

**TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL CHANGE:
A STUDY OF DISTRICT KINNAUR OF HIMACHAL PRADESH**

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Abstract

Himachal Pradesh is situated between 300-22'-40" to 330-12'-20" north latitude and 750-45'-55" to 790-01'-22" east longitudes. The altitude in the Pradesh, a wholly mountainous region in the lap of Himalayas ranges from 350 meters to 6975 meters above mean sea level. The total area of Himachal Pradesh is 55673 square kilometer which is divided into twelve administrative districts. The Kinnaur and Lahaul Spiti districts and Pangi and Bharmpur (now tehsil Bharmour and sub tehsil Holi) Subdivision of Chamba district constitute the schedule areas in the state. The tribal areas in the state have well defined administrative units. The (ITDP) Integrated Tribal Development Programme Kinnaur comprises the whole district. The present-day Kinnaur does not constitute a homogeneous group and displays significant territorial and ethnic diversity. The Kinnaur district can be divided into three territorial units to understand the territorial and ethnic diversity of the district. The main focus of this research paper is to explore the development of this tribal area and how tribal development resulted in to the social change of the tribal people.

Keywords: *Tribal, Development, Ethnic, Territorial, Diversity.*

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Received: 15.04.2020

Approved: 30.06.2020

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SOCIAL CHANGE:
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*RJPSSs 2020, Vol. XLVI,
No. 1, pp. 22-33
Article No.03*

Online available at:

*<http://rjpss.anubooks.com/>,
[https://doi.org/10.31995/
rjpss.2020v46i01.03](https://doi.org/10.31995/rjpss.2020v46i01.03)*

Introduction

Kinnaur region of Himachal Pradesh is bound on the east by the Ngari region of western Tibet. This tribal district is separated from Tibet by the Zaskar Mountains. The crest of the Zaskar Mountains forms the eastern international boundary of Kinnaur with Tibet. The great Himalaya extends from the North West to the south and the crest of the theDhauladhar constitutes the southern boundary of Kinnaur at the southeastern corner where the last two ranges merge. In the south, it separates Uttar Kashi district of Uttar Pradesh and Rohru tehsil of Shimla district from it. SrikhandDhar separates the district from Kulu and Rampur regions in the west. The general elevations of the peaks on these mountains vary between 5180 and 6770 meters and hence are covered with snow all the year-round. The Dhauladhar range has peaks ranging generally from 4877 to 5791 meters. In the north Kinnaur is separated from the Spiti region of Lahaul and Spiti district by the rivers Spiti and Pare near the international boundary with Tibet.

Between Zaskar, the great Himalaya and Dhauladhar ranges lay several valleys of varying dimensions. Among the valleys, Sutlej valley is the largest embracing both sides of the river. The general direction of this valley is northeast to southwest with its length about 140 kilometers. The next is Ropa or Shyaso or Sangnam valley formed by Ropa stream. It has the distinction of having the highest village of the region, Charang at 3600 meters. The Baspa or Sangla valley is the most beautiful in Kinnaur.

The district has a long snowy winter season from October to May and short summer from June to September. From April to May is spring and from September to October is autumn¹. The total area of this particular landmass is 6553 square Kilometers. In the rugged mountainous district, the means of communication constitute the greatest problem. The important passes in the district are Shipki, Kaurik, Khimokoul la Simthong, Ransio la, Keobrang la, Yamrang la, and Gugairang la². There was only one important road that led from Shimla and entered Kinnaur beyond Sarahan. This was the Hindustan Tibet road and was mainline of communication between Tibet and Kinnaur.

