

Exploring the Socio-Economic and Cultural Fabric of the Hatti Community in Sirmaur District, Himachal Pradesh: An Ethnographic Study

Anjali Bains¹ Abhishek Malik²


1. Student, Department of Geography, Panjab University, Chandigarh

2. Research Scholar, Department of Geography, Panjab University, Chandigarh



<https://doi.org/10.55041/ijstmt.v2i3.200>

Cite this Article: Bains, A. & Malik, A. (2026). Exploring The Socio-Economic and Cultural Fabric of the Hatti Community in Sirmaur District, Himachal Pradesh: An Ethnographic Study. International Journal of Science, Strategic Management and Technology, 02(03).
<https://doi.org/10.55041/ijstmt.v2i3.200>

License:  This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), permitting use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author(s) and source are properly credited.

Abstract

The historically marginalized Hatti community, primarily residing in the Trans-Giri region of Sirmaur district, Himachal Pradesh, has recently achieved Scheduled Tribe status. Despite this recognition, a comprehensive understanding of how modernization impacts their traditional socio-economic and cultural fabric remains underexplored. This ethnographic study aims to document these dynamics, utilizing a mixed-methods approach involving a primary survey of 50 households, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation across the Rajgarh and Nohradhar regions. Findings reveal that Hatti society remains deeply rooted in traditional structures, characterized by a hierarchical caste system and the prevalence of patriarchal joint families with distinct patrilineal inheritance patterns. Crucially, the traditional 'Khumbli' council continues to wield significant authority in local governance and dispute resolution, often guided by faith in local Hindu deities like Shirgul Devta and Mahasu Devta. Economically, the community relies heavily on smallholder terrace farming, cultivating traditional staples while increasingly diversifying into cash crops like apples and tomatoes. This agrarian base is further supplemented by livestock rearing and traditional woolen handicraft production, highlighting a gradual shift towards broader market integration. Culturally, the Hatti identity remains remarkably vibrant, actively preserved through a distinct local dialect, unique two-story stone and wood architecture, and robust community participation in regional festivals like Magh, Bisu, and Diwali. Ultimately, the study concludes that the Hatti community is navigating a critical juncture, delicately balancing the preservation of their unique cultural heritage with necessary adaptations to modern economic realities and new socio-political opportunities.

Key Words: Hatti Community, Socio-Economic and Cultural, Rajgarh and Nohradhar regions, Himachal Pradesh

Introduction and Historical Background

Himachal Pradesh is home to diverse tribal groups, including the historically marginalized Hatti community, primarily residing in the rugged mountainous terrain of the Trans-Giri region of Sirmaur district. Deriving their name from the traditional "Haats" or small markets where they historically traded their agricultural produce, the roughly 300,000-strong Hatti population has long inhabited this isolated landscape, sharing deep cultural, historical, and kinship ties, known locally as 'Daichara', with the Jaunsari tribe of the neighboring Uttarakhand state. Despite their rich, enduring heritage and recent constitutional recognition as a Scheduled Tribe in April 2022—a status achieved following a decades-long peaceful struggle spearheaded by the Kendriya Hatti Samiti—the community remains underexplored in contemporary academic discourse, particularly regarding how rapid socio-economic changes, market integration, and modernization are currently impacting their traditional lifeways and values. Therefore, this comprehensive ethnographic study aims to meticulously explore and document the socio-economic and cultural fabric of the Hatti community, analyzing their unique social institutions, livelihood strategies, and cultural practices to fully understand the implications of these ongoing transformations for their

future. Employing a mixed-methods research design, primary data was collected through a field survey of 50 households in the Rajgarh and Nohradhar regions, utilizing structured questionnaires, in-depth semi-structured interviews with key informants, and participant observation.

Image: Showing the Hatti population in Nohradhar



The empirical findings reveal a society deeply rooted in traditional structures, characterized by a relatively rigid, hierarchically stratified caste system comprising upper (Bhat, Khosh), middle (Badhoi, Lohar, Bajgi), and lower (Koli, Dum, Chanal, Chamar) groups, which strongly dictates social roles, occupations, spatial village organization, and strict commensality practices. Furthermore, the joint family system remains prevalent and highly valued, operating under strict patriarchal authority with distinct patrilineal land inheritance patterns, while marriage practices prominently feature monogamy ('Jhajra'), though historical forms like polyandry ('Jori Dara') are still acknowledged within the social memory. Crucially, the traditional village council, known as the 'Khumbli', continues to wield significant and authoritative power in local governance and dispute resolution alongside the formal state administration, often guided by the community's deep-seated religious faith in local Hindu deities such as Shirgul Devta and Mahasu Devta. Economically, the community relies heavily on smallholder terrace farming, with 86% of surveyed households primarily engaged in cultivating traditional staples like wheat and barley, heavily supplemented by livestock rearing (goats and sheep) and the traditional handicraft production of intricately woven woolen garments. While the traditional 'Haat' remains central to local exchange, there is a gradual, observable shift towards crop diversification, including the cultivation of cash crops like apples and tomatoes, and an increasing integration with broader regional markets, though persistent challenges such as high transportation costs, limited technology, and price fluctuations continue to hinder optimal economic growth.

Image : Showing cultural practices and local festival of Hatti community



Culturally, the Hatti identity remains remarkably vibrant, actively preserved through a distinct local dialect used extensively for oral storytelling, traditional two-story stone and wood houses designed for harsh winters, and specific, symbolically rich woolen attire and silver ornaments. High levels of community participation are starkly evident in elaborate life-cycle rituals spanning from birth to death, and in the enthusiastic celebration of major regional festivals like Magh, Bisu, and Diwali. These festivals serve as crucial, unifying platforms for social cohesion, showcasing traditional music, dances like the Nati, and ancestral martial games like 'Thoda', thereby reaffirming their shared cultural bonds. In conclusion, the Hatti community is currently navigating a highly critical juncture, delicately balancing the vital preservation of their unique, enduring cultural heritage and traditional governance structures with the necessary adaptations to modern economic realities and the new socio-political opportunities presented by their recently acquired Scheduled Tribe status.

