

Ecology, Economy and Society : Their Interaction Amongst the Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh

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ABSTRACT The present study reports the economic and social interdependence in a transhumant population group Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh. This transhumant way of life nurtured by ecological factors has given social relationships which are institutionalized between people who know one another personally. Each Gaddi stands at the centre of a network of social relationship. Some of these relationships are established by birth, some by marriage and some by deliberate pledge. All these relationships provide economic advantages and protection for the participants. Gaddis have evolved two institutions, namely, co-operation between families and *barton* (obligatory assistance) to deal with the need for interdependence and to overcome the scarcity of paid labour. In the present paper it is reported that ecology of the area has produced a unique blend of self sufficiency and mutual interdependence. The socio-cultural system of Gaddis, provides an institutionalized means of formalizing a friendship between status equals or of bringing close together persons of high and low castes.

INTRODUCTION

Transhumants face the common problems of people every where. Despite their migratory mode of production they must marry, establish families, relate to kins people and neighbours in a way that pre-supposes mutual obligations and expectations. They must get along with co-villagers and maintain stable relations well enough to be able to call on them for economic, social and ritual aid in times of need. They must also maintain viable relations with people outside their community. Transhumant way of life necessitates relations beyond the limits of a village. The quality of social relationships in which transhumants engage: their form and meaning, the way they are initiated and sustained, is similar to other peasants. But despite the apparent identity, there are vital cultural differences. Transhumant social institutions are looking both towards the requirements imposed by the ecological conditions and economic order and towards customary expectations of the fellowmen. According to Fredrik Barth (1981), social interaction is purposive and goal-oriented, and actors seek to maintain or

maximize social values by choosing the strategy which seems to offer them the best opportunities. However, choices are partly constrained by jural rules, and also by the values and moves of other social actors. The basic material to study "social relations" is regularised (or institutionalized) behaviour between individuals. Generalization are made about the systematic connection of these relationships.

PRESENT STUDY

This study presents economic and social interdependence in a Gaddi population of Bharmour Tahsil, Chamba District, Himachal Pradesh, who travel from one ecological zone to another. This transhumant way of life nurtured by ecological factors has given social relationships which are institutionalized between people who know one another personally. The population in the Bharmour Tehsil, Chamba District, has been stable in the area for quite a long time. It has not been dominated or strongly influenced by the Muslims, Gorkhas, Tibetan or British. There have been no recent changes in the technology of economy great enough to bring about rapid changes in social organization. The area remained comparatively isolated till the 7th century. Although the physical environment is discouraging. Bharmour saw a large influx of Gaddis around the 7th and 8th centuries. The Gaddi caste is a result of the union of Rajputs, Khatri and Thakurs over several hundred years. Historical events suggest that they came from Lahore and Delhi. Whatever may be the origin of these groups they now form a single caste. Immigrants into Bharmour area adopted the local customs, caste, kinship, marriage and religion thus indicating that ecological adaptations moulds the social relations to adopt to the local conditions. The local inhabitants draw a distinction between the three castes, the Brahmans, the Gaddi Rajputs (formed by the union of Rajputs, Khatri, Thakurs

or Ranas over several hundred years), and the Scheduled Castes.

Each caste (i.e. the endogamous social group) is traditionally associated with certain occupations which are considered to be the traditional occupations of the caste. In parts of India, in a large number of cases, this association is reflected in the caste name. Even if the caste name does not express this link with its traditional calling, it is universally known as established by tradition. Among Gaddis, the caste name Brahman, Rajput, Sipi and Rehara, do not show any association with specific occupations; two of these castes, however does possess and pursue traditional calling: the Brahman *Purohit* (priest), and the Reharas musicians. Artisans and menial castes are not found. Their work is generally done by each family. When special skill is required it is done by skilled workers of any caste. All the members of Brahmans and Rehara caste do not follow the traditional occupation, and even those members who do so may derive most of their income from other activities. When members of a caste pursue occupations other than their traditional one, usually these are farming, tailoring and official employment. The economic importance of the traditional occupation varies from caste to caste. Some members derive most of their income from traditional sources, while for others the income from traditional sources is trivial.

