



## **Social And Culturalchange in Lahaula Tribe of Himachal Pradesh: An Ethnographic Study**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Change is a universal fact. It is a truth from which we cannot be separated. Change is bound to happen. We have to go with the change. It is rightly said that 'go with the flow'. If we do not go with the flow than we cannot cope with the society anymore. We will be left behind. Change happens in each and every aspect of human life whether it is their daily life, ideology, society, culture, economy, political organization, etc. we have to adapt with the change's incoming in our society or if we do not do so then we feel isolated from the society. There are various reasons which are responsible for bringing about changes in various aspects of our life. How a society accepts these changes also gives us a hint about the tolerance level of its members. The factor mainly responsible for adopting the reasons to bring out the change in a society is the open mindedness of its members. Here, such changes are explained of Lahaula tribe which are related to their social, cultural, and economic aspects. An ethnographic study was incorporated on Lahaula tribe for about seven months where many sources of data collection tools like observation, unstructured interviews, narratives, and secondary data sources were used to underline the changes related to various aspects of Lahaula tribe of Himachal Pradesh.

**KEYWORDS:** Change, Cultural change, Social change, Tribe, Ethnography.

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The whole world is composed of various societies of different characteristics which make them distinct in nature. Talking about India, this country is also composed of a variety of societies embracing distinct attributes. In general, talking about the different type of societies existing in India, they can be divided into three main types based on their composition and geographical distribution, they are tribal, rural, and urban society. It is a well-known fact that every society is in a phase of transition. No such

society is there which is in a state of full stop position. Each society's stability is maintained but with a twist of continuity. Old generation goes and new generation comes with that old mentality goes fades away and new mentality tries to make its place in a society. In addition to its various factors pay their contribution in the life of members of a society to adopt the patterns of change.

Here, focus is only given to the sect of tribal society and the changes happening within this sect of society in India. A tribal society has its own set of characteristics which make them unique and attribute them a distinct identity of its own. No doubt, a tribal society is in general a society which is still taken as a society which lives in a primitive stage. They have their economic organization based on the fulfillment of basic sustenance level and no extra profit gain. They have their simple social organization where labor is divided only on two bases; age or sex. They have their own set of cultural elements which they abide very strictly. They have their own political organization. They have their own customary laws which also goes against the major defined constitutional laws of India.

Here, such changes are discussed in detail related to one specific profile related to one tribal group of people which is Lahaula tribe. It is a tribal society which resides in the hilly areas of state of Himachal Pradesh which is called as *Dev Bhoomi* (a land of Gods) of India. The main objectives of conducting this study were to present an ethnographic account of Lahaula tribe. The main focus was given to explore the social, and cultural changes happened in the life of Lahaula tribe. Also, to underline the responsible factors which have brought these changes in Lahaula tribe.

### **II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Several studies had been conducted revolving around the theme of changes happening in the field of socio-cultural-economic profiles of any tribal communities mainly in Indian states. Like,



Acharya and Kshatriya (2016) had studied Santal tribe and focused on the issue of social change happened in the contemporary world of this ethnic group. The tribal group was observed from the lens of changing status of its ethnicity and language identity. They had stated the ethnic and language movements which had made changes in this ethnic group. They had accepted that changing lifestyle could be considered as an indicator to confirm socio-cultural transformation happening in an ethnic group.

Xaxa (1999) had presented a study on the issue of transformation of tribes in India where the question of assumption of loss of tribal identity was raised by the author. The study had attributed to present a study of tribes not as communities in their own right but in terms of connection and non-connection to mainstream communities. The concept of Sanskritization was attributed to bring change in tribes in contact with non-tribal societies. The concept of Hinduisiation, transformation of tribes to caste, to peasantry, language concern, social differentiation bringing out were explained through which transformation has taken place in tribes.

Sasidharan (2017) had studied the tribal group of Kattunaika which is a tribal group of South India. The livelihood transition is studied in detail of concerned tribe as any change in livelihood mainly leads to the impacts on socio-cultural-economic systems of tribal life. The study focused on the comparison of economic and socio-cultural life of concerned tribe who are still engaged in traditional livelihood practices and who had adopted non-traditional livelihood practices.

