



AN ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGES IN THE PANGWAL TRIBE OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

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Abstract:

The researcher presents an in-depth analysis of the socioeconomic changes experienced by the Pangwal tribe of Himachal Pradesh, India. The Pangwal tribe, primarily residing in the hilly regions of Chamba district in Himachal Pradesh, has undergone significant transformations in their way of life and livelihoods over the past few decades. The researcher's study aims to elucidate the multifaceted aspects of these changes, examining their impact on the tribal community's social structure, economy, and overall well-being. This analysis is not only of academic interest but also holds practical significance for policymakers, development practitioners, and tribal community leaders, who can use these findings to formulate inclusive and culturally sensitive policies aimed at improving the lives of the Pangwal tribe and other indigenous communities facing similar challenges.

KEYWORDS: Pangwal, Tribe, Socio, Communities, Change

INTRODUCTION

Change is a rule of nature, change was nonexistent in the Pangwals' lives until a few years ago. Pangi had its subsistence economy twenty years ago. They had to make do with what they had because there wasn't much outside assistance. Essentials like salt and occasionally beans were transported from Chamba across Sach Pass using sheep and mules. Alternatively, there was a barter system in place with Lahaul, wherein salt was exchanged for the equivalent quantity of ghee and butter.¹

Another section of people known as Bhots living at mountain tops and a height of 3354 mts (11,000 feet) above mean sea level used, to go to Zaskar in Jammu & Kashmir for salt. The whole trip used to take them 15 days on foot.²

The transport of commodities used to take place mainly on sheep and in all three routes it used to take them on an average of four days caves huddled together. Moreover, as there were no proper roads, the journey used to be risky for both man and animals. In case someone's goat or sheep fell into the river and drowned this was a moment of sadness for the owner. The man used to make these trips during summer only. With the onset of winter and the coming in of Tunda Rakshash i.e., the signal of winter approaching as well as Seer Budhi till April or the departure of Seet Budhi, life was restricted indoors. Then it was time for drinks, dancing, and festivals.³

Before 1972 there were no officers and officials in the valley during winters as the government offices used to shift to Tissa in Chamba District.⁴ In the last eighteen to twenty years, the entire picture has changed. This snow-bound valley has experienced many changes that have revolutionized the living in the valley. Some of the most important among these are:

1. The whole valley has been linked with the outside world by a busable road. Work is going on to widen the road to make it pucca.
2. The brief note of activities of Killar division Himachal Pradesh Public Works Division-Killar serves as part of the Bharmour constituency. The total length of the road network under Killar division up to 31.05.2020 is as detailed below:

1.	Total road length as per A/A and E/S	871 KM
2.	Motorable Kuccha	424 KM
3.	Motorable Pucca	186 KM
4.	Jeepable road	132 KM
5.	Cross drainage	45 KM
6.	Soling	65 KM
7.	Wearing	19 KM

At present time Pangri has sixteen panchayats out of these eleven panchayat headquarters are connected to motorable roads and five panchayat headquarters are connected to jeepable roads.⁵

3. Pangri Valley has many streams waterfalls, and nalos which can be harnessed to produce hydel power. The valley has great potential for developing hydel power. The project is located in the Pangri area and has having installed capacity of 300 KW. The present position of the power project:

Power Projects	Killer 300 KW HPSEB	Sural 200KB HIMURJA	Saichu 90 KW HIMURJA	Killar 25KW HIMURJA	Sahali 20KW HIMURJA	Purthi Hilutwan 100KW 20KW HIMURJA
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Project under construction: Sach 900 KW through Himurja estimated cost 9.81 crore.

For rapid development of this area, the quality electricity supply which is one of the basic infrastructures for development should be made available. The increased energy availability to the rural economy of Pangri has also a long-term objective for reducing the fuel wood drawn from the precious coniferous forests.⁷ Presently almost all the villages of Pangri Valley have been linked with electricity. Even the highest village in the valley Charak Bhotori located at a height of 3659 mts (12,000 feet) above mean sea level has been connected with electricity.

4. Team Coal has been introduced in the valley. This has resulted in reducing pressure on the forests. Efforts are on to introduce LPG at Valley.
5. With the coming of the Tribal Sub Plan, the government has posted senior officers of all the departments in the valley to avoid administrative problems. Single-line administration has also been introduced in the valley for effective coordination and control.

So, we see that a revolution has taken place in the valley in the last decade or so. The new generation of Pangrials born after 1985 is living in an entirely different atmosphere. Now there is a great change in the lifestyle of a 60-year-old Pangri who had spent his or her 50 years of life in totally different circumstances.

