CHAPTER 4

THE GUJARS: CULTURE AND COGNITION
The Gujars of Himachal Pradesh: Traditions and their Transformations

In this chapter, I describe the cultural part of knowledge - the beliefs, customs, and ideas 'emerging from the bottom' that are embedded in the cognitive reasoning of the Gujar community. I do this in order to avoid the danger of viewing culture as a "coherent body that lives and dies" (Clifford 1988) or as a "physical substance" (Appadurai 1996). 'Emerging from the bottom' means that cultural ideas are no longer treated in an abstract manner with culture becoming a mere "anthropological abstraction" (Borofsky 1994; Strauss 1992). On the contrary, cultural ideas are viewed as residing, at least partially, in each individual and are so analysed. It is from the multitude of ideas and values found in each individual (of the group under study) that their cultural part must be found.

Having acknowledged this, it is necessary to define culture as a process (rather than as a static entity), without necessarily giving up the idea of agreement and sharing. Culture has to be understood as the distribution of knowledge, ideas, and values; its study should focus on the exploration of the distributive patterns and processes involved in its creation. In this kind of approach, culture serves as initial shorthand for moving towards the real object of study: the identification and classification of a cultural domain and the patterns of knowledge distribution. These patterns are illustrated in subsequent chapters that are based on the cultural profile of the Gujars. It is this profile that is explained here.

The Gujar population of Himachal Pradesh (although a satisfactorily intensive study of it is lacking) is known to have undergone the insulation of external elements and intra-cultural compulsions for a long time (Bhardwaj 1994). The Gujars may be classified into several groups on the basis of religion, occupation, place of origin etc., although they speaking in a common language: Gojri (with some local variations). Described as the India's largest pastoral community (Tambs-Lyche, 1997) that practices vertical
transhumance, the Gujars are mostly confined to Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and the newly created state of Uttarakhand. They are classified on the basis of religious affiliations and a nomadic-sedentary dichotomy (Das, 2000). The Gujar presents three discrete social clusters: the nomadic Muslim Gujar (Baniyara or forest dwelling), the settled Muslim Gujar (Bhatliye or those settled in village) and the settled Hindu Gujar.

The present study (as mentioned earlier) selects Sillagharat Gram Panchayat (Dist. Chamba), which is inhabited by the Bhatliye Gujar. This place is also used by the Baniyara section as base camp en route to their highland pasture. In addition to the choice of this area, the Gujrada village of Kangra district (inhabited by the Hindu Gujar) has primarily been selected for collection of ethnographic information about the community.

The Gujar derive their name from the Sanskrit term "Gurjara". Historically, they were once a dominant people in western India and gave the territory occupied by them the name Gujarat or Gujrat. However, for unknown reasons, the Gujar migrated from western India and spread all over north-western part, and to some extent central, India. Cunningham (1871) described their distribution as being "... in great numbers in every part of north-west India, from the Peninsular Gujrat. They are specially numerous along the banks of the upper Jamuna near Jagadri and Buriya, and in the Saharanpur district, which during the last century was actually called Gujrat. To the east they occupy the petty state of Sampatpur in Bundelkhand, and one of the northern districts of Gwalior which is still called Gujorgarh". The Gujar were mostly Hindu, but sizeable sections of them were converted to Islam in the Mughal period, especially during the reign of Aurangzeb. At present there are both Hindu and Muslim Gujar populations in northern
India: but whereas the Hindu Gujars are mostly found in the plains of Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, the Muslim Gujar inhabit the Himalayan region of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Garhwal and Kumaon divisions of Uttar Pradesh. There is yet another remarkable difference between the Hindu and Muslim Gujar populations: the former are entirely settled agriculturists while the latter are semi-agriculturist pastoralists in some areas and completely pastoralists in others (Negi 1998).


There is a great controversy regarding the origin of the Gujar. According to the one view they were pastoral nomads of Central Asia and came into India during the 5th
or 6th Century A.D. But according to another, they are of Indian origin and were inhabitants of the region extending from around Mount Abu in western Rajasthan, upto Malwa and Gujarat. It is said that they migrated at around the 16th century A.D. in a north-westerly direction, into Punjab (Kandi), in primary and secondary waves. The primary wave of migrants comprised pastoralist nomads who moved to the hilly and unproductive marginal area bordering the Siwaliks, where there were pastures for their herds of buffaloes (Manku 1986). It is not very important for us to resolve the controversy regarding the origin of the Gujar. What is important, and interesting, is that according to both views the Gujar were pastoralists. As pastoralists of Central Asian origin, they would have entered India with their stock of sheep and goats, taking to buffalo raising later. According to the theory of their being of an Indian origin, they were already doing this. The contemporary Gujar, especially that section which has embraced Islam, is, however, known to raise sheep and goats as well as buffaloes. The former (sheep and goat rearers) are known as Bakkarwal and the latter as Gujar or Dudh-Gujar.