Professional practitioners of three crafts resides in Bharmour Patwar Circle (study area) - blacksmiths, goldsmiths and carpenters. Both families of blacksmiths belong to Sipi caste, but all the Sipis are not blacksmiths. Goldsmiths and carpenters, who may be of any caste, are the specialists whose work requires much training and who as a consequence, are well paid. In summer, cobbler and barber come to Bharmour for work and stay there up to winter migration. The Gaddis buy their pots and pans from Kangra market. Of the craftsmen who live in Bharmour, Blacksmith is the most important because he makes and repairs agricultural implements.

There are some other crafts that call for some skill or extra effort such as spinning and weaving, tailoring, beekeeping, making liquor and collecting minor forest products in the high forest. Those who do not have these skills must go

to their kinsmen or friends who do. Consequently people are able to supplement their income, especially by spinning and weaving, tailoring and plant collecting (medicinal herbs).

The Bharmour *Patwar* circle, as a region, is caste-incomplete. On the hamlet level this incompleteness is more pronounced. The process is largely circular. The lack of surplus prevents the family from hiring specialized labour, and its own range of skills render it unnecessary. Artisan castes have not proliferated simply because they are not needed. On the other hand unskilled labour is needed at harvest time but is not available.

Because of the fact that all castes, regardless of the rank in the hierarchy, have their own land, the family can usually provide sufficient income for economic independence. This acts as a natural deterrent to any inclination that the artisans and menial castes might have to practise a specialized trade or to hire themselves out as agricultural labourers. The high castes are unable to hire such labourers even if they can afford it, this factor further promotes inter-caste and intra-family occupational generalization.

It is interesting to note that 14 per cent of the people in the circle belong to low unclean castes, a far higher proportion than is normal for north Indian plains. Historically speaking perhaps it was also because of their large number that the high castes could not coerce them into occupational servitude.

Until very recently there was not land pressure in the sense that every household owned as much land as it could use. Those families that are short of land now are almost equally distributed among the several castes, and so far they have been able to maintain their income level by road labour and other work that do not involve working for other local families. Families were, and still are autonomous economically, socially and ritually. They are self sufficient, but at the same time there are some areas of co-operative assistance.

MAKING A LIVING

Ecological conditions in the area have resulted in a mixed-agro-pastoral economy. Although agriculture provides the bulk of the staple

food. Gaddis give importance to sheep and goat rearing. From this source they obtain additional food in the form of meat and milk and wool for clothing. Due to heavy snowfall for about three to four months during winter, the Gaddis generally migrate to lower hills and plains along with their flocks of sheep and goats. During this period the main source of livelihood is sale of wool and employment of their children and women as domestic servants. A small percentage of population is left behind to look after the cattle and fields and spinning and weaving of woollens. The migration is necessitated because the pastures and grazing lands are covered with snow, and it is difficult to maintain the large number of sheep and goats, and secondly, for the selling of raw wool which is available in large quantities without market facilities. Other secondary traditional pursuits in the area are collecting minor forest produce, various kinds of household industries such as spinning and weaving, tailoring and bee-keeping, and specialized occupations such as carpentry, iron-smithery, medicine, religious and para-religious activities. More recently the increase in mercantile and government activities has created new sources of income in transport, road building, construction, wholesaling and retailing. Horticulture, while not yet significant, may become a major source of income in the coming years.

Although agriculture is the mainstay of the Gaddis, yet the food produced is not enough for the whole year. The climate (temperature and precipitation), short working season, absence of irrigation, fragmentation of the land resulting in small fields preventing the mechanization of agricultural practices, absence of surplus labour in the area have affected the agricultural production in Bharmour. In the months of winter when they migrate to lower hills their women and children work as domestic help, thus earning their livelihood for winter months. Apart from this, wool and woollen products needs some way of disposal which is not possible if they are stagnant locally. As all the local people have sheep and goats (even if they have few) they cannot sell or exchange wool and woollen products. Inadequate transport plays a significant role in arresting the developmental activities. Thus the ecological and economic factors necessitate transhumance among

Gaddis. They have mixed economy because of ecological imperatives. Severe limitation on the land available for cultivation, with low margin of productivity and a lack of market for exporting local products, has prevented the emergence of either full-time specialists or landless labourers.

