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THE STUDY OF FAIRS, FESTIVALS AND LANGUAGES IN RAVI RIVER BASIN IN HIMACHAL PRADESH, INDIA

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ABSTRACT: The language commonly spoken in the district is western Pahari in 5 distinct dialects. Of these, Chambiali is spoken in Chamba town and its neighborhoods, Gadyali or Bharmouri is being spoken in the upper Ravi valley comprising of Bharmour and Holi tehsils, Bhattiyali is the dialect of Bhattiyat tehsil, Chaurahi is being spoken in Chaurah tehsil and Saluni tehsil and some villages of Chamba tehsil. Ravi basin in Himachal Pradesh's most part spread in Chamba district and Chamba is full of fairs and festivals. Of all the fairs of Chamba district Minjar Fair is the most popular in Chamba district of Ravi River Basin in Himachal Pradesh. Minjar fair of Chamba town is held in sravana month every year. The people sing seasonal songs in their respective area. Of all the songs sung during the fair, Kunjari is the most charming song in Ravi River Basin in Himachal Pradesh. The Shopkeepers from neighboring states come to Chamba town and sell their goods and the people of surrounding area purchase many articles of their requirement for one year. Sui fair is as old as the time when Chamba became the capital of the state. The Sui fair is held on the month of April every year. Mani Mahesh is situated about 26 Kms. from Bharmaur town. Lord Shiva is believed to reside there. The pilgrims of Ravi River basin and another part of India have to be at the lake on the morning of Radha Ashtami which falls 15 days after Krishna Janam Ashtami in the month of August/September every year. Nag fair is held in Banikhet in the month of June for two days. A Khajiar village is about 24 Kms. from Chamba towns. A Jatar is held here on the fourth night of Jaistha (May) and continues till the next morning. Saluni Jatar is held on 1st Jaistha (May) every year at Saluni and on this day Nag Devta is worshipped with incense and wheat bread is offered to him. Phool Jatar is begins in the month of October every year for four days at Kupha. This Jatar is the last fair of the year and after this, the region has heavy snowfall. Bhanjraru

Chhinj is held on 14th Asadha (June) at Bhanjraru for a day and held in the name of Lakhdatta. Baar is held on the last Tuesday of Pausa (January) and Kalimai is worshipped here. Different types of local dishes are eaten in the evening.

KEYWORDS: Festivals, Fairs, Language, Basin, River.

Introduction

Festival is an event, a social phenomenon, encountered in virtually all human cultures. The colorful variety and dramatic intensity of its dynamic choreographic and aesthetic aspects, the signs of deep meaning underlying them, its historical roots and the involvement of the 'natives' have always attracted the attention of casual visitors; have consumed travelers and men of letters alike. Since the last century, scholars from disciplines such as comparative religion, anthropology, sociology, and folklore have concerned themselves with the description, the analysis, and, more recently, the interpretation of festivities. Yet little explicit theoretical effort has been devoted to the nomenclature of festive events or to the definition of the word festival. As a result, the meaning of festival in the social sciences is simply taken from common language, where the term covers a constellation of very different events, sacred and profane, private and public, sanctioning tradition and introducing innovation, proposing nostalgic revivals, providing the expressive means for the survival of the most archaic folk customs, and celebrating the highly speculative and experimental avant-gardes of the elite fine arts. Etymologically the term festival derives ultimately from the Latin *festum*. But originally Latin had two terms for festive events: *festum*, for "public joy, merriment, revelry," and *feria*, meaning "abstinence from work in honor of the Gods." Both terms were used in the plural, *festa* and *feriae*, which indicates that at that time festivals already lasted many days and included many events.

