CHAPTER 2

CULTURAL HERITAGE OF DOGRAS

2.1. Richness of The Dogra Tradition :

(a) Social : The ancient Dogra race which had settled in and around the forests and along the slopes of the mountains and the valleys, remained to a large extent untouched by the outer influences. Their sheltered life gave them a chance to shape their culture and traditions to flourish, excepting in certain pockets, where inner dissentions and feuds brought sudden disruptions, and impact of external influences shattering their peace, faith and social homogeneity. However, the traditions did not break altogether, and a continued strain of social philosophy and cultural richness remained un-broken. There is not a written authentic record of the social or cultural patterns adopted and preserved by the war like classes of the Dogras, yet the traditions, which have been carried on, even by the people, remotely living from each other, speak about the richness of the Dogra culture, its customs, beliefs and social relationship. These are profusely expressed in the songs and rituals of the Dogras. Some scholars (i, ii) are engaged in unravelling the traditional glory and the past history of the Dogras with the help of existing cultural features.

The old cultural picture continues to be preserved by the people living in the rural areas and the far-flung settlements un-touched by the modern influences, which have bent and destroyed much of social and cultural life of the people in the cities. They cannot escape interaction with other classes and external influences, which in the present time spread very fast. The joint family system continues to be operative in the rural

sector, and the emotional and sentimental ties continue to be very strong. This contributes to the harmonious and homogenous character of the social fabric. All this is also reflected in their vocational and domestic life.

The festive occasions spring out of mutual concern and sharing of joys and sorrows. Hence their songs and dances, pilgrimages, marriages and rituals always become a collective affair. The agricultural character of the rural sector has an economic significance. The family is a close knit unit, each member becoming indispensable factor in the farm economy.

Ceremonies connected with child birth: The birth of the male child in the family is an occasion of rejoicing, although after child birth brief ceremonies of some type are common everywhere, which include anointing, singing etc. The relations, neighbours and friends offer congratulations and blessings for the new born. The parental or the maternal aunt approaches the home, where the infant is born, reciting the songs called Vadhaiya (Bihaiya) viz:

"बाल जमेखा गोरिये, जे किह मंगना सो मंग"
"Bāḷa Jamēyā Gorīyē Jay Kish Manṅā so Maṅg

"मैं के मंगना ढोला, तैनी खूए जिहड़ी नल्थ"
"Main Kay Mangna Tohla, Laenī Khue Jiddi Nuth"

(Bride gave birth to a male child. The delighted husband asks for a boon. Excitedly she says— “Give me a nose-ring as large as a well.”)

Since the family is in a state of sutak, a sort of quarantine, the guests are offered ‘Gurh’ (mollases), since every other eatable is considered as contaminated. Three weeks after the child birth, the well wishers bring pots of milk as a token of love and these are returned with a little of dry ginger or concoction of ginger. This has become almost a ritual although the scientific reason could be to neutralize the contaminating effect of ‘Sutak’. The barber, water carrier (Jheers), blacksmith and carpenter constitute important social factors.

As a ritual the woman from the barber’s family makes a geometrical design with different colours and flour on the ground on the fifth day of the birth of a child and on this a small ‘Chowki’ (wooden bench) is placed to seat the mother of the new born baby, and she is helped to dress her hair and complete the toiletting process. This day is termed as ‘Panyab’. On the same day the infant is given its name. It is customary for the people to engage the services of the family priest. At the end of the third week, strings of white or yellow cotton called ‘Sutra’, along with other gifts like clothes are received from the parents, the mother and the infant are neat and clean now onwards. The infant gets clothes and a bracelet of cotton strings to which are tied small bells called ‘Dodnu’. The child is also given a waist-cord of black colour called ‘Karootni’ and a milk container like a spouted jug. All these articles are brought by the maternal uncle of the new born child. The process of providing clothes to the infant continues upto head shaving ceremony (Mundan). It is the barber woman who bathes the child and helps in putting on the clothes. ‘Gurh’ (hardened mollases) is distributed on the occasion in thanks giving to the family god. The infant and the mother sit on a small wooden platform and are given ‘Panch-gavye’— “a mixture of milk, curd, butter, cow-dung and urine of a calf, to purify themselves.” Several gifts are then offered to the child and

(45) The period of ‘Sutak’ is eleven days for the members of the family, twenty one days for the parents of the new born and forty days for the mother. During this period the entire family is restricted to perform religious activities, to offer tributes and to offer food to others. Songs like Bidhaian/Bihaian are sung, example of which will be taken up while discussing musicology.