Previously there was no land pressure so that every household could own as much land as it needed. At the same time legal restrictions set by the Rajah and the lack of labour, specialized or otherwise, made it difficult if not pointless to amass land. Universal land possession, in turn, inhibited occupational specialization. The combination of these factors created a circular effect by continually reinforcing each other.

Among Gaddis, land rights are vested in individual households and inherited according to geneology. Their claim and those of their descendants rest on their continued participation in a non-kinship based association, a fact which emphasizes the need to keep up amicable relations with fellow villagers and to behave in accordance with village expectation. In such societies, villagers act so as to reinforce social cohesion often at the expense of apparent economic goals or the individual's needs and wishes. Such cohesion may be desirable according to abstract values, but it also often is essential for the survival of the economy.

Gaddis farming is "labour intensive" rather than "capital intensive". Additional workers are necessary at certain times of the year for tasks that need to be accomplished in a single operation. Extra familial-ties are necessary even for the routine jobs of agriculture. Work groups are often called up on the basis of *barton* relationship, on the basis of kinship and neighbourhood. Labour exchange of this kind are often validated by drinking, feasting and dancing, so that participants feel they have gained in enjoyment for what they have contributed in work. Such exchanges contribute to the continuance of village integration, it is an investment for a social as well as an economic end.

SOCIAL RELATIONS

Social relationships among Gaddis, a agropastoral transhumant population, are institutionalized between people who know one another personally. Person to person relationships are all

important. Among Gaddis four basic social relationships - Kinship, fictive kinship, reciprocity and associational ties — are important. While consanguine, affinal and ritual kinship provide important bonds on which close and enduring relationships can be established, the system of reciprocal obligations forges strong links, too.

Each Gaddi stands at the centre of a network of formal, personal relationship with other Gaddis. Some of these relationships are established by birth (patrilateral and matrilinear kin), some by marriage his own and those of his sisters and daughters (affinal kins) and some by deliberate pledge (*dharam bhai*). A man looks to these people for help, friendship, sympathy, advice and affection.

The nuclear family is the basic social group among the Gaddis and is responsible for the total economic welfare (For details see — Bhasin, 1988). The geographical mobility, nurtured by the transhumance, reinforce the prominence of the family. Further social ties are developed through the institutions of *Al* (sub-caste), *gotra* (clan), caste and *dharam bhai* (bond-brother) bonds. All the institutions provide economic advantages and protection for the participants. This expansion of the circle of kinsmen and fictive kinsmen, may be seen as an effective adaptive mechanism to the harsh and rugged environment. There is a safety in alliance either through kinship or formalized friendship. Most of the castes in Bharmour *Patwar* circle recognize large categories of castemates united by a myth that they were related by patrilineal descent from a common ancestor. Each of these categories is denoted by its own name and its members are found in several villages. These groups are called *gotra*. These *gotras* are further sub-divided into lineages — *khinds*, *als* or *jaths*.

A *gotra* forms a kind of corporate group sharing territorial land, it makes demands on the loyalty of its constituent members, each member being responsible to and for the whole group. It is also specially useful as a land holding entity, serving as a broad basis for recognizing and protecting landrights. The *gotra* is a mechanism for introducing continuity and stability into social system. The *gotra* gives a greater degree of stability and permanence, but has in turn a limited flexibility and adaptability to new situations.

Al association is a form of co-operation and mutual insurance, and through it a man maintains a range of significant interpersonal relations within the wider society in which he lives. This association is the core of social life through which an individual maintains himself as a full social being and not merely an isolated unit or even as the member of a small, isolated group. These associations are a reliable index of the strength and importance of social relations along with other values inherent in a person's closest relations. In Bharmour, residential ties and day to day co-operation in affairs large and small that result from intimate face to face relations among close agnates (extended family) are of real and considerable importance. Partly connected with such small scale community relations, but extended also to the whole range of *al* associates. Although this sort of help is reciprocal, yet members of the *al* are always available as ready source of help. This support of *al* associates is a matter of their friendliness with an individual and the allegiance they owe him. This institution of self-help, physical support, obligation to assist and in giving moral and vocal support to individuals, acts as a mutual insurance in these remote and isolated areas.

