed in Rampur under the charge of Doctor N. J. Rodrigues. A Sub-Assistant Surgeon was deputed from Punjab who practised and was in the habit of conducting an itinerant dispensary in Rohru tehsil till the State built a proper dispensary.

In Chini Tehsil, medical work was carried on by the Salvation Army till the State built a dispensary. The dispensary was the property of the State, but medical work was carried on by the Salvation Army on behalf of the State. The Forest Department maintained a Sub-Assistant Surgeon with a dispensary at Kilba for the staff of the Department who also offered medical services to the villagers, whenever the need arose. The Moravian Mission maintained a dispensary at Poo

towards which the State made an annual contribution of Rs.100.

In 1916 Dr. N.J. Rodrigues left the services of the State on being offered the charge of the Salt Department Hospital at Sambar Lake in Rajputana. His departure proved a great loss for the medical amenities of the State. On 3rd July, 1916, the dispensary at Rohru was closed and the Assistant Surgeon from Punjab, Mr. L. Chranji Lal was shifted to Rampur.

Due to numerous people constantly applying for medicines to touring officers, a compounder trained by Dr. Rodrigues was sent along with the Manager to treat the patients at various villages during the summer tour of the Manager. The compounder was supplied with a series of basic medicines and simple remedies from the Rampur Hospital. What is amazing is that he treated more than six hundred patients in the five months tour every year. The Moravian Mission at Poo continued to receive the annual grant from the State as usual.⁶³

In 1911, a dispensary was opened at Chaupal.⁶⁴ In 1946, a regular proper Hospital was constructed which could accommodate 25 patients. A large stock of medicines as well as all kinds of necessary equipment were supplied to this hospital.⁶⁵ Some of the common diseases in the State were dysentery, diarrhea, hook worm, flu, pneumonia, venereal

diseases, goitre, cholera, plague and small pox. There was no cure for diseases like cholera and smallpox.⁶⁶

In the next three decades, the health services did not make any significant strides, progress was rather very slow. From the administration reports, it is revealed that in 1945-46, there were two hospitals in the State, one at Rampur and the other at Rohru, both of them in the charge of medical graduates. Besides, there were two allopathic dispensaries, one at Sarahan and another at Chini. There were also four Ayurvedic dispensaries at Sangla, Tikkari, Sholi and Rampur. These were managed by trained and experienced Vaidas.⁶⁷

Baghat State

During 1943-44 there was, in addition to the State hospital, one rural dispensary, at Deothi. In 1944-45, a well equipped Ayurvedic dispensary was set up in Solan, operational at the beginning of the year. The dispensary was named Shri Umed Ayurvedic dispensary in memory of the late Shri Ram Umed Singh

Baghat State Vidya Devi Hospital for Women

The opening ceremony of this Hospital was performed by Shri Raja Sahib Bahadur on 26th March, 1945.

For the welfare of the travellers in the Hill State the rulers and the chiefs constructed various services and maintained various natural resources of water. Raja Bhagat of Jubbal established a Sarai at Sanjauli in the name of his mother and also one at his State. Rai Jodhamal built a Sarai in Choordhar and provided water supply at Rohru.

From 1870 to 1945, it is important to highlight the fact that the British Government established eight nearly full fledged hospitals and only one modest one was established by the Raja of Baghat. The British also established eleven dispensaries; Raja Baghat; only one Ayurvedic Dispensary. Such spectacular contribution on the part of the British is to be lauded. Why the other Rajas of Bashahr, Jubbal Keonthal did not show this concern for the people is somewhat baffling. It is disappointing, to say the least, because these Rajas definitely contributed more money to the exchequer and were more affluent than the Raja of Baghat.

The foregoing survey in the chapter titled Social Reforms and Social Welfare Works clearly demonstrates, that with the passage of time paramount power helped the weaker inhabitants. It became aware of certain horrendous problems such as *begar* and *bethu*. The chapter shows, through the catalogue technique, the various categories of *begar* which flourished in Simla Hills. *Begar* was Khar Patwar, i.e., a pernicious weed growing under the soil and degrading it beyond repair. The British Government was well aware of the

inequity in the *begar* system, especially General Ochterlony in an individual capacity. In due course, the rulers wily-nily had to fall in line. A protest movement took shape. Incidentally Samuel Stokes who was rechristened Satyananda Stokes, also campaigned for it. It is important to draw attention to this fact, though no reference was made to it earlier. The exploitation inheritance in the *bethu* system was much more iniquitous than *begar*, because *begar* was a permanent component, *bethus* being more like serfs always at the beck and call of their masters for minor chores in addition to cultivating their respective masters' lands. So granting the *bethus* proprietary rights over their lands which they had tilled for three generations was a revolutionary step forward. Finally the legal abolition of *begar* and bethudom imparted a sense of dignity to the poor Himachalies, making them realise that they were not draft animals, but human beings with the same flesh and blood as the people of privilege and status and in no way tainted. In addition to removal of these ugly ulcers on the fair face of Simla Hills, rapid strides were made in the area of education and health care and public works. In the area of education, the ruling house of Jubbal must be commended for also starting S.D. College now Government College for Women. Rightly T.S. Eliot, Nobel Laureate poet of England says in "*The Four Quartets*" that history is "illusion free contemplation verily, and history is not the life-time of one man only, but of old stones that cannot be deciphered".

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CHAPTER V

THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Irrespective of the nature and form of society, women have always been its integral and inseparable part. That reality notwithstanding, they hardly get what is due to them. The very word 'woman' connotes a long history of dependence and subordination. For centuries, women who constitute half of the humanity have been suppressed, oppressed and treated as subordinates, not as equals of men in various fields of activity, and politics is one among them.

The work on social history cannot be viewed in isolation from the general position of women in society. The socio-cultural practices in society, to a large extent, determine the life of women. Historically, women were supposed to carry forward the traditions, norms and values of the society. The process of socialization that they undergo in their families does not prepare them for non-traditional roles.¹

In this light, what does the mainstream Indian culture expect a woman to be? Without going into the corridors of Indian history, which may be a good source to turn to, insofar as the realities are concerned, we will not be in a position to have a general view about women's position in Indian society. In ancient India, reverence was given to women as mother's image, a symbol of life, strength and purity with immense

capacity for patience, sacrifice and suffering. Woman was depicted as 'Shakti' and it was an accepted belief that where woman is respected, there is divine presence.²

For the Rig-Vedic Aryan, women were not ornamental addendum but co-partners in life, in its pleasures and hazards, in its joys and sorrows.³ They enjoyed a position of equality and were respected both in and by family and society as well. They were imparted education like men and enjoyed considerable freedom in their personal matters. The community as a whole showed concern and respect for them and they played a significant role in the familial, social and political life.⁴

Indian culture also accorded a high place to women who did not come into their own till the early 20th century. He writes, "It may be noted too that in law and theory at least women in ancient India, contrary to the sentiment of other ancient peoples, were not denied civil rights, but, he qualifies, being a student of history "although in practice this equality was rendered nugatory for all but a few by their social subordination to the male and their domestic preoccupation, but adds in the selfsame sentence that "instances have yet survived in the existing records of women figuring, not only as queens and administrators and even in the battlefield, a common enough incident in Indian history, but not as elected representative on civic bodies."⁵

Even though in the Rig-Vedic period, ostensibly, women were equal to men and had access to education, administration, politics, etc., but in actual fact, because of domestic preoccupation a very small percentage of them could take advantage of this freedom and equality. This fact is sharply underlined by Aurobindo in his opus, The Foundations of Indian Culture .

In the later Vedic period (C. 1000-600 BC) the position of women deteriorated to some extent because of the undesirability of a daughter. Marriage became compulsory and eschatological notions as well as notions of ceremonial purity crept in. Women were generally considered impure and were debarred from the highly clean and spiritual function. A son was more desired, as he had to perform the funeral ceremonies of his parents, in the absence of which the dead souls, it was feared, would go to hell.⁶

In the later-Vedic period, there was a gradual decline in female education. The system of sending out girls to famous teachers or centres of education was discouraged and they received their education from their close relatives. Further, Vedic education was also canonized during this period. However, women of royal, rich and cultured families would receive education like their male counterparts.⁷ Women did not take part in political activities as actively in the later Vedic

period as in the Rig-Vedic period. They did not form a part of the Sabha.

The position of women continued to plummet in the 'epic period', the general principle prescribed being that Man was the master of Woman. The husband was 'viewed' not only as a friend, but also an ideal 'preceptor' and the 'very god' of the wife. Occasionally, ancient beliefs that women should be respected and honoured were repeated in the epic period. They were considered pivots, not only of domestic life, but of society as a whole. The education of women was well looked after and they were assigned important duties at home. But we can see that such an 'exalted position' was replete with an ulterior motive as they were socially useful to maintain 'racial purity' and continuity of the family. Women became a condemned section of the Hindu society during the post-vedic period. They were considered dependent upon men throughout their lives. As no resurgence of Indian culture and society occurred, these traditions continued to be strengthened. The position of women continued to be downgraded gradually due to certain internal changes in the societal arrangements.

Compulsory marriage, introduction of the dasi system, specialization of Vedic education and denial of religious and, therefore, intellectual education to women, contributed much to their degradation.

Buddhism and Jainism upheld the women's position to some extent by providing an alternative position of dignity to those who wished to dissociate themselves from the normal role of women in the family and society to join the Sangha.⁸ Though Buddhism admitted women as nuns to participate in higher spiritual life, they were given inferior positions to that of men in the monastic administration.

Like other great religions, Jainism also maintained that in the monastic life, a nun was inferior to a monk as Jainism generally believed in the supremacy of indirect salvation.⁹

Even in the Sangha women were not equal. They had to prostrate completely to the monks. Such inequality reflected ridiculously on their poor status.

The lower status of women continued in the Mauryan and Gupta period. However, during the Mauryan Era, there were women who constituted the force for the personal security and safety of the King,¹⁰ meaning there was faith in the competence and faithfulness of women. During the Gupta epoch too, women were not disqualified from the exercise of public rights.

After the 7th Century A.D., the position of women declined steadily. The medieval period strengthened three atrocious practices, i.e., female infanticide, child marriage and the sati system. The competition to find a bridegroom, the denial of education to women, the rigid idea of chastity as an imperative for the prospective bride, fear of women joining

nunneries, and, to a large extent, protection of the women from the inroads of Muslim invaders were some of the main reasons which strengthened the custom of child marriage. With the arrival of Islam and the terrorism of martial Turks, Hindu society became rigid in its indigenous socio-religious structure. Some Turks entered into marriage alliance with the Hindu girls after forcibly converting them to Islam. This led Hindus to further curtail the freedom of their womenfolk. The purdah system a Muslim custom of covering the face with a veil was adopted by middle class Hindu women to protect themselves via camouflage from the foreign invaders. The denial of education and advocacy of early marriage resulted in putting women under the protection of their husbands at an early age. Purdah, polygamy, the widespread practice of Sati and the like, were some of the indications of the rapidly deteriorating status of women.

The birth of a female child was not welcome, she being considered a burden by both parents and generally. This resulted in the practice of female infanticide. Social seclusion of women turned out (unjustly) to be a matter of pride for the men, especially among the middle and upper class families.

When British imperial power established its rule over the Simla Hill States, women were occupying a highly subjugated position in the social structure. Dube (1963) argued that the dark and dismal years of the eighteenth century were believed

to have left the deepest mark on the status of women. The advent of the British in Simla Hill States brought them in contact with the modern west. This brought about a considerable change in political, economic, social and cultural outlook of society.

The 19th century reform movement and the Indian social renaissance initiated the process of improving the status of women. The struggle for their upliftment took place mainly in making laws for social reforms, women's education, and political rights. Efforts were concentrated on the first two in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The emergence of a muted Indian Renaissance in the nineteenth century opened the eyes of the Indian intelligentsia to the disgraceful social conditions of their own people, especially that of women. They realised the shameful position of Indian woman, which was nothing but a tale of suffering and humiliation from birth to death.

The religious and social organisations like the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj and the Rama Krishna Mission advocated the cause of women. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who is also called the father of the Indian Renaissance, opposed the inhuman custom of sati and rallied strong public opinion against it. By this time the Indian Renaissance had gathered steam. He urged the British government to legally abolish the cruel practice of sati. On 4th

December, 1829, sati was declared "a crime of culpable homicide punishable with fine, imprisonment or both."¹¹

Conditions in the Simla Hill States when the Britishers came, were somewhat different than other States. To assess their status, in various factors like marriage, dowry related, and bride price, birth, child marriage, widow remarriage, divorce, have to be examined. In Bashahr no case of dowry was unearthed, at least not as solid proof. Parents gave to their daughters material and money of their own free choice.

The society of Bashahr State was divided in two groups, tribal and non-tribal. Tribal women enjoyed great freedom in the Kinnaur region. Marriages were settled at an early age. The marriage customs of a society mirror a society's standard and progress. Four types of marriages existed in the Kinnaur region of Bushahr State. The first was called Janekang or Janetang, in which the boy and girl, father and mother and relatives celebrated a common marriage function. The second type was Damchalshish or Benaghachis love marriage. The third type was forcible capture, in which a group of boys forcibly captured a girl for marriage, for a friend or a relative. The fourth type of marriage was called Har, which means enticing away someone's wife.

The socio-societal status of a woman was variously estimated and diametrically opposite views were current,

regarding her place in different stages of civilization. On the one hand, she was conceived as little better than a slave or beast of burden, condemned to perform the hardest drudgery, bought as chattel, and treated as such. On the other, those who had anything to do with tribes reckoning descent from the mother were likely to view woman as an undisputed mistress of the family, if not of the communal life too. Both concepts were, as far as the vast majority of the people were concerned, far removed from the actual state of affairs. There was so much variability in the relationship of woman to society that any general statements must be taken with caution. Her utility and resourcefulness in domesticity, her refreshing company and the affectionate care of children had always proved to be a great asset to her partner in life and had, to a considerable extent, determined her status at different stages of civilization.¹²

In the hill society of the region as a whole, Kinnaur aside, woman appeared to be subservient to man. She was regarded as chattel and bought and sold to the highest bidder. Besides, she could be inherited by her husband's kin. If the husband willed it, he could repudiate his marital obligations and divorce her on the flimsiest of pretexts and receive compensation for her in the shape of reet. The status of a woman was to a considerable extent due to her economic utility to her husband who had to depend on her. We must, therefore, study the use of women in the hills to get at the root of her societal status, in society. In order to illustrate her

vegetable. The morning meal consisted of Sattu or in winter at times of boiled gaugti (Arum colo-casea). That did not take her very long to prepare except on festive occasions when she had to cook the whole day to entertain guests. She was now free to go out and proceed to bring in fuel and grass.

In the evening she had to milk the cattle again. The cows and buffaloes were generally milked three times a day - morning, noon and evening. After preparing the meal for the night, she kept hot water ready for the bath. The men, tired after the day's toil, came at nightfall and to relieve their fatigue she provided them with a hot bath. Those who did not take a bath simply washed their faces while she washed their feet. She kept the milk for coagulation before retiring to bed and this finished her daily routine. A grueling one, to say the least.¹⁶ One can see from the above, that the woman was busy from dawn to dusk. The fact of the matter is that she still does, even today.