### **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study is of qualitative in nature. An exploratory and descriptive research design was incorporated to carry forward this study of Lahaula tribe of Himachal Pradesh of India. The use of ethnography study was taken to deeply get an insight of Lahaula tribe. This presented study is a part of my Ph.D. related work which focuses on the folklore and its gender representation of Lahaula tribe. Various sources of data collection tools were used for this study. Firstly, for primary source of data collection the main tool of observation (non-participant type) was used. Apart from this, unstructured interviews were held with the old age respondents of the selected area of study which is discussed in next section. Various narratives of local experts of above sixty years of age were also recorded.

The use of secondary sources of data collection tools is also taken like content analysis is done on the published books by the local scholars of the tribal area and of outside scholars of other states

of India. The pre-recorded set of videos were also analysed for the defined purpose.

### **IV. STUDY AREA**

First, we will talk about the main geographical area which is selected for the study. The main geographical area of Lahaul is selected for the proposed study. The Lahaul area is a sub-division of one of the districts of the state of Himachal Pradesh which is a state lying in the laps of the great Himalayas of India. This district of Himachal Pradesh is Lahaul and Spiti which is complete tribal district of the state. This district comprises of different tribal communities which had resided in this area since a very long time. As the Lahaul area is very vast in territorial distribution so only a part of it is selected for the study. The Lahaul sub-division is further divided into three main valleys which is composed because of the distribution of the main river of the sub-division i.e., Chanderbhaga river which is famously known as the name of Chenab in other states of India. This river distributes the Lahaul sub-division into three main river valleys which are Chandra valley, Bhaga valley, and Chanderbhaga valley. The main Chanderbhaga river is composed of two tributaries and they are Chandra River and Bhaga river. These two tributaries meet at a common point in the village of Tandi, this common meeting point is famously known among the locals by the name *Sangam*. Starting from this meeting point onwards from whichever villages Chanderbhaga river flows comes under Chanderbhaga valley also known by the locals as Pattan Valley which is the main study area. As there comes about a hundred of villages in Pattan valley so the main populated village area i.e., *Shansha* of Pattan valley is marked as the main central study area. Apart from these the neighboring village areas like Jahalma, Rangbay, Lote, Jobrang, Rashel were also taken under the scope of study.

Second, we will talk about the main topics or themes of study which was the social profile, cultural profile, and economic profile of Lahaula tribe. Here, several topics covering the changes coming in these different profiles of Lahaula tribal society are discussed separately to give a complete past and present scenario of Lahaula tribe.

### **V. LAHAULA PROFILE**

The term Lahaul used for referring Lahaula tribal group in literal sense means the people who are the original inhabitants or residents of the Lahaul area which is tribal area of the state of Himachal Pradesh of India. So, first and foremost it is necessary to trace out the meaning of the term Lahaul as the Lahaula tribe under study belongs or have an



ancestral connection to this Lahaul area only. In that respect, there are various etymological meanings attached to the term Lahaul. Since a long time, this tribal area was a very interesting study area for various scholars and they had studied Lahaul area in depth. They all had given their own way of interpretation to describe the etymological meaning of the term Lahaul.

Major Cunningham (1871) in defining the fact that from where Lahaul term was derived had stated it can be traced with the historical relation of Lahaul to the land of Tibet as the people of Tibet called Lahaul area by the term *Laho-Yul*. The term *Laho-Yul* which comes from Tibetan dialect meant the southern part (*Laho*) of land (*Yul*) to Tibet. For giving support to this fact, in the Gazetteer of the Kangra District (1899) it is mentioned that in early times the area of Lahaul was a dependency of Tibet empire. This historical fact could explain the name of Lahaul as a southern district which further indicates its subjection to the northern power of Tibet.

