Chapter IV

Social Bases of Sub-regionalism

Society provides the environment in which the game of politics is played. Hence, the social structure determines and guides the emergence of social classes which apart from individuals constitute the actors in the political system. Moreover, social mores, modes and ways also shape individual and group identities. The study of social structure and interactions is, thus, important to an understanding of the underlying basis of regional identity. The present chapter is devoted to the analysis of the social structure of the two regions. We would mainly focus our discussion on language, caste formations, religious practices and social customs and mores with a view to see how the regionally based social and cultural distinctiveness combined with other political and economic factors produce sub-regional conflict at the political level.

Language and Sub-regionalism:

Language is a very important and sensitive media of social interaction in any area. A common language brings the people of diverse areas together and create among them a feeling of oneness. Common language makes for social communication, so necessary for the formation of a community. It is our view that language is not the only factor to provide a strong base
to sub-regionalism, but it becomes important when accompanied by other socio-economic factors and serves 'as one of the important symbols of identification and distinction.'\(^1\) In the given situation of Indian society we can very well understand the sensitive and crucial role of language by keeping in view the "nature of divisive issue and the target of divisive politics."\(^2\) It is in this context that we will discuss the role of language in the formation of regional identities in the empirical setting of Himachal Pradesh.

Himachal Pradesh is, by and large, a Hindi speaking state. The various dialects spoken in the different parts of the state are assumed to be different versions of Pahari language which is the spoken language as distinct from the written language which is Hindi. In fact the word 'Pahari' applies to "the groups of languages spoken in the sub-Himalayan hills extending from Bhadrawah, north of Punjab to the eastern parts of Nepal."\(^3\) Various Tibeto-Burman languages are spoken to its north, Kashmiri and western Punjabi to its west, and the Aryan languages of Punjab and the Gangetic plains are spoken to its south.\(^4\)

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4. Ibid.
G.A. Grierson has divided the Pahari languages into three main groups. In the extreme east there is khas-kura or Eastern Pahari, commonly called Naipali, the Aryan language spoken in Nepal. In Kumaon and Garhwal, we have Central Pahari languages, Kumauni and Garhwali and finally in the west we have the western Pahari languages spoken in Jaunsar-Bawar, the Shimla Hill States, Kullu, Mandi, and Suket, Chamba and Western Kashmir. This is, however, a very broad categorisation of Pahari language but it establishes one important point that Grierson places the half of Himachal Pradesh in the western Pahari group and excludes the present districts of Kangra, Hamirpur and Una from it. Therefore, these districts which form one of the two regions selected for the sub-regional conflict do not fall in the broad classification of Pahari language.

It is a remarkable fact that although Pahari has little connection with the Punjabi and Western and Eastern Hindi spoken in the adjoining areas, it shows manifold traces of intimate relationship with the languages of Rajputana. The overwhelming majority of population who speak Pahari belong to the Kanet and Khasa castes. There is no substantial difference between these two castes which are, very closely connected

with each other and sometimes even interchangeable. To explain such an independent position enjoyed by Pahari language, we have to trace the origin of people who speak Pahari language.

The Khasas were the earliest immigrants to this Himalayan tract of whom we have any historical account. They were, probably an Aryan tribe hailing from Central Asia which occupied this hilly tract, then known as Sapadalaksha. In sixth century A.D. another tribe, of Gurjars after invading India also occupied the same tract. Both these groups, at that time, spoke an Aryan, but not necessarily an Indo-Aryan language. Most of the Gurjaras who generally followed pastoral pursuits accepted the way of life and culture of Khasas and got merged into and identified themselves with the preceding population. Another group of Gurjars who were great fighters invaded Eastern Rajputana from Spadalaksha and founded the great Rajput States of Rajputana. They were later identified with Kshatriyas by the Brahmins.


Hence the Pahari dialects are closely related to Rajasthani possibly because of the Gurjar influence. This also can be explained by the fact that during the Mughal rule in India there was a constant influx of Gurjar-Rajputs from Rajputana and neighbouring parts of India into the hills. The historical accounts and the folk tales of these hills tell how tribes after tribes and rulers after rulers left their established seats in Rajputana and sought refuge in the hills to save themselves from the imperial oppression.  

Hence in the Grierson's classification Shimla region fits in the western Pahari group of languages which "may be looked upon as a form of Rajasthani mixed with the already heterogeneous language of the Khasa-Gurjars." Even western Pahari is not a homogeneous dialect but consists of a great number of dialects varying almost from hill to hill. Some of the major dialects prevalent in the western Pahari group are Jaunsari, Sirmauri, Bhagati, Kiunthali, Kului, Mandeali, Chameali and Bhadrawah group. Most of these dialects are inter-connected to some extent and this interaction and influence on each other is more visible in those areas which are also geographically contiguous. For example, Sirmauri, Bhagati and Kiunthali dialects spoken in the Shimla region.


are intimately connected with each other as there was better social interaction among the people living in these areas.

On the basis of above discussion we can argue that Shimla region constitutes a distinct linguistic group within the state and distinct from the dialect spoken in the Kangra region which is our second unit for analysis.

Let us try to situate the Kangra region in the Grierson's classification on which we are relying to prove our point.

The Kangra region comprising the present districts of Kangra, Hamirpur and Una lies to the north of Hoshiarpur district of Punjab and to the south of Chamba. The region was a part of undivided Punjab and was merged into Himachal Pradesh on the basis of the recommendations of Punjab Boundary Commission on November 1, 1966.

In this region, Kangri dialect is the mother tongue of about 95 per cent of population. It is the language of whole of Kangra region with the exception of Chhota and Bara Bangahal, and along the fringes where the dialect merges into those of the adjacent territories. Locally the dialect is generally called Pahari but this term does not

signify that the Pahari spoken in this region has similarity with the Pahari spoken in Shimla region. In fact, this dialect is more closely related to standard Punjabi than it is to the western Hindi or Hindustani. In vocabulary too while western Hindi words are sometimes used in preference to the Standard Punjabi form, structurally the dialect is essentially Punjabi. In Una district the spoken language is Punjabi. In the scheme of nomenclature and classification adopted in the Linguistic Survey of India, the language and dialect of Kangra are grouped in the following table:

Table 4.1

Central Group of Indo-Aryan Languages

- Punjabi (Part-I)
- Kangri (p.775)
- Kandiali (p.775)
- Dogri (p.637)
- Standard Punjabi (p.677)
- Baghati (p.495)
- Western Pahari (p.373)
- Kiunthali Satluj Group (p.647)
- Pahari (Part IV)
- Kangri (p.776)
- Kiunthali Satluj Group (p.549)


The above table shows that Kangri is one of the dialects of Punjabi language and it is different from Fahari language and its various forms. We can see the influence of Dogri which is also one dialect of Punjabi due to proximity of Kangra to Jammu where Dogri is spoken.13

What follows from the above discussion is that the language spoken in Kangra region which is generally termed as Fahari is a combination of Standard Punjabi and Dogri with a few peculiarities of its own. It is also significant fact that this dialect is not connected with the western Pahari, the spoken language of rest of the State excluding the tribal areas, where the influence of Rajasthani is found to a large extent.

Hence the argument that the whole state is unilingual i.e. Fahari speaking seems to be very superficial and cannot stand scrutiny when we examine the composition of languages and dialects of different regions of the State. This assertion is confirmed by our survey which included a question on common language of Himachal Pradesh.