To Chhambiali any opportunity for celebration is welcome. Innumerable fairs and festivals are held throughout this Ravi River basin in Himachal Pradesh. Almost every village has a fair. Then there are fairs for groups of villages and still bigger fairs for the areas or the districts. Most of the fairs are religious but there are also community and trade fairs. In fact every kind of fair in essence becomes a social get together or a trade gathering. Besides propitiating the local God, matches are made, marriages settled and wares of the artisans and the produce of the farmers change hands. Men and women dressed in their most colourful clothes sit on hillsides which present a riot of colour to watch the wrestling matches or the dances and songs that go on endlessly (H.K. Mittoo)

The language commonly spoken in the district is western Pahari in 5 distinct dialects. Of these,

Chambiali is spoken in Chamba town and its neighborhoods, Gadyali or Bharmouri is being spoken in the upper Ravi valley comprising of Bharmour and Holi tehsils, Bhattiyali is the dialect of Bhattiyat tehsil, Chaurahi is being spoken in Chaurah tehsil and Saluni tehsil and some villages of Chamba tehsil. Ravi basin in Himachal Pradesh's most part spread in Chamba district and Chamba is full of fairs and festivals. Of all the fairs of Chamba district Minjar Fair is the most popular in Chamba district of Ravi River Basin in Himachal Pradesh. Minjar fair of Chamba town is held in sravana month every year. The people sing seasonal songs in their respective area. Of all the songs sung during the fair, Kunjari is the most charming song in Ravi River Basin in Himachal Pradesh. The Shopkeepers from neighboring states come to Chamba town and sell their goods and the people of surrounding area purchase many articles of their requirement for one year. Sui fair is as old as the time when Chamba became the capital of the state. The Sui fair is held on the month of April every year. Mani Mahesh is situated about 26 Kms. from Bharmaur town. Lord Shiva is believed to reside there. The pilgrims of Ravi River basin and another part of India have to be at the lake on the morning of Radha Ashtami which falls 15 days after Krishna Janam Ashtami in the month of August/September every year. Nag fair is held in Banikhet in the month of June for two days. A Khajiar village is about 24 Kms. from Chamba towns. A Jatar is held here on the fourth night of Jaistha (May) and continues till the next morning. Saluni Jatar is held on 1st Jaistha (May) every year at Saluni and on this day Nag Devta is worshipped with incense and wheat bread is offered to him. Phool Jatar is begins in the month of October every year for four days at Kupha. This Jatar is the last fair of the year and after this, the region has heavy snowfall. Bhanjraru Chhinj is held on 14th Asadha (June) at Bhanjraru for a day and held in the name of Lakhdatta. Baar is held on the last Tuesday of Pausa (January) and Kalimai is worshipped here. Different types of local dishes are eaten in the evening.

Main Objectives of the study: The objective of the present study area is to: -

- To study languages of Ravi River Basin in Himachal Pradesh.
- To study main fairs and festivals of Ravi River Basin in Himachal Pradesh.

Data sources and Methodology:

The present study area is based on secondary data. Data has been collected from Census data of 2001 and 2011 of Chamba and Kangra districts of Himachal Pradesh. The study area map was prepared with the help of ArcGis software. This study was guided by the following methodological steps. For compilation tabulation, mapping and analysis of data for cartographic techniques were pressed into service.

Study Area: The Ravi River Basin in Himachal Pradesh, Which lies in Kangra and Chamba districts of Himachal Pradesh, has been chosen for the present study. Geographically Ravi River (H.P.) Basin area is located

between 32° 11' 30" to 33° 01' 5" North latitudes and 75°48' to 77°45' East Longitudes. The tract is mountainous, covered by the Dhauladhar and Pirpanjal ranges. The elevation varies from 559 meters to 5563 meters. On the other side the climate of the Ravi River Catchment area may be described as moderate summer and very cold winter. The precipitation is received in both during rainy season and winter season, but in high altitude an area in winter season receives precipitation in the form of snow and in lower altitude area in the form of Rainfall from Monsoon winds as well as from Western Disturbance. The highest monthly temperature is experienced in June and lowest below 0°C in January. The Ravi River has a total of 5451 sq.Kms. Catchment area and its total length are about 158 Kms. in H.P. The Ravi River originates in Bara Bhangal area of the Multhan Tehsil of Kangra. This River rises at the elevation of 4300 mts on the southern side of the mid Himalayas. It flows through Bara Bhangal, Bara Bansu and Chamba District. It flows in forms of Rapids in its initial reaches with boulders seen scattered in the bed of the River. The Ravi River in this reach flows in a gorge with a River bed slope of 1:185 feet per mile, and is mostly fed by snow. It is called Ravi after meeting two tributaries Tantgari and Badal in Bara Bhangal area of Kangra District. The main tributaries of Ravi River are Badal, Tantgari, Budhil, TundahNala, ChirchindNala, Nai, BatogNala, SahoNala, Baira and Siul etc. It left Himachal at Khairi and enters in Punjab (Fig.1).