Occasional pastoral cooperation may occur between *al* associates when the number of sheep and goats is small in a family and it is not economical for a family member to accompany his flock to the pasture, he makes arrangement with one of his *al* associates for grazing of flocks. The obligations of support in judicial affairs also exist; and these obligations are more important as most disputes are settled in the traditional courts.

Internal relations within the *al* are principally those between the heads of independent nuclear families. Cousins of all degrees do not have the same problems of adjustment which prove so difficult between brothers. They inherit, as it were the pattern of relations already established between their fathers in the previous generation. There is not in general, therefore the same sort of tensions between cousins as there is between brothers. Relations commence on a basis of reciprocal rights, which have already reached a level of stability.

Because of the ecological conditions, the Gaddis have to be dispersed in winter and

concentrated in summer and as a result the ties of common residence, daily cooperation and face-to-face relations in local neighbourhood always keep on changing. A person may not see many of his *al* associates for lengthy period, nor will he be aware of all their movements and activities for they are likely to be scattered arbitrarily over a large area, and both his and their locations change fairly frequently. The relationship of *al* associates therefore, consists primarily in mutual assistance on the more important occasions of individual social life during the months of concentration. For much of the time relations are dormant, being reactivated as occasion requires.

Transhumant way of life necessitates relations beyond the limit of a village. The quality of social relationships in which transhumants engage: their form and meaning of the way they are initiated and sustained is similar, but despite the apparent identity, there are vital cultural difference. Among Gaddis, virtually all adult males have special friends—*dharam bhai* (bond-brother).

Dharam bhai (bond brother) are the only type of associates where ties are not coincident with kinship, but which, by virtue of reciprocal rights and duties, have a pseudo kinship quality. A *dharam bhai* is a person with whom one informally contracts such rights for reasons of mutual convenience and trust. There is usually a strong element of genuine and proven friendship. For both persons there exists something closely approaching a business agreement. In this, of all social relations, if a man does not reasonably reach his obligations he will quickly forfeit his own rights and the association would fail, for there is nothing at all to support it. This type of bond-friendship can be contracted with any one, irrespective of age, social position, residence, caste or sex. This relationship is formalized by a ritual. A *dharam bhai* would in theory perform all the traditional obligations that a consanguineal brother would; they would observe the same kind of marriage restrictions towards the women of one another families that pertain between ritual or fictive brothers in the area. Through this friendship a man endeavours to ensure that he has a potential supporter in most or all the areas to which, in any part of the year, he might wish to migrate. In an economic context these ritual and

special friends become preferential trading partners. When special friends become trading partners or vice-versa these ritual and special friendships are primarily economic relationships. Since the whole relationship rests on its obvious mutual convenience, care is taken not to overtax it by a too frequent or a one-sided exercise of rights. Either party is entirely free to break off the bond. On the whole a man is always seeking to establish new bonds in these ecological conditions, where help is always wanted. Through these ties a man is able to extend the effective range of his personal relationship beyond his relatively restricted and automatic ties of kinship. A man with *dharam bhai* becomes less dependent upon formal ties, where these have become irksome, or are made difficult by tension. These bonds are established by rituals—one is Manimahesh brotherhood where in two people of the same sex, who wants to enter into this relationship, make a pilgrimage to Manimahesh together, enter the water at the same time, exchange sweets and small gifts and mark each other's forehead with red *teeka*; the other type is between a man and woman when the relationship becomes one of brother and sister; and thirdly by untying or opening the *kangana*, the black thread, off the wrist of the newly married men or woman at an appropriate stage of the marriage ceremony.