The Bakkarwal have their nomadic area in the territory of Jammu and Kashmir whereas the buffalo-raising Gujar are in Jammu. Further, sections of the latter have also moved in a south-easterly direction from Jammu and western Punjab, to Himachal Pradesh and the hills of Uttar Pradesh. This movement has been caused by the depletion of grazing resources in Jammu and Punjab, and also by the increase in both human and animal population. At present the Gujar have their winter camps in the Punjab plains - in the farm land that has gained the status of being their semi-permanent habitat over the course of four to five generations.
Socio-Cultural Perspectives:

The primary functional unit in the Gujar social system is the dera (the household or homestead). It is synonymous with the family and is the most dominant institution in the pastoral Gujar society. Their major occupations, their socio-economic, political, religious, and reproductive activities are all centred around a dera. A dera is usually composed of a husband, a wife, their sons and their wives, their unmarried daughters and their grandchildren. It is an extended joint family, and usually three generations live under the same roof and eat on the same hearth. The joint family, however, tends to break into nuclear families when the sons marry and set up their own units. These may still share the same roof, but have their separate hearths and herds. Such nuclear units, with the passage of time, become joint families only to break up again. The reason behind this cycle is the permit system which allows the Gujar to live in the Chamba forest circle and follow their transhumant mode of subsistence. The head of each family holds a permit on the basis of the number of buffaloes owned by him, and so is known as a numberdar. The numberdar can set up his dera in an allotted locality within a specified forest range or coup. His sons, after marriage, may have separate hearths and may be given buffaloes from the parental herd, but they cannot set up separate deras unless they are given permits by the Forest Department, and become numberdars themselves. Thus it is an extra-social factor that has a determining role in a social phenomenon. It is this that is also responsible for the sprawling nature of the Gujar dera - spread over a considerable area within which more than one chappar (a hut/living space) may be constructed. Parents may share the hearth with one of their sons, even a married one. The Gujar also
have the tradition of taking *ghar jawain* (a son-in-law who lives with and becomes a member of the family).

The Gujar are polygynous, since Islam allows a man to have more than one wife (and up to four) at a time. But actual cases of polygyny are not frequent, although remarriage, due to death or divorce, is frequent. Where a man has more than one wife at a time, the wives may set up separate hearths with their children and the husband may join any one of them. However, residential arrangements are dependent upon the fact of ownership of a herd. Separate residences are possible only if the units get buffaloes as their share from the family’s herd. In fact the herd acts as a cohesive factor in a situation where there are multiple marriages and frequent divorces.

The Gujar family is patrilineal and patrilocal. The father, the head of the house, is a strong figure and owns the entire herd as the permit is issued in his name. After the death of the father, the property (mainly the herd) and liabilities are equally divided amongst the sons. But the responsibility for running the household devolves upon the eldest son, who inherits and wears the headgear of the father as a mark of authority. He is also given at least one buffalo more than the others, but he also gets a larger share of the father’s debts. Where there are no sons the property is inherited by the widow, who has authority over the household. A *ghar jawain* inherits the property of his father-in-law through his wife.

**Marriage:**

The Gujar are divided into various *gotras* (clans) which are the same as among the Hindu Gujar. Some of the clan names of the Gujar inhabiting the Himachal and the
lower Himalayas are Kasana, Khatana, Chechi, Chauhan, Theckari, Dhinda, Pathan, Poshwal(d), Vania/Bania, Maisi, Lodha and Kaalas. They follow gotra exogamy, although there may be exceptions (as in cases of an elopement). Parallel cousin marriages may take place. Cross-cousin marriages take place frequently, and the sanction is embodied in kinship terminology, where the husband's father, wife's father and mother's brother are all addressed by same term, mamu. The different forms of Gujar marriage reflect their mode of subsistence as well as the importance of buffaloes in marital alliances. The most preferred form of marriage among the Gujar is marriage by exchange, in which a son and daughter of one family are married to a daughter and son of another family. In such cases the paying of bride-price and dowry is avoided and the herds remain intact. Generally bride-price is quite high among the Gujar. Among the Gujar of Himachal it used to be as high as Rs. 10,000, but among the Gujar of the lower Himalayas it may now go up to Rs. 30,000 or Rs. 40,000. The bride-price can also be paid in kind by giving 5 or 6 buffaloes. The remarriage of widows is allowed by the Gujar, but in such cases the intending husband may have to compensate the family of the dead man. Junior levirate is quite common among the Gujar.

As in other pastoral societies, the animal plays an important role in the marriage of the Gujar. Buffaloes are transferred between families as bride-price as well as dowry. In cases of marriage by service, if the couple subsequently sets up a separate household, the father of the girl usually gives them some of his buffaloes. However, due to recent changes in their economic life, monetary transactions are replacing the transfer of buffaloes.
Material Culture:

Material culture is the tangible aspect of the life-style of a people. It includes the equipment and artefacts by which a people produce goods and services in order to meet their basic needs. In the case of the Gujar, a pastoral people following transhumance between the Punjab plains and high-altitude pastures, the material culture is centred around their subsistence strategy. As they do not practise horticulture or agriculture, there is a complete absence of agricultural technology: they only have just simple digging sticks (called bashalli). Their entire material culture can be classified under:

1. Homestead (different elements).
2. Dress and ornaments.
3. Implements for collecting fodder.

Economy:

