



Research Paper

Unsung Cultural Heritage And Social Ceremony Of The Pangwala Tribe: A Research Inquiry

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Abstract

This research paper delves into the cultural heritage and social ceremony of the Pangwala tribe, an indigenous community residing in the Himalayan region. Despite their rich traditions and unique way of life, the Pangwala tribe remain relatively understudied within academic discourse. Thus, this study aims to fill this gap by conducting a comprehensive exploration of Pangwala culture heritage, traditions, and social ceremony. Through this research, not only shed light on the richness of Pangwala culture but also contribute to broader discussions on local knowledge preservation, cultural diversity, and marginalized community empowerment. By amplifying the voices of the Pangwala tribe, the research aims to foster a deeper appreciation for their heritage and inspire dialogue on the importance of honoring diverse cultural identities. Socially constructed patterns of behavior and standards are referred to as culture. Culture can be defined as a way of thinking and way of behavior. The cultural identity of the Pangwala people has endured since ancient times. Because of its remote position, it was an isolated place that was kept unbroken. The Pangi Valley is a lesser-connected tribal area as well as one of the most remote areas in Himachal Pradesh state. This region's difficult geographic conditions rendered it remote and unreachable. The tribal region has a distinct social and cultural character. With in the Pangwala tribe, cultural identity manifests itself in rather varied ways. The people are deeply connected with their local social ceremonies. The people of the valley are deeply connected with their local heritage.

Key Words: *Heritage, Ceremony, Organization.*

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I. Introduction

Situated between the difficult terrain and majestic peaks of the Himalayas, the Pangwala tribe stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of cultural heritage and social ceremony. With roots that trace back centuries, this community embodies a rich tapestry of traditions, customs, and beliefs that have withstood the test of time. In this research paper, embark on a captivating journey into the heart of Pangwala culture, delving into the intricacies of its heritage and the nuances of its identity. Exploration is not merely a scholarly pursuit but a homage to a people whose story is as captivating as the landscapes they call home. The Pangwala tribe, like many other communities, has crafted a way of life intricately woven with its surroundings. From the rhythmic beats of traditional music to the vibrant hues of ceremonial attire, every aspect of Pangwala culture reflects a profound connection to the land, the seasons, and the spirits that dwell within. Yet, amidst the beauty of their traditions lies a complex narrative of resilience and adaptation. Over the time, the Pangwala tribe has weathered the tides of change, confronting challenges that have threatened to erode their heritage. From external influences to internal strife, their story is one of survival against the odds, a testament to the strength of community and the power of tradition. As we peel back the layers of Pangwala culture, we uncover not only a rich tapestry of rituals and practices but also a profound sense of belonging and identity. For the Pangwala people, their cultural heritage is more than just a collection of customs; it is the very fabric that binds them together as a community, providing solace in times of hardship and celebration in times of joy. In doing so, we hope to not only shed light on the richness of Pangwala culture but also to honor the resilience and spirit of a people whose story deserves to be told. In understanding the heritage and social ceremony of the Pangwala tribe, gain not only insight into their past but also inspiration for our shared future.