History of Kinnaur

Tradition tells that the region known as Kinnaur had been the place of abode of the legendary Pandavas for a year during their period of hiding (*Agyatvas*). Kenner's have deep roots in Indian mythology, legends, and literature and are considered as a distinct race. Winners are mentioned both with Devas and Rakshasas alike. Beside Buddhist and Jain literature, Kinnaras find mention in almost every religious text of Hindu scriptures, hymns, and mantras from time immemorial. The

land of Kinnaras at one time was supposed to lie between the source of the Ganga in the east and the Chandrabhaga River in the west³. It is also said that this land was spread between the rivers Jamuna and Sutlej⁴. To the north of it was the Southern part of Kashmir, probably the Zanskar range, which was forming the northern boundary, and the southern boundary was Dhauladhar⁵. This region may have included Rampur and Sarahan, the Shonitpur of the Puranas. It was the capital of famous Kinner king Banasur, who according to a legend like Sagara of Raghuvansa brought the Sutlej River from the lake Mansarover. It is probable that the legendary mythological Kinnerdesh was situated between 3700 and 4600 meters in the Antargiri or middle Himalayan range between Ganga and Chandrabhaga rivers⁶. In the beginning of the sixth century B.C India was divided into sixteen Janapadas. The Gandhara, Kamboja, Koshal, Mull, Vajji, Panchal, and Sakya were based in Southern Himalayas with political sway extending up to the Himalayan ranges. Among the states which flourished in the sixth century B.C the kingdom or emperors of Magadha carried their arms deep into the Himalayas. After Mauryas, Kanishka's empire extended up to the inner recesses of Himalayas. Similarly, the northern boundaries of Samudragupta's empire ran all along the high Himalayas covering that tract of the country where Kinnaur was situated. Early in the seventh century A.D. Harasha also extended its empire in the Himalayas. Thus Kinnerdesh or Kinnaur was ruled by one or other Indian empires.⁷

Under the overall lordship of the Maurya, Kushan and Gupta suzerains, Kinnaur lay parceled out among petty chief or thakurs, often named after the places. One such Thakur ruled at Kamru, who in course of time is stated to have annexed the territories of his neighboring chief and laid the foundation of Bushahr principality. All along with history till the fourteenth century, Bushahr had its independent existence. The rulers and ruled lived in perfect peace in complete isolation from the events of the plains of India or from the upheavals of beyond Kinnaur's borders with Tibet, Ladakh, and Kashmir. There must have been a loose control of the Raja of Bushahr over the region of Kinnaur. During the several centuries from the establishment of the state of Bushahr in A.D.415, people gradually attained a certain degree of prosperity. Border trade was developed and agriculture progressed. Side by side the consolidation of Bushahr state continued. In the course of time, its capital was shifted from Kamru to Sarhan and later to Rampur⁸.

Administrative Changes after 1948

Tehsildar of Chini tehsil continued to function till the formation of the district in 1960. The district originally had three subdivisions of Puh, Kalpa, and Machar

with three tehsils of Sangla, Morang, and Machar and two sub tehsils of Kalpa and Puh. In 1961 Kalpa was made a full tehsil and one sub-tehsil for the hanging valley was created. Puh was converted into a full tehsil in 1965. The district comprises ninety-five villages in all. The usual resident apparatus of the district administration has been planted here with certain modifications to suit administrative and development needs peculiar to the district and different in many respects from certain parts of Himachal Pradesh. Soon after independence, the border region of Kinnaur was administered like that of the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA). After 25 January 1971 when the state was granted a full statehood the above setup at the state headquarters and the function of various agencies in the district became the concern of general administration. Deputy Commissioner was the pivot around whom the entire administration used to resolve. He had wider administrative and financial powers than the system which was known as single line administration introduced in December 1963⁹.

Tribal Development

The Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti districts in their entirety, and Pangti and Bharmour (now tehsil Bharmour and sub tehsil Holi) Sub-Division of Chamba district constitute the Schedule Area in the state, fulfilling the minimum criterion of 50% S.T. population concentration in a C.D. (Community Development) Block. These areas have also been declared as Scheduled Area under the Fifth Schedule of the constitution by the President of India as per the Schedule Area (H.P) Order, 1975(C O 102) dated the 21st November 1975. The five IDPs are Kinnaur, Lahaul, Spiti, Pangti, and Bharmour. Except for Kinnaur which is spread over 3 C.D.Blocks, the rest of the IDPs comprises one C.D. Block each¹⁰.