Tobdan (1984), one of the prominent local experts of Lahaul and Spiti tribal district had written a number of books and articles related to it, had also pointed out the possibility that the meaning of term Lahaul could be traced out by a term *Lha-Yul* which also is derived from Tibetan dialect. In Tibetan dialect, the term *Lha* means mountain pass and *Yul* means a land. So, the term *Lha-Yul* meant a part of land which is surrounded by the mountainous passes from all its sides. It can be proved by the geographical position of Lahaul and from where it can be approached. The Lahaul area could be approached through one of the passes like through Rohtang-*Lha* which adjoins the district of Lahaul and Spiti to neighboring Kullu district, through Baralacha-*Lha* which joins it to the neighboring area of Ladakh, and through Kugti-*Lha* which joins it to the neighboring district of Chamba.

Huan-Tsang, a famous Chinese traveler had also called the area of Lahaul by the term *Lo-hu-lo*. This Chinese term was written in the form of pictorial ideograms by the traveler himself and no such separate meaning was described by the person involved to the term. He had mentioned *Lo-hu-lo* as a district to north-east of Kullu (Sahni, 1994). Sankrityayan (1956) had also described his own way of calling the area of Lahaul by the term *Laha-Yul* which meant in Tibetan dialect a land (*Yul*) of Gods (*Laha*).

It is an interesting fact that Lahaul term is usually used by the people of outside world. The actual inhabitants of Lahaul area did not call it by the name of Lahaul. They have their own way of calling this tribal area by different names. Like the people

belonging to the areas of Spiti, Ladakh, and Zanskar, who basically constitutes a population mainly speaking Bhoti dialect called Lahaul area as *Garjaor Garza Khandroling* which in local language means a land of *Daakand Daakinis* i.e., a land of God and Goddesses (Garja Young Drukpa Association, 2011).

The inhabitants of the Lahaul area also do not refer their area as Lahaul but they called it by the term *Swangla* which is a local term belonging to the dialect of *Manchad*, also known as the dialect of *Pattan* valley. This term of *Swangla* is relevant to that part of Lahaul where *Swangla* people had settled during the medieval times as immigrants. The people usually living in the *Pattan* valley famously call Lahaul area as *Swangla*, or *Swangla-o-dharti* (a land of *Swangla* people) (Tobdan, 1984).

## **VI. SOCIAL CHANGE IN LAHAULA TRIBE**

Lahaula tribe has its own social organization which is governed by their own set of customary laws. This tribal society has its social structure well defined in a very simple way. Lahaula tribe is a society which is mainly patriarchal, patrilineal, patrilocal, and patronymic in nature. The normal social structure is stratified in a number of different social communities like *Swangla*, *Bodh*, *Chinal*, and *Lohar*. The *Swangla* people are the followers of Hinduism while *Bodh* people are the followers of Buddhism. *Chinal* people also follows Hinduism while *Lohar* have their own way of mixed religion. The normal labor distribution within a household is done on two bases; via age or sex. In early times, various communities used to perform their own kind of hereditary professions like the ruling family called by the term *Thakur* used to rule the village area, general *Swangla* and *Bodh* people used to engage in farming activities, people engaged in religious and cultural activities like *Bhat*, *Lama*, *Chhomo*, *Gur*, *Gurni* etc., people engaged in musical activities like playing different *Raag* in various socio-cultural practices, females engaged in singing mournful songs in death practices, people engaged in activities of blacksmith, goldsmith, basket makers, dancing etc. nowadays, the social profile of Lahaula tribe has undergone a set of changes due to various reasons with still following some of its earlier social characteristics.

### **Family structure of Lahaula tribe**

As already discussed, the Lahaula tribal society has a long history of having and sustaining a patriarchal social system. Till now, it can be observed that it still holds a sense of patriarchy in various aspects like in family structure, decision-making