* Manusamriti: Refer 14th Chapter, 11th shaloke, page 212.
The other important ritual is **Anna-Prashan** (tasting of food) for the first time by the six month old child. Cereals are introduced to the diet of the baby.

**The Head Shaving** (Mundan) is another ritual and particular religious spots are chosen for this purpose, for example, the Tawi, the Mansar lake and the Cichi Mata temple near Samba in Jammu. It is normally in the first or third year after the child is born that head shaving is considered necessary by the Dogras. The child is taken in a procession and all the relatives move on singing songs and beating drums to the temple of the family deity or the suitable place decided upon for the purpose. On the bank of the Tawi, there are sacred places dedicated to the Bhair-Nag (Snake God). The Mansar lake is also consecrated to the memory of the “Naga” (Snake deity). This ritual is traditionally important. After the head shaving is done, the child and the mother both are given yellow clothes to wear. There is also a tradition of providing white or red clothes to the baby.

Among the socio-religious ceremonies in the Dogra people one can hold thread-ceremony called ‘Yagnyopavit  ’as the most significant. Though the Brahmin class must wear the sacred thread quite early in the child-hood, other castes wear it on the occasion of marriage. According to the set traditions, thread ceremony is observed in the seventh, ninth, eleventh or thirteenth year of age of the male child. The shaving of the head is compulsory at this occasion. The boy is given a yellow waist cloth to wear and advised to propagate religion like a ‘mandarin’ and as he moves out of the sight, he is searched out and brought back with some persuasion. On his return women sing songs and celebrate the occasion. Among some classes the boy has his ear pierced so that he can wear ‘ananti’— a small ear-ring.
The marriage ceremony is observed according to the vedic traditions around sacred fire with chanting of the holy verses (mantras). The Dogras have included certain peculiar rituals that go with the marriage ceremony. For example, five days preceding the marriage day, a ritual known as ‘Karyae’ is observed. The mother of the bride-to-be or any other woman in case the mother is a widow, makes a ‘Chulha’ (fire place) with clay and a proper worship is gone through. The gods and family gods are worshipped, a little earlier that day and then the dishes are cooked and distributed and marriage songs are sung. The bride or the bride groom are restricted from going out of their homes particularly from crossing the bridge to avoid any mishap. Even the clothes are not to be changed. Traditionally, this period before the wedding day is called ‘Mangra’ or ‘gandian’.

On the day or a day preceding the wedding day, an expiating ritual is observed. This is called ‘Sant’. The parents of the would be bride or bride-groom have to worship the family deity. This is followed by ‘Greh-Shanti’ which means calming down the planets and gods. The bride or the bride-groom is given a seat and oil is poured on the head. The barber or the barber woman takes the concerned bride or the bride-groom to the bath and help them in anointing the body (application of butna). The women sing joy-songs on this occasion.

"वाह वाह बुरना कटोरे दा, बाह वाह मेलदियां दो जनियां" 
"Wā Wā Butānā Katórey Dā, Wā Wā Maleṇdiān Do Janiān"

"आमो सामनियां ते सिकियां भैनारियां।" 
"Aamō Sameniān Te Sakiān Bhaināriān।"

(How fine and colourful is the Butna (anointing paste) of the bowl. The two women applying it on the body of the bride or bride-groom are the real sisters facing each other).
The maternal uncle sways thrice a small pot filled with water around the bridegroom’s head, and then pours out water on the ground, while the women spray out water with mango leaves on the maternal uncle to ward off evil; he offers some coins to the bride or the bride-groom wishing good fortune. Women rejoice singing songs called ‘Bardey’ or ‘Sithnian’ suited to the occasion.

