

Fairs and Festival of Pangi Tribal Tehsil

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Abstract

Himachal Pradesh, can hardly be called a tribal state though it is inhabited by tribes like the Pangwala, Gaddi, Gujjar, Kinnaura, Lahaula, Lamba, Jad, Khampa, Swangla, Beda, and Zoba. The tribes of Himachal Pradesh are scattered in different parts of the state and the tribal communities residing in different parts of Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh like Pangwala, Gaddi and Gujjar are sociable and by their own culture and tradition, they have marked their position in the Indian subcontinent also. Dancing, musical melodies, festival, fair, etc. bore evidence to it. They are by nature nomadic people and their customs and social structure make them identifiable from each other. As far as the occupations are concerned, the tribes of Chamba have taken up the occupations including rearing of cattle and also raising of wool. Dresses that these tribes of Chamba wear also are quite exquisite to look at. With this perspective an attempt is made in this paper analyze the fairs and festival, customs and culture of tribal people of Pangi tehsil of Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh.

Keywords: Tribes, Fairs, Pangwal, Festival

Introduction

Himachal Pradesh located between 30° 22' and 30° 12' north latitude and between 75° 47' and 79° 4' east longitude is totally a hilly state where the Himalaya is demarcated into various ranges like outer with shivalik range, the lesser Himalaya with Dhauladhar range, the great Himalaya with pir panjal range and the Trans Himalaya with Zanskar range. It is characterized by an uneven elevation, which ranges from 350 meters to 7000 meters above means sea level.

Pangi valley (location and boundaries): has unique geography which strongly influences its climate and subsequently its geographical diversity culture and flora and fauna. Pangi is the remotest, rugged, snow bound, inaccessible, land- locked but picturesque and pristine narrow river valley in Himachal Pradesh. It is a small administrative subdivision of Chamba district situated in the northern extreme of the state where time and space acquired a new dimension. Sandwiched between two mighty mountain ranges, the Zanskar in the North and the Pir panjal in the south it is an isolated valley.

Pangi valley extends between latitude 32° 46' 36'' north and 33° 10' 46'' north of the equator and between longitudes 76° 23' 33'' east and 76° 54' 59'' east of the Greenwich mean time. It is contiguous with Kishtwar and Zanskar region of Jammu and Kashmir in the north and spreads over an area of 1600sq. km. Pangi valley is irregularly triangular in shape,(Fig.1) each side of which is about 56 kms. in distance. It is bounded by Zanskar hills that lie in the northern part of the valley and pir panjal in west. In southern side it shares boundaries with Lahaul and Spiti and in eastern side with Jammu and Kashmir. It is chiefly formed by river Chandrabhaga (Chinab) which cuts across the terrain in deep narrow gorge before entering (sansri nala) Padar area of kishtwar

district of Jammu and Kashmir. With its deep river gorges and barren mountain peaks, it offers a wide range of scenery and vegetation. Till recently, this valley was the remotest tribal area of Himachal Pradesh where road access to the rest of the valley was established only in mid 1990s.

The pangi valley accessed from three directions, by crossing the Rohtang pass from Udaipur in Lahaul via karru nala, from Kishtwar, Gulabgarh in Jammu & Kashmir via sansari nala and from Chamba via Sach pass or Cheni pass. These passes remain snow-clad for most time of the year and the valley can only be visited during late summers through these passes.

Fairs and festivals of pangi valley

Fairs and festivals are an important part of social activities of human. They are arranged all over the world in a variety of ways. Some celebrations are specific to certain areas and some are celebrated by different group, communities in certain villages, cities or even state or country. Fairs and festival are important parts of the Indian cultural life. In Indian traditional fairs and festival are connected with religious beliefs, changing season's harvestetc. Fairs and festivals provide occasions to forget worries and hard realities of life. Living is tough in the valley and the means of entertainment are limited as a result the local fairs and festivals are celebrated with much fanfare.