Analysis of Study:

Language: The language commonly spoken in the district is western Pahari in 5 distinct dialects. Of these, Chambiali is spoken in Chamba town and its neighborhoods over a considerable area extending to the whole of Chamba tehsil. Gadyali or Bharmouri is being spoken in the upper Ravi valley comprising of Bharmour and Holi tehsils.

Bhattiyali is the dialect of Bhattiyat tehsil, Chaurahi is being spoken in Chaurah tehsil and Saluni tehsil and some villages of Chamba tehsil.

Chambiali, in modified form, is the only dialect used in writing, but now it is less in use. During the state period, all the official business with the parganas used to be conducted in Tankri script using Chambiali. With the spread of modern education, the use of Tankri has almost extinguished except that it is being used by a few people belonging to the business community. In the urban areas, Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi are commonly spoken by all. The Parachinari displaced persons speak Pashto but this is confined to their own community. During the regime of Rajas the Tankri script which is believed to have been derived from the Sharada script was much in use. For a number of years, Urdu in the Arabic script was the court language in Chamba. Now English and Hindi

are the official languages of all the departments (Census Report 2001).

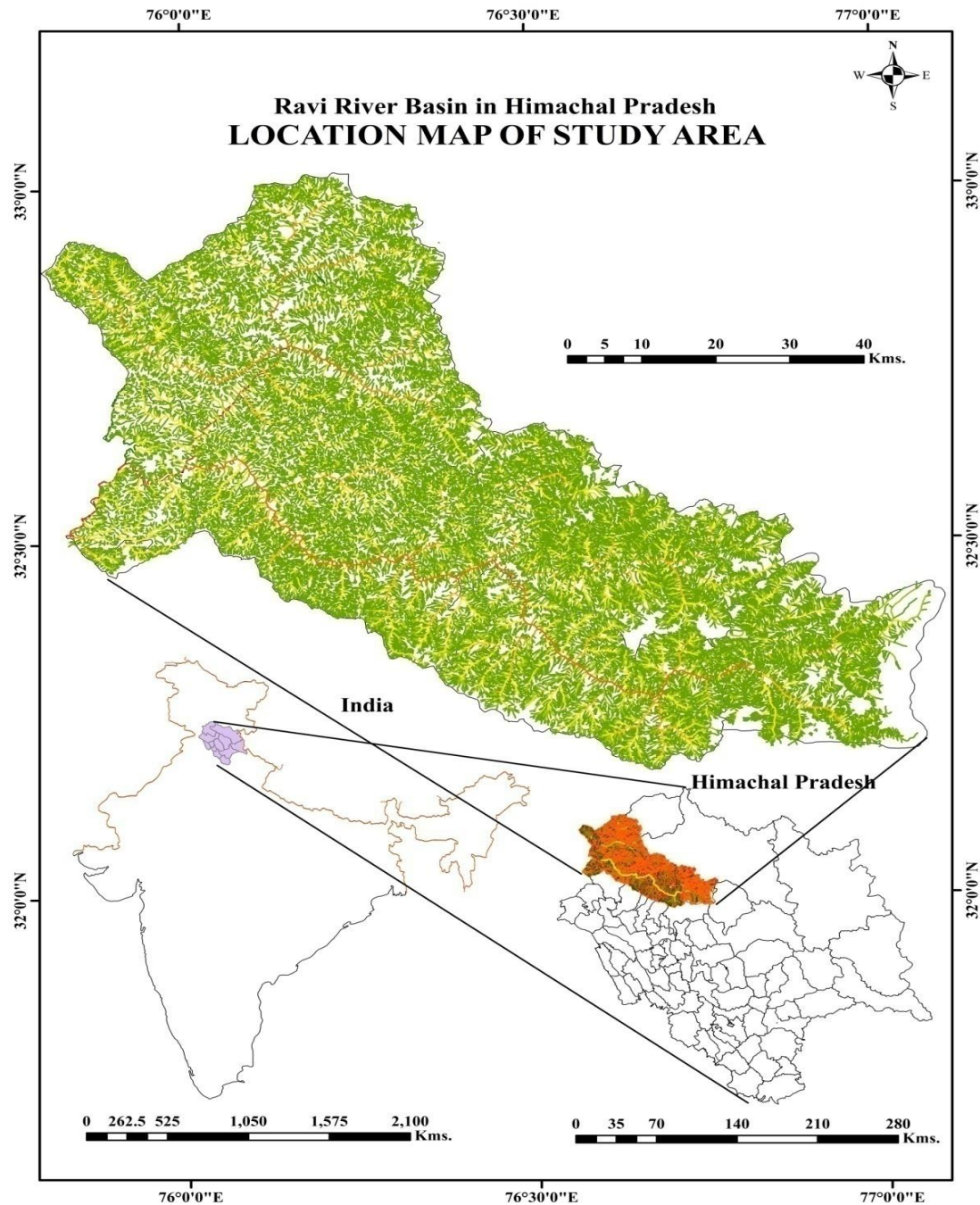


Figure: 1

Fairs and Festivals:

Festival is an event, a social phenomenon, encountered in virtually all human cultures. The colorful variety and dramatic intensity of its dynamic choreographic and aesthetic aspects, the signs of deep meaning underlying them, its historical roots and the involvement of the 'natives' have always attracted the attention of casual visitors; have consumed travelers and men of letters alike. Since the last century, scholars from disciplines such as comparative religion, anthropology, sociology, and folklore have concerned themselves with the description, the analysis, and, more recently, the interpretation of festivities. Yet little explicit theoretical effort has been devoted to the nomenclature of festive events or to the definition of the festival. As a result, the meaning of festival in the social sciences is simply taken from common language, where the term covers a constellation of very different