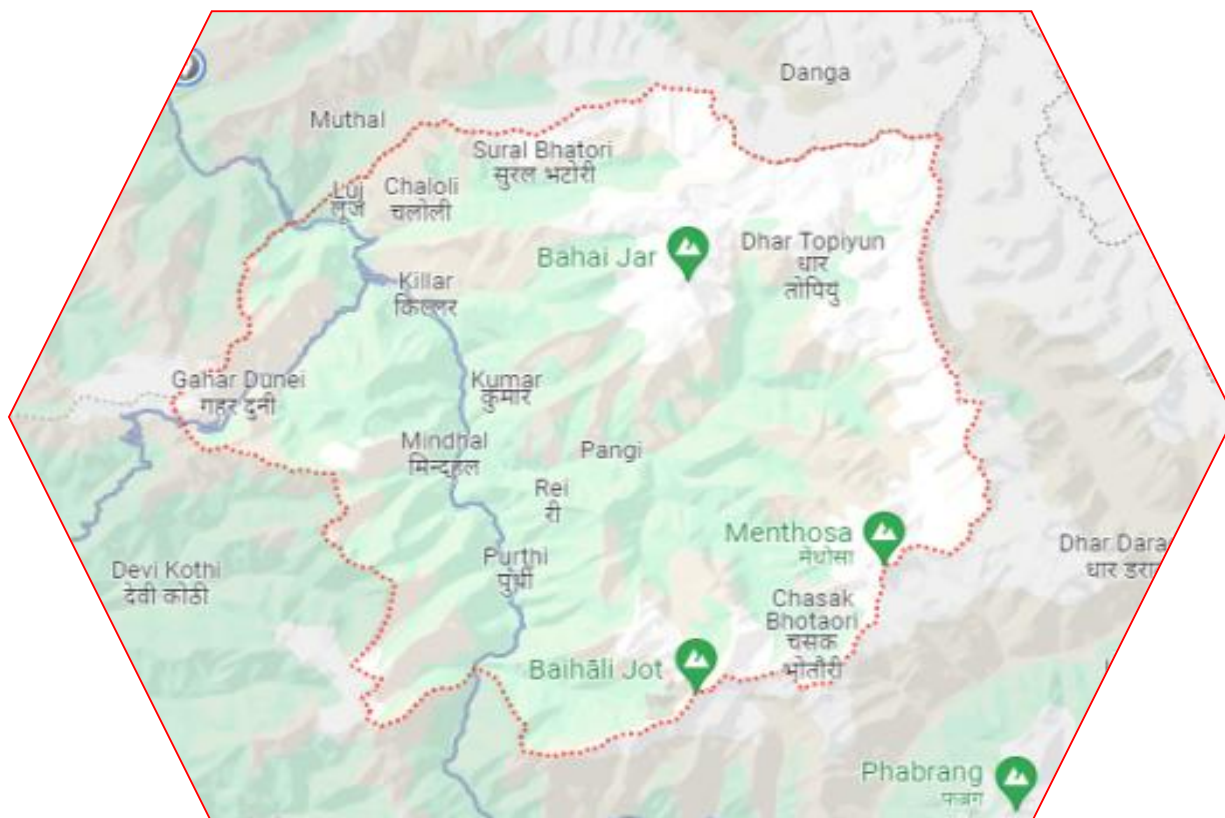
II. Methodology

Given the nature of our study, which aims to delve deep into the cultural heritage and social ceremony of the Pangwala tribe, a qualitative research approach is deemed most suitable. This approach allows to explore the nuanced aspects of Pangwala culture, traditions, and social ceremony through in-depth interviews, observations, and analysis of cultural artifacts. In order to achieve the objectives that follow, this study will explore and analyze the heritage and social ceremony of the Pangwala tribe community. The first goal is to define and assess the role of ceremonial processes and heritage that shape the Pangwala people's way of life. This research is anthropological in nature. In this study, which primarily focuses on primary and secondary research, qualitative approaches are used. Through primary research, the collection of data and information is collected through fieldwork. Interviews were conducted among informants in various villages. By employing qualitative research methodology, aim to provide a comprehensive exploration of the cultural heritage and social ceremony of the Pangwala tribe, shedding light on their rich tapestry of traditions, beliefs, and collective experiences. Basically, pangwala tribals are divided into to region, lower and upper valley. We selected upper valley for research purpose.

Geographical Location

The isolated tribal area of Pangi is full of scenery and tribal elegance. Situated in the northern region of Himachal Pradesh, the Pangi valley covers 1503 square kilometers and borders the Kishtwar district of Jammu & Kashmir. There are ranges of mountains in the valley that vary in altitude. The elevations range from 2200 to 6500 meters, and the highest point of town is 3570 meters. It is a Chamba district subdivision that is surrounded by the Zaskar and Peer Panjal mountains. Pangi Valley's subdivisional headquarters are in Killar. The Hindu and Bhot natives are strong, productive, and charming and maintain the valley's different culture through eating habits, local songs, music, and dances (Ghurei). The valley is one of the State's most difficult and unique tourist sites, located beyond the reach of the tropical monsoon rainfall. The Atal tunnel provides entry to the Pangi Valley from high mountain routes via Rohtang Pass. A lot of snowfall has kept the Valley isolated for almost six months.

The Pangi region has beautiful landscapes like Phindpar, Mindhal, Sural, Saichu, Parmar, Hundan, and Sechu Valley. All these valleys are connected with the Zaskar range. The most of people in Pangi Valley are Hindu, few are Buddhists. These people, known as Bhots because of their Mongolian traits, live in the higher valley regions known as Bhatoris, which include Sural, Hundan, Parmar, Chasak, and Hilu-Twan. Since the valley is one of the most remote and inaccessible tribal regions in the state, the state and central governments have build road networks for transportation with utmost top priority in order to guarantee connectivity to every village in the valley. As a result, development is moving significantly faster across the tribal area.