Following India's independence, the Hatti community was integrated into the Indian nation-state. Like other marginalized communities, the Hattis faced challenges related to socio-economic development, access to education, and political representation. Government initiatives aimed at uplifting tribal and backward communities have had varying degrees of impact on the Hatti community. A significant development in recent decades has been the Hatti community's sustained demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status, a demand that was eventually met, marking a turning point in their political and social trajectory. Despite the forces of change, the Hatti community has maintained a rich and vibrant cultural heritage. Their traditions, customs, and beliefs, often intertwined with Hindu religious practices, have been passed down through generations, contributing to a strong sense of cultural identity. The Hatti language, folklore, rituals, and festivals continue to play a vital role in preserving and expressing their unique cultural heritage. While adapting to modern influences, the community has strived to maintain continuity with its past, negotiating a balance between tradition and change.

Today, the Hatti community is at a crucial juncture. While the attainment of ST status has opened up new opportunities, the community continues to face socio-economic challenges, including issues related to education, employment, and infrastructure development in their remote mountainous region. The historical factors that have shaped their identity and experiences, including their unique social structures, cultural traditions, and relationship with the state, continue to influence their present-day realities. Understanding this historical context is essential for addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities that lie ahead for the Hatti community.

Study Area Profile

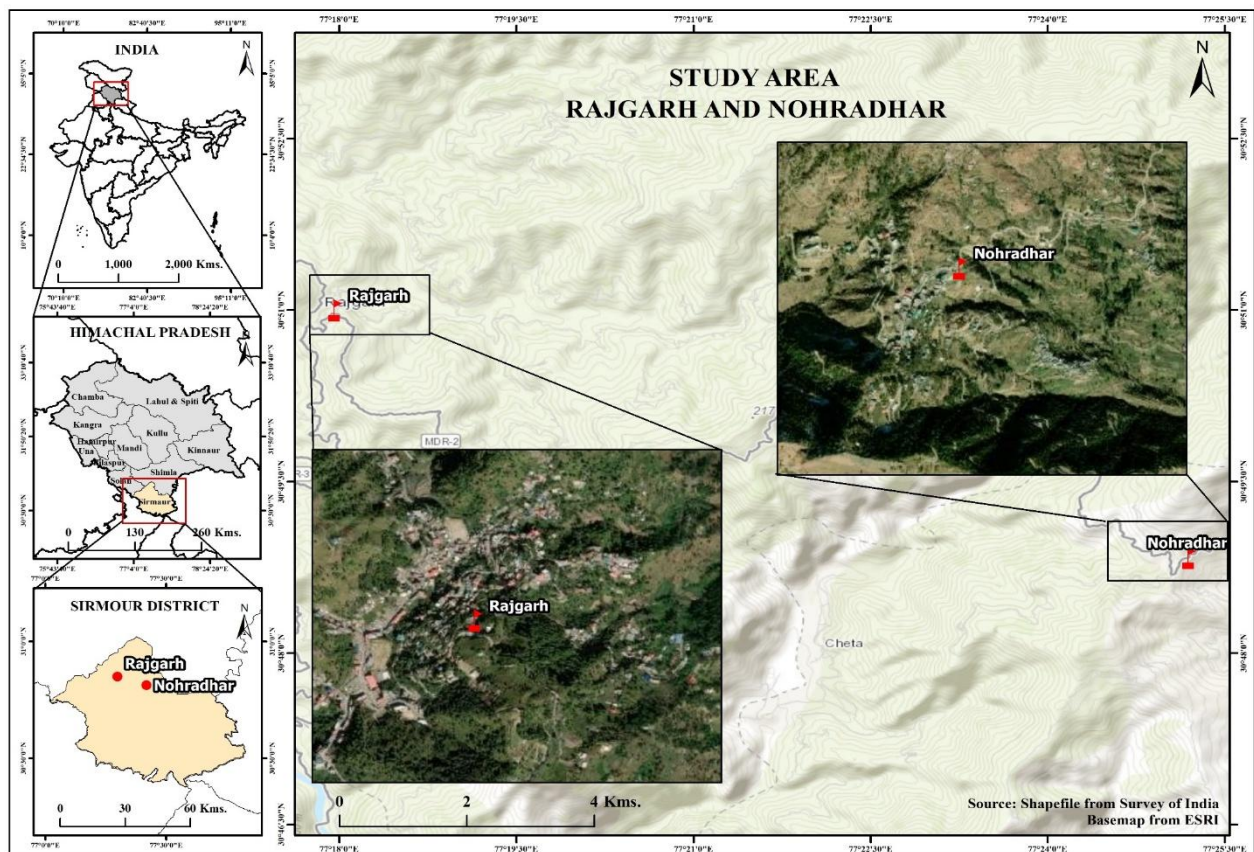
Sirmaur District Sirmaur is the southernmost district of Himachal Pradesh, largely characterized by its rugged, mountainous terrain within the Shivalik range. The district is fundamentally divided into two distinct parts—Giripar (Trans-Giri) and Giriwar (Cis-Giri)—by the Giri River, which serves as a major geographical lifeline for the region. The Trans-Giri region is characterized by its remote and inaccessible location, marked by challenging mountainous terrain, harsh climatic conditions, and consequently, difficult living conditions.

Focal Regions: Rajgarh and Nohradhar The primary fieldwork for this study was meticulously conducted in the Rajgarh and Nohradhar regions of the Sirmour district.

- **Rajgarh:** Widely known as the "Peach Valley," Rajgarh is an urban center and a Nagar Panchayat situated at Latitude $30^{\circ} 51' 08.7''$ N and Longitude $77^{\circ} 18' 04.5''$ E. Perched at an approximate altitude of 1800 meters above sea level, the area is notable for its scenic landscapes, temperate climate, and extensive cultivated gardens.
- **Nohradhar:** Located approximately 27 kilometers from Rajgarh (Latitude $30^{\circ} 48' 39.36''$ N, Longitude $77^{\circ} 25' 23.22''$ E), Nohradhar is a Gram Panchayat falling under the jurisdiction of the Sangrah Panchayat Samiti. It serves as a primary region inhabited by the Hatti community.

Within these focal areas and surrounding constituencies (including Sangrah, Shillai, Renuka Ji, Pachhad, and Paonta Sahib), the regional Hatti population of approximately 160,000 individuals is distributed across roughly 400 villages and 154 Panchayats.