The Gujar economy is based on keeping buffaloes. There has been a shift in their orientation from subsistence to commerce: most of their milk and milk products are sold in the market (through a middleman, called a bania). Usually, each Gujar family has an appointed bania to whom the entire produce is taken. But lately banias have arranged for the milk to be collected from the Gujar deras itself. The Gujar do not get cash from the sale proceeds, and rarely do they get a fair price for the milk. The arrangement over the years has been that the bania offers monetary support for the purchase of provisions, khal-chokar, and equipment and he provides logistic support for their annual migratory journeys. All these expenses are supposed to be adjusted against the sale proceeds of the milk. Cash requirements for marriages and other social obligations are met by taking
loans from the *bania*. The result of this is that almost every Gujar family is heavily indebted to a *bania* and these debts are difficult to redeem since the Gujar are totally dependent on the *bania* for keeping their accounts. On an average, a Gujar family has 20 to 25 litres of milk for sale per day which, according to the market price, should fetch Rs. 400.00 to Rs. 500.00. But the Gujar never gets that price: the *bania* adjusts Rs. 2-3 per litre against his account. It has been estimated that the monthly income of the Gujar is about Rs. 4500 per family and Rs. 420 per capita, yet they remain perpetually indebted. Their sole means for generating of income is the sale of milk and milk products. But expenses are mounting: the grazing fee has been raised by the Forest Department to:

- 01 — 10 buffaloes Rs. 20
- 11 — 20 buffaloes Rs. 25
- 21 — 30 buffaloes Rs. 30
- above 30 buffaloes Rs. 40

The expenditure on *khal-chokar*, *pural*, and salt for the animals is also rising. The cost of transport- to move household goods and equipment during migratory journeys is also much more now. However, it has been observed that if the Gujar get a fair price for their milk, they would be able to save some money even after meeting all their expenses.

Religion:

The pastoral Gujar of the Chamba, like those inhabiting other parts of the Himalayan region, are Muslim by faith and claim to belong to the Sunni sect. They observe Ramzan and Moharram and celebrate Idul Fitr, Idul Zuha, Shaberat, etc., according to the tenets of Islam. A Gujar would like to offer Friday *namaz* in a mosque:
he would also like to perform haj, but usually a Gujar cannot raise the money required. There are a few hajis among the Gujar. Some Gujars, especially those belonging to the Bania clan, celebrate Diwali a day after the Hindu Diwali. In the past the Gujar also celebrated Lohdi and Baishakhi, which signal the waning of winter and herald the spring (which is very important for a pastoral community. Now, however, these celebrations only remain in their memories especially due to Islamic fundamentalism slowly creeping into the lives of the community (due to frequent visits, and the preaching, of maulvis from the neighbouring region of Gurdaspur). The seasonal migration to high altitudes plays a determining role in the education of Gujar children. They engage maulvis to teach them, and the education remains confined to religious teaching.

Concepts of Space and Time:

Concepts of space and time have a special significance for pastoralists like the Gujar, who follow seasonal migration between two distinct ecozones. "Most, perhaps all, concepts of time and space are determined by the physical ambience . . . ." (Evans-Pritchard, 1969).

Let us first consider the concept of time. For the Gujar, there is a clear-cut dichotomy in reckoning time, and the two divisions can be termed 'ecological time' and 'structural time' a scheme devised by Evans-Pritchard in his seminal work. The ecological time frame is in the form of both an annual cycle and daily routine. The Gujar year has two major and almost equal divisions, defined by their mobility between two different ecozones. One, is the winter months, from mid-September to mid-March, when they inhabit the winter camps in the Punjab plains and the Sillaghrat panchayat area; the other is from mid-March to mid-September, when they migrate to the high-altitude
 bugyals. These two divisions include the journey time (both up and down) which may be 15 — 20 days each way. The two major divisions are further divisible into two each, and these four divisions coincide with the four major seasons, that is, winter (October — February), spring (March — April), summer (April — June) and rains (June — September). Time reckoning in four seasons is important, because that is an index to the state of availability of the two main resources for the herd: pasture and water.

During the winter months (the first major division of the year) the Gujar, while in the Punjab and the Sillaghrat, graze their herds in the forest areas allotted to them in groups of families. Because the grass in the forest is not plentiful, it is supplemented by tender leaves from trees. As the winter months pass, there is a depletion of grass as well as leaves on the one hand, and a drying up of water sources on the other. This makes it necessary to first make minor movements in the lower regions, which can be termed horizontal migration, followed by the major vertical movement through the middle-altitude valleys to the high-altitude pastures. Migration to the high-altitude bugyals not only ensures pasture and water for the herd, but also allows the regeneration of resources in the lower regions (during the rainy season). When the herds are brought back to the lower regions around mid-October, fresh regenerated grass, the tender leaves of trees and the recharged water sources are available to them. Also the pastures at high altitudes have time to regenerate during winter and spring (in the absence of grazing).

The Gujar also claim that their buffaloes are conditioned to changing weather conditions, and therefore when there is a rise in temperature in the lower regions towards the end of spring, the animals start getting restive. It is even claimed that since the animals know the routes, some of them may even start moving towards the hills on their
own. While the annual time cycle is closely related to the needs and welfare of the animals, the daily time cycle is associated with the routine of both humans and animals.