Important Fairs

PHOOL JATRA

This is one of the most popular fair and the literal meaning of *phool Jatra* is to mix up freely without any hesitation with each other. Both men and women mix up freely and hold great rejoicings. The Jatra begins in the month of *Kartika* (October-

November) each year in *Kupha village* and goes on for four days. Men and women from the distant villages such as *Sural, Dharwas and Hudand* also take part in it with great jest and fervor.

Every day it starts from nine in the morning and continues till five in the evening. Thousands of persons participate. In the evening, men organize themselves into groups to perform the *Sain* which they dance on the tune of the *flute and nagara*. Stalls of sweet-meats, bangle sellers and miscellaneous articles are put up. On the second last day, all the participants come to *chauki* and hold a dance there. On the fifth day, the fair is concluded by offering Puja to *Deesh Naag* the village deity. The devotees sacrifice goats and sheep and ask for blessings of the devata. But now-a-days this type of sacrifice of goat and sheep totally ban by government.

This fair is the last Jatra of the year as the valley starts having heavy snowfall and the villagers cannot meet each other again till summers. So, before the start of this fair, Pangwals go to their relatives in neighboring villages and wish them good health throughout the winter by saying *Matha Matha Beshay*. The young members touch the feet of the elders. During the fair delicious meals are cooked in every house and liquor is excessively consumed. Now this fair declared as district level fair by state government.

SAINJ

This fair is held *in Chaitra* (March-April) in *Karyuni* and remains for one day only. The villagers worship *malasni mata* and offer sacrifices of goats and sheep. In the evening, they get down to dancing. Hundreds of persons participate in this festival.

IWAAN

This Jatra is held *in Dharwas and Sural about 10 and 25 kms away from killer*. This fair is celebrated in *Magha* (January-February) and *Phalguna* (February- March) each year. It continues for four days; In Dharwas first day it used to be for the *Raja* (now-a-days it is also held in the name of Praja) the second day for the Praja, the third day for shiva and the fourth day for Naag Devta. Similarly in sural valley the first day for Naag devata, second day for devi mata, third day for *Jerhiun Naag debta* and fourth day for praja. No other devata is worshiped in this Jatra. Thousands of persons from distant villages participate in it. Sweet and other shops are put up and miscellaneous articles are sold during the day, man dance to the tune *of flutes, nagara* and drums while women dance in the evening. Every house hold prepares delicious meals, and serves liquor.

UNONI

This fair is held *in Chaitra* (March-April) and takes place in four places of Pangi tribal tehsil like *Sural, Luj, Karyuni and Kariyas* where Jerhiun naag, sheetla devi, shakti devi, malasni mata and baleen basani are worshiped. It also remains for three days. During the day the men keep on dancing and in the evening the women dance in their respective villages. Delicious meals are prepared in each house and are taken with liquor.

DAIKHAN

This fair is held *in Hudan on Shravana* (july) every year. It also celebrated for two days. On first day it is celebrated in an open compound which is about three kms away from Hudan. There is a lake in the middle and people assemble around it. On the second day the venue shifts to the village. Though it is *Bhot fair*, Pangwals also participate in it. The main characteristic of this fair is that men and women dance together or side by side.

MIGLYATH

This fair is held in village *Mindhal and Kutha* in the month *of Bhadra* (August- September) each year. It remains only for a day. During the day the Pangwals remain busy in worshipping the devi, and sacrificing goats and sheep. But now- a- days this type of practice totally stopped by govt. In the evening, the men dance to dhols and music. Small shops are put up, this fair is very popular amongst the Pangwals tribes.

SARJAAT

This fair is celebrated in village *Mindhal*, on the day of *Puranmashi in Asvina* (September-october). It also remains for a day. Like miglyath jatra, the pangwal remain busy during the day in worshipping the *Chamunda devi* . In the evening they enjoy by singing and dancing.

