CHAPTER VI

THE PANGWAL SCHEDULED TRIBE

Pangwal is a generic term. Inhabitants of the Pangi Tehsil of Chamba District of Himachal Pradesh are known as Pangwal. The Pangwal community has been declared as a Scheduled Tribe by the Central Act 31 of 1966. As we will see in the following lines that Pangi is one of the most tough and rugged area in the Himachal Pradesh which remains cut off for more than six months a year from the outside world. The people of the region because of their geo-physical setting and their isolation from the main stream of the national life represent the fantastic way of life, particularly the marriage customs which are unheard of in any other community in Himachal Pradesh.

Geo-Physical Setting:

The home land of Pangwal, the 'Pangi,' is a Tehsil of the Chamba District of Himachal Pradesh which is situated between north latitude 30°, 10' and 33° 13' and east longitude 75° 45' and 77° 33', in the lap of Himalayas having an area of 6528 sq. km.¹ 'Pangi'

constitutes one fourth of the total area of the Chamba District. The Mid-Himalaya or the Pangi range, divides the district into two large sections of unequal size and severs those from each other to such an extent that even in summer the inter-communication between the two parts is difficult. The smaller section on the northern side, called Pangi and Chamba Lahul, is completely isolated from the outside world during the winter season. This region was considered so tough that during the times of the princely regime the state official proceeding to 'Pangi' on duty was granted a special allowance known as 'funeral expenses,' as his return was not considered a certainty.\(^2\)

Prior to 1975, Chamba Lahul was included in the 'Pangi' sub- tehsil (as it was then). But in 1975 Pangi has been re-organised and the 4 Panchayat circles, viz. Tindi, Udaipur, Triloknath and Mayor Nulah, commonly known as Chamba Lahul, has been transferred to Lahul—Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh.

The 'Pangi' valley is surrounded by Jammu and Kashmir in the north and north west, Lahul—Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh.

---

Himachal Pradesh in the east and by Bharmour and Churah Tehsils of Chamba District in the south.

The region lies in the Chandra Bhaga valley or the Chenab valley. The river Chenab enters into the region from Lahul-Spiti and leaves at Sansari Nullah bordering the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The Chenab river throughout the whole of its course in the territory flows not below 7000 feet above sea level at any point.

Pangi valley is remarkable in its rugged grandeur and austere beauty. The scenery is sublime and imposing. It is surrounded by high mountain ranges. The lowest of the passes on which the Pangi Tehsil is connected by direct traffic with the rest of the district is about 14328 feet high, while the highest is 16441 feet above the sea level. In all there are five well known passes for such direct traffic namely Sach, Darati, Chaini, Kalicho and Chopia. These passes get closed up by snow during most part of the winter season which continues for about 6 months a year. Thus, the valley remains cut off during the very large part of the year. Even during the summer, means of communication are still extremely difficult.

The whole region is remarkably mountainous which are piled one on another and finally attaining the
height well above 21000 feet far beyond the line of eternal snow. But all is not rugged sublimity and naked grandeur. There are small tracts of flat land scattered here and there where inhabitation is possible. There are several beautiful side valleys in Pangi all upto the Zaskar Range. Though narrow where they join the main valley, they are fairly open higher up and between them, contain a large number of villages. Those near the head of each Nulah are occupied by people of Tibetan origin, called Bhot. Their number is small. Interiors of these valleys are inhabited by the people of different race and culture.

The People: Historical Perspective:

