

**Engendering the Commons:  
A Case Study in Gender, Difference and Common Property  
in Himachal Pradesh, India**

**By**

**Kerril J. Davidson-Hunt**

**A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS**

**Department of Anthropology  
University of Manitoba  
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## ABSTRACT

The focus of *Engendering the Commons: A Case Study in Gender, Difference and Common Property in Himachal Pradesh, India* is women's use of common property, primarily village forests, and how women of different caste and economic status use common lands for distinct needs. The research is theoretically framed by a perspective in difference, and bounded by common property as a parameter for study. Research is based upon 10 weeks of fieldwork, undertaking interviews with women in 33 households in two small agricultural villages in the Kullu Valley.

The present research supports theory at a macro-level that rural villagers are highly dependent upon common property resources, and may therefore have interests in defending village commons from degradation. At a micro-level, however, this study suggests that there is stratification by caste and class within rural villages that ultimately leaves the poorest within the village outside management and influence in decision-making over village common lands.

In this study, 97% of the women interviewed used village commons for the collection of firewood, fodder and/or cow bedding, although each woman relied upon the commons for distinct livelihood needs. Households with limited land and cattle resources required products from the commons to sustain agricultural livelihoods. The near-landless often used village commons to gather products for sale or to be utilized within reciprocal relationships with kin households. Within this context of differing needs from village commons, a women's organization, the *Mahila Mandal*, had organized to protect village forests from continuing environmental degradation. The diversity of needs from village commons, as well as women's differing positions within the village socio-political structure, was found to create conflict at the village level over the management and issues of control of common lands. The study concludes that a perspective in difference brings a closer understanding of 'community' management of 'common' resources.

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The thesis presented over the next few pages would not have been possible without several key people. First and foremost, I want to sincerely thank my advisor, Dr. Ellen R. Judd in the Department of Anthropology for her continual support, and for the attention she has given to seeing this project through to completion. I cannot thank her enough for her guidance in clarifying issues and reflecting on the research I have undertaken. I would also like to thank Dr. Fikret Berkes from the Natural Resources Institute for his role in my thesis work. Thanks to Dr. Berkes for inviting me to join the research project in India, for input in the field at a critical point during fieldwork, and also for his very supportive approach through the whole process. I would also like to thank Dr. G. N. Ramu from the Department of Sociology who has provided a critical and invaluable assessment of this document. His thorough comments and serious attention to this work is greatly appreciated. Also, thanks to Dr. James S. Gardner for his expertise on India, and especially for providing strength and guidance to the team of student researchers arriving in India in June of 1994. These people have truly been invaluable in their encouragement, and continual support.

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In addition I want to thank Dr. John Sinclair for his support both in the field as well as during the writing. In India, Dr. R. B. Singh was of great assistance, welcoming us to the University of Delhi. I also would like to express a warm gratitude to our University of Delhi counterparts Mr. G. S. Chauhan and Mr. B. W. Pandey for their friendship, warm welcome and care during our time in India. Laurie Ham and Colin Duffield also deserve credit for their part in this effort. In so many ways, this research has been a collaborative effort between our close team of researchers, and principal investigators, although I must take sole responsibility for what is written in this thesis.

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*In memory of my parents, June and Bill Davidson,  
whose work and concern for people instilled an early  
interest and respect for cultural diversity*



*I saw  
At the foot of the ridge  
The dispersion of horizons  
(A hive of diligent bees  
In a horse's skull)*

*I saw  
Vertigo petrified  
The hanging gardens of asphyxia  
(A tiger butterfly  
Motionless on the tip of a scent)*

*I saw  
The mountains of the sages  
Where the wind mangles eagles  
(A girl and an old woman, skin and bones  
Carry bundles bigger than those peaks)*

*(Himachal Pradesh. Octavio Paz, 1979)*

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### *Context for the Study*

In the new year of 1994 I was invited to be a part of an interdisciplinary research team to do fieldwork on natural resources management in the Indian Himalayas. The work presented in this thesis is the result of 10 weeks spent in the state of Himachal Pradesh in the summer of that year. The project was undertaken jointly by the Department of Geography and the Natural Resources Institute, both at the University of Manitoba, with funding from the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute. The overall aim of the project was to examine the sustainability of mountain watersheds, specifically the Beas river watershed of the Kullu Valley. The stated objective was to “analyze sustainability in its three major dimensions (ecological, economic and social)...[and] to identify the most important factors [in sustainability] (Berkes 1995:1). Within this overall objective, the project aimed to “study the success and failures of mountain environment resource management policies and their social, economic, and historical context as revealed in case studies (Berkes 1995: 4). One aspect of sustainability to be researched was the community management of common lands, and a common property framework was established as an organizing principle for assessing sustainability of land resource management in the Indian Himalayas.

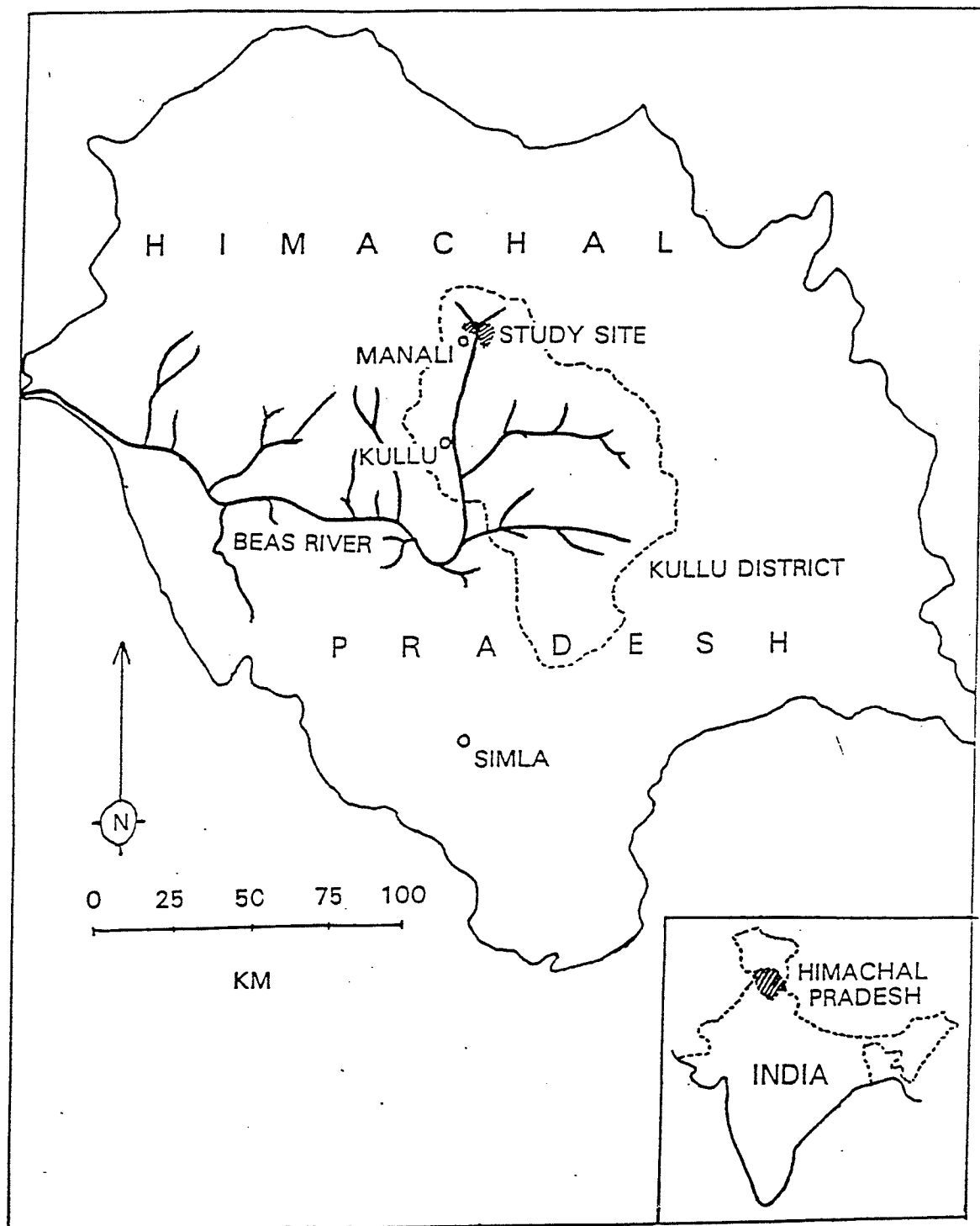


Figure 1.1 Study site, located in the state of Himachal Pradesh, India (source Colin Duffield, 1995).

### ***Objectives of the present research***

Within the stated aims of the project, my role was to contribute an understanding of women's roles in the Kullu Valley cultural and environmental context, part of which was the caste organization and culture of the Kullu Valley. As common property formed the framework for the overall study, the present research sought to specifically examine women's use of common property resources, in this case village forests and pastures. While my primary objective was to understand women's use of village commons, an accompanying aspect of this was to examine how women were involved in resource management. In this, my objective was to understand women's informal agency and influence over management of village commons. 'Management,' in this context, refers primarily to non-timber forest resources such as firewood and fodder (timber management falls under the jurisdiction of the Forest Department). The specific objectives for my research were to:

- (1) Outline the general caste system;
- (2) Document women's use of common property resources (i.e. state or village forests, pastures);
- (3) Indicate change in access and availability to common property resources over time; and
- (4) Identify informal processes of influence affecting access and availability of natural resources.

These were the stated objectives for my research in the Kullu Valley within the context of the overall study. In preparation for fieldwork, the months from January to May of 1994 were spent doing an extensive literature review and proposal for the research I would undertake in India. Although I had never been to India, I had several

years of experience in Latin America working in gender and development,<sup>1</sup> which gave me some conceptualization of what I could accomplish.

At a level more specific to my own perspective and interests, within the stated objectives I brought an interest in feminist anthropology following Henrietta Moore's perspective in difference. Being influenced by various socialist feminist scholars (Henrietta Moore, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Bina Agarwal), I was interested not only in generalities about women's roles, but in differences generated between women at intersections of class, race and caste in relation to use and 'collective' management of village commons. The thrust of my research, then, was focused on women's use of village commons, and differences among women by caste and economic factors in the use of the commons. In order for me to understand differences among women, however, it was necessary to gain a general understanding of the Himalayan forest-agricultural system of the Kullu Valley, and women's roles in it. As a result, parts of my thesis are dedicated to a discussion of the forest-agricultural system as a whole (Chapters 3 and 4) and the parts that follow look at differences between women (Chapters 5 and 6).

Research is a dialectic process and Agar describes it as a process in which "you learn something ("collect some data"), then you try to make sense out of it ("analysis"), then you go back and see if the interpretation makes sense in light of new experience ("collect more data"), then you refine your interpretation ("more analysis"), and so on.

---

<sup>1</sup> I lived and worked in Bolivia and Mexico for five years before attending the University of Manitoba to pursue graduate work in anthropology. Despite this experience, I did not feel completely confident undertaking research in an Asian context where I did not speak the language. The experience, however, proved to be a wonderful opportunity to learn, as well as a personally rewarding experience, as I met some incredible women in yet another part of the world. My partner, Iain Davidson-Hunt, studies at the Natural Resources Institute and was the person initially contacted to consider the project. Iain, myself, Laurie Ham and Colin Duffield from the NRI comprised the team of researchers.

The process is dialectic, not linear” (Agar 1980:9). Within this dialectical process of research, I am continually evolving my understanding of women’s use and management of village commons in the Kullu Valley. The research undertaken was, primarily, to examine women’s use of village commons, and especially village forests, and the differences among women in their daily activities related to these resources by caste and economic factors. While in the Kullu Valley, I was fortunate to discover a dynamic organization of women, the *Mahila Mandal*, which was actively involved in the regulation and protection of village forests. While I did not expect to find an official or formal institution organized to protect village forests from degradation, the *Mahila Mandal* was incorporated into my research as an aspect of women’s formal agency in commons management.

The process of data collection in India, however, has not been the only dialectic in research. Data analysis upon returning to Canada, as well as the subsequent writing of the research undertaken, has been a continually transformative process. Things I understood in the field, and that took substantial effort to understand, are now the basis for new insights. Thus the foundation of research on the varied use women make of village commons has been important in my perpetual interpretation of events during fieldwork. This is especially true in relation to the social and political dimensions of commons management. As a result, I have increasingly incorporated social and political dimensions to commons management in my writing, even though this aspect moves beyond the stated objectives for my research.