advantage, socio-cultural practices, public sphere activities as a specific gender still holds a quite influential role in these aspects. A *ghyat* who is the elderly male owner of the whole household still holds his strong position and role in commencing a certain practice either related to their family's daily life or their social and cultural life. In contrast, *Gharni* who is an elderly female owner of the household usually *Ghyat*'s counterpart has a place to accompany him in some of the practices. The main role of males in a family in early times was to engage in business-related work in faraway places as this was considered very unsafe activity due to lack of proper transportation and resting facilities on the passage way. The women still living a life of housewives in the Lahaul area are still engaged in majority of household activities but with a little bit of change. In early times, they were responsible to fetch water from a common water source in heavy wooden vessels for the household purpose. Nowadays, the fetching of water in heavy vessels from a common water source is not much applicable as in newly made modernized houses a water facility is provided within their houses. They were responsible for preparing *chhang* (local liquor) in big containers which was consumed in various collective occasions. This chore of preparing *chhang* in large containers is also not followed nowadays due to the utility of other foreign liquors. Females of the household were mainly engaged in farming activities in early times but due to the availability of farm helpers from outside areas to the locals, most of the farm works are done by them. Females only go to share a hand and to supervise the work nowadays. The mentality of not giving the ploughing work to females is still followed.

The essence of a family, which was a joint family system in early times, had changed its form drastically. As of now most of the members of a family have temporarily migrated to other areas due to certain push and pull factors. Now, they pay their visit to their paternal village on certain occasions and in necessity whenever they get time and space to do so. So, due to the unavailability of all family members in their actual paternal village, all the farming activities are assigned to some farm helpers who had come from Nepal or Bihar areas. Due to this reason females now enjoy a little bit of freedom from all farming activities. In early times, the work of disposing of human excreta from the old local toilet system was the responsibility of females of the house, this activity is nowadays dropped due to the addition of new and modern toilet facilities in the house.

### **Social roles of each gender**

In early times, it was the father's role of having his final say on approval or rejection of a marriage proposal initiated from the boy's side for his daughter. It was his decision to either accept the bottle of liquor brought by boy's side or to give it back to the boy's family. This norm is now loosely followed, as now the decision-making role in accepting or rejecting a marriage proposal is also given to the girl and boy in case of arrange marriages where girl and boy do not know each other. Now they are given a suitable time to meet each other to know about their compatibility whereas in early times in most of the cases boy and girl do not have any idea about each other. The traditional way of engagement ceremony, i.e., *shaagun*, is still followed for two to three times. The mother of the bride still does not go to visit her daughter the next day of her farewell, while the father still went with some other relatives to visit her married daughter. Till now, the participation rate in the decision-making process within a house concerning private or public issues is concentrated mainly on one specific sector of gender, which is the male members of the household.

In death rituals, all the activities starting from bathing body of deceased, preparing the pyre, carrying a death procession, visiting a crematorium, burning a pyre, and collecting ash on another day, etc., are all done by males in a family just like in early times. Females are exempted from all of these. There are a few exceptional cases where females were allowed to take part in the activity of burning the pyre. The main rule followed in death rituals that who will be the medium of executing them, either a *Lama* or a *Bhat*, is still followed the same way nowadays. Here, the main importance is given to the paternal lineage or family of the deceased and not to the husband's lineage or family. Like if a *Bodh* woman is married to the family of *Swangla* than on her death a *Lama* will be called by her husband's family and all the death rituals followed according to Buddhism will be followed. Similarly, if a *Swangla* woman is married to *Bodh* family than on her death a *Bhat* will be called by her husband's family and death rituals will be carried off according to Hinduism.

Normally, the work that requires strength like cutting and collecting trees from the forest areas and managing the wood storage in the house for the winter season, was done by males only and is still followed. The old locals had quoted that in early times the work of knitting was done by males as there was a prohibition for females to work in handloom on machines, but nowadays the work of knitting is long lost forgotten by males and has become a trait of a Lahauli woman to possess it. Now, the females of the



area had also started working on handloom machines due to the exposure.

In early times, a married daughter usually paid a yearly visit to their parents' house on the *Kun* festival with prepared gifts. Nowadays, due to easily available transportation facilities, they can easily visit their parents' house anytime and not just on some special festivals. On *Kun* festival, usually the father or brother or any other male relative of a girl also pays a yearly visit to her husband's paternal house to meet and greet with some prepared food items, this ritual is called as *Tir* and is still followed by the locals.

