Chapter VIII

SOCIAL STRUCTURE, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION AND COMMUNITY LIFE

8.0 INTRODUCTION

In the State of Jammu and Kashmir a transhumant Gujara Bakarwal family remains in migration for about four months in a year. It spends four months in summer pastures and four months in winter pastures. It passes through different topographic zones in their annual cycle of migration. The social institutions, customs, beliefs and practices have emerged from the principles to meet the exigencies of day-to-day life which are well-adjusted with their annual cycle of migration.

Social structure constitutes an important basis out of which social norms grow and are sustained. It will, therefore, be reasonable to begin the discussion of social structure of the Gujara Bakarwals with the consideration of their social patterns. The discussion of these aspects is limited to the consideration of two basic questions: what are the norms governing the social structure in the context of their ecology and physical setting and how do customs and practices take place? What are the ceremonies associated with their performance?

Thus, our discussion will begin in this chapter from kinship groups to functional groups and, thereafter, the
adaptation of different customs, norms and rituals in their ecological setting.

8.1 KINSHIP GROUP

There are three principal kinship groups among the Gujara Bakarwals: the dera (household), the deda-potra (lineage) and the gotra (clan). All these kinship groups are important to a Gujara Bakarwal in one context or another, and the importance enjoyed by each has tended to vary according to a series of both internal and external changes to which the Gujara Bakarwals have been exposed from time to time. These kinship groups will be discussed separately, pointing out the significance attached to them in the Gujara Bakarwals' day-to-day existence.

8.1.1 The Dera (Household)

The dera (household) is the basic unit among the Gujara Bakarwals. They count their numbers and describe their grazing and Kafila groups in terms of the number of deras.

A dera usually comes into existence when a person establishes an independent household, which happens normally after his marriage. Each son, thus, establishes his own dera as he gets married (which is usually in the order of his birth), and receives a share in the patrimony. Most
fathers try to give an equal number of animals to all sons, but the number of animals which a particular son receives is quite often determined by the number of animals available in his father's flock at the time of separation. Thus, it can happen that a son who breaks away from his father's dera in a lean year gets a smaller number of animals in patrimony than the one who gets married and establishes his dera at a time of relative prosperity.

The deras usually tend to be small, comprising on an average of four to six persons. Table 8.1 sets out the distribution of persons per dera in the two Kafilas for which detailed statistics are available. It would be seen that, though some deras contain as many as eleven or twelve members, deras comprising four to six members predominate.

Table 8.1
NUMBER OF PERSONS PER DERA UNIT IN TWO KAFILAS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of persons in the dera</th>
<th>Number of Deras</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st Kafila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - 9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Furthermore, most deras tend to be nuclear in their composition, consisting of a husband, his wife and unmarried children. Extended patrilineal or complex deras consisting of two or more nuclear family units are usually few. Table 8.2 summarises the figures of kinsmen living within each dera by dera type.

Table 8.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Deras</th>
<th>Number of Deras</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st Kafila 2nd Kafila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete Deras</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Widow(er) and unmarried children</td>
<td>1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Single person</td>
<td>1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Unmarried brothers</td>
<td>1 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple or Nuclear deras</td>
<td>24 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple or Nuclear deras with additional relatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Ego, wife, unmarried children and ego's mother</td>
<td>5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex or extended patrilineal deras</td>
<td>4 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>36 57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each dera has its own hearth and its own property. The property consists of a tent for use during the annual migrations, sheep, goats, dogs and mules or horses. In

most cases, the *dara* members look after the animals themselves. However, wealthy persons with large flocks of animals sometimes employ servants to look after their flocks. Some also give a part of their flock to poor shepherds (*Airia*) on annual contract. The flocks belonging to each *dara* carry distinct marks or colours for the purpose of identification.

The *dara* usually have a clearly demarcated hierarchy of authority and division of labour among its members which regulates its functioning. Where the *dara* consists of a nuclear family, the head is always the husband. Where it is comprised of an incomplete family, the senior male members enjoy the status of a head. Only in cases where there is no adult male member in the *dara*, the woman is considered the household head. The head of the *dara* holds all rights over the property of the *dara* and represents it in its dealings within the community as well as with outsiders. He is also responsible for taking all important decisions.