At a theoretical level, and in identifying the various areas of research and writing pertinent to my study, the Chipko movement of the Uttarakhand, the hills of Uttar Pradesh, has been helpful in my preparation for fieldwork because the movement involves women's roles in resource use in the Himalayas as well as aspects of women's agency in the management of village commons. Literature on common property has also been useful, although it does not explicitly incorporate a gender analysis, but is linked in writings on Chipko.<sup>2</sup> Within common property writings, however, there is some attention to class issues in commons use, especially revolving around the idea that the 'poor,' or 'smallholders,' (Netting 1993) are more dependent upon common property resources than larger landowners (see especially Jodha 1985, 1986; also Shiva 1986). Others have emphasized that the rural poor, but especially poor rural women, are severely affected by environmental degradation (Agarwal 1994, 1992, 1989a; Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey 1987, Sharma n.d.; Agarwal and Narain 1985; Shiva 1988; World Bank 1991), and by extension, then, it is poor women who take action in the protection of village commons (Agarwal 1992, 1989a; Mitra 1993), as for example, the Chipko movement.

The actions of the Chipko villages are examples of rural poor villagers responding to environmental threats (Agarwal 1992). The context is one in which poor rural households are dependent upon village common land for livelihood strategies of cattle-rearing and agriculture (Jodha 1985, 1986; Agarwal 1989a, 1992, Shiva 1986). I

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<sup>2</sup> Although a gender analysis has not been widely incorporated into the literature on common property, gender studies in natural resources management incorporate issues that pertain to village commons (common property resources). For some discussion in the Indian context on gender and village commons see Mitra 1993; Agarwal 1994, 1992, 1989a; Shiva and Dankelman 1992; Shiva 1988, Dankelman and Davidson 1988; Bhati and Singh 1987, Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey 1987.

refer to this integration as a *forest-agriculture* system. Within this system women are the main source of labor that links forest produce with cattle-rearing and agriculture.

Shiva writes that:

...women's work and the livelihoods of poorer sections of rural society are intimately linked to trees and grasslands in the commons, which support the farm animals and thus take pressure off cropland, while increasing organic inputs to crop through animal waste. Small peasants and landless laborers can own livestock largely because of the existence of the commons. (Shiva 1988:83).

This is the context of the Kullu Valley in which rural households depend heavily upon common property resources (forests and pastures). Dependence upon village commons, as discussed by Jodha and Agarwal, and as suggested by Shiva above, comes from the integrated nature of activities such as agriculture, cattle-rearing and collection of forest products. While these writers discuss dependence, I focus on the use made of the commons as it is difficult to assess 'dependence' in a village context where all make use of village commons, but in very diverse ways. The fact that women with more resources of land and cattle use village forests more intensely does not mean that they are necessarily more dependent upon common lands than poorer women who use the commons less intensely, but who may be equally, or more, dependent upon these lands.

This study is based on interviews conducted in two small villages in the Kullu Valley. Jodha and Agarwal suggest that the poor are those with two hectares of land or less. At the time of this study, 80% of land holdings in the Kullu Valley were less than two hectares, while 58% were below one hectare (12 *bighas*)<sup>3</sup> (1980/81 Census, ODA

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<sup>3</sup> *Bighas* are the unit of measurement of land in the Kullu Valley: 5 *bighas*=1 acre, and 12 *bighas*=1 hectare.



1994, Vol. 2, Annex 1). This meant that 80% of rural households in the Kullu Valley were poor by this standard, and all but a few select households in the villages of the study had less than two hectares, or 24 *bighas* (see Table 5.1).

In the broader discussions in this field regarding poor rural villages and common property, villages are viewed as locations of the rural poor, without distinction of poverty levels within villages. My own research examining the micro-level management of village commons reveals significant differences within villages in class, caste, economic, social and political status. What emerges from interviewing in two villages of the Kullu Valley are divisions of caste and class that lead to very different needs, as well as uses, from village commons. Conflicts arise within villages between castes and classes of people in the rules and enforcement of regulations over village commons. While my interview results are focused on forest use, and do not directly address socio-political issues surrounding women's organization, I am able to make some preliminary observations regarding political dimensions to commons management.

At the village level, contrary to Jodha's and Agarwal's assertions at the macro-level, those who use village commons are not necessarily those who actively respond to protect village commons, but management and decision-making over village commons is heavily influenced by village socio-political dynamics. Village data suggest that the majority of households (73%) own a small plot of land with one or more cattle, and ownership of these resources being associated with an intense use of common land, but also that 97% of the women interviewed use the forest to some degree, and for multiple purposes. Not all women, however, participate in the women's organization that has

gained substantial control of village common resources, and the poor at the village level have very little power to affect the management of village commons. What follows is an account of my fieldwork that examines the ways that 'poor rural women,' in the many aspects and conditions of that term, become differently situated actors primarily in the use, but also in the management, of village common lands.

### ***Theoretical Framework***

My research has been influenced by a socialist feminist analysis within anthropology that goes beyond assumptions and generalizations about all women as 'oppressed,' or assuming a generalized 'condition of women.' For lack of a better term I call this a 'perspective in difference,' which is largely derived from the work of Henrietta Moore (1988). A perspective in difference has as its goal an understanding of how women differ amongst themselves in relation to distinct experiences due to class, caste, race, and so on. Implicit in this view is an assumption that women do not experience life identically because of a same biological sex, but experiences are formed by their location within diverse structures of oppression such as class, race, ethnicity, caste, sexual orientation, and innumerable other distinctions. Recognizing the differences that exist between women allows feminist researchers to identify differing experiences of women. A perspective in difference assumes that women can be oppressors as well as oppressed, or experience oppression differently. For me it has been necessary to recognize that my experience as a white, middle-class, educated, northern Canadian woman is different from the experiences of the women I have studied within countries of the South, or women within my own culture but from different backgrounds. It assumes that each

person has a different story, a unique life that merits personal attention, and that they cannot be drawn into undifferentiated generalizations about 'Third world women,' or equally, 'Western women' (Mohanty 1991).

Some of the concerns of a socialist feminist perspective focus on the individual, and the unique character of individual lives. Just as anthropology has moved away from the traditional ethnography that generalized about cultural traits and characteristics in the presentation of static, homogenous cultural entities with little diversity or internal division (Clifford and Marcus 1986), feminist anthropology has also made a priority of going beyond facile generalizations on the condition of women. A perspective in difference emerges from an historical process wherein gender studies have increasingly become incorporated into mainstream theories. An anthropology of women began during the 1970's to incorporate women into research and writing, after recognizing that many traditional ethnographies, research and studies were undertaken without consciously incorporating women's perspective, role or agency within culture (Moore 1988). By the 1980's, feminist scholars had achieved substantial ground in bringing women back into anthropology. yet many feminist scholars also recognized that women's experience was more diverse than could be presented through merely 'adding' women into a culture framework (Moore 1988).

Underlying a perspective in difference is an analysis of political and economic influences on structures and relations of power. Within this analysis, a political economy perspective has been incorporated into my analytical framework, heavily influenced by the work of Bina Agarwal and Ursula Sharma writing in the Indian context, and more

generally by the work of Henrietta Moore and Eric Wolf. These writers have in common a perspective on social organization that analyzes class within social and cultural modes of relating. It could be argued that my research does little more than add women into the analysis of use and management of the environment. While this is true at one level, I have attempted to go beyond generalizations about women in their use of the environment, and to look at factors of caste and of economic differences between women. My research is largely about women, and I have not been able to incorporate a complete gender analysis into my research. To have done so, I would have needed to focus on relations between men and women within the villages of the study, and the dynamics of control of village resources between men and women. I have done this to some extent, although the time I had to undertake research was limited and I focused on interviews with women for the most part during my fieldwork.

### ***Review of the Literature***

There are several bodies of literature that are applicable to a study on women and the environment in Northwest India. At a broad theoretical level, development literature on women and the environment relates to the present research. More specifically in a geographical and cultural sense, writings that focus on Northwest India in general, but the Central and Western regions of the Indian Himalayas specifically, incorporate the context found in the Kullu Valley in the state of Himachal Pradesh. Culturally and environmentally the Himalayas are tremendously diverse, and the scope of the literature reviewed for this thesis has been necessarily narrowed to the Central and Western Himalayas. Of particular interest is literature which covers the Chipko movement of the

Garhwal Himalayas (Central Himalayas), as well as ethnographies on Central and Western Himalayan regions of Northwest India. The work of ecologists on Central and Western Himalayan ecosystems also provides an understanding of the environment, and people's interactions with mountain environments.

At the most general level, several sources focus on women and development with special attention to women and the environment in the South that relate to the present research on women and the environment (Agarwal 1994; Mies and Shiva 1993; Chioma Steady 1993; Mies 1986; Dankelman and Davidson 1988; Rodda 1991; Shiva 1988; Stock, Force and Ehrenreich 1982; Dankelman 1990; Afshar 1991; Agarwal 1986a; Braidotti, Charkiewicz, Hausler and Wieringa 1993). More specific are studies on women in India (Desai 1992; Kumari 1989; Sharma 1985; Chaki-Sikar 1984; Hirschon 1984; Kishwar and Vanita 1991; Caplan and Bujra 1979; Das 1976; Mitra 1989-90) and women and natural resources in India (Agarwal 1992, 1989a, 1989b, 1988a, 1988b, 1986a, 1986b; Mies, Lalita and Kumari 1986; Shiva 1992, 1991, 1988; Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey 1987; Sharma n.d.).

The authors who have contributed most significantly to research on women and their environments in the Indian context have been Bina Agarwal and Vandana Shiva. Agarwal writes extensively on women, the environment, the social construction of women's roles in relation to the environment (Agarwal 1992, 1989b, 1988a, 1988b, 1986b), and the effect of a degraded environment upon the lives of rural women (Agarwal 1989a, 1986a). Shiva, a physicist and philosopher, writes prolifically on the same topic of women and natural resources, although the two Indian scholars differ in

their approaches. Shiva's work as a whole tends to generalize on women from the South (Mies and Shiva 1993), and the qualities women hold due to their gender, making assumptions that women hold ecological knowledge and maintain conservationist perspectives because of the nature of being 'woman,' that is, by being the procreator, the sex with reproductive potential, women hold specific conceptualizations of the environment.

Both Shiva and Agarwal fit into an ecofeminist framework. Ecofeminism can be characterized as recognizing domination of women as an extension of man's domination of nature. Mies and Shiva explain that ecofeminists:

....immediately became aware of the connection between patriarchal violence against women, other people and nature, and that: In defying this patriarchy we are loyal to future generations and to life and this planet itself. We have a deep and particular understanding of this both through our natures and our experience as women. (Mies and Shiva 1993: 14).

Ecofeminism is a broad classificatory term for a wide range of thought. Some ecofeminism is distinctly spiritual in nature, focusing on holism, unity, interconnectedness, and so on, while ignoring political conditions of oppression (Mies and Shiva 1993). Both Shiva and Agarwal, however, could be considered to hold 'socialist ecofeminist' perspectives, although Shiva's views cross between radical and socialist ecofeminism. Melody Hessing (1993) develops three distinctions within ecofeminist positions: radical, liberal and socialist ecofeminism. While the terms are awkward and perhaps tedious, they are helpful in distinguishing different constructions of ecofeminist thought. The differences between these perspectives are based upon one's concept of who or what bears responsibility for unsustainable environments.

Briefly, radical ecofeminists, closely aligned with spiritual movements (Starhawk 1987; Diamond and Fenman Orenstein 1990) place responsibility for environmental destruction on men, patriarchy, and the male impulse to control, dominate and subjugate. The liberal ecofeminist view (O'Neil 1991; Anderson 1991) is similar to radical ecofeminism, although sees the source of unsustainable environments as poor assimilation of women into structures of power and decision-making, without questioning or wishing to change the structures in any other respect. Socialist ecofeminists (Shiva 1988; Mies 1986; Sen and Grown 1987) view structures of imperialism, capitalism and globalization as structures of patriarchy which have been built upon, and maintain dominance through, the exploitation of women's labor (Mies 1986). The result of such structures is inequitable and unsustainable environments (Hessing 1993).

