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Patron: Prof. R. G. Kothari

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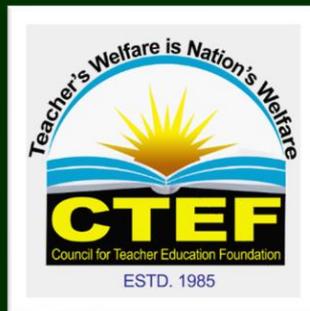
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Culture and Tradition of Hatti Community in the Trans- Giri Region: A Review

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ABSTRACT

India is a highly diverse country, both culturally and ethnically. The diversity of the country is reflected in its languages, religions, traditions, and people. India is characterized by several types of tribes which differ in terms of language and social setting. Hatti community is a small but well-knit community that has its main settlement in Shillai, Rajgarh, and Paonta Sahib between the Tons and Giri Rivers, tributaries of the Yamuna River, Sirmour district of Himachal Pradesh. This community is named after the term '*Haat*' which translates to village market, as they have traditionally socialised and interacted through trading. The Hattis also relied on their village council, or the '*Khumbli*', a significant democratic institution in the settlement of disputes and maintenance of peace in the community. Hattis also have culturally a lively festivals, expressive folk dances, and religious rituals and are closely connected to the agricultural calendar and to the respect of the local deities. The caste segregation that was a characteristic of traditional occupations has shaped the social structure of society although the barriers are slowly fading off. Economic and educational opportunities have promoted integration which has helped to lessen socially ingrained inequalities. Due to marginalization fewer resources, limited means, Hattis have been struggling for many years with restricted access to government assistance and education. In recent times literacy has increased and more young people particularly women are pursuing higher education and government employment. With the help of constructive activity and constitutional guarantees of their

long-standing request to be included in the category of Scheduled Tribes was finally accepted in 2023, which opens new possibilities for social and economic progress. The local culture in Himachal is characterised by a number of Scheduled Tribes such as Gaddi, Kinnaura, Lahuala, and Pangwala. By integrating the Hatti community as a scheduled tribe, there has been a major step toward equality and justice. Being offered the opportunities of a modern India while preserving their traditional background, the Hatti community turns out to be the crossroads of traditions and change. This paper through reviewing literature emphasises the importance of Hatti community as Scheduled Tribe and highlight the cultural and geographical significance of the Hatti community.

Key words: Hatti Community, Schedule Tribe, Recognition, Trans-Giri, Culture

Introduction

India is a culturally rich and ethnically diverse nation. Extending from the snow covered Himalayas in the north to the tropical coasts in the south, and from the deserts of Rajasthan to the dense forests of the Northeast. India's diversity is reflected in its languages, religions, traditions, and people. According to census of 2011, India is home to 1,21,08,54,977 people residing in 32, 87,469 Km² area. Speaking over 1,600 dialects and languages. The Constitution of India recognizes 22 scheduled languages. There are many religions, caste, tribes and sects speaking different languages and residing in different part of the country coexist with hundreds of local faiths and indigenous spiritual practices especially tribal people (Anderson et al., 2016). Tribal people are often closely connected to nature and the environment. Their livelihoods traditionally depend on forests, agriculture, and crafts (Colchester, 2004). They have their own governance systems, myths, languages, and rituals that differ greatly from mainstream Indian culture (Alcorn, 1993). The additional terms for tribal people are "Adivasi" and "Anusuchit Janjati." The Indian tribal people are referred to under the constitution as Scheduled Tribes (Vidyarthi & Rai, 1977). Tribal people are among India's most marginalized, socially and economically backward (Saxena & Kumar, 2016). Scheduled Tribes and socially disadvantaged communities primarily face several issues, such as limited access to basic services like education, health, and economic security. This contributes to social exclusion and social isolation due to discrimination, lack of representation, and poverty, which in turn is further reinforced by a lack of resources and social support systems. Such issues need to be addressed systematically, particularly those related to social aspects. Disadvantaged communities need to be provided with equal

opportunities and resources to establish a more inclusive and equitable society throughout. Education plays a very important role in the development process of a country. It is a medium through which we can bring backward, deprived and minority communities into the mainstream and enhance their common welfare. In India for tribal people, constitutional term ‘Scheduled Tribe (ST)’ is used (Kumar et al., 2020). Similarly Hatti community of Sirmour district of Himachal Pradesh is recognized as a tribe on 4 August 2023 (The Second Amendment to the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order Act of 2023 Gazette of India). This paper tries to study about the culture, tradition, casteism, and education of the Hatti community, which is located in the Sirmour district. It will help in gaining information about their development and educational status.

