

# Demographic Features and Changing Polyandry Culture in Jaunsar Bawar: A Case Study

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## Abstract

Polyandry culture constitutes a specific pattern in the Indian Himalayan region, especially in JaunsarBawar Region of Uttarakhand. Jaunsari tribe of this area was declared as a Scheduled tribe in the year 1967. The physical, economic and infrastructural conditions cause a great impact on the cultural system of this area. In recent years various developmental activities, supporting education in youth and mobility of knowledge and technology of Jaunsari people with other areas are resulting a rapid change in this society. This study denotes the transformation process of the society at village level.

**Keywords:** Tribe, Jaunsari, Polyandry, Culture, Himalaya, Demography, Infrastructure, Literacy, Mobilization.

## Introduction

The cultural diversity of Indian Himalayan Society of Uttarakhand (i.e. Bhotia, Banraji, Tharu, Buksa and Jaunsaries) is been rich and strong since prolonged spell of time. The culture of an area is always affected by the physical, economic and infrastructural activities of that area. In some parts of the Himalayan areas polyandry – a specific pattern of marriage is found to be practiced which is ancient in origin. In the Himalayan region this interesting institution of human society is definitely a variant quite distinct from all other social institutions and customs (Raha and Coomar, 1987). This marriage system is mainly found in Ladakh, Lahul and Spiti, Kangara, Kinnaur, Chanba, Kullu and Manali (Himanchal Pradeh) and JaunsarBawar (Uttarakhand). Although the name of this system is same but there are some differences in different areas.

The Greek word Polyandry may be defined as polyandria which means women having many husbands where poly indicates many and andria indicates 'man'. It is a custom by which a woman is socially permitted to have more than one husband at the same time (Needham, 1971). It seems that these cultural practices evolve strategies which make effective use of the resources through adaptation. They make real management between resources, culture and economy by adopting the polyandrous system. This cultural has been studied time to time by various academics i.e. Atknsn(1882), Donham(1912), PrincePeter(1955), Leach(1955), Saksena(1962), Parmar(1975), Raha and Coomar(1987) and Uhilig(1995).

## Study Area

Jaunsar Bawar, the mountainous region of Deheradun district of Uttarakhand which lies between  $30^{\circ} 31'$  and  $31^{\circ} 3'N$  and  $77^{\circ} 42'E$  and  $78^{\circ} 7'E$  encompasses an area of  $1002\text{km}^2$  with a population of 130862 person (Census 2011). Administratively, the area is extended to three blocks Chakrata, Kalsi and Tyuni with 362 inhabited villages. The whole region entirely consists of mountain track mostly rugged hills with gorges. Tons river flows in the western part of JaunsarBawar while Yamuna River flows in the eastern and southern parts. Geographically this area comes under two divisions i.e. Shiwalik in the south while Lesser Himalayas on the north (Valdia, 1980). Both Chakrata and Tyuni administrative blocks (Tables1) comes under Lesser Himalaya where temperature varies from  $20^{\circ}$  to  $30^{\circ}$  in summers but in winter it goes to  $0^{\circ}$  to  $5^{\circ}C$ . The area of Kalsi block spreads over the Shiwalik hills (about 610 msl.) where the maximum temperature goes up to  $30^{\circ}C$  in summer season. The altitude ranges from lowest from 405m at Rampur Mandi to highest 3071m at Kharamba peak.

The average annual rainfall is about 175cm. Temperate



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coniferous forest i.e. Deodar, oak, spruce are found in higher slopes while pine and sal, broad leaf forest found in river banks of Yamuna and Tons near Kalsi.

**Table -1- Population Profiles of JaunsarBawar – 1991 and 2011 Census**

	1991	2011
Total Geographical area (Sq Km)	1002.07	1002.07
Tehsil	1	1
Administrative Blocks	1	3(Chakrata, Kalsi and tyuni)
Inhabited Villages	356	362
No. of households	13153	17294
Total Population	98611	130862
Male Population	—	69092
Female Population	—	61770
Sex Ratio	866	894
Total SC Population	25323	43748
Total ST Population	64345	71940
No. of Literates	38073	72992
No. of Illiterates'	60538	57870
Population Density(/km <sup>2</sup> )	98	131

**Source: Census of India 2011.**

As compared to 1991 Census the population of JaunsarBawar is increased be 32.7% in last 20

years duration. As per the table 1, the no. of villages and the households has also increased by 6 and 31.48%, and the sex ratio remained lower 866 and 894 as compared to Uttarakhand and India since 1991 and 2011. It could be due to polyandry system in JaunsarBawar. The status of Literacy in Uttarakhand is 79.63% whereas in JaunsarBawar it is about 55.77% which is very low in present perspective. The ST population of this region constitutes about 54.97% which is nearly half of the total population of JaunsarBawar.