“मामा बारे भरेओ, मामा बारे भरेओ
“Māmā Bārey Pareho, Māmā Barey pareho
मामा के के दान करेड़, मामा कन्या दान करेड़।”
Māmā Ke Ke Dān Karendā, Māmā Kaneȳ Dan Dān Karendā.”

[The maternal uncle must take the water pot holding around bride-groom’s head. What offerings does the maternal uncle make? He offers the peerless bride (Kaneȳ Dan) in true traditional spirit.]

Thereafter the maternal uncle lifts the bride or bride-groom on his shoulder or lap and takes her or him to the ‘mandap’ (marriage platform). The sacrificial fire glows with sacred verses and is attended by the parents of the bride or bride-groom at their respective houses. Specially prepared dishes offered to them are called ‘Lareyai’. Till the time ‘Sêhra’ (the decorating crown) is worn by the bride-groom, he remains dressed in yellow or crimson clothes. He is given a new attire by the maternal uncle to change into. He wears a turban with Sêhra tied on it. The women sing songs:

“सेराह लादे लाड़े गी गरमी आई, फलता जोले नाई, बेलां विदे बाई।”
“Sêhra laide Lāde Gī Garmī Aai, Pakhā Chohley Nāi, Bêlā Vîde Bâi.”

(The bride-groom sweats as he is being turbaned. The barber fans to cool him, and the bride-groom’s brothers swing some money around his head and pass on the same to the barber for his services)

After that a matured lady wards off the evil by moving coconut and some money round the head of the bride-groom. Thereafter relatives and friends offer money to the bride-groom as a token of pleasure and honour. Women also sing songs during this ceremony, called ‘Tamole’.
The bride-groom with a sword in his hand is taken to mount the mare. The wedding process now starts with all grandeur and sounding of trumpet, drums and bursting of crackers. The barber, carries water and the black-smith carries the packages containing gifts and both have necessarily to accompany the barat (the wedding party).

The Dogras observe certain customs at the time of starting of marriage party. The bride-groom’s brother’s wife applies antimony to the bride-groom's eyes, his mother applies swab of cotton to clean out the face, the sister takes lentils (broken grams) to the mare and decorates the harness of the mare. The mother must ward off evil eye on the bride-groom by throwing some coins over his head. The following song is sung by the women—

"बर्दो बर्दो जानी अबज बनी, बलगो बलगो बाबल औं देओ, "
"Bardo Bardo Jâni Abaj Bani; Balgo Balgo Bâbal Aun Deo,
बाबल आवे, जानी अबज बनी."
Bâbal Aavae, Jâni Abaj Banae.”—and so on.....

(Proceed, proceed, the marriage party looks grand; wait, just wait, let the father come.)

The ladies also sing songs called 'ghori', as the bride groom mounts the mare, such as—

सेरा पेहन के बीर घोड़ी चढ़ेया
Sehra pehn ke veer kho di chhdeya

Soon after the bride-groom has left along with the barat, celebrations continue as per tradition. The women dance, sing songs and play tricks through out the night. The performance is called Jâganât/Dhamachra.
The following lines of the songs on this occasion are worth note.

"अज नच्चे गी भई नच्चे गी नच्चे गी मुढ़े दी मा
"Aj nache gi bhāi nache gi nache gi munde di maa

नच्छे तमाशा दरसे गी, भई दरसे गी मुढ़े दी मा।
Nach tamāshā dase gi, bhāi dasi gi munde di maa"

(Today the mother of the bride-groom will dance. She will dance and cut capers. How excited will all feel!)

Next morning the mother and the aunt of the bride-groom perform roles of bride and the bride-groom to herald the return of the married couple. The parrots made of wood temporarily fixed on the arches by the threshold signify good omens. They must be given some cooked rice as if they were living birds.