Tribal Population in Himachal Pradesh¹¹

	Area (Sq.Km)	Total Popu.	SC Popu.	ST Popu.	Density Per sq.km	Sex Ratio	Sex Ratio STs	Literacy
I.Kinnaur	6,401 (27.08)	84,121	14750	48746	13	819	1065	80.00
II.Lahaul-Spiti								
1.Lahaul	6,250 (26.42)	19,107	1699	15,163	3	931	1021	74.97
2.Spiti	7,591 (32.09)	12,457	536	10,544	2	862	1010	79.76
III.Chamba								
1.Pangti	1,595 (6.74)	18,868	1246	17016	12	969	993	71.02
2.Bharmour	1,818 (7.69)	39,108	4560	32116	22	945	964	73.85
Total Scheduled Area	23655 (100)	173661	22791	123585	7	877	1018	77.10

The 5th five-year plan was approved for Rs. 157.43 crore out of which Tribal Sub-plan for the 5th plan period (1974-78) was approved for Rs.16 crore and actual expenditure was Rs.9.12 crore which gave utilization at 83%. According to the 12th five-year plan, a provision of Rs. 2052.00 crore has been made for the Tribal Sub Plan for 2012-2017. For the equitable flow of funds to the 5ITDPs, the state has evolved an objective formula based on 40% population, 20% area, and 40% relative economic backwardness of each ITDP. Based on this formula, the share of each ITDP is as under:¹²

Kinnaur	30%
Lahaul	18%
Spiti	16%
Pangi	17%
Bharmour	19%

In this state, 9% of the state plan flow has been earmarked to the tribal sub-plan. It may further be stated here that such flow, starting with 3.65% in 1974-75 to the tribal sub-plan has increased substantially. The level has reached 9% for 1993-94. A continuous monitoring of the plan is continued through reports, review meetings, and field visits. After the sub-plan gets reflected in the state budget in a single Consolidated Demand, a document, containing the complete set of schemes and the ITDP wise sectoral/scheme wise outlays and list of works is prepared by the Tribal Development Department and circulated to all the departments and their field agencies simultaneously for timely implementation of schemes.

Since agriculture is the largest industry and main occupation of the people in tribal areas of Himachal Pradesh. Out of the total geographical area of 23, 65,533 hectares, operational areas are only 39,900 hectares i.e. 1.69% owned by 34,500 farmers. The average size of holdings in tribal areas is 1.16 hectares. About 65 percent of the main workers are engaged in agriculture according to the 2001 Census.¹³ According to 12th five years plan various steps like diversification of area from traditional crop to commercial crops where irrigation potential has been created, development of rainfed areas through the watershed approach on a large scale for efficient use of the natural resource, promotion of precision farming practices through protected cultivation, Post-harvest management, and efficient marketing system, etc. are initiated in this part. The tribal region in Himachal Pradesh is mainly situated at a high altitude comprising of very high mountains. Thus the agro-climatic conditions prevailing in the tribal region of H.P. are quite suitable for the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, and other economic horticultural crops like, saffron, hops, Black Zeera,

