



Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh

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ABSTRACT Transhumant Gaddis who reside in the area of Bharmour *Tehsil* in Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh are extremely backward. They spend the summer in their permanent homes in Bharmour and cultivate their lands. In the winter, they migrate to lower hills along with their sheep and goat in and around Kangra hills. The Gaddis of Bharmour have been given the status of a Scheduled Tribe by the Government of India and are entitled to certain financial benefits. The important economic strategies of the people in the mountain regions seem to be the utilisation of the different biotopes at various altitudes. The economy of Gaddis is agro-pastoral. Land, livestock and the considerable knowledge of the skills necessary to exploit them effectively are the principal economic resources. Supplementary but nonetheless of considerable importance, is the income from non-traditional resources. The cash value of the products of village artisans is relatively insignificant as compared to the return from agriculture and pastoralism but products themselves are vital to the village economy. Although agriculture provides the bulk of the staple food. Gaddis themselves give major importance to sheep and goat rearing. There is no weaver caste in the village as such, however spinning and weaving is done in every household in the village. This is an important supplementary occupation among the Gaddis and both men and women engage in it. The woollen cloth required for preparing their woollen apparel is woven by the people out of the wool spun themselves. Gaddis maintain a short-term ecological balance with the environment through migrations and winter dispersal, whereby the intensity of utilisation of pastures is adjusted to the carrying capacity of the different pastures at the different period of time, while the long-term balance between flocks and pastures is beyond the control of Gaddis. The Gaddis also maintain an approximate economic and political balance with surrounding areas mediated through market exchange, and the institution of *Panchayat* and *Biradari*. For the present form of organisation to persist, the Gaddis must be in demographic balance. Since the Gaddis are partially isolated within the larger population of the area, the factors involved in this balance are both biological and social.