Google map of study area

Temple Heritage

The importance of temples is very high among the Pangwala tribe. It weaves its roots with culture, religion, and architecture. The history of the temples here helps in understanding the thinking of the ancestors of the times and their vision of religion. Mainly the community here is divided between Hinduism and Buddhism. The temples of the people of the Hindu community are built in the style of Hindu temples and the temple (Gompa) of the Buddhists are built in the style of their religion. The people Pangwal community have immense faith in the Gods and Goddesses. Their entire life depends on the blessings of the Gods and Goddesses. This is the reason why they do not start any work without convincing their worshiped deity. Innumerable temples of Gods and Goddesses are found in the valley and receive special reverence in their respective areas. All the temples here are built in Pahari style. In every village in the valley, there is a temple of Kuldevi and Devta. There is a temple of Mindal Mata in Mindal village, the people come here and worship with devotion in this temple. There is a temple of Mata Malasani in Purthi village. Which is the center of reverence for the people. The five Nags (Panch Nags) of Sach village are also highly revered among the people. Sidh Baba temple also has a place of reverence for the people. Mata Balin Vasni temple in Kariyas village has place of worship in the entire valley. Sheetla Mata temple in Luj village also holds a prominent place from the religious point of view and all the people come to this temple to fulfill blessing. People in Bhot tribes live in quiet and high mountain areas. They follow the principles of Mahatma Buddha. Statues of Mahatma Buddha remain in their temple. And painting is also done. The temple (Gompa) found in Sural Bhatari has a special reverence among the Buddhist people. Tools of worship are kept in front of the statues.

Conventional livestock and agriculture

Agriculture and livestock are the main backbone of the Pangwala tribe. The climate is cool in summer with little rain and heavy snowfall in winter. Heavy snowfall restricted people in their homes for at least six months. Agriculture activities are carried out in the summer months. Animals (Choor, Choori, Cow, Sheep, Goat) lived with family members at the same storey named (Gharan) during the winter. Fodder and fuelwood were collected during the summer for the winter session. Nowadays, people are involved in apple orchard plantation, and become a major source of their income. They moved to Adhwari (Got) in summer with their animals for at least five months. Different crops are produced in the hills and areas. They kept livestock and practiced farming for survival. A few have started practicing stepped agriculture. In addition to cultivating the land, the individuals began as temporary workers in order to earn money. The citizens can purchase subsidized rations with this money. As a result, the elderly people who were engaged in agricultural pursuits have stopped. The

tertiary sector is a means of livelihood. There are many persons employed by the government in government sector. The owners cultivate the land, and there are hardly any workers in agriculture. Maize, barley, Wheat, phullan, Rajmah, Bhes and Kodra (buckwheat) are also grown. Vegetables are also grown in lower area of the valley. Unfortunately, most of the produced barley is used to make local liquor (Patter).

Fairs and festivals of Pangi Valley

Fairs and festivals are an important part of the social structure of the Pangwala tribe. The practice of celebrating fairs and festivals has been going on in the tribal society since ancient times. Due to the isolation of the valley, life is very difficult and the means of entertainment are also very limited. Fairs and festivals provide an opportunity to end mutual differences and forget the worries of life. When the valley is completely covered with snow, the Jukaru festival is celebrated every year with a great show. Houses are cleaned and Mande and puri (Pakwan) dishes are prepared. On the first day of the festival, people go to each other's homes and all differences are resolved by hugging each other. In the evening villagers gather on the terrace of the house and perform local dance (Ghurei) while singing local songs. This sequence continues for 12 days continuously. There is a fair celebrated at Killar named Full Yatra, this day is a government holiday in the valley. There is a fair (Mindliyach) celebrated in the village Mindhal which is dedicated to Goddess Ma Kali. Sherjach is also a fair celebrated in this village. Every village celebrated fair at their village and dedicated to their Local Deities and Gods. Shivaratri and Dipawali is also a festival celebrated with great energy. The people of the valley have immense faith in their family Deities and Gods.

Food habit

Pangwals have very simple food habits. In olden times, they had no external support and had to feed themselves. Earlier nothing could be arranged from out of the valley without putting one's life in danger. In the seventies, even salt was a priceless commodity. It used to be brought either from Lahaul from Chamba through exhausting journeys. Salt and other items used to be carried on the back of Goats. People moved in groups over narrow paths and glaciers for days to get these treasured items. That is why Pangwals use locally grown items on their menu. The developmental activities have changed the face of Pangi. The interaction of locals with employees has influenced many socio-cultural traits of local Pangwals and Bhots. For example, tea was not served in the valley till a few years ago. One would be served Patter (local wine) is preferred. Even today, tea is served to only those who do not take liquor. With the coming in of commodities from outside, many eating habits have changed. Wheat is now used as flour for chapatti. Earlier chapatti used to be made of maize and barley. Rajmah and rice have started being used in every household; different vegetables have also come into use now. Instead of locally brewed wine, some people prefer to drink at the bar that has been opened. There are some dhabas in the market. One can have Tibetan or Chinese food at reasonable rates. Many more changes have taken place in the lives of Pangwals in recent years. The valley is very rich in terms of plants, herbs, and medicinal plants. With the inputs from the government wheat of good quality is being grown in the valley. It is also supplied through the public distribution system (PDS) in good quantity along with other items such as levya sugar, pulses, salt, mustard oil, edible oil, spices, etc. Maize is also grown and is now a major item in the food. Barley, phullan, and Bhas are item in the food.