events, sacred and profane, private and public, sanctioning tradition and introducing innovation, proposing nostalgic revivals, providing the expressive means for the survival of the most archaic folk customs, and celebrating the highly speculative and experimental avant-gardes of the elite fine arts. Etymologically the term festival derives ultimately from the Latin *festum*. But originally Latin had two terms for festive events: *festum*, for "public joy, merriment, revelry," and *feria*, meaning "abstinence from work in honor of the Gods." Both terms were used in the plural, *festa* and *feriae* , which indicates that at that time festivals already lasted many days and included many events. Ravi River basin in Himachal Pradesh's most part spread in Chamba district and Chamba is full of fairs and festivals, some of which are given below:

Minjar Fair: Of all the fairs of Chamba district Minjar is the most popular. There are many beliefs about its origin. There is a legend that many centuries ago, Ravi was flowing through the Chamba where now Changan is situated. There is a temple of Champawati on the right side of the River and that of Hari Rai on the other side. A Mahatma who was staying by Champawati temple used to visit Hari Rai temple by swimming the river. Raja Sahil Varman and people of Chamba town requested the Mahatma to make some arrangement so that all could visit the sacred temple of Hari Rai. The Mahatma asked the people to come to the temple of Champawati where a Yajna was performed with the help of Brahmins for seven days. A cord of seven different colours was prepared and it was given the name of Minjar. On completion of the Yajna, the River changed its course. According to another legend the fair is held for worship of Varuna, the God of waters.

Minjar is a seasonal fair of Chamba for celebrating the rains and the flowering of maize. It is held in August and starts with a traditional procession of decorated horses and banners. People from all parts of Chamba and even from other areas of Himachal Pradesh, travel long distances to watch the week-long celebrations. Besides the famous folk-dances of Gaddis, there is plentiful music and trade. On the concluding day the devotees offer

Minjars (maize flowers) and coconuts to God Varuna at Ravi River. Afterwards sweets and scents are distributed (Mattoo, H.R).