Labour is divided among the members of the *dara* by sex and age, though the tasks formally assigned to each sex or age group are not always strictly adhered to. The women and girls perform the domestic tasks of cooking, washing, the bringing of water, the rearing of children, the collection of wood and the making of woollen garments. The repair of equipment, the upkeep of tents, the twining
of ropes and the tending and herding of animals are done by male adults.

An average Gujara Bakarwal dera is on the move for about 110 to 130 days out of the year. The frequent migrations consume much time and labour and strongly the organisation of the daily round. Activity starts well before daylight when the sheep and goats, which have spent the night by the tents, depart in the care of the shepherd who is usually a boy or a man. The tent is usually struck before sunrise, while the household members snatch odds and ends of left-over food. At the time of migration, the packing and loading are done jointly by all members of the dera without any formal division of labour.

8.1.2 The Lineage

While discussing the organisation of the dera, it can be discerned that the principal function of the dera is economic. It is the basic unit of consumption and production which, in a transhumant group such as the Gujara Bakarwals, depends upon the raising of animals. The successful pursuit of this economic activity eventually rests upon the availability of pastures for grazing. In the State of Jammu and Kashmir the pastures are not allotted to individual families (deras) or to their heads. On the contrary, they are deemed to be the property of kinship groups whose ancestors had first established control
over them and used them traditionally. These kinship groups are called *dada-potre* and their rights over pastures and migration routes are traditionally recognised both by the community as a whole, as well as, by the forest department and the revenue authorities.

The *dada-potre* is a group of patrilineally related kinsmen tracing their ancestry to a common ancestor. The size of this group is extremely variable and may comprise as many as 250 or more persons, depending upon the extent to which the division of pastures and migration routes has taken place.

Usually, while a Gujara Bakarwal father divides his animal wealth among his children as and when they get married, the division of pastures and migration routes is postponed until much later. This results in a situation where all his descendants continue to depend upon him for access to pastures and migration routes during his lifetime. Sometimes he may decide to divide his rights over pastures while he is alive, but this is unusual. Thus, the generation depth of a *dada-potre* unit extends into several generations and includes a person’s siblings, cousins and distant relatives in addition to uncles.

This highly complex composition of the *dada-potre* unit may be seen by referring to the genealogy of one Mian Bagga (Fig. 8.1). He had two sons called Mian Mulan Ali and Fa quir. Mian Mulan Ali had two sons from his
two wives while Faquira had four sons. The living descendants of each of these sons, who are all deceased, are today divided into separate *dada-potre* units usually named after their forebears. They have their own pastures and the land which was transferred to them for this purpose by their respective ancestors. Subsequently as their *dada-potre* units expand and grow in complexity, they will in all probability, divide into further *dada-potre* units.

The critical significance of the *dada-potre* unit derives from its common ownership of pasture land which are themselves essential to the economy of the Gujara Bakarwals. Therefore, membership of a *dada-potre* unit is critical to the survival of a Gujara Bakarwal in an economic sense and gives them a unity of interests. Even though there are no formal restrictions upon a person's pursuit of his economic activities, this freedom is greatly limited in his choice of whom he attached himself to for the herding of animals and for the migration between winter and summer pastures by his membership of a particular *dada-potre* unit.

Since pasturage rights are of critical importance to the Gujara Bakarwals, their division and transfer is regarded with considerable interest and is subject to strict control by the *Zirga* (tribal council). The division of pasturage rights within the *dada-potre* units usually follows the principle of patrilineal descent. Even though the Gujara
Bakarvals are Muslims and claim to adhere to the traditional Islamic rules of inheritance, in practice this rule is ignored where the division of the joint estate in the form of pasture rights is concerned. The daughters who are admitted in theory to be eligible to receive one-fourth of all property belonging to their father actually receive a share of movable property only. Thus, they are given animals when they are married and this is supposed to terminate all their rights in the estate of their father. Even if she is unmarried a daughter does not enjoy any claim to pasture lands. Instead she is entitled to receive dowry from her brothers when she is married, but does not inherit the right to the pasture lands. Even the wife of a man has no rights of ownership over pasture lands. If she has small children, she can use the pasture lands to the benefit of the family, but as soon as the children grow up she has to allow the estate to be divided among her sons. All that she receives is the animals that she brought as part of her dowry.