Since there is a strong feeling that all those with a real or classificatory status of sister's son have the right to claim assistance in the homes of their mother's brothers, the affinal links form an extremely powerful network between the different villages within the endogamic restriction of caste where real kinship are missing, obligations are established by brother/sisterhood.

A man can be sure of getting food and shelter and a warm welcome at the home of his *dharam bhai*. Under the indigenous system of self-help, is included also the duty of lending verbal and, if necessary physical support. A similar type of institution occurs among the Gaddang of Pakak and Kabanuangun (Philippine), living in isolated hilly settlements. Gaddang participates in two interrelated mechanisms, trading partnerships (*kolak*) and a peace pact system (*pundon*). Both are ways of establishing mutually beneficial relationships between individuals and communities. Once the *kolak* (meaning 'sibling') relationship is established a dependable

source of friendship, trade, protection, food and lodging is available (Wallace, 1970: 30-33).

In Bharmour, family autonomy and self-sufficiency is necessarily high, but the village as a social unit shows marked solidarity. Face-to-face relations are important and every village member household joins in co-operative endeavour in the maintenance of village paths, *balwaris* etc., and every village wedding and funeral is attended by a representative of every household.

A *gotra* forms a kind of corporate group sharing territorial lands, but land rights are vested in individual households and inherited according to genealogy. In Bharmour Patwar circle the villages (except Sachuien) contain all the members of a single *gotra*; that is all the males born partilineally, their unmarried sisters and daughters. Each *gotra*, of course, is made up of number of *als* or extended families, but in a very few cases can people trace any kind of genealogical links between these families. The *gotra* is exogeneous, and therefore, there are no affinal links between members. In this type of social situation, there is need to keep up amiable relations with fellow villagers and to behave in accordance with village expectations. Gaddis act so as to reinforce social cohesion at the expense of apparent economic goals or the individual's needs and wishes. Such cohesion is desirable according to abstract values but it also is essential for the survival of the economy and society.

While consanguine, affinal and ritual kinship provide important bonds on which close and enduring relationships can be established, the system of reciprocal obligations forges strong links, too. Social integration is also served by actions that are part of the distribution system of economy. The fictive kinship, friendship and neighbourhood ties are established and reinforced with gift giving and exchange of labour and services.

Gaddi farming is labour intensive rather than capital intensive. Additional workers are necessary at certain times of the year and for tasks that need to be accomplished in a single day. It is natural in a community which is not affluent, and where labour force can hardly be purchased, that there should be some arrangement for cooperation when a man is in want. The Gaddis have evolved two institutions to deal with the need for

interdependence and to overcome the scarcity of paid labour. These are *co-operation between families* and *barton* (obligatory assistance). In Gaddis social structure, there is an informal, principle of reciprocity that underlies all formal ties, cross-cutting them at every point, serving as the binding agent that holds society together and the grease that smooths its running.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE

Despite the fact that most activities are carried out by the nuclear family, there are some areas of co-operative assistance. This may be done at the discretion of individuals of two or more families. Funerals, marriages, house construction, etc. are different because these require the participation of every household in a village.

Co-operation between families comes to surface at the time of thrashing when two or three families may help each other in turn, pooling their cattle to thrash the wheat and barley, and their own labour to husk the maize. Thrashing is done quickly to prevent germination of grain. These groups are basically friendship groups. Most of the residents of a small hamlet are kins, but within the hamlet friendship and co-operation are governed by compatibility and not by closeness of the kin ties. Co-operation between families occurs on the same economic level and both sides feel that it is fully reciprocal, but it is consistently unwillingly given to kinsmen in a superior economic position because of the inequality inherent in the situation. A big land owner who needs help in ploughing or at harvest time can also afford to hire labour. Such labour may be any low caste men and boys willing to take time off their own work. Such people are paid one or two rupees a day plus food. A kinsmen, on the other hand, can only properly accept food, but he feels this is not adequate remuneration, if he cannot expect later reciprocation of his labour. Consequently, he prefers not to help. The man who is so poor that he has no choice but to work for wealthier kinsmen feels he is accepting charity. At the same time he realizes he is not being fully compensated for his labour. He resents the person he is helping and feels he is being looked down upon and exploited.