Social Organization

Praja was essential to fostering social cohesion and fortifying the social fabric of the community. Praja is an assembly of people for the purpose of promoting social welfare and unity among the populace. It is a social organization at the village level. The Praja is patriarchal in nature, meaning that only men are eligible to join. Each village family's eldest male member serves as the household's representative in the Praja. The Prajapati is the leader that the members elect from among themselves. For a year, the Prajapati is chosen in a rotating manner.

Social organization refers to the systems of responsibility relations that are present both inside and between the groups that comprise a given society. These social components collaborate to ensure that the organization runs well. Praja can be understood as a social organization in connection to social units such as the deva (religion), village, & family. For example, religion & Praja are inter-related because Praja initiates rituals & offerings; Praja is important for social gatherings, family weddings and funerals, and resolving small conflicts; Praja plans fairs and festivals, manages village development, including building kuhls, resolves disputes with neighboring villages, etc. According to the respondents, in the past, religion—that is, the deva (local deity)—acted as a unifying factor and helped form the Praja, which was responsible for a number of tasks like creating a set of guidelines for behavior, guaranteeing that each member adhered to a shared set of moral standards, and leading religious ceremonies that are essential to Pangwala culture. However, as a result of the contemporary legal system's introduction and their significant integration into society at large, their influence diminished, even though the goal—ensuring social progress and solidarity—remained the same. Additionally, in the past, Praja

took on the duty of building houses; however, these days, they seldom ever do such jobs. Additionally, the Praja settles disputes within villages as well as between villages. At the village level, every adult in every family comprises the Praja. Every Praja member is required to abide by the regulations. If someone cannot follow the rules established by the Praja, they will be subject to a fine. If not, the Praja must boycott that person. Praja functions as an intermediary for interpersonal communication. It aims to improve social cohesion and peace within the community.

Dress

Thick woolen cloth produced locally has been used to create traditional clothing. Male clothing consists of a woolen shirt and woolen pants, referred to as kamari and suthan. A scarf worn around the waist is called a jachi, while a woolen coat is called a likalh. Male dress comprises a white color cap called a Topi. The foot coverings are composed of pule, made of wheat straw. Straws from barley and wheat are used to make the pule. The Joji is composed of women's clothing constructed of colored cotton cap. Ladies dress in traditional Kameej, which consists of a cotton full-sleeve shirt and suthadn. They also take a shawl made of wool called a Chadru. Both silver and gold are used to make ornaments. But at present time traditional dress is worn by only old age person and young one wear modern clothes.

Birth Ceremony

History shows that when a male child is born, people usually celebrate, but in the present time female children have been greeted too. After the birth of a child, women are confined themselves to one place as the myth is there that women are not considered sacred for at least 12 days after birth. Even she is not allowed to perform the deity Pooja. Following the birth of a male kid, they go to the deity to worship and offer flowers as a token of congratulations. Family members and the village came to congratulate them. They bring various food items, like Sattu, Puri, fruits, and sweets. On the twelfth day after birth, the purification ritual is carried out. The youngster is given a name after nine months. The maternal uncle shaves the hair. We call this ceremony Jattu (Mundan).