Image: Sowing the Study Area Map



Objectives

The given study addresses the following objectives:

1. To examine the social structure and organization of the Hatti community, including their kinship ties, family patterns, and community dynamics.
2. To analyse the economic practices and livelihood strategies of the Hatti community, including their traditional occupations, agricultural practices, and market interactions.
3. To investigate the cultural practices and traditions of the Hatti community, including their language, customs, rituals, and festivals.

Research Questions

1. What is the historical background of Hatti community and their evolution over time.
2. How do the Hatti community's social institutions, such as their social groups or castes and marriage systems, shape their social relationships and interactions?
3. What are the primary sources of income for the Hatti community, and how do they vary by season, location, and household composition?
4. What are the traditional cultural practices and customs of the Hatti community, and how have they been passed down through generations?

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, with a primary focus on ethnography, to investigate the socio-economic and cultural fabric of the Hatti community in Sirmaur, Himachal Pradesh. The methodology was structured to capture complex community dynamics through direct immersion and interaction, contextualized by empirical quantitative data. Extensive fieldwork was conducted in the Hatti-dominated regions of Rajgarh and Nohradhar, integrating household surveys with in-depth informant interviews.

To establish a quantitative baseline, a primary field survey was administered to 50 households utilizing a semi-structured questionnaire. Participant selection was achieved through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques, ensuring a comprehensive and accurate representation of diverse demographic segments within the community. Concurrently, rich qualitative data concerning social structures, economic livelihood strategies, and cultural traditions was gathered through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including community leaders and household heads.

Furthermore, the ethnographic core of the study was significantly enriched through rigorous participant observation, allowing for the systematic documentation of daily routines, cultural practices, and major community events. Finally, the primary field data was situated within a broader academic context through a comprehensive review of secondary sources, encompassing existing academic literature, official government reports, and historical archives.

Methodological Table

Sr.no.	Research Objective	Research Question	Data Source and Methodology
1	To examine the social structure and organization of the Hatti community, including their kinship ties, family patterns, and community dynamics.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What is the historical background of Hatti community and their evolution over time.2. How do the Hatti community's social institutions, such as their social groups or castes and marriage systems, shape their social relationships and interactions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Primary Field Survey of study area• Secondary Sources (Research Articles, papers, newspaper, magazines, books) <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Questionnaire, Schedules, interviews, focus group discussions2. Official data from authentic sources

2	To analyse the economic practices and livelihood strategies of the Hatti community, including their traditional occupations, agricultural practices, and market interactions.	What are the primary sources of income for the Hatti community, and how do they vary by season, location, and household composition?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary Field Survey • Secondary Sources (Research Articles, papers, newspaper, magazines, books) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Questionnaire, Schedules, interviews, focus group discussions 2. Official data from authentic sources
3	To investigate the cultural practices and traditions of the Hatti community, including their language, customs, rituals, and festivals.	What are the traditional cultural practices and customs of the Hatti community, and how have they been passed down through generations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary Field Survey • Secondary Sources (Research Articles, papers, newspaper, magazines, books) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Questionnaire, Schedules, interviews, focus group discussions 2. Official data from authentic sources

Review of Literature

The literature review had been divided into studies on Hattis historical background, ethnographic and socio-Cultural studies, and socio economic and political studies

Historical and General Overviews:

Hatti Community': Background of the tribe seeking ST Status: This article traces the history of the Hatti community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status, linking it to the status granted to the Jaunsar Bawar region of Uttarakhand in 1967. It highlights the shared cultural and socio-economic conditions and the political aspects of their struggle for recognition.

Hatti Community (KSG India, Unacademy, Vajiram & Ravi, iLearn CANA): These resources provide concise overviews of the Hatti community, including their name origin, geographical location, social structure (caste system, 'Khumbli'), traditional occupation, and their demand for Scheduled Tribe status, often emphasizing the similarities with the Jaunsar Bawar region.

Elusive identities, enduring demands: the Haatis' struggle for recognition in the trans-Giri region, Himachal Pradesh: This article delves into the historical and geopolitical context of the Sirmaur region, including the Hatti community's struggle for Scheduled Tribe status, examining their claims based on cultural authenticity and geographical connections to Jaunsar Bawar.

Ethnographic and Socio-Cultural Studies:

From a community to a 'Scheduled Tribe: An Ethnographic Study of the Hatti (Sharma.V) This article provides an ethnographic account of the Hatti tribe in the Trans-Giri region of Sirmaur district after they were granted Scheduled Tribe status. It documents their culture and traditions within existing social institutions like caste, family, marriage (including unique forms like polyandry), kinship (unique recognition extending to the father's father's brother's family), political organization (the traditional council 'Khumbli'), and religion. It highlights the similarities between Hatti culture and that of the Jaunsari tribe of Uttarakhand.

Hatti Community in the Trans-Giri Region of Himachal Pradesh: A Constitutionally Recognised Scheduled Tribe (2022): This study examines the socio-economic and demographic characteristics, cultural heritage, distinctive customs, and social practices of the Hatti community. It also explores the significance and implications of their Scheduled Tribe status. Key findings include the presence of a caste system, the Budi Diwali festival, the 'Khumbli' traditional council, polyandry, and agriculture as the main livelihood.

The Hattis Of Himachal Pradesh: This piece offers insights into the cultural practices and traditions of the Hatti community, particularly highlighting the Budi Diwali festival and its social significance, including the historical depiction of social hierarchies. It also touches upon the kinship ties ('Daichara') with the Jaunsar Bawar region.

Socio-Economic and Political Studies:

The Politics of Reservation: A Case Study of 'HATTI' Community of Sirmour District in Himachal Pradesh: This paper evaluates the complexities surrounding the Hatti community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status, considering the socio-economic and political nuances. It discusses arguments for and against their inclusion, the historical context of reservation in India, and the perspectives of different communities within the region (including Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes).

Hatti Tribal and Swarna Aayog Movement: Deciphering Caste Majoritarian Churn in Himachal Pradesh: This article analyzes the Hatti community's demand for tribal status within the broader context of caste dynamics in the Trans-Giri region. It discusses the internal caste distinctions within the Hatti community and the varying perspectives of different caste groups on the issue of tribal status.

Hattis of Himachal Pradesh (Drishti IAS): This provides an overview of the Hatti community, their traditional occupation, social structure (including the caste system and the 'Khumbli'), and their long-standing demand for Scheduled Tribe status, highlighting the topographical disadvantages they face.