BARTON (OBLIGATORY ASSISTANCE)

The kinds of co-operation and assistance described above are at the discretion of the individuals. Some people readily respond to requests for help even when they know it will not necessarily be returned. Others always find excuse and refuse. House building, however, is one activity in which assistance must be given virtually by every household in the village, regardless of caste or religion. Each household that gives help at this time is said to have a *barton* relationship with the household it assists. It can then expect this help to be reciprocal when it builds. Failure to fulfil this obligation breaks the *barton* relationship and creates great ill will. Each family in Sachuien has *barton* relationship with all other families, even where it is otherwise on bad terms.

Another time when the *barton* relationship appears to operate is at funerals, when every household must send a representative and bring some wood for the funeral pyre. The white cloth called *talli* placed on the dead body is contributed jointly by the members of the deceased's *barton* group. When a newcomer settles in the region, a *barton* relationship is assumed unless he refuses to follow the custom, in which case he would not be helped with house-building, nor would his funeral be necessarily attended by every household in the village.

The other occasion when *barton* relationship comes into operation is at the time of marriage in the ceremonies called *saj* and *tambol*. Each family owns a book in which are recorded all those friends having *barton* with the family either on bridegroom's side (*tambol*) or bride's (*saj*) and who contribute some money. Initially the amount is small, but when a family member attends a marriage subsequently at the contributor's house he is expected to subscribe in his turn twice the amount he gave earlier. The amount continues to double until a maximum of about one rupee is reached when the obligation is cancelled or relationship created again at a small initial level. Now-a-days in Sachuien members of *barton* group are giving a utensil each in the *saj*. The purpose of this ceremony is not so much to defray the cost of a wedding, as to assert publicly the number of *barton* relationships a family has. The *Purohit* receives the money on

behalf of the bride and puts a *teeka* on the forehead to each donor at *saj*, but at *tambol* the ceremony is purely secular with no *Purohit* present.

Newell (1960) has defined *barton* as a "system of traditionally sanctioned mutual obligations and duties between individuals usually belonging to different castes". In 1962, he modified his definition to include all forms of mutual obligations between individuals or families other than obligations concerned with kinship relations (Newell, 1967). Apart from the village *barton* which prevails in every village, there are certain other types of *barton* obligations which people of one caste have for another. Under this obligation each caste group is expected to give certain standardized services to the families of other castes. Agriculture economy of traditional Indian villages integrate several segments of the village society through *Jajmani System* and encompasses the caste system as well (Dumont, 1980). In Bharmour a blacksmith makes iron implements or a carpenter repairs tools, but they do not necessarily perform these services to every one. Each man works for a particular family or group of families, and he is said to have *barton* relationship with his client's family. He would resent it if he is not invited to a *rite de passage* in the client's family. The relationship between a family and its Brahman *Purohit* is also of this type. Brahman *Purohit* works for a family with which he has hereditary ties. His father worked for the same families before him, and his son will continue to work for them. This relationship operates without much exchange of money. The patron compensates his *Purohit* for his work through periodic payment in the form of grains, made throughout the year on a daily, monthly or bi-yearly basis but mainly on four main *sankrant* (festivals). He receives up to ten *seers* of five grains. Each *seer* consists of 5 *chhataks* and not usual 16. *Purohit* may also receive benefits such as free food, clothing, the use of certain tools, etc.

The relationship between blacksmiths and other castes is of a different kind. It is not necessarily of *barton* kind. His work is paid for in cash. The blacksmith in Bharmour *Patwar Circle* has *barton* obligations only in Bharmour village where he lives. He does not have similar obligations towards his other clients. These ties are like those of an employer and employee and are paid

for in cash or kind. Similarly the Sipi carpenters or ploughmakers have *barton* relationships within the village and are paid for the services they provide to the other in cash. Skilled labourers residing in village have *barton* relations within the village and are repaid through periodic payment of grains. As Bharmour *Patwar* Circle is a caste-incomplete area, people of most villages have to seek for skilled help from other quarters. These skilled labourers are paid for in cash or kind.