Marriage Ceremony

Pangwala tribes are endogamous groups in general. The institution of Pangwal marriage is unique, strange, and interesting. In the Pangi Valley, marriage takes place in several forms. Marriage by abduction, called Pith-Chuk seen earlier and generally monogamy is the rule of the valley. There are some incidents of polygamy but polyandry is not known. In some cases inter caste marriage among bhots and Pangwals takes place. Inter-caste marriage between Brahmins and Rajputs is accepted but both the Rajputs and Brahmins do not marry in the lower caste such as Lohar, Hali, Chamar and Aryas, etc. Bhots marry amongst themselves. In the past, marriage between girls and boys was initiated by close relatives of boys. In present times are also initiated by themselves. 'Pilam' is the first ceremony. After this ceremony born child is accepted socially. It's similar to being engaged. The girl's home is visited by the boy's brother or father as well as one or two other relatives. They take with them Local dish sattu and liquor (Patter). If the girl's relatives accepted the sattu and liquor then it will be considered that the family of the girl accepted the relation, if not it will be assumed that the family did not accept the relation of marriage. The bride's family receives gifts from the bridegroom's family on this day. These exhibit some ceremonial ornaments, usually made of gold and silver. On this particular occasion, the boy gives the girl the symbolic jewelry. Mugali is the kind of engagement that refers to the second step of a married relationship. In this practice, on a predetermined date, sattu and roti are prepared. Father, Diwan, and relatives visit the house of the girl. They take with them Local dish sattu and liquor (Patter) again. They also give the female ornaments, usually made of gold and silver cash gifts. Dham will be served to all relatives of girls. After Mugali, they receive public recognition and are free to lead private lives. The marriage is the third ceremony. The bridegroom's brother is referred to as Patmarain Bharat. The bride's family serves food for the 'Barat'. After a great deal, of local singing and dancing, the bride, bridegroom and the others go back to their homes. The bride is escorted by five to seven relatives. The last ceremony of marriage is frauni. Pit Chuk refers to "carry on the back.". The marriage is one of capture. An unmarried girl is lifted by a boy and his companions and taken from her home. The girl is sent back to her parents if she refuses to eat for a whole day. On the other hand, if she consumes food, it is interpreted as permission. Following that, the wedding is observed normally. Among the Pangwala tribe, there is a trend of dowry including Choor, choori, sheep, goats Kitchen utensils. Financially sound families give money to their girls as a gift. Widows are permitted to remarry after their husbands pass away. The widow receives a joji from the new man in front of two village members (the Head of the Praja). She grants permission for the remarriage by accepting this Joji. A guy must obtain the widow's parents' approval and pay a specific amount in order to marry her. After that, he can bring her home as his wife. Pangwala women are able to file for divorce, and it is accepted. There are two ways to go about it: either the husband pays the woman for her new spouse, or he consents to the divorce in front of the village chief and breaks a dry branch in two over her head as a sign of their prior marriage bond being destroyed. The second method involves the husband taking

a specific amount of money from the woman's lover and breaking a dry stick in two, either above the woman's head or over the money received as a sign of ending the previous marriage. The wife may get married again in either of these situations.

Death

The dying individual is placed on the floor after passing away. When someone dies, the entire Praja congregates at the grieving family's home. Relatives from other regions of the valley also come. Each family member gives the dying person a gee dripping in mouth. Members of village are in charge of information sharing inside Praja. Kui is a girl who follows a unique practice that involves eating first meals for three days. It is thought that the deceased person will get the meal. Woman (Lieuti) cleans every article of clothing. In addition, traditional garments are given to the departed. After being brought to the Shamshan, the deceased is cremated. The corpus is maintained on the fire in a sitting position. The remains are submerged in the Chandrabhaga River after they have burned entirely. The pooja is held on the third day. Ten days later, Braman (Pandit) and Prajamandal are invited. Braman does havan, and food is given to every member of Praja Mandal. Till the anniversary of the death, family members and relatives observe a fast every month. In the Bhot family, the Lama pays a visit to the deceased person's home and determines when the cremation will take place. A Brahman is called on the third day following the death, and the deceased's former garments are given to him. Following the death, the family grieves for a year and no marriages occur within the family. After a year of mourning, mourning closed and weddings and music were once again permitted in the home. A well-off family brings the deceased person's bones to Haridwar so they might be immersed in the Ganga.

III. Conclusion

Exploration of the cultural heritage and social ceremony of the Pangwala tribe reveals a profound tapestry of tradition, resilience, and adaptation. Local knowledge and customs from intangible cultural heritage are carried by this tribal identity. The knowledge that the majority of long-standing customs must be maintained. Numerous modernizing factors have undermined the old customs of the area. Local knowledge and practices pertaining to intangible cultural heritage are facing difficulties. The local culture has been influenced by the village society's connections to the outside world. Time and space are no longer compressed in the same way. There is a trend toward the blending of local and global cultures due to globalization. Every aspect of human activity has been impacted by globalization, and local culture is no exception. Despite facing challenges from modernization and external influences, the Pangwal people demonstrate remarkable resilience in safeguarding their traditions and transmitting them to future generations. By valuing and preserving the cultural legacy of communities like the Pangwal tribe, we not only honor their past but also contribute to a more inclusive and harmonious future for all.

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