The twenty-four hours of the day are reckoned in four divisions:

1. *Bada pahar* (morning — pre-dawn to sunrise)
2. *Dopahar* (day — sunrise — afternoon)
3. *Sham* (evening — afternoon — sunset)
4. *Navasa* (night — after dusk)

The Gujar day begins at dawn, when the *loi tara* (morning star) is positioned above the *dera*. The *loi tara* is located next to *girgiti*, a constellation of six stars. By *dhyada chadna* (sunrise) the Gujar household is agog with activity. The animals are given their feed and are soon taken to the forest for grazing. Before noon, that is *dopahar*, the animals are brought back to the *dera* for milking, and are then led to watering holes - and again to the forest. In the evening or *sham*, the animals are brought back to the *dera*, and herded into an enclosure for the night.

The structural time of the Gujar is the usual division of a year into twelve months, a month into weeks and a week into seven days. The Gujar being followers of Islam, follow the Hijri calendar, but ecological time reckoning is according to the Gojri calendar. Time reckoning in the annual cycle of subsistence activities is according to the Gojri calendar, whereas the Hijri calendar is followed for religious pursuits. All days of the week have Gojri (Hindu) names, but Friday is known by its Islamic name. Similarly, there is a recognisable dichotomy in the Gujar concept of space — a dichotomy, which can again be defined as ecological and structural. Ecological space is defined at various levels, beginning at the level of living space. The hut (*zhonpri*), followed by the
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homestead (dera); a group of deras (tol); Forest Compartment; Forest Range; Forest Division; and the seasonal encampment areas in different ecozones.

Table 4.1: Names of Gojri Months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gojri Calendar</th>
<th>Islamic Calendar</th>
<th>English Month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chaitar</td>
<td>Moharram</td>
<td>March - April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baisakh</td>
<td>Safar</td>
<td>April - May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeth</td>
<td>Reviyolabbal</td>
<td>May - June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arh</td>
<td>Raviyosani</td>
<td>June - July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sann</td>
<td>Jamadiyolabbal</td>
<td>July - August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhado</td>
<td>Jamadiyosani</td>
<td>August - September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asu</td>
<td>Razor</td>
<td>September - October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaliyado</td>
<td>Sahban</td>
<td>October - November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangeru</td>
<td>Ramzan</td>
<td>November - December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pau</td>
<td>Shavval</td>
<td>December - January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mago</td>
<td>Zokayada</td>
<td>January - February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phagunn</td>
<td>Zilhijja</td>
<td>February - March</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Gojri Days of the Week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gojri</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tar/Atwar</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>The Gujar recognise two important dates in a year. Nauroz (21 March) and Het (21 September). Nauroz heralds the migration to high-altitude pastures and Het signals the journey back to the winter camp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swar Pir</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangal</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badhar</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jammerat</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/Virwar</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junma</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hafta/War</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Life Support Strategy:

The Gujar subsistence pattern, characterised by a near-total dependence on buffaloes, is so remarkable that their relationship with the animal may be regarded as parasitic, the Gujar being the parasites of buffaloes. But through a close examination it is seen that the Gujar life-style includes the care and welfare of their herds. They build sheds for adult buffaloes, and special enclosures for calves to protect them from predators as well as the elements. They take the animals for grazing and watering; they feed them with fodder, leaves, oilcake and bran; they shave them periodically to ensure protection against lice. They move with the animals from one locality to another in search of pasture and water; and so on. In a sense the buffalo also becomes dependent on the herder. As the herd and the herder actually sustain life by their reciprocal services to each other, their relationship can only be termed symbiotic; and man and animal form a single community of the closest kind. The buffaloes are fed with the leaves of the bankuli (*Anogeissus latifolia*) and the haldu (*Adina cordifolia*). In addition to fodder, the buffaloes are fed 1.5 kg khal-choker (oilcake and bran in the ratio of 1:2) purchased from the bania. The calves are given only 500 gm of the feed. Usually the feed is purchased from those traders to whom the milk is sold but it can also be purchased from others. The daily quantum of khal-choker naturally depends on the economic status of a family.

Puyal is purchased from the villages in the area. Some is also available from the Gujar households who were allotted land in the 1970s and are cultivators. Feeding of puyal is from February to April, till the seasonal migration to the high-altitude bugyals takes place. It is obvious that considerations of fodder, water and general welfare of the herds are uppermost in the life of the Gujar. It is these considerations that prompt the Gujars to
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travel. Sometimes, in some forest localities, there is a sudden increase in the number of flies and other insects which trouble the herds. In such cases also there are frequent movements.

Seasonal Migration:

The seasonal movement of herds to high-altitude pastures is the adaptive strategy followed by the Gujar. This is done in the interest of the herds, and due to the food production for the herders. Livestock husbandry and mobility are closely associated because the livestock must be fed throughout the year to maintain its productivity. As summer approaches and grass, fodder and water become scarce in the lower regions, the Gujar take their herds to high-altitude pastures where nutritious grass grows after the melting of snows. The grass has an invigorating effect on the animals, improving their health and increasing productivity both quantitatively and qualitatively. It is also noticed that the animals start becoming restive as soon as the temperature starts rising and are conditioned to move to cooler zones in the summer months. There is thus interdependence between the Gujar and their herds and a dependence of both herder and herd on pasture and water.

The Gujar inhabiting the Punjab plains and lower region of the Chamba district migrate to the Pukhri Dhar, either via Sillaghrat or Saho panchayat. The migration is between predetermined sites, through traditionally set routes, and according to a more or less fixed time table. The outward and inward journeys take 15 to 20 days each. Thus the actual encampments in summer and winter are for five or five-and-a-half months each. The traditional migratory routes followed by the Gujars in the Chamba forest circles, and the focal points at which they make small halts are:
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Fig 4.2: Transhumant routes in Chamba (Source: Himachal Pradesh Remote Sensing Cell, State Council for Science, Technology and Environment, Shimla).