Table 4.2

Region-wise opinion regarding the spoken language of Himachal Pradesh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Name of Language</th>
<th>Shimla region</th>
<th>Kangra region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Pahari</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Dogri</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>No Common Language</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>55.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 165 100 240 100

The data reveal that the assertion that Himachal Pradesh is a Pahari speaking state seems politically motivated, used to justify the integration of the hill areas of the Punjab into Himachal Pradesh which took place on November 1, 1966. The overwhelming majority of the respondents in both regions were of the view that there is no common spoken language in Himachal Pradesh. Since language was the principal criterion for the reorganisation of states before the State Reorganisation Commission constituted to look into this matter, it was
imperative to emphasise the linguistic homogeneity of Himachal Pradesh. Hence there has been a tendency to gloss over the heterogeneity of spoken languages by grouping them under the umbrella of Pahari Language.

Table 4.3

Do you understand the dialect of other region?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Shimla region</th>
<th>Kangra region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Yes</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>77.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Don't know</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 165 100 240 100

Whatever the leaders may claim, the data reveal that the various parts of the State including the two sub-regions which we have identified for our analysis, namely Shimla region and Kangra region, are not only linguistically distinct and different but most people of one region do not understand even the dialect of other region. Even if we assume the various dialects as the different forms of Pahari language, the Pahari spoken in Shimla region is entirely different from the Kangra brand of Pahari.
Probably, the diversity in language has existed in the state for a long time due to the geographical isolation of its different parts from one another. Natural barriers like rivers or mountains were the major hurdles in the social interaction and the subsequent emergence of one Pahari language. But this linguistic diversity became a relevant factor in sub-regionalism only after the increase in political mobilization of hill people.

Caste Structure:

Caste is a peculiarly Indian institution which has no counterpart elsewhere, for in no country is man's entire life so dictated by the accident of his birth, at least theoretically, but fortunately less and less so in practice, as it is in India. It has become the basis of social stratification in the absence or very low level of class consciousness.

The term 'jat' and 'jati' denotes 'genus' or 'species' and is conventionally translated by the English words 'caste' or 'sub-caste'. The origin of caste system can be traced back to the sacred scriptures which divide Hindu society into four hierarchically ranked 'Varanas', each associated with a particular hereditary function. Moreover, in this broad framework each caste is generally identified with one of the 'varana' in various regions. Many serious
studies on caste system in Indian context have shown that the Varna Scheme is more appropriately seen as a set of dialectically related models rather than as a single linear series. Thus the Brahmins, Kashatriyas and Vaishyas are distinct from the lowest Varna—The Shudras—in that the former are entitled to study the Vedas and to offer sacrifice. Brahmins and Kshatriyas are different from the last two as the rulers of the spiritual and temporal domains. Apart from it each varna is opposed to the other in regard to style of life and code of conduct. There are certain attributes attached with each caste like occupation, degree of purity, diet and marriage customs.  

It is beyond the scope of the present study to examine various aspects of caste system but an attempt will be made to situate the caste system prevailing in the two regions of state and find out the regional caste structures emerging in these regions of Himachal Pradesh. For this it becomes necessary to discuss the caste hierarchies and interrelations in the two regions and the interaction between caste system and political processes in a democratic society. Such an

analysis will help us to see how regional caste structure lead to the formation of regional identities. And how the politicization of these identities leads to regionalism and sub-regionalism.

Hindus constitute the overwhelming majority of the population in Himachal Pradesh. The caste structure of this hilly society generally follows the broad outline of the general caste structure of the Hindu society. However, since from our point of view, it is not the general but the particular features of caste structures in the two regions of state which are of importance we would confine ourselves to the latter.

First, we shall discuss the caste hierarchy in Shimla region. The principal castes in this region are Brahmins, Rajputs, Kanets and Lower castes such as Kolis, Sonars, Badhis, Breheras, Turis, Doglis, Dums, Nais, Kumhars, etc. 15

Brahmins in this region can be divided into two general categories. The upper caste Brahmins such as Gaur and Sarswat Brahmins are mostly immigrants from Garhwal and Kumaun areas of Uttar Pradesh. They perform

priestly duties at conventional Hindu ceremonies and are generally well off because of the large clientele and land grants given to them to encourage settlement. They are generally educated and have monopoly over the religious affairs in a society where religious orthodoxy still plays an important role in individual's psyche. They do not plough at all and normally rent out their land to raise income. Fees given to them for performing various rituals, are the other source of their income. The second group consists of the indigenous Fuiaries who work in the 'deota' temples and do not follow caste rules associated with upper caste Brahmins. They eat meat and also follow the rit system. Their main occupation apart from temple worship is agriculture and they usually handle the plough which is forbidden to priestly Brahmins.

Second in the caste hierarchy come Rajputs of different shades. There is no authentic record of the origin of the Rajputs in the hills but it is believed that Muslim conquest forced many Brahmins and Kshatriyas to seek refuge in the hills and some of them ultimately became rulers of small states. During the princely period, most of them were land-

lords rather than a caste in the true sense. They constitute a very small group scattered all over the region and have maintained some connections with each other mostly through matrimonial alliances. They claim themselves to be of royal blood, and all the ex-ruling families, their descendents and relatives come in this category of Rajputs. They did not till the land themselves initially but the legislation regarding the abolition of tenancy has forced them to till the land themselves. Rathores, Chandels, Kanwars, Thakurs, Parmars come in this category of Rajputs.

The mass of the population of Shimla region consists of Kanets who also claim themselves to be Rajputs. They are basically an agricultural group but the origin of this caste is still controversial. Possibly they are of Aryan origin which is confirmed by the use of Vedic rituals and hymns by them. It is said that later they adopted Karewa or widow re-marriage which was not permitted at that time. The name Kanet is perverted form of the Sanskrit word 'Kuniti' which conclusively goes against their being aborigines, because it means that they were initially bound by vedic law which they later on abandoned or violated.

Cunningham identifies the Kanets with the Kulindas or Kunindas of early Hindu history who sprung from the Khasas, and later occupied the whole sub-Himalayan region from the Indus to the Brahmaputra before the Aryan invasion.
He divides the Kanets into three main tribes, the Chauhans, Mangals and the Raos. This view is also confirmed by Sri James Lyall who holds that Kanets were a mixture of Mughal and Hindu races. Whatever their origin, the fact remains that Kanets turned Rajputs enjoy dominant social and economic position in the region.

Internally they do not form a homogeneous caste, but are divided into number of sub-sections or 'khels', either after the name of a famous ancestor or the place where they had settled. Another way to classify Kanets is to divide them into superior and inferior groups. The superior Kanets called Khas or real Kanets are supposed to be the descendants of the old Movis. The 'Khels' of superior Kanets

17. Cunningham quoted in Punjab States Gazetteers, Shimla Hill States Gazetteers, Ibid., p.120.
18. James Lyall, quoted in Ibid., p.121.
19. Generally 'ta' is added after the name of their ancestor or place of settlement. Therefore, we find that surname of most of them ends with 'ta' like Justa, Tanta, Ronta, Deshta, Prita, Dipta, Singta etc.
20. For the Origin of Khas tribe see D.N. Majumdar, Himalayan Polyandry (Bombay: Asia Publishing House,1962), p. 249.
21. Movis were the ancient ethnic group living in the hills before this area was occupied by the immigrants from the lower hills or plains.
22. Khel is a small homogeneous group connected with blood relation, within each caste and sub-caste.
collectively know as 'Khund Kanets' are scattered throughout the region. The second group of Kanets consists of Rahu, Kuran and Kanari which again are divided into countless Khels. But this neat classification has lost its ground after some lower Kanets successfully acquired higher status, through 'Sanskritization', thereby increasing inter-caste homogeneity. Now the earlier restriction of social intercourse between the higher and lower Kanets, are breaking down and almost the whole group enjoy the same status in caste hierarchy.