The three ecofeminist perspectives outlined above may be simplistic and do not account for uniqueness within ecofeminist thought, although they do allow for some understanding of ecofeminist views within a broad movement of ideas. Shiva's work (Mies and Shiva 1992; Shiva 1992, 1991, 1988; Shiva and Dankelman 1988) mixes a radical and socialist perspective and finds capitalism and the North to be major contributors to environmental destruction, while believing women to hold solutions and perspectives towards sustainable livelihoods and enterprises. Shiva's writings are important in that she contributes an understanding of the kind of knowledge women can hold, knowledge that is distinct from men's understanding of the environment because of the fact that they use their environments differently and for distinct purposes. Shiva's work is valuable in this, although she often presents more an ideological view on

women's knowledge and roles than empirical accounts of women's lives. Agarwal also contributes to a general knowledge of women and the environment, yet pays attention to differentiating factors of class in her work. Shiva's and Agarwal's writings are not based on primary fieldwork, but they write from theoretical perspectives. Both Shiva and Agarwal have written on the management of common property resources and the Chipko movement of the Garhwal Himalayas, and Shiva is reputed to have been involved in the movement as an academic interested in women's environmental movements in India (Aryal 1994).

Geographically, Himachal Pradesh is considered the Western Himalaya, and the hill districts of Uttar Pradesh the Central Himalaya. Both are given attention in the literature touching on various cultural aspects of the Himalayan peoples (Sax 1990; Chandra 1981; Furer-Haimendorf 1981; Raha 1981, 1978; Nitzberg 1978; Parmar 1975; Sharma 1970; Berreman 1963, 1970; Newell 1970; Miller 1981; Berreman 1962). Based on fieldwork, three ethnographic works have come out of the Himalayan regions of Northwest India. Ursula Sharma has written an excellent ethnography on women in two states, entitled *Women, Work, and Property in North-West India* (1980). Gerald Berreman has also written a very good ethnography, *Hindus of the Himalayas: Ethnography and Change* (1972), based on his fieldwork in Uttar Pradesh, while Jonathon Parry's *Caste and Kinship in Kangra* (1979) is an ethnography from a structural functionalist perspective. Sharma's work is most pertinent to the present research on women in the Himalayas, but Berreman's work has been central to understanding Pahari culture of the Himalayas. Berreman is the foremost writer on the



history and culture of the lower Himalayan regions, and is important in the attention he gives to the historical aspects of Pahari culture. Parry's ethnography, based on his fieldwork in Kangra district in Himachal Pradesh, while well researched, falls prey to the traditional ethnographic style that treats women as commodities for strategic marriage alliances, kinship networks, and the like.

Ursula Sharma's research in the states of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh was undertaken to conduct a comparative analysis of the position of women in rural India. Sharma's work is sophisticated both theoretically and empirically. She chose the Punjab as one of the wealthier states in India where women participate very little in outdoor physical agricultural labor, and Himachal Pradesh as a contrast to the Punjab in its intense poverty and in the involvement of women in household agriculture. Her initial hypothesis was that women in the Punjab hold a social position of inferior status to that of women in the state of Himachal Pradesh, because women are so openly and visibly active in agricultural systems in the latter. Analyzing from a socialist feminist perspective, Sharma treats women's control of assets (for example, property, products of labor) as central to her analysis. She finds that women's involvement in productive activities cannot account for the social position of women within a society, and the two case studies from very different cultures within close geographical regions exemplify her point. Sharma finds that women hold roles of equal social importance in each of her research areas (Punjab and Himachal Pradesh), but that these roles are different in each, and that women differ in how they exert their will and influence within households and society.

Raj Mohini Sethi's research, *Women in Agriculture* (1991) focuses directly on women in agricultural production in four districts of Himachal Pradesh. Sethi's account is based on her fieldwork interviewing women in Himachal Pradesh. Sethi borrows the concept of 'housewifization' from Mies (1986, also Mies, Lalita and Kumari 1986) in discussing women's involvement in agriculture as an extension of 'household' work. Housewifization involves a social construction of women's labor as 'free,' that is, labor not only confined to, but assumed to be part of, household activities and thus removed from any analysis or discussion of labor value (Mies 1986). While men's work is clearly distinguished between productive and non-productive, women's activities, regardless of what they are, are classified as non-productive household activities and consequently, women's labor is not directly remunerated and given value. Both Sethi and Sharma focus on land and women's alienation from land ownership in the Himalayas, as does Agarwal (1989b) in India in general,<sup>4</sup> as a major factor at work in women's subordination and oppression within a patriarchal system.

Aside from the ethnographic work available on the Northwest Himalayan regions, some of the literature on ecology is useful in providing background for the Himalayas. Some studies focus on India's forests (Sen 1992; Chowdhury 1983; Guha 1983; Gadgil, Prasad and Ali 1983; Shiva, Sharatchandra and Bandyopadhyay 1982) with some attention to women and forests (Kelkar and Nathan 1991; Nesmith 1991). Other research and writing on Himalayan states deal with various aspects of the environment of the Central and Western Himalayas (Sharma 1993; Swarup 1991; Jaraith

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<sup>4</sup> Women do not own land through cultural restrictions, not through legal restrictions, as Hindu women achieved legal rights to land ownership in 1956.

and Swarup 1991; Tripathi 1991; Singh and Bhati 1985; Bandyopadhyay, Jayal, Schoettli and Singh 1985; Thumpson and Warburton 1985), and Himalayan forest systems in general (Jodha 1991; Pradeep and Lakhanpal 1988; Moench and Bandyopadhyay 1985; Punhit and Rawat 1985; Singh, Pandey and Tiwary 1984). Of special note are the works concerning people-forest interactions in the Himalayas (Guha 1989, 1985; Gupta 1990; Dogra 1980; Fernandez and Menon 1987; Bhatt and Kunwar 1982), and those focusing on various aspects of women's lives in the Himalayas of Northwest India (Sharma 1984, 1980, 1979; Pitt 1986; Pokhriyal 1985). Bhati and Singh (1987) have given particular attention to women's agricultural activities and the gender division of labor in the Western Himalaya, as does Samal (1993), Sethi (1991), and Patel (1987), and others briefly for the Central Himalaya (Agarwal and Narain 1985; Dankelman and Davidson 1988).

Focusing on women's social position especially within caste and class interactions (Liddle and Joshi 1986; Lakshmi 1994), Miriam Sharma (1985) has looked at caste and class at an analytical level, and the influence of capitalism on women's roles in agricultural production in the state of Uttar Pradesh. In comparing women's status in relation to ownership of resources, she finds that women of higher castes hold less control over resources than women of lower castes where women are more economically and socially independent. Miriam Sharma suggests that capitalist production, and upper caste status, increases men's control over women as restrictions of purdah and seclusion are strong standards of upper caste status. Sharma's ideas coincide with Mandelbaum's (1988) in relation to caste and women's position in North India. Ursula Sharma (1984,

1980, 1979), however, discusses women's position by caste and feels that women of lower castes, who in practice have a greater degree of independence, in reality are equally constrained by patriarchal systems that restrict women (for example, seclusion or purdah). She gives the example of the bazaar, which is considered 'men's space.' While lower caste women may go to the bazaar themselves more than upper caste women, lower caste women are equally uncomfortable and vulnerable within this space, but do not have the option of having someone else go to the bazaar for them (Sharma 1980). Thus, it is not that lower caste women have greater freedom than their upper caste counterparts, but that they may have to enter men's space due to economic necessity, regardless of the discomfort they experience.

North India is characterized to a much greater extent than Himachal Pradesh by capitalist agricultural production, and more highly stratified caste and class systems, as agricultural production in the Himalayan states is largely a combination of household subsistence and cash production, but at a very small, non-mechanized scale, with less economic and social stratification. The discussion on seclusion and purdah of North India, and caste associations with these cultural characteristics, is less applicable to the Central and Western Himalaya, although not irrelevant. In comparison to North India, Himalayan hill cultures (Pahari cultures) do not practice women's seclusion per se, which Mandelbaum describes as "restrictions on their movements outside the household and the requirements for their respectful and deferential demeanor within the home" (Mandelbaum 1988:2). Nor does Pahari culture hold to the practice of purdah, literally meaning "curtain" in Hindi, referring to veiling in front of men (Mandelbaum 1988).

This does not mean that women within Pahari cultures are completely unrestricted and unaffected by these norms, but that they are largely ineffective (Berreman 1970).

Berreman (1972, 1970, 1963, 1962) gives a thorough historical account of Pahari culture and history in his ethnography, *Hindus of the Himalayas: Ethnography and Change* (1972). He describes extensively the caste system specific to the lower Himalayas, based on a basic division between the upper and lower castes. His depiction of caste in Pahari culture provides a good basis for understanding the cultural context of the Kullu Valley.

Also of interest to research on women's roles in the Himalayas is the extensive attention given to the Chipko movement in the Garhwal region of Uttar Pradesh (see for example, Bahuguna 1991; Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey 1987; Khator 1989; Guha 1989, 1988; Bandyopadhyay and Shiva 1987, 1985; Jain 1984; Kunwar 1982; Misra and Tripathi 1978). Of the numerous and varied studies, Guha's (1989) stands out for its thorough and encompassing account. His approach to Chipko is similar to that of Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey (1987), and Guha presents an interesting perspective in *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya* (1989). Guha looks at Chipko as a modern expression of traditional peasant struggle and resistance in the Himalaya. His initial intent was to provide a sociological analysis of Chipko Andolan (movement) but found that Chipko could not be separated from its historic roots of frequent peasant rebellion in the Himalayas. Guha sees Chipko, and peasant rebellion, as resistance to the evils of capitalism and commercialism rather than seeing Chipko as a women's environmental movement. Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey

(1987) also give special attention to historical precedents to Chipko in traditional movements in the Uttarakhand, focus on women's role within the movement, and also view Chipko in the tradition of historical peasant struggle.

By contrast, Vandana Shiva believes Chipko to be a form of ecofeminism in the South with traces to Gandhian *satyagrahas* (non-violent resistance). Shiva (1988; Bandyopadhyay and Shiva 1987) strongly believes Chipko to be a women's environmental movement based on women's understanding of the environment through their nature as women and through their daily interactions. Agarwal (1992) believes Chipko to come from women's interactions with the environment involving both gender and class components of a division of labor, in which poor women enter into the protection of village forests.

Shobhita Jain (1984) provides an interesting perspective on Chipko from a sociological point of view. She sees women's activism in Chipko as a reflection of women's roles in society, and of their alienation from the formal, official political processes within village India. The fact that women are not a part of official political processes allows women to act against the structures of power. Jain also suggests that the male leadership in Chipko (the most prominent being C.P. Bhatt and Sunderlal Bahuguna) is unsure of what to do with the unleashing of women's agency into official arenas.

While most literature on Chipko tends to present the movement in a favorable light, if not to glamorize it, two articles stand out in their critical analysis of the Chipko movement. Aryal (1994) writes about a movement that is dead and gone, and only

continues to live through the persistent writings of people such as Guha, Shiva, and Bandyopadhyay. Aryal is extremely critical of the involvement of these high-profile academics who have spent very little time in the Garhwal Himalayas, but written much about it. The crux of Aryal's position is that Chipko has been over-studied and mythologized. Aryal states that the claims of the movement have been exaggerated to such an extent that Chipko has been unable to sustain the actions that gained attention internationally, or to accomplish all that was claimed, and that it has ceased to exist as a movement.

Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey (1987) in their working paper, "Women in Struggle: Role and Participation of Women in the Chipko Movement in Uttarakhand Region of Uttar Pradesh," also critically assess Chipko, and ask why it is that such active participation of women in the Chipko movement has not been transferred to arenas of formal political participation. Others also follow a similar line of questioning as to the political extent of the movement. Jain (1984) and Desai (1992) question the momentum of Chipko and wonder how far a protest movement can successfully challenge structures of gender oppression towards a more equitable sharing of power. Khator (1989) suggests Chipko is ultimately apolitical in its organization, and most effective as a spontaneous grass-roots response to issues that touch the lives of people in the Himalayas (Khator 1989). Jain, Khator, Desai, and Aryal all suggest that it is the spontaneous and grass-roots nature of Chipko that allows it to be responsive; and that publicity and extensive scholarly attention are effectively undermining the movement.