etc. The temperate fruits mainly apple dominates the agriculture economy in ITDP Kinnaur and ITDP Lahaul. The ITDP areas of Pangri and Spiti have so far remained backward. Influenced by the economic growth in these areas, the trials of the adjoining areas have also been encouraged to take up hops cultivation in the last few years. While the production of apple has become the main source of income in Kinnaur and has changed the economic conditions of farmers very positively. The department of horticulture has adopted a strategy to practice specific fruit crops suitable for different identified pockets. Animal husbandry is an integral part of agriculture, which can be visualized from the fact that almost all tribal families have been rearing one livestock or the other. It provides additional income to the agriculturists and Sheep and goats are the main source of wool and the woollen garments to protect against the extreme winter in the tribal areas. In January 2004, The Department of Information Technology has been created to ensure the process of furthering the development of IT the state including the tribal areas of the state. All programs included in the state including tribal areas are Himachal State Wide Area Network (HIMSWAN) to create a secure close user group (CUG) Government network for the purpose of delivery of Government to Government, under National e-Governance plan(NeGP), State Data Center(SDC) has been identified as one of the cores supporting components to consolidate services, applications, and infrastructure to provide, the efficient electronic delivery of Government to Government(G2G), Government to citizen(G2C) and Government to Business (G2B) services, as per the scheme of Government of India LokmitraKendrasare being established. Tribal areas of the state are rich in tourism potential and offer a variety of attractions in the form of trekking, mountaineering, art and culture, fairs and festivals and flora and fauna. Kinnaur and Lahaul Spiti districts have a common international border with Tibet. After the relaxation of inner line restrictions, Lahaul valley has already acquired international recognition, and Spiti along with Kinnaur is on the threshold to do so.¹⁴

Considering the overall situation in the border areas of Himachal Pradesh, the Planning Commission, Govt. of India decided to extend Border Area Development Programme to Himachal Pradesh for three blocks, Kalpa and Pooh Blocks of Kinnaur district, and Spiti Block of Lahaul-Spiti district, having borders with China from 1998-99. The basic objective of the scheme is to meet the special needs of the people living in remote, inaccessible areas situated near the border. The emphasis is to be laid on schemes for employment promotion, production-oriented activities, and schemes that provide critical inputs to the social sectors.¹⁵

According to the study it has been observed that the rural development schemes have a positive impact on socio-cultural and economic development of

tribal areas. Rural development schemes also have helped in infrastructure development and have a positive impact on the non-farm sectors, SSIs, and priority sectors in tribal areas. The people of this area have rated the quality of rural development schemes as good.¹⁶

Social Structure and Social Change

Social stratification based on the hierarchy is a peculiar feature of the Kanaurasociety. Kinnaur there are two major sections of the society-Kashia and Beru, Scheduled castes, locally called Chamang and Damang. Beru is considered inferior to the Kashia or Khosla or Khash. The Khosla or the Rajput on their part are divided into three *Khels* or status groups, that is, Orang, Morang, and the Waza. Beru constitutes four distinct castes with a different hierarchical order. The order of the Rajput endogamous groups ranks the Orang as the superior most and the Wazakhel lying at the bottom with Morang or Orang comprising intermediate level. The members of Orang khel are socially, economically, politically, and religiously dominant. In comparison members of the other two keys are not as comfortably placed. However, this system is prominently dominant in Hinduism dominated areas. Throughout the Nichar and Kalpa subdivisions, the three status groups are well organized with distinguished features marked clearly. While the distinction is not clear in Pooh subdivision. Beyond Pooh, the distinction gradually blurs until the system ceases to exist altogether beyond Mangia. Apparently, it is an institution unknown to Buddhism.¹⁷In Past all these three status groups were strictly endogamous. A member of one status group was not allowed to marry into any of the other status groups. However, with the march of time, the rigidity of the rule has considerably loosened. Presently instances are galore of inter khel marriages. The intermixing however results in a deleterious effect on the status of the concerned families. In spite of constitutional directive and the law abolishing it, untouchability is still practiced in Indian society. Though it is considered in the weekend form in the towns and places especially where the concentration of population from outside the community is heavy. But it is still as stringent as in the past in remote and secluded areas. Kinnaur among Rajputs, the general restriction is that water or cooked food touched by lower castes is not used by them. During the princely regime, if Kanet inadvertently takes food touched by a person of lower caste could apply to the raja, who bade him make expiation and pay some amount of money by way of nazrana or forfeit.¹⁸These traditional restrictions are based on the caste system and have been playing their role. But after independence, the hold of caste rigidity and consequent restrictions of marriage alliances and eating is on wane though not completely extinct as yet. Despite legislation preventing untouchability, the social customs have retained it. The

Chamangs and Damages cannot mix freely with the people of other castes. There are differences among the lower classes of Kanetsand Rajputs. The Chamangs whose main occupation was connected with the removal of dead animals have of late, withdrawn they from this occupation though they still plow the fields and prepare shoes from leather obtained from the plains.¹⁹ However, these and similar other restrictions solely based on caste system and tradition have, of late, lost their rigidity, and taboos of yore are melting away in the changing milieu. It would however take some more time, maybe in the next 2/3 generations; the whole obsolete edifice would crumble down.