Result and Outcomes

Based on the primary survey demographic profile of Rajgarh and Nohradhar," the survey data from 2025 indicates that the largest portion of respondents falls within the "Above 45" (19%) and "36-45" (17%) age groups, suggesting a significant representation of older individuals, while younger groups "Below 25" (6%) and "26-35" (8%) are less represented; additionally, the gender distribution is relatively balanced, with slightly more female respondents (26%) than male (22%), and the total sample size is 50.

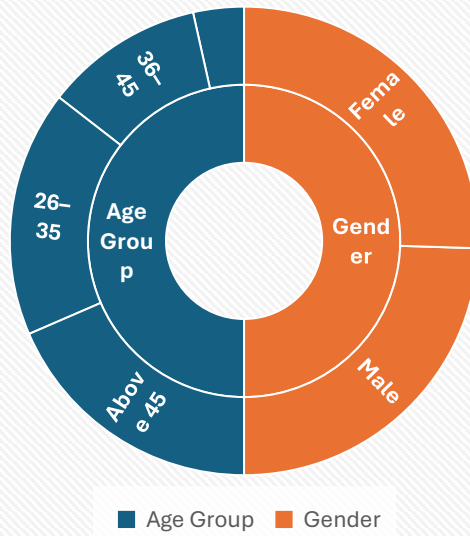
Table: 2.1

Demographic Profile: Rajgarh and Nohradhar 2025

Demographic Profile	Category	No. of Respondent (In Percent)
Age Group	Below 25	6
	26-35	8
	36-45	17
	Above 45	19
Gender	Male	22
	Female	26
Total	50	50

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Demographic Profile: Rajgarh and Nohradhar



Educational Qualification

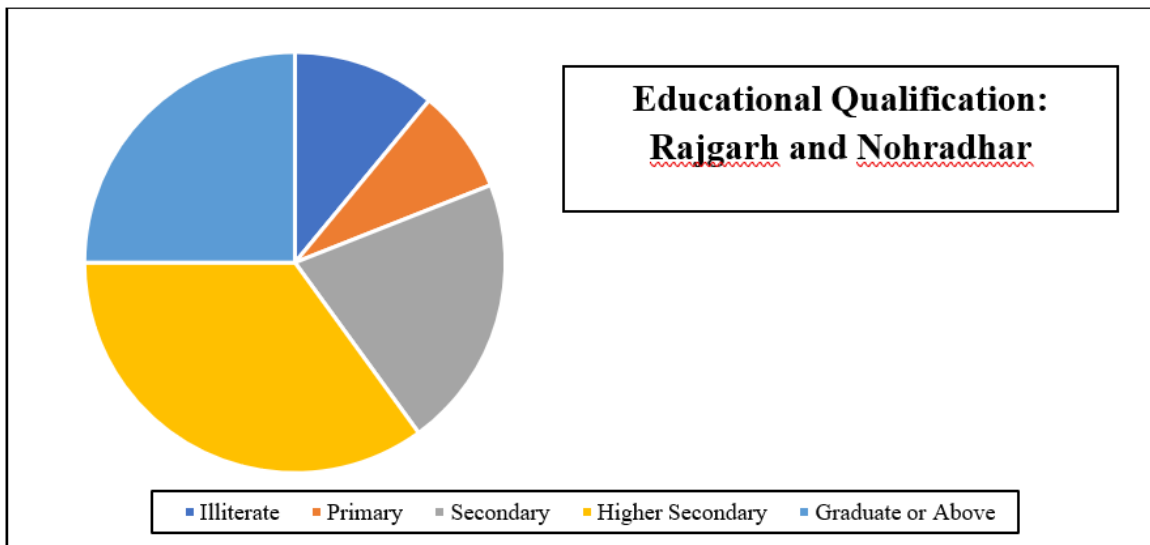
Table: 2.2

Educational Qualification: Rajgarh and Nohradhar

2025

Demographic Profile	Category	No. of Respondent	In percent
Educational Qualification	Illiterate	05	10
	Primary	04	8
	Secondary	11	22
	Higher Secondary	17	34
	Graduate or above	13	26
Total	100	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025



Source: Field Survey, 2025

The survey data reveals that the largest portion of respondents (39%) has attained "Higher Secondary" education, suggesting a significant level of secondary education completion within the surveyed population. Additionally, 24% of respondents hold a "Graduate or above" qualification, indicating a notable presence of higher education. Among the remaining respondents, 16% have a "Secondary" level of education, 14% have a "Primary" level, and 8% are "Illiterate".

2.3 Occupational Structure & source of income

Table: 2.3

Occupational Structure and source of income: Rajgarh and Nohradhar

2025

Occupational Structure	Category	No. of Respondent (In Percent)
Occupation (Source of Income)	Agriculture	86
	Livestock	10
	Wage labor	04
	Business	02
	Other:	04
Total		100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The survey conducted in Rajgarh and Nohradhar in 2025 reveals that agriculture is the primary occupation and source of income for the majority of the population, with 86% of respondents engaged in this sector. Livestock rearing provides a source of income for 10% of the respondents, indicating its importance as a secondary occupation in the area. A small percentage of the population is engaged in wage labor (4%), while 8% are involved in business activities. Notably, a significant portion of the respondents (04%) fall into the "Other" category, suggesting a diversity of occupations and income

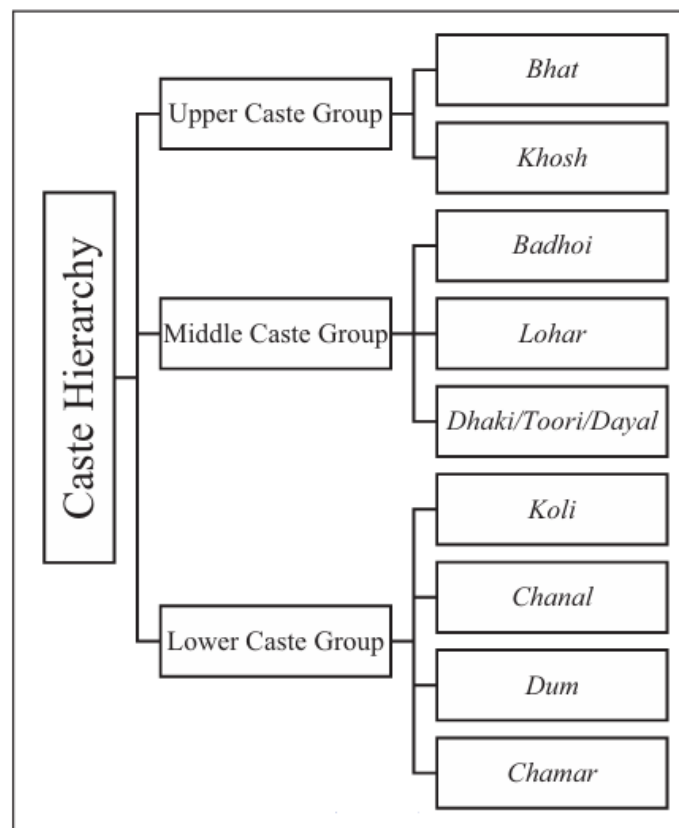
sources beyond the ones specifically listed. Overall, the data highlights the dominance of agriculture in the region's economy, while also indicating the presence of other livelihood activities.