The division of pasturage rights usually takes place according to the wishes of the father. Either he divides them in his lifetime or wills them to be shared by his children in accordance with his wishes after his death. If he wills them to be divided after his death, the will is usually recorded orally by the (Khar panch) leader of the Kafile to which belongs, in the presence of senior
relatives and the will is executed by the survivors. Where a dispute arises over the distribution of pasture rights, the matter is taken to the Zirga for adjudication, and the decision of the tribal council is accepted as final. The Gujar Bakarwals do not take their disputes to the courts.

The rights to pasture lands remain within the dada-potra unit. This right can be sold, exchanged or mortgaged only with the consent of all the members of the dada-potra unit. However, the pastures are subject to arbitrary allotment by the tribal council. Where the council leaders are convinced that the land belonging to a particular unit is surplus, it can allot it to another dada-potra unit which may not have adequate pasture lands. Where a shortage of pastures occurs, the tribal council is called and the council headmen are asked to distribute land afresh in accordance with the needs of each unit. Earlier, the practice among the Gujar Bakarwals was that when a new group of families joined a Kafila, rights in pastures and migration routes were provided to them. However, this no longer happens.

The dada-potra unit derived its importance largely from its ownership of rights over pastures, but it is also a powerful political and administrative unit. Thus, each dada-potra unit has a head who is responsible for the
socio-economic and political activities of his group and represents the group in the tribal council. The headship of the unit is based on the principle of primogeniture and passes on to the eldest son either after the death of the father or when the father chooses to retire from that position. Usually, succession to the position of headship of the dada-potra unit is marked by the tying of a turban on the head of eldest son in the presence of tribal leaders. This ceremony is called dastarband.

8.1.3 The Gotra (Clan)

The entire Gujara Bakarwal community is divided into a number of clans (Gotras). Unlike the dada-potra unit which is based on actual patrilineal descent, the clan is based on a fiction of common descent. The members of a clan believe that they are descendants of a common ancestor but it is not necessary for them to demonstrate their kinship links in order to justify this claim.

The presence of gotras among the Gujara Bakarwals seems to derive from their Hindu ancestry. This view receives some support from the fact that the names of Gujara Bakarwal clans (gotras) are the same as those found among the Hindu Gujarals in other parts of the country. The gotra name is usually used by the Gujara Bakarwals as a suffix to their names.
Perhaps the traditional function of the clan division among the Gujara Bakarwals was the same as that among the Hindu Gujaras, but this does not seem to be the case today. Old Gujara Bakarwals say that inter-marriages among members of the same gotra were avoided in the past, but this does not seem to be true now-a-days and cases of inter-marriage among clan members are not unknown. It seems, therefore, that the significance of the clan group among the Gujara Bakarwals has declined gradually since their conversion to Islam and it does not perform its traditional function of regulating marriage. Nor is it today a very effective kinship grouping among the Gujara Bakarwals.

8.2 KINSHIP CUM FUNCTIONAL GROUPINGS

The dera, the dada-potra unit and the gotra are the three main kinship groups among the Gujara Bakarwals, but their transhumant mode of existence requires them to form a number of functional groups for the satisfactory pursuit of their pastoral activities. The foregoing discussion of kinship groups among the Gujara Bakarwals would be incomplete without a consideration of the role of kinship in the formation of these functional groupings. Such a discussion is also warranted by the fact that, except for the dera, the Gujara Bakarwals live for the most-part as members of these functional groups rather than as members of kinship groups. A consideration of
kinship in the formation of functional groups will show
the articulation of kinship groups among them.

8.2.1 Pass-Chara (The Herding Unit)

The primary functional group among the Gujara
Bakarwals is the herding unit. This is a group comprised
by deras who come together to form a group for the efficient
grazing and care of their animals. The function of the
herding unit is to provide labour for milking and shearing,
and the deras forming a herding unit usually move together
and pitch their tents in the same place during migration.

The size of herding units among the Gujara Bakarwals
is variable and combines between five to ten deras depending
upon their animal holdings and the availability of labour.
Since these factors are not constant and keep changing from
year to year in response to natural conditions, the member-
ship of the herding units fluctuates and changes every year.
As the size of the flock increases or decreases beyond a
manageable limit, the households constituting a herding
unit often break up and join other herding units. Thus,
the number of animals per dera is critical in the formation
of a herding unit.