One unique feature of caste system in the region is that there are almost no business castes as prevalent in other parts of state. Most of the business activities are dominated by the Suds of Kangra region or Punjabis who are concentrated only in the market areas and are scattered throughout the state. Their relationship with the local population is mainly confined to business activities with little social interaction as most of them have maintained links with original places from where they migrated. Local people still regard them outsiders and there are instances of conflicts between locals and these outsiders particularly after entry of local people into business which was not regarded honourable until the recent past. Rarely do Suds

23. Khoond Kanets are the marshal race known for their bravery.
marry locally. They seek brides or grooms from their own region. However, in spite of dominating the economic scene they do not enjoy any corresponding position in the social set up due to their isolated position and small number.

Among the lower castes the Kolis and Daglis numerically occupy an important position in the caste hierarchy. They are mainly agricultural labourers who have been serving the landowning castes for the ages. They were by and large landless but now they own small plots of land as a result of the governmental policy of land to landless. But they cannot subsist entirely on the small land-holdings and have to depend upon the big agriculturists to sustain themselves. They are considered a distorted caste of Kanets. It is said that these two castes are descendants of the two sons of a Kanet who killed a bullock and were made out-caste.

Apart from Kolis and Daglis there are many artisan castes but their number is small. Lohars are iron-smiths and most of them own small plots of land. They are dependent on big land-owners who require their services. They marry within their own caste and also with other castes such as Badhis and Brehras. Badhis are carpenters and Brehras are goldsmiths. Sunars are goldsmith but they have higher status and can inter-marry with Kanets. Almost all of them were initially servants of land-owners from whom they received foodgrain at harvest time. This share of grain is called
'shikota' which has now been replaced by daily wages.

Turies are musicians who beat the drum and play other musical instruments at marriage, funeral and other ceremonies. They get a share of offerings for the dead and also receive the shroud, besides getting fees depending upon the status of deceased. At the time of each harvest, they come and collect the grain from each household. They are also generally attached with the Deota temples which are found in almost all the villages or cluster of villages in the hills. They are considered unclean due to the fact that they take offerings of the dead.

Nais are barbers who were previously, the servants of land-owners and received 'Shikota' at harvest but now most of them have opened their own stalls. Their status varies from place to place. In some areas they inter-marry with Kanets while in other areas they are considered untouchables. Kumhars are considered the most superior among the lower castes. Except Nais, Sunars and Kumhars, all other castes are considered untouchables and no upper caste will marry or dine with them, nor are they allowed to enter the houses of higher castes.

To conclude we may say that the regional caste structure which emerges after brief description of various castes in the region is that Kanets are the dominant castes in the region and they are also the dominant class. Most
of them are agriculturists or horticulturists and have acquired the status of Rajputs by observing Rajput customs. The superior Rajputs who once enjoyed the dominant position during the princely period feel threatened by their degradation though they still claim their superiority of status.

There is no evidence of caste based class conflict though lower castes particularly Kolis and Kanets are not merely caste categories but also class categories. The only caste conflict which is seen in the region in between superior Rajputs and Kanet turned Rajputs. In this struggle the latter have the advantage of better economic position, numerical strength and closeness to the lower castes which the former lack. The position of Brahmins who only enjoy superiority in religious affairs is not much better. Like upper caste Rajputs, they are also small in number and hence suffer from minority complex of insecurity and in many cases they have alligned themselves with the upper caste Rajputs who are also placed in the same situation.

Hence inter-caste relations as found in Shimla region make it peculiar regional caste structure which becomes the strong basis of sub-regionalism along with other social bases when the game of politics is played on it.
Let us now turn to Kangra region which is noted for its rigid caste system. The principal castes in the region are Brahmins, Rajputs, Khatris, Rathis, Ghirths and amongst lower castes, Kolis, Dagis, Chamars and Dumana are the common ones. First, we would discuss each caste separately and then try to look at their inter-relation in order to have a broad picture of the regional caste structure.

Brahmins occupy the highest position in the regional caste hierarchy. The general impression about this caste is that all Brahmins are a homogeneous whole, whose members, knowing no inter-differences among themselves, are united to exploit all other castes. Most of them claim themselves to belong to the great Sarswat family, but recognise an infinity of internal sub-divisions. The broad division among them is whether they follow or abstain from agriculture. 24

Among the Brahmins in the region, Nagarkotias rank the highest followed by the Bhateru, cultivator Brahmins and Bhojks. Each of them normally marry within their own clans but this restriction is now breaking down so as to give the semblance of harmony to protect their caste

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24. Those Brahmins who do not plough and have restricted themselves to the caste pursuits, are held to be pure Brahmins; those who have adopted agriculture as their main source of livelihood and plough are not held in the same reverence either by the pure Brahmins or by the rest even though they claim their status. See Punjab District Gazetteers, Kangra District, op. cit., p.151.
interests in the present democratic set up. The pure Brahmins though abstaining from agriculture, by no means restrict themselves to sacredotal duties and generally hold land, lend money, engage in government service, occupy public offices both traditional and modern. Many are in the army and teaching profession.

Rajputs constitute the second important caste of the region. Generally members of royal houses belonging to the ex-princely states on the both sides of Ravi are Rajputs. Also included are those with whom high caste Rajputs condenscend to marry. The designation of their clans is derived from the names of the states over which they once ruled. All these decendants of noble houses are distinguished by the honourable little of 'Mian' who receives peculiar salutation of 'Jai dia', offered to no other caste.

The prejudice against agriculture could be the probable reason for most of them joining the army which is still a craze for Rajput youths. Though they are homogeneous group but each clan is divided into numerous sub-divisions. Since they do not inter-marry within the clan and therefore,

25. Thus the Rajputs of Guler, Datarpur, Jaswan, Kangra, Kutlehr, Mankot, call themselves Guleria, Dadwal, Jaswal, Katoch, Kutlehria and Mankotia respectively.

26. In order to preserve their name and honour, a 'Mian' must observe four basic maxims. He must never drive the plough; he must never give his daughter in marriage to an inferior, nor marry himself much below his rank; he must never accept money in exchange for the betrothal of his daughter; and his female household must observe strict seclusion.
all the clans have to marry outside the clans which brings them in close relations with other clans and ultimately results in caste solidarity.

Thakurs and Rathis are next to the royal clans in social importance because they are connected by marriage with the latter. Sometimes it is very difficult to draw a line between the two as they also claim themselves to be Rajputs. Among them the most important are the Manhas, Jarial and Sonkla Rajputs. They occasionally receive the salutation of 'jai dia' but most of them are engaged in agriculture. In fact, they constitute the main agricultural class of the region along with Ghirths and both these castes enjoy the same position as do the Kanets in the Shimla region.

The Ghirths are the major agricultural caste scattered throughout the region. They were tenants of the Brahmans and Rajputs who abstained from agriculture and therefore, rented the fertile valleys to maintain privacy and seclusion. But after the implementation of land reforms particularly in the 1970s, Ghirths have become the landowners of the land they tilled as tenants. The land legislation has changed their relationship vis-à-vis the landowning castes of Brahmans and Rajputs. The Ghirths rank as Sudras which is confirmed

27. In Kangra, the son of a Rajput by a low caste woman was degraded from the caste of his father and he became Rathi. See J.B. Lyall, Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Kangra District (Lahore: Civil & Military Press, para 66, 1889).
by the fact that they do not wear the 'janeo' or thread, they take money for their daughters but seldom exchange them. Now they have acquired a respectable position after the long struggle against the social restrictions imposed on them by the higher castes. Their improved economic position can be the possible cause of the better social position.