History is silent as to who were the aboriginals of the Pangi Valley and other mountain areas falling within the Chamba territory. But the historians are of the opinion they came from outside. This fact is supported by the common traditions of the people inhabiting these mountain valleys which show marked similarities with the people of the plains. In such circumstances it appears probable that the earliest people of the region are now represented by the low caste tribes. This is the case on plains also, and it
seems not unreasonable to believe that the same is true of the hills. The history of the Chamba state reveals that the various low caste tribes have been included under the names of Koli, Hali, Sipi, Chamar, Dumna, Barwala, Megh, Darain, Rehara, Sarara, Lohar, Bhatwal, Dhangri etc.³ They are found scattered all over the territory. Though differing among themselves as regards social status, they are all looked upon as out caste by the high caste Hindu, who applies to them the epithet of Chanal or Chandal. These low caste tribes possess no traditions as to their original home, which shows that a long period of time must have elapsed since they first migrated to the hills. General Cunningham believed that the Western Himalayas were at one time occupied by a true Kolorian group from the same race as the Kols of Central India.⁴ There are still many people in the Western Hills who bear the name of Koli and the Hali, Sipi, Megh and Dagi etc. are essentially to the same people. These tribes must have been of non-Aryan origin like the other aborigins of India, but a great fusion of races took place in ancient times by intermarriage and the process of degradation from the high castes. So great was the impact of the Aryans on these aborigins that the later lost their identity

with the passage of time and the fact now is that they exhibit the feature of the Aryan race and have been completely absorbed in it. These low-caste tribes are employed in menial occupations and does odd jobs to the high-caste people. Even now they labour under some social restrictions, particularly in the hills. Their conditions generally seem to indicate that they have long occupied a very depressed position in the social scale. There is a common saying in the hills which runs as follows:

"Chanal Jetha, Rathı Kanetha"

implying thereby that the high castes are dependent on the Chanal, just as a younger brother is on an elder one. No ceremony of any importance can take place without their help. At birth, marriages, and death they are indispensable in one capacity or another. It seems improbable, however, that this was the original significance, which has become obscured through the laps of ages. It is more likely that the saying is an unconscious expression of the general conviction that the chanals were the original inhabitants of the hills. The Rathis came to a later period, yet so long a time has passed since even they migrated to the mountains, that they are generally regarded as having been always
resident there. Presence of Aryan in the Western Himalaya at a very early period, probably before that in which the hymns of the Rig-Veda were compiled, has been revealed by the Sanskrit literature. It can, therefore, be assumed that the oldest strata of the Aryan population of Chamba State are of very ancient origin.

During the course of the field survey, three different versions about the origin of the inhabitants of the 'Pangi' region came to my knowledge. It gives a faint idea about the origin of Pangwals. According to the first version, it is said that because of the difficult terrain state of Chamba considered 'Pangi' as the best place for sending those criminals who were condemned to life long sentence. It is presumed that these criminals permanently settled here and married locally. As years rolled by their off springs established different settlements and came to be collectively called Pangwals. To substantiate this version it is said that even today the traditional Pangwal tope, which is widely worn in this region bears a close resemblance to the one generally provided to prisoners. According to the second version it is said that in time immemorial the settlers of Lahul and lower Chenab valley were faced

with great difficulties because of heavy pressure on land and pasture. They were desperately in search of more good land and green pastures to feed themselves and their cattles. These people finally migrated to 'Pangi' which then had plenty of both good land and green pastures. Pangwals are said to be their descendents. The third version is of historical background. Accordingly, it is said that during the days of Muslim domination in India certain Rajput nobles apprehending persecution at the hands of the Moghuls decided to send their families to a safer place, which was beyond the reach of the attacking army of the Moghul empire. Besides this they also thought that once they were free from this worry they would be able to give better fight to the Muslim invaders. Because of the difficult terrain, it is said, 'Pangi' was selected the best place for this purpose. The entire Caravan of the Rajput ladies together with their children and servants left for 'Pangi' escorted by their servants and soldiers. In the mean while most of the Rajput nobles who remained behind, died in the battle and many were seriously injured and as such could not reach the difficult region to join their families. When all hopes of their warrior husbands
to return to them vanished, the Rajput ladies ultimately married their servants and soldiers. Pangwals, to-day are said to be their direct descendents. This version holds good that even to-day we find Suryabansi, Chandrabansi and Thakur Cotras among the Pangwals.

Though none of these versions represents the whole truth, one thing can be concluded that there had been migration of certain people to the 'Pangi' region at some time in the past. The family traditions of the Pangwals point to their having emigrated from the lower Chenab and Ravi and Beas valleys and also from Lahul. These people got mixed with the local inhabitants to such an extent that the later lost their separate identity and acquired the traits of these comparatively powerful people. With the passage of time these people became adaptive to the local conditions and lost their contents with the main land because of the geographical conditions of the region. They developed their own way of life, within the framework of the contemporary circumstances, which continues up to the present day.