There were various folk beliefs are connected to the bad omen when the child was born differently. The responsibility of driving this bad omen away was done by the maternal uncle of newly born baby only. Nowadays, these beliefs are not given importance. During the *mundan* (hair-cutting) ceremony of a boy child, the brother of the mother plays an important role. The first new clothes should be brought by him only. The hair-cutting ceremony which was earlier performed only in case of boy-child is now also performed by families for their girl-child. For the selection of a *shirdaar* (leader) for marriage, usually the importance is given to the brother of the mother or the father of the groom. The feast which is given on the next day of the bride's arrival at her husband's house is also given by the uncle of groom. The sister of a groom plays her role of *tsakti ping-jhaare* (groom's maid), and her husband plays the role of carrying *sha-kog* to the house of the bride. In early times, during *sha-kog* ritual the headless body of a sheep was brought by the new son-in-law of groom's family on his back while in present times, it is replaced by a box of sweets.

In early times, usually a *baktrik-pa* (who accompanies the groom and later becomes the god-brother of bride for whole of their lifetime) was chosen by the groom's side based on their relations. The bride had no idea of it and she was formally introduced to him on the day of marriage only when she came to house of groom. But nowadays, due to full exposure to select her groom, she is also given information about her *baktrik-pa*. In certain cases, the bride herself had opted who to select as her *baktrik-pa* from her friend's list even if he does not belong to Lahaul area, also.

In early times, a daughter's work efficiency and her worth in selection for marriage were judged based on how efficient and hardworking she was in preparing *pullah*, *zaraba*, cooking, cleaning, washing, and farming activities. Nowadays, this norm is not given any more importance.

### **Hereditary professions**

In early times, the people (males) generally of lower social status were given the traditional profession of playing musical instruments in different socio-cultural practices which were passed from generation to generation within their family. In present times, the families who had their traditional profession of playing instruments to play the death *raag* during death rituals had dropped these professions due to economic upward mobility. Now whole of the death procession is prepared and taken out by the relatives and acquaintances of the deceased which was done by some designated male individual of certain categories. In early times, even the news of death was transmitted by a certain male individual called as *Muh-chaan* but in present times this norm is not followed anymore due to various reasons. The females who used to come to the house of the deceased and sing *sugili* while sitting in the courtyard of the house of deceased had also dropped their profession. In present times, a very few old females are alive who had sung these songs in early days. These people had somehow mobilised themselves economically and socially. Nowadays, a more population of these people are engaged in other professions related to field of service sectors like teaching, doctor, banking, engineers, insurance company, bureaucrats etc.

### **Adaptability to modernity**

Most of the folk beliefs that were once taken care of and kept in mind are nowadays forgotten. If we look at the folk dresses of the locals, they have been drastically affected. In daily life, the male locals could not be seen wearing actual folk dresses which was once a part of their lives. They have shifted to wear pants, trousers, shirts, caps, etc. Even in social celebrative occasions, they could be seen wearing coats, pants, and ties. Only in performing the rituals related to festivals or religious acts could they be seen wearing actual folk dresses that too in very few cases. Whereas the females, specifically the old ones living in the local area, could be seen wearing *katar* and *baskat*.

In early times, the locals of this tribal area were not introduced to the formal modern education system and very much connected with the beliefs related to the supernatural entities. They had a very hard belief in the existence of several negative identities and their impact on specific genders, like the negative male identities had an influence on females and the negative female identities on males. There were also various beliefs related to the purification days after the birth of a child in a house. Nowadays, after the introduction of a formal



modern education system to both males and females, all these typical orthodox beliefs have started to lose their significance.

Earlier there were various folk beliefs mainly related to the exceptional cases happening in the case of new-born babies and to the related purification period after their birth, which was followed for some days after the birth of a child mainly by the males of a family, stated that all these things if not followed can bring a bad omen for the father of that child. There was one such belief that a female who has had many healthy sons should touch the new-born baby as it will bring a good omen to the baby. These were all irrational but people followed them blindly in the early days. The main reason to follow these beliefs was the degraded health-related facilities, by which the infant mortality rate was very high, and due to which in the early days the number of children in a family was at least seven to nine. But as soon as the people were able to enjoy proper health-related facilities and started to gain the knowledge of rational health-related education, all these beliefs went into the background.