The mode of migratory journeys has undergone some change over the years. Until about half a century ago, the journey each way used to take a longer time as there were no modern means of communication and transport to the remote approach points to the bugyals. Household material and camping equipment all had to be carried by pack animals such as horses, ponies and bullocks. With the road network in the interior of the Himalayas, the Gujar can now use public motorised transport to carry their equipment as
well as other necessary provisions up to the points from where the trek up mountainous trails to the *bugyals* begins. For example in the Chamba district, public transport extends to Sillaghrat, some 25 km from Chamba proper and 150 km from Pathankot. The Gujar migrating to Pukhri Dhar, can use it to transport their equipment and advance parties up to Sillaghrat or Saho in just one day, contrast with the ten days taken previously.

The herd and some of the herders follow the old foot trail but the movement is a bit faster. Besides, the herds pass through a number of villages through the middle altitudes where fodder and water are available. Earlier the movement was during the day and the herds were halted in agricultural fields where substantial quantities of dung were left when the herd moved. Thus the villagers got manure without any expenditure. There were other transactions also, such as the purchase of fodder (*puyal*) by the Gujar and occasional purchase of *jhotas* (male buffaloes) by the villagers for breeding purposes. The relationship between the Gujar and the local populations was cordial, and the Gujar were welcome in the vicinity of the villages. However, there has been some change in the attitude of the local populations changes related to resource availability, as well as political reasons. The Gujar are no longer welcome in the vicinity of villages, although economic transactions are still carried through. The result is that the movement now occurs mostly during the night, and the camps are at secluded places (away from the villages) - at times on the highway itself. The availability of fodder and water remains the sole determinant of the choice of camping sites. The objective is to reach the *bugyals* the shortest possible time so that the herds can graze on the healthy and nutritious grass. The return journey does not entail much hardship as far as availability of fodder is concerned.
This is because the animals, after grazing in the bugyals for about six months, are in a healthier condition and can sustain the rigours of the journey without much strain.

High-Altitude Camping:

In the high-altitude bugyals, the encampment locales are predetermined tol-wise. The tol panchayat has a role in the allocation of grazing areas to the individual deras. When the migration begins, some members of the tol representing individual deras arrive at the pasture in advance to reconstruct or repair the deras which had been left the previous season. In the bugyals, Gujar deras are situated near springs. In the high-altitudes too a conflict situation is arising. Previously the high-altitude agropastoral people raised only goats and sheep, which used to go to pastures at higher elevations where cattle cannot easily climb. Now they keep cattle, which are led to pasture at lower elevations where previously the Gujar used to graze their herds. Consequently the Gujar are compelled to take their buffaloes to high pastures. The presence of Gujar herds in the higher bugyals thus creates a multiple conflict situation. First, the highland shepherds do not want the Gujar to migrate to the bugyals as these are considered within the jurisdiction of their villages; and second, the presence of two kinds of animals in the bugyals results in a competition for resources. Sheep do not touch the grass browsed by cattle, and therefore are taken higher and higher beyond the reach of the buffaloes. This entails physical hardship for the shepherds, which they resent. There are thus frequent feuds between the Gujar and the shepherds. This is a complex situation as the Gujar have the backing of the official permits issued by the Forest Department, and the shepherds have the backing of traditional rights as the inhabitants of the region. Fortunately, thus far
no serious situation has arisen and every feud is amicably settled in the spirit of the old amity between the people; but there is little doubt that the situation is fast changing.

Livestock Herding:

The Gujar, it is claimed, were a pastoral people who migrated to the Indian subcontinent from Central Asia (where they probably raised sheep and goats) in the 5th or 6th century A.D. The shift to buffalo raising could have taken place due to ecological pressures and the fact that the animal was already domesticated in north-western India. Later, the Gujar are known to have migrated to northern India, especially the marginal areas of Punjab and Jammu, where pasturage was available for their buffaloes. At what point of time and why the Gujar shifted to buffalo raising is difficult to say, but its continuance up to the present is an observable phenomenon.

The Gujar daily routine is closely integrated with herd management. The day starts very early for adult males and females. Lighting the hearth is the job of young women in the family, who prepare tea and to everybody. The next task is the churning of curdled milk. Fodder is given to the animals and the stalls are cleared of dung. Around 7 a.m. almost all the adults take the herd to the forest for grazing. Often young children also accompany the herd. Division of labour depends on the available labour in a dera. If the family is large, the aged remain in the dera and clean the stalls, fetch water, cook food and mix oilcake and bran for the animals, returning to the dera to be milking. Milking is done by all adults. There are no taboos regarding milking. In the afternoon, the work-force is divided. Some adult males (both old and young) may go to the bazar with the milk products and bring back provisions. At 3 — 4 p.m. the animals are again taken to the forest.
The daily routine of the buffaloes varies from locality to locality, according to the feeding time table. In the Saho area, the lopping of trees is done in the afternoon and the buffaloes are taken to the lopping area, where leaves are fed to them along with whatever grass is available. The animals stay out in the forest during the night, one or two men stay with them because of the possible danger from predators, especially tigers. Early in the morning, lopping is done again and the animals are fed the leaves. After this, the animals are brought to the *dera* at around 10 — 11 a.m. In the *dera*, all the lactating, pregnant and sick buffaloes are given oilcake and bran, often mixed with water and the leaves. Dry buffaloes are given oilcake and bran in smaller quantities. After being fed in the *dera*, the lactating buffaloes are milked. The buffaloes are then taken to watering holes, where they sit in the water for some time.