Socio-Economic Set-Up and Religious Beliefs:

'Pangwal' is a generic name and implies the residents of the 'Pangi' Tehsil of Chamba District. It includes the following castes which can be divided into two major classes namely high and low.

**High Castes**                      **Low Castes**
1. Brahmins                      1. Halis
2. Rajputs                      2. Lohars
3. Meghs
4. Dagis

Rajputs are further divided into three main divisions, namely, Rana, Thakur and Rathi. The latter is regarded inferior to the former two. Rajputs though ritually inferior to Brahmins are both numerically and economically dominant, holding maximum land. Out of the total population of 11691, the low castes amount only to 919.  

Alongwith these people of high and low castes there are found a few families of 'Bhot' in the side valleys who are of Tibetan origin. 'Bhot' are a class by themselves and they have no social relations with the Pangwals proper. Customs of 'Bhot' of Pangi region are akin to those of Swanglas and Bhots of Lahul region. They

---
also have the matrimonial relations with the people of lower Lahul region in the Chenab valley. The marriage customs of 'Bhot' and 'Swangla' have been discussed under the chapter 'Lahula'.

Among the high castes people there is no restrictions of food and marriages. Inter Castes marriages are performed. But there cannot be any relationship between people of high caste with that of low caste. The people of low castes are all endogamous. Marriage among them takes place only in their own caste. Though the class distinction exists among the Pangwals and they do not eat food or have marriage tie between them, socially both of them are interdependent. The presence of low caste people is indispensable for the high castes people for the completion of their functions related with birth, marriage or death.

Main occupation of the people is agriculture but to supplement their meager earnings some of them rear sheep and goats. Due to heavy snowfalls only one crop a year is obtained. In winter the entire region is isolated where men and their animals live in their houses without moving outside. Due to acute shortage of food grains, the people do not separate chaff from the wheat. It is ground with wheat to get flour.
People are generally monogamous. During the course of field survey few families among the high caste people were found polygamous i.e. a man having more than one wife living. In the land of mountain and snow only an affluent people can think of polygamy. Polyandery does not exist in this region except among 'Bhots'.

Normally the people prefer to live in the joint family. This is because of the fact that a person cannot afford to do all the jobs himself in the field. Work is distributed among the various members of the household and as such the economic position is maintained. But if a person wants to establish his separate house, he has all freedom to do so by taking this share from the joint household property.

'Pangwals' are hindu-by religion. They are God fearing and believe in superstitions. Their religious beliefs and rituals are in essence demonalatry and nature worship. Though a considerable portion of Pangwals population is represented by Brahmins but Brahminism of the plains has not altered the religious beliefs of the people. They believe in hindu gods and Godesses. Their chief Gods are Devi, Nag, Shiva to
whom they worship before starting any new work. The tribals believe in evil spirits and appeal them. They sacrifice a sheep or goat and offer it to the spirits at all occasions. The animals' head being the prerequisite of the slayer and the rest is divided between the priest and the worshipers.

**Marriage and Morals:**

A marriage is a must for a Pangwal. It is not because of the fact that it is must from the religious point of view but from his economic point of view. It is the woman who does all the jobs in the field except ploughing.

No marriage alliance is made within the same sub-caste and no caste avoids marriage within the same gotra. Five degrees on the side of mother and six degrees on the side of the father are avoided. There would seem to have been growing over the years a certain amount of relaxation in this restriction, because, according to old gazetteer this prohibition extended to ten degrees on the father's side, though it was five degrees on the mother's side even in those days, i.e. about the beginning of the 20th century. The high caste people inter-marry but they do not make marriage alliances with the low caste or the Scheduled castes. Marriage with maternal uncle's son is not permissible. Child marriage does not prevail among Pangwals. Consent of boy and girl is necessary before
making marriage alliance between them by their parents.