All of the discussion that occurs around Chipko implicitly incorporates the issue of gender in common property management. The literature on common property is extensive (Jodha 1993, 1986, 1985; Bromley 1992; McGranahan 1991; Damodaran 1990, 1989; Berkes 1989; Gadgil and Iyer 1989; Brara 1987; Shiva 1986; Singh 1986) but especially pertinent is the writing on common property that gives attention to women's interactions with village commons (Mitra 1993; Shiva 1988; Agarwal 1992, 1989a), as well as the literature on Chipko which encompasses aspects of gender and common property management, cited previously.

Historical materials have provided an interesting context for social and political relations in the Kullu Valley. Many of the more historical works were obtained while in India. The main texts useful on the Kullu Valley are *History of the Panjab Hill States*, Volumes 1 and 2, by J. Hutchison and J. Vogel (1933), and Sukhdev Singh Charak's *History and Culture of the Himalayan States, Vol. II, Himachal Pradesh, Part II* (1979). The District of Kullu was part of the Punjab state until 1966 when it became part of the newly formed Himachal Pradesh, and was thus incorporated into the history of the Panjab Hill States. The Himachal Pradesh District Gazetteers from neighboring Chamba District (1963) and the Gazetteer from Lahul and Spiti (1975) both contain some history of the Kullu District, although less in the latter. All of these works sporadically touch on the Kullu District and I have pieced together a history of the area from these accounts (see Chapter 3 for history of the Kullu Valley area). Most of the historical works draw upon Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India* (1916), especially Volume IX, part IV, where Pahari dialects are included. Specifically pertaining to the



Kullu Valley is the Kullu Settlement Report (1886) which provides detailed information on the rights of forest use established during British times and carried into the present. Harcourt's *Districts of Kooloo and Lahaul and Spiti* (1972 [1871]) is an interesting account of the Kullu Valley in the 1800's and valuable in its more recent historical content. Kayastha (1964) has written a descriptive account of the Beas Basin (the Kullu Valley) in its physical, cultural and economic setting. In novel form, Chetwode's book, *Kullu: The End of the Habitable World* (1972) gives a good sense of the area in more recent times.

### ***Concepts Employed in the Study***

#### **Common Property**

Common property, or what is often referred to as village commons, are lands that involve something other than exclusive ownership of lands whereby multiple user groups together make use of, and manage, a resource. A useful definition put forward by Berkes describes common property resources as a "class of resources for which exclusion is difficult and joint use involves subtractability" (Berkes 1989:7). Essentially common property, then, involves a collective use of a resource wherein consumption by one person takes away the possibility of consumption by another (subtractability), and where excluding access to the resource is problematic.

Although common property can be simplistically contrasted to private property, there are several classes of property-rights regimes associated with common property (to be distinguished from the resource itself) that can incorporate a natural resource. Berkes (1989) lays out three general property-rights regimes under which common property can

be used: open-access, communal property and state property. However, few resources are used under a pure property-rights regime as classified above, and in practice resources are often used under a combination of property-rights regimes (Berkes 1989). Bromley provides a good understanding of the nature of a property-rights regime as distinct from the resource itself:

There is no such thing as a common property *resource*; there are only resources controlled and managed as common property, or as state property, or as private property....Property is a triadic social relation involving benefit streams, right holders, and duty bearers....It is for this reason that I urge us to consider the concept of "property regimes." Regimes, after all, are human artifacts. (Bromley 1992: 4, original emphasis).

Bromley's point is critical in understanding the nature of common property management. Human institutions create the conditions under which resources are managed. Commons are collectively managed as opposed to privately managed, and social relations form the basis of common property management. The property rights regime is not inherent in the resource itself. Hence, actual management regimes can be as varied as the institutions themselves.

My study emphasizes an understanding of the varied use women make of village commons. If social relations in all their complexity lie at the heart of commons management, the political economy of common property resource management also needs to be considered. Of interest to the present research are the regenerative natural resources that hold a critical place in the livelihoods of women, specifically pastures and forests. The parameter of my research is on village forests as they are the resources that hold the highest value to several interest groups. Village forests are shared by men who

have timber rights; men who do not have timber rights but cut trees for sale; women who gather firewood, fodder, animal bedding and other 'minor forest products' (although it is not 'minor' to the livelihoods of women and households), also referred to as non-timber forest products (NTFP, World Bank Country Study 1991:64), for household use, and/or for sale. While many products can come from gathering from forests (for example, food, fiber, medicinal herbs, oils, handicrafts, resin, gum, spices), my interviews suggest that for food, women mainly collected small ferns for eating (*lingari*, or fiddleheads) and mushrooms, and to a lesser extent some greens (*popra*, *zerca*). Very few women said they collected medicinal plants, although some had collected *shingli mingli* to sell to people in Manali for soap making, and some gathered stinging nettle and cannabis for making rope. While walking through the forest with people, however, there were several plants that were recognized as good for commons ailments.<sup>5</sup> The main non-timber forest products gathered by women were firewood, fodder and bedding. Beyond the local uses made of forests, there are contractors who cut timber for sale under license from the department of Forestry. These are examples of the variety of uses made of village forests, emphasizing the point that wood is only one product to come from forests. Forests are vital for a myriad of plants that are used, as well as in maintaining soil structure and in avoiding erosion.

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<sup>5</sup> I think that the way I was asking about non-timber forest products was not capturing peoples knowledge of plants. I tried in every interview, in several different ways, to get at this, but this question never resulted in a satisfactory response. It is possible that women simply do not use forest products other than fodder, firewood and bedding to any great extent. The mother of Rolli, one of the translators, however, told one of the other researchers that she knew between 200-300 plants. Since I was not doing a study on ethnobotany, I did not pursue this aspect with much intensity, and I suspect there were translation problems in this question.

Village pastures are also used by different groups such as transhumance herders, village herders, and village women in gathering activities, but there is not the conflict over management of village pastures that there is over village forests. High altitude pastures belonging to villages are often used by semi-nomadic tribal groups, such as the Gaddis or the Gujjars, while lower altitude pastures closer to the village are used by women and men to graze animals and cut grass for animal fodder.

All common property forests and pastures in the Kullu Valley technically belong to the state, but villages have well-defined rights of use that have been established in the settlement report for the district (Anderson 1886). While the government holds ultimate ownership of common resources, villagers manage common lands through local institutions, both formal (for example, the *panchayat*, *mimbers*, and *Mahila Mandal*) and informal (for example, relationships between villagers and pastoralists, see I. Davidson-Hunt 1995). In effect, the village acts as the owner of the resource at the local level where clear boundaries are held to land. As Berkes points out (1989), the admixture of property-rights regimes confound the delineation of property rights as communal, state or open-access and makes these classifications dynamic. Open-access resources are resources where neither the state nor a local community controls access, or where management of the resource is weak (Damodaran 1990). Legally forests and pastures in the Kullu Valley are state-owned, but in practice they are a mixture of state and communal common property regimes, and very little associated with open-access resources (see I. Davidson-Hunt 1995).

Open-access regimes are almost always associated with over-use, and degradation of a natural resource frequently ensues (Berkes 1989), as no formal or informal institutions are associated with the resource. While most common property in the villages of the study embodied this admixture of state and communal property, one particular area of forest lying between the village of Goshal and the neighboring village of Old Manali had elements of 'open-access' (I. Davidson-Hunt 1995). Ownership of *Gherha Thatch* and *Keari* forest, while officially vested in the state, is designated as Old Manali forest in which Goshal has usufruct rights (Anderson 1886). It is in this forest that women from Goshal will lop tree branches for firewood (*rakti*), a practice not adopted in their own forest (Goshal Forest). Old Manali cannot keep vigil over this part of the forest as it is quite far from the village of Old Manali. In parts of forests where two or more villages share a common resource, management and control often becomes weaker as in *Gheha Thatch* and *Keari* forest, and becomes closer to an open-access scenario.

Generally, management is strictest where boundaries over resources are closely identified with a village (Ostrom 1990). Through conversations and interviews with people in the Kullu Valley, I found a clearly identified sense of ownership (although not legal) amongst women who used a resource regularly and where the village had clear rights. This sense of ownership came to fruition in the protection of forest areas where women felt a clear sense of rights to, as well as needs from, that forest (K. Davidson-Hunt 1995). Forests are designated for use by the Forest Department for Goshal or Chachoga, but within these boundaries are classifications by villagers themselves, who

distinguish parts of the *jungly* (forest) by specific names according to local use and history. For example, *Keari* Forest and *Gherha Thatch* are local names for sections of the forest for which the Forest Department has different names.

In sum, at the surface of common property regimes are resources owned by the state and parceled out to villages to use. Beneath this level of state ownership, however, is a complex informal organization of usufruct rights and management at the village level that pertains to social institutions and common property regimes (I. Davidson-Hunt 1995). Within village management of common lands there exists a diversity of interests, needs, rights, management and influence over the control of natural resources. While my research pays particular attention to differences between women in the use they make of village forests by caste and economic factors, it also becomes apparent that there are differences between women in the influence they have in affecting decisions made over common land.

### Caste

Caste in India has been the subject of intense debate and theoretical discourse. Without entering the debate, I propose to provide an account of the structure and principles of the caste system in India as a background for understanding caste relations in the Kullu Valley. Cultures of the lower Himalayas construct a distinct caste organization from other parts of India in that its major division is between upper and lower castes only, although the basic caste structure stems from common Aryan origins throughout India (Srinivas 1962). Generally, however, caste organization is based upon four *varna* (literally, meaning 'color'), or caste categories: Brahmin (traditionally priests

and scholars), Kshatriya (rulers and soldiers), Vaishya (merchants) and Shudra (peasant, laborer or servants) (Srinivas 1962). Within the four major caste classifications (*varna*), throughout India there exist thousands of sub-castes (*jati*), which have traditional occupations associated with them (Jayaraman 1981). The system as a whole is founded upon the concepts of purity and pollution, wherein Brahmins are considered the purest, while 'untouchables' are outside of the *varna* scheme and understood to be the most polluting (Jayaraman 1981). Concepts of purity and pollution determine interactions between castes, for example in eating,<sup>6</sup> as well as the occupations associated with caste. Lower castes generally undertake manual labor or service oriented occupations (e.g. blacksmiths, weavers, leather workers, sweepers) (Srinivas 1962).

Srinivas suggests that the *varna* scheme is a reductionistic way of understanding caste organization, but has "enabled ordinary men and women to grasp the caste system by providing them with a simple and clear scheme which is applicable to all parts of India" (Srinivas 1962:69). He also indicates that the system is an ambiguous one, especially within the middle castes, fundamentally flexible (Srinivas 1962), and therefore impossible to characterize to any real extent. Srinivas states that "[o]ne of the most striking features of the caste system as it actually exists is the lack of clarity in the hierarchy, especially in the middle regions. This is responsible for endless argumentation

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<sup>6</sup> It seemed to me that most restrictions of caste interactions revolved around eating and drinking. I have innumerable accounts of my own breaches of caste interactions that would illustrate the concepts of purity and pollution, but one will suffice. After an initial period of accepting drink from anyone who offered (my understanding of politeness did not allow me to refuse something offered to me, although I was later told that it was considered rude to accept so freely an offer to "take tea" or have something to eat) my translator laid down a rule for me that I was no longer to accept food or drink from *Harijans* (Scheduled Castes), as I was polluting his home by drinking or eating in a lower caste home and then going into his upper caste home. I always carried a bottle of water with me, and he also indicated that I should throw out my water from the bottle after leaving a Scheduled Caste home to avoid contaminating any upper caste house I entered with my water.

regarding mutual ritual rank: it is this ambiguity which makes it possible for a caste to rise in the hierarchy" (Srinivas 1962:66). It is useful to discuss the *varna* scheme for precisely the reasons suggested by Srinivas, as a basic understanding, although I do not pretend to offer an in-depth analysis of a complex cultural system as a short-term visitor to India. I offer, then, a description of caste structure rather than an analysis of caste.<sup>7</sup> In the Kullu Valley, caste organization is distinct in that it is formed around a basic division between upper and lower castes, specifically 'Rajputs' (Kshatriya) and 'Harijans' (Untouchables). I will return to the discussion of caste in the Kullu Valley in Chapter 3.