Since the ultimate viability of the herding unit
is based on the size of the flock and the availability
of labour, kinship plays little part in its formation.
This is not to say that kinsmen do not, or cannot, form herding units. As a matter of fact, they do occasionally choose to become members of the same herding unit, but only where the considerations critical to the formation of a herding unit also converge. However, kinsmen rarely form a herding unit if other economic factors are not conducive to their functioning as a viable unit.  

Table 8.3 sets out the herding units in one Kafila comprising sixty households distributed in three herding units. It can be seen from the table that close kins were members of the same herding unit in only ten cases. In  

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The dynamics of functioning and the process of development in the herding unit in this ecological area can be explained by the size and structure of the herding groups, which influence the relationship among the individuals and their economic functionings. When the size of the flock is followed to exceed or fall below that number or more than a determinable amount not only the efficiency of the herding operation but the actual welfare of the animals suffer significantly. The individual holdings of animals increases and decreases in size unpredictably. So it is required that a group of people form one flock of nearly optimum size. The process by which the optimum size of the flock is maintained in many cases depends on the fluctuations in size of the flocks of various individuals. The fluctuations in the size of the flocks vary seasonally in this area. So the individuals are interested more in the welfare of their flocks and the composition of the herding groups as a sociological unit is not stable among these pastoral nomads.
Table 8.3
SOCIAL LINKS AMONG HOUSEHOLD OF THREE HERDING UNITS IN ONE KAFILA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Herding unit</th>
<th>No. of kins</th>
<th>Kins distant relations</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Households</th>
<th>Head lucky in herding operation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Good luck is an important consideration in the formation of herding groups. People who enjoy a reputation as being lucky in herding operations are often sought after as members of herding groups.

In the remaining cases, the herding unit was comprised of distant relatives or friends. It seems, therefore, that kinship considerations are by themselves irrelevant in the formation of herding unit and its organization is usually determined by economic considerations, mixed with feelings of friendship or consideration of good luck of the persons constituting it.

8.2.2 The Kafila

The second important functional group among the Gujara Bakarwals is the Kafila. A Kafila is a group of families which moves together during the annual migration and submits to the authority of the Kafila leader practically for the period of annual migratory cycle. It is the transhumant counter part of the compact
village settlement of sedentary groups.

A Kafila is usually built around a leader who is an experienced old man and is supposed to be knowledgeable about migration routes, weather conditions and the habits of animals (Plate 8.1). However, the basis for the formation of Kafilas among the Gujara Bakarwals is the need for safety and security from natural calamities like snowfall, hailstorms and occasional floods. While moving from their winter pastures to their summer pastures and back, the Gujara Bakarwals traverse precipitous mountain Passes and cross many small rivers. Thus, they are all in constant need of assistance to enable them to cross these barriers safely. In short, the Gujara Bakarwals form themselves into Kafilas so that the members of a Kafila can help one another during these arduous journeys.

Unlike the situation described by Barth for the Basseri, the Kafila among the Gujara Bakarwals is not a permanent grouping nor does it enjoy equal importance and relevance during the entire period of the annual migratory cycle. Among the Basseri the camps are relatively permanent social units whose membership remains fixed. Furthermore, the camp leader also enjoys considerable political significance within the Basseri political organization through his links with the tribal chieftain. This is not the case

(a) An old Muqadam

(b) Muqadams from different Kafils
(c) A Khar Pench
(d) Lambardars and Meharias
among the Gujara Bakarwals. For one thing, the membership of the **Kafila** is not permanent. Secondly, the **Kafila** is important only during the migratory periods.

When the migration begins, the households which are members of a common herding unit, start moving towards the intervening pastures lying to the south of natural bottlenecks. Those who start earlier wait there for the other **deras** to arrive. After all the households belonging to the **Kafila** have assembled, they move onwards as a group. Once they have reached the other side of the valley they again break into herding units and travel separately. Thus, **deras** become members of a **Kafila** only for part of the way during their migration cycle. Nonetheless, the **deras** belonging to a **Kafila** are subject to the control and authority of the **Kafila** leader. Disputes arising out of the order in which a **Kafila** should move on a particular route, or, conflicts occurring over thefts of animals across **Kafilas** are usually settled by the **Zirga** council of **Kafila** leaders (**Kafila Zirga**) and the **Kafila** is represented at these council meetings by the **Kafila** leaders. Furthermore, the **Kafila** leader is alone entitled to take day-to-day decisions as to whether the **Kafila** should move or stay camped at a particular place, and if they move, by what particular route they should travel. Needless to say, this places the **Kafila** leaders in the position of great
responsibility and authority and makes his position of critical significance.