The bride on the other hand, in her own house, has to wear a single crimson cloth at the time of 'Sant'. She is given ornaments, especially nose-ring and 'Kaleera' by her maternal uncle. When the bride-groom is seen approaching, the barber blows the long piped trumpet called 'Kehl.' The maternal uncle and the father of the bride step forward to welcome and embrace the maternal uncle and the father of the bride-groom respectively. Gifts are also exchanged on this occasion, This is called 'Milnee.' The Dogras present a peculiarity in observance of this ritual.

The barber spreads a red cloth on the ground. The maternal uncle and the father from both sides touch this cloth with the right toe and garland each other. Some money is taken full circle around the head of each other as a mark of warding off the evil. This is known as Banda (or) Varna.

The bride-groom comes away from the main party and walks towards the room called Loa-Ghar, where he is offered a specially prepared dish called 'Gheur' with curd and sugar. The baraties are properly served and then the bride-groom has to move

(46) 'Kaleera' is a bracelet made of cowries and the coconut cut in half passed through a string of red colour.
towards the bride's house along with barber and priest. At this stage the bride's mother pours a little oil at the door step or threshold. A young un-married girl comes forward with a pitcher or pot of water and the barber woman holds a plate with incense and butter lamp on it which she sways around his face. Now the path is clear for the bride-groom to proceed towards the marriage enclosure (Mandap). He is joined by the bride and has to worship the family deity of her household. After that she goes back into the house and the bride-groom attends the ritual. The bride is given a make up by the barber woman and is dressed in the clothes offered by her maternal uncle. This seems to be trace of the maternal domination of the Hindu society. The ladies sing the following notable songs:

"इस बेल्ली बुन बुन जागे जी, राजे धर्मे दा बेला"
"Is Belae Kūn kūn Jagae Ji, Raže Dharmae Dā Belā"

"इस बेल्ली बाबल जागे जी, जेदी कुडी ऐ कुआरी"
"Is Belae Bābal Jagae Ji, Jaedi Kuđi ae Kuārī." 

(Who are the persons waking now? It is indeed an auspicious hour. The virgin's father is broad awake; the marriage-tie he has to make)

After completing the marriage rites inside the room, the bride is moved out of the room for final marriage rites. During that interval the members from the bride-groom's side present clothes and ornaments to the bride, which are also shown to every body present there, as a matter of tradition. Women from bride's side sing songs on the occasion called 'Barasuhi':

"खोलौ बरसोई, खोलौ बरसोई,
"Kholo barāsuhī, kholo barāsuhī.

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While the bride is about to leave the parent’s home, the women sing songs as they give her a tearful send off. The songs are touching and deeply pathetic (Doli songs):

"Enain mehlên de bizh bizh wê babal dôla nein langdâ
Do ittàn putai degay, dhiyêa ghar ja apne."

("Father, the palanquin does not pass through the doors of these castles. "We shall remove two bricks, daughter, go to your home.")

There is no doubt that the traditions and religious ceremonies adopted by the Dogras are basically the same as per the Puranic or Vedic philosophy. However, certain peculiarities have crept in over the time and under the local conditions, they have taken deep roots. For example, the bride-groom’s feet are washed with milk soon after the marriage ceremony is over. This is done as a token of honour. The scientific reason may be to relieve the tiredness of the person and to counter the effect of germs etc.

When the bride-groom returns along with the bride, he must stay for a while in ‘Loa-ghar’ and on entering the precincts of the husband’s home the bride is given a welcome with ‘Aarti’ (swaying the butter lamp in a plate around the face) followed by devi pooja (worship of the deity), which is a compulsory observance. The mother-in-law fills the hands of the bride with a mixture of sugar and rice called ‘Gullar’. This is followed by what is called ‘Masani’ in Dogri. This is an occasion when the bride is decorated with ornaments, dress etc. and gifts from the in-law’s side are offered to her.

A practice followed by the Dogras is related to guiding her and the bride-groom to a small puddle, specially created (with cow-dung) under the tamarind tree, and filled
with milky water around which the bride moves three or four times and then both have to retrieve a ring. This brings a lot of fun and is very much enjoyed by the onlookers. This is known as 'Raghdey' rounds—a peculiar Dogra tradition. On the sides of this puddle, hotchpotch is cooked and left at different places on the pieces of fried loaves of bread called ‘Babrus’ for the birds as their share to eat.