## **VII. CULTURAL CHANGE IN LAHAULA TRIBE**

Lahaula tribe just like other tribal society has its own set of cultural elements which give them a unique identity. These elements had to be explored first properly. There is a need to document these old cultural elements of Lahaula tribe as many of its locals had started to forgot their original cultural profile. This specific cultural profile of Lahaula tribe was the main focal point of study of my Ph.D. work where I had focused mainly on the folklore part and various socio-cultural practices of Lahaula tribe. There I had majorly focused on the gender aspect of such cultural elements of Lahaula tribe but here, it is discussed that what are the changes which were observed while studying this tribal area. Below, various sections are discussed related to the cultural profile of Lahaula tribe which had undergone change:

### **Change related to the socio-cultural practices of Lahaula tribe**

There are various socio-cultural practices related to Lahaula tribe which were studied for the study purpose. These practices revolved around marriage, birth, death, divorce related aspects. Upon analysing them it can be stated that there are some kinds of changes which could be seen upon observing them and comparing them to the way they were performed in earlier times. The folk ritual of *phorog tsar-tsiand* of *branges-o shaagun*, which were a part of the marriage practices of *Bohd* community has

been forgotten by the locals. According to some old locals this ritual was last seen being performed around 2007 to 2008 by the locals who wanted to revive this ritual. Even during the period of observation this ritual was not even seen performed.

The ritual of *tsam chhwang-zial* also a part of marriage practice is still performed, but with a little bit of difference, which is mainly in the emotion with which it was performed in the early days to how emotion it is performed nowadays. In the early days, it was performed to get an idea about how efficient the bride's side women were in the work of weaving. Nowadays, only a little bit of wool is given to the females from the bride's side when they come to the groom's house to send the bride to her new house only to do the formality, and there is no hidden agenda like calculating the work efficiency of bride's side in performing this ritual.

The ritual of *kham ran-dri* is still being performed but nowadays with a little bit of change in the form of gifts. Originally, *kham ran-dri* means to gift clothes from the bride's relatives to her, but in the present time, it involves another form of gifts, like money as well. An account of all these gifts is still been taken by the bride's parents to keep a reminder for the bride of how much number of things like flour, oil must be taken by her when the concerned relative (who has given her *kham*) dies. This type of give and take of things is still been observed and performed by the locals.

The ritual of *sha-kog* has changed a lot. *Shakogin* a literal sense means the body meat of a sheep without its head. It was usually the duty of the groom's side to bring it with their procession to the bride's house. The responsibility of carrying this raw meat on the back was of the new *damaad* (son-in-law) of the groom's house. In the present time, the same type of gifting system is brought by the groom's side to the bride's house, but in place of raw meat, a box of sweets brought from the market is taken along. All the close relatives of the bride are given a small box of sweets by the *damaad* from the groom's side with the help of an elder lady (usually the mother of the bride).

The types of patterns of marriage that were usually being followed by the locals in early times, a drastic change has occurred in this respect as well. Like in early times, a total of three types of marriage patterns existed. In present times, only the *mo-de byah* (a big formal wedding) could be seen followed by the locals. The *kwachi byah* (a small wedding where a representative groom goes in place of actual groom) is not in fashion nowadays, as almost everyone now is in a good economic condition to hold a proper marriage ceremony. There has been a



very nice change in the area quoted by the old locals, that nowadays, *koozi byah* (wedding done by capturing) has long been forgotten by the people. In place of it, a new trend of love marriage is getting very popular in the area. Most of the inter-district, interstate, and inter-country marriages are also in fashion, as most of the young males and females are temporarily migrating to other areas due to their profession. The most common form of marriage pattern nowadays adopted by the locals are firstly, a full-fledged big marriage (*mo-de byah*) usually arranged by the relatives and then the soon-to-be bride and groom are introduced before the actual wedding, so that they get acquainted with each other. Secondly, a full-fledged big marriage (*mo-de byah*) usually followed when the girl and boy are in love, and then they introduce their families to each other, and with their approval, they get married. Thirdly, a court marriage or temple marriage on non-availability of time and then after some time, approximately within one to two years, a full day reception (*feroni*) is arranged by the families for the relatives. Fourth, a small marriage happens in one day with involvement of only close relatives, and after some time, approximately one to two years, a full-day reception is given. Lastly, an inter-mix marriage where one side belongs to this area and the other side to the outer area, and both types of rituals are performed in completing a marriage ceremony.