A Kafila leader cannot expect to exercise this authority nor can he expect unquestioned allegiance from the Kafila members unless he has some means available to him whereby he can control the deroas constituting his Kafila. Among the means available to him are two political powers derived from the community or the government and popular support. As already noted, the Gujara Bakarwals are not organized into a well-knit community with a clear-cut internal political structure such as the one described by Barth¹ for the Basseri. For example, there is no chief among them who may be said to confer power upon the Kafila leaders. Nor do they enjoy any special powers from the government. Each Kafila usually has two leaders. One is the headman (Lambardar) who is formally recognised by the state government and the other is the informal leader who is regarded by common consent as the Kafila leader. This distinction has broken down in the state and practically all informal Kafila leaders are today recognised as lambardara by the government. Even so, this does not confer any special political strength upon the Kafila leader and he cannot hope to lead the Kafila upon the strength of such recognition.

¹ Ibid
A Kafile leader can draw some political power from his economic position, especially since he is often a person possessing a large flock of animals. However, economic preeminence is subject to fluctuations. There are economic cases where Kafile leaders have lost their animals and the members of their Kafile have compensated the loss by voluntary donations of animals rather than form a Kafile under the next richest man in the unit. There is, therefore, little direct correlation between Kafile leadership and wealth. The power of the Kafile leaders can be derived from economic resources only to a small extent.

Since the Kafile leaders neither enjoys any external political support nor is he able to use his economic position to further his influence, he is ultimately dependent upon his ability to invoke already existing solidarity links for getting his decisions accepted and for the maintenance of his authority. These links are usually those of kinship and friendship. Friendship is frequently used, but the principal link which gives the Kafile leaders his authority and influence within the Kafile is his kinship linkage with the other members of the Kafile.

There is among the Gujara Bakerwals a proverb which runs: 'A Kafile is formed by the like mindedness of those who compose it.' What this proverb implies is that the continuity and harmony of a Kafile is maintained by the continuous reaffirmation by all its member, deras of the
authority and wisdom of the Kafila leaders. This reaffirmation is achieved through invoking both agnatic and matrilateral or affinal kinship relations.

It is found that the Kafilas tend largely to be of kin groups. First, they are dominated by members of a single sama-potra group who are closely related through agnatic ties. Secondly, they consist of affines of the member deras. Unrelated deras are sometimes incorporated into the Kafilas. However, attempts are made subsequently to establish affinal links with such households to strengthen solidarity with them. Thus, though not primarily a kinship grouping, the Kafilas tend, by and large, to be kin groups based on ties of consanguinity and affinity and the Kafila leader is often the individual with the largest number of kinsmen in the Kafila.

8.3 ZIRGA (PANCHAYAT ORGANIZATION)

The Gujara Bakarwals society has an established system of Zirga, which is an ancient institution in their society. There is no general Zirga for the whole Gujara Bakarwal tribe in the State, but each Kafila or a big herding group (comprising two or three sub-herding groups) has its own Zirga. The Zirga decides the disputes among its members (Plate 8.2).

It is to be noted that the groups up to the level of Kafila depend on processes that have their source within
(a) A Complainant Before the Zirga

(b) Discussion in Zirga
the *dora* and elementary families. But the source for administrative authority lies in the powerful leader, which can be attributed to his economic power, man power, special leadership qualities and relation with the government of that area. The formal hierarchy of groups and subgroups by which the *Kafila* men are ordered into a tribe and through which their leader exercises his administrative powers are summarized as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Formal Leadership</th>
<th>Estate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gujara Bakarwal (Tribe)</td>
<td>Zirka (Tribal Council)</td>
<td>Gujara Bakarwal grazing lands and Rasto (routes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Kafila</em> (Section)</td>
<td>Kafila Masadam</td>
<td>Adjoining grazing areas same or close migratory route. Similar migratory schedule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dada-Potra (Lineage)</td>
<td>Masadam of lineage</td>
<td>Joint grazing area, joint migratory route and schedule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Dera</em></td>
<td>Head of the Family</td>
<td>Separate tent and flock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All these groups have been described in terms of the process by which they emerge and maintain themselves.