### **Caste and Class**

There is an interaction between economic status and caste to some extent, although it cannot be asserted that caste is equated with class or economic status. Jayaraman states that "generally, there is a close correspondence between the three hierarchies of caste, class and power" (Jayaraman 1981:24), but this is a correlation rather than a direct translation of caste status to class or economic status. The congruence in elements of social organization such as caste, class, status and power results in what Srinivas has termed the dominant caste (Srinivas 1987:77). Throughout India there is a pattern whereby "[p]ositions in the caste hierarchy tend to coincide with positions in the class structure of rural India, consisting of landowners at the top,

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<sup>7</sup> I am concerned that by offering a description of caste organization I am party to oversimplifying a complex and dynamic system. However, to understand the basic structure of caste organization, it is necessary to identify the fundamental principles and concepts, thereby risking oversimplification. I recognize the limitations of a brief discussion of caste, but believe it necessary to convey the general system that forms the basis of Indian village organization.



agricultural tenants in the middle, and agricultural laborers at the bottom of the scale” (Jayaraman 1981:10). Class, in the traditional Marxist sense, coordinates with the relationship to the means of production such as land, machinery, finance capital, and so on (Jayaraman 1981).

Traditionally in the Kullu Valley there was a class of landowners, the *zamindars* (Rajputs), and a class of landless persons (Untouchables), although this has changed to some extent through land reform. Bhatnagar describes similar circumstances in the district of Kangra, a neighboring district to Kullu, and the economic situation of the Scheduled Castes: “recent land reforms--which conferred upon them proprietary rights in the lands which they tilled--and their inclusion in the category of the backward classes<sup>8</sup>--which brought them some special concessions--have improved their [Scheduled Castes] social and economic conditions to a great extent” (Bhatnagar 1974:xix). Although most households in the rural villages of the Kullu Valley own at least a small plot of land and are generally ‘smallholders’ (Netting 1993), there is substantial economic stratification that distinguishes households in terms of ownership of land (including amount, type and quality of land), of animals, and of other means of production such as tractors, tea stalls, or larger businesses (see Chapter 5 for a discussion of ownership of resources in the villages of the study).

While most households, including Scheduled Caste households, in the villages of the study owned a small plot of land through land reform measures, the variation in the

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<sup>8</sup> Bhatnagar is referring to legislation in 1935 that listed in a ‘schedule’ the disadvantaged or ‘backward’ castes. The intent was to safeguard representation of the ‘Scheduled Castes’ in government, as well as in accessing special benefits from the government (Jayaraman 1981: 69). Thus, the synonym ‘Scheduled Castes’ with ‘Untouchables’, or *Harijan*. With India’s Independence in 1947, ‘untouchability’ was prohibited by law, although the social stigma remains (Jayaraman 1981).

size and type of land between households is sufficiently diverse as to suggest that the very poor within the village are, in fact, a near-landless class of people. Households identified in my survey as poor, with three *bighas* or less of land (less than one acre) generally do not own enough land to make their livelihood directly from their land, and depend upon wage incomes to support the household. There are, then, within the broad classification of 'smallholders' or rural villagers, distinctions of class and caste. It is this broad category of smallholders that has been identified elsewhere as the 'rural poor' whose livelihoods are dependent upon common property resources (Jodha 1986; Agarwal 1992, 1986b). However, the rural poor is a category that is divided between castes and classes of households who hold differing degrees of power in village affairs.

### ***Organization of Thesis***

Chapter 2, *Research and Methodology* details the methodology, the research setting, the villages that were chosen for study, and the reasons for choosing to undertake research in these villages. In Chapter 2, I also discuss some of the dynamics associated with working through translators, as it presents a very distinct kind of research context. In Chapter 3, *The Kullu Valley: Historical and Present*, I outline the history and present context of the Kullu Valley in order to better understand present caste relations and patterns of land ownership and occupation by caste. An historical understanding is essential for considering the differences in caste occupations, and why it is that the Rajput caste presently has developed a more diversified and ecologically sustainable land use system based on the use of common lands, and also over management of village commons.

I move from the historical in Chapter 3 to the gendered use of the land in Chapter 4, *A Gendered Use of the Landscape*, which is intended to give a sense of the general land use system that primarily women manage, and that has been historically managed by Rajput women. In Chapter 5, *Difference in Livelihood Strategies: Analysis of Household Surveys*, I shift the emphasis from the general system to the specifics of household strategies, drawing upon my household interviews. The discussion of difference between households by caste, as in ownership of resources, identifies differing needs and uses of village commons, although the vast majority of households use village commons at least in the collection of firewood, fodder and/or bedding. Having established that the great majority of village households use common lands in Chapter 5, although to varying degrees, I go on to discuss in Chapter 6, *Women's Organization in Perspective*, the socio-political dynamics of the *Mahila Mandal*, the primary vehicle for managing village commons within the villages of the study. Although most households need and use village commons, the decisions over common lands are made by Rajput women through the *Mahila Mandal*, reflecting the social and political dynamics of natural resource management and supporting Srinivas' concept of the dominant caste (Srinivas 1986).

My conclusions in Chapter 7 revolve around the interactions of use and control of decision-making over village commons and the importance of recognizing difference between women at all levels. I surmise that, contrary to the macro-level observations about the class of rural poor and their dependency and protection of village commons, at the micro-level of the village, the poor are the politically and socially powerless who are

largely alienated from influencing control of village commons. I conclude by suggesting that natural resource management cannot be separated from its historical, social and political context, and that a perspective on difference brings us closer to understanding the complex nature of 'commons' use, and 'community' management of 'common' lands.



The *Mahila Mandal* of Chachoga.

## Chapter 2

### RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

#### *The Villages of the Study.*

Chachoga and Goshal are both small villages located within two kilometers of Manali. Manali is the center for the region, and the town where I lived for the duration of my research. I did not live in either of the villages where I studied;<sup>9</sup> therefore, the way I entered a village was very important in establishing the research relationship. Entrance into the village of Chachoga was based on an established research relationship, and in Goshal, a trust relationship between translator and village. Without the trust established in both cases, the kind of research undertaken would have been very difficult, if not impossible. Chachoga and Goshal were chosen after a short time spent in the area making contacts with people, and getting a feel for the Manali area. Neither of the villages had been preestablished as study sites before arrival in Manali. They developed as study sites over the first few weeks spent in Manali, after having gained some important relationships early on in our stay.<sup>10</sup> Chachoga was a small village about one kilometer from Manali, easily accessible by foot, although off the beaten

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<sup>9</sup> It would have been difficult to live in either of the villages, mostly due to logistical restrictions. The villages are closed entities, and people are friendly but suspicious of outsiders. There were few places to rent in the villages, and staying in the village would have depended upon a very trusting relationship with a family from the village. At the point when any of my relationships were at this trust level, I was working in both Goshal and Chachoga, and it was, in the end, more convenient to live in Manali and travel to either village from there. A further limitation was language: I speak neither Hindi or Pahari, and was unable to communicate with people at any real level without a translator with me.

<sup>10</sup> Ten weeks is not a great deal of time to carry out research, especially given the fact that we did not have preestablished contacts in the area. We were incredibly fortunate to have made some strategically important relationships early on in our time in the Manali area. Our research team of four worked together to establish the study sites, and the contacts made between the four of us facilitated the momentum to begin research.

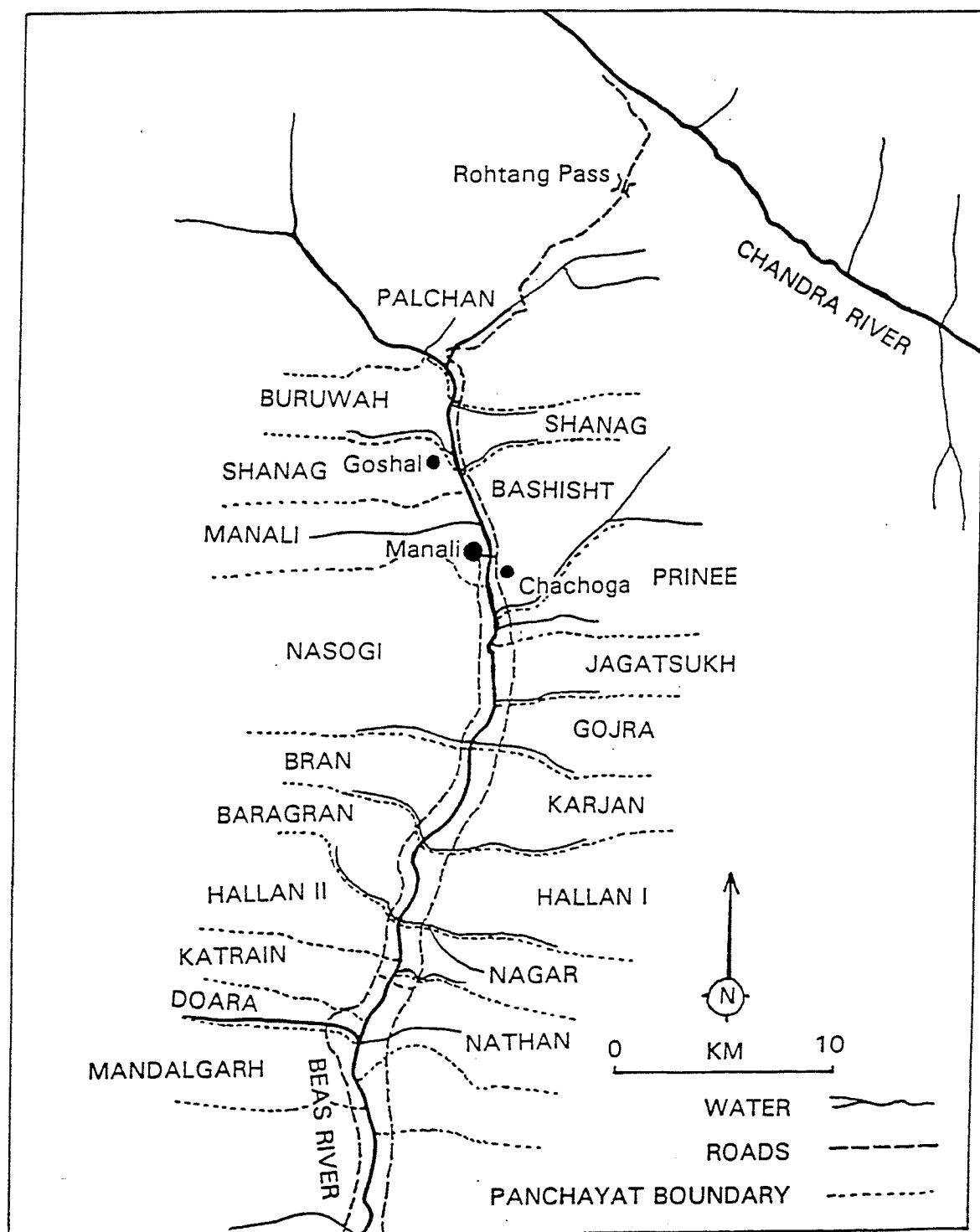


Figure 2.1 Villages and Panchayats of the Kullu Valley  
(source: Colin Duffield, 1995).

path.<sup>11</sup> Goshal was about two kilometers from Manali, accessible by a regular taxi that ran between Manali and Bhang, the village across the river from Goshal. Once in Bhang, one crosses the Beas river over foot bridges to get to Goshal. At times during the monsoon rains, these bridges would wash away, making visits to Goshal impossible for a few days until the bridges were fixed. The locations of both villages were convenient for spending the day in the village and going back to the Guesthouse in Manali where we stayed for the evening.<sup>12</sup>

The village of Chachoga was selected for study as it was recognized by the Forest Department, with whom we had been in dialogue about the study, for its strong *Mahila Mandal* (women's organization) and its work in forest protection. Once I knew of this group's existence, I knew that Chachoga was the site where I wanted to do research.<sup>13</sup> The organized response to forest protection in Chachoga was an unanticipated and exciting development of the study that materialized from the local

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<sup>11</sup> Tourists, both foreign and national, are everywhere in the Manali area. There is a substantial "hippy" population in Manali, and villagers are used to people wandering into their villages. This was more the case in Goshal than in Chachoga, and the influx of 'hippies' made it difficult for people to believe that we were in the area for reasons other than tourist purposes. Contact with outsiders was, in this case, both a detriment and a benefit. While people were used to outsiders, they were also suspicious, and it was difficult to understand our motives for talking with them.