2.4 Caste System

2.5 During the survey, questions were asked about the caste system of Hatti community which is characterized by hierarchical caste system traditionally ascribes social roles and socio-economic status, and is stratified into upper, middle, and lower groups. The upper stratum comprises the Bhat and Khosh castes. Bhats, of Brahminical origin, are crucial in religious ceremonies, while Khosh are traditionally landowners. The Bhat caste is subdivided into Pabuch, Dewa, and Dety/Dethi, with Pabuch at the top.

Figure : Showing Caste Hierarchy

The middle stratum primarily comprises artisans: Badhoi (musicians), Lohar (carpenters), and Dhaki/Toori/Dayal



(blacksmiths), also known as Bajgi. These castes are considered relatively equal, and intermarriage between Lohar and Bajgi has been observed. Their traditional right to enter village temples contributes to their middle-caste status.

Image: showing, interaction with Hatti community during primary filed survey



The lower stratum, comprising Koli, Dum, Chanal, and Chamar, is ranked lowest. Koli are superior to Dum and Chanal, while Chamar are at the bottom. These castes traditionally perform specific service roles: Koli as messengers, Dum as bamboo basket makers, Chanal who carry corpses, and Chamar as leather workers. They also engage in agriculture and labor for upper-caste landowners.

Village spatial organization reflects this hierarchy, with upper-caste households located in the uppermost part of the village. Upper castes maintain purity through strict endogamy and commensality practices, where cooked food is accepted only from one's own or a superior caste.

2.5 Family system

Based on the survey of 50 households, the typical Hatti family exhibits a strong preference for the joint family system, characterized by a shared kitchen and encompassing parents, married sons, unmarried daughters, and grandchildren. This living arrangement is a source of communal pride. Patriarchal authority is vested in the eldest male member, known as the Ghar ka Sayana/Thagda/Thogda, whose wisdom ("Sayana") dictates family decisions, property ownership, and financial records. Inheritance typically follows patrilineal lines, with property jointly passing to sons, and division among brothers occurring according to the Jetthong, Castong, and Kanchong rules, often mediated by the Khumbli to prevent disputes. Elders generally discourage familial division. The eldest son often succeeds as Sayana and enjoys certain privileges, including priority in land division and the primary claim to a wife in polyandrous marriages. His wife, the Ghar Sayani, is the senior woman responsible for the kitchen and household management, though the mother often oversees the kitchen. Women progress through life stages as Dhyanti (daughters/sisters), enjoying a privileged status in their natal families with special invitations to events, and later as Royanti (wives), assuming greater responsibilities in their marital homes. Women often form strong social networks, primarily within their caste groups, engaging in collective activities such as agriculture and resource gathering.

2.6 Marriage System

Based on a field survey of 50 households, marriage in the Hatti community, locally termed "**Jhajra**," The most common form observed in the survey, involving a single husband and wife. The groom's family initiates the process with a formal visit ("Behda") to the bride's home. A symbolic proposal involves the groom's father offering coins ("Rupaya Chorna"), with the bride's acceptance signifying engagement. Pre-wedding feasts ("Mash Khande") and a village-centric wedding ceremony ("Sinjh") are typical.

Image: showing Mahila mandal (Nohradhar) Hatti Community



Jori Dara (Polyandry): While historically significant, the survey indicates that polyandry (one woman marrying multiple brothers) is less frequent. When practiced, it typically involves a woman marrying up to three brothers.

2.7 Religion

Based on a field survey of 50 households, religion is a significant aspect of Hatti community life. The Hattis practice Hinduism, with each village having a temple dedicated to local deities, believed to protect the community from dangers. Key deities include Shirgul Devta, Mahasu Devta, Thari Devi, and Gugga Pir, with Shirgul and Mahasu Devta representing manifestations of Lord Shiva.

Religious duties are performed by village specialists. The Pujari, from Bhat families, is the sole individual permitted to worship the deity. Other specialists, with roles like spokesperson of the deity (Mali) and temple assistants (Bhandari, Chakar, Nabdia, Palgyar), are selected from specific castes. Lower-caste individuals generally do not enter temple premises.

The survey indicates the presence of the "Nabad" custom in villages, where a drum is played in the early morning ("Jisho Ke Nabad") and at night ("Phire Ke Nabad"). The morning Nabad signals the deity's awakening and the start of the day, while the night Nabad indicates the time for sleep.

Image: During primary filed survey, Rajgarh, H.P.



In the Hatti community, the village deity plays a role in dispute resolution, often as a last resort before formal legal action. This is evident when the Khumbli, a traditional council, is guided by the deity. Two dispute resolution practices at the deity level were noted:

- **Suka-tirin:** Individuals plead their case before the deity in the village temple.
- **Neem-Gharna:** Specifically related to Mahasu Devta, this involves an oath-taking process in the temple. The accused person risks divine retribution ("Dosh") by taking money from the deity's container if they are untruthful.

"Neem-Gharna" is particularly serious, with potential consequences including illness, loss of property, and death. The deity is considered the ultimate authority, and their decisions are generally accepted.

The Hatti community has historically relied on a combination of agricultural practices and traditional occupations to sustain itself. Agriculture, as in many parts of the Himalayan region, forms the backbone of their economy. Traditional practices such as terrace farming, which involves cultivating crops on stepped terraces carved into the hillsides, are employed to maximize land use and manage water resources in this mountainous terrain. Key crops include staples like wheat, barley, and pulses, alongside cash crops such as fruits and vegetables, which are often sold in local markets.