The differences that do exist between these groups is about the functional groups. They are centred around to achieve short term ecological balance among men, animals and pastures in this mountainous habitat. The kinship
groups are permanent in nature but the functional groups fluctuate in different seasons at different topographic zones. In different seasons these groups frame and reframe for the purpose of economic gains, security and keeping the balance in moving population. Fig. 9.2 explains the movement zones and the nature of functional groups on the oscillation channel. From the winter areas to the intervening pastures they travel in herding groups; from the intervening pastures through the Pir Panjal and Kashmir valley zones they march in Kafilas up to side valley and then again in side valley they disperse into herding units and reach the summer bases. This they do at two times a year, i.e. spring and autumn.

8.4 RITUALS

The Gujara Bakarwals are the followers of Islam. They accept the general premises and prescriptions of Islam to the extent that they are familiar with them. Within the limits defined by the general tenets of Islam, they are free to develop and elaborate their ceremonies and customs as an autonomous folk system.

For most of the time a Gujara Bakarwal is on move from one place to the other. His basic activities involve economic adoption of camping, herding and travelling. At two times in a year, spring and autumn, the Kafilas travel a long distance through narrow lanes crossing Pir Panjal
mountain passes and passing over the valley of Kashmir ultimately scattering over pastures.

The entire system of beliefs, rituals, ceremonies is to be looked in the context of these meanings in the cycle of migrations, which dominate the life and organize most of the activities. The ceremonies, avoidance, customs and beliefs have been influenced by their environment and pastoral way of life. These can be grouped in terms of relevance to

1) The yearly cycle
2) The life cycle
3) Special practices and avoidances.

8.4.1 The Yearly Cycle (Rites de Passage)

1) The festivals observed by the Gujara Bakarwals during a year are Ramadan fast, Narakaz and Baisakhi. They start upward journey after celebrating Baisakhi in the winter resorts.

2) Visit to Sacred Places

During the course of annual migrations they pass by succession of localities and many points along the route are marked with shrines in the form of graves of holy men or Fira. Different groups have their adherence to the Fira of the area wherein they move about. The location of the shrines of these Fira is in the winter
pastures along the routes of the mountain Passes. Most important shrines are:

(a) Hazrat-Baba Sharif Saheb, Larvi-Wangat (Plate 8.3).
(b) Hazrat-Baba Sharif Saheb, Tral.
(c) Hazrat-e-Zinda Baba Saheb, Nariyan (Rajouri).
(d) Hazrat-e-Sheikh Nooruddin Wali Saheb, Chirar-Sharif.
(e) Hazrat-e-yarmi wala Pir, Khanyar (Srinagar).
(f) Hazrat-e-Naga Baji Saheb Bandipura.
(g) Hazrat-e-yarmi wala Pir, Kishtwar.

The names of the mountain Passes like Rattan Pir Shah, Pir Gali are also after the names of the Pirs.

The migratory groups follow different routes, to visit Pirs when they could not go. Besides these great Pirs, there are smaller Pirs who are many in number.

iii) Annual Feasts

The feasts that are ritual are occasioned for Idd-ul-Zohra and Idd-ul-Fitr. Besides there are feasts at the arrival of Bakir among the folk.

1. The famous shrines (Ziarat) to which the Gujara Bakarwals pay respect entoures Pir Panjal Pass area, Rattan Pir Shah (near Thamma mandi) Neeliana (near Poshiana) Pakhar pur, Chirar Sharif, Srinagar and Wangat Sharif. Most of the Kafilas which regularly pass close to a shrine make a practice of stopping over there to visit it. Men, women and children dress in their best clothes and go there together. Often several persons from each Dera visit the shrine. They offer a sacrifice of an animal. When the animal is slaughtered and cooked, they enter the shrine and join the feast. They tie ribbons of cloth at the shrine and pray for the betterment of their families and flocks.
PLATE 8.3

RELIGIOUS PLACE

THE SHRINE OF BABA LARVI AT WANGAT SHARIF
### (iv) Offerings

When a Gujara Bakarwal pays a visit to the Nash of the Pir which he visits on Thursday, he offers a Nash and lights an oil lamp. Women take a pitcher of water and pour it on the east and west corners of the Nash. They offer woollen blankets, lof or patti on the Nash. Even if the shrine is not there on the Thursday, he would offer the Nash somewhere in the forest and burn a lamp. At times when they cross major mountain Passes they offer Nash on the following Thursday, which is known as 'Deetha Nash'.