It was not only as a worker at home that the services of the women were demanded, but also in the fields. She was important in the fields as at home. Near the obara the refuse of the cattle was collected at a place called gabras. She carried this on her head or at times on her back to the fields where it was utilized as manure. Women in the cis-Giri were not expected to do this sort of work which was considered unchivalrous on the part of men. But difference prevailed in

the trans-Giri tract or Sirmour and in the other Simla Hill States. After the manure had been collected and the field had been ploughed by men she broke the lumps of earth that were left behind by the plough. The stones in the field were thrown out by her to prepare the soil for the growth of the crop. Women were useful in the cultivation of rice. When the fields were flooded, they were ready for transplantation with a basket called *poora* or *poori*. It was a very tedious, back-breaking, and labourious process and needed careful and constant attention till the whole field was finished.

Apart from the usual management of the household, a woman had to do other work from morning till evening. It is worth noting that woman performed almost all tedious tasks because they needed not only strength but careful attention.¹⁷ It may be not out of place to mention here, though in passing, that what Buddhists call 'mindfulness' comes naturally to them as they are involved with minutia in living, whether in the kitchen or, for that matter, human relationships.

Women were a source of help not only in the household and the fields, but also in the industrial undertaking of their partners. They took an active share in the manufacture of mats and baskets. In Bashahr and other States, where sheep-breeding was done on a large scale, they helped not only in supplying fodder to the sheep and in looking after them but did a considerable part of this spinning and weaving as well.¹⁸

Because they worked side by side with men, this encouraged equalitarian culture.

Thus, it was that the woman worked. There was no restriction on her except one. She was nowhere allowed to plough the land. But under extraordinary circumstances she was obliged to do so, it being taken as an insult to men. This brief description shows how, in the region, she was man's equal in every respect. By her economic utility, she was equal to men in every respect. The scarcity of her sex in number enhanced the demand for her and her position in society was assured.

The role of woman in Simla Hill States was important because she could work side by side with man in agriculture as at home. Women were constantly at work in the field (agriculture) such as weeding, reaping, threshing, pounding or carrying headloads of fodder, water, rock clay, firewood, grain, manure and flour, etc. Women were mostly away from their homes, when they were at work regularly with care and tenacity, collecting grass, leaves or firewood or tending animals in the forests and even at night and also during winter and rains. She busily and unrelentingly performed most agricultural and livestock duties working worked like a machine, ensuring that the food was cooked and even carried to the men working in the fields. In Bashahr Hill State, woman

worked very hard both at home and in the fields but never protested, doing all cheerfully and freely.

Reet or Rit (obnoxious social customs) were prevalent since time immemorial among tribes in the lowest rung in social stratification such as Kolis, Chanals, Chamars, Kanets, etc.

Reet was a form of marriage without any ritual or ceremonies and was contracted by paying money. Girls, young women and even married women were allowed to go by their parents, guardian or husbands for sums ranging from Rs. 100 to Rs. 2000/-. After the payment to the husband, the marriage or association was considered to be annulled. Concubinage to a second man became marriage under this custom. A woman could trade hands many times and a man could keep as many women as he could. Women were considered merchandise.

Because of Reet domestic ties became weak and marriage had no significant position in socio-societal stability. 'Reet' also resulted in the laxity of sexual relations and total disregard for the laws of chastity. Sexually transmitted diseases like syphilis or gonorrhoea were common in these segments of society. The girls were often exploited and used for immoral purposes, which in turn swelled the ranks of prostitutes.¹⁹

Alarmed by the evils of Reet, organizations of the hills like Rajput Sthania Sabha and the Himalaya Vidiya Prabundhani Sabha Simla began vigorous propaganda for its

abolition in the beginning of the 20th century. The Himalaya Vidiya Parabandhani Sabha in 1907 wrote to Colonel Douglas, the then Superintendent of Simla Hill States, to take strict measures to stop the custom of 'Reet'. Douglas took up the matter with the hill chiefs who agreed unanimously to eradicate the Reet custom but nothing effective was done. Then, in 1910, Kettlewell, successor of Douglas, emphasised to the hills rulers the necessity of doing away with this immoral custom.²⁰ Kettlewell wrote about it to Mir, Munshi of Patiala State in July 1910, who further wrote to the Political Agent, Phulkian States and Bahawalpur, inquiring whether the custom of 'Reet' was accepted by British courts. On July 26, 1910, during the discussion among the Political Agent, Phulkian States and Bahawalpur and the Superintendent and Hill States on the 'Reet' system, the latter informed that the British courts regarded Reet custom as valid. Thereafter, the Patiala Darbar issued an order declaring the Reet custom illegal.

To discourage the custom of 'Reet' marriage (5% in 1855 to 15% in 1920).²¹ In 1924, Thakur Surat Singh, General Secretary of the Himalaya Vidiya Parbandhani Sabha intensified against Reet and suggested that to counter it, it was necessary that rulers of hill tracts themselves took interest in abolishing the most crying practice of society.²²

The Thakur Surat Singh started complaining against reet by issuing pamphlets and tried his best to create public opinion

against reet. At the initiative of the Hindu Sabha, a Hindu conference was held in Simla on June 28-29, 1924. The reception Committee of 120 members was formed, some office bearers being Rana Jagjit Chand, Chief of Kuthar State as Chairman, Dr. Kedar Nath General Sect. Thakur Surat Singh, Propaganda Secretary, Lala Puran Chand, Vakil Reception Secretary. The conference was held in a spacious shed at Ganj. This augmented the State exchequer but still was not a deterrent.

The decoration of the shed was done by Pt. Raghava Nand Gautam and volunteers of the Himalaya Vidya Prabandhni Sabha. The Singh Sabha, the Seva Samiti, the Akhara Committee etc. helped the organizer of the conference.²³

Rana Durga Chand, the elected president, was given a public reception on his arrival on June 27, 1924. The procession started from Winterfield cart road with a band of volunteer hill musicians on horses, leading students of the Sanatam Dharam School and followed by the volunteer of Himalaya Prabandhni Sabha and Singh Sabha. Shops along the route were decorated and the bazaar was thronged with interested spectators. The session opened in the day following Bhajan by Master Mohan Singh, Musical Prodigy of Punjab.²⁴

The main aim of such fanfare and associations and involvement of prominent personalities of Simla, various

organizations, the hill chiefs, high Govt. officials and people of the hill state was to create a lot of propaganda or agitation among the masses against the social evil of 'Reet' and secondarily to remind the Kenats that they were also Rajput, and they should adopt the custom and manners of the Rajput as Kanets comprised the majority of the population of the hill States.

High British officials and many hill chiefs, although invited, did not attend the conference.²⁵

Thakur Surat Singh by enclosing the copy of above resolution appealed to the Supdt. Hill State to prevail upon hill chiefs to take up legislative measure for the eradication of Reet custom.²⁶ The Sabha held meetings at several places to create awareness about the evils of Reet in the society and passed resolution that no woman shall remarry during a husband's life time.²⁷

Surat Singh also assured the British Govt. that the Sabha was loyal to the British and had nothing to do with politics. He remarked that since the Govt. had already abolished Sati, Barda Faroshi, female infanticide, human offerings to God and slavery they should also take necessary measures to abolish the evil custom of 'Reet'.²⁸ With respect to such, he also requested E.G.F. Abraham Supdt. Hill State to substitute Hindu Marriage for Rit by legislative process.²⁹

The opinion of the then Chief Secretary to the Punjab Governor, J.M. Dunnett, to the resolution was that the Governor in Council considered Reet as purely the internal matter of Indian States and that it could suitably be dealt with in conference with other hill chiefs than at a conference convened by the Sabha.³⁰

The Punjab Governor advised his local representative at Simla not to take initiative for calling such a conference and not to act as the Sabha's Chairman, so that the official approach might not be misconstrued. The Punjab Government, however, opined that the practice of 'Reet' was purely a matter of internal administration of the hill chiefs who, however, could take practical steps in its elimination.³¹

Thakur Surat Singh in 1925 brought out the seventeen page pamphlet on the evils of Reet custom titled "The Himalayan Tragedy of Marriage" which was distributed to the high Govt. Officials, journals and newspapers in and outside Punjab.³² The pamphlet attracted considerable attention of the people of Punjab and in other parts of India with respect to the degradation of women and society as a whole. It was published in various paper like the Tribune, Lahore, The Servant of India, Poona, Hindustan and the Advocacy of India, Bombay, the Hindustan Times, The Statesman (Calcutta) and Indian Daily Mail, Bombay.

Emphasis was also laid on the lackadaisical and irresponsible approach of the Govt. of India and the Punjab Govt. in strictly curbing the menace of Reet.

The matter was publicised to such an extent that the Colonel Wedgewoel, on June 30, 1925, raised the question in the House of Commons (London) on the practice of 'Reet' in Simla Hill State under which girls were traded for immoral purposes within and outside the State, and if the custom existed, the political department should frame rules to eradicate it.³³

On reference from White Hall, the Govt. of India wrote to the Punjab Government about the problem. The letter asked the Supdt., Hill State, to consult the Hill chiefs to eradicate or reform the custom.

The Govt. of India asked the agent to the Governor General, Punjab State, to operate with the Government of Punjab to discourage the practice of Reet in respect to those hill States which were under his political charge. These States were Patiala (hill territory), Mandi, Suket, Sirmour (Nahan), Bilaspur and Kalsia hill territory.

The Punjab Govt. was not very keenly enthusiastic about holding any conference of Simla Hill State Chiefs. It was certain to enquire what action had been taken to suppress the evil of Reet by the British Government in territories under its direct administration.

Regarding the two solutions suggested, one was to declare Reet marriage an offence and the second to withhold such recognition in civil courts. J.M. Dunnett commented that the first method was full of difficulties. The prevailing criminal law did not interfere in matrimonial matters except on the complaint of the husband and, in this case, it was assumed that the husband would not report and under Section 498 of the Indian Penal Code, the woman herself not being a culprit. In Reet, as practiced in Sirmour and Kullu, including the right of divorce and remarriage by womans. Therein, woman too would have to be made an offender and Dunnett observed that he was doubtful if any law of this kind could be administered; he further remarked that if legal recognition to these marriages was refused and children treated as illegitimate, that would create further complications.³⁴

Meanwhile, the Government of India wrote a number of times to the Punjab Government inquiring about the action taken on the subject. The local Government made inquiries from J.C. Coldstream, Superintendent Hill States. The latter took up the matter with Bhagat Chand, Raja of Jubbal, who told Coldstream that he was not prepared to take the initiative in calling the conference. The Raja was of the view that as a Rajput, he was not justified in taking part in a movement for imposing changes in a custom of other castes, unless the initiative came from the people themselves.³⁵ Raja Padam Singh of Bashahr, however, framed regulations for abolition of

Reet custom in December 1924, which were to be enforced in the State from March 14, 1925.³⁶ The first part of regulations contained five provisions about the forms of marriages to be performed and the second part dealt with the punishments for breaking the rules. The regulations were finally approved by the Raja in April 1926 after the approval by publicmen, Zaildars, Lambardars and State officials in a joint meeting.

The Raja of Keonthal, with the initiative of Superintendent, Hill States, brought forward the question of Reet and explained its evils to the chiefs and representatives of the twenty-one Simla Hill States.³⁷ The Superintendent stated that the Govt. deplored the existence of the practice and would like the hill chiefs to take necessary steps to end it. The laws enacted and enforced by Raja of Bashahr were read to the audience.³⁸

The Raja of Jubbal supported the abolition of the practice. In the opinion of Rana of Baghat, it was not possible to abolish Reet unless the public was educated about its evils.

After great discussion, it was unanimously agreed that Reet should be abolished. A sub-committee consisting of the chiefs of Bashahr, Jubbal, Baghat, Bughal, Kumharsain, Bhajji and Theog under the Chairmanship of the Raja of Keonthal was appointed to prepare a draft bill. Rai Bahadur Sher Singh, the 5th Wazir of Keonthal State, was to work as Secretary of the sub-committee.

The Punjab Govt. was happy that at last the hill States were determined to tackle the question of Reet in an earnest manner, independent of the State Agencies.

In Baghat, Bushahr and Jubbal the custom of Reet was prohibited on paper at least. The States of Nalagarh, Mahlog and Kuthar had agreed to adopt the rules framed by the sub-committee of the chiefs. Baghal and Bhajji had also agreed to reduce the draft rule but they were under minority management and therefore the Governor in Council was averse to the introduction of the rules. The draft rule was postponed until their rulers attained majority and assumed full ruling power. In the case of those States who agreed to introduce the draft regulation, the local Government desired the hill States to advise the rulers to enforce the rules with consideration and not too harshly at once, because the people would take some time to reconcile to these regulations.

In a nutshell, theoretically, in eight of the Simla Hill States out of twenty-eight, the Reet custom was illegal or the States were prepared to make it illegal.

Though greatly opposed publicly by various social organizations, efforts were also made by the same and some hill chiefs to abolish the custom of Reet, rules being framed as well and theoretically enforced by some States. Yet nothing concrete could be achieved in its abolition as it was a immemorial custom. The custom was prevalent among the

Kanets and Kolis and - formed the backbone of their economics. No hill chief wanted to antagonise the two classes. Furthermore, the Kolis built and mended the houses of the rulers, carried their baggage and dak, cultivated their land and rendered innumerable other services under the *begar* system.

Thus, the rulers could not afford to annoy such a vital section of their subjects, they being dependent upon them for political expediency.

Moreover, the reformist trend of the British Government had relaxed and changed after the 1857 independence struggle prior to which the British Government had abolished female infanticide. The paramount power did not want to see turmoil and rebellion in the hill States as Simla was their summer Capitol. So they did not want to get directly involved in the abolition of Reet in the hill States and whenever the issue was raised by the social organizations, they evaded the same by transferring the responsibility either to hill chiefs or to the rulers.

That the Reet custom has been an extremely complex problem is borne out by the fact that about forty-five years after attaining independence, it is still practiced among some backward tribes. The present writer, in a conference held at Simla in September-October 1990, presented a paper on the custom of Reet. The paper evoked interesting discussion in which persons from different walks of life participated. One of

the participants, an I.A.S. Officer, who was Deputy Commissioner of the Nahan district for a couple of years remarked that the custom was even still prevalent among the poor tribes of the remote Pachad area of the district. Maybe there still are such pockets in other districts too. Nonetheless, concerted efforts made by the Union Government of India and the State Government of Himachal Pradesh in declaring child marriage (below the ages of eighteen and twenty-one in the case of girls and boys respectively) illegal, in introducing education, both at the primary and higher levels and making it accessible even in the remote tribal areas, and their many economic measures with a view to eradicate poverty, have started bearing fruit. One remarks with a sense of relief that the centuries-old custom, which was eating into the vitals of society, is at long last on its way out.³⁹

Even though Reet was legally abolished in 1925 by the British after a long, hard, sustained and protracted campaign, which found echoes in the British Parliament, unfortunately, so deeply embedded is Reet in the Simla Hill society culture, so embedded in the psyche of the lower strata in particular that is to say among the Kolis, Dumnas, Chamars, Kanets, etc., it continues to flourish subversively.