As in Sachuian, the three castes residing in the village are Brahman, Rajput and Sipi, people have to seek the help of Sipi Blacksmith of Bharmour village, Rehara Musicians of Goshan and certain Rehara families of Guggu village who provide leaf plates used for wedding feasts. Their services are paid for in cash or kind at the completion of the work. The relationship between villagers and the skilled labourers of the other villages may or may not be of *barton* sort. If they are of *barton* sort, they will be invited to all the ceremonies of *rite-de-passage* of the patron's family. The relation between Rajput and Sipi blacksmiths and Rehara families are not found in every village of Bharmour *Tehsil*.

The labour force is raised by means of an institution known as *Kwer*. *Kwer* are raised in the following manner, as exemplified in Sachuian village. Every family, i.e. every family having a separate *chullah* for cooking has to send one person (male or female or child depending on the type of work involved) on the appointed day to the person or family that needs help. The villagers called to work may or may not be related to the needy person but they will send their representatives if they live in the same village. If the labour force is still insufficient as it happens in case of small village, the relatives from other villages are summoned. The labour force raised by the *Kwer* institution is not paid for in cash. In return of their work they are given a free meal and free *sur* (beer) in the evening after work. The food and drink exchange between friends and neighbours is important. Because the ties of these people are unstructured, in a formal sense, in contrast to those of the family and fictive kinship, constant reaffirmation of the relationship is necessary. The *Kwer* is requisitioned for certain tasks which an individual is unable to perform by himself without the help of other co-villagers. This

mutual assistance is necessary in certain economic and social activities, whether given willingly, grudgingly or obligingly. *Kwer* are raised on the following occasions and for the following purposes:

1. House-building : In house-building *Kwer* are raised to bring timber from the forest, slates from the quarry, stones from the mountain-streams and clearing the site for the house. A day is set aside for the labour, each family having a separate *chullah* is informed. Whether the family is small or large, one person of the correct sex must be provided. In building *Kwer* all are males. The task is difficult because the timber may have to be carried five or six kilometers. In the evening, all those who have worked together, are provided with a free meal and free *sur* (beer). If the labour is not sufficient relatives of the house builders are invited from other villages but this is on personal basis. For village member not to send a member would be in the nature of an insult to the host. To a person who is a member of a large family and who is not interested in making as much money on his own as possible, these work terms are very enjoyable, but to small ambitious families they are a heavy burden. Yet it is the small families who in their turn, most requires the assistance of a work team at the required time. Unskilled labour is supplied by the villager's *barton* group and the skilled labour is paid by the day.

2. *Gharat* (Water Mill) Building : Male *Kwer* are raised to bring timber from the forest and stones from the mountain streams.

3. To Repair Retaining Walls : Male *Kwer* are raised to repair retaining walls of the fields broken down by snow during winter.

4. To Repair House : Male *Kwer* are raised to repair houses, or to bring new cross-beams for the houses damaged during winter.

5. For clearing terraces and narrow paths leading to each piece of land, *Kwer* are raised.

6. Funerals : At funerals male *Kwer* are raised to cut wood for the pyre.

7. Female *Kwer* are raised to undertake the task of plastering a house with cow-dung.

8. Children *Kwer* are raised to collect the stones which have rolled on the field. Children collect and pile up the stones. These stacks are ready to be packed into a wall. The rules regarding

the payment for each task are same, i.e. food in return of labour. These work teams are different from a group of common friends who pool their services for common task. For example at the time when manure is carried to the fields from the cowbyres, girls from different families unite and work together on each other's field for the sake of company. But no meals are provided for this work.

An underlying theme of the Gaddi social organization is the general difficulty of group activity on any large scale because of ecological conditions which cause widespread dispersal of population together with diverse and frequent movement. In addition there is a cultural norm of strong individualism, and there is neither particular need nor opportunity for the frequent assembly of kinsmen. The entirely corporate groups are nuclear families only. The ties of common residence, daily cooperation and face-to-face relations in the local neighbourhood always tend to be temporary and exiguous.