The bride is given no share in the work of household. It is conducted by the mother-in-law until the ‘Panyas’ ceremony is over. ‘Panyas’ is known as worship of the water god at the well or spring or river. Peepal tree is particularly worshipped by moving round it four times.

According to the Hindu way of life the last rites are both social and religious in character and must conform to the said practice. Among the Dogras if a really old man passes away, the cortege moves to the ‘burning ghat’ with trumpets blowing and drum beating. The relatives fan the dead body with ‘Chanvar’—a bunch of peacock feathers in token of respect. In absence of any available device, an olive branch serves the purpose. Over the dead body are thrown some coins, coloured powder, corn flowers, cotton and rose water. All these things are called ‘Bareer’.

Groups of people including the barber, water carrier, and artisans, drum beaters and close relations like parents of the daughter-in-law or son-in-law follow the cortege and with banners in hand women masquerade all along the path. This is called taking out of ‘Tadd’ in Dogri.

(b) Religious: The religious life of Dogras has historical importance of some kind. In the process of evolution of any society, traditions and customs undergo changes and the basic tenet is left unchanged. As in the Aryan periods, the worship of fire, the sun, the wind, the rain, water and the elements forms an essential faith. This has led to the worship of gods, mother-earth, Nag devta (the snake deity), family god, the saints and the martyrs, and pirs etc.; who are remembered annually. They preside over festivals and functions at the assigned posts and places. For example, the snake god is
believed to live in water-sheds, springs, lakes or rivers, and the family deity's temple is built on a hill top. Goddesses also have a temple on hill top or caves, such as 'Bahu Fort' for the goddess 'Kali'.

Seasonal festivals are observed to mark the occasion. Often pilgrimages are arranged over a set number of days such as 'Kailash yatra' in Bhaderwah. Preparation of such prayers is known as 'Jatra' in Dogri. Traditionally sacrifice of an animal is made at the site of these places of worship, such as, offering a goat at 'Sarthal Devi' a site near Kishtwar. Sacrifice of goat has been replaced by offering a coconut, as at the temple of 'Sukrala Devi' in Billawar, the pilgrims proceed beating the drum, blowing the pipe or trumpet and other instruments called 'Turhi, Narsingha, flute, ghadyal etc. The pilgrims carry an iron staff, iron chain, peacock feathers at the head of the party. Basically the pilgrims take a round of the village and then march to the site of worship and sing what is called 'Karks'. Some of the devotees dance and are completely lost in the meditative steps while others go on singing hymns. Sacrificial fire is burnt and animal sacrifice is also performed to complete particular religious observances, which are generally held at the site of hills or banks of the lakes viz. Mansar lake, Kailash kund, Bas kund, 'Sarthal Devi' (Kishtwar), 'Sankri Devta' of (Panchari, district Udhampur). Dehra-Da-Tala (Tehsil Doda), etc. The temples of Bhair Naga are erected on the banks of the rivers— the Tawi, the Ujjh, the Ravi, the Chenab, and the jataras are performed throughout the day and night on special occasions by the devotees and pilgrims from various sides. The mini temples are made of wood and cone like a pongra (a type of Budha temple). Gugehal* and Gusetan** are typically known for inclusion in the ceremonial worship in such temples.

*Gugehel : 'The activity starts with jatar (singing hymns and karks) at the seat of the family deity (Gugga chauhan in particular). The party then proceeds to another place of the same deity in the village, with peacock feathers in the hands and the image of the deity on the head, where the same activity of jatar is repeated. Next morning the party returns.