With respect to Reet it is important to mention now, that the British are gone and India is free since 1947, the fact that the hold of Reet still survives is a matter of shame.

Barda Faroshi

Barada Faroshi is the practice of dealing with slaves or captives. Slave dealers carried on regular trafficking of girls and boys in Punjab, especially in the hill tracts of Kangra, Hoshiarpur and Ambala districts. In Simla district and Hill States, the practice existed even before the arrival of British.

In July, 1824, C. P. Kennedy, Assistant Deputy Superintendent of Hill States remarked that women of hills were always in great demand for the zanas or harems of the plains and as slaves were priced highly.⁴⁰

In August 1924 the Deputy Commissioner, Kangra district reported that 'barda faroshi' existed mainly in the subdivision of Hamirpur, Dehra and to some extent in Nurpur. Thereunder, this kidnapping, buying and selling of girls for export was engaged in nefariously by 'barda faroshes' based in the plains and the girls were taken to distant places such as the united Provinces and the canal colonies in West Punjab. The Deputy Commissioner suggested that by the amendment of Indian Penal Code or Penal legislation this social evil could be eradicated.⁴¹

Polygamy

Throughout the Simla Hill States, including Kangra and Sirmour, polygamy was widely practised. In fact, it was

prevalent in all the Himalayan tracts. But the spread of education and a consequent change in outlook had placed this custom at a discount in Hindu society. Such, however, was not exactly the position in the hills for no stigma was attached to a man who had more than one wife. It was not, however, everyone who could afford a wife in the hills where the mere possession of more than one wife signified prosperity and distinction, though possession of many wives where the number of males was considerably higher than that of females would seem improbable.

Polygamy was usually practiced where there were more females than males. The most important reason behind the adoption and continuance of polygamy was the fact that women functioned as partners in agriculture.⁴² In the past it was not possible in the hills to carry out the household and field work without the assistance of someone else. For that purpose, tenants had to be engaged and paid quite decent wages. Instead of getting tenants, it was inexpensive and more useful to get another wife who could, in addition, work after marital needs. If the first wife was childless or had only female issue, she insisted on her husband's marrying another woman, preferably her own sister. When the wife was living a comfortable life, according to the local standard, and was happy with her husband, she might ask him to marry her sister so that the latter too might be as happy as herself, where she found that she could also carry on the household and field work singly;

she might ask her husband to marry someone else too. All this goes to show that polygamy was not by any means a sign of feminine inferiority or felt as a degradation by the women concerned. Nor was the husband in most cases prompted to take a second wife because of an excessive libido but by his first wife's eagerness to shift part of her household duties on other shoulders. The opportunities of satisfying one's sexual desires were so ample that in legal marriage with a second wife, the sexual motive did not play an insignificant role. Such marriages also became a badge of distinction and a sure sign of prosperity in the family, for a man with more than one wife was not only in a better position to manage his household and fields but also had ample time to relax and entertain guest properly. It may seem inevitable that two or more wives could be always quarreling and fighting and making one's life miserable. But an examination reveals that this apprehension was not justified by the actual state of affairs. Since it was only the rich who could afford the luxury of many wives, the husband had generally at least two rooms in his house. Only the wife whom he would like to be with for the night would sleep in his room though in cases where the wives were not jealous, they might sleep in the same room. Quite often the husband had a dochhi where he kept his cattle and he kept one wife at his house and the other at the dochhi. She lived in the house and at the dochhi and performed her duties. Since the women married without any coercion or pressure whatsoever,

they generally got along well with each other. We came across cases in the hills where children treated their mothers and their stepmother, who was not their mother's sister, on the same terms and had no reason to dislike her but were rather more attached to her than to their mother. This was of course by no means common, but it must be admitted that on the whole the relations of the co-wives were not as bad as they were generally made out to be. In case irreconcilable differences grew, the injured wife might leave her husband and marry someone after her heart.

Polyandry

Polyandry of the fraternal type was extensively practiced in Bashahr, Jubbal, Keonthal, and the Trans-Giri tract of Sirmour. It was not peculiar to any particular caste or tribe.

Fraternal polyandry was practised in some Himalayan areas and, where it was in vogue, it was not confined to any caste or tribe, but extended to even the highest castes, ruling families alone being exceptions. Generally, only brothers shared a common wife, but first cousins and at times even strangers shared a wife in common in certain tracts.⁴³

We find polyandry prevailing in the greater part of Kinnaur and in some places in Bushahr other than Kinnaur. In Bushahr it was found existent in both the forms mentioned

above, higher and lower. In the higher form, the joint husbands were brothers and in the lower they were not so. Usually the former only was found in Bushahr but there were scattered instances of the latter too. In the latter type even strangers of even different castes became dharama bhais and shared a wife, but in such cases the offspring were not admitted into the brotherhood of the father."

The fraternal tie was thus the basis of the practice, allowing them to share a joint wife for as members of one caste, tribe or family, they as possible heirs, represent the fraternal group. As a matter of general practice, however, a joint wife was shared by uterine brothers upto the number of six. If, however, there were more than six brothers, they got two wives.

The ceremony of a polyandrous marriage was simple. Formerly it was the practice to capture the bride. She would be waylaid, a struggle might take place. Her captors would bring her home. If she managed to slip out of their hands, she would boast of it all her life and would be very proud of her achievement. The brother would in that case negotiate for her marriage with her husband. They would send a deputation to settle her price. The marriage ceremony was completed by her washing the feet of all the bridegrooms and the bridegrooms tying round their caps pieces of Muslin cloth called puju. The formality of capture is not, however, generally observed now

and the brothers of their friends negotiate with the parents of the bride and bring her home after paying the bride price.

Conventional methods existed in this region for ascertaining the social paternity of a child. It was usual to recognize all the husbands as the fathers of each child. The eldest brother was called teg babach (elder father) and the others gato babach (younger father).

At times, one of the several brothers, married yet another solely for himself. If the new wife agreed to be shared by all brothers, no difficulty arose. If, however, she refused to be the common wife of all the brothers, the joint property had to be partitioned. She and her husband had to separate and set up a new hearth and home and work as well (due to the partition).

The hill tracts such as Jubbal and Keonthal practised polyandry too on much the same lines as in Bushahr. All these tracts were situated in the interior of the Himalayas and were removed from the plains by mountains and rivers. Bushahr and Jubbal lie in the remote recesses of the Himalayas. The Kinnauris had been practising polyandry as a system of marriage, but later changed it to education and development of individuality as a result thereof. The custom of polyandry had been prevalent in border areas of the State. This system may have begun to control the joint family as agricultural land was not sufficient to be divided among all the brothers.

However, lower, economically deprived classes continued with the polyandrous system.⁴⁵

Divorce

The present research shows that the ruling Chief of the Hill State or the upper class Rajputs and their Wazirs had many Khawas wives. A Khawas was known generally as more than a keep and she was especially treated with respect in the palace, when she became mother. Divorce was the name applied to the value of clothes and ornaments given to the bride by her husband at the time of marriage. If a wife wished to leave her husband, the marriage could be annulled by both accepting of 'Reet' of just a rupee.

Thus polyandry and polygamy existed as variations within the traditional monogamy structure. The incidence of polyandry was much larger than that of polygamy, for the simple reason that polyandry was the way of life in Kinnaur and other parts of Bushahr and also a spillover in Jubbal and Keonthal territories. But Polygamy in comparison was incidental, affordable by a select and chosen few, though here and there, some zamindars also went in for it due to not having a male issue and for an extra hand in agriculture and sometimes for prestige as well.

The chapter 'Status of Women' has given a fairly comprehensive view of the position of women in the Simla Hill States at the British time and how they fared both at home and outside in the place of work, essentially in the agricultural domain. It is seen that although no clear picture emerges in terms of the institutional marriages as different kinds of arrangements prevail polyandry, polygamy and serial monogamy-all due to 'Reet'. However, these different arrangements were necessitated by economics. Despite the diversity and variation in the marriage arrangements, patriarchy appears to have been strongly entrenched, because the power still belonged to men and women had to play second fiddle.

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CHAPTER VI

AMUSEMENT AND RECREATION

The simple, carefree and proud inhabitants of the village were happy by nature. They continued to live an isolated existence for centuries and were cut off from the stream of life following in the rest of the country. They did not bemoan their lot and strove hard to earn their bread, whether in the fields or with flocks. Men and women were found working together, and to relieve the monotony of their hard labour, they especially, the women sang sweet songs in melodious tones with fascinating lyrics.

Religious and festive occasions were the only means of recreation and source of entertainment for the villagers wherein their socio-cultural life, customs and rites were so clearly enacted-truly energising manner. There were innumerable fairs and festivals which the hill people celebrated. There were fairs at the village level while others were at a mega scale.

Those fairs 'drew' the village deities and folk as well as traders and visitors from far and wide. Generally the fairs were held when the people had finished harvesting. As such, they could revel and enjoy in the festivities and buy or sell things of need and religio-aesthetic articles and 'simply' aesthetic articles as well. Traders from far and near joined these

festivities and a market emerged with all sorts of things, such as clothes and garments, wool and pashmina, leather and furs, hides and skins, metalware and pottery, ornaments and jewellery, fruits and vegetables and partially made and finished product of the folk. Leaving apart these articles, which in a way were indispensable to any household, there were shops to meet every body's requirements of hosiery and cosmetics, cigarettes and tobacco and spectacles and dentures.

One of the common features in all fairs was the folk dance accompanied by the traditional orchestra, consisting of chol, nugara, narsingha, karnal and sahnai. Most of the fairs and festivals were celebrated according to the Hindu calendar but most of them were conspicuously marked for their local colour.

In the following pages the fairs of Simla Hills will be presented as major/minor fairs followed by mainstream fairs. Mainstream fairs are also included because people bring to bear on their celebration the same joy and eclat that they do in celebrating their village fairs rich in colour, song and dance and deity symbology. The community participation mystique is a hall mark of their celebratory social life. The fairs are going to be described in the present tense as they have continued as in British times with no change in the ritual enactment.

Fairs

Haryali

Rhyali (upper Shimla hills), Dakhrain (Jubbal and Kinnaur) and Shegtsum (Lahaul) is a festival of rainy season. It is celebrated on the 1st of Shrawan (16th July) corresponding to mid July to mark the advent of the monsoon and its songs are Laan and Jhuri.

This festival was known as Haryali (Greenery), i.e. the festival of the rains. Some ten days before this day, seeds of five or seven kinds viz. wheat, barley, gram, etc., are mixed together and sown ceremoniously by the head of the family or the family priest in small baskets filled with earth, or in a small bed of earth prepared near the place where the household gods are kept. Water is sprinkled twice at the time of worship and the place is fenced off with cotton thread.

On the last day of Asadha, one day before the actual celebrations, a kind of mock wedding is performed with a wooden hoe and all kinds of available fruits are placed near the tender saplings. Amidst the tender growth of seeds are placed clay images of Lord Shiva and Parvati. The images are prepared and gaily painted by hand by the girls and women of the family. When the images have been so placed, the mistress of the household, dressed in her best offered worship at the altar, duly assisted by the family priest. The family priest chants : Haryali, may thou ever remain in the green fields and

may though impart grace and take away the sufferings of those who worship thee.

The remaining ceremony is performed the next day, i.e., on the 1st of Shrawn called Skaranti. This day's worship is performed by the master of the house. He cut the green stems, which, after they have been offered to the gods, are worn on the head dresses by the young and old alike. Some plants are kept on the upper frame of the doors. Haryali is regarded as one of the most important festivals and on this day even the cattle are given a rest. The farmers picked out lice, bugs, fleas and other parasites, locally called cheeren, from the cattle and put them into the coddung cakes(ball-shaped) which are carried away by the children and young outside the village and burnt with the shrubs. Those coddung balls, containing the blood sucking insects are burnt because during this period cattle are usually infested with such parasites and it is believed that cattle got rid of these if burnt in this manner on first Sharawana.¹

In some areas above Simla and Kinnaur, Haryali is known as Dhakruin and in Rohru area it is called Dhaknol.²

In some areas on the days of Haryali or Rhyali, fairs are held where archery (Thoder) is indulged in.³

Sair Fair

A Sair fair began on Sankrant 1st of Asvina. There is a famous saying in this area that if one saw a male buffalo on Sankrant, all his deeds are well done and happy tidings are predicted. So a buffalo fight is given due preference. The fair is not connected with the worship of any deity.⁴ People from Baghal States came to Arki on the occasion of Sair festival. Sair fair was also celebrated at Kunihar on the first Asauj at Bhali, a village on the bank of the Ronaddi. Here, too, Buffalo fighting was a key feature.⁵

Bisu fair

The fair takes place at Mashran on the 3rd of Vaisakha (April). The devta of Mashran was named after Maheshwar Shiva and its idol is in the shape of Mohra of asht dhatu or eight metals. It was found in an excavation. Once a man was imprisoned by Jubbal darbar. He had a dream while in prison. When he was released, two persons met him on the way, one was from Shak Pajarli and another was from Tharoch State, to whom he related the dream. Both the persons dug the earth and found two images which were established by them at Tharoch and Mushran. Both the deities are now called brothers. No special rituals were observed on the occasion of the fair. A distinctive feature of the fair is the archery game (thoda ka khel).⁶ In Kinnaur, Baiskhi, Bishu or Beesh is also called Ras.

Kayang is the day on which the sun reaches the zodiacal sign of Aries. Throughout Simla Hills, it is called Bishu-ka-Suza.⁷

Jagra

It is a nocturnal festival where rejoicing is one of revelling. Many villages rejoice. It is held in the nearby villages of Sondha, Chalala, Tikkri, Khashdhar. Many from Chergaon join. The investigator had the occasion of attending Jagras at Sondha and Chalala villages. These are held on dooj, teej and chouth in the Krishna paksh of Bhadon month. Any of the three days could be chosen to celebrate Jagra to honour Mahasu devta's birthday.⁸

Villages from the surrounding villages gather and sing around an open place meant for the Jagra. Some people occupy the verandahs of the surrounding houses. The local devta is worshipped at about 9.00 p.m. in an image on a flat stone balanced on a wooden beam. The image was made out of wheat flour and Kungu. The people and village devta witnessed the puja ceremony amidst the beating of drums and playing of musical instruments. Some young men carried khukries in their hands. During puja a goat is slaughtered and the head offered at Chida.

The young men at once begin to dance with khaukries in their hands while carrying the devta. The oracle also dances

under the devta's influence. The dance continues for a while. Then it takes the form of a regular Jatra. The devta's oracle and the priest first start the jatra. Their place was then taken by other influential people. A turan also dances at the head of the jatra. Free food is given to the poor at night. The fire on chida is kept aflame throughout. A regular feature during the devta's puja is that the oracle pierces his cheek or tongue with a thin needle. This is supposedly done under the influence of the devta-remarkably, there is no wound.⁹

Basal Fair

Every year in the month of Kartika (October-November) on the third day of Diwali or Teej, a fair is held in Basal in the name of Junga Devta. This fair remains open for three days and is held in a field in front of Junga devta's temple.