The fraternal polyandry system of marriage is also been forgotten by the locals. Nowadays, only monogamy is followed. One can marry another individual after getting a customary divorce from their former partner. While talking to the females about the acceptance of another lady as a new wife to their husband (polygyny) and of another man as her other husband (polyandry), they are in complete disagreement with these conditions. In early times, usually the females were quite tolerant about it, so that they accepted this as their destiny. In present times, young females are in favor of monogamy.

The *stree-dhan* given to a girl in the form of gifts on behalf of the relatives of the bride is still given to a girl. Her family, relatives, or friends could be seen gifting some cash, jewelry, clothes, or other gifts to her in the form of *zong*. An amount of cash is given after eating the feast as *bartan* on both sides. *Chheti* is also given if the divorce is initiated by the husband to his wife, which is decided in front of the elders of the village. This custom of gifting ceremony should not be equalized to the concept of dowry as the old locals had taken their stand that dowry is something which is given to the in-laws of daughter at the time of her wedding and not to the daughter herself. But *zong* is something which is only given to

and is meant for the daughter only, and not to her in-laws. They stated that dowry usually involves giving jewelry, clothes, vehicles, and cash to the in-laws and husband of a daughter. But *zong* is only given in the name of the daughter. All collected money is deposited into the bank account of the daughter by her parents. The jewelry given is only used and belongs to her. The clothes gifted are only for her use. One of the old locals had an opinion that dowry is given as parents of the daughter are socially and culturally forced to give it. But *zong* is not forced by the in-laws on to the parents of daughter. It is the daughter's parents and relatives' voluntary wish to give it. Dowry according to them is something which is pre-decided usually by the in-laws, but the *zong* amount is wishfully decided by the family and relatives of the daughter according to their own will and capacity. Dowry is something which is not kept under the property of the daughter. *Zong* is a property given to a daughter by her parents as she is not bestowed any other property rights. So, this *zong* can be seen as a part of property that is very less of her father, which only belongs to her. But in present times, it has been observed that some type of piece of jewelry, like a gold ring or watch, is gifted by the bride's parents to the groom voluntarily. One local expert had stood firm against this and stated that this form of voluntary gifting of a groom by his in-laws could become a seed of dowry in the coming years, if it becomes a norm among the locals.

The death rituals happening in this area had also undergone some change in the general way of performing them. One of the old locals had pointed out the difference that in the early days, a death procession was not like a sorrowful procession but like giving a grand tribute to the deceased as a final farewell ceremony. In early times the procession was accompanied by the local musicians playing a certain death *raag* who were of lower social class categories, as it was their hereditary profession. Certain females of lower social classes also used to visit the house of the deceased, where they sang some songs called *sugili* in their deep voice. The information about the death of an individual was transmitted to the relatives by a male informant called *muh-chaan*, who also belongs to a lower social class. The procession, when going to the crematorium was allowed to take rest where the *bel-driritual* (to take a round off the deceased by the musicians and collecting the amount of money given by the family of the deceased) was completed. In the present time, there is a drastic change in this regard as due to the economic upward mobility, the lower social class people have long left their hereditary occupation of playing instruments and singing songs at death rituals and have engaged



themselves in other service sectors' professions. Nowadays, the news of the death of an individual is transmitted through phone calls. The whole of the arrangements like preparing the pyre and other things are only done by the family of the deceased. The rituals of *yang ya-tsi*, *phoa*, and *shuguro-tri* are done in the same manner by *Bodh* people. Females are still not allowed to accompany the death procession, and the last burning rite of the deceased is done by the male relative of the deceased only. The collecting of ash and the ash flowing rite is only done by males. Nowadays, in place of *Tandi*, most of the people prefer to do this at the *HaridwarGhat* in Uttarakhand state by both the *Bodh* and the *Swangla* people. The people still living in the local area go to the common land of the farm pre-decided as a place of crematorium by the villagers, while the *Lahaula* people who are living in *Kullu* district usually go to the common places of crematorium in *Kullu*, like either in the *Bhoothnath* temple or in the *Bhuntar* crematorium area.