Schedule Tribes

Tribe is a group which speaks the same language and share the same cultural traditions (Mamdani, 2012). Similarly tribes are such types of societies that derive all or certain social roles or their rights from the social values or particular characteristics (Crone & Hall, 1994). The Indian Constitution classifies certain ethnic minority groups, historically referred to as tribes or tribals, as Scheduled Tribes (STs) (Sujatha, 2002). Scheduled tribes in India are indigenous communities recognized by the Constitution for special protection and assistance. They form an essential part of India’s cultural diversity and social structure. In the Census 1931, Scheduled Tribes defined as “backward tribes” residing in “Excluded” and “Partially Excluded areas”. Article 366 (25) of Indian Constitution, states that, “Scheduled Tribes means such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this Constitution.” According to Article 342 (1) President of India, with the consultation of states’ Governor, may specify tribal communities or tribes as Scheduled tribe by public notification. Indian Constitution’s 5th Schedule offers a structure for managing Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Areas in the majority of states, with the exception of Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Assam (are covered under the Sixth Schedule). Officially recognized as Scheduled Tribes (STs), there are over 705 tribes across the country, comprising around 8.6% of the total population of India (2011 Census).

Scheduled Tribes in Himachal Pradesh

Himachal is situated in north part of India in the Western Himalayas, well known for its mountainous terrain, rich cultural heritage, and spiritual significance. Jammu & Kashmir,

Ladakh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Punjab, and China's Tibet touches their boundary with Himachal Pradesh. Himachal had 68,64,602 population, with 3,92,126 (5.17%) identified as members of Scheduled Tribes (Census 2011). These communities are listed in Scheduled Tribe list of the state: Gaddi, Bhot/Bodh, Gujjar, Lahaula, Jad/Lamba/Khampa, Swangla, Kanaura/Kinnara, Beta/Beda, Pangwala, and Demba/Gara/Zoba (Directory of Villages, Tribal Development Department Government of Himachal Pradesh).

The Tribal Population of Himachal Pradesh is divided into three categories based on the Directory of Villages, Tribal Development Department Government of Himachal Pradesh:

1. **Scheduled Area of Scheduled Tribe:** According to Tribal development department Government of Himachal Pradesh, Lahaul- Spiti and Kinnaur district, along with Pangi and Bharmour, Chamba district's subdivision, have been designated as Scheduled Areas. The majority of residents in these regions belong to communities recognized as Scheduled Tribes under 5th Schedule of the Indian Constitution. These regions are extremely difficult and remote to access, characterized by rugged mountainous region and harsh climate. Himachal Pradesh has geographical area of 55,673 Km² with 23,655 Km² (42.49%) fall within Scheduled Areas. The total population residing in these regions is 1,73,661, of which 1,23,585 (71.16%) are Scheduled Tribes and population density in these areas is 7 (per Km²) (Census of India, 2011).
2. **“Modified Area Development Approach (MADA)”:** In the 6th Five Year Plan, the scope of the Sub-Plan of Tribes was broadened, introducing the “Modified Area Development Approach (MADA)”. This strategy aimed to include small regions with concentrated populations of Tribes with at least 10,000 people, where 50% or more belonged to scheduled Tribes. In Himachal Pradesh, two such regions were identified in 1981-82: the Chamba and Bhatiyat blocks of Chamba district. These areas span 881.47 Km² and, according to the 2011 Census, 29,455 (7.51%) are Scheduled Tribes.
3. **Population of Dispersed Tribes:** Up until February month of 1987, the “Special Central Assistance (SCA)” under the “Tribal Sub- Plan (TSP)” was limited to Scheduled Areas and regions identified under the “Modified Areas Development Approach (MADA)”. During the 7th Five Year Plan this strategy was broadened to include all tribal residing outside the “Modified Area Development Approach” and Scheduled Area. The expansion aimed to support beneficiary-driven programs funded by Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs through ‘Special Central Assistance’. Apart from

Scheduled Areas and MADA regions 2,39,086 (60.97%) population live in non-tribal regions.