Polyandry is the most debated subject in the area now and opinion is not unanimous as to the usefulness or otherwise of the system. The legend of Draupadi who had husbands may have indirectly encouraged the people to adopt the system of polyandry. Old generation defends it on the grounds that it has kept the family a closely-knit entity. It has further prevented overpopulation and the subdivision or fragmentation of small agricultural holdings. It has enabled a family to derive full benefit from several sources for a proper living by way of the pooling of labor. During the days of the native rulers, the institution was directly helped and encouraged. The rulers used to put penalties on the partition of properties. In the case of movable property, a one-half share was appropriated by the state, and in the case of immovable property, official recognition was denied.²⁰ It was the adelphic polyandrous household that once dominated the kinnara society. However, presently it is fast on its way out, in the process yielding ground to more and more nuclear families. In a nuclear household, the father is the head and after his death, the authority passes to his eldest son. On the other hand in a polyandrous family, the authority passes to the next brother and to the eldest son on the expiry of all the brothers. The marital relations in the polyandrous family were not so difficult. The eldest brother, being the head of the family mostly remained out visiting places for earning. One amongst the remaining generally looked after the flocks and yet another for trade and other occupations outside the home. In practice, it is not so often that all brothers are at home at one time. Now the system has started changing. People are getting employment at their doorsteps through massive road-building projects, agricultural and horticultural development, and development works started by the district administration and their several agencies. So all brothers remain at home and this has resulted in the quarrel among them making the life of the lady of the house miserable.²¹ Thus the institution of polyandry is gradually on its way out particularly among the new generation this social practice is totally unacceptable.

Women occupy a prominent social and economic position in Kanaura society. In economic activities, women play a very vital role. They are not constrained or confined to any degree. They work hard at all the laborious chores, domestic and agricultural. It is possible that in the past when most of the men had to go on an annual trading mission to far off places with the flocks of sheep and goats, the responsibility of tending the field devolved wholly on the womenfolk and the tradition continues. In the past, they did not have any share in her parents or husband's property but recently the government has given them this right like other women of the state. However, the unfortunate and distressing phenomena such as that of selling the girl child, witnessed in other hilly regions of infanticide have been alien to the land.

According to Gazetteer of India records, the religion prevailing in Kinnaur shows the same mixed origin as their ethical peculiarities. The northern villages profess Buddhism of the Tibetan model and the in the south, Hinduism prevails. While the middle region shades off gradually from one faith into another, producing grotesque mixtures of ceremonies and beliefs. According to Gerard 'The religion of the mass of inhabitants' he wrote, 'is Hinduism, but they have no minute distinctions of caste.' Some of them profess the lama religion, 'but that properly belongs to the tartars,' he added.²² However, in Kinnaur, the original religion centered entirely on the principal village deity. It is believed that after independence and the Chinese occupation of Tibet the situation has dramatically changed. The border has been sealed and the Dalai Lama is a refugee in India. This has made some impact on people's religious beliefs. Now more and more people are tempted to believe in Hinduism. It seems, there is a shift in the religious beliefs of the people and the focus now has come round to Hinduism perhaps even in the border villages of the region.