Among the commercial castes the Gosains used to be the wealthiest caste but Mahajans and Suds have now outstripped them. Khatries are the numerically most important commercial caste and rank with the Mahajans and Suds, wearing the 'janeo' or sacred thread. They do not enjoy very high status in the Rajput-Brahmin dominated society though they control trade and commerce of not only this region but the state as a whole.

The Gaddis, a caste not in real sense, are the most remarkable group of this region. They mostly reside in the high hills known as Dhauladhars. They are semi-pastoral, semi-agricultural caste whose main wealth consists of flocks of sheep and goats. In all respects they differ from rest of the population and have preserved their distinct cultural identity.

28. The term Gaddi is a generic name under which are included Brahmins, Khatri, a few Rajputs, Rathis and Thakurs.
The Gujars of the region are exclusively a pastoral caste owning buffaloes, generally living in the skirts of the forests and subsisting by the sale of milk, 'ghee' and other produce of their herds. Majority of them are Muslims who are divided into two groups - the Sowanadar Gujars and the Ban Gujars. 29

Lower castes of the region consist of Koli, Dagi or Chanal, Barwala, Dumna, and Labanas. But interestingly different occupations tend to merge into one another, so it becomes very difficult to distinguish the outcaste classes. For example most of them not only perform the usual caste functions but also follow the occupations of higher artisan castes. They are considered untouchables and usually work in the fields of Rajputs and Brahmins as 'kamās', the agricultural labourers. They are subjected to endless restrictions imposed on them by the higher castes though there has been no sanction given or implied by the governmental rules. The social and economic position in which they are situated compels them to serve the high castes as obedient servants. Kolis are the only exception who have asserted and ultimately succeeded in climbing up in social hierarchy after a long social and legal battle. 30

29. Contrary to the impression that all Gujars are Muslims, we have found during survey that good many of them are Hindus.

The general pattern which emerges from the above description is that Rajputs are the largest caste in the region as a whole and account for 30.8 per cent of the total population. Next in size are the Girths and Brahmins with 15.1 per cent and 13.4 per cent respectively. According to British Settlement Report (1889) Rajputs, Brahmins and Girths owned nearly 90 per cent of the total cultivated area. Of this 58 per cent belonged to Rajputs, 18 per cent to the Brahmins and 13 per cent to the Girths. The above data show that Rajputs and Brahmins display what Srinivas has characterized as decisive dominance. These castes are not only numerically the largest castes in the region, but also occupy an overwhelming majority of the key positions in the formal power structure of the region.

During the last four decades we see signs of an emerging class based caste conflict in the region among the Brahmins & Rajputs who own land on the one hand and the Girths & Kolis who tilled their land until recently which they now till in their own right. They were given the right

to own that land by the legislation. Moreover, with the politicization of lower castes particularly Girths and Kolis, the dominance of Brahmin and Rajruts is being challenged by this newly mobilized section of society. Moreover, Mahajans and other Khatri castes being the decisive castes in such a sea-saw battle, are taking maximum advantage by bargaining with both caste combinations.

In such a complex situation, it is the traditionally dominant castes consisting of Brahmins and Rajputs who feel threatened by the challenge put forth by the other castes. To meet this challenge, both of castes are following a strategy to win over the lower caste fellows to their own fold in order to serve their caste/class interests and to consolidate their own caste position, vis-a-vis the other. For example, Rajputs are trying to bring over the Kolis to their side and Brahmins have come closer to the Girths.

Hence this hierarchical arrangement of different castes and their inter-relation create a peculiar caste structure confined to the Kangra region only. Moreover, regionalism or sub-regionalism in such a situation becomes a convenient tool in the hands of dominant castes of the region i.e. Brahmins and Rajputs to consolidate their own position within the region by mobilizing the masses cross-cutting castes and classes.
The picture of caste system which emerges from the above discussion clearly establishes the fact that "caste is, with very few exceptions, an endogamous group confined to one linguistic region." Moreover, endogamy and distribution over a definite area make caste members related to one another either by the ties of blood or by ties of marriage and therefore make any caste group, by and large externally homogeneous inspite of its internal ranking. The situation in a multi-caste society, as is the case of the two regions described above, becomes of great political significance when the socially and economically dominant castes, who have also dominated the political scene throughout the ages, are challenged by the newly mobilized lower caste groups which have the numerical strength which matters a lot in democratic system.

Hence, we find some sort of caste based class conflict getting a foot-hold in both regions. While in Shimla region the Kanets have succeeded in replacing the dominance of superior Rajputs, in Kangra region, Rajputs - Brahmins nexus is facing the stiff challenge, from the other castes like Girths and Kolis with the support of Khatris, particularly Mahajans. In this given situation, the dominant castes in both regions find the slogan of regionalism very convenient.

to diffuse the emerging crisis of intra-regional caste based class conflict into inter-regional conflict.

Therefore, regionalism or sub-regionalism simultaneously performs the twin functions of mobilizing the masses on regional line cross cutting the internal caste and class differences and also get a lion's share in the state power structure cashing on the consolidated regional support.

Apart from the regional structure of caste system, we also find a considerable variations in the nature of caste system in the two regions. For this purpose we have looked into the various inter-caste relations and interactions to have a clear view of caste system. Inter-caste marriage is very good indicator of emerging closeness or distance among the various castes.

Table 4.4

Inter-caste relations; Inter-marriages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Shimla region</th>
<th>Kangra region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data reveal that only 51.52 per cent were against the inter-caste marriage in Shimla region whereas as many as 63.34 per cent people disfavoured such marriages in the Kangra region. A significant percentage of respondents in the two regions were undecided which again shows the influence of caste system on the minds of the people. Similarly when the respondents were asked whether they can dine with the people of other castes, the responses were again interesting.

Table 4.5

Inter-Caste Relations; Inter-dining

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No.</th>
<th>Shimla Region</th>
<th>Kangra Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>% age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>72.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>165</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data in table 4.5 above reveal that in Shimla most of the people (72.73 per cent) can dine with any other caste except the scheduled caste, whereas Kangra people are still prefer to dine either within the caste (25.00 per cent) or with the higher castes (24.17 per cent), though there is a significant number (33.33 per cent) who can dine with non-scheduled caste people.

There is also a significant difference in the inter-caste relations in the two sub-regions:

Table 4.6

Region-wise Inter-caste relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No.</th>
<th>Shimla Region</th>
<th>Kangra Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Harmony</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|        | Total | 165  | 100.00 | 240 | 100.00 |

The data indicates that caste relations are more harmonious in Shimla region than in Kangra region. The majority of the respondents in Shimla region (60.00 per cent) were of the view that there is no caste-conflict or were not aware of
any such conflict. On the other side, in Kangra region only 26.67 per cent clearly stated that there is no caste conflict and overwhelming majority (73.33 per cent) was of the view that there is definitely a caste conflict or were not ready to respond in either way.

Though no serious caste-conflict has emerged, politicization of caste has taken place in the two sub-regions of the State. This in turn has resulted in the emergence of various caste organisations in the two regions of the State.