As mentioned earlier, 68.51% of Scheduled Tribe population in the Himachal lives outside the designated Schedule Areas. To support the socio-economic advancement of these communities, in addition to the allocations made under the General Plan, financial assistance is also extended through SCA to TSP.

Hatti Community

Community which can be interpreted in various ways based on different academic perspective, such as community development, social movements, interest and identity groups, and collective action literature (Arsneault et al., 2025). Sirmour is the southernmost district of Himachal Pradesh, known for its rich cultural heritage, scenic landscapes, and spiritual significance, situated in the Shivalik range, Sirmour borders Shimla to north, Solan to northwest, Uttarakhand to east, and Haryana to south. According to Economic and Statistics Department of Himachal Pradesh, 2,825 Km² is the area of district Sirmour and according to the 2011 Census 5,29,855 is the population in district Sirmour. 1,299 km² is the total area of Giripar regions with 4,89,235 population (Chhetri, 2023). In the Sirmour district a community named Hatti that has recently been recognized as a tribe. The Hatti Community is a tight-knit group with a strong foundation in distinctive customs and a particular way of life. Hattis are referred as trans-Giri communities, demonstrating the Giri River's impact on their political, cultural, and geographical aspect. Giri river divides Sirmour district into two parts: Trans-Giri (Giri par) and Cis- Giri (Giri aar) (Kumar et al., 2020, Bhardwaj et al., 2024). The name Hatti comes as they buy and purchase goods in "Haats" which are temporary markets. These markets are Shimla, Solan, Nahan, the nearby towns and cities of Himachal Pradesh also Vikasnagar and Dehradun of Uttarakhand. Hattis barter their produces like ghee, wool, ginger, walnut, turmeric etc., to purchase essential items at those "Haats" (Kumar et al., 2020; Badoni & Badoni, 2022; Kumar & Mokta, 2023; Bhardwaj et al., 2025). Hatti community is similar to the Jaunsar Bawar, Uttarakhand in both geography and culture. The Government of Uttar Pradesh granted the Jaunsar Bawar a tribal status in 1967 (Kumar et al., 2020). This review paper tries to study the Culture and Traditions, Casteism, and Education in Hatti Community.

Hatti Community: Recognition as a Tribe

On August 4, 2023, Union Minister, Tribal Affairs Mr. Arjun Munda announced that the Hatti community of Giripar of District Sirmour in Himachal was granted Scheduled Tribe

status after the Union Cabinet approved the decision. The Hattis residing in the Giripar region of Himachal Pradesh were given Scheduled Tribe status after the bill was approved in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha and signed into law in the same year. In accordance with the 5th Schedule and Indian constitution's Article 342, this status was also granted to other communities, including the Nariduravar and Kurivikkaran, Tamil Nadu, Betta Kurba, Karnataka, and Brijia, Chhattisgarh. (The Second Amendment to the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order Act of 2023 Gazette of India).

Culture and Tradition of Hatti Community

Throughout history, human have developed many cultures that have influenced people's thoughts, emotions, desires, values and behaviors. Culture often takes root in a particular region or place. The concept of culture is very vast and complex, encompassing many elements of daily life and human existing (Naik et. al. 2023). Cultures of the Nations' are varied and intricate, enclosing a wide range of customs, cultures, and global history (VS & Gopikrishna, 2023). Indigenous and non- indigenous both groups include historic knowledge and folk tales into their cultural practices (Society, 2004). Similarly, the Hatti community follows their traditions and has unique cultural significance. In the Hatti community, a joint family system exists in which the eldest member serves as the head of the household. Hatti community has unique tradition and customs from birth, marriage to death. Customs related to birth are *Naamkaran* (name given to child), *Dashuthan* (birth ceremony for purification of home) (Verma & Sharma, 2019). Marriage custom in hatti community, such as polyandry, polygamy, monogamy, remarriage (after divorce), and marriage by elopement (*Haar*) (Verma & Sharma, 2020; Chhetri, 2023). There are some rituals after death like *shudhi kriya* (purification of home). The Hattis' political structure is centered on the *Khumbli*, a traditional council is organized according to territorial divisions and continues to serve as the primary forum for resolving disputes (Kumar & Mokta, 2023; Chand, 2024). Hatti community has its own significant dance forms such as Sirmouri Natti, Budha dance, Thoda Nritya, *Sinhtoo* (Mask dance), and *Bharaltoo* (Shepherds' dance) (Habbi, 2023, Habbi, 2024, Habbi, 2025). Political and religious institutions are closely intertwined, often leading to conflict resolution being conducted at the level of local deities.