Now- a- days this fair is shifted to punto village. This time, the villagers *worship Singhbaan devta* and seek his blessing to save their cattle from leopards and bear during the summer months.

Important Festival

JUKAROO

When the musical beats of dhols and mouth organs mingle with the serene melody of icy winds echoing around the snowy peaks, the greatest religious-cum-cultural festival of pangwals take off. Jukaroo is the annual festival celebrated by about 15000 tribal's in all the 60 villages of the snow-clad Pangi belt during winters. The festival usually stars in the first week of February and continues for about one month.

Merry-making, drinking, singing and dancing mark the occasion in the valley giving a colorful and bustling scenario of rejoicing to the otherwise silent surroundings.

Jukaroo is the most important festival here with tradutuonal Hindu festivals of Diwali, Holi and Dussehra holding little significance for the tribals. In fact the celebration of these Hindu festival were started here just a decade ago with the mingling of government employees serving here.

The main features of the festival include singing, dancing, eating and exchanging tribal delicacies including *sattu, manday, honey*, and of course distilled home-made liquor which is consumed by both men and women. The atmosphere in the valley during this one month is '*all play no work*'.

Other aspect of the festival include a rhythmic dance *called ghurei* performed by tribal women on the roof tops of the houses. Usually in every village of the belt the evening meal is eaten together in one house of their respective villages. During the occasion almost every village celebrates a fair in which the people of the surrounding villages are invited for joining the festive mood. A group of four to six lower caste people give music either by *dhols* or mouth organ to give spirit to the occasion.

In a nutshell the festival is a '*get-together*' occasion for the tribals who during this time visit their relatives staying in different parts of pangi valley. Married girls visit their parental houses and exchange goods.

Surprisingly in the recent years the festival has gained momentum of colour and spirit due to the enthusiasm and zest shown by the younger generation of the tribals. The spirit and fervor of the

festival in the recent years tremendously increased due to the interest shown by the younger generation. The younger generation on the other hand enjoy celebrating *jukaroo* and claim that they will not allow this festival to die.

According to the legend the festival is held to celebrate the ending of severe winters and starting of the sowing season. The other legend say that drinking, singing and dancing signifies '*rest period*' for pangwal who work hard under harsh climate conditions so it is a period in which they socialize and meet each other.

The date for starting of the festival is announced by the Praja after consulting religious books. The festival is held from the next day of Amvas. Pooja of their respective devtas is held in the villages for praying to the almighty for saving the people uptill now from any untoward incident.

Preparation for celebrating *jukaroo* start from October onwards before the setting in of winters. Houses are cleaned and decorated. Eatables including ghee and butter are stored in advance. Now one of the reasons for the festival being celebrated with greater zest is that of the availability of variety of eatables in the market.

The importance of this festival for the tribals can be judged from the fact that the few pangwal settled in *Chamba, Dharmshala, Kullu, Shimla, solan and any other part of state or country they all also celebrate the festival even there.*

SHEEL

This festival is celebrated in *Phalgun or chaitra* (February-march) on the day of *amaavas*. Pangwal hold great rejoicing since this festival celebrates the coming of spring. All the villagers get up early in the morning, clean themselves, cook numerous dishes including meat. They sprinkle water on the back of sheep and goats to know whether any village deity is angry with them. Spinning is suspended *till pareed-* the next festival. The pangwals celebrate this festival with great enthusiasm.

Every household usually takes *ghee and chapaties* in the morning. Meat is taken with *cheen* and *manday* at noon. At about the evening *rehani* is taken which consists of *halwa, manday and ghee.*

At about seven or eight o'clock in the evening, every household burns an earthen lamp with ghee and delicious meals prepared during the day the day all the family members are kept around it. Thereafter the *Goddess Lakshmi is worshipped. The pinani –a local dish prepared with bhagani and gur is taken with ghee.*

PAREED

This festival comes after the second day of *sheel*. The village deities are worshiped by one and all villagers. The villagers then meet and embrace each other and the eatable which were kept around the earthen lamp on the day of sheel are eaten on this day. Spinning which was temporarily suspended since sheel is resumed.