Table 4.7

Membership of any caste Panchayat / Organisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No.</th>
<th>Shimla region</th>
<th>Kangra region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>66.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Don't know</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>24.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data reveal that Shimla people do not think it necessary to organise themselves on caste lines because the organisation on party lines or on economic issues suits the requirement of newly emerging economic and political elite of the area. But in Kangra region, during the last decade
there has been a noticeable tendency to form caste organisation for social purpose with a view to protect caste interests threatened by competitive politics.

The above analysis shows that traditional rigidity of caste system is gradually breaking in Shimla region, but in Kangra region people are still rigid in practising caste system. The opinion regarding the nature of caste system proves this point.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Shimla-region</th>
<th>Kangra-region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Rigid</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Loose</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Don't know</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>165</strong></td>
<td><strong>240</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that (38.79 per cent) respondents from Shimla region believed that the caste system was rigid whereas the number in Kangra region is much more (60.83 per cent). Only 21.67 per cent people of Kangra were not very particular about the rigidity of caste system whereas
(39.39 per cent) people of Shimla did not attach much importance to caste system.

Religious Practices:

The powerful influence of religion on politics needs no elaboration. Historically, one finds that in India the pattern of interaction between religion & politics has varied from time to time and it has had varied social consequences. In other words, religion was never able to fully extricate itself from politics nor could politics ever rid itself fully of religion. Our main purpose is to see how the religion has played a role in the emergence of sub-regional identities in the case of Himachal Pradesh which has overwhelming majority (95.77 per cent) of Hindus. The religious homogeneity integrated the population of this state into the mainstream of mainly Hindu society and acted as an integrative factor, but the practices and various forms of Hinduism within the Hindu religion which coincide with the sub-regions have resulted in the consolidation and persistence of many sub-regional socio-cultural identities.


Hence we would focus our analysis on the religious practices followed in the two sub-regions of the State and see how they differ with each other and ultimately become the part of sub-regional cultural formations.

Let us first take the case of Shimla region where nearly the whole population is of Hindu. However, according to the generally acceptable view, the popular religion of these hills is a primitive form of animism or demon worship, which has been overlaid with a thin veneer of Hinduism. 37 Because Kanets and Khasas form the mass of population in the region, the religion practised in the region generally refers to their beliefs, unless the contrary is stated. Their religious practices are not exactly the orthodox cult of Vishnu and Shiva which are incarnated in the form of devtas and are worshipped almost throughout the region. There are also many temples of Devi, at Hatkoti, Tara Devi and Bhima Kali, but these temples were not built by Kanets or Khasas but by Rajputs. 38 There are a few Vaishnavites but most of them are immigrants while there is a considerable number of Shaivites, the mass of the hill people in Shimla region can be classed as Shaktas or devotees of Shakti,

38. Ibid., p.136.
embodied in a host of deities of whom Kali is the principal one. Broadly, the religion and the religious beliefs of the people of this region revolves around the institution of deota which has no parallel in the lower hills and plains. Therefore, more discussion on this institution is required, which though purely religious has some political and socio-economic manifestations.

Every village has a devta or devi (deity) of its own and many have more than one. For each paragana (group of villages) there is a principal god or goddess which is identified with some form or incarnation of one of the principal Hindu deities. There are numerous legends attached to the origin of devta. According to the popular belief, devta was a man of divine origin or attributes who had a mission to free the earth of a certain demon. After accomplishing his task of killing the demon he was deified by the people who had suffered at the hands of the demon. This is the commonest version, through the names of 'divine man' and 'demon' differ from place to place. The ordinary villager appears to look upon his deota as a divine spirit, capable of inflicting considerable harm if not propitiated with offerings and sacrifices on every occasions. According to another version accepted by some people, the deotas were originally men, who met violent deaths or died in a manner which made the propitiation of their ghosts necessary and
gradually they acquired the status of deotas by terrorising the people.

The belief in deota is so deep rooted that an oath taken in the name of deota is unhesitatingly accepted by the litigants. A refusal to honour the oath is believed to bring disaster not only to oneself but to one's relatives and property also. People socially boycott false swearers. At times the deota worship can be a great burden to the devotees. On different occasions, deota is taken out from the temple and it is always taken in procession in which all his devotees or atleast one member from each family must accompany him. The deota is generally taken out with great eclat on a tour called 'Dhawala' covering its jurisdiction to collect offerings which are decided by the elders of the village with the deota's consent. Sometimes devtas are carried on long pilgrimages to Badrinath, Kangra or Jawalaji or to any other place desired by them to take holy a bath. The failure to be present on these occasions, without the prior permission of deota, is deemed an inexpiable sacrilege. Deotas are sometimes capricious and forbid the use of even milk and milk products to anyone, even to children.

39. Based on field survey.

40. This tour provides the opportunity for the ordinary people to take deota to their houses which is otherwise a very expensive affair.

41. The persons accompanying devta on such journey, are supposed to walk the whole distance bare-footed.
While a temple of some sort is a must for deota, a temple for a devi is a rare thing. In most cases the devis (Kali) are assumed to reside on hill tops. The deota idols in the temples are made of precious metals. In case of devi the whole form is represented while only the face of a deota is exhibited. The form of worship of all deotas or devis is the same.

One interesting fact about deotas is that many of them are related with the another like human beings and their also exists an hierarchy of deotas according to the status enjoyed by them. In fact, this relationship among them is just symbolic which encourages mutual interaction among the people living within the jurisdiction of different deotas. Put differently, these deotas provide the opportunity to the people living apart from each other in far flung areas under different administrative units to come closer to each other and create among them broader unity. Moreover, the hierarchical organisation of deotas extends the framework of this unity to all the people of area.

It is said that up to the beginning of 19th century human sacrifice to Kali was openly practised at Sarahan in Shimla district where the temple of Bhima Kali is situated. Now, however, goats are offered of which the major share is

42. The sacred place on these hill tops is signified by a shrub or a tree carrying flags and a heap of stones.
returned to the sacrificer and the rest is distributed among the priests who generally relish meat. Such offerings can be made to deota or devi at any time depending upon the devotion of devotees but the most important occasions are the 'Shand' and the 'Bhunda' which are held at fixed intervals. 'Shand' is held in the temple while 'Bhunda' is held on the hill top. Thousands of goats are sometimes slaughtered at these occasions. After this is done, the deota is brought out and the people dance to celebrate the occasion.

To run the affairs of devta there is a committee of managers called 'Kardars'. Besides the five or six priests there is one Bhandari or storekeeper. They perform the functions of administering temple funds and settling religious or social disputes among the devotees. The office of Bhandari and the membership in the management committee are held by higher castes and confined to a few families. The higher castes use their membership of the deota committee to legitimise their influence and dominance over the masses. The religious affairs are looked into and conducted by the 'Pujaris', a caste graded below the Brahmins & Rajputs.

43. The goats are made to walk round the temple of the deity to whom the sacrifice is offered, and then slaughtered one by one. Before slaughtering, water is sprinkled on the goats and if the goat trembles, it is assumed that deity has accepted the offer.

44. Pujaries claim themselves to be Brahmins - a claim which Brahmins themselves reject. In fact, they have a doubtful caste background. They were brought from outside to perform religious ceremonies. This according to tradition deota himself ordained.
Here we find a caste conflict between the Rajputs who control the management and the priests (Pujaris) who monopolise the religious domain. This conflict is sometimes reflected in politics, especially at Panchayat level where both castes usually clash for the panchayat offices.

The above description shows that though the people of the Shimla region claim themselves to be followers of Hindu religion, the Hinduism practised by them is quite different version of Hinduism. The role of deota institution in integrating the people of hills which are scattered all over the region and disconnected from each other by geographical barriers is remarkable. In other words, the network of deotas has helped the people to integrate themselves within that region which ultimately helps in the emergence of regional consciousness in the shape of regional identity.