On the first day, the turis of the village take a round of the village and beat drums to inform the people who collect in a designated chowgan or open ground where the people sing songs to Junga deota and to Kathesar to the beat of drums by *Turis*. On the second day, elder people play in the same field to the beat the same drum sounds. On the third day children's games are conducted. In the evening of the third day, a Karyala is held in the memory of the Bijju Devta. Karyala starts at about 10.00 at night, ending at dawn. In their homes, the villagers take delicious meals consisting of *ghee, jaggery*

powder, *patenday*, pulse and rice. The Raja of Baghat used to attend this fair on the third day. In the evening he witnessed the Karyala and then the villagers entertained him with delicious meals.¹⁰

The light thrown in detail on this fair all participating on the first day, the elders people specially getting their share of the celebratory cake, the children having a ball on the third, shows the participative structure of the entire populace of believers.

Keonthal State

The Zat fair at Gareen in Pargana Ratesh

This fair was held on the 29th of Jeth. The images of the Devi Ratesh and Kalwa deota are brought in procession from the temple, they are kept, to Gareen with 400 to 500 persons accompanying them; and of these some 50 remain at Gareen for the night, the rest returning home. By mid-day next day a great crowd of people collect, the men coming in bodies from opposite directions, each man armed with a bow and arrow and flourishing them. A man in one of these bodies shouts - Thadairi ra bhukha, awa ji Thamal lagi thi, hoho, (I hunger for a shooting match : Come, the fair has started ho ho-a challenge the other challenging likewise). The tune called a thadairi was then sung, and matches were arranged between pairs of

players. One champion advances with his arrow on the string of his bow, while the other places himself in front of him keeping his legs moving, so as to avoid being hit. The archer's object is to hit his opponent below the knee, and if he succeeds in doing as he takes a dangra in his hand and dancing, declaring that a lion's cub was born in the house of his father at his home. The man who is hit is allowed to sit down for a time to recover from the pain of the wound, and then he in turn takes a bow, and placing his hand on his opponents shoulder, says (said) 'Bravo!' Now it is my turn, beware of my arrow.' If he strikes his opponent, he dances. If not the first, victor dances again, yelling 'How could the arrow of such a jackal hit a tiger's cub? This continues till one or the other is beaten. The matches are usually arranged between men who are one anothers enemies.

On the third day, a goat and two buffaloes, all males, are sacrificed to the Devi."

The Jat fair, Bhalawag

This fair is held at Bhalawag on the first Sunday in Har. There is a legend that a sadhu once lived on the Chahal hill. He was famous for his miraculous feats and was said to be a sidh. He built a small temple to Mahadeo on the hill, and established a fair, which was held continuously for some years.

The offerings made at the temple were utilized to meet the expenses of the institution.¹²

Lavi Fair

The historic and famous Lavi fair of Rampur Bushahr was one of the biggest and most important fairs in the inner Himalayas which was held at Rampur. This had been primarily a trade fair, with a long history.

Though the fair was being held on an organised basis for the last three hundred years, its origin was stated to be much older. The Bushahr chronicles record that Raja Kehari Singh, the 113th from the founder Parduman was the ruler of Bushahr.¹³ He ruled from 1639 AD to 1696 AD with his headquarters at Sarahan in the upper Sutlej valley. He annexed the southern principalities of Karangla and Sarj, established his supremacy over Dealth Kumarsain, Kotgarh, Balson, Theog, Darkoti.¹⁴

Professor L. Petoeh gives the best available information about the 'Treaty between Tibet and Bushahr 1681 AD' in his valuable article in 'The Tibetan - Ladhakhi Mughal war of 1681-83' in the Indian Historical Quarterly, Vol. XXII, September 1947. At the time of that war, there was an alliance and a brief general agreement about friendly relations and the

exchange of envoys between Raja Kehri Singh of Bushahr and the Government of the 5th Dalai Lama.¹⁵

The fair was believed to have started in 1681 AD after a trade treaty was signed between the Bushahr State and Tibet during Raja Kehari Singh.

Shivratri in Rohru

The festival started with the worship of 'Shiv Murti' and keeping fast in the month of Phalguna. Delicious foods of various varieties were prepared on the day of Shivratri. The main food were Poldu, Brae, Shakali, Bhat, Poolu, Bakare and Khobli, etc. The Shiv and Parvati idlos of clay were buried in some field or orchard early in the morning the next day. The main feature of the next morning was that Kiltas full of the delicious foods were given to the daughters and sisters by every father and brother.¹⁶

Shivratri at Baragaon (Sangri) is one of the big local festivals. Aged people also waited for this festival impatiently. For them this festival signals an addition of one more year to their life. This festival was celebrated ever since this village was inhabited. The common belief among the people is that on this day the real existence of spiritual Lord Shiva in the form of "Linga" was established. It is on this occasion that people

are joyful and in order to express their happiness they started this festival, which is also celebrated at Jubbal.¹⁷

Pather Chauth in Sangri

This festival is celebrated in the month of Bhadra on the fourth of light half. The sight of moon was forbidden on this day as it was said that Shri Krishna asked for Mani from Satrajeet, but he refused. Once Satrajeet's brother Prasain had worn that mani. He accompanied Shri Krishna for hunting. On the way he fell far behind Shri Krishna and was killed by a lion. Satrajeet thought that in order to steal the Mani, Shri Krishna had killed his brother. When Shri Krishna came to know this, he again went to the Jungle and reached where the lion and Prasain were lying dead. Shri Krishna recovered the Mani and duly returned that to Satrajeet. Rishi told Shri Krishna that he had seen the half moon on the fourth night of Bhadra in consequence of which he was disgraced. Since then the practice of not seeing the moon on this day started. If one happens to see it by chance he has to throw stone pebbles on the roofs of neighbours so that they may abuse him and his sins may be pardoned.¹⁸

Bhunda in Chopal

The Bhunda festival was centuries old in Chopal Tehsil. People gather and sacrifice goats and rams before their devtas. People of many villages and parganas jointly hold this festival. People call their relatives and other villages to their homes and take meat with them. Some portion of meat is dried and hung in the house. They continue consuming such dried meat from Magha to Vaisakha, i.e. January to April.¹⁹

This festival is also celebrated in different parts of Balsan after four years in Pausa (December- January). The ruler of Balsan State had divided the State in four parts called pattis. These pattis were : (1) Bahgaon (2) Nathgaon (3) Pralim Patti and Shill Patti. The festival was ordered to be held in the village of a different patti every fourth year. The turn of each patti came after four years.

A reason for starting the festival could be that the rulers were very fond of hunting, but during the snow, they were trapped in their capital and could not go out for hunting. The worship of the devta attached sanctity to it. The people were told that in case, they did not celebrate Bhundu the deity would be annoyed and many misfortunes might befall them.²⁰

Pather-ka-Khel

Another most peculiar fair of Simla Hill States was the fair of Pather-ka-Khel, held at Halog about 30 kms from Simla on the 2nd day of Diwali in the month of Kartik. This fair was held in a place called Khel-ka-Chaunra. There were two parties. One comes from Dhamed and the other from the opposite direction. They visit the temples and honour the goddess, by bowing, etc. and take immediately afterwards, respective positions on the two opposing hillocks. After this a person makes a signal and the opposing parties start throwing stones at each other which goes on for about half an hour or so till some one is hurt. The two or three married scheduled caste women come running and waving their dupattas as white flags to stop the fracas. The injured man dries his blood at the temple. The parties get together and a procession starts with the beat of drums and go to the ground to sing and dance. The fair used to be held on a grand scale during the princely days but because changing and changed times and circumstances make it no longer currently possible.

Ghund Fair

In the month of Asadha every year, a fair of three days is held at Ghund, the capital of the former small Ghund State situated fourteen miles away from Theog.

A Thakur's dynasty used to rule here. Two temples of devta Mahasu and devta Shirgul were situated here while Durga Devi's temple was at distance of four furlongs. Devta Shirgul and Durga devi were the deities of all the people, living in pargana Ghund, whereas Devta Mahasu was the deity of the ruling family only. The common people did not bow to his deity.²¹ The reason perhaps lies in the fact that Mahasu being of a serious and sublime disposition does not allow homage to be paid to him which is kind of interesting because the mainstream Shiva does not respect status and privilege, caste and creed. This difference is inexplicable. Perhaps the difference lies in the fact that Mahasu was brought from Kashmir by Pandit Una Bhatt to fight and put to the sword a man eating ogre, Kirmat, who used to perpetrate atrocities in Kothkhai, Jubbal, Chaupal, and Rohru areas.

Deothi Dhar Fair

This fair starts at Deothi on 26th Sravana and lasts for five days till Bhadra Sankranti. Deothi Dhar is situated at a distance of eleven miles from Theog and two miles above the road of Kothal.²²

Sipi Fair

One of the largest fairs of Simla Hill States is that of Sipi held on a spur below Mashobra, whereas a clump of magnificent deodar surround a temple of Sip deota. Offices of Simla are closed on account of this fair. There is a long row of shops selling rings in the shape of sweets and trinkets, while other traders attempt to dispose of curios as mementos of the fair. This fair is famous for dance, music and rural sports, like archery.²⁹The Rana of Koti used to be the chief guest during the States time. The Sipi god accompanied the first Rana of Koti when he emigrated to these hills from Rajasthan centuries ago. This godling since then reigned as the deity of the house of Koti since that 'era'.

Rohru Jatar

Rohru Jatar was one of the important fairs of Pabar valley. This is held on the 9th and 10th of Baisakh (3rd week of April). The fair is connected with the local deity called Shikro. Before the actual date of the fair, the deity 'tours' his 'deitydom' and returns to his temple at Rohru on the morning of 9th day of Baisakhi, when the fair is considered open. His followers pay him homage. The deity too 'dances' and the songs go on day and night in his celebration.

Basant Panchmi

Basant Panchmi is celebrated as a new year's festival in Simla Hills in the month of Magha. On the day of Basant Panchmi, the scheduled castes, especially 'Turis', go from village to village singing, thus conveying auspicious wishes for the new year.

Holi

Holi is relatively a new festival and seems to have been imported from Punjab. Village youngsters and adults belonging to the scheduled castes sprinkle coloured water upon each other and the festival ends on a note of prayers offered to the Mahasu devta.²⁴

Baisakhi Fair

The fair is celebrated for a day at Unchagaon, Kunihar in a ground surrounding the famous tank of Kunihar on the 2nd of Baisakha every year. The following two legends are associated with its celebrations :

Some people say that a Raja of Kunihar was dumb and suffered from goitre. He was married to a beautiful princess. Before her marriage, she knew nothing about her fiancé. During the marriage, the bride and bridegroom went to Shiva

temple to offer their worship before the deity. On reaching there, the princess leaped into the tank and the Raja followed her, both thus committing suicide.

Others say that the princess belonged to Kunihar State and the Raja belonged to some other State. Before departing, she was taken to the Shiva temple by the side of Kunihar tank. She leapt into the tank and the bridegroom followed.²⁵ This fair is also celebrated at Bhajji and Jubbal States.²⁶

Phulech

This is essentially a festival of flowers celebrated during the later part of the month of Bhadon or during the earlier part of the month of Asak. This festival is celebrated only in Kinnaur region on different dates. It is also called Ykhyan, which is a combination of two words U and Khyang. 'U' means flower and 'Khyang' means the sight of them, thereby meaning and symbolising delight. It is after this festival that autumn begins. Various kinds of flowers are used on this festival of which Rangol, Liskarch, Khushal and Gyalchi are more common.²⁷

Khadar Fair

Khadar was a small place about three miles south of Basal. Every year in the month of Asadh (June) about a week after the Solan fair, a small fair is held here. This fair is in fact, primarily meant just for the women but men also do participate, especially the elderly and married, the last escorting their womenfolk and the young to add colour and festivity to the occasion.²⁸

Sazo

On the Sankrant of Magh, this festival is celebrated. Early in the morning, one or two elderly women in the family bathe. Before dawn, puja is performed in honour of goddess Usha, Kimhsu, the family god also being worshipped besides fire. On this day, goddess Usha was believed to have gone for a respite to Kailash where she attended a meeting of gods presided over by Lord Shiva.²⁹

Dussehra

Dussehra festival is one of the ancient festivals of India. It is celebrated on the 10th of the bright half of the moon in the month of Asvina (October) to commemorate the victory of Lord Rama over Ravana, the Demon king of Lanka. It is

celebrated in a few of the hill States. On this day the villagers put on new or clean clothes and worship the village deity. Rich food is taken afterwards.³⁰

Diwali

Diwali is one of the important festivals of the Hindus. It falls on the 15th of the dark half of the lunar calendar month-Kartika (October-November) every year. A week earlier, the people start cleaning and white washing their houses. The festival is celebrated for two days as 'Chhoti Diwali' and 'Bari Diwali'.³¹

Sarahan Fair

This fair is held in village Sarahan for three days in the month of April. The venue of the fair is the courtyard of Devta Bijat temple. People from adjoining areas as even from far off areas of Pargana and Balson State attend to it as the people find time to meet their relatives and friends before their busy time in the fields in the later days.

Vishnu Fair Purag

This fair is held near Kothkhai on the 9th day of Baisakha for three days. The fair is held in honour of Mahadev Devta.

Mahasu Jatar

This fair is celebrated about 6 kms from Simla - Kothkhai road near Mahasu village on the 3rd Tuesday in the month of Baisakha for two days. This fair is held in front of the Durga Devi temple by a large gathering who throng from the neighbouring areas.

The Rana of Badoli resided in Chakrath near Mahasu. He had built a Durga temple there. After the abolition of his Jagir, the Rana left the village and the villagers of Mahasu constructed a temple of Durga in their own village, commemorating the occasion by starting the fair.

Barara Fair

This fair is held in Kumarsain and people of all castes and creed participate. The fair is held on the 1st of May. Devta Koteswar was brought in the fair and goats are sacrificed in its honour as a mark of respect.

Shancha Fair

This fair is held in Kumarsain for two days every year on the 15th and 16th of Shravana. It was started in the year 1874 on the coronation of Rai Hira Singh of the erstwhile Sangri State.

All these festivals are still celebrated in other districts of Himachal Pradesh.

Among the various games and sports played in these hill States, wrestling is by far the most popular in these hills, especially in the lower hills. It is a very exciting part of the village fair where young wrestlers from the surrounding village come to grips in a trial of strength. The winners are rewarded.

Previously, the other popular game was archery locally called Thoda. Only the young and hardy play this game. The women and children have their games, too, but mostly they were indoor games. In winter when the fields and forests are covered with snow, women and children spend their leisure hours in playing these indoor games.