Minjar fair is held in the month of Sravana every year. The fair starts on the second Sunday of Sravana with the distribution of Minjar. During the regime of erstwhile State, Raja used to participate in the fair. Till recently a male buffalo used to be pushed into the river. In 1955 or so a Minjar flag was introduced by the Municipal Committee. It is hoisted by the Deputy Commissioner in the Chaugan on the morning of second Sunday indicating the beginning of the fair. Minjar is distributed and the tournaments start from that day. On the third Sunday, there is a large gathering.

The people sing seasonal songs of their own area. Of all the songs sung during the fair, Kunjari is the most charming. Being a very old folk song, it is traditional and has a typical tune. Shopkeepers from adjoining states come to the place to sell their goods and people also purchase many articles of their requirement for the year as a whole. Various types of exhibitions are also arranged by the Government departments to exhibit the progress made in various fields. Various cultural shows are also organized for the entertainment of the people.

Sui Fair of Chamba: Sui fair is as old as the time when Chamba became the capital of the state. For the capital there was no proper supply of water. Raja Sahil Varman had a water course made from Sarota stream round the Shah-Madar hill but the water did not enter the channel and it was ascribed to 9 super natural causes. The Brahmins who were consulted pronounced that water would pass if the Rani or her son was sacrificed. There is another tradition that the Raja had a dream in which he was directed to offer his son as sacrifice. But the Rani insisted to sacrifice her own life. A grave was dug near Balota village and she was buried alive. When the grave was filled up water began to flow and has been flowing ever since. The Rani is venerated for her sacrifice and is worshipped as 'Sui Mata. The fair is held on the last three days of April every year. Last day of the fair is known as Sukrat i.e. 'Sukh-khi-Raat'. On the evening of the closing day Sukrat is sung. The fair is colourful and its charm is enhanced by the songs not only at the fair but in all houses.

Mani Mahesh Fair: Mani Mahesh is situated about 26 Kms. from Bharmaur town. Lord Shiva is believed to reside there. Shiva had granted a boon to Bharmani Devi that every pilgrim must worship her before proceeding to Mani Mahesh. The oracles of Keling and Mani Mahesh are consulted as to whether their pilgrimage would be successful and accepted by Shiva. Pilgrims assemble at Bharmaur and start for the yatra to Manimahesh. They reach Mani Mahesh Lake after covering the distance in two stages. The pilgrims have to be at the lake on the morning of Radha Ashtami which falls 15 days after Krishna Janam Ashtami in the month of

August/September. Every devotee must take a dip into lake in the early hours of the morning which is considered as sacred. A dip in the lake is taken only after taking a dip first in Gauri Kund which is situated at one km. ahead of Mani Mahesh Lake. In the past only women used to take a dip in this kund but now all avail this. Besides this, two dips in the spring at Hudsar and Dhanchhoh are also essential. The pilgrimage to Mani Mahesh is considered as sacred. Some of the pilgrims go bare footed. The pilgrims go on shouting 'Mani Mahesh-ki-Jai'. People return to Bharmaur on the 5th or 6th day. On their way back; people bring two plants growing in the area. These are called Ghugi and Banand. Every year 8 to 10 lakhs peoples are came to Manimahesh during this fair.

Nag Fair: This fair is held in Banikhet in the month of June for two days. It is held in honour of Nag devta, whose temple is situated in the village. People come and make offerings to the Nag Devta and wrestling matches are held.

Khajiar Jatar: Khajiar village is about 24 Kms. from Chamba towns. A Jatar is held here on the fourth night of Jaistha (May) and continues till the next morning. The fair is managed by temple committee of Laxmi Narayan Temple of Chamba. The fair starts at 10 P.M. with the Kirtan of Khasi Nag and continues till 3 A.M. The people make offerings of ghee, wheat flour, coconuts etc. to the Nag.