Image: Showing the Step/Terrace farming done by Hatti community



During the survey a significant majority (90%) of the households reported practicing terrace farming, highlighting its importance in the region. The primary staple crops cultivated are wheat (85%), barley (70%), and pulses (60%). Additionally, 40% of households engage in cash crop cultivation, with apples (60% of those cultivating cash crops) and tomatoes (50%) being the most common.

Image: Showing Nohradhar old wool weaving practice by Hatti community



Beyond agriculture, the Hatti community has also been involved in a range of traditional occupations. Livestock rearing, particularly of goats and sheep, is a significant economic activity, providing not only sustenance through milk and meat but also wool for traditional crafts. Many Hatti families have historically been involved in the production of handicrafts, such as woven textiles and woolen garments, which are often exchanged within the community or traded in local markets. The structure of land ownership, access to resources, and traditional exchange mechanisms have played a crucial role in shaping these economic practices. For instance, the system of land inheritance, where land is typically passed down through male lineage, has implications for agricultural practices and economic power within the community.

Livestock rearing is a common practice, with 70% of households engaged in it. The average herd size is 15 goats/sheep per household. Handicraft production is another notable activity, with 30% of households involved. Woven shawls (60%) and woolen garments (40%) are the primary handicrafts produced. Furthermore, the survey revealed that land ownership is predominantly patrilineal, with 80% of households reporting male inheritance.

Image: showing interaction with Female Hatti Community and their perspective



Market interactions, though historically limited by the region's geographical isolation, have become increasingly important in recent times. The "Haat," or traditional market, has long served as a central place for the exchange of agricultural produce, livestock, and handicrafts. However, with improved transportation and communication, the Hatti community's engagement with broader regional and even national markets is expanding. This has brought both opportunities and challenges, including access to new goods and technologies, but also competition from larger market forces and the need to adapt traditional practices to a changing economic landscape.

The survey data indicates that all households participate in the local "Haat." A significant portion (50%) of households sell agricultural surplus in these markets, while 20% sell handicrafts. Access to broader markets is still developing, with 10% of households reaching regional markets and 5% utilizing online platforms for sales.

Agricultural Practices in Detail (Major Occupation)

The survey data reveals a nuanced picture of agricultural practices within the Hatti community. While terrace farming is widespread, the size of landholdings varies significantly, impacting the scale of agricultural production. **Landholding Size:** The survey found that 60% of households own less than 2 acres of land, 30% own between 2 and 5 acres, and only 10% own more than 5 acres. This indicates a prevalence of smallholder farming. **Irrigation:** Access to irrigation is a critical factor influencing crop yields. The survey showed that 40% of households rely solely on rain-fed agriculture, 50% have access to traditional irrigation methods (e.g., canals, springs), and 10% have access to modern irrigation (e.g., borewells). **Crop Diversification:** To assess the resilience of the agricultural system, the survey examined crop diversification. It was found that 70% of households cultivate more than three different crops, while 30% cultivate only one or two. **Use of Technology:** The adoption of modern agricultural technologies is limited. Only 20% of households use tractors, and less than 10% use modern fertilizers or pesticides.

Livestock and Handicraft Economy

Livestock rearing and handicraft production, while important, face challenges and are also undergoing changes.

Image: showing the old Hatti community person, weaving the woollen Coat for livelihood



Livestock Products: In addition to meat and wool, the survey investigated the sale of milk. It was found that 60% of households with livestock sell milk, primarily in local markets, while 40% consume it entirely within the household. **Wool Production and Sale:** The survey found that 80% of households use the wool produced for their own needs (e.g., making blankets, clothes), while 20% sell it. Of those selling wool, 70% sell it to local traders, and 30% sell it directly to cooperatives or outside the region. **Handicraft Income:** For households involved in handicraft production, the income generated varies. The survey showed that for 40% of these households, handicraft production contributes less than 20% to their total income, for 50% it contributes between 20% and 50%, and for 10% it contributes more than 50%. **Skill Transmission:** The transmission of handicraft skills is primarily through family. 90% of households reported that skills are learned within the family, from older generations.

Market Dynamics

The increasing integration of the Hatti community into wider markets presents both opportunities and challenges. **Market Access:** The survey explored the challenges faced in accessing markets. 60% of households reported transportation costs as a major barrier, 50% cited lack of market information, and 40% mentioned competition from cheaper products. **Price Fluctuation:** The volatility of market prices affects income stability. 80% of households reported that price fluctuations significantly impact their income from agricultural produce and handicrafts.

Image: showing the main market of Rajgarh



Credit and Finance: Access to credit is crucial for investment and growth. The survey found that 70% of households rely on informal sources of credit (e.g., moneylenders, relatives), while only 30% have access to formal credit from banks or cooperatives. **Impact of Government Schemes:** The survey assessed the awareness and impact of government schemes related to agriculture and rural development. Awareness levels were relatively low, with only 40% of households aware of relevant schemes, and only 20% having benefited from them.

A community's cultural practices and traditions are central to its identity, social cohesion, and the transmission of knowledge and values across generations. This chapter will delve into the language, customs, rituals, and festivals that define the Hatti community's unique cultural identity, examining how these practices have evolved over time and continue to shape their social life.

The Hatti community, like any other, possesses a unique cultural identity shaped by a complex interplay of historical, geographical, and social factors. Their traditions are not static but have evolved through interactions with neighboring communities, changing socio-political landscapes, and adaptation to new economic realities. This chapter seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of these dynamics.

Language, for instance, is a fundamental aspect of Hatti cultural identity. While regional dialects and influences from neighboring languages are present, the Hatti language serves as a primary vehicle for preserving and transmitting oral traditions, folklore, and cultural knowledge. Understanding the nuances of their language is crucial to understanding their worldview and social interactions.

Image: showing the custom and ritual practiced by Hattis



Customs and rituals, which govern various aspects of Hatti life, from birth and marriage to death, provide a framework for social behavior and reinforce community values. These practices often involve symbolic meanings and traditional performances, reflecting the community's relationship with the natural world and their spiritual beliefs.

Festivals, on the other hand, are vibrant expressions of community identity, often celebrated with great enthusiasm and participation. These events provide opportunities for social gathering, artistic expression, and the reaffirmation of cultural bonds. They also serve as a stage for the performance of traditional music, dance, and other art forms, showcasing the community's creative vitality.