When the Gujara Bakarwal Kafilas cross over the Pir Panjal range through different routes, at the top they stay near the tarns (Sars), like Nanan Sar, Konsar Nag etc. They tie a bundle of offerings and throw it into the Sar. If it floats, it is taken as a good omen, during the ensuing journey, animals and the human beings will not meet any calamity. If it sinks, it is considered a bad omen for the entire group.

#### 8.4.2 Life Cycle

The ceremonies of birth, marriage and death are life cycle rituals. The detailed description of these follows as under:

1. On the top of Pir Panjal range there are Sar (tarns). While passing close to the tarn the transhumants tie up some eatables and other things in a piece of cloth and throw it into the tarn as an offering. If the bundle keeps floating it is considered a good omen for the ensuing journey. On the other hand if the offering sinks, it is an ill-omen and the tarn deity is required to be propitiated by bigger offering (Gurbani) like the killing of a sheep or goat.
1) Birth

When a child is born in the family, Molyi gives the 'azan' in the ear of the child. In case he is not available, the senior most member present at the occasion recites the 'agalma' in the ear of the child. After a few days the members of the Kafila are invited to give a name to the child and a sacrifice of a 'bakra' (goat) is done in the name of the Pir.

At the age of five, the ritual of circumcision is performed in the presence of the community by the barber. A "gurbani" of sheep, goat or lamb is made at this occasion. They all pray after the feast for the welfare and long life of the child. Blessings are given by wishing the child to be a possessor of large flocks and horses.

It has been observed that when a child is born during migration, the other marching members do not stop, except near relatives or the household members of the lady. A two days' stay is sufficient in that case. Then the lady is seated on the horse back and the members march onward. Other connected ceremonies are performed either in the summer or winter pastures as the case may be.

ii) Marriage

My discussion of this aspect is limited to a consideration of two related questions: what are the norms governing marriage in the context of their ecology and physical
setting? And, how do marriages take place and what are the ceremonies associated with their performance?

The first thing which must be noted with regard to marriage among the Gujara Bakarwals is that there is wide disparity in the proportion of males to females. There are approximately 856 females per 1,000 males among the Gujara Bakarwals. The arduous life of these people is responsible for the shortage of women among them. This demographic imbalance mentioned above has a direct bearing upon their marriage patterns. Firstly, there is the possibility that some males may be unable to find a wife for themselves and thus be forced to remain unmarried. The figures, I collected for the two Kafilas with whom I travelled and spent a good deal of time indicate that there were eight unmarried males among the seventy five adults in the Kafilas. Secondly, it places women in an exceptionally advantageous position. Our survey revealed that there were several women who had been married more than once, whereas there were very few cases of polygynous unions. Lastly, the disproportionate sex ratio also results in relaxation of norms relating to the arrangement of marriages within specified social boundaries and in the attitudes towards elopement and divorce. Specifics will be taken up a little later.
The ceremonies connected with marriage have been directly influenced by their mode of life. The betrothal ceremony is generally performed at an early age of seven or eight years old among the well-to-do Gujara Bakarwals. There are, however, exceptions to the rule—girls are sometimes betrothed at an age of fifteen and boys after they are twenty-five years old. A betrothal can be revoked by either party any time before the solemnization of the marriage. In case of elopement or death of the girl the betrothal is automatically revoked.

The nikah is usually solemnized after for years of the betrothal, but in some cases this period can be extended up to seven or eight years. Since the Gujara Bakarwals mode of existence requires them to attend to their animals during winter and as the periods of migration are full of tensions and worries, marriage usually takes place during the summer season (gaamivan), when everyone has more time to spare. It has been observed that more marriages take place in the side valleys (zone of sedentarization) on the return journey from summer pastures. The actual solemnization of a marriage among the Gujara Bakarwals is a relatively simple affair. They perform the nikah ceremony to solemnize the marriage and the form of this ceremony is the same as the one prescribed by Islam. As soon as the nikah has been read, the bridegroom’s father is required to fix the dowry (mahr).
Among the Gujara Bakarwals the consummation of a marriage does not take place immediately after wedding though the bride comes to the bridegroom's family. For seven days, the girl remains with her mother-in-law. She is not supposed to be seen by the husband. The violation of this rule is considered to be a serious affront to the bride's family.