Saluni Jatar: This Jatar is held on 1st Jaistha (May) every year at Saluni. On this day Nag Devta is worshipped with incense and wheat bread is offered to him. A goat or ram is sacrificed. After offering the bread to the Nag Devta, it is distributed among the people present in Jatar.

Bhanjraru Chhinj: This fair is held on 14th Asadha (June) at Bhanjraru for a day. It is held in the name of Lakhdatta. His worship is done by the people in their homes. The people believe that by worshipping the Lakhdatta cows and buffaloes give more milk. Ghee is hoarded in his name. Wrestling matches are held and prizes are distributed among winners.

Baar: This festival is held on the last Tuesday of Pausa (January). Kalimai is worshipped. Local dishes are eaten in the evening.

In the recent years the following fairs and festivals are also getting importance:

Chamba Dussehra: This is organized by the local people and Ram Leela committee and has become one of the important fairs of the district.

Summer Festival Dalhousie: This is organized by the administration with the help of local people and

Municipal Committee, Dalhousie to attract tourists from the different parts of the country. During summer tourists influx to Dalhousie is at its peak.

Urs: Urs is celebrated twice a year at Dargah Peer Zamal Shah, Rajpura- first on 10th Muharram and second on Milad-ul-Nabi (12 Rabi-ue-awal). Quawalis are organized during night in which people from all walks of life irrespective of their religion participate (Census Report 2001).

Conclusion: Festival is an event, a social phenomenon, encountered in virtually all human cultures. The colorful variety and dramatic intensity of its dynamic choreographic and aesthetic aspects, the signs of deep meaning underlying them, its historical roots and the involvement of the 'natives' have always attracted the attention of casual visitors; have consumed travelers and men of letters alike. Since the last century, scholars from disciplines such as comparative religion, anthropology, sociology, and folklore have concerned themselves with the description, the analysis, and, more recently, the interpretation of festivities. Yet little explicit theoretical effort has been devoted to the nomenclature of festive events or to the definition of the *world festival*. As a result, the meaning of festival in the social sciences is simply taken from common language, where the term covers a constellation of very different events, sacred and profane, private and public, sanctioning tradition and introducing innovation, proposing nostalgic revivals, providing the expressive means for the survival of the most archaic folk customs, and celebrating the highly speculative and experimental avant-gardes of the elite fine arts.

Minjar is the most popular fair in this Ravi River basin in Himachal Pradesh and there are many beliefs about its origin and centuries back, Ravi River was flowing through the Chamba chagan. Minjar is a seasonal fair of Chamba for celebrating the rains and the flowering of maize. It is held in August and starts with a traditional procession of decorated horses and banners. Sui fair is as old as the time when Chamba became the capital of the state. Mani Mahesh is situated about 26 Kms. from Bharmaur town. Lord Shiva is believed to reside there. Shiva had granted a boon to Bharmani Devi that every pilgrim must worship her before proceeding to Mani Mahesh. The oracles of Keling and Mani Mahesh are consulted as to whether their pilgrimage would be successful and accepted by Shiva. The pilgrims have to be at the lake on the morning of Radha Ashtami which falls 15 days after Krishna Janam Ashtami in the month of August/September. Every devotee must take a dip into lake in the early hours of the morning which is considered as sacred. Nag fair is held in Banikhet in the month of June for two days every year. Khajiar Jatar is held on the the fourth night of Jaistha (May) and continue till next morning. Bhanjaru Chhinj is held on 14th Asadha (June) in Tissa area of this basin and it is celebrated in name of Lakshdata. Chamba Dussehra is organized by local people and Ram leela committee every

year. Summer festival of Dalhousie organized by the administration with the help of local people and Municipal Committee, Dalhousie to attract tourists from the different parts of the country. During summer tourists influx to Dalhousie is at its peak. Urs is celebrated twice a year at Dargah Peer Zamal Shah, Rajpura- first on 10th Muharram and second on Milad-ul-Nabi (12 Rabi-ue-awal). Quawalis are organized during night in which people from all walks of life irrespective of their religion participate (Census Report 2001).

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