The material on the fairs, by no mean inclusive, has been categorised in three slots, second and third. This should not be taken to mean the fair in slot one is more important psychologically, socially and culturally, because for the participant the importance of the fair is in the spirit, in the mystique, in the level of participation, the gaiety and abandon

that he brings to bear upon his participation. The weak and small or short can prove as powerful as the big tall and strong.

At this point, the fair vibrancy is being described in one dimensional prose - in 'cold print'. But for the people of Simla Hills, their participation in the fairs, some secular, some predominantly spiritual, like the mela fair around Shiv, Devi, etc., celebrating sheer animal strength and aggression - the buffalo emblemizing that - have made a rupture, a slash in their day-to-day existence. To adopt a concept of Mircea Eliade, they enter sacred space and experience supra expansion of energy and consciousness. Their social life, the intensity of interaction organized around the fairs is something unique in the annals of history. Once in a while you want to be a part of a festival where you shed all civilized constraints and burst into laughter and zest.

It is a tribute to the British that they did not tamper with the socio-culturalism of Simla Hill people, thereby not deterring them from connectivity with the archaic to recharge their batteries instinctually, emotionally and spiritually.

Dance and Drama

Dance and Drama were the means of recreation and entertainment.³² In leisure-hours, men women and children from all shades of life assemble at one place and dance.³³

Mala and Diali are the two types of dances which are common in these hill States. The number of participants may range from four or five to twenty and twenty-five. The persons so participating, form a chain or mala (local name). The formation of the chain can be of varied types and the movement of the steps and body may also depend upon the pattern of the chain so formed.

Nati

In Nati, known as Gech, men and women gather on an evening on an important festival or ceremony and dance and sing to the tune of the music. Usually this is held after dinner.

Pooduya

In this dance only women participate. They dress colourfully, and assemble in a compound. While standing they sing and clap. Two women dance in the centre, stretching their hands sideways. No music is played in pooduya nor does any man join except little boys.³⁴

Kayang

It is the most popular folk dance of this area. Bakyang is another form of the Kayang dance, the difference being that it

is not performed in a circle. Instead, it has two to three rows behind each row.

Bonyngchu - Chashimik

This was the third form of the local dance. Bajantri was in the centre and the men dance round him during the different tunes.³⁵

Special dresses are worn by the professional dancers and may consist of white achkan, churidar pyjama and pagri. Kalgi and Zanziri are the only ornaments used on this occasion; the former being a silver mounted tuft with peacock feathers or upright silver strips, whereas the latter is a series of silver chains covering the right portion of the forehead and hanging down the ears.³⁶

Dances for women

The women hold each others' waists from the back. Otherwise the position of the body and movement of the steps remains the same verily, they are graceful and attractive, especially incarnating femininity in their dance. There is no special ceremonial dress for this performance. A slight musical background - humming of local songs provides rhythm to the dance.³⁷

Occasionally, dramas too are staged by the young farmers. They organise a drama every year on the 24th of April at the time of Dhada fair.³⁸

Folk songs

(झूरी)

- (1) सईये बोलू भजिये पन्दरीये सगेते,
रोले आये रोजके हमें कोम आवणे थे एते ।
- (2) उटो देश री बाबडी ऊँदे देशा रे कुए,
झुठे दिते बचन नैल नैलदे मुए ।
- (3) ठण्डे बोले पाणिये चुल्लू इंदले पीणा
साजा धिया समी रा नही कस चकरी रो नीणा ।
- (4) आंडखे बोलू ना पांडखे ना एखी बासू मानगावें
कटी देखणे अखिये कदी बोलो शुणने घैं नावो ।

* * * * *

- (1) कीमू काटयो झूंडी ले 2, श्याल्डी पीडी थाचे ले बौजीरा की मंडी ले ।
- (2) लोजे भौरयो हालाले 2, एक मारो बौजीरा ले सात मारे जिगाला लै ।
- (3) बाजी जान्दी वाणो ले 2, तेरे पौडी जावला दा सोलेनी को टाणो ले ।

- (4) वाज्यो थी वौड़ाईले ले 2, श्याल्डी थाचे ले वाई छुटी लोड़ाई ले ।
- (5) रूपाया के पौडा ले 2, जिगालु भानौ नन्दलाले जिगालु की भौंडा ले ।
- (6) लो चाण्यो छोड़ी ले 2, जिगालु रै हाथै लै लो गोये पौड़ी ले ।
- (7) दूड़ी जान्दे घोड़े ले 2, जिगालु रै मूण दी ठाने वालेऊ कै जोड़े ले ।

Thus we see that the social life of the people is structured around fairs and festivals wherein they express their rich and varied feelings by singing and dancing and by rich manifold relating with kith and kin, friends and strangers on the side lines and directly as well.

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CONCLUSION

Social life of Simla Hills has dealt with the history of the paramount power and its effects on the social and cultural life of its inhabitants. During this period, as a result of civilisational contact, not interaction, because the latter connotes a significant relationship, certain vital changes, however, did take place in the society of Simla Hills. These vital changes have been dealt with in some depth and at some length in several chapters.

The introduction gives an extensive and deep description of geography, etc., and the life and ethnicity of the inhabitants to give the setting in which important part of Simla Hill history was played out followed by chapter II Historical background which shows the arrival of the British and consolidation of the paramount power. Because the British do not subscribe to sudden cataclysmic changes, they did not go in for any radical surgery in the existing Thakuraie system, though they streamlined it somewhat, intervening from time to time. Their essential role though, in addition to governance while respecting the autonomy of the Rajas, was that of supervision. This fact has been highlighted in Chapter II Historical Background.

Chapter III, General Social Life, deals with the unique religious life of the Simla Hills, which revolves around the village deities. The difference of this cult tradition from the

mainstream religion has especially been brought out in sharp relief. This cult tradition has its infrastructure of small and large temples, with *gurs*, oracles sooth-sayers *Kardars* who maintain the temples. The cult is communitarian and participatory. In the course of analysis, the erosion of the cult because of the shrinkage of the *gur* base and the *turis* taking to other professions and their offspring looking for "pastures new" has been pointed out as well. The chapter catalogues briefly the dress and ornaments of the people. The apparel is part of the social personality of the people. The apparel of the hill people shows their fondness for colour with a touch of flamboyance. They can be recognised differently from the rest of the Indians, especially women.

In Chapter IV, "Social Reforms and Welfare Work", the thesis settles into the history of *begar* and *beth* system, their moribund medieval nature and shameless exploitation of the poor and the marginal, the depressed and the sunken swarms. The chapter shows how a movement against those affected them and how decadent practices built over centuries were dented, though not pulverised. It highlights the role of the Britishers and their finally abolishing those which permeated hill society with noxious stench. *Begar* though has disappeared, but viewed psychologically and sociologically, it still prevails in India that is Bharat at bureaucratic and political levels when the officials and the politicians travel with their staff, family members and lumper chipkus and followers for visiting guest

houses and rest houses of PWD and forest departments, etc. *Begar* came to be abolished and practically disappeared in such blatant, gross form and the *beth* structure collapsed. The land of bonded tenants was returned since they were the sweat and blood tillers and thus deserved it. In addition to this revolutionary surge forward, viewing such with hindsight, certain major developments took place in the fields of education and in the area of social and health welfare. The details of the second contribution have been spelled out in the chapter IV. From 1870 to 1945, it is important to highlight the fact that the British Government established eight nearly full fledged hospitals and a solitary, modest one was established by the Raja of Baghat. The British also established eleven dispensaries whereas the Raja of Baghat set up just one Ayurvedic dispensary. Why the other Rajas of Bashahr, Jubbal, Keonthal failed to show like concern for their own people is somewhat baffling disappointing, to say the least because they were definitely more affluent than the Raja of Baghat.

The Status of Women has significantly progressed, registering a fair degree of amelioration. Reet was abolished. The chapter V shows how the Britishers succeeded in banning it after great preparatory debate and discussion and social mobilisation at the instance of social reformers and a handful of enlightened hill rajas. The British way has invariably been the way of debate and discussion, and social mobilisation to bring about any change in the polity before enshrining it in an

act and making it obligatory on people to follow it. The British do not go for a violent cut or rupture in history, unlike other colonial powers like the French, the German, the Dutch, the Spaniards did in the course of their colonisation. This has been especially underlined in chapter V "Status of Women".

The VI chapter Amusement and Recreation presenting the material on the fairs, by no mean inclusive, has been categorised in three slots, first, second and third. This should not be taken to mean the fair in slot one is more important psychologically, socially and culturally, because for the participant the importance of the fair is in the spirit, in the mystique, in the level of participation, in the gaiety and abandon that he brings to bear upon his participation. The weak and small or short can prove as powerful as the big tall and strong.

At this point, the fair vibrancy is being described in one dimensional prose-in 'cold print'. But for the people of Simla Hills, their participation in the fairs, some secular, some predominantly spiritual, like the *mela* fair around Shiv, Devi, etc., celebrating sheer animal strength and aggression - the buffalo emblemizing that - have made a rupture, a slash in their day-to-day existence. To adopt a concept of Mircea Eliade, they enter sacred space and experience supra expansion of energy and consciousness. Their social life, the intensity of interaction organized around the fairs is something unique in

the annals of history. Once in a while you want to be a part of a festival where you shed all civilized constraints and burst into laughter and zest.

It is a tribute to the British that they did not tamper with the socio-culturalism of Simla Hill people, thereby not deterring them from connectivity with the archaic to recharge their batteries instinctually, emotionally and spiritually.

The paramount power did not interfere in the immemorial socio-cultural fabric of historicity of the inhabitants in terms of their local religion, their festivals and fairs, songs and dances which continued as they had for millennia. This has been discussed in Chapter III "General Social Life" and in chapter VI "(Amusement and Recreation)." Historically, the contact of the Simla Hills with a different civilization and its effects has been examined in Chapters II, III, IV, V and VI.

It is hoped that future historians will further explore the interface between the British and the hill people, supplementing, complementing, qualifying, shading and nuancing my modest venture.

Rightly, Arnold Toynbee enunciates that history is primarily the relationship of challenge and response between civilizations and cultures. This challenge-and-response dialectics, insofar as Simla Hill is concerned, retained its unique religiosity and cultural historicity, but nevertheless

underwent significant historical changes economically, thereby losing its traditional roots, somewhat yet stepping into modernity.

In the course of the thesis Social History of a Simla Hills stance emerged crystallized itself that thought the British gave governance spear headed education, diffused social welfare, abolished *begar* and *bethu*, they did not interfere in social life in terms of its expression through age old fairs and festivals and amusement; they did not touch their religion.

Simla Hills acquired a modern visage, countenance without losing its traditional moorings and roots.

But the story is not the same since the British left, the healthy balance between tradition and modernity has been affected adversely. Tradition has become recessive, modernity is furiously apace. The folkways are in danger of becoming a copy for Bollywood.

The present researcher would like to recommend that this balance of tradition and modernity be maintained and the course of pauperisation must be stopped through grass-roots movements while this is going on, documentation of religious and folk material must be done. Certain gods have fallen into disuse. The example of Magneshwar of Jubbal comes to mind. The five villages where he had a sway do not extend hospitality to the entourage of the godlings. In the Junga belt the believers do not know the story of Kathesar, for less its symbolism. The

present researcher would like to suggest that the Himachalies should enter into an analytic relationship now with their numinous heritage. In the neighbouring Punjab at Punjabi University, Patiala hundreds of studies at M.Phil and Ph.D. level have been carried out on folk material under the guideline of Prof. H.S. Gill. It is hoped that some such things would be done in the newly opened center of Himalayan Studies at Himachal Pradesh University.

The point which is conveyed is that tradition and modernity must go hand in hand in the social life of Simla Hills even as it was earlier in its history.

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APPENDIX - I

The Statesman, Calcutta, dated 24th May 1925

MARRIAGE REFORM

Quaint Custom Among Simla Hill Tribes

A Pamphlet headed "Himalayan Tragedy of Marriage" is being widely distributed here. The object of the movement is a laudable one. It proposes to rid the Hill States of Simla of the custom of marriage called "Rit" under which the matrimonial tie is very loose. The wife is purchased by the husband and both parties are free to break it off when they like.

The organizers of the movement are appealing to the Deputy Commissioner, Simla, who is also the Superintendent of Hill States, to influence the Hill Chiefs to follow the example of Patiala and others to abolish this custom. Some of the Hill Chiefs imposed a tax on such marriages which did not, however, minimise the evil.

The hill tribesmen are all Hindus, and it is pointed out that Hindu *shastras* do not permit of such marriage. In the words of the Pamphlet the evil is thus described :-

"This is a form of marriage without any ceremony, contracted by paying a money price-varying according to beauty, generally from Rs. 100 to Rs. 500 and has recently been as high as Rs. 2,000 to the guardian of a girl if unmarried or to the husband of that girl if married. There is no limit of such marriages, and as is evident from their

nature can be as easily dissolved as they are freely undertaken, This one custom is more responsible for the steadily increasing degeneration of the people than all the other evils put together. Under its baneful influence marriage has lost its sanctity, domestic relations, all their felicity and society, all those ties which make it a means to civil welfare. It allows too wide a latitude to the people in selecting and divorcing their mates, and, unrestricted by any of the forces of virtue, the entire population is being guided by one instinct alone - that of lust, and one object alone - that of fomenting disaffection between a married couple otherwise happy. Education is already rare, and among the females it is unknown. Added to it, notions of chastity and morality are queer and low."

Indian Daily Mail, Bombay, dated the 26th May 1925.

A HIMALAYAN TRAGEDY

"The Himalayan Tragedy of Marriage" is the striking name of a small pamphlet published by the General Secretary, Thakur Surat Singh, of Social Reforms Association in Simla. It does not, however, contain any slashing indictment of the ways of modern youth as any one would have expected. The Tragedy mentioned in it is Himalayan really and not figuratively since it occurs among the people of the Himalayan regions. The matter referred to is the custom of "REET," a survival from an early age when marriage in the modern sense was unknown and which is still followed by uncivilised tribes in obscure nooks and corners of India. The tribes in the Himalayan District near Simla and the

surrounding Hill States known only of marriage by purchase. No religious or social significance attaches to the event. Girls are bought for a money price, varying from Rs. 100 to Rs. 2,000 according to their personal attraction and the status they occupy in the society. But unfortunately the evil of the system does not stop here. A married woman may herself often induce him to club his resources with those of their men. The looseness of society under the extraordinary condition is having a very bad effect on an otherwise excellent stock of people. The population of the district and States concerned is gradually going down and all forms of disease are prevalent among the emasculated survivors. We are glad that the Rulers of some of the Hill States are taking steps to root out the custom which will before long completely ruin the people of their territories.

"Liddel's Weekly," dated 30th May 1925

THE HIMALAYAN TRAGEDY OF MARRIAGE

Thakur Surat Singh the General Secretary of the Local Himalaya Vidya Parbandhani Sabha, sends us a seventeen page pamphlet with the above sensational heading. The Tragedy is the Hill system of contract marriage known as "Reet". The brochure, which is far too long to reproduce in full, is intensely interesting so we can only publish a few extracts, clarified a little, from the unvarnished phraseology necessary, no doubt, in dealing with such a subject.