**Gusetan : It is also pronounced as gusetan. It is a yajena or Mcghs, Dooms, Blacksmiths etc. Devotional songs saturated with story music are sung on this occasion.
The life of the Dogras is so intimately connected with deities and as such their respective festivals are celebrated every year on specific days. The old tradition of worship of the snake deity started by the Nagas in the ancient times has remained unchanged till now. For example, people celebrate the occasion of Nag Panchami during July-August. People carry a pot of milk and water to sprinkle at the site of Naga temple and mound of the snake called ‘Barmi’ in local dialect to propitiate and seek the blessings of the snake god so that no body dies of snake bite. Some mixture of milk and water taken home is sprayed over the threshold and the arch of the door-way where a band of red cloth with the image of the white coiled snake has been formed and the worship is completed by offering flowers, incence and tilak (paste of lead oxide and ghee or water). Parsadam, comprising of rice cooked in milk is distributed. It is believed that by due offerings and worship the snake remains subdued, and prosperity is ensured. On the solemn day of Nag ‘Panchami’ milk bath is also given to the image of the snake engraved or embossed on the slab lying inside the water tank or spring into which some milk is also poured. The goldsmiths, chhimbas and mahajan (the people of trading class) especially of Ramnagar (district Udhampur) also go to the spring for worship of snake god during the month of ‘sharawana’ (the month of August) on a sunday. Similarly Naga Cheodash or Anant cheodash is observed. After proper worship silver armlet looking like a coiled snake is worn. The folk songs related to the worship of the snake god are no more extant and the ceremonies are confined to recitation of mantras and other customs only. In earlier days gathering of people on Naga-Panchami might have been associated with singing of some related songs and karks, but now it has gone into oblivion.

Shiv Ratri is the most important religious fair of the Hindus, and the worship of Lord Shiva wearing the snake round his neck is performed with great reverence. In fact the snake god remains present almost at all temples standing by the side of rivers, tanks and springs. The people make a shivalinga (phallus)—‘a symbol of Nagas,’ out of

the clay obtained from a ‘burmi’ (a mound raised by a snake). Karks of ‘Shiv-vivah and praise of Lord Shiva are discussed in the relevant chapter.

Ahoi Ashtami, commonly known as ‘Suttu-Buttu Ashtami’ in local dialect in the month of October-November is another occasion of snake worship. The people make a disc-like fried loaf with impression of coiled snake on both the sides. It is placed on a wooden bench (chowki) on which some geometrical designs and margins in different colours are filled with the form of the snakes. It is worshipped by the members of the family.

There is also a tradition of worshiping the cow on ‘Gopal Ashtami’ the eighth day of luminous fortnight. The Dogras garland a cow and a calf, and offer kneaded flour with a little salt and butter spread over it, and thus, worship the cow, Bachhdawa and Darubri are the well known examples of the worship of a cow with fruits and flowers on the river bank.

There is also a mention of ‘Goverdhana puja’ (worshipping the cattle wealth) in Bhagwat Puran which runs down through the Mahabharata period to our day. However, celebrating the auspicious day of birth of lord Krishna as well as Narsingha (the god who was fighting against the infidels) is well known. On the 27th December every year, a regular ceremony to pay homage to lord Narsingha is observed and Khichri along with curd and butter are distributed after the yagaye (sacrificial fire).

Twice in a year nine auspicious days called Navratras are observed with full devotion, and the devotees worship the goddess Durga. Barley is sown in pots and when fully sprouted in nine days, the sacred barley pots are consecrated in the river after proper worship and small girls are also worshipped as a symbol of worshipping the mother goddess. For the whole night the devotional songs are sung, the activity is called 'Jagrata'.
Fairs and festivals: The Dogra land is blessed with a number of sacred springs and caves, with long traditions of worship and there are festivals associated with all these. The devotees travel a long distance to these places and feel gratified by taking holy dip in the springs, lakes or rivers, and sitting down to worship the presiding deity. For example in the month of March–April there is a pilgrimage to Parmandal on the fair of “Chetar Chaudhi”; in the month of June, hold pilgrimage to Sudh Mahadev on Ashar purnima (full moon). Here the well known singers of typical variety of Dogri folk-music called ‘Bhakh’ display their talent throughout day and night; in the month of December-January, comes the change in equinox called ‘Utrayn’ in local dialect, and in the month of January, the festival of Lohri is celebrated. Similarly, Basant panchami, in the month of February-March; and Parbodhani Akadshi’ the first day of luminous fortnight, in the month of November are the illustrations of tree worship which has a great ecological significance.