The climate of the region is very cold and people wear woolen clothes throughout the year. The *the pang* or a woolen cap with or without *clambake* flowers is the common headwear that is used by women and men alike. The men wear woolen shirts *chamu-Kurti*, a long coat *Cuba*, and woolen pyjamas *chamusutan* mostly of grey color. Ladieswear woolen *sari Ghori* full-sleeved blouse with *choli, change* or shawl. This shawl is wrapped around the shoulders and its two ends are fastened together near the breast by means of silver hook called *digra*. Women often wrap around their waist a scarlet-colored woolen or cotton cloth of about five to eight meters in length and about a meter in width. This is called *each hang*. On the occasion of marriages, fairs, and festivals, people put on embroidered clothes in various designs and colors. However with the opening up of the area due to increased communication a channel has made an impact on the people. Now men are using

modern suits, coats, pants, shirts and other clothes used in the plains. The ladies have taken to wear *salwar* and *kurta* but the use of sarees is not seen yet. In place of the old *pony*, locally made shoes, people now are using shoes made either in plains or by the local manufacturers. However, people prefer to wear their traditional dresses on special occasions.²³

Status of the ethnic group also carries its influence into their residences. During the princely regime, the Domang, Chamang, and other lower caste people were not allowed to construct houses with high walls or of slate roofs. They were allowed to construct houses with flat roofs or at best of low slope, either of wooden planks or slates was permitted to be raised. However with the changing economic scenario, the gap is reduced, and traditional houses are replaced by the big concrete buildings all over the region. In place of cow-dung wash, now houses are generally painted with modern paints. People of Kinnaur include wheat, opla, phapra, barley, and pulses like peas, black peas, beans, mash, and Masur. People also include vegetables in their food and relish meat. Drinking of liquor is quite common in the district. However now most of the foodstuffs are readily available in the region because of good transportation facilities. Rituals observed in this region are mostly the same as we see in the plains. However, in the border regions, there are two ceremonies that are different and peculiar. These are khakis or bedhai and bose. In bedhai, all the clan people come and congratulate the parents with some presents. The bose function is held between one and three years of childbirth. In this local deity is invited to bestow blessings. On this occasion, a big feast is arranged by the parents and all those participating in the dances and music on that day. There are four forms of marriages in the region. The standard marriage is known as *janekang*. This is properly managed by the middle man. The other form of marriage is *dimtangohis* or *beginning-hachis* or *justice* or love marriage. In this system boy and girl decide to get married and the boy brings the girl to his house secretly. The third form of marriage is known as *dub dub* or *churches*. In this form boy either alone or with the help of friends captures the girls either from fair or from the farm or carries her to his house. Later standard form of ceremony is observed. The fourth type of marriage is known as har. In this form, a married lady is taken away by another man after making the payment of expenditure incurred in the marriage by the former man. Dowry is unknown in the region, but presents are given to the bride by her parents.²⁴

The old isolation of the region is now broken by a network of road communications in the region. Besides a national highway that connects Kalka to

Kaurik a distance of about 441 kilometres, which runs through the district, there are several feeder roads and bridle paths which connect almost every village to the national highway. The new centers are coming up and markets like Chango, Puh, Patwari, Karchham, Tapri, Nako, etc. are gaining importance by virtue of their situation on the National Highway No. 22. Education has received greater attention after independence and now there are as many as schools as the villages. Even college has been opened up at ReckongPeo. However, with economic prosperity people are also moving out for good education. Medical facilities are now available in most of the villages. Besides Vaidyas, primary health centers, maternity centers, and dispensaries are now available to the people. At the apex district hospital at Reckongpeo is functioning with all modern equipment. Now several hydro-electric stations in the region are changing the economy considerably. The prominent among them are Karcham-Wangtu, Shongtong-Wangtu, Thopan-Patwari, Jangi-Thopan, Bhaba project, and Nathpa-Jhakri, etc. are helping in the development of the district. Now all the villages are being electrified irrespective of tough terrain.

The changes brought about by the formation of the district and opening of communication are many and far-reaching. Some old practices, superstitions, faiths, and beliefs are gradually giving way to reason and rationality. There is no doubt that the region has developed visibly, however, there is further potential especially in the field of tourism which needs to be exploited, horticulture and hydro-power, etc. Natural resources are yet to be exploited fully. With the advance of education and democratization, it is expected that understanding will develop more rapidly than before. Now the tribal people are joining the national mainstream in all matters as equal partners.

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