Forms of Marriage:

As has already been mentioned that marriage is a must for a 'Pangwal' since the economic condition of all the people is generally, not good and the marriage proper requires a considerable amount, some other forms of marriage, are prevalent among the 'Pangwal'. Though the forms of acquiring a bride may differ but the legal consequences are the same in all the forms. Less expensive forms of marriage are getting popularity among the 'Pangwal' particularly among the low caste and economically weaker section of the community. In the following pages we shall discuss the various forms of marriage existing among the Pangwal tribe.

Regular Marriage: Janji or Jani

Janji or Jani is considered as a superior form of marriage. In a Janji marriage certain formalities are observed before the final marriage ceremony takes place. Marriage negotiations are started by the boy's parents. The boy's parents through a common friend approach the girl's parents and explore the possibility of such a marriage alliance. The common friend goes to the girl's parents with 2-3 bottles of wine with him and discusses
the matter with them. If the girl's parents agree to the proposal both the sides fix a day when the boy could meet the girl. On the day so fixed, the boy along with 3-4 friends visits the house of the girl's parents. He takes with him few bottles of wine, Luchies and some ornaments. All the members of the girl's family sit together with the boy's party and dine. The boy later on presents the piece of ornament to the girl and the wine and Luchies to the father of the girl. The girl and the parents accept the respective gifts from the boy. This amounts to having given their consent for the marriage. This ceremony is called Pillam.

The Pillam ceremony is celebrated for a day only. The boy and his party reaches in the evening. At night they sit together with the members of the girl's family and eat and drink. Next morning the boy and his friends return to their homes.

Within a year of Pillam, a day is fixed by both the parties to celebrate the 'Fakki' ceremony. Tuesday and Friday are considered unauspicious for this ceremony. On the appointed day the boy along with the middle man visits the girl's home. The boy takes with him a large quantity of wine along with Luchies and Halwa and some
ornament to the girl. As the night falls, both parties sit together. The girl's parents also invite their friends and relatives. The boy pays some money to each relative of the girl according to the status of the relative with the girl's family. The relatives may or may not receive this amount. The piece of ornament is given to the girl. The girl's side serves wine and food to all the persons who are present at the occasion. The dinner is followed by singing and dancing till the early hours of the morning. In the morning the boy and his party leaves the girl's house. This completes the *Fakki* ceremony.

Within a year or so after the *Fakki* ceremony on an appointed day, the boy along with some of his friends and near relatives goes to the house of the girl's parents again. The boy's party takes with it large quantity of wine and other eatables like *Luchies*, *Halwas*, etc. and some ornament to the girl. On reaching the girl's house they are received and entertained with wine and good etc. After staying there for a day or so the boy's party returns home after presenting the piece of jewellery to the girl and other eatables to the parents of the girl. This completes the *chhakki* ceremony.

The successive visits by the boy to the girl's house before the final marriage ceremony in the form of 'Fakki' and *Chhakki* suggest that the both sides
may acquaint themselves with each other. In fact only the Pillam ceremony that the betrothal in fact is complete and becomes irrevocable. In case after Pillam ceremony one or the other party annuls the betrothal, that party has to pay the damages to the innocent party. In the eyes of law the boy is entitled to have the company of the girl as his wife, of course with the consent of the girl or her parents as the case may be.

After the Chhakki ceremony, both the sides fix a day with the consultation of an astrologer or the village deity for the performance of the final marriage ceremony. On the appointed date the groom visits the house of the bride along with the Diwan, the middleman and Patmarah. The later performs certain duties. He carries a sword with him which, it is believed, renders protection to the groom against the evil spirits. The groom takes with him wine and other eatables in large quantity. After reaching at the bride's place everybody assembles in a room. The bride wears the traditional marriage dress. The bride and the groom sit next to each other and some incense is burnt before them. Both of them offer the prayers before the village deity. This marks the end of the marriage ceremony.
In the evening a meal is served to the all present. Wine and meat is consumed in large quantity. The next morning the bride wears new clothes and ornaments which are given to her by her parents. Accompanied by her maternal uncle and brother, she then sets out for her in-laws place alongwith the groom and his party. The procession is headed by the Patmarah who keeps the sword with him to ward off the evil spirits. When the procession reaches the bride grooms' place, a number of the household fires 3-4 shots in the air which signal the arrival of the couple. A he goat is then sacrificed to please the evil spirits to keep away from the house and barring their entrance to the house alongwith the couple. The couple stops at the main entrance. Meanwhile the eldest member of the household comes out carrying burning incense. He first of all worships the village deity and seek the blessings of good luck for the couple. The couple also pays respect to the deity and enters the house. A feast is served to the assembled persons.