<sup>12</sup> We stayed at a very nice Guesthouse run by a third generation British immigrant to India. John Banon, the owner of the Guesthouse, proved to be of endless help to us, from banking, to providing a 'home away from home,' but especially in his contacts with people in the area, as he had been born and raised in Manali. It was through John Banon that we obtained our translators, both of whom were not only good people to work with but trusted by villagers. This, in and of itself, was a critical component to carrying out any research in the area.

<sup>13</sup> I could not begin to describe all the dynamics involved in working to establish a relationship with people in Chachoga. At some point, luck took over from my determination to work in Chachoga. On a visit up to the village, my partner and I met an American woman living at the outskirts of the village, staying with a family she knew in Chachoga and learning Hindi/Pahari. She did not know many people in the village, but we met her landlady through her while she translated for us. Her landlady was very knowledgeable and served as a 'key consultant' on the dynamics within the village. The landlady was on the outside of village affairs, but involved enough to know much about village politics, without being enmeshed in them. To some extent, this relationship facilitated other relationships that brought me closer to working with the *Mahila Mandal*.



setting, and the contacts made in the Manali area. While I had read about the Chipko movement as part of my preparation for research, I had not expected to find an organized response in forest protection in the Kullu Valley, given the fact that it is so far from the hills of Uttar Pradesh (see Figure 6.1). The group in Chachoga constituted an exciting local initiative in forest protection, and I am fortunate to have been able to work with it. The women of the *Mahila Mandal* of Chachoga proved to be open, warm and willing to enter into a research relationship after an initial period of skepticism and distrust. My relationship with the Mahila Mahdal in Chachoga was greatly enhanced by one key woman from the *Mahila Mandal* whose friendship and trust established my relationship with the women's group.<sup>14</sup>

Time spent with the women of the *Mahila Mandal* was some of the most rewarding time I had interacting with women in the Kullu Valley. I feel that the women of the *Mahila Mandal* of Chachoga bring to life the issues of common property resources management, and without their openness and willingness to enter into a research relationship with me, my research would lack the relationship and exchange that many feminist researchers desire. I was, and still am, thoroughly impressed by the actions these women have taken in confronting issues of village forest degradation, although my thesis discusses the inequities between women that the group propagates. While I cannot help but be captivated with the active agency of the *Mahila Mandal* in

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<sup>14</sup> Kormi Devi (not her real name) seemed to be key to all aspects of our research in Chachoga. Kormi Devi invited us to her home for lunch early on during the summer months in the Kullu Valley, and became a close acquaintance while we were in the Manali area. Her position and influence within the village, and her acceptance of us, was instrumental for our entrance as researchers into the village.

Chachoga, I also recognize some of the conflicts that are occurring around issues of control and management of village commons.

The second village of the study was selected as a result of our relationship with one of the translators for the group of researchers, Rolli (not his real name). Goshal was Rolli's village and I knew that many of the initial difficulties of access and trust in Chachoga would be overcome by working in his village. Rolli was also interested in working in his own village. Rolli's home village provided me with a second village where I could carry out comparative research, which I had been hoping to do. I chose to spend the final weeks in the Kullu Valley interviewing in the village of Goshal. Working in Goshal for the final part of my research had special advantages, the greatest being the translator. His English was excellent, and he had a very good understanding of the village and acted as a key consultant as well as translator. While my preference would have been to have a female translator, he provided much of the basic information that was tedious and time-consuming to understand with a translator that was not from the village itself, and whose English not as good, as was the case in Chachoga.<sup>15</sup>

Beginning to interview in Goshal at a later stage of research contributed more to my study than continuing with more research in Chachoga could have. At the point where I was ready to start working in Goshal, I felt confident that I had obtained good basic data from Chachoga. If I had continued to work in Chachoga, I would have changed my methodology and gone towards more intensive interviews and broadened

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<sup>15</sup> It is difficult to convey the amount of time it took to understand even the basics of village organization, caste organization, the agricultural cycle, women's seasonal activities, and so on. I consider all of this "data," or "results," as much of what is presented in this thesis is the product of putting a cultural puzzle together, even though it may sometimes seem rather basic or elemental.

my topic. To do so, however, would have required a more skilled translator than I had in Sarla (not her real name). Also without the interviews from Goshal I would have come to very different conclusions than those that have developed with two villages to contrast. The two villages are sufficiently different that they have challenged facile assumptions I might have made based on data from Chachoga alone. Interviews in Goshal, and the comparisons between Chachoga and Goshal, pointed to factors of forest use and social dynamics that could have gone unnoticed if only one village had been studied.

### ***Methodology.***

The basic method used during my research was an informal structured interview. I had developed an extensive interview schedule before leaving for India based upon the literature review I had done in Canada and assistance from my advisor, and the schedule was revised continually as research progressed in India. The interview was substantially shortened in the interview situation, as women simply did not have the time or patience to endure long, lengthy interviews. While the interviews were structured in the sense that they directed discussions to specific ends, they were informal in that I did not control the flow of conversation, but rather touched on different aspects of what I wanted to cover at related points during the course of an interview. This method is briefly discussed by Crane and Angrosino (1984), although not presented as 'standard' anthropological technique. My interviews were not the informal, open-ended conversations some anthropologists would choose to undertake (including myself). However, I was working with limitations of time, language, first-hand knowledge of the

culture, and established relationships. Therefore, my methodology reflects the context in which my research was undertaken, and was ultimately a mix of informality and structure.

Discussions in the interview sessions, which lasted anywhere from half an hour to two hours, began with a focus on the woman's seasonal activities and the specifics of her household situation. Once I understood the basics of the seasonal activities as a system, I simply asked a woman to describe the activities she did each month, and followed along with her on my own calendar of activities (see Appendix II) and noted her specific cycle, and how she negotiated her activities in accordance with her household's ownership of resources. I found that starting an interview by allowing a woman to talk about her specific work was a starting point for discussions on the problems or conflicts that arose in her livelihood strategies, and her views on management and control over resources.

Following a description of a month's activities, using the Hindu calendar months (as shown in Figure 4.2, see also Appendix II), I asked the consultant the number of days she estimated she had gone to the forest that month doing the activities she had just described to me. This way, I gained some conceptualization of the intensity of her involvement in gathering activities from forest commons and the demand her household made on village forest resources. I also considered this a reflection of how the woman being interviewed valued forest resources. In this I am assuming that, in part, a woman's estimation of the time (in days) she spent gathering from the village forest was a subjective reflection of her need to go to the forest to gather. In this, I am suggesting that a higher estimation implies she not only spends more time gathering from the forest,

but views the forest (*jungly*) as important to her livelihood strategy. Where there was more than one woman in the household that gathered from the forest, questions were directed to the woman who took the brunt of the responsibility, while the other women added to the conversation. Thus, the 'days spent gathering in the forest' in my data reflects the main female gatherer from the household and her perception of involvement in forest collection.<sup>16</sup> The main female gatherer varied from household to household. In situations where there was a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, if a young woman was pregnant or had young children, the mother-in-law would do much of the gathering. Otherwise, generally the younger woman went to gather, and the mother-in-law took the cows to pasture, worked in the fields, or carried out some other activity. In almost half of the cases (15/33) there was only one adult female worker in the household, who did much of the gathering work. Young girls would also go to the forest to gather when not in school, or doing other chores, although the responsibility did not rest on them to do all the gathering work.

With central members of the *Mahila Mandal*, the discussion would turn to the organization, activities and functioning of the group. I also brought the *Mahila Mandal* into all interviews, with members and non-members alike, through using the beginning of the *Mahila Mandal* in the village five years ago as a reference point. Since I wanted to know how resources had changed over the past years, I asked women if they could

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<sup>16</sup> I recognize the variability in a household's time spent gathering in the forest, depending upon the number of women from a household actively collecting in the forest. This method of understanding a household's use of the forest, while not exactly precise, is useful in providing general impressions. In most households, however, it was clear that there was one main female who did most of the gathering, and even within the joint or extended family there was usually a separate living space where each nuclear sub-family provided for itself, although there was a great deal of cooperation within the joint or extended family.

remember the condition of the forest when the *Mahila Mandal* was first established. I would then ask how they saw the actions of the *Mahila Mandal*, and if there were differences in village resources, or in the management of resources, in the five years the *Mahila Mandal* has been active. This question received a wide array of responses, some angry and some supportive, depending upon the relationship of the consultant to the *Mahila Mandal*. In some interviews, even mentioning the *Mahila Mandal* elicited a spontaneous discussion without any further questions needed.

### ***Informal Household Interviews: The Process.***

Interviews were undertaken with members of 33 households in the villages of Chachoga and Goshal. Interviews were undertaken with a translator, and conducted in order to understand not only the activities women undertook, but how women differed amongst themselves in their daily livelihood activities. I generally focus on the 19 household interviews I did in Chachoga as well as the discussions that occurred in that village, as the relationship with the *Mahila Mandal* was better established in that village. The amount of time, as well as the relationships developed in Chachoga, allowed for a more complete understanding of village dynamics in Chachoga than in Goshal. The 14 household interviews from Goshal are used for comparative analysis, and as a cross-reference in observing trends and patterns. The two villages are quite different, cautioning against any easy generalizations that one would wish to make. There are, however, some consistent similarities and differences between the villages that contribute to an understanding of the specifics of internal village use and management of natural resources.

The household interviews are based upon the social composition of each village. In Chachoga, 10 lower caste households (Scheduled Caste) and nine upper caste households (Rajput) were interviewed, reflecting the household composition of the village where 56% (45/80) of the households were of Scheduled Castes and 45% (35/80) from the Rajput caste. In Goshal, nine Rajput households and five Scheduled Caste households were interviewed. Goshal is largely a Rajput village with 83% (100/120) of the households being from this caste, and 17% (20/120 households) from Scheduled Castes. The household interviews represent 23% of the households in Chachoga, and 11% of the households in Goshal.

### **Castes and Tribes Represented in the Study.**

The emphasis on lower and upper castes reflects the basic classification of caste organization in the Kullu Valley. Rajputs are still today referred to as *zamindars*, literally 'landowners' (traditionally, feudal landowners) (Harcourt 1972 [1871]), referring back to traditional land ownership patterns, and are the main land owning caste in the Valley. The Brahmin caste, the priestly and the highest caste in the caste hierarchy, was not a prominent caste in the Kullu Valley. There were some villages recognized as Brahmin villages<sup>17</sup> (for example, Jagatsukh and Bashisht, see Figure 2.1), but the majority of the villages were made up of Rajputs and Scheduled Castes. In the simplest terms, the social and political stratification was between the Rajput 'farming

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<sup>17</sup> Because there were so few Brahmins, by virtue of their caste many acted as religious persons for the villages of Chachoga and Goshal, as there were no Brahmins who lived in either of these villages. On religious celebrations, Brahmins came to the village and performed religious rites for the villagers. The one I witnessed was on a day recognizing the importance of one's brothers. Women would buy strands of wool or yarn from the Brahmins, and place them on their brothers' wrists in order to pay homage to their brothers.

caste' and Scheduled Castes or 'untouchables,' who traditionally held caste occupations. In the Kullu Valley area, some of the caste occupations were represented by blacksmiths (*lohar*), weavers (*julaha*), carpenters, and music makers for festivals. Even before India's Independence, however, there had been a movement to abolish the caste distinction of 'untouchable,' or *Harijan*, a term reintroduced by Gandhi meaning "children of God," and untouchability has been officially prohibited in India since 1947 (Jayaraman 1981:69). The political nature of the term *Harijan* was more an issue in urban areas than in the villages where I spoke with people. People will refer to themselves as '*Harijan*,' but only if asked, and it was not a source of pride, as 'Rajput' was with a Rajput person.<sup>18</sup> I refer to the term '*Harijan*' periodically, as it is the term that I was accustomed to hearing and using during fieldwork.

I do not incorporate the different sub-castes into my research as the division between upper and lower castes forms the fundamental social and political classification within village affairs. Berreman explains that the divisions are significant from within, and less so from outside, the major upper/lower caste division: "[w]hile there is hierarchical caste ranking within each of these two major categories, it is of significance primarily to those within that category. From across the high-low caste pollution barrier, it appears insignificant" (Berreman 1970:77).<sup>19</sup> The different sub-caste groups (*jati*)

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<sup>18</sup> It was awkward to ask someone their caste, especially if they were of the lower castes, although discussions about caste were not a problem with people from upper castes. In Goshal, where the translator was working in his own village, he filled in much of the caste detail, without ever having to ask about it. In Chachoga, where the translator was from another village, I left it to my translator to ask subtly about someone's caste, although she could often tell by someone's name, where they lived, or some other caste-related indicator. I also came to understand some of these indicators myself, and would confirm these with my translator.