The consummation of the marriage takes place after a ceremony, called rukshati which is usually held three to four years after nikah, but in some cases it takes place after nine to eleven years. (There are instances where this ceremony was performed soon after the nikah, but the girls were quite mature in those cases). The idea behind providing this gap between marriage and consummation seems to be that the consummation should take place only after a girl attains the age of twenty to twenty two years. This age is considered by parents a fit age for their daughters to bear the strain of child bearing in the difficult conditions of a transhumant way of life.

There is a provision of divorce according to Islamic Law, but because of the shortage of women in the Gujara Bakarwal community, cases of men divorcing their wives are rare. If a divorce takes place at the initiative of women, it is by way of elopement. The elopement of a woman results into serious feuds among them. There is no taboo against widow remarriage. There are, of course, cases of widows
leading independent lives, but such widows are either women with children or those who were widowed after they were forty-five years old. There are no young widows among them as even widows are in considerable demand as wives on account of the overall shortage of women in Gujara Bakarwal society.

iii) Death

They bury their dead according to Islamic rites and perform the same rites on the grave of the dead. If the death occurs during migrations, the dead are buried along the route of migration. A heap of stones is created at the site and every year they pay respects to the departed soul and burn a lamp on the grave while passing through it.

8.5 SPECIAL PRESCRIPTIONS AND AVOIDANCES

A certain number of special prescription and avoidances are observed by them, which have no direct relation to the yearly cycle or the life cycle. These are generally associated with the notions of good and bad luck especially with respect to the flocks and the children.

8.5.1 Qurbani (Sacrifice)

Ritual sacrifice is resorted to when it is promised in the name of "Great Allah", towards ameliorating some
natural calamities, or fear of personal loss. For such a sacrifice they choose the best of their lambs. It is a belief that the sacrifice is accepted by the Divine spirit.

8.5.2 Omen, Ordeals

It is observed that the taboos associated with animals in certain situations are most important for them. They combine omens with animals more than human beings.

1) The bleating of a sheep is a good omen.
2) The non-eating of goat is good omen on Baisakhi day.
3) The fasting of sheep during Ramzan is a good omen.
4) To meet two women with filled up pitchers is a good omen.
5) If the group lamp lighted at the Mazār keeps burning till the recitation of “Noor Nama” finishes, it is a good omen for the group.
6) A dog wailing at night is a bad omen.
7) Dreams of darkness and fast air blowing are ominous forecasting death or disaster, because fast air signifies devastation and darkness.

1. Noor Nama is a religious book of the Gujar Bakarwals based on Qoranic precepts in Gujar language.
viii) If the group is moving forward and a snake crosses them on the road, it is considered to be most inauspicious and the Kafila would seek the permission of the Molvi to move further on. They slaughter a cock if available before moving ahead. But if the snake is seen somewhere else, it is equally suspicious.

ix) If the mules deliver an offspring on upward journey, it is not a good sign. If it delivers on the downward journey coming to the winter resorts, it is a good sign.

x) Banbuddi, Randas or Padri are the greatest fear of black magic.

xi) The belief in the Bad Nazar (evil eye) and protection against it, is very important for them. This belief is widespread that evil eye and envious thoughts in any person have certain automatic effects, which may at times cause illness and death. Animals and children, are the objects and victims of evil eye. A number of protective devices have been used to shield the animal or child from it. All of them are designed to make the spectator immediately aware of his thoughts: a string of beads, or rags, broken pottery or other objects of striking contrast tied around the neck or leg of the
animals or child. On the other hand, strong amulets (Tawia - citations from the Koran) which may be obtained from Pira, may protect a person and his flock by their inherent power without the knowledge of envious spectator.

8.6 CONCLUSION

Summing up the discussion on the social responses of transhumance, the study reveals that the governing principles in the transhumance mode of life are:

Firstly, the social structure is governed by two major principles, one is the social security of property rights and the other is economic gain. The kinship groups like Dera (household) and Dada-patre, have been developed around the principle of social security. The pasechara (herding unit) and Kafila groups have been developed around the principle of economic gain.

The tribal council (Zirga) has been developed to look into the community matters judiciously in case of disputes of all kind. As regards the customs, rituals and connected ceremonies in transhumance mode of life, they are solemnized by way of life cycle and yearly cycle rituals. These ceremonies and beliefs are directly controlled by the ecological factors and are well-adjusted in their migratory cycle by the Gujara Bakarwals of Jammu and Kashmir.