In the Sillaghrat area the routine is somewhat different. Here the animals do not stay out in the forest during the night. At around 5 or 6 a.m., the animals are fed *puyal* and then are led, for grazing, to the forest, where the herdsman also lops the leaves. At 10 — 11 a.m. the animals come back to the *dera* and are fed with oilcake and bran before being milked. After their milking, the animals are led to the watering holes and then to the forest for grazing and feeding on leaves. The animals come back to the *dera* before nightfall. It can thus be seen that in two different ecological situations, the animals’ routine is changed by the herdsmen who are keenly aware of the difference in conditions as well as that of the availability of resources.

In all situations the milking routine is constant. The Gujar milk their buffaloes only once in twenty-four hours, just before noon. After their milking, the buffaloes are led to watering holes, ponds or rivers, where they are allowed to sit and rest for about an
hour every day. Usually after milking or when they are taken to graze in the forest, the buffaloes are given rock salt to lick. The intake of salt is helpful to the metabolic process of the animals, and at the same time the feeding of salt at the dera is an attraction to the animals. This prompts them to come to the dera on their own at the appointed time.

Rock salt is purchased in the market and boiled in an empty canister. Usually the twigs of the bhoomal (Grewia oppositifolia) are first boiled in water and their fibres are removed. To this extract, rock salt is added and is boiled when this solution cools, it solidifies. The solid mass is then broken into pieces which are given to the buffaloes.

In the organisation of daily routine, apportioning time, especially the period between dawn and dusk, is very important. The Gujar do not possess watches and clocks to guide them, but (like every pastoral community) they have learnt to tell time from natural indicators.

1. Early dawn is signaled by the position of kirgiti (a constellation of six stars) and the loi tara (morning star) over the dera. The Gujar also recognise that the shrieks of the ghughu (owl) indicate the dawn.

2. During the day, between sunrise (dhyda chadna) and sunset (dhyda chhipha), they divide the time, according to the sun's trajectory, into early morning, mid-morning, noon, afternoon, and so forth.

The lengthening and shortening of the shadows of trees also indicates the different quarters of the day.

After a calving, a buffalo is given special feed (consisting of boiled urad, jaggery and fenugreek) for three days. The buffalo is also fed with its own fresh milk mixed with oilseed and bran. The milk yield of a buffalo, on an average is 6 — 7 litres and it lactates
for one-and-a-half years to two years. However, the yield decreases continuously during this period. For the first six months it may be 7 — 8 litres, on completion of one year, it may be 4 — 5 litres; and it may come down to 1 — 2 litres at the end of two years. Female calves are allowed full feed for the first six months while male calves are allowed only half feed. Gradually the feeding, even of female calves, is reduced and they only suckle the udder of the mother buffalo briefly before milking to make her release milk. If a calf were not to suck her teats first, the buffalo would hold up her milk. After milking, the calves are allowed to suckle for the remainder, when the teats become soft and empty. The feed of calves is supplemented by oilcake, bran and other fodder. Male calves are allowed very little milk as a deliberate part of the culling process.

The Gujar’s dependence on milk is so great that they want the maximum yield. Towards that end they often take recourse to cruelty. When a calf dies either naturally or through culling, the mother buffalo may withhold milk. In that event the Gujar resort to:

1. *Fuke dum deve*, vaginal irritation in which the tail of the buffalo is inserted into its vagina in order to make the animal release its milk. Sometimes a man may insert his hand in a similar manner in order to cause great irritation. This is done only by the few who know about it.

2. Administering posterior pituitary injection to the buffalo, which makes her release milk.

Both these operations are defined, by the law, as cruelty and are punishable criminal acts. In the first case, there may be imprisonment up to 6 years and a fine of Rs. 10,000. In the second case, a fine of Rs. 2,000 may be imposed. However, according to veterinary doctors, rarely is a case of cruelty registered against a Gujar. They live in
forest areas, where it isn’t easy to lodge a report against them, even though their indulgence in such cruelty is well known.

The Gujars of Kangra

The Hindu Gujars of Himachal trace their origin from Yasoda, mother of Krishna. They are mostly found in the district of Mandi, Kangra, Sirmaur, SoaLN and Bilaspur, (while, the Muslim Gujars are dispersed in the districts of Chamba, Mandi, Bilaspur, SoaLN and Sirmaur). They speak the dialect of the region; they use the Devanagari script. The Hindu Gujars do not have any markers of identity. They are usually vegetarian, and their diet depends upon the availability of cereals. During the summer months, they eat wheat and rice, and in winter they prefer maize and wheat. They are occasional non-vegetarians and eat mutton and chicken. Their staple diet consists of wheat or maize chappati, dal of urd and gram, vegetables or milk products, and curd. Milk and milk products occupy an important position in their normal menu for these are their own produce. They are occasional consumers of alcohol, which is purchased from the market and are consumed on festive or social occasions. But the women do not consume alcohol. Smoking tobacco, and bidi, cigarette are very common among the males, and the elderly women also smoke hukka. On marriages and festive occasions, preparations of mutton, sweetened rice and of dal of mah or chana are essential, and are cooked by all families. In the event of a death in a family, and during pitri-paksha, spicy food and non-vegetarian food is avoided. Mutton is also avoided on all festive occasions, except Holi.