In the course a foreword Thakur Surat Singh says :-

"My letter of June 12th., 1924, published in Liddell's last year to high Government officials, regarding the system of

'Contract Marriage' popularly called "Reet" or "Rit" stated the urgency of the case for administrative action against this traffic in female slaves among the Himalayan Highlanders. Since then the Hindu Conference, held in June 1924 at Simla, has passed a Resolution, condemning the practice; while the local press has also taken up the matter; and now one of the seven first class journals in India, the Indian Social Reformer, Bombay, has come to our support. His Highness the late Rana Dalip Singh Bahadur, C.I.E., Chief of Baghat State, Solan, was the first Highland Prince, to enact a Law for the abolition of the custom of "Reet,"

The State of utter ignorance, illiteracy and superstition in which the Simla District and its neighbouring States live, is owing solely to the want of schools, colleges and proper educative institutions. It is a matter of satisfaction, pride and good fortune that we have enlightened ruling Princes like that of Patiala, Sirmoor, Bilaspur, Bashahar, Jubbal, Baghat, and others, who have begun to take genuine interest in the social amelioration of the people and are endowed with true matronly feelings and possess great administrative faculties.

With one of the great British Monarchs as our Emperor; with one of the greatest Englishmen, diplomats and jurists as our Viceroy; with one of the greatest men of action as our Governor and under them the immediate supervision of such talented Agent to the Governor General and Deputy Commissioners as Colonels A.B. Minchin, H.B. St. John, J.C. Coldstream and Mr. Abraham, who besides having a wide outlook and broad vision,

do also possess true sympathy with the land of their adoption, we do hope that the British who already have to their credit such achievements as the abolition of Slavery throughout the world, suppression of Sacred Sati and of female Infanticide in India, would now hail with delight the opportunity of gaining the glory of eradicating this inhuman practice of the sale of mothers, sisters and daughters like cattle which prevails in the Himalayas. Public bodies, editors of newspapers and every Indian worth the name should also co-operate and do their utmost to remove this blot on the fair name of this land of the highest mountains and of great and sacred rivers, where nature has spared nothing to beautify it, and make it one of the best regions of the world and the inhabitants on the contrary nothing to make them cursed in spite of all this.

So to our Rulers and Statesman, to our Princes and Chiefs and to the public we appeal that they move in the matter of the eradication of this social evil which is corroding into the vitals of the society in the regions of the Himalayas.

I need not dilate on the immediate and consequential effect of this evil custom. Woman is a key-stone to the whole fabric of society and as long as this custom of "Reet" prevails, no efforts to improve society can bear fruit. Where woman is lightly treated; where matrimonial ties are so flimsy; where sentiments of conjugal bliss and obligations are thus prostituted, there it is easy to notice the demon of Destruction burying with mouth agape to swallow up all before it. Suffice it to say that the first and foremost step in regenerating these tribes is improvement in the relations of man and woman, establishment

of the sacredness and glory of woman and appreciation of the powers she has to make or mar a nation. The child is the father of the man; but the former is what its mother is. If you want good citizens, if you aspire after nation-building, do but only these three things :- the first, improve the mother; the second, improve the mother; and the third, improve the mother. Leave aside all other reforms, let the worst of evils persist for a time as they cannot persist long; for where once you have improved the womanhood, you have improved all. Illiteracy, ignorance, poverty, sickness, high death-rate, imbecility, etc., etc., proceed, but only from the laxity of morals that dominates in these hills and by applying remedies to elevated the morals you apply remedies for the removal of all the rest.

I have no words to convey the depth of feelings which animate me; but if once the evils of this custom of "Reet" are fully comprehended, I feel sure that none who has the least feeling of humanity in him will hesitate to come forward and help in putting a stop to it whether by active participation, or otherwise, by suggestions or money.

I earnestly request that any opinion, whether expressed through the press or otherwise, may kindly be communicated to me at the Punjab Hotel, as that will greatly assist me in furthering the mission of stopping this evil custom which I have at heart.

APPENDIX II

Extract from *The Servant of India* Poona, 4th June 1925

SCANDALOUS TRAFFIC

One is shocked to learn that more than eighty years after slavery was abolished in British India and Indian States, a particularly odious form of slavery is tolerated in the Simla Hill states. These States are not independent like Nepal, but are under the Punjab Government, and therefore, the responsibility of British Government for the continuance of the evil cannot be shaken off. The practice is known as "Rit" and consists in the sale of girls and young women for sexual purposes, for sums usually ranging from Rs. 100 to Rs. 500, but sometimes going up to Rs. 2,000, by the parents or other guardians in the case of unmarried girls and by husbands in the case of married ones. It is sometimes described as a form of marriage, but one finds no essential feature of the marriage relations in it. There is no limit to the number of girls that one might purchase, nor any restriction as to selling any of them again, and in this way they may change hands any number of times. If the sale and purchase were confined to the hill tribes one might recognise it a form of marriage and allow it to undergo change in the natural process of time. But it is not so, the girls are purchased by the people of the plains for immoral purposes, a notorious traffic in them exists, and they finally swell the ranks of prostitutes. The practice was stopped in British India long ago. Some of the States have followed the example of British India and prohibited it; but several of them have put no check on it because

according to Himalaya Vidya Prabandhani Sabha of Simla, which is making commendable efforts for the suppression of the evil, those States are making revenue out of the traffic by claiming a percentage of the sale money. What is most surprising is that the practice has been allowed to exist so long around the summer capital of the government of India and of the Punjab, without the Political Department putting an end to it. What can be more scandalous?

**Cuttings from the Times of India Bombay, dated the 2nd
July 1925**

SALE OF GIRLS

Question in the Commons

(Special Cable - Copyright)

London, June, 30th

In the Commons Colonel Wedgwood asked Lord Birkenhead would enquire whether the system called "Reet" prevails in Simla Hill States, under which girls were sold for immoral purposes even outside those States and, if such traffic did exist, whether he would recommend to the Political Department to end it.

Earl Winterton replied that at present he was without official information but he would make enquiries.

**Extract from the Legislative Assembly List, No. 15-A, dated
the 3rd August 1925**

Mr. C.S. Ranga Iyer :-

- (a) Has the attention of the Government been drawn to the question asked in the House of Commons on June 30th, 1925 and published in the Times of India of the 2nd July 1925, regarding the immoral traffic in girls in Simla Hill States and even outside those States?
- (b) Are the Government aware that there is a widespread feeling among the Hindus that the traffic should be abolished.
- (c) If the answer to (a) and (b) are in affirmative, have the Government taken any steps to remove the system of "Reet"? If so, what?
- (d) If the answer to (c) is in negative, will the Government be pleased to take steps towards the abolition of this system? If not, why not?

(Partap)

Extract from the Hindu Conference, Simla District 1924.

Rana Jagjit Chand, (Chief of Kuthar State) Chairman of the Reception Committee, in a short speech welcomed the delegates who were not less than 500 and had come from all the hill States. In doing so he said that there was a time, when the great range of Himalaya was celebrated not only for being the prince of mountains, but also as the home of Rishis and cultured and happily people. But want of education, elementary as well as high, and harms full customs had brought about unhappiness, misery and eventual decay among the people of the hills. He

said that the officers of the benign British Government were sympathetic and willing to help hillmen but unless the Ruling Chiefs of the hill States came forward to do their duty to spread education among their people and assist them to root out evil customs, there was not hope of bettering the condition of the masses, that it was a happy sign that the ruling Princes had shown their willingness to associate themselves with the Conference, the object of which was to ameliorate the condition of the people of the Simla Hills. Another great necessity was the abolition of the evil custom of "Reet" by which women in the hills were treated like cattle and sold like slaves for money to persons, willing to make them their wives. In conclusion, he requested his brother Chiefs to encourage education among their subjects, to better their economic condition, and to raise them in the scale of civilisation.

In his presidential address Rana Durga Singh Chief of Baghat State. He emphatically condemned the demoralising custom of "Reet". He said that it was necessary to root out venereal diseases which were sapping the health of men and women of the hills and were one of the chief causes of depletion in the population owing to decrease in the number of births and increase in the number of deaths.

**Extract from "Grihalakshmi" Allahabad for the month of
Jaith Samat 1982 May 1925**

MISERABLE CONDITION OF SIMLA HILL-WOMEN

The hill women belonging to the neighbouring hills of Simla are in no way inferior in beauty or complexion to English girls. While, however, fate has endowed the former with such beauty, the pity is that there exists no means of its protection. They are unable to understand their true religion on account of poverty and want of education prevailing among them. The result is that they do not now realise that adultery is a sin. In a very short period they change husbands twice or thrice. This, however, is not done by them of their own accord. The husband himself hands them over to other people on receipt of some money either for some limited period or for good, as it may be settled. Unmarried girls are also sold by their parents without any reluctance or consideration. All these abuses have taken the garb of a social custom which is termed "Reet" by the hill people and in the name of "Reet" good many atrocities are being committed. Fidelity of wives towards their husbands has lost its significance. Mostly the women have come to lead the life of prostitutes. Then again many degenerated men from the plains - neighbouring districts of the Punjab and the United Provinces come and spoil the chastity of these poor, simple uneducated women, purchase them and make heavy profits by selling them to prostitutes or other people in the plains. All these causes are contributing to the degradation of the hill women, may, not

only of the hill women, but in a way of the entire Hindu Nation, because all these unfortunate women belong to his race.

There is in Simla a society for promoting education in the hills called the Himlaya Vidya Parbandhani Sabha, Simla, which is doing a good deal of work in this connection. This society has directed the attention of the Government and the Rulers of the Hill States to these abuses and is trying its level best to have the most deplorable custom of "Reet" abolished by all possible means. We express our hearty co-operation with the Sabha and its able Secretary - Thakur Surat Singh - and desire that the Almighty may soon grant the Sabha success in removing this great blemish from the women.

* * * * *

From

Thakur Surat Singh
General Secretary,
Himalaya Vidiya Parbandhani Sabha,
Simla.

To

The Superintendent of Hill States, Simla
And
The Deputy Commissioner, Simla District.

Simla, the 12th June 1924

Abolition of the Custom of "Rit"

Sir,

In the capacity of General Secretary, the Himalaya Vidiya Prbandhani Sabha, Simla, I have the honour to approach you in

the fervent hope of eliciting your support to the Sabha's efforts in the matter of eradicating a most pernicious custom, popularly known as "Rit," prevalent in the hill tracts under your supreintendence. An effective way of combating this obnoxious custom is to get the rulers of the hill tracts interest themselves in this most crying sphere of reform, and if you be good enough to exhort them to take the matter up, the problem will be easily solved and to you will redound the credit of having done the subjects ruled over by you an act of inestimable good.

2. First of all, permit me to assure you that this body is loyal to the core and prescribes to itself only such lines of action as are for the social uplift of the hill people inhabiting the Himalayas. It has no concern what-so-ever with politics. Next, let me define 'Rit'. This is a form of marriage, without any ceremony, contracted by paying a money price, varying according to beauty generally from Rs. 100 to 500, and has recently been as high as Rs. 2,000 to the guardian of a girl, if unmarried, or to the husband of that girl, if married. There is no limit to such marriages, and, as is evident from their nature, can be as easily dissolved as they are freely undertaken. For a further explanation of the practice, a reference is invited to the Gazetteers of the Simla and Kangra districts and also of the neighbouring Hill States.

3. This one custom is more responsible for the steadily increasing degeneration of the people than all the other evils put together. Under its baneful influence, marriage has lost its sanctity, domestic relations all their felicity and society all those ties which make it a means to civic welfare. It allows too

wide a latitude to the people in selecting and divorcing their mates and unrestricted by any of the forces of virtue, the entire population is being guided by one instinct alone - that of lust - and one object alone - that of fomenting disaffection between a married couple, otherwise happy. Education is already rare and among the females it is unknown. Added to its poverty, the notions they have chastity and morality are queer and low. Debauchery gets hold of the people from an early age and the custom of 'RIT' gives them a care blanche to revel in it without incurring any social or moral stigma. The inevitable is therefore already coming about in that a large majority of the people is affected with those diseases which arise from sexual indiscretions and several become barren, with the result that their numbers are fast dwindling away. Constitutionally too, they are fast growing symptoms of decline, so much so that during the 1914-19 War most of the recruits from the Simla hills were rejected as unfit on account of their suffering from venereal diseases, which deprived the people of this district of an opportunity for rendering service to the King-Emperor, on the one hand, and winning glory for their country on the other.

4. Social and moral principles having been warped, as stated above, the women are extremely prone to temptation. Rich and unscrupulous people from the plains and elsewhere find these tracts especially fertile field for enticing away the lewd girls and, having first made them the victims of their evil passions, treat them afterwards, as they best deserve, worse than women-slaves. Most the bolder type traffic in these girls and passes

them on like current coin from one hand to another and often through several hands at one and the same time.

5. The existence of this custom given rise also to bad relations in society and strife among its members. The rich amongst the local inhabitants very easily outbid the other rivals and carry off the prize while they, in turn, have often to yield it up in favour of the richer people from the plains.

6. Such, in short, Sir, are the evil consequences of the custom under reference. The British Government which is always forward in matters of social uplift have realised this state of affairs and your predecessors took steps to advise, on the suggestion of the Sabha whom now I represent, more than once, the Chiefs of the Hill States to put an end to this evil custom. Some of them seem, however, to have suffered it to continue unchecked, perhaps because of the handsome income they derive in the shape of percentage they levy on the sale-money of the women. This percentage was intended to serve as a deterrent of the custom by throwing additional liability on the party concerned, but is now looked upon as no more than a tax, like several others, leviable by, and due to, the State.

7. The Himalaya Vidiya Parbandhani Sabha, Simla, has never been slow to realise the magnitude of this evil and has been doing all it can in the matter of impressing upon the people the gravity of the situation. They have been convening meetings at several places to bring home to the people the vices of the custom and condemning it as one most harmful. Among others, they passed the following resolutions :-

.....

(3) that no woman shall remarry in her husband's life time.

.....

*. In fairness to the Patiala Durbar, Bilaspur, Bashahr, Jubbal and Baghat States it must be recognised, that the initiated measures to discourage the practice; but their efforts seem to have borne but little fruit. In Baghat Sate, the late Sri Rana Dalip Singh, Bahadur, C.I.E., framed certain legislation, published it in a treatise and enforced the same in his State. The first three sections run as below:-

- (i) This Act shall be called the 'ABOLITION OF RIT CUSTOM' and shall come into force in the State with effect from the 23rd July 1917.
- (ii) Any one who shall infringe this law on or after the 23rd July 1917 shall be punished in accordance with the provisions of this Act.
- (ii) To marry a woman by Rit is forbidden. Neither men nor woman shall perform RIT, nor a woman whose husband is alive shall become another man's wife by RIT. No man shall keep as wife any woman whose husband is alive. Whoever will commit breach of these provisions, shall be punished under Sections 497, 498, 363, 366, 494 and 496 of the Indian Penal Code and any one proved to be an accomplice in a RIT affair shall be liable to be punished under Act XXV of 1856.