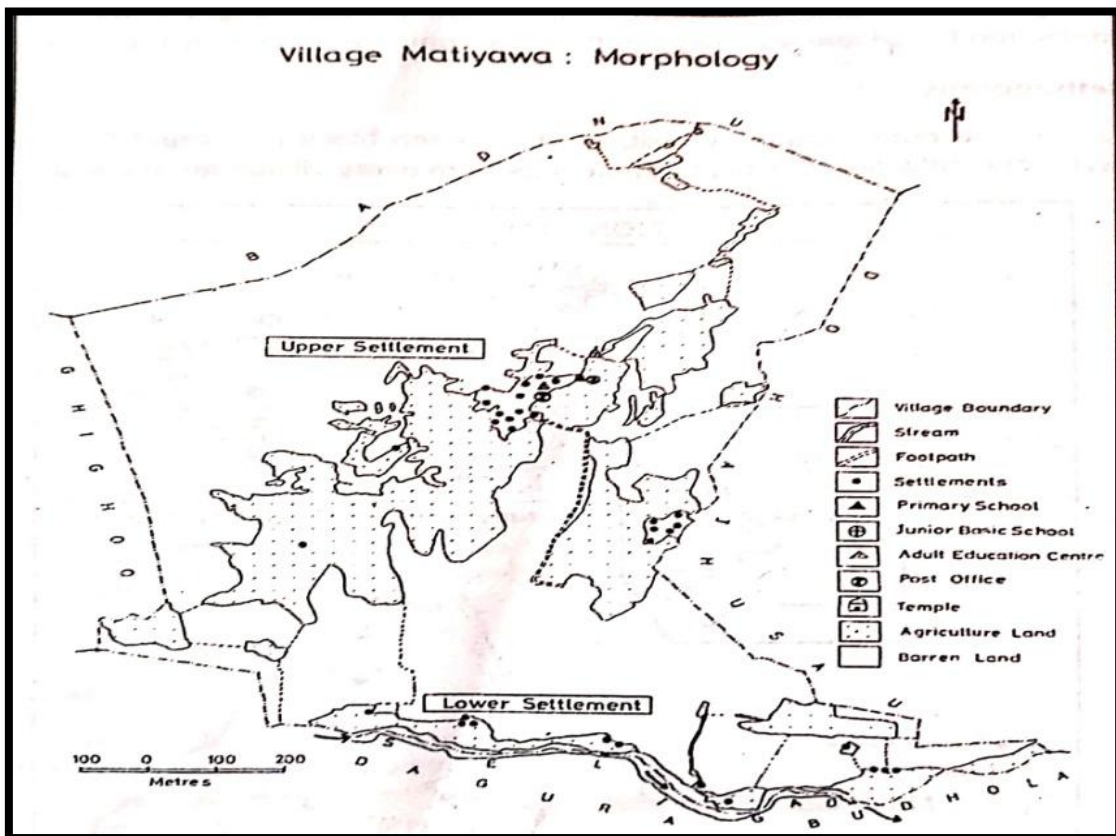
**Methodologies**

Matiyawa village is one of the remote village(Fig.1) which is about 15.3km away from Chakrata block. Primary survey had been conducted by preparing questionnaire and information collected by door to door survey regarding family structure, demography, economy, cultural practices etc. and secondary data also been collected from various blocks, tehsil and district offices.

**Objectives of the Study**

The main objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To depict the Polyandry culture in different intervals of time.
2. To study the impact of modern migration on cultural and traditional practices.
3. To distinguish between traditional and present cultural practices.



(Fig.1) Results and Discussions

Undoubtedly, in presentera, modernization is affecting the cultural practices of tribal societies. Infrastructural, education, economic conditions and sources of livelihood etc. are the main aspects of social environment where the combination of these elements with physical environment makes a society or a region different from others. Therefore, to find out the stages of changes in tribal society or tribal regions, it is an important aspect to study from cultural point of view. In JaunsarBawar area, it was noticed that the following aspects played a vital role in changing the traditional cultural practices.