Casteism in Hatti Community

In India, caste emerges as a distinct indicator of social stratification. Gradually increasing economic inequalities are characteristics of the caste system (Ambedkar, 1979). Similarly,

Hatti community follows a deeply rooted caste system, traditionally shaped by occupational roles and socio-economic standing. This system is organized in a hierarchical manner, consisting of three broad groups Brahmins, Rajputs and Scheduled Castes (SCs) (Chhetri, 2023, Bhardwaj et al., 2024, Badoni & Badoni, 2024). Among these groups, Brahmins are subdivided into Bhat and Deitie (Dethis). The Rajputs identity is collectively claimed by Khosh, Miyan, and Deva. Within the Scheduled Castes (SCs), there are two sub groups as Bajgi and Hali. Bajgi are subdivided into Lohar, Badi, Dhaki, Natua, and Bera and Hali are subdivided into Koli, Chanal, and Dom communities (Chhetri, 2023). Participation in community events such as festivals, religious ceremonies, and village councils is influenced by caste. (Chand, 2024).

Education in Hatti Community

Education is a socially organized and controlled process through which important social experiences are continuously passes from one generation to the next (Naziev, 2017). According to Census 2011, literacy rate of the Sirmour is 78.8%. This is due to the challenging terrain of Kamrau, Sangrah, and Shillai in Sirmour has contributed to the social and economic marginalization of the Hatti Community, particularly affecting their access to education and employment opportunities. At present, many schools in Himachal Pradesh's tribal regions face a shortage of staff. Education and ecotourism have been identified as key areas for qualitative advancement in the development strategy for the newly recognized Scheduled Tribe (Badoni & Badoni, 2024)

Conclusion

The Hatti community in Sirmour district is an example of social complexity, cultural continuity, and evolving identity within the larger framework of Himachal Pradesh's tribal landscape. The roots of Hatti community lie in the Giripar region, have preserved a unique set of cultural values shaped by centuries old community rituals, agricultural traditions, and strong ties with the Jaunsar Bawar region of Uttarakhand (Kumar at el., 2020). The fact that they were traders and farmers in the past is reflected in their name, which derives from the term 'Haat', and their culture remains a blend of regional and local traditions. Historically hierarchical structures existed in India within the caste system of the Hatti community. There is social stratification and unequal allocation of resources that have led to divisions among people in the society into various categories of castes like *Brahmins*, *Khas* and castes of occupation. Social cohesion has been prevented by caste based exclusion and discrimination,

the Hatti have maintained a consistent identity in their political and cultural aims. The Hatti community had also made some progress in the field of education. There are several factors that create obstacles in education but inadequate infrastructure and economic barriers have posed a major challenge to formal education. In the socio-political history of the Hatti community, a turning point was reached in 2023 when they became a Scheduled Tribe. Another tribal groups of Himachal Pradesh including the Gaddi, the Knnaura, and the Lahaula are now a recognised tribe after decades of advocacy. This guarantees access to welfare programmes, work, and education through reserved measures, which may alter the trajectory the community development. The incorporation of the Hatti community into the larger context of Himachal Pradesh brings more variety to the diverse tribal image of the state as well as the need to acknowledge historically disadvantaged communities and cultural uniqueness. By balancing equality of opportunities and uniting under the new status, the Hattis ought to continue prioritising in various pivotal fields.

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