<sup>19</sup> I accept that this is perhaps a simplistic analysis of caste and Berreman has been criticized for not recognizing the hierarchies that exist within sub-caste groups (see Berreman 1979:14-16). Sharma has also critiqued Berreman's conceptualizations of caste and inequity (see Searle-Chatterjee and Sharma



within the main caste divisions (*varna*) encompassed a realm of caste interaction and complexity that was difficult to incorporate into a short period of fieldwork.<sup>20</sup> Neither do I make mention of tribal people within my study. This is primarily due to the fact that tribal peoples do not figure in internal village dynamics in either of the two villages of the study. There were, however, pastoralist tribal people using Goshal's and Chachoga's high altitude pasture lands (for example, Gaddis and Gujjars), but neither of these tribal peoples lived in either of the villages. The shepherding families of the villages were those who primarily held relationships with the tribal groups that lived and used village high altitude pastures.<sup>21</sup> The Gaddis are a shepherding people who take large herds of goats and sheep through an established route of high pastures over a great distance throughout the year. The Gujjars are a Muslim group herding water buffalo. Water buffalo are not owned by anyone else in the area, and all the buffalo milk comes from the Gujjars, who also use Goshal's and Chachoga's high pastures. Gujjars bring buffalo milk down from the mountain every day to sell in the villages and in Manali. They are also on a transhumance route through the Himalayas, and live in the high pastures above Goshal and Chachoga for a few months of the year.

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1994). Parry's ethnography in the Kangra district, a neighbor to the Kullu district, focuses on the hierarchies of sub-castes (*jati*), and the relativity of caste status within the major caste categories (*varna*). Therefore, even in the less stratified caste system of Pahari culture, the intricacies of caste organization are complex and possibly no less important than in a more stratified caste organization of other parts of India (see Parry 1979). The basic distinction between upper and lower castes, however, is still the major division, exemplifies the fundamental divisions in a village, and is the most observable.

<sup>20</sup> The specifics of sub-castes and the complexity of caste organization in India is something I recognize to be absent from my study, but a topic that would require a separate study of caste organization.

<sup>21</sup> Gaddis and Gujjars are transhumance herding peoples, to be distinguished from village shepherds. Although all follow similar routes through the high pastures of the Himalayas, the different groups have distinct cultural backgrounds. Another study has been done on herders and the land use systems of herders (see Iain Davidson-Hunt, 1995).

Caste considerations and restrictions came into play during interviews with people, although in different ways in each village.<sup>22</sup> In the village of Chachoga, I was essentially treated as a higher caste person, and entered into people's homes, ate and drank tea with almost all of the women interviewed. The situation in Goshal village was different in that some initial problems with older and more traditional people meant that all interviews were done on the flagstone patios of the houses, while eating and drinking was carefully accepted with Rajput families only. This was mostly, if not entirely, to avoid problems going between lower caste and upper caste homes. Having learned from some of the earlier problems,<sup>23</sup> my translator was careful not to offend people's sense of what was proper interaction between people. I surely offended in a myriad of ways the subtle and inarticulated standards of interaction, but attempted to adhere to, and respect, the basic tenets of relations between castes. People were generally very forgiving of, and even humored by, some behavior that was simply inappropriate, yet came from a foreigner who could know no better. My translators were invaluable in these matters as well.

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<sup>22</sup> The fact that I was treated differently in the two villages within a very similar cultural and geographical area exemplifies Srinivas' point that the caste system is not a homogenous kind of structure where people act and respond in established ways, but that it is variable and flexible, even within the distance of two kilometers in the same valley. The local dynamics of a predominantly Rajput village (Goshal) created a caste system distinct from that of a village where Scheduled Castes were numerically predominant (Chachoga).

<sup>23</sup> One of the first interviews done in Goshal was by my partner in the home of a Rajput man. The interview was undertaken in the son's part of the house he shared with his father, but when the father found out that a foreigner had been in his house (even though it was his son's part of the house, with a wall separating them), the father refused to eat in his house until the first day of the next month, when the house was washed and ritually purified with fresh cow dung. After this incident, my translator made sure that all interviews were done on the stone patios outside of a house.

### ***Translators***

All interviews were done through a translator, a female translator in Chachoga and a male translator in Goshal. The translator for Chachoga was not from the village itself, but was quickly and easily accepted by most women in Chachoga's *Mahila Mandal*. She was known by one of the main leaders of the *Mahila Mandal*, and trusted by her.<sup>24</sup> Working with translators added a dimension to research that both enhanced and limited research. On the one hand, working with a translator meant that I did not have the control I would have preferred over either the questions or the responses from people. It meant that I was entirely dependent upon the translator's understanding of what I was trying to ask, as well as the discussions that occurred following a question. While I would have preferred to have been in control of my own conversations and interpretations of responses, working with a translator in the particular setting I did also had its advantages. Given the suspicion people had of foreigners, my translators, especially in the village of Goshal where Rolli was from, broke the ice and assured people of my sincere motives for wanting to talk with them, and were able to explain the purpose of my research in a way that was acceptable to them.

In Chachoga, where my translator, Sarla, was not from the village, her personality won people over as she entered into conversation with people easily and people enjoyed her company. The limitations of her English were compensated by her

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<sup>24</sup> On the last day of our research in the Kullu Valley, Kormi Devi told me that she knew of our translator's 'secrets,' that our translator had a lower caste grandmother but considered herself a Rajput. Kormi Devi allowed our translator into her house, even knowing that she had 'questionable' caste status in her family background. This act by Kormi Devi, established with the rest of the village our 'caste status' as higher caste persons, which allowed ourselves and our researcher to be allowed into all homes for interviews.

way with people that made them at ease with both herself and with foreigners and she was intrepid in meeting people and in talking with them. My established relationship with the *Mahila Mandal* in Chachoga also gave Sarla credibility and a starting point for introducing my research at the beginning of each interview. Sarla was involved from the first visits to Chachoga, and in the first meetings with the *Mahila Mandal* in Chachoga. We became known in the village together, which helped ease people's comfort with us.<sup>25</sup>

The biggest frustration and limitation in working with an interpreter was that the nuances of conversation were lost. The specific meanings to the different words or ways a consultant wished to express herself, were left behind in the basic transmission of 'facts.' My translators understood well, especially Rolli, my interests and purpose for research, but found it a little more difficult to understand my interest in the subtleties of communication and perspective. For this reason, more than any other, my research was restricted to the concrete specifics of women's activities and organization in village resource management. With Sarla, her English was good enough to allow me to understand the basics, although even this was taxing on both herself and me at first, and more complex questions were beyond her capacities in English.<sup>26</sup> While I would have preferred working with a female translator in both villages, especially considering that all my research was interviewing women, the limitations of Sarla's English made it

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<sup>25</sup> One time I went to Chachoga with Rolli after having made the earlier visits with Sarla. People did not respond positively to a change in translator, and it seemed clear that trust had been built with Sarla, and not Rolli. Therefore Sarla became the 'official' translator for me in Chachoga. I did actually take Rolli back to Chachoga again and he was better accepted, but this was at a later point in research, when I had a closer relationship established with people in Chachoga myself.

<sup>26</sup> One might think that in a tourist area translators would be easy to find. This was not the case, however, and I was extremely grateful to find a female translator at all, let alone someone whose English was workable, and at a stage where it could improve quickly through practice. Sarla's English improved dramatically during the time I worked with her as she became familiar with my questions and purpose for research.

advantageous to work with Rolli, a male translator. It also would have been very difficult for Sarla to gain access in interviewing women in Goshal considering that some of the other researchers on our team had already been working with Rolli in Goshal. The advantages of working with a translator well respected in his own village outweighed the advantages of having a female translator for the same village.

It would be prudent at this point to admit to some cautions I have regarding the quantitative data I have collected. I am confident that the data presented in a more quantitative form support the observations I have made through discussions and interviews. I believe the data point to trends and patterns that contribute to a general understanding of women's use, management and protection of village resources, although I am less confident in the accuracy of it in the strictest sense of the word. In some cases I gained a stronger sense of the dynamics involved in village management through my personal interviews with people than could appear through the tabular results of the data. For example, I gained a strong sense of the differences in how women used the forest, and in how they perceived the forest, through talking with women. In the data, however, looking at the 'days/year spent gathering in the forest by the main female worker/household,' this aspect of perception and use does not come across as defined as it did through interviewing women. Therefore, I balance a qualitative and quantitative analysis, allowing the interaction of observational and numerical accounts. There are no black and white trends emerging from the analysis of my data. However the data, along with my observations through fieldwork, support

each other and thereby allow me to make some initial statements and suggestions of patterns and trends that may be useful to similar studies in the future.

Reservations on the data primarily come from two aspects of data collection. First, the data on land ownership reported in the tables may not represent precisely accurate figures on a household's land holdings. Some of the problems in obtaining exact figures came from the fact that respondents were often unwilling to discuss specifics of land ownership, or resource ownership (Sharma 1980). Since land is a major indication of wealth, it was a sensitive topic and one difficult on which to attain exact figures. Local land records through government officials were very difficult to obtain, and did not have the specific information I needed at the household level. Additionally, Pahari culture follows standards of patrilocal residence and married women were outsiders to the household, and often to a village. Women marry into their husband's family and it is questionable whether women had exact figures on the amount of land their husbands' households owned, especially in the cases of younger wives.

The other area of data collection where I would hold some reservations in claiming precise accuracy is in women's estimations of the time (days) they spent gathering from the forest each year. Considering that this is a central component in my data analysis, it could be a fundamental problem, although I do not think that it is.<sup>27</sup> The responses women gave for the number of days spent in the forest throughout a year were measured month by month after the main female worker described the specific activities

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<sup>27</sup> I do not consider the data collected to be either inexact or inaccurate. I bring out my reservations in order for the reader to judge for her/himself, to bring into the open the actual process of 'data collection,' and the inherent biases and margins of error involved in any kind of human interaction brought into academic research. I do believe the data to be a satisfactory reflection of the lives and dynamics I observed.

she undertook that month. I used the estimations of a woman's time spent collecting in the forest as her perception of how important the forest and its resources were to her livelihood strategy. From this perspective, the number of days a woman indicated she spent collecting from the forest was a reflection of her sense of the import of the forest to her negotiation of livelihood strategies. In this, I feel it is a very useful quantitative tool, although perhaps not a perfectly accurate account of the actual number of days she would spend each month and year gathering from the forest. Similarly, the information given on land ownership is a woman's estimation of the land ownership of her husband's household, and should reflect the general amount of land a woman works each day, if not the specific or exact amount held by her husband's family. I have no doubt that women understand the extent of land and the number of fields the household holds in general. It is in the specifics of land in terms of exact ownership in *bighas* where I would hesitate to make claims of exact precision.

I do not believe that the cautions I express invalidate the data collected, but rather, reflect the nature of data collection, especially quantitative data. While quantitative data has the appearance (in our cultural mythology) of being more exact, in reality, it is subject to the same human interactions and dynamics as qualitative data, but is less overtly recognizable. The general estimates women gave me bring together some trends and patterns that have been elaborated upon, and supported by, the qualitative research done, and stand as preliminary results from 10 weeks of fieldwork which will contribute to further studies in the gendered use of common property resources and women's agency in the management of village commons.

### Chapter 3

#### THE KULLU VALLEY: HISTORICAL AND PRESENT

A village in the Upper Beas is far from an uninteresting study.  
(Harcourt 1972 [1871]:47).