In short the life and beliefs of the Dogras have remained intimate with nature and as such fair and festivals have been linked with seasons, cattle, plants, water, sky, fire, corn fields, birds and animals. It is interesting to find that a very deep sense of maintaining ecology has been cultivated in life, worship and other pursuits of life.

(c) Chivalrous Richness in Dogra life:

The Dogra land has contributed to the heroic deeds described in songs and tales of great warriors and their expeditions. Since most part of the inhabited area is arid and mountainous, the people are hardy and capable of surmounting difficulties and facing odds. This has perhaps added to the heroic virtues of the warrior class. Even the poor toiling masses inherit these virtues, and their stories of valour add to the great traditions of the Dogra people. For the most part the Dogras have chosen to serve in the army and wait for an opportunity when they can prove their valour. However, this may be maintained that frequent invasion and encroachment on their lands created the necessity to keep in warlike readiness to meet any eventuality and this made them a fighting race.
The periods of epics are full of incidents showing that the local chieftains and their lieutenants rose to meet a powerful adversary or feudal lord, who had ambitions of gaining ascendency over them. The story of Bhairang fighting against the invading forces of Indra, as recorded in the Rig Veda, is a proof of such chivalrous deeds. The historical events concerning the hard and bold expeditions of Caucasians, Gurkhas (of Nepal), Kazaks (of Khas), Pathans (of Kabul) and Dogras (of dugger) constitute the glorious traditions of the fighting race.

“The Dogra chieftains have often fought against the Khokhars of the north western Panjab, as soon as the central Government showed signs of weakness or sloth. The central government of Sindh or Delhi often engaged them to suppress incursions and rebellions.”

“The records of the exploits of Timur Lane present the accounts of the bravery of the Dogra warriors.”

The scholars agree in holding the view that due to the abundance of beasts in forest land and valleys the Dogra people had to adopt an aggressive and tough attitude and it helped them in keeping the traditions of valour at all costs.

The extensive use of weapons and the traditions of worshipping the weapons as revealed by the engravings and stone images, excavated in different parts of the land go to explain the war like qualities of the Dogras. The stone images and engravings of fighting gods are mostly installed by the side of a spring or under a tree.

The custom of tying a red cord (token of protection ‘Raksha’) round the wrist of the brother by the sister or the way in which the warriors are worshipped and their

weapons offered after due worship, are proofs of chivalry-cult among the Dogras, as also the popularity of duels and wrestling contests shows the interest of the people in admiring the chivalrous.

The Dogras have liked to promote body building and adopt the practice of taking exercise. In different festivals and fairs there are certain items engaging contests and duels, and the promoters take pride in sponsoring them.

The chivalrous chieftains are held in high esteem and they are praised like one would sing hymns and eulogies of a saint or god. Such eulogies are called ‘Karks’ in Dogri. The famous Karks are those of Baidnag, Mandlik (Gugga Chowhan) and Baghan etc. Such of great warriors who are remembered for military exploits and cannot reach the stature of saint are praised in folk-songs which are called ‘Bars’ in local dialect. The famous instances are Raja Mal Dev, Mian Diddo, etc. The folk-songs also contain heroic adventures of the decoits and dare-devil youth similar to the songs about Robin-Hood. The famous ones are Dharmoo, Langeh, Baldev Tapaha etc.

Admiral S.N. Kohli says that 'the Dogras' contribution to fighting forces of our country has been outstanding for many centuries and their bravery, doggedness and loyalty is a legend". 53

2.2. Features of Dogra Culture and Belief:

The Dogra culture is an ancient offshoot of the Aryan civilization. The various tribes viz; chhimbas, paernās, sansis, batwāls, gujjars etc. which occupied certain pockets in the uplands and low lands had certain peculiar style of living, beliefs, rites and customs. Over a period of time there grew an interaction with other communities and left some impact on the culture as a whole. Communities comprising Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jhewars, Dooms etc. passed a tradition which in an integrated form has contributed to the richness of our Dogri culture. The characteristics of religion have gone deep into the culture of the land. Naturally, some very peculiar conventions and beliefs have become distinguishing attributes of the culture.