The seasonal movement of herds to high-altitude pastures in case of the Kangra Gujars is somewhat different from the Chamba sections. Their migration season starts around May-June every year. They move to the Himani Chamunda hill to graze their
buffaloes and after six months, the downward movement starts. The migration uphill begins as summer starts and resources become scarce in the lower regions. The Gujars take all their animals on this migration, except for the one or two, they behind in their village household.

Fig 4.3: Transhumant routes in Kangra (Source: Himachal Pradesh Remote Sensing Cell, State Council for Science, Technology and Environment, Shimla).

The Gujar inhabiting the Gujrada and lower region of the Kangra district migrate to different locations of the Himani Chamunda hill, including Patti, Gahua, Jodu, Kanda, Kumarkot etc. The migration is between predetermined sites through traditionally set routes and according to a more or less fixed time table. The journeys to and fro take 1-2 days each. The composition of the migratory group is also different from that of the Chamba section, and includes one or two adult males from each family along with their...
The female and the children stay in the villages to overlook small scale agricultural operations. A breed of Punjab buffaloes is usually kept in the villages and the indigenous breed forms part the migratory herds.

The endogamous Hindu Gujar section is further subdivided into a number of exogamous gotra like Khatana, Chohan, Gursi, Didhar, Bhumphal, Kalarya, Paswal, Chaichi, Badhana. These gotra denote their ancestry and regulate marriage alliances. These Gujars are also aware of the varna system and place themselves along with the Kshatriyas, though other communities place them a grade lower. It is in choosing a spouse that the socioeconomic condition of the negotiating families is seen, and four gotra, one's own, one's father's, one's mother's and one's mother's mother's - are avoided. The usual age of marriage for is 18 to 25 years for boys and 15 to 18 for girls. Child marriage was in vogue, but now it has given way to adult marriages. The common symbols of marriage for women are koka, choori, tika, and bala. After marriage, the residence is patrilocal, and dowry in the form of gift and cash does exist, but is not asked for. Both widow and widower remarriages are practiced, as are junior levirate and sororate. However, if the husband's elder brother is a widower, he can marry the widowed wife of his younger brother. Likewise, remarriage of a divorced man and woman can also take place. Remarriage of widowed women is without any rituals, and can take place only after a month of her becoming a widow.

The Hindu Gujars believe in the supremacy of the traditional joint family system. The head of the family is the eldest male member, whose decision in family matters is final and is respected. Nowadays, a change in the family structure is seen where the family shares the same roof but not the same kitchen. When the differences among the
members surface too frequently, the joint setup splits into nuclear type. The elders in family are given due regard and respect: they are consulted and obeyed by the younger ones. Purdah is observed by a wife with her husband's elder male relatives of the family. Purdah is known as *ghoond* or *ghoongat*. A jocular relationship exists between a wife and her husband's younger brothers and sisters: the relation between a husband and wife is that of love and respect.

The family property descends along the male line. A daughter can claim the property of the father in the absence of a son. Normally, if a father dies without making any will, the property is transferred to those holding the collaterals. Nowadays, in the absence of a son, the son-in-law is invited to stay and look after the family and the property. Under normal circumstances the property is equally divided among the sons, with the widow having a right to maintenance.

The Hindu Gujar women are hard-working and, besides household chores, do other jobs like tend the cattle, make cowdung cakes, plaster the walls and floors of the house with cowdung and bringing potable water, fuel and fodder for the cows and buffaloes. The women of a well-to-do household may not, like to work in the fields, but during the peak harvesting season, their assistance is inevitable. A woman's role, both in the domestic as well as in the economic sphere, is significant but she does not enjoy the same status as her male counterpart. Her political role is the limited to the casting of votes in the local or general election. In the religious sphere, women take an active part in domestic rituals, festivals and fairs.

The major life-cycle rituals (commencing with birth and ending with death) are broadly in accordance with the Hindu customs. The birth of the male child is an occasion
for gaiety and celebration. The first childbirth is welcomed with greater enthusiasm than the subsequent ones. A worship called matri-havan, is offered to the family deity, in the seventh or ninth month of pregnancy to avoid miscarriage. Post-birth pollution is observed for both the mother and the child, and for this they are given purificatory baths on the sixth, eleventh, and fortieth days. After this, the child and the mother are considered ritually clean. A child is named on the eleventh day. Mundane is performed for the male child. A Nai cuts the hair, and in return is paid in cash and given some gur to eat.