A group's social organization of social relations is an integral aspect of its adaptation to social as well as physical pressures in the habitat. The social structure of a community is not a single set of roles and organized groups, but is rather a series of several sets of roles and groups which appear and disappear according to the task at hand. Practically every household is a farming unit and the agricultural activities dominate the economic life. In the type of economic scene, autonomy and self sufficiency necessarily high, but still in some quarters of life mutual help is needed. In a community where labour force cannot be purchased, the major function of the *barton* system is to assure a stable labour supply when man is in need. At the same time, the *barton* group exercise an enormous amount of control over society. Desired traditional norms and values are kept in order. The *barton* relationships are, therefore internal regulators of Gaddi society which bind relationships and caste organizations closely to each other. The interaction groups either of the same caste or different castes are important for the working of society. Even the lower castes are anchored firmly in social system as people who are responsible for carrying out specific functions, and are not only a marginal group.

Among Gaddis four basic social relationships - kinship, fictive kinship, reciprocity and associational ties are - important. These are structured ties that hold transhumants together. The heads of the households are interested for their own part in maintaining bonds that counteract the divisive tendencies. While consanguine, affinal and ritual kinship provide important bonds on which close and enduring relationships can be established, the system of reciprocal obligations forges strong links. As an operating principle of Gaddi society, reciprocity helps define one's position in relation to others for it comes into play when transfer of services takes place between individuals. The system of reciprocal obligation rests in the appropriate sense of gratitude and exchange of food and drink. The exchange of food and drink between friends and neighbours is important. The principle of reciprocity underlies all formal ties, cross cutting them at every point, serving as the glue that holds society together and the grease that smooths its running.

Though family and extended kin group is important, but one's responsibility towards relatives does not over-ride over all, other kin groups. Relatives do not always take precedence. People draw a line some where and select consciously or unconsciously those among their relative with whom they will associate closely. While other relatives have a potential claim on his support, he may actually favour a non-relative over more socially distant relatives. In this terrain the lifestyle of the people bears the marked imprint of the ecological conditions of the place which brings into focus two distinct situations. The first is the limited nature of the resources and the second is the specific nature of the agriculture and herding cycle. In months of summer, after their winter migration when they return to Bharmour, the agriculture season starts. The concentration of the most agricultural work in the months from March to October produce a period of stress and strain for utilization of manpower. During this period every hand is needed to plant and reap the harvest. There is heavy demand of labour but all hands are needed in their respective fields and no remuneration is sufficient to divert people from agriculture. Labour cannot be imported from the outside, as absence of markets and surplus prevented the immigration of labour into the area.

There are no big landlords, so there is not enough cash to encourage the immigration of labour force. In this type of situation the system of *barton* - reciprocal obligations among villagers forges strong links and ensures stable labour supply in case of need. *Barton* obligations often supersede kin obligations. "Relatives are important but the importance is often relative" (Lynch, 1958 : 16).

In the socio-cultural system of Gaddis, the *dharam bhai* bond provides an institutionalized means of familizing a friendship between status equals or of bringing close together persons of high and low castes. By ritually incorporating a non-relative into one's kin groupings, one broadens its base of social help.

Perhaps the most important aspect of *barton* and *dharam bhai* bond is its caste-class bridging aspect. It provides a means of ordering hierarchial relations, and channels for equalising social relations. While the traditional dominant caste of Rajputs tends to restrict their marriage partners to those of equal status, they utilise *dharam bhai* bond to enhance relationships with the lower castes, so that they build up a network of ritual relationships which supplements their social network. In Bharmour, where labour is scarce, people have to depend on one another and in doing so, the inter-caste relational patterns are

diluted. Constant interdependence can hardly be conducive to the maintenance of a rigid caste ideology. Moreover, in Sachuian where Rajputs and Sipis live in the same village, daily contact, interaction and interdependence have led to a certain degree of inter-caste intimacy which, however, is studiously covered up in the presence of outsiders. The ecology of the area has thus produced a unique blend of self sufficiency and mutual interdependence.

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