9. It is out of question to hope to stamp out this evil through private efforts alone, and the Sabha is decidedly of the opinion that much good will result if prohibition be enforced, through legislation, by the States affected, on the lines initiated by some

of them as stated above, making infringements punishable so as to have a deterring effect. In the absence of any such measures, it is not too much to say that this region of the hills, with all the gifts of nature lavished upon it in profusion, with climate invigorating and highly bracing, endowed with all that makes life happy and worth living, will mark the habitation, despite all the charms, of a race of people, dwarfed in all their faculties and fast degeneration into utter extinction. Pitiably spectacle this and the world will blame not the victims themselves, as they know not what is eating into their vitals, but those who have the means and opportunities of weaning them from their ways. The British Government have already served humanity in such philanthropic deeds as the abolition of SATI (the sacred old custom of the wife burning herself on the funeral pyre of her husband), Thuggee (the equally old practice of the people despoiling the wayfarers and their neighbours of their belongings), female infanticide and offerings of human beings before the gods. They have also been the pioneers in the eradication of slave-trade from the face of the earth, and the only explanation why they have so far been indifferent in the matter of abolishing this custom of RIT, seems to be that they have not yet been seized of the havoc this evil has done, is doing and has the potentiality of yet doing. Here is a chance of adding another feather to their crown and of raising the cloud that is blighting all under its ominous shade.

10. It may also be observed that the inhabitants of the regions in question are only Hindus. The custom of RIT is against the very scriptures and tenets of the Hindu religion and although by

themselves the people are incapable of getting out of its clutches, they will welcome efforts from outside and, being peaceful and law-abiding, will calmly submit to legislation.

11. In conclusion, Sir, I take this opportunity of requesting, on behalf of the Himalaya Vidiya Parbandhani Sabha, Simla, the favour of your being kind enough to take suitable steps in the matter of uplifting the people of the Simla Hills and freeing them from a most prevalent corruption which is marring their progress and stigmatising them in the eyes of the civilised world. The Sabha would, therefore, urge your enlisting the cooperation of the Hill Chiefs this time with a view to their undertaking effectual measures to wiping out by legislation this black spot on the fair name of the territories they rule over. The Sabha does hope and trust that the British Government will welcome this chance of adding to the manifold services they have rendered the humanity and thus establish its well-deserved claim to the eternal gratitude of the people of these hill whose destinies are in their charge.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

SURAT SINGH

General Secretary,

Himalaya Vidiya Parbandhani Sabha,

Simla.

APPENDIX - III

To

The Political Agent
Punjab Hill States,
Simla.

Subject : Reforms - Beth and Begar

Memorandum

Kindly refer to your Memorandum No. R.2/2/46, dated the 17th January, 1946, on the above subject.

There can be no going back on the undertaking already given. Necessary changes in our revenue records will be made when the Settlement Report which is still pending in the Agency, is finally disposed of. The Bethus who are my subjects are treated as occupancy or non-occupancy tenants according to the conditions they fulfill to entitle them to belong to the former or the latter category.

As regard the petition (herewith returned) on which you have invited my comments, I think the position has already been explained clearly enough in my Memorandum No. 285/A.O.1/9-44 dated the 28th October, 1945. As you will notice the petitioners mainly stress the question of Begar. This was abolished long ago, and it is a down-right lie on their part to say that anyone of them or their family members has been ever subjected to it. They are, however, duty bound to make labour available on payment for purposes specified in my Notification No. 1/255 dated the 5th July, 1946, a copy whereof already exists in your office. What they want is that even the paid labour should not be taken from them. I would like it to be left

to you for consideration whether in a hill territory such as mine, any work will be possible if we were to agree to such an absurd request of theirs. I can, however, assure you that I always act with commiseration in my dealings with these people, and even compulsory paid labour is asked for only when it is otherwise not practicable to do without it.

I have made enquiries about the alleged "illegal recoveries" to which they have vaguely referred in their petition. The allegation appears to be completely unfounded. If they can bring any specific cases to my notice and substantiate their allegation, I will look into the matter again immediately.

It is not for me to offer any comments on their request that I should be "advised to desist from penalising any of the Bethus for moving the higher authorities for redress of their grievances". The right course for them always would be to first refer their grievances to me. If I cannot redress any of their genuine hardships, they can appeal to the higher authorities. Their present action of petitioning to you direct is I think objectionable. If they are not discouraged, others will get emboldened, and we may be faced with serious difficulties in our day to day administration. I hope that you will give your careful consideration to this aspect of such petitions being entertained in your office.

Should you have any other point for clarification I am at your disposal.

Sd/-

Thakur Sahib

Dealth State

172614
 P. P. University Library
 Shimla

APPENDIX - IV

From

Thakur Surat Singh
General Secretary, Himalaya Vidiya Parbandhani Sabha,
Shimla.

To

The Superintendent of Hill States, and Dy. Commissioner,
Shimla.

Shimla the 4th September 1924

Abolition of the custom of 'REET'

A am directed by my Sabha to thank you for your letter No. 3680, dated the 22nd July 1924 on the above subject. I am also to state that the Simla District Hindu Conference which was held on the 29th June 1924, also passed a resolution - copy enclosed to abolish this custom.

I am further to suggest that the proper method to eradicate this evil is to convene a conference which should consist of the following people :-

- (a) Representatives of the Chiefs in whose territories this custom is prevalent.
- (b) Election delegates of the public from each State and British territory like Kotkhai, Kotgarh and Bharauli wherever this custom is more prevalent.
- (c) Representatives of Government for Government territory like the Tehsildar of Simla and Kotkhai.
- (d) Representatives of the Himalaya Vidiya Parbandhani Sabha, Simla, and
- (e) Representatives of the Hindu Sabha, Simla.

If such a conference is convened, the representatives should come prepared with the following information which should also be communicated by the States to you and the General Secretary of the Sabha at least 15 days before the conference :-

- (1) What are the different kinds of marriages in the State, e.g., REET, KHEET, HAR, ETC.?
- (2) In how many forms the people pay taxes to the State on the sale of women, (unmarried girls, widows and those whose husbands are alive)? What is the percentage on each form or whether it is a fixed amount per marriage? In the latter case how much amount is fixed? Since when has this tax been levied.
- (3) What is the average total income to State through such taxes for the last 5 years?
- (4) What action if any, has been taken by the States on the Muraslas of Major Douglas and Mr. Kettlewell, later Superintendents of Simla Hill States? A copy of the correspondence and orders should be brought to the conference, if possible.
- (5) What induces or compels the hill-people to sell their girls and women to the non-hill men?
- (6) Whether this custom is against the scriptures and tenets of the Hindu religion?
- (7) Whether it is desirable to stop this practice of REET, allowing, of course, widow marriage according to the dictates of Shashtras.
- (8) Whether it is a fact that women are also sold by third parties who are not related to them?
- (9) What reasons are there in support of this custom?
- (10) What are its vices?

This Sabha will be obliged if you will please consider the proposal and arrange to hold a Conference somewhat on the above lines.

A copy of this letter, together with a copy of my letter dated the 12th June 1924 to your address, is being sent to the Agent of the Governor-General, Punjab States, and to the Deputy Commissioners, Ambala, Kangra and Hoshiarpur districts.

.....

HINDU CONFERENCE - DISTRICT SIMLA

28TH AND 29TH JUNE 1924.

.....

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1. President Conference | - Rana Durga Singh, Chief of Baghat State |
| 2. Chairman Conference | - Rana Jagjit Chand, Chief of Kuthar State |
| 3. General Secretary | - Dr. Kedar Nath, Simla. |
| 4. Propangada Secretary | - Thakur Surat Singh, Simla |
| 5. Reception Secretary | - Lala Puran Chand, BA. LL.B., Vakil, Simla. |
| 6. Financial Secretary | - Seth Sulakhan Mal, Simla. |

The Custom of Reet which prevail in the Highlands and the presence of which is the root cause of the degradation of the Hills and is the reason for depopulation, poverty, misery and outranges, and which is contrary to the Shashtras, should be stopped by all those Rulers of States, Deputy Commissioners, Agents to the Governor-General, Punjab States, in whose jurisdiction this custom is present and the Conference requested them to abolish it by legislation for which the Hindu Community will be grateful to them

.....

Letter dated 4th September to the Agent to the Governor-General, Punjab States, and Dy. Commissioners, Ambala, Kangra & Hoshiarpur.

.....

Abolition of the custom of Reet

I am directed by the Sabha to enclose a copy each of my letters dated the 12th June 1924 and 4th September 1924 to the Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Simla Hill States, on the above subject and to say that the Himalaya Vidiya Parbandhani Sabha, Simla, will be obliged if you will please see your way to co-operate in rooting out the evil custom which is marrying the progress of a large number of Indian States/British subjects.

GLOSSARY

| Words used | Language | Meaning |
|------------|----------|--|
| Begar | Urdu | Forced labour |
| Beth | Pahari | Forced labour |
| Khillat | Urdu | Gift |
| Nazarana | Urdu | Monetary offering |
| Sanad | Urdu | Treaty |
| Swaran | Hindi | Upper caste |
| Diva | Pahari | Oil burning lamp |
| Malli | Pahari | Oracle |
| Kut | Pahari | Grains offer to Mahasu Devta at Hanol |
| Ghanti | Pahari | Bell |
| Karnala | Pahari | Trumpet |
| Ransinghas | Pahari | Trumpet (Made of Brass Brozen and Silver) |
| Bhanas | Pahari | Cymbals |
| Thalie | Hindi | Plate |
| Turi | Pahari | Name of caste and work as temple musician |
| Jaggery | Pahari | Unrefined sugar |
| Patendy | Pahar | Chappaties made from rice |
| Ghur | Pahari | Oracle |



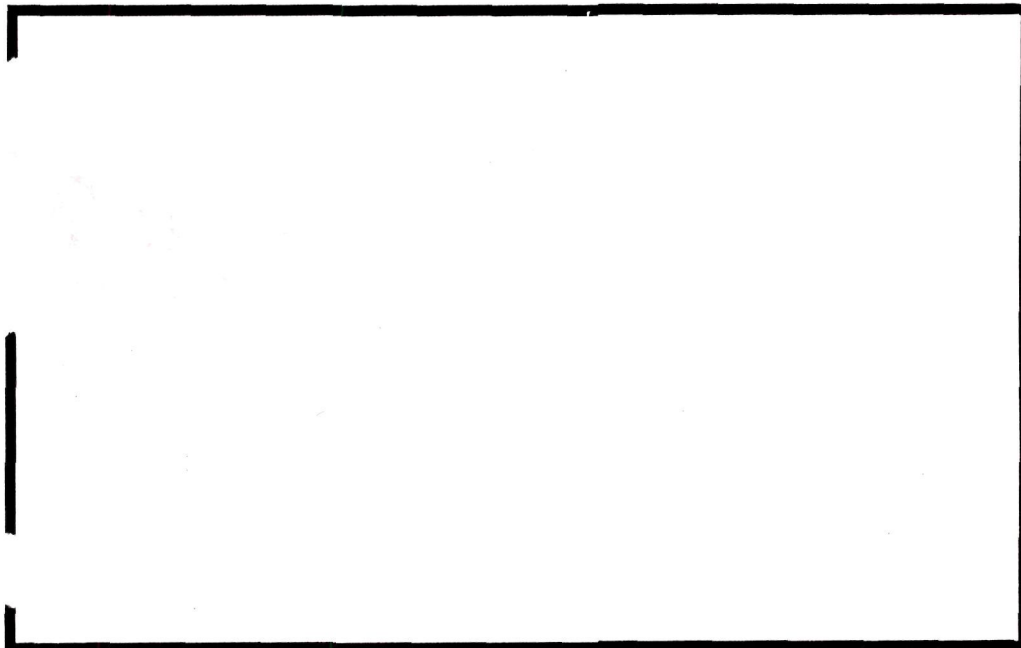
Masks of a deity made by a domang of Kinnaur



Sikfi Piya in Pabar Valley



*Shikhi-Puja during Shiant festival at Nirath in
upper Shimla hills
{In the background in Surya temple,
(C. 8th century) of Nirath}*



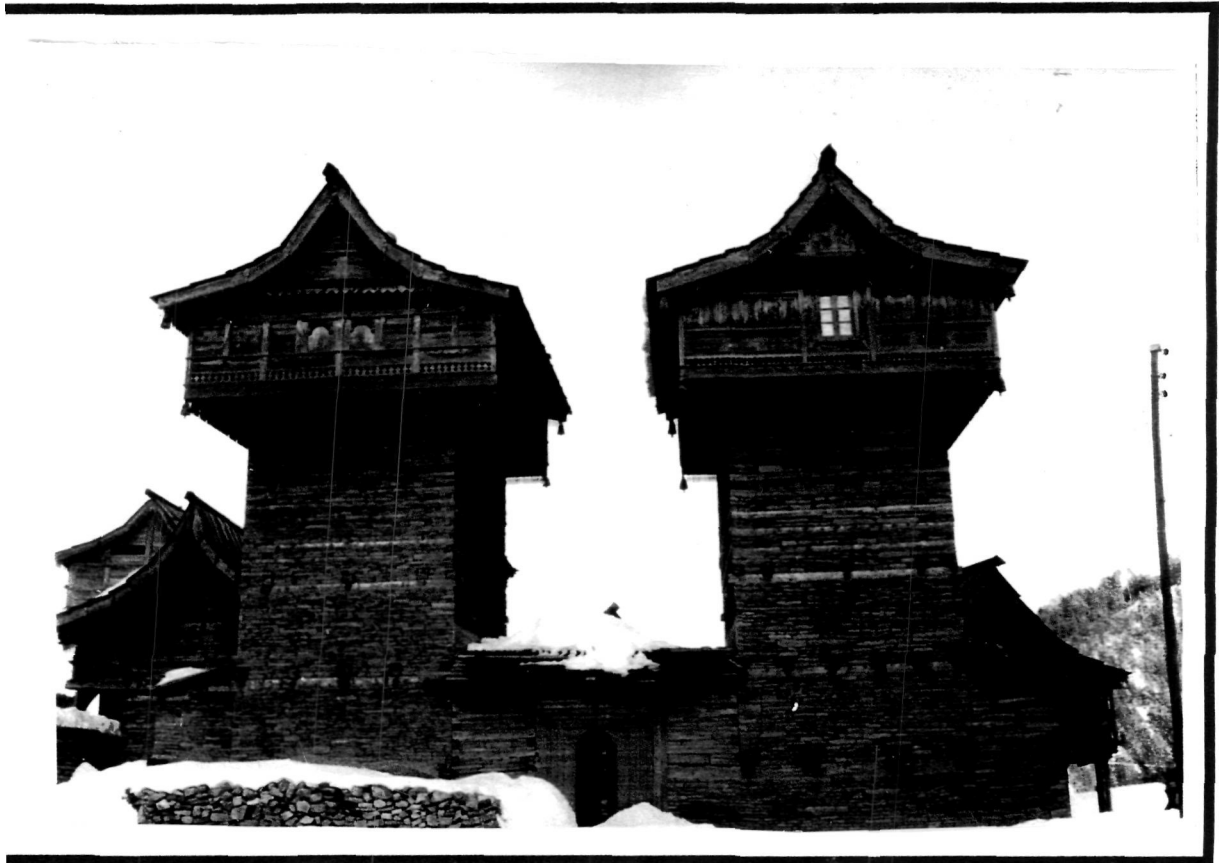
Bannar Devtas of Jubbal Valley, Shimla District