#### Infrastructure Developments

Infrastructure is one of the basic amenities of people that cause a great impact on inhabitant of a particular region. Gradually, the traditions, beliefs and customs get's changed. If the basic infrastructures facilities i.e. roads, transport, educational institutions, communication, medical and health etc. introduced in a remote area, the changes took place. Table.2. depicts that when the village was isolated and the amenities was totally absent from the village (1951), the polyandry system was found 63.6% (Table.3.) of the total married population. At that time, more than 94% population was engaged in agricultural activities and the literacy was 5.6%. Even to get primary level education, the students had to cover about 20km from the village. It seems that till 1960's, the culture was preserved due to remoteness. The first primary school was opened in the year 1960 which gave a light to education in this remote village. After 1960m the area was also connected with road and the distance reduced from 20 to 8 Km, from the road of MaktiPokhari, which is a small transit station with few shops of this area.

**Table-2- Temporal Development of Infrastructure Facilities.**

Available Facilities	Before 1950	2011
Distance from Deheradun	NIL	121 Km
Distance from the road	20 Km	8 Km
Primary School	NIL	1 (1960)
Junior Basic School	NIL	1 (1978)
Govt. Intermediate School	NIL	(Nainbagh 9.4 Km away)
Adult Education	NIL	1 (1975)

**Table-4- Cultural and Occupational Changes in different time span.**

Time Span	Marriage Types			Occupations			
	Polyandry	Monogamy	Polygamy	Agriculture	Bus	Prof.	Service
Before 1945 I <sup>st</sup> gen. (i.e. Grandfathers)	63.6%	36.4%	—	94.9%	—	5.1%	—
1945 -1965 II <sup>nd</sup> gen. (i.e. Father's)	41.5%	53.7%	48%	78.1%	2.4%	—	19.5%
After 1965 III <sup>rd</sup> gen. (i.e. Son's)	—	100%	—	13.3%	—	—	86.7%

**Source – Primary Survey.**

Table-4 shows that before 1945 the maximum 94.9% workers were engaged in primary activities i.e. agriculture and allied activities where only 5.1% were engaged in professional works. Along with the educational development, service sector was increased by 19.5% in next generation (i.e. 31-50

Center		
Post Office	NIL	1 (1975)
Bank	NIL	1 (8 Km)
Medical Facilities (Ayurvedic)	NIL	6 Km Govt. Hospital 15.3 Km(Chakrata)
Electricity	NIL	YES
P D S	NIL	1 (1993)
Drinking Water Sources	Natural	Tap Water (1980)

**Source - Field Survey and Census Hand Book 2011**

#### Educational Development

The village society has their own way to sustain their economy livelihood and culture. Gradually this entire region had developed with slow start. Education is one of the major reasons to change the mindset of the society.

**Table-3- Literacy Rate (In Percent)**

Total Male, Female	1951	1991	2011	% Change
Total Population	5.6	25.4	65.61	+60.01
Male	9.4	37.4	80.29	+70.89
Female	Nil	9.2	48.2	+48.2

**Source- District Census Handbook, Deheradun, U.P.,1951, N.I.C. Deheradun, U.P., 1991 and Census Handbook 2011.**

As table-3 shows that during 1951 Census there were only 5.6% literates out of them 9.4% were male whereas female education was 0%. Later by the year 2011 the literacy rate rose up to 65.61% out of which 80.29% were male literates and 48.2% were female literates. It was observed that after getting the educational facilities within the approachable distance not only the males got education but females also stated to get education.

#### Economic Development

Occupational positions are sometimes inherited through ascription in Indian perspective. But in recent past there have been some changes in these norms. Occupational structure and mobility are other indicators of changing values of the society. The socio-economic reforms are silently coming at village level. Education and migration have played an important role for this transformation.

years of age group). After 1965, the maximum workers moved towards government services (Defence, Banks, Post Office, Teaching etc.) with 86.7% of the total working population. The tremendous change was mainly due to the declaration of Scheduled Tribe area in 1967. Therefore, the

traditional cultural practices have been rapidly changed in recent years.

Thus, it is clear that both education and occupation directly affect their traditional cultural practices which are continuously changing their peculiar marriage system. Polyandrous marriages are replaced by the monogamous marriages (Table -4). It may be due to the new linkages of the villagers with the outer world. It is striking to note that in last few years there was not a single person adopting the traditional marriage system i.e. Polyandry. It seems that this marriage system is almost in disappearing stage from the village.

#### **Conclusion**

On the basis of the above analysis the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Developmental activities had played an important role for broken down the traditional cultural practices.
2. Continuous population growth and their increasing demands compelled them to migrate outside. Thus the migration had played a vital role for losing the traditional cultural practices.
3. Education is an important means for human thinking. In this study it was observed that continuous increase in educational institutions may be a factor for changing the traditional cultural practices.

#### **Suggestion**

1. The developmental schemes should be implemented according to the physiography and location of the region.
2. Women empowerment should be focused on educational, economic, social and cultural

aspects by which this society will be self-dependent and sustained for a long time.

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