After the marriage ceremony, the Gauma ceremony is performed, which is equally important. In local dialect this is known as Phironi. While the brides relatives, who have accompanied her to her in-laws house,
locally called as Duants, are preparing to leave, the call aside the bride and give her an early date to visit her parents. On the day so fixed, the bride alongwith her husband, visits her parents. She also takes with her some 'Luchies' which on reaching there are distributed among the members of the household. The couple stays there for 3-4 days and when they depart, the bride's parents give them equal quantity of 'Luchies', Sattu and Ghee etc.

Thus from the above discussion it is clear that the marriage proper (Janji or Jani) among the Pangwals is a lengthy process. It starts from Pillam, the betrothal, and completes with the Phironi i.e. the Gauna ceremony. Normally, the Jani marriage is performed among the high class people who are particularly economically well off.

**Short Marriage:**

In order to avoid the marriage expenses, a short cut method is also followed by some people. No marriage ceremonies like Fakki, Chhakki or final marriage are performed. After Pillam the girl is taken by the boy to his home with or without the consent of the girl's parents. Generally the boy comes to the girls house
and after arranging the matter with her parents takes away the girl to his home. Sometimes, if the parents of the girl don't agree to the boy's proposal to take the girl without performing the proper marriage ceremony, but the girl is a consenting party and gives her tacit support to the boy, the boy then takes away the girl even without the consent of her parents. However in such a situation the girl must have attained the age of majority. If the girl is minor her parent's consent can't be dispensed with.

Normally the boy resort to this short cut method where both the boy and the girl are major and after Pillam no early date is fixed by the parents for the performance of Fakki and Chhakki ceremonies. Secondly, if the parents wants to avoid the marriage expenses, there may be a secret understanding between them and the boy adopts the short cut method with their tacit consent. Thirdly if the boy and the girl have love affair with each other and they find that his or her parents are not going to settle an early marriage date, the boy may bring the girl to his house even without the consent of her parents. Very few instances of marriage by short cut method particularly without the consent of girl parents come to my notice during field
investigation. Though the short cut method is in vogue but the number of marriages performed in this way are not very large.

Dowry in the real sense of the term is unknown to the 'Pangwal'. Parents of the bride, normally, give to the girl some clothes, household utensils, few items of jewelry, sheep, goats etc. depending upon their economic conditions. No specific demand is ever made by the boy nor there is any customary binding to give each and every thing to the girl. In practice, usually, the 'Pangwal' give household utensils and other things of daily use to their girls. Some near relatives of the bride also give some presents to her at her husbands' house according to their capacity. Generally, these presents are reciprocated. What one receives in her marriage, gives almost equally when the time comes.

From the above discussion of the regular marriage, it can be safely concluded that 'Pillam' ceremony is more important than the actual marriage ceremony. It is in fact, from this day the boy keeps on visiting his fiancée frequently. After Pillam the alliance between the two is considered as irrevocable. Furthermore, the recognition of the short cut method without performing the actual marriage ceremony, suggests that
at the time of Pillam. The status of husband and wife is acquired by the parties. Society does not mind even if an issue is begotten to them prior to the marriage ceremony. Such eventuality normally does not arise as the boy may bring the girl to his house as his wife even without the consent of her parents provided she is of the age of majority.