Overwhelmingly Hindi dominated Kangra region, on the other hand, has been more influenced by the Hinduism of the plains due to constant interaction and proximity. It would be out of place to enter here into any detailed discussion on the general characteristics of Hinduism. We would, therefore, emphasise only on local peculiarities.

The influence of Hinduism of plains is visible from the number of historic temples and shrines located in the region.
The temple of Vajeshwari or Mata Devi at Bhawan near Kangra is a highly venerated Hindu temple. This temple not only attracts the devotees of the region only but the people from adjoining state also come in large number to have 'darsan' of the Devi. An extensive Sanskrit inscription at the gateway of the temple records that it was built in the reign of Sahi Mauhmamada who reigned at Delhi from 1433 to 1446 A.D. 45

Another famous temple of the region is at Jawalamukhi situated in a niche in the range known as Kalidhar, 35 Kms. far from Kangra. There is no idol of the Jawala 'mata', but sacred flames burning in the temple are taken as manifestation of 'mata'. The real place of worship within the temple consists of a square pit about three feet deep with a pathway all around. There is a little water mixed with the gas at the bottom of the pit and on applying fire the gas bursts into a flame. Gas also leaks out at several other places where flames can be seen burning most of the time. It is believed that flames proceed from the mouth of demon Jalandhara whose head lies at Kangra and whose buried body extends to Multan, under the whole area between Beas and the Sutlej.

The influence of Lord Shiva can also be seen in the region. The Shiv temple at Baijnath attracts large number of

devotees throughout the region especially on the 'Shivratri' festival. The temple of Baba Balak Nath, the supposed son of Lord Shiva, at Deoth Sidh, in Hamirpur district of the region, is a place of worship for not only for the people of region but also for the people of plains, especially Punjab. It is believed that wishes of people are fulfilled after visiting the temple. Devotees also offer goats after the fulfilment of their wishes but now goats are not slaughtered in the temple but generally sold by the management of the temple to enhance the income of the temple.

There are certain religious practices which are confined to this region only. Rali worship is one of them, though the mode of worship slightly vary from place to place. This worship begins on the new year of Hindu calendar i.e. 1st of Chet and continues for 15 days. The clay images of Shankar and Rali are made and worshipped by unmarried girls. On the 1st of Baisakh, the marriage of Shankar and Rali takes place with great celebration in the presence of Purohit (Priest) and the girls who took part in the worship. On the next day Shankar and Rali are put in 'dolis' accompanied by girls to a pool or river bank where the images of Shankar and Rali are immersed in the river amidst sobs of the girls.

The worship of Sendu Bir, the whistling spirit, is an other religious practice prevalent in the region. Sendu Bir is generally worshipped by the agriculturists who offers
him Karahi or sweetmeat at the time of harvest. Most of them believe that Sendu Bir steals corn, milk, ghee etc. and gives them to his devotees. Moreover, he is supposed to burn down the house and cause a fire or some such damage if he is angry. Sendu Bir is also supposed to cohabit with any female whom any person who has mastered his charms may send him, the woman thinking that she is in dream.46

Narsing is mostly worshipped by females of the Kangra region though some males also believe in him. It is believed that he blesses sons and assists in adversity.

In this region, not only Hindu gods are worshipped but some graves of Muslim saints are equally venerated by Hindus. Among the most celebrated saints Bawa Fattu and Bawa Bhopat are respected by the people. They primarily perform the functions of spiritual judges who impart justice to the disputed parties who swear by their name which is honoured because of the fear of some calamity in case it is defied.

Guga worship is another peculiar feature of the Kangra region. The Gugas are curious sheds which contain some images, and are supposed to be efficacious for snake bites. A mounted horseman is exhibited in these images of guga. Moreover, snake worship is also very common which is generally

46. Ibid., p.206.
held after Diwali when snakes made up of cowdung are worshipped.

The people of the region following a Vedic tradition, also worship plants and trees particularly at the time of marriage. Among these trees are ak (Calotropis), dhak (Buteak rondosa) and aam (mango) whose twigs are cut and put into a Kalas (large earthen pitcher) and worshipped both in bride's and bridegroom's houses. Worship of peepal trees by the bride and groom after marriage is also a must. The people who are childless regularly marry the tulsi plant to Rama, Vishnu or Krishna, in a hope of having a child. There is one important god who is very much found of sticks and generally described as 'Dandion-ka-deota'. His effigy is placed under a peepal tree and person suffering from any diseases offer a couple of sticks after recovery.

Our discussion regarding the different religious practices in the region, clearly establishes the fact that there are some peculiarities in them. In fact, many gods or saints worshipped in the region are unknown in the other region of the state, but form the integral part of the culture of the region and add very important dimensions to it. One more point which emerges from the discussion is that many temples like Baba Balak Nath and Jawalaji provide the people of the region and the people of plains especially from Punjab, a platform to know each other. But, interestingly, the
people of Shimla region do not generally visit these temples though they are not less religious. Otherwise, their religious visits would have encouraged interaction at the social level also. In fact, religious practices in Kangra region have definitely some thing to do with the regional cultural identity.

To conclude our discussion, we may say that though Himachal Pradesh is predominantly Hindu state, the types Hinduism practised in the different regions are quite different. Moreover, the religious practices, the whole rage of belief system and modes of worship, are quite different as far as Shimla and Kangra regions are concerned. These religious variations as such do not become very important from political point of view but as a part of regional culture, they definitely play a contributory role after the politicisation and these cultural identities by the interested groups on regional lines.

Social Customs, Folkways, and Mores

A custom is an habitual form of behaviour largely followed in society. It is the most genuine channel along which the flow of social life runs. Customs, in fact, are the repository of our social heritage and are so essential to the life of a society and so much interconnected with its popular tradition and myths, that they often come to be
regarded as something sacred or even prescribed by the gods or supernatural powers. People generally follow these customs because they have been followed by their ancestors.

Intimately related to the customs are the folkways and mores. According to W. Graham Summer, "Men inherited from their beast ancestors psychophysical traits, instincts and dexterities, or at least predispositions, which give them aid in solving the problem of food supply, sex, commerce, and vanity. The result is mass phenomena; currents of similarity, concurrence, and mutual contribution; and these produce folkways."47 The mores, on the other hand, are the folkways considered as regulator of behaviour and imply a value judgement about the folkways.48

The social customs, folkways and mores are, in fact, integral part of social structure of any society. In the present section, we would discuss the different social customs, folkways and mores as followed in the two sub-regions of Himachal Pradesh i.e. Shimla and Kangra and try to look into the points of differences between these regions on that ground. Also we would see how social customs, folkways and mores help in the process of identity formation at

48. Ibid., p.34.
regional level and how the politicisation of these sub-regional identities leads to the emergence of the phenomenon called sub-regionalism.

We shall confine ourselves to customs and mores related to marriage, birth and death ceremonies, system of inheritance, widow remarriage, dowry system and parda system. While discussing different folkways we would discuss the fairs and festivals, dances and songs prevalent in the two sub-regions under study.