No one can deny the fact that the role of the State Government has been tremendous, especially with the formulation of the Tribal Sub Plan and introduction of Single Line Administration. A lot of money has been pumped in. There are a great number of primary schools, government buildings, and welfare schemes. Unfortunately, the pumping in of the money has also hurt the attitude of the people. The little initiative that Pangrials had has been nearly finished. They lack the zeal and zest of the other tribals including Lahaulis and Kinnaurites to work and earn to enrich the economy of their place.

But time has changed and the people have their self-supporting economy and they export their products including dry fruits, potatoes, peas, hops, and fruits to different parts of India. Over the years extensive network of

infrastructural facilities has come up in the valley, particularly in the education and health sectors. There are inhabited revenue villages and as many educational institutions as below:

Educational Institutions (School/college)	Total	Primary School	Middle School	High School	Sr.Sec. School
	126	89	21	9	7
Enrollment Boys	3109	1303	897	645	264
Enrollment Girls	2945	1423	798	614	110
Total	6054	2726	1695	1259	374

Primary Schools

Now the literacy rate has gone up compared to the past. The literacy rate in Pangti is 61%, 84% amongst males and 46% amongst females.⁸ Pangti has one 50-bed rural hospital, six primary health centers, four Ayurvedic dispensaries, and fourteen health sub-centers.

The government has created a very heavy infrastructure in comparison to the population of the valley. Executive Engineers of the Public Works department and Himachal Pradesh Electricity Board are posted here and a Divisional Forest Officer also has his headquarters at Killar.⁹

Dress and Ornaments

In the last decade, the dress of both males and females has changed to a large extent. The traditional dress is now worn only by the older generation. Men wear the woolen kurta pyjama and the ladies' tight pyjama with a shirt and a shawl embodied around it.¹⁰ The younger generation, both boys and girls, has stopped wearing the traditional dress. The older generation though sticking to their traditional costume seldom wears the *Topi* and *Joji*, according to the Information collected District Education Department of Chamba. (DEO) Information collected Resident Commissioner Offices Date 20-7-2006. accessories are worn by males and females respectively. The *footwear*, *pullay*, made of grass is also now worn only by the old people. For the younger generation, they are no more comfortable. Jackets have been substituted for *pattu* coats and women now wear proper *salwar kameez*.¹¹

The *bali* of men has totally disappeared and the number of *balis* worn by women has now reduced. Earlier, women had seven holes in each ear but now there are not more than three or four holes. Gold ornaments have also replaced the silver ornaments. The necklace which used to weigh at least half a kg has now become very light. Traditional designs have also changed.¹²

Eating Habits

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 leaves of a wild plant known as *Chukri*. Soybean and rice have started being used in every household; different vegetables have also come into use now.¹³

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. Even though Pangwals are Hindus, the festivals such as back. The valley is very rich in terms of plants, herbs, and medicinal plants.

In almost all the villages the government offices are used in government buildings, so even *Mahila Mandals*, *Aanganwadis*, and *Yuvak Mandals* have their separate building in some villages. The organizational set-up of the valley gives a clear idea of the infrastructure that the government has created under the Tribal Sub Plan to carry out various developmental programs in the valley.

Tourism Potential

Pangi Valley is heaven for trekkers, adventure tourists, and nature lovers. It is wild, rugged, and extremely beautiful. Though the approach is tough the journey is so satisfying that there is a great sense of achievement once you reach there. Vast green *pasturelands*, *gushing nullahs* and *rivulets*, beautiful *waterfalls*, *ranges*, *glaciers*, *avalanches*, rich wildlife, miles of slopes covered with thick layers of snow, ideal for snow skiing, crisp mountain air, cool refreshing mountain water these and many more attractions make it an ideal place for tourism purposes.

The peculiar lifestyle, and customs of local people; the fairs and festivals; the temples and monasteries are all calling the visitors to have a lifetime experience. The ideal time to visit the valley is from July to October. For snow sports March to June are ideal. There are beautiful rest houses in the valley located at convenient distances. Moreover, the *Sansari-Killar-Thirot-Sach Pass road* which is under construction would make an alternate route to Srinagar within a couple of years, thus attempts should be made to develop tourism with this in mind. There are many beautiful valleys namely *Sural*, *Hudan*, and *Saichu-Twan* valley.

A comprehensive plan for developing tourism is required. This would also improve the economic condition of the local people as they will get opportunities to work as porters, guides, and paying guest house owners. There is tremendous scope for developing eco-tourism by having nature parks. According to wildlife experts, the valley should be made into an independent wildlife division.

Conclusion

The socio-economic changes in the Pangwal tribe of Himachal Pradesh reflect the broader patterns of transformation experienced by indigenous communities worldwide. The shift from traditional livelihoods to modern professions has both positive and negative consequences. The Pangwal tribe must strike a balance between preserving their cultural heritage and embracing economic and educational opportunities. Furthermore, the government and non-governmental organizations can play a pivotal role in supporting the Pangwal community in this transition, ensuring that their unique identity and heritage are not lost in the process.

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