A male member of each house goes to *kailash, the local name of a small holy stream* and brings water in the pots which are used for milking the cows. It is believed that the cattle give more milk by doing so. The villagers also feed their *goats, sheep, churi, chur and yak* well on this day early in the morning. They visit their neighbor friends and take with *them sattu, lucht bakroos of atta and manday or ghee*, which they eat and wishing each *other bhala- bhala or takday asay na (means may you be well).*

PUNAHIE

This is celebrated after the fifth day of *pareed*. The villagers make *bakroos of atta, and sattu*, and visit their fields. This festival marks the restarting of all agricultural activities which had been suspended due to heavy snowfall during winters. On this day a portion of the field is cleared by removing the snow, and is ploughed. When this is over, the villagers sit together and eat the delicacies they had brought from their homes.

SHIVRATRI

As everywhere else, shivratri is celebrated in Phalgun (February-March). Pangwal keep a fast and break it in the evening by offering puja to lord shiva. Phulan atta and potatoes are eaten but grain and salt are avoided.

SANKRANT

On Sankrant, the *lohars and the gawalays* visit every household, who give them one tablespoonful ghee and about one seer of grain. Usually grain and ghee are given in the summer, and meat is given in winter. Early in the morning on this day, members of the household worship the village deity and in the evening eat *bakroos of atta.*

LISHOO

This is the local name of *Baisakhi*, and is celebrated in *Vaisakh* (April). On this day, all the temples which were closed in winter, reopen. Villagers prepare bakroos, chapaties and other food in their houses to offer to the deities. On this day local praja mundle get together in one place and discusses the whole issue that they have taken in a year.

CHAJGI

This festival is celebrated in *puranmashi of pausa* (December-january). All members go to their fields, nearby water-heads, *dhaj, thoch and all the holy place of village with burning jagni to offer puja.* Then they assemble at a fixed place and every person brings with him two special burning jagnis which in the local dialect are called as *masharas*. One mashara each is placed before the temple of Millabhani devi, where puja is offered. Then the villagers pick up their second masharas and go to the shiv temple. At this stage, the Aryas also accompany the procession beating the drums and dhols. Here they offer puja, and then with these masharas, they return to the ground and hold great celebrations.

Later in the evening the the villagers accompanied with small stick of burning mashara, which are later thrown on a walnut or any other tree. According to them if a mashara gets struck on the tree the thrower will get a son, otherwise a daughter.

UTTAIN

This festival is celebrated in the month of *pausa* (December-January). On this day all the households to worship their ancestor. The first thing the pangwals do in the morning is sprinkle water on the backs of all the goats and sheep reared by a household in the name of the village deity. If the cattle shiver it is taken to mean that the deity is happy with the household, but if they don't, it is presumed that the deity is angry with them and a goat or sheep is sacrificed in the temple. But now a days this type of activity totally ban by government. On the day of this festival, manday and cheen are given to all the relatives and also *taken by other members of the household with walnut oil.*

BAAR

This festival comes in the last Tuesday *of pausa* (December-January). Kali devi is worshiped. Local dishes consisting of *luchis*, *halwa*, *uans* and *beer* are eaten in the evening.

Summary

The fairs and festivals are important parts of the Indian culture life. The life of Indian people revolves round the fairs and festivals.

The best way to know about the life of people of tribal people of pangi tehsil is through the study of their fairs ,festival customs and manners. The way of life of the people of Pangi tribe has been brilliantly expressed in their fairs and festivals.

This paper includes the classification of fairs and festivals of Pangi tribal tehsil of Chamba district.This paper also include that each fair and festival of Pangi tribal tehsil related with religious classification, season wise and also related with agriculture activities. All types of sacrifice ban by government.

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