First let us take the customs and mores related to marriage in Shimla region. As we have earlier stated Hinduism is only a thin veneer over animism and demon worship in Shimla region and also that caste system is not very rigid. The marriage customs confirm this observation. Marriage rules are not so definite or so strict in the hills as in the plains. Certain types of relationships are, however, regarded as prohibited such as the marriage within the 'got'. Also marriages on the father's side up to the seventh generations are prohibited but on the mother's side marriage beyond the third generation is allowed. Further the lower castes have no definite rules. The higher caste status families will always prefer to marry with equivalent caste and status but lower castes sometimes break this rule especially in the case when suitable matches are not available within their own caste. There are many instances of marriage
of a Kanet girl with a Rajput, Brahmin or Bania. Hence caste restrictions regarding marriages are gradually breaking down and inter-caste marriages among the non-scheduled caste and scheduled castes are recognized as legitimate but the children of such union designated 'sartoras' are considered to be of that caste which is inferior among such parents.

A man may marry as many wives as he pleases or can afford to keep, but the first wife is considered the senior or superior until a son is born, otherwise the mother of eldest son is the principal wife. Usually most girls are married at an early age. In higher castes the parents arrange the match but now this trend is on decline and the girl/boy has a choice of her/his partner. Moreover, the free intermixing of the youngs are not discouraged even before marriage.

There are three kinds of marriage ceremonies. First is the 'biah' or regular marriage according to the Shastras. The other two forms, 'Jhajra' and 'gadar' or 'Paraina' are informal and unorthodox in which the bridegroom sends one or two men to bring home the bride who comes with a small party of her relations as well as friends. On arrival the bride worships a pot of water, a lamp placed at the threshold and also the hearth. Worship of Ganesh is essential in 'Jhajra' marriage, otherwise it becomes a 'gadar' marriage. The
bridegroom, if he can afford, gives a feast to the village and relations and fees are given to priests, barbers, musicians and village menials. It was also found during survey that large number of respondents in Shimla region (90.9 per cent) do not consider it necessary to perform the ritual of seven rounds around the sacrificial fire which is must in a conventional Hindu marriage which is performed by majority of the people (79.6 per cent) in Kangra region.

The influence of social customs and mores of plains is clearly seen in Kangra region probably due to the long social interaction. Marriage ceremonies in this region confirms our observation. Here, the rules of marriage are those typically followed among the orthodox Hindus of the rest of India. Caste system is so rigid especially among higher castes that marriage must take place within the same caste irrespective of the suitability of the match. There are numerous instances of excommunication of those who dared to break this taboo. Our data on the inter-caste marriages show that a large number of people (66.66 per cent-in Shimla region and 60.41 per cent in Kangra region) prefer to

49. It is pertinent to note here that choice of the type of marriage depends on class rather than caste. The upper caste rich go in for 'biash'marriage according to the shastras which is quite an expensive affair. The other two types of marriages being inexpensive are popular among the common people.

50. Data based upon field survey.
marry in the same caste. But the preferences for inter-caste marriages are more (39.59 per cent) in Shimla region as compared to Kangra region (30.33 per cent). The marriage with the 'al' or class is forbidden throughout the region irrespective of caste. There is a little less strictness about inter-marrying in the same 'gotra' though this is not observed by members of lower castes. Exchange marriages or what is called 'atta satta ka nata' which consists of a series of reciprocal arrangements are common among the lower castes and very rare among the higher castes. Sometimes it creates problem especially if someone in this linkage does not stand by his words. Second type of marriage is called labour marriage in which the would-be bridegroom binds himself to work for the bride's family for the period already decided. Third type is called money marriage where the bride is purchased by making payments depending upon the paying capacity of the bridegroom's family and the economic position of bride's family. Fourth type of marriage is called 'dharam' or 'pun' marriage where girl is given without taking

51. The percentage of inter-caste marriage in Kangra region seems very high because of the customs followed by Rajputs by which they prefer to give their daughters to a higher caste and take a wife from lower caste. Data based upon field survey.

52. Lower caste people do not always perform marriage ceremony according to 'Shastras' and good many of them at times marry within the 'gotra'.

53. In this exchange X will promise his daughter to Y, on the condition that Y gives his daughter to Z, who again promises, his daughter to X. See Punjab District Gazeteer, op.cit, p. 137.
money. The fifth is called 'jararphuki' in which bride and bridegroom, without consulting the elders of their families enter consugal relations after setting fire to a brush wood and walking round the fire.  

Hence, we can say after the brief discussion regarding the marriage customs in the two sub-regions under study that there is a lot of difference in the kind of marriage ceremonies and other matters related to them, 'Gaddar' and 'Jhanjar' marriages are confined to Shimla region and the five kinds of marriages discusses above are quite legitimate in Kangra region but unknown in Shimla region. Moreover, parents of boy approach first the parents of girl for the settlement of marriage in Shimla region whereas in case of Kangra it is vice-versa.  

One common practice followed in both regions is that most of the people generally prefer intra-regional marriages and avoid marrying a girl in other region. Our survey confirms this assertion and following table shows that there are only five cases of inter-regional marriages in Shimla region and only 16 cases of such marriages in Kangra region. This is probably due to the existence of regional

55. Based on field survey.
56. Ibid.
caste structure, and culture, geographical proximity and the natural desire of the parents to take care of the daughter in odd situations.

Table 4.9
Opinion regarding inter-regional marriages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Shimla No.</th>
<th>%age</th>
<th>Kangra No.</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Yes</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15.76</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>17.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>58.79</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>56.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Don't know</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>25.45</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>25.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data on opinion regarding inter-regional marriage reveal that majority of the respondents in both regions are against such marriages or undecided about it. Whatever the reasons for intra-regional marriages may be, it is certain that it expedites the social interaction and binds the people into some kind of relationship at regional level which becomes one of the strong contributory factors in the creation and consolidation of regional identity.
A 'biah' marriage is strictly speaking, indissoluble in Shimla region and divorce is possible only in 'Jhanjars' and 'godar' marriage and is accomplished by the 'rit' system which means compensation to the husband for the value of clothes and ornaments given to the bride and other expenses incurred at the time of marriage. Sometimes an additional ceremony is performed in which husband gives the wife a small stick, called 'dingi' to break. If she breaks it, the divorce is complete, but 'dingi' is not practised by higher castes. On the other hand, in Kangra region, divorce is not very common nor does there exist 'rit' system and 'dingi' system. Divorced women are always looked with contempt and do not enjoy respectable status within the society whereas they normally remarry and lead a respectable life in Shimla region.

There is also a considerable difference regarding the 'dowry' system in the two regions. Whereas 'dowry' was not known in Shimla region till the recent past, in Kangra region it is recognised as a rule and parents are supposed to give dowry to their daughter.

The data on the prevalence of dowry system reveal that 85 percent of the Kangra people give/accept dowry whereas in Shimla region only 20.90 percent people have adopted this practice.  

57. Ibid.
Table 4.10
Opinion regarding the acceptance of bride without dowry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No.</th>
<th>Shimla region</th>
<th>Kangra region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that there is a remarkable difference between the two regions as far as the acceptance of bride without dowry is concerned. Whereas 75.15 per cent of the respondents of Shimla region were willing to marry without taking dowry, in Kangra region only 22.50 per cent were willing to do so.58

Interestingly, the parents of girl in Shimla region are encouraging this practice just to show their high status, but not because it is demanded by the bridegroom's side. In Kangra it is generally essential to negotiate the 'dowry' before the marriage is settled. Sometimes, the demand is so high that potential marriage falls through due to non-fulfilment. Apart from it, dowry has become compulsory to

58. The large number of 'Don't know' category shows the dilemma of Kangra youth regarding the adoption of this practice considered as social evil.
attract a good match. It was found during survey that in Shimla region there was not even a single case where dowry was demanded but 25 per cent of the respondent in Kangra region reported some kind of demand by the bride-groom's side. On the other hand, 67.87 per cent of Shimla respondents were ready to give dowry just to enhance their prestige.59

Another important area where we find a lot of difference in two regions of the State is regarding the question of widow remarriage. It is very common and socially recognised practice in Shimla region where widows generally marry after the lapse of sometime which may extend upto one year, the period of mourning. Thereafter, they are free to marry another person and people recognise such alliances. There are cases where a widow marries the younger brother of her late-husband and sometimes with the elder brother also. She can also marry outside the family. The position of a widow in Kangra region is very pathetic and she is generally looked down upon by the society. She cannot remarry and her presence at some auspicious occasions is considered bad and in some cases she is not permitted to wear good clothes or eat sumptuous food.