Marriage by Elopement:

Marriage by elopement is prevalent among 'Pangwal.' Normally, the boy resorts to this method when he has the consent of the girl also i.e. there are love affairs between the two. But their parents are not agreeing to their marriage alliances and thereby the Pillam is not possible. The boy elopes the girl from a fair to his home along with his friends. The girl makes hue and cry and the matter comes to the knowledge of her parents. After 2-3 days her parents come to see her and ask her about her willingness. At the same time the boy and his parents also try to persuade the girl’s parents to agree to the marriage alliance. Because girl is a willing partner to the whole drama, after showing their resentment, ultimately, they agree to the alliance. Sometimes her parents insist for Izat, i.e. some agreed amount or something in kind is paid by the boy or 'his
parents to the girl's parents for their honour or Maan. Then the girl is treated as the wife of the boy. No ceremony of any type is performed. After some times the husband and wife go to the house of the wife's parents with some presents, generally Luchies etc., where they stay for 3-4 days and come back to the husband's home. On their return, the girl's parents usually give her some present and other things of daily use out of their natural love and affection.

But at times some embarrassing position arises for the boy when he elopes the girl of his choice from a fair. In such cases the boy and the girl are not having any intimacy with each other. The boy sees the girl in a fair and he at once decides to elope her with the help of his friends. The girl is lifted away by force to the house of the boy. The girl makes hue and cry and the matter becomes public. The boy keeps the girls in his house and pursue her to give her consent to the marriage. She is offered food which she refuses. The practice is that if she accepts the food this shows her willingness to the marriage and is treated as her implied consent to the marriage alliance. Sometimes the matter is solved and she accepts the food. But generally in such cases when the girl's parents arrive
and ask her about her willingness to the marriage and
her reply being in negative, the relation between the
boy and girl's parents becomes tense and at times
police help is sought to free the girl. But normally
the village elders decide the case, the decision of
the village elders is generally accepted by the parties.

Thus in marriage by elopement the consent of the
girl plays an important role if she is major. And if
she is minor, the consent of her parents or guardian
is a must. If the consent of the girl or her parents,
as the case may be, is there the matter is solved by
mutual agreement by payment of 'Izat money to the
girl's parents. No marriage ceremony is required to
be performed.

**Topi-Lani: Widow Re-Marriage:**

**Topi-Lani** is an inferior form of marriage and
implies widow remarriage. A widow may remarry after
one year from the death of her husband. The first right
to claim the widow's hand rests with the late husband's
brother, nephew or cousin. But much depends upon the
widow itself. The brother or nephew etc. of the later
husband cannot claim her as a matter of right. He must
obtain the consent of the widow. If the widow gives
her consent, then the new husband presents her a woollen
cap in the presence of two respectable persons of the village. This woollen cap is locally known as Joji. Her acceptance of the Joji means her consent to the new husband and he becomes her husband.

But if the widow does not want to remarry with the brother or nephew etc. of her deceased husband she may go to her parents home. Later on if she wants to remarry with some other person, the consent of her parents is also necessary. If the parents give their consent, the new husband pays some money to the parents of the widow and takes her with him as his wife. No other ceremony is required to be performed.

Though the Topi-Lani form of marriage is recognised among 'Pangwal,' it is less in vogue. Normally the widow-remarriage takes place when she is young and has no children. If the issues with the first husband are there, she prefer to stay in the house of her deceased husband.

Legal Position of Pangwal Marriage and the Position of Women

As has been pointed out in the earlier chapter, marriage is an important social institution. It evolved and developed with the socio-economic progress of mankind. To the Hindu, marriage is not merely an arrangement for a man and a woman to live together, a
kind of a social contract, it is a sacrament, though at present the sacramental aspect of Hindu marriage is loosing its grounds. With marriage a man enters on a particular stage of life, with religious sanction, this bestows on him a certain status and also a set of obligations moulding and influencing his personal and family social life. This is how the Indian religious law givers look upon marriage.

The marriage rites in the ancient Indian society in the Vedic period have been a very simple affair. Later on with the passage of time other subordinate rituals and rites have been added and the simple rituals became quite a complicated rite in the days of the Dharamsutras and Dharamsastras. Provincial and family customs, superstitions and conventions also have played their part in the evolution of the ritual of the sacrament of marriage. Local customs, superstitions and

10. Supra, Chapter I.
11. Ibid.
conventions play a much greater role in a society which has been isolated for the centuries together from the mainstream of the Hindu ways of life. 'Pangwal,' as has already been pointed out, are hindu by religion. They are the descendents of the people who migrated to the area at different times from the plains and lower hill regions. With the passage of time and the geophysical conditions of the region inhabited by them, there developed a system in their society to perform the marriage rite which corresponds to their need and is quite different from the rites followed by the Hindus of the plains.