The *kawa ran-dri*(ancestral worship) ritual is still being performed in the parental house while living in the parental village on special occasions. It is still done for only the male ancestors' names and is done by a male head (*ghyat*) of the house. In early times, the after-death rituals in early times were mainly done after forty-nine days due to some folk belief attached to it. But nowadays, only after thirteen days, the after-death rituals are completed by the family of the deceased, and they call it *terahvin*, i.e., the thirteenth day after the death, or *sama*, which is heavily influenced by the neighboring outer areas' culture.

Concerning the folk rituals related to birth related practices of *Lahaula* tribe, there are some perceptions which are not significantly changed. The ideological preference given to the birth of a son on comparison to a daughter is still there. Some folk beliefs, like a pregnant lady should not visit water streams or someone's death rituals, are still the same. The folk custom of keeping and preserving the umbilical cord, placenta, and dried out *naal* is long lost and forgotten. Some type of nutritional food and drinks are given to a new mother for her good health despite of the gender of the baby. No such customs were found on giving certain types of food items to a pregnant lady, so much so that a specific gendered child i.e., son should be born. But some sort of wish is generally put forward by the direct family members to Lord *Shiva* while doing the *Mani Mahesh Yatra*, wishing to *Ghepan* God, *Triloknath*, and *KelingVazir* to bestow their family with a son, if their previous children are all daughters. Nowadays, a newborn baby is bathed not in any metal vessels but

in a plastic bathtub. The period of impurity after the birth of a child is loosely followed nowadays. In early days, the birth procedure was done in the lower floor in a room designated which was the lower floor which was assigned for the animals in traditional houses. In the present day, no such thing is kept in mind. The males can eat food in the same house immediately after the delivery. At the birth of a child, in paternal homes, the house deity is still worshipped specifically for boy-child. In early times, people were in the trend of giving birth to more than five children, but in present times families have changed their state of mind in giving birth to only one to two children due to decreasing infant mortality rate happening in the area. The ear-piercing ceremony, specially done for a boychild, is also forgotten. A *kada* of silver for both wrists are gifted to the child, either boy or girl, by their grandparents. The hair cutting ceremony, which was only meant for the boy child on their completion of one year. In present times, some families have started doing this ceremony even for their girl children.

### **VIII. RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY**

The presented study which mainly focused on the changes which had happened in the social, cultural, and economic aspects of *Lahaula* tribe in past few years. The study is helpful to get an idea about the past conditions of *Lahaula* people concerning these three aspects and also to know the present conditions of *Lahaula* people again concerning the selected three aspects. Among the three aspects selected for the study a variety of issues had also been touched like gender relations assigned by the society, education role in the society, technological advancements' contribution to area, family structure, marriage customs, death practices, birth rituals-beliefs, folkloric elements, basic economic pattern, social communities within the area, advancing health facilities, availability of other professions etc. the study is helpful to give the readers an actual insight of the social profile of *Lahaula* tribe in past and present conditions. About its set of cultural elements and also about its economic profile that what are the changes which had been brought by various reasons in the lives of locals and how their life had been influenced by these changes.

### **IX. CONCLUSION**

Society is constantly changing despite of its characteristic. It is possible that the rate by which a society is changing differs but every society goes under a phase of change. *Lahaula* tribal society is also one such society which has gone under change



whether it is its social, cultural or economic profile. The basic family structure of Lahaul tribe had been changed. The economic upward mobility had also taken place in the area among the earlier deprived social communities of the area. The cultural pattern of the area had also undergone a drastic change even in the influence they had at one point of time on the locals. Various responsible factors were brought out by the locals and by the outsider agencies by which Lahaul tribal society had undergone these types of changes. Some of changes had happened for a good cause and there are also some changes which had caused a loss to the distinct tribal identity of Lahaul people.

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