59. Data based upon survey.
One other remarkable difference among the women of two regions is that whereas in Shimla region married women do not put red lead (sindoor) on the parting of their hair in Kangra region it is must for all the married women to follow this typical conventional system. Apart from it 'purda' system is an integral part of the culture of Kangra region where married women observe 'purda' from menfolk in their own household and in the village. The survey also reveals that 75.0 per cent of the household still observe 'purda' whereas the figure for Shimla region is just 2.42 per cent.

Table 4.11

Regionwise perception of Purda System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Shimla</th>
<th>Kangra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>% age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Good</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bad</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>49.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Don't know</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>29.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data above show that majority of the respondents in Shimla region either reject this system or are not aware of it. On the other hand, in Kangra region except for a few

60. Data based upon survey.
educated families, by and large, people are still for for the perpetuation of this system.

Interestingly, there is not much difference regarding birth and death ceremonies in the two regions. This is possibly due to the fact that the Brahmins who perform these ceremonies, generally follow the common 'shastras' and people in general mostly accept this ritual without questioning. However, there are some variations and peculiarities regarding such ceremonies outside the common ritual framework. For instance, in Kangra region, a child born in 'katak' is considered unlucky and the evil is averted by a fictitious re-birth from a cow. A birth which takes place in the month of Sawan is considered harmful to the father. Sometimes mother avoids taking the child to any place which is shadowed by tall trees. But people in Shimla region are not superstitious about these things.

People of both the regions follow the same procedure as far as death ceremonies are concerned. Right from putting 'Panch Ratna' into the mouth of dying person to the 'pind dan', Kirya, bharkhari and chaubarkh, common practice is followed, with minor variations. But there is a deep rooted belief in Shimla region that the souls of all the dead persons do not find place in other world. Hence, those wandering souls are called back and special temples are made for them where such souls called 'pap' are worshipped at different occasions to avoid any possible harm which they can cause.
Now, we would discuss the fairs and festivals of the two regions which form the part of the regional folkways. These fairs and festivals are not only source of entertainments to the rural folk but have some social and economic role of regional integration also. Although some fairs have been declared state fairs by the Government but primarily they are confined to some regions and basically attract regional audience.

Shimla hills are famous for their fairs and festivals. Most of the fairs in these hills are connected in some way with local devtas or Hindu religious festivals like Dussehra, Diwali and Shivratri. On every fair or any special festival, the image of local deity is brought out in a palanquin and danced about by seven or eight men, accompanied by music, trumpets and kettle drums. Such fairs are termed 'jattar' fair which are held in different parts of the region in which devta heads the dancing party. These fairs are not only religious in nature which provides the venue for the scattered population to get together, but also of economic importance. 'Lavi' fair which is held at Rampur is basically a commercial fair where the commodities produced by the artisans of this region are dispalyed for sale.

The people have over the years, devised their own ways of amusement, which is marked by a strong sense of humour. One such interesting and unique way of amusement is
'Thoda ka khel', a test of skill in archery, in which the archer hits his opponent and dances on one leg, lashes his bow and shouts if he succeeds. The crowd also responds. Only the 'Rajputs' known as 'khoonds' and are scattered in some pockets of the region are allowed to participate in this game. Theog, a place near Shimla, is normally the venue of this function. 'Karyala' is a night dance and source of entertainment to the people in which the artists entertain the people with their comedy. In most folk dances both sexes participate. No festival or ceremony is complete without 'Nati' in which love stories and folk tales are set to simple melodies. 'Munjara' and 'maal' are popular forms of dances. Another interesting and unique dance is the 'diwali dance' in which the people dance in pairs and sing Fakiri versions of Ramayana.

The above discussion shows that both religious and secular fairs are held in Shimla region. In case of Kangra region, religious occasions as well as harvesting seasons constitute the background for these festivals. The most notable feature of the fairs in Kangra is the wrestling matches in Indian style and is the most important event in almost every fair. Wrestlers from far and wide participate.

61. In every form of dance women also join men without any inhibition, unknown and unthinkable in Kangra region.
in these fairs. Many of them are officially recognized for awards. 'Sair' fair celebrated throughout the region on the first day of 'Asauj' is connected with the beginning of harvesting season. This day is called 'bara din' and is an occasion for family reunion. 'Tika Kohr' or 'Nagani Mata fair' is held near Nurpur in the month of 'Sawan'. People go there to make their offerings on every Saturday and Tuesday, but main fair is held on four Saturdays of the month. It is commonly believed that if a person bitten by snake is brought there, he is cured. 'Nauratra' fair at 'Jawalamukhi' held in April and October every year, attracts devotees from both the hills and plains. The song popularly sung in the praise of goddess 'Jawala' describes how the Emperor Akbar, who once tried to quench the flames and suffered, came bare-footed to this temple and offered a crown of gold to goddess, which is still preserved. Apart from the local fairs held in different parts of the region, Lohari, Shivratri, Holi, Baisakhi, Nirjala Ekadashi, Rakhi, Jammashtmi and Diwali are well known festivals of this region and are celebrated in conventional Hindu ways.

Lastly, we would have a brief look at the food and dresses of the people living in the two regions. In Shimla region, the use of meat is very common and to serve 'ghee' at the time of any ceremony is considered a must. Drinking is widely prevalent in the area. Steamed and dried food are very popular in the region. Maize and wheat are the
chief staple food not only in this region but throughout the state. In Kangra, Rajput or Brahmin women generally do not eat meat. Unlike Shimla hills where meat and rice are universally served to the guests on marriages and on other ceremonies, in Kangra vegetarian food is served. Moreover, smoking is very common among the lower caste women in Kangra region but in Shimla region high caste women also smoke.

Dress also plays important role in the identity formations. One can easily identify a person by his dress which is particular to the region. In view of the cold climate woollen clothes are commonly used in Shimla region. The dress of women consist of Shirt (kurta), petticoat (ghaghra), rejta (gown) and head scarf (dhatu). The manfolk generally wear a loyia (long over-coat of wool), topa (cap) and soothan (woollen trouser). On the other hand in Kangra region the dress is generally the same as used people in the adjoining plains. Women prefer kamiz - salwar along with Dupatta and men also wear kurta-pajama. Ghagra is used by married women.

To sum up the whole discussion we can say that Shimla and Kangra regions have distinct social structures. We have refuted the claim of some political parties and their leaders that Himachal Pradesh is a 'Pahari' speaking unilingual state. Apart from it, we have also found a
remarkable difference between the caste structures of the two regions. Though the whole state has overwhelming majority of Hindus, the close look at the religious practices followed in the two regions shows that they are quite different. We have also found a significant difference in the culture, customs, folkways and mores prevalent in the two regions. The distinctiveness in the social structures of the two regions has resulted in the emergence of two distinct social identities which have been playing an important role in the evolution of sub-regional politics after getting politicized.