This chapter will explore these various facets of Hatti culture in detail, aiming to provide a holistic understanding of their cultural heritage and its significance in their lives.

During the Primary field survey data was collected on the different aspects of culture such as Language, oral tradition, festival and gatherings, dresses/attire etc

4.2 Language, Oral Traditions: During the primary survey, it was observed that while Hindi is widely understood, a distinct Hatti dialect is spoken in most households (90%). This dialect serves as the primary medium for oral storytelling, traditional songs, and religious practices. A rich tradition of folklore exists, with 70% of households reporting regular storytelling sessions, particularly among older family members to younger generations. These stories often feature local deities, historical events, and moral lessons.

Image: Showing the interaction with Prof. Virendra thakur ji and local Hatti people (leader of Hatti's Movement for ST status in HP)



Traditional songs are integral to Hatti culture, with 80% of households reporting the presence of traditional musical instruments (e.g., drums, flutes) and their use in social gatherings and festivals. The Hatti language, though influenced by neighboring languages, plays a crucial role in preserving their unique cultural identity. Oral traditions, including folklore and songs, are vital mechanisms for transmitting cultural knowledge, values, and history across generations.

4.3 House Types, and Traditional Games: The survey also provided insights into traditional house types and games. The traditional Hatti house (observed in 60% of households) is typically a two-story structure made of locally sourced stone and wood, with a sloping roof to manage heavy snowfall. These houses are often clustered together, forming compact villages.

Hatti's traditional houses are of a different type, being built of squared stone on a rectangular foundation, stout beams of deodar or some other strong timber being inserted after every foot or so of stone to ensure strength. These beams run the

whole length of the wall and are equal to it in width. The houses are two or three storeys high, the lowest storey being about 5 feet and the second about 4 feet in height. The latter is often used for the storage of grain, the inmates living in the third storey. The upper storeys have each a verandah (tung), about 2 feet broad, running round two or more sides of the building. The verandah is usually painted in bright red ochre. It is reached by stairs or, in the poorer houses, by notched beams. The walls of the topmost storey contain cupboards for household necessities, and the whole space is often partitioned off into two or three rooms, but only one door leads out from them on to the verandah.

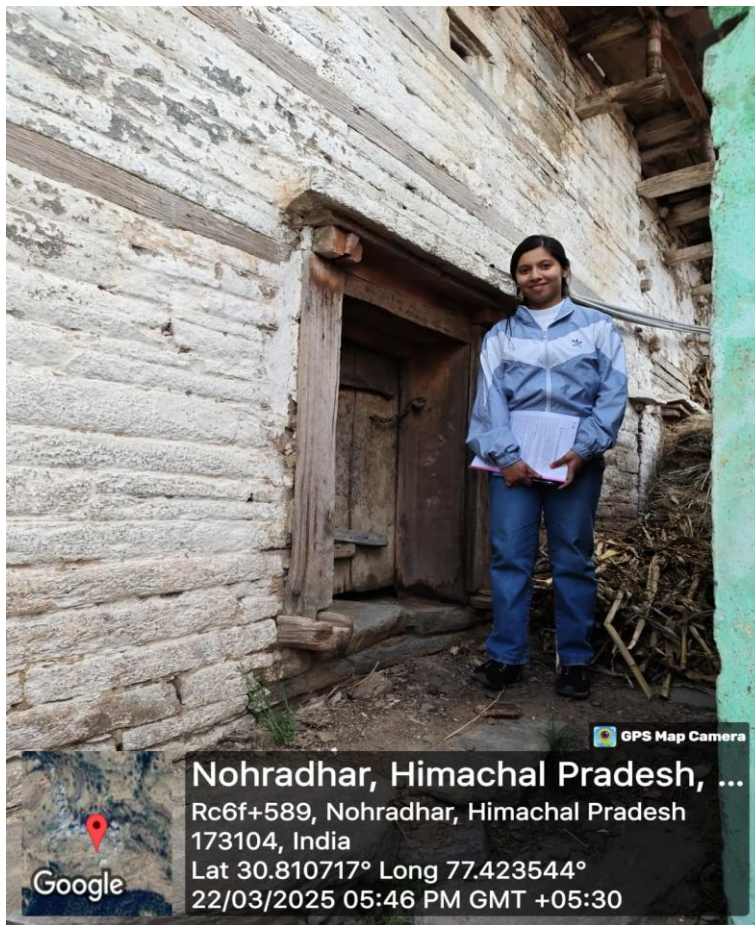
Image showing: Hatti woman and child sitting outside a typical wooden structured Hatti House



The roof is sloping and made of slate. Some old houses or makaan are one-storeyed and made of mud or grass with thatched roofs. There use to be no bed . The floor is made of planks. planed smooth and the whole family sleeps on it under a single covering. In: winter the door is kept shut and a fire kept burning on the hearth throughout the night, while for economy a pot of Arun Colocasia (gangati) roots is also kept boiling all night. Daris made of several pieces of cloth sewn together are also used as coverlets. When the house only contains two storeys, a part of the upper room is partitioned off to form a kuthar or dharoth for storing grain

Traditional games are an important part of Hatti social life, especially for children. Common games include variations of wrestling (observed being played by children in 80% of households), stone throwing games, and indoor games using locally made dice. The traditional game is thoda. It is very popular in the community and trans-Giri. The game derives its name from thoda, the arrow with which it is played . It is an ancient game supposed to date from the time of the Pandavas on festive occasions. The players wear black woollen caps, in shape like a Delhi jeweller's pagri with a silver mounted tuft of peacock's feathers worn as an aigrette. Below this, on the right side, are wom silver chains which cover nearly half the head and hang down to the ear. Bound the waist an ordinary coat or chola is worm, with trousers made of some thick, coarse material, such as felt, and very tight below the knee.

Image: Showing the typical Hatti House structure



A long heavy boot covering the whole foot and ankle is also worn. The attacking party takes a bow and arrow in his left hand, and, in his right, a dangra or axe which he brandishes until the moment comes to use the bow when the dangra is put in the belt. The bows, which are very long, are made of bamboo, and the arrows of bamboo, but they are not pointed. The game requires two players. One of them aims an arrow at his adversary, who wards it off. The arrow must only hit the back of the leg below the knee. The defender keeps his back turned towards his opponent and moves rapidly. If the shooter misses, the parties change places, but if he hits his adversary, the winner sings a song of triumph. Throughout the game the players, especially the assailants, sing the praises of their ancestors and relatives famous for their bravery. The players become very excited when it is played between Sathors and Pasars, the excitement sometimes resulting in severe fights.