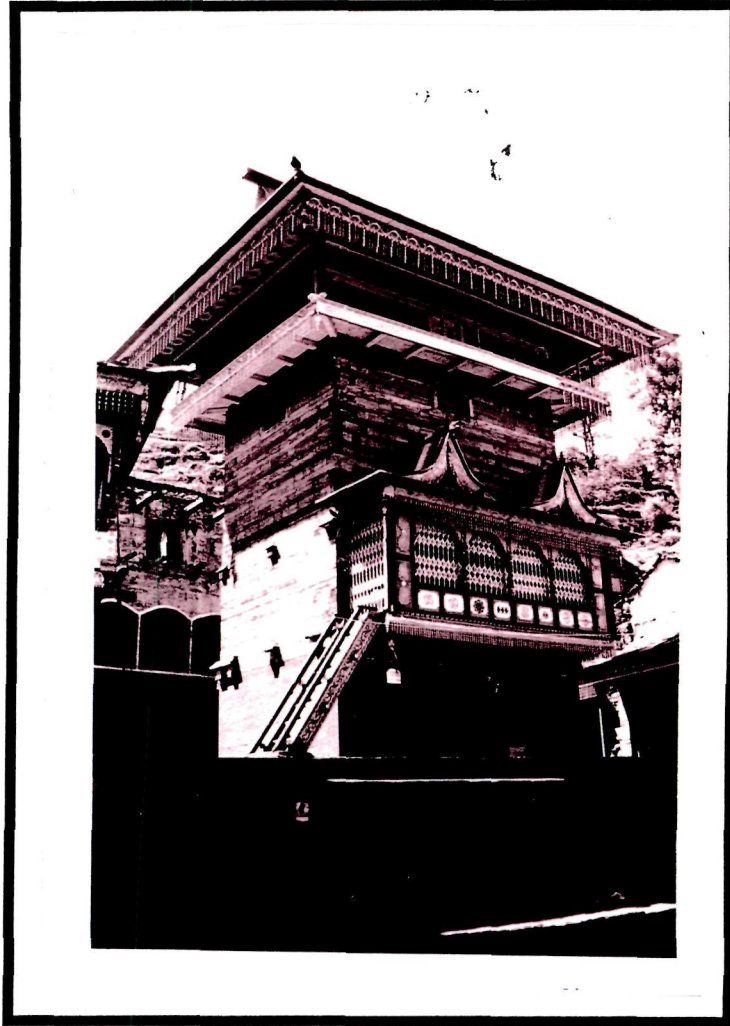
Worship of Devta



Devta of Pabar Valley



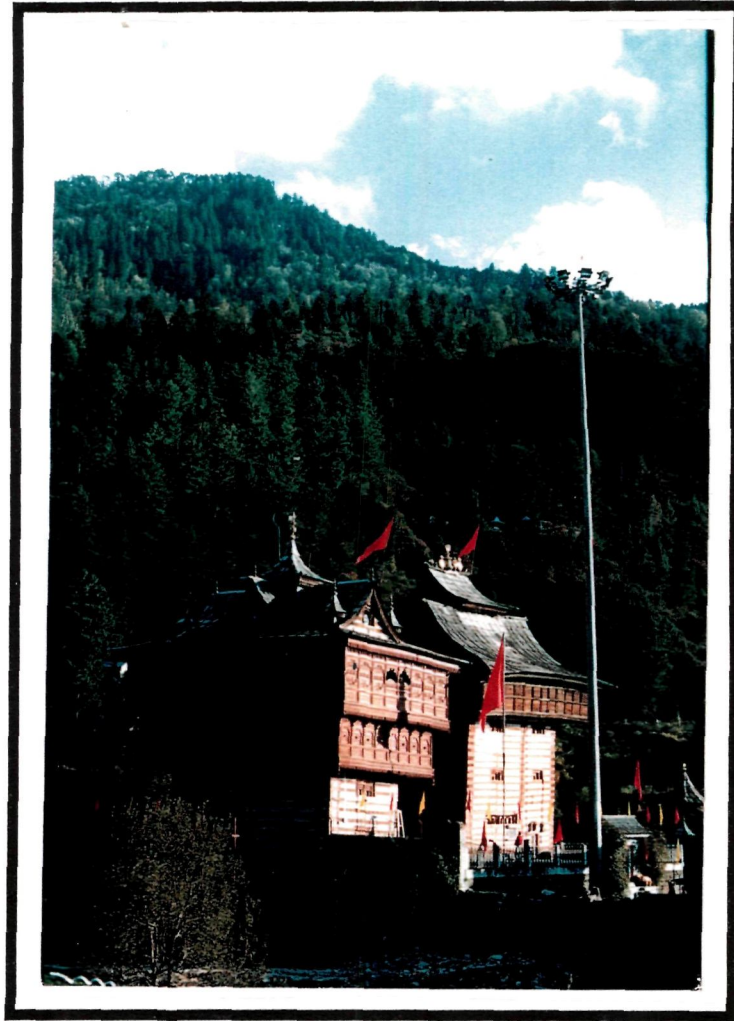
*Bijata Maharaja Temple, Sarain, Tehsil Chopal
Shimla district*



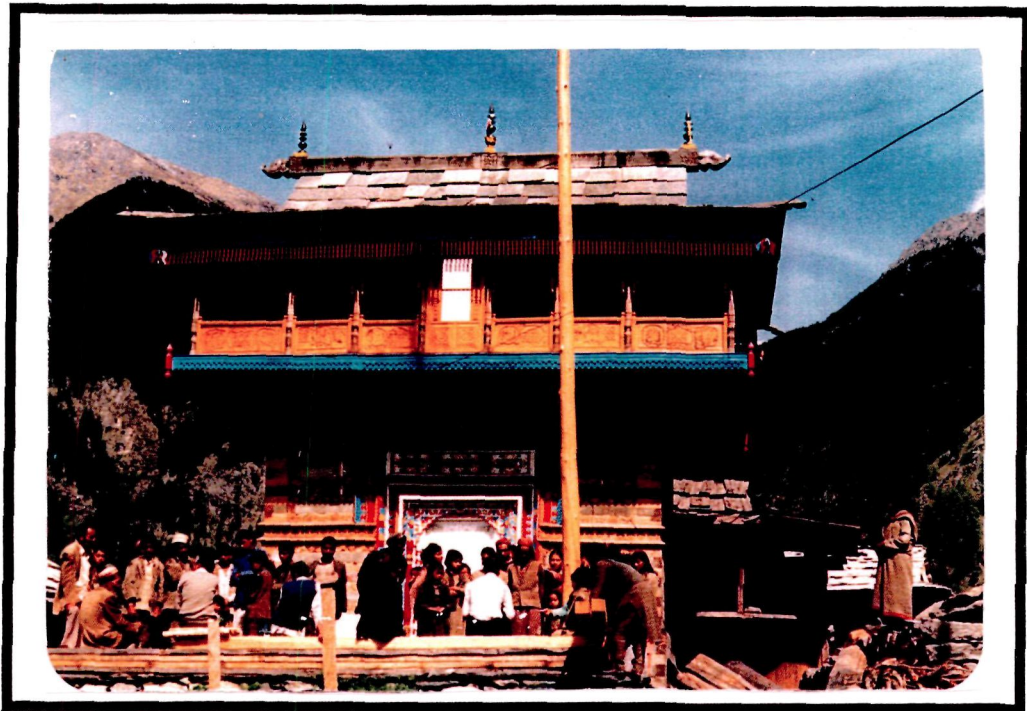
*Manan Devta Temple, village Manan (Theog)
Shimla District*



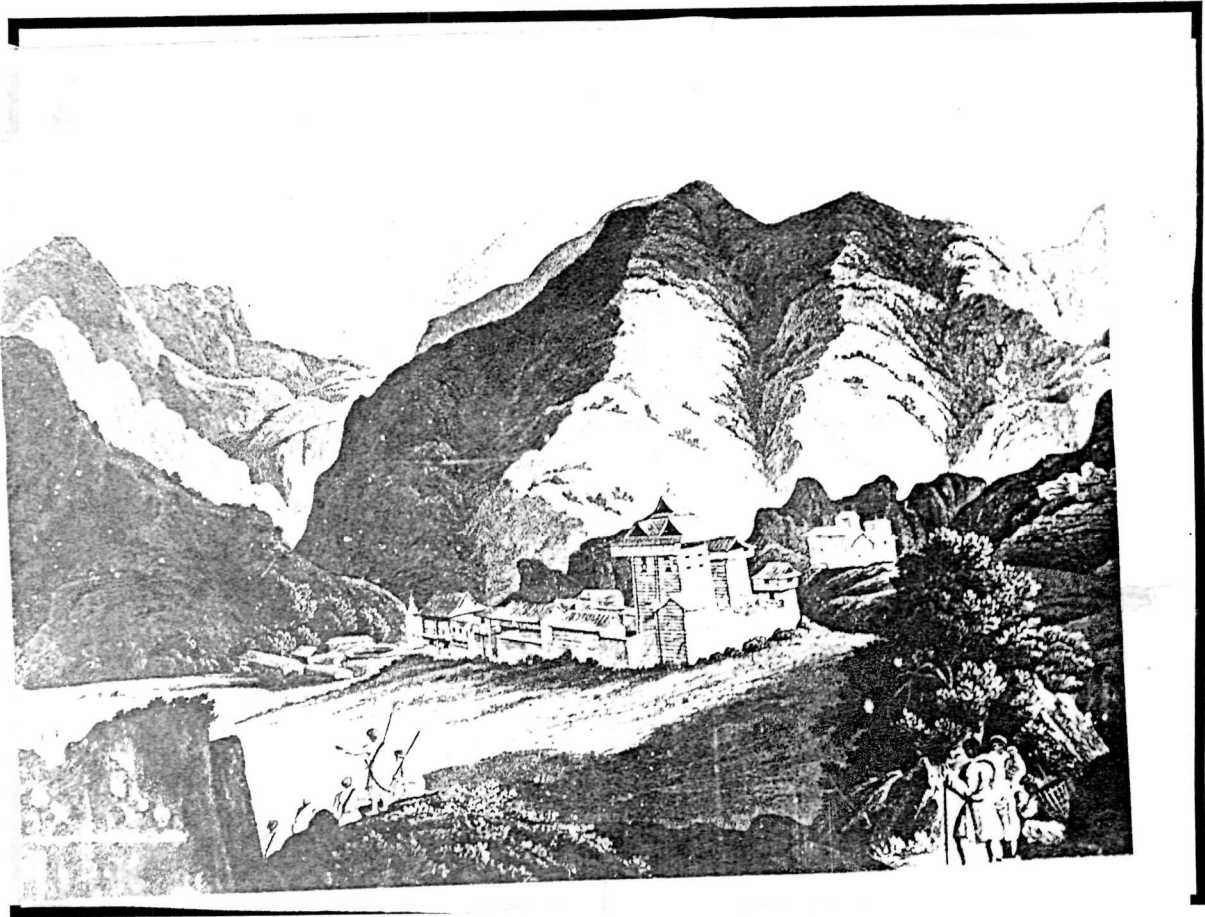
*Baidra Devta Temple Bachhochi, Pabbar Valley
Shimla district*



*Bhimakali temple, Saruhan (Rampur Bushahr)
as it is today*



Outer Saraj of Devta Temple



*Bhimakali temple, Sarahan (Rampur Bushahr),
J.B. Fraser 1820*



War dance in Rofiru Valley



Cultural programme at Solan



Dances from Khabal vilage of Pabar valley in upper Shimla hills



Community dance during Nirathi (Rampur Sushair) fair



*Hill women sitting on the terraces enjoy the cultural programme of a fair
at Matyana in upper Shimla hills*



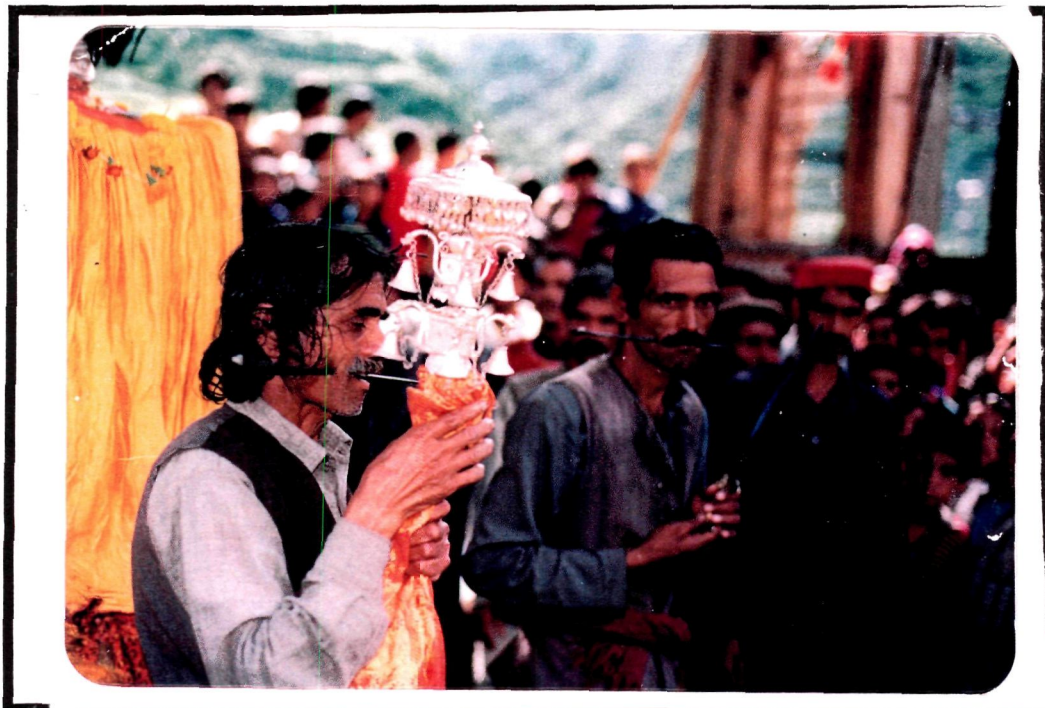
Social gathering in a village



*Kfiaranoo Devta temples
Gathering at the time of Bhunda festival*



*Rope sliding ceremony of Bhunda festival at village Kharahan
in upper Shimla hills*



*Bhag festival in Jangla village of Pabar valley in eastern Shimla hills
Oracles with pierced iron needles in their cheeks and nose*



*Baisakhi festival at Giri ganga (3000 mts above sea level)
in Jubbal, Shimla District*



Shant festival at gwas in Pabbar valley

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