The people believe in good and bad spirits, in transmigration of soul; expiating the disturbed and distressed souls; offerings made to keep the spirits and gods calm. Similarly, there are the beliefs that the departed souls not properly remembered or insulted in the rites often get degraded. The degradation of the spirits may also be due to suicide, self-immolation, (or) accidental death. The wayward spirits of the persons meeting a tragic death are supposed to harass the passers by or remote settlements. To keep them in check, people take the help of magicians and jogis. Some people make an image of such souls and calm them with ceremonial worship and offerings at the site particularly chosen for installation of such spirits. The beliefs are wide spread about teasing spirits who torment the subjects until they are expiated in a particular way. For not doing this they are supposed to cause hysteria or madness. The jogis are adept in controlling the spirits they have tried and trapped on cremation grounds or grave yards. Similarly, the distracted spirit of women dying in child birth have to be calmed because they are supposed to have become witches and follow madly to trouble the passers by in their vicinity.

Again if a bachelor dies, his relatives have to remain watchful throughout the night in the cremation ground, so that the jogis or magicians may not escape with the
particular bones of the dead body. It is believed that the jogis, prepare a fine powder
of the bones of dead body to be administered to the person they want to turn insane
or possessed. Sooner or later, the person they offered sweet dish mixed with the
powder shows the symptoms and victim is supposed to be under the spell of ‘Ghost’
called ‘Masān’ in Dogri dialect. This is a kind of black art prevalent in the Jammu
region especially in the villages. This is commonly called ‘Jariān’. The benevolent
jogies are engaged to drive out the ‘masān’ by arranging a process called ‘Chowki’ in
local dialect, the mention of which will be made, when its musicology is discussed.

People have created souls, spirits and gods in all those factors, which determine
their peace and prosperity, health or wealth. Thus there is rain god, the god of thunder
bolt, small-pox goddess etc. "A particular tribe of jogies known as Sarsali people are
believed to control storm, flood, rain or hail storm. The sarsali tribes-man holds a
scythe in his hand and recites incantation to drive away the storm to the forests".54

The Dogras are staunch believers of shagun (omen), e.g. if on going out of the
home, a cat cuts across the way, it is taken to be a bad omen. The beliefs of the people
can be fantastic, some times leading to superstition. For example; (i) A journey to a
hill on Tuesday and Wednesdays is not free from hazards and troubles. Some people go
to the extent of saying,

"मंगल बुध जो जाईये पाहइ, जिती बाजी आईए हार"

"Mangal budh jo jaiyae phaai, jitti baji aaye har"

(Travelling towards hills on Tuesdays and Wednesdays means losing a game.)

(ii) The tree is supposed to be the night shelter of ‘Jogan’ (evil spirit), and staying
or sleeping under the tree at night is not free from evil effect. (iii) If it rains on
Saturday and continues till Sunday, it is believed that a full week’s rain is certain (iv)
A maternal uncle with the nephew or niece will not stay together when the lightning

flashes in the skies, as it may kill one of them. Those who qualify this belief refer to Kansa— the maternal uncle of lord Krishna, who striking his niece to death, found the infant change into lightning. (v) The farmers believe that by offering or selling milk of the cow or buffalo, that has recently given birth to the calf, there could be the danger of blood passing through the udders or cause pain in the teats. Similarly some birds are associated with some supernatural spirit, and the people believe in the tribes keeping informed of the good or bad omens. For example, a cawing crow on the roof is a signal that a guest is most likely to drop in. Similarly the owl’s quaint hoot is a bad omen, taken as death of somebody in the locality.

With the advancement of civilization, education and science, the age-old superstitions, belief in witchcraft, black magic or deep rooted fears of evil and shadows of spells have gradually dwindled, giving rise to new values of life. There is an evolution in respect of logical and analytical approach to the problems of life and society, yet these superstitions exist even today.