4.4 Hattis Dress / Attire: Traditional Hatti attire, while showing some regional variations, generally comprises woolen garments for both men and women. Men often wear a long coat (chola), a cap, and a woolen lower garment, while women wear a long skirt (ghaghri), a blouse (choli), and a headscarf.

Detailed Attire: To add more detail, the woolen garments are often intricately woven with traditional patterns, using natural dyes. The designs can vary slightly between villages, reflecting subtle regional differences. Men's caps, in particular, are often a significant cultural marker, with specific styles and embellishments. **Ornaments:** Both men and women wear traditional ornaments, often made of silver. Women's jewelry may include necklaces, earrings, bracelets, and nose rings, while men may wear silver amulets or rings. The ornaments often have symbolic meanings and are worn during festivals and ceremonies.

4.5 Customs and Rituals : During the primary survey, it was found that specific rituals are observed following childbirth, including a period of isolation for the mother and newborn (observed in 60% of households) and a naming ceremony involving the village priest (Pujari) in 80% of households. Traditional marriage practices, as discussed in Chapter II, remain

significant. The survey indicates that arranged marriages are still prevalent (70%), with families playing a central role in the selection of partners. Death rituals are elaborate, involving community participation and specific practices for mourning and remembrance.

Image: Showing the Local Hatti community festival celebration



The survey shows that these rituals typically last for 13 days (as reported by 90% of households) and include communal feasts and prayers. Hinduism is the primary religion, with each village having a temple dedicated to local deities. The survey confirms that the worship of deities like Shirgul Devta and Mahasu Devta is widespread (95% of households). Hatti customs and rituals provide a structured framework for life events, reinforcing social bonds and community values. These practices often have deep symbolic meanings, reflecting the community's relationship with the natural world, their ancestors, and their spiritual beliefs.

Festivals and Celebrations: During the primary survey, it was observed that several key festivals are celebrated in the Hatti region. Diwali is universally celebrated (100% of households), while other important festivals include Shivratri (90%), Dussehra (85%), and local harvest festivals (80%). Festivals are characterized by high levels of community participation, with 90% of households reporting active involvement in festival preparations and celebrations.

Festivals are a platform for showcasing traditional art forms. There are four important festivals, which ordinarily last three days. The chief day of festivities is known as Saja. These festivals themselves are also called Sajas, which is equivalent to the Teohar of the plains. All members of each house gather during these festivals. Each of these Sajas has its own peculiar customs.

Image showing : The villagers dance holding fire torches during Buddi Diyali celebration at Drabil village photograph taken before sunrise



The Bisu festival falls on the last two days of the solar month of Chait and the first of Baisakh. The first day is Ashkalanti, the second Bashri and the third is Saja. The Bisu fair is held in several villages, and the dates of Bisu vary in different places. The fair is held on a high summit under the flag of the village Deota. People dance, play Thoda, and feast their friends. Huryali is celebrated during the rainy season on the first of Sawan and the last two days of the preceding month of Asar—milk and ricetake a large part in the preparations of the appropriate dainties.

Diwali is celebrated on the same day on which it is observed in the plains, but in the high hills it comes a full month after it. The first day of the festival is Askanti, the middle Saja, and the last Prainth. On this festival Kolis and Dhakis smg, dance and give farcical performances during the night in the houses of those of their landlords who have been blessed with a son during the preceding year. In return they are given presents. They also visit the villages in which girls of their own villages are married. Sometime a barricade is put on their route to close it, and unless they sing the songs specially potent to open the route, they cannot go on. Those who do not know these songs return to their homes. The party who violates this rule or enters a house before sunset is liable to be Gned by the Panchuyat. -

The Magh festival is the greatest of all. No fair is held, but rich and poor, young and old, man and woman, celebrate wt. It commences on the 28th of Poh. The first day is Askanti, the second Dawlanti, the third Altranti and the fourth Saja. Sheep and goats that have been reared in the preceding year specially for this festival are killed on the Saja day. Every household kills at least one goat. Nearly the whole month of Magh is spent in feasting and merry-making. The preparations for this gay period take at least a month. Magh is the coldest time of the year and the husbandman, forced by the climate to spend his days indoors, does his best to make them merry.

The survey indicates that traditional dances (e.g., Nati) and musical performances are common during these events (reported by 70% of households). Festivals are vibrant expressions of Hatti cultural identity, fostering social cohesion and providing a stage for artistic expression. They offer opportunities for the community to come together, celebrate their shared heritage, and reaffirm their cultural bonds. Traditional music, dance, and other art forms play a crucial role in these celebrations, showcasing the community's creative vitality.

Cuisine: The traditional Hatti diet, as observed during the survey, consists mainly of locally sourced ingredients. Staple foods include wheat, barley, and pulses, often prepared into simple but nutritious dishes. A significant majority of households (90%) reported consuming *siddu*, a steamed bread made from wheat flour, as a regular part of their diet. Dairy products, derived from livestock, are also important, with 80% of households consuming milk and yogurt daily.

Social Structure: The Hatti community is traditionally organized around a system of clans and sub-clans. The survey revealed that 70% of households identify strongly with their respective clan, which plays a significant role in social organization, particularly in matters of marriage and inheritance.



Decision-Making: Traditional village councils, known as *Khumbli*, continue to play a vital role in local governance. While formal Panchayati Raj institutions exist, the survey indicated that 60% of households still approach the *Khumbli* for dispute resolution and other community matters.

References

- 1.Sharma, V. (n.d.). *From a community to a 'Scheduled Tribe': An ethnographic study of the Hatti*.
- 2.*Hatti community in the Trans-Giri region of Himachal Pradesh: A constitutionally recognised Scheduled Tribe*.
- 3.Chhetri, N. (2023). Elusive identities, enduring demands: the Haatis' struggle for recognition in the trans-Giri region, Himachal Pradesh. *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research*. <https://doi.org/10.4000/ebhr.1305>
- 4.'*Hatti Community*': *Background of the tribe seeking ST status*.