Marriage is known as byah or shadi. Before marriage, on an auspicious day, the sagai takes place, where the boy’s parents go to the girl’s house and offer the girl a piece of jewellery. The girl’s father also gives some token cash to the boy, and the date of marriage is settled after consulting a priest. Prior to marriage, another ceremony known as haldi charahna is held in which turmeric and mustard oil is applied to the bride and also to the bridegroom by the womenfolk in the respective houses. On an appointed day, the barat leaves for the bride’s house, where the actual marriage ceremony is performed. This consisting of kanyadaan and phera around the sacred fire. The entire marriage ceremony is presided over by priests from both sides (they recite Vedic mantras). This is finally followed by the doli ceremony, signifying departure of the bride from her maternal home for her husband’s house. When child marriages were performed, another important ceremony known as muklawa was performed at a later date when the girl actually attained puberty, and was then allowed to stay with her husband.
The Hindu Gujars cremate their dead. Only children up to the age of five are buried as are those who die of small pox and leprosy. The eldest son performs the last rites, but the last rites of a wife are performed by the husband. On the tenth day, that is daswa, they go to Pehowa (a place near Kurukshetra in Haryana) when offerings are made to Brahmins in the name of the dead. On the thirteenth day, terhaee is performed and food is served to the Brahman and young girls. Again after fourteen days Brahmins are invited for a feast and the house is considered to be free from pollution. During the period of mourning very simple food is cooked: turmeric and ghee are not used. It is customary for the food on first three days, to be brought from a neighbor’s house. Ancestor worship (in the form of shradh rites) is performed annually, during the dark fortnight in the months of September-October. This time is especially devoted to the commemoration of the dead.

The traditional economy of the Hindu Gujars revolved around cow and buffalo herding and selling milk and milk products. The Gujars prepare Butter and Ghee in the Dhar and store it to sell to the traders during their downward journey. Milk and milk products like ghee, and curd are also directly sold in the market. The Hindu Gujars lead a settled existence and practice agriculture; a majority of them are landowners. Owners of large landholdings may employ agricultural labor and pay them a share from the produce. The farming is customary and the produce is not for sale. This is because of the Hindi Gujars trace their origin to the famous Yaduvansha to which Lord Krishna belonged. Aside from practicing agriculture and animal husbandry, some Gujars have taken up jobs in government and semi-government organizations. Some of them are education officers, forest guards, members in police and military services, etc. They have their traditional
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* rights on the forest, from where they can take wood for fuel. Wood for building houses is procured by means of a permit procured from the forest department at nominal rates. The Gujars have a regular market where they sell their produce directly. A majority of them have good landholdings and a decent income through buffalo and cow herding.

The enforcement of traditional laws and social control is managed by their own *gharelu* panchayat. This is headed by a *Chowdhary* and four other elder experienced male members of the community. They listen to all cases of land disputes, division of property and family, divorce, separation and compensation, petty thefts and the like. People usually sort their problem out through the panchayat, but if a person feels dissatisfied he may approach the court of law. Such cases are however very few. Offenders are penalized by fines in cash or kind, and these ranges from tendering a simple apology before the *biradari* to giving a feast to the *biradari*. In cases of a serious breach of community norms, a person may be excommunicated. Since the inception of statutory panchayat, the control of the traditional panchayat has been on a decline, but nevertheless it still continues.

The Hindu Gujars have faith in the local gods, goddess and regional deities. Amongst the female deities Mata Shitala is worshipped as she is responsible for causing small-pox. Similarly, *Budhe-Baba* is propitiated for his displeasure which is believed to cause skin eruptions. He is duly worshipped in the month of June and July on a Wednesday. A sweet dish made of *gur* and wheat flour known as *gulgula* is prepared and offered to *Budhe Baba*. This offering can only be eaten by a member of the *Khubbar* gotra, because Budhe Baba belongs to this gotra. Likewise, whenever a calf is born, they offer some grain and jaggery at the temple of Baba *Garibnath*. All the major Hindu
rituals and festival are celebrated with devotion. The village deity known as *Khera Devta* is propitiated every six months. Every family of the village contributes ration which is cooked and the entire village community eats. The offerings are made to the Khera Dev for the common welfare of the village.

The impact of the various developmental programs on them is evident from their overall growth, modernization and industrialization (in terms of electricity, water supply, and transport and communication network). Under the integrated Rural Development Programme, they have been able to secure loans (at a nominal interest and with a heavy subsidy) for opening their own dairy, buying agricultural implements, and tube-wells and for installing *chara* machines. The educated unemployed youth can get a loan up to a limit of Rs. 25,000 for opening any shop, or starting a business, or a small-scale or cottage industry. The Gujar girls and boys manage to secure a primary and secondary level of education. Girls drop out to help their mothers in household. One factor dissuading boys and girls from studying further is that for a college education they have to travel a long distance. Immunization programmes are availed of, and for all serious illnesses they go to the hospitals that are not far from their village. The attitude of the people towards family planning programs is not very encouraging: they like having large families, especially consisting of male children.

**Summary**

This chapter presented the studied cultural and cognitive perspectives of the ‘multi traditional’ community identified as Gujar. The above description reveals that the Gujar of Chamba are entirely different from those of Kangra in terms of lifestyle, religious performance, livelihood, pattern of migration, perception of natural events, etc.
This chapter also outlines the fact that the difference between the sub-sections of the Chamba Gujar is minimal, although the status of the Ban Gujar is considered to be higher than the Bhatliye in the local hierarchy (in terms of traditional purity and economic condition). The social systems of all the sub-section are also explained in this chapter, along with the details of their seasonal migration and its relation to their time-space perception.
REFERENCES CITED