Different forms of procuring the bride have already been discussed. From that discussion various necessary ingredients of 'Pangwal' marriage may be pointed out.

Among 'Pangwal' marriage is a simple affair between the boy and the girl. Though it has the religious sanction as marriage is considered a must for a 'Pangwal,' it is not circumscribed by religious rituals. The consent of the parties to the marriage or their guardians is important. At present the young generation plays an important role and their guardians/parents do not interfere as the child marriage is not in vogue among
'Pangwal'. If the boy and the girl are major, they hardly bother for the consent of their guardians because the marriage by elopement is a recognised method of procuring bride. In the eyes of law the marriage by elopement is not any way inferior to a regular marriage i.e. Janji or Jani. Legally the marriage alliance is established as soon as Pillam ceremony is performed. In fact 'Pillam' implies the consent of both the parties and the boy becomes entitled to have the company of the girl as his wife if he so wishes provided the girl or her guardians also agree. Actual marriage ceremony has no legal validity. It is merely an occasion for marry making.

Recognition of widow remarriage and divorce among the 'Pangwal' tribal people suggest that the women enjoy a good status in the society. But in fact this is not the whole fact. The field study shows two different trends in this regard. So far as the matrimonial matters are concerned the women enjoy considerable freedom. The right to seek divorce from the husband is enjoyed by the 'Pangwal' woman. Though it is not an absolute right given to the woman. She has to pay the damages to the husband which are normally the reasonable expenses incurred by him at the time of
marriage. Divorce procedure is very simple. After divorce, she has the freedom to remarry or she may go to her parents. In no case she is looked down upon in the society. Similarly widow remarriage is permissible. After the death of the husband, wife is free to remarry with the deceased husband's brother, nephew or cusion of with any other person with the consent of her parents. In no case the widow is considered as a burden. The reason for this lies in the fact that in whatever capacity she stays, she contributes to the economic needs of the household. Man-power plays an important role in the agricultural society. 'Pangwal' are agriculturist basically. It is the Pangwal lady who does all the jobs connected with agriculture except actual ploughing of the fields. In such a society it is the natural tendency to keep the woman in the house in any capacity viz. daughter, wife or remarried woman. Contrary to this importance, a woman does not enjoy a respectable position in the society. She does not get any proprietary right in the household property. She remains dependent through out her life first on her father then on her husband and lateron upon the son.

Though a 'Pangwal' woman has not been given the proprietary rights her position in the society has been safeguarded. If she does not get proper care and maintenance,
she can seek divorce and can go with some other man.

**Divorce:**

Institution of divorce is well established among the 'Pangwal' society. Wife has got the same right to seek divorce as the husband enjoys. There need not be any specific ground. If one party who initiates the divorce pays damages to the other by mutual agreement, divorce between the two may take place. If the husband initiates the proceedings he has to pay to the wife some amount, 13 which is normally fixed, by the village elders. This amount is known as *Maan*. If the wife initiates the proceedings she has to pay to the husband or her lover pays to the former husband, the reasonable expenses of the marriage incurred by the first husband. The amount may be agreed upon between the parties mutually or the village elders may fix the amount which is generally accepted by the parties.

Divorce ceremony is very simple. When the parties have mutually agreed to separate from each other, husband breaks a dry wooden stick over the head of the wife.

---

This breaking away of the stick signifies the breaking away of the marital tie between the two. After this ceremony parties are free to re-marry with other persons.

There are instances in the region, where even a pregnant woman has been divorced. After the delivery of the child, the husband claimed the child as his own and wanted the custody of the child which has been refused by the wife. There are many children who do not know the names of their fathers. They give the name of their mothers. In the eyes of law, such a child is treated as illegitimate and can not acquire the right in the property of his putative father. However, in the society they are not looked down upon.

Though the divorce is recognised and a divorced woman in no case looked down upon by the society, the number of divorce cases are not large in the region.