#### ***Pahari Culture of the Himalayas.***

The Kullu Valley lies within the Western Himalayan range, with the Beas River originating at the head of the Kullu Valley and flowing out into the Punjab plains (see Figure 1.1). To the northeast lies the Greater Himalaya and the districts of Lahaul and Spiti and Ladakh. The Rohtang Pass crosses between Kullu, and Lahaul and Spiti and the pass forms a traditional and ancient trade route to the Greater Himalayan regions of Tibet and Ladakh (Gardner 1995). The lower Himalayas form a cultural tradition, Pahari culture, that spreads from eastern Nepal to western Kashmir, through the Kullu Valley. The different cultures of the area are collectively termed 'Pahari' cultures (literally, 'of the mountains') (Berreman 1970), referring to both culture and language. The language is a distinct dialect derived from Sanskrit. Pahari is of Indo-Aryan linguistic stock (Sanskrit) also with some Punjabi influences, although its grammar is closer to Hindi (Bhatnagar 1974; Harcourt 1972 [1871]; Berreman 1963). Crossing over the Rohtang pass into Lahaul and Spiti, one crosses into an area more characterized by Tibeto-Burmese peoples and Lamanistic Buddhism, broadly termed 'Bhotiyas,' from the high Himalaya (Berreman 1963). The classification of Pahari cultures serves both to link and to distinguish the Hinduized Himalayan culture from North Indian cultures, with which they share a common history. As Berreman writes: "Indian tradition in the Himalayas is





a distinct Himalayan version of the greater North Indian cultural tradition" (Berreman 1963:294). Just as Pahari culture differs from North Indian culture, it also differs from the Greater Himalayan cultures.

Pahari culture is probably most characterized by a unique, or 'unorthodox,' Hinduism (Berreman 1972) and an equally distinct caste organization from that of the plains. Pahari culture is also marked by smallholder, terrace agriculture in which women play a central role. In a related manner, seclusion or purdah are not a part of the cultural system, nor is the practice of dowry traditional, although is making its way into changing cultural traditions in the urban centers of the state. Caste organization is developed around a basic division between higher castes and lower castes (Scheduled Castes, so-called 'untouchables', or *Harijans*). Rajputs, and to a lesser extent Brahmins, represent the higher castes and are dominant both in numbers and wealth (Berreman 1970:75).

The upper castes comprise 69% of the population of the Kullu Valley. The Scheduled Castes (untouchables) form the other major sector of the population with approximately 28% of the population (ODA 1994, Vol. 2, Annex 1:12), and are largely service castes with either an indigenous history in the area, or a past of immigrating into the area as laborers, but likely a blend of both. The Himalayas have long served as a refuge for immigrants from the plains and the hills have incorporated them throughout history into its population (Berreman 1963). Scheduled Tribes form the smallest grouping making up 3.1% of the population of the Kullu Valley. Most people in the Valley are Hindu (96%), even crossing caste and tribal barriers. Buddhists make up approximately 2.9% of the population (ODA 1994, Vol. 2, Annex 1:12), accounting for

the influence and cultural exchange between the Kullu and the districts of Lahaul and Spiti as well as Tibet. While caste organization is structured around a basic division between upper and lower castes, a less stratified caste organization such as exists in the Kullu Valley does not imply that caste holds less social or political significance within Pahari culture. Bhatnagar says of Kangra district that "[a]lthough the influence of caste is strong everywhere, it is perhaps stronger here than anywhere else. It covers not only every aspect of the social life of the people, but also is one of the major considerations in local politics" (Bhatnagar 1974:xviii). Although caste organization of Pahari culture in general, and of the Kullu Valley specifically, has less stratification within it as compared to plains caste organization, the significance of caste does not necessarily diminish simply because of a lesser developed caste stratification within the system.<sup>28</sup>

Agriculture in the Himalayas is characterized by its intensive, small-scale nature. Industrialized agriculture is virtually impossible within this system, both due to the terrain and to the size of land holdings (Bhati and Singh 1987). Agriculture is based upon farm lands that are small and dependent upon inputs from common property forest and pasture resources, as is the rearing of cattle. As farms are small, fodder is collected from forests and pasture lands and not produced from one's own land, although where land holdings are a little larger, fodder can be cut from around the fields and from weeding. The agricultural system is an intricate one where forests feed the agricultural

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<sup>28</sup> Bhatnagar's perspective from Kangra district is distinct from Berreman's understanding of the caste system in the Uttar Pradesh Hills, and Parry's account of caste in Kangra district supports Bhatnagar's. It is possible that the Uttar Pradesh hills have a less intense stratification between castes and sub-castes, but it is also possible that Berreman oversimplifies caste dynamics. My own observations tend to support Berreman's, although I would readily admit that I did not attempt to observe the stratification of sub-castes within the main caste categories. I suspect that there is more stratification and hierarchy within sub-castes than either myself or Berreman have discussed. This does not diminish the fact that the main division is between the upper and lower castes, or between Rajputs and Scheduled Castes.

cycle and where women's activities make the links between forests, animals and cropping systems (Shiva 1988). The uniqueness of Himalayan culture and agriculture is predominantly interpreted throughout the country as 'backwards,' intimating that Pahari culture has not 'caught up' to the rest of India either socially or economically. This perspective was prevalent amongst the people I talked with in urban areas from New Delhi, in Manali in the Kullu Valley, and sometimes by villagers themselves. The style of agriculture, religion, dress, and marriage arrangements, for example, all reinforce this idea. Bhatnagar, himself from the Himalayas, exemplifies the point in his discussion of agriculture:

...agriculture forms the main occupation of the people. But the pity is that it is quite primitive and underdeveloped. Even after two decades of Independence, the farmers of this district still use the traditional wooden plough....All these factors combine to make agriculture an all too backward industry. (Bhatnagar 1974:xix).

Granted, he wrote in the 1970's, yet his views are still those expressed by people with whom I spoke, and representative of a wider opinion of the area (Bhati and Singh 1987). Many younger people are abandoning rural village life and culture in favor of more urbanized values because of this conceptualization that their own culture is 'backward.'

### ***The Changing Landscape.***

The Kullu Valley is in the midst of social and economic transition. Tourism is flourishing in the valley, many say because of the political turmoil in Kashmir redirecting tourists to Manali. Due to the booming tourist industry, immigrants have come to the area in great numbers, including Tibetan refugees, and laborers from Nepal, Bihar and

Rajasthan. The tourist industry supplies seasonal employment for many, and road construction and constant road repairs provide employment for others. The poorest people living in the Valley are the Nepali, Bihari and Rajasthani laborers, who live on roadsides and are most vulnerable to environmental disasters (for example, flooding of the Beas river in monsoon season). Absolute poverty in the Kullu Valley is largely confined to the urban centers where laborers and landless people eke out a living. In the rural villages most have at least a very small plot of land, and access to common property resources.

One of the more significant changes for women in rural villages is the establishment of apple orchards away from a mixed crop-based forest-agricultural system. The Kullu Valley is being transformed from a mixed cropping agricultural landscape to a fruit belt, with apple trees sprawling upwards on the mountainsides, as well as within previously irrigated rice fields, no longer irrigated in order to grow fruit trees. Most see apples as a promising market, and the area has observed the development of orchards over the last 30 years. Within the past 10 years, there has been, again, an increase in the plantation of apple trees by most agricultural households. Orchards are largely men's responsibility in terms of maintaining and pruning apple trees. Women are involved in some of the intense labor at points in the fruit cycle, such as fertilizing trees and during harvest, although men control the income from the apple crop. In a meeting with eight *Mahila Mandals* of the Kullu Valley, the question was asked to a group of over 20 women how they felt about the transition to orchards, considering the male-controlled nature of apple production. One woman responded

spontaneously, "We'll still have to do all the work!!" The rest of the women agreed, and there was little concern on the part of women that they were losing 'control' or 'influence' by a switch to a male-controlled activity. While women may have a less direct role in decision-making over apple orchards, they are still clearly involved in orcharding. One woman explained that agricultural decisions are made by both the man and the woman, and apple orcharding will be no different.

In comparing ownership of orchards by caste in the two villages of the study, Table 3.1 shows the average household ownership by caste in each village and suggests that Chachoga Scheduled Caste households have been in the poorest position to negotiate a new livelihood strategy towards orcharding, while the Rajputs in Chachoga have moved towards orcharding to a greater extent. In Goshal, Scheduled Caste and Rajput household transformation to orcharding livelihoods are more closely aligned (shown in Table 3.1). The pattern between the villages is a general one. In Chachoga, Scheduled Caste households consistently own fewer resources than Rajput households. This is also the case, but to a much lesser extent, in Goshal where caste difference is not as stratified.

The data for neither village includes the land or orchard ownership of the biggest landholders in either village. In Goshal, the largest landowner's wife (our translator's mother) was a key consultant, and the time spent with her was not in an 'official' interview capacity following the informal structured interview used with other women.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> The relationship developed with our translator and his mother, Mani Devi (and her daughters), was a special relationship that developed over a period of time spent at their home. At a certain point in the relationship, it seemed inappropriate/awkward to go through the same interview that we used with other women, simply because of the more informal relationship/friendship developed. The structured

The female head of one of the other wealthiest households in the village of Goshal essentially refused to have us interview her, in a polite way. She served us tea on the flagstone of her house (separate from where she was serving tea upstairs to her family), and simply never came back down from the kitchen to speak with us. A similar process occurred with the wealthiest landowner in Chachoga, where we got a very chilly reception, and few specific answers.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the largest landowners of both villages are not represented in the data. However, several larger land owning households are represented from both villages, although they are not the largest in the village (also discussed in Chapter 5).

If one looks closely at the household land and tree ownership data (presented in Table 5.1), it is apparent that the amount of land and fruit trees owned by a household do not accurately correspond to each other (approximately 35-40 trees can be planted on one *bigha* of land). This is largely because of the fact that there is a good deal of encroachment in the plantation of apple trees (*nazaise*) onto undemarcated protected forest (UPF) and demarcated protected forest (DPF) lands (illustrated in Figure 3.2), both village common lands which are owned by the state (ODA 1993, Vol. 2, Annex 2). Thus, while people would admit to the number of trees owned (although they probably provided a conservative estimate if they were encroaching onto UPF or DPF land, the

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interview I used with other women was also too superficial for the kinds of discussions we had with Mani Devi (not her real name).

<sup>30</sup> Part of the explanation could be seen in this example from an interview with a village head: he whispered to my translator that he did not want to talk about land reform because he managed to keep all his land during land reform.

Table 3.1 Comparison of castes in Goshal and Chachoga  
(based on averages by caste)

	total land (in bighas)	non-irr	irr.	cows	bullocks	sheep	past <sup>1</sup> sheep	large fruit trees	small fruit trees	total fruit trees	days <sup>2</sup> spent in forest/yr
Chachoga Rajputs (n=9)	8.06	5.28	2.78	2	0.89	7.89	108.50	190.56	78.33	268.89	103.40
Goshal Rajputs (n=9)	8.26	7	1.26	1.44	0.67	10.78	156.67	95.22	144.44	239.67	87.56
Chachoga Harijans (n=10)	3	2.8	0.2	0.8	0.2	0	1	83.6	46.5	130.1	91.8
Goshal Harijans (n=5)	6.6	6.2	0.4	1	0.4	0.6	23	50	111.25	161.25	115.8

<sup>1</sup> Refers to the number of sheep a household owned in the past when some households were large sheep and goat herding families. Households no longer have as many sheep, and the numbers have decreased over the past 10-20 years. The size of a herd was previously a mark of wealth.

<sup>2</sup> Refers to the number of days the main female worker per household gathers from the forest/year.



land data is more a reflection of their legitimate ownership, and do not include the amount of land they had planted apple trees on outside of their own land.<sup>31</sup>

The changes occurring in the Kullu Valley bring an entirely new dimension into women's negotiations of livelihood strategies. The area is in a gradual process of transition where many households have planted apple trees on the same plots of land where women are still fertilizing and planting crops in the 'traditional' way, although eventually crops will be crowded out by large apple trees.<sup>32</sup> When women were asked what they would do without the crops they are presently producing, they responded that they could buy all their food once they were receiving income from the sale of the apple harvest. They also responded that grass still grows below large apples trees, and makes good animal fodder. This suggests women still see animal husbandry as a viable part of their future livelihood negotiations. When I asked one woman how she felt about putting all their land into orchards, she commented, "We can always chop them [the trees] down." This is, in fact, occurring in other parts of the valley that are more appropriate for vegetable growing. When the market shifted in favor of vegetable products, fruit trees were cut down to make fields for vegetable production. It is interesting to note that women, for the most part, were not the ones to make decisions in favor of planting apple orchards. Women were cautiously in favor of the changes, but it was generally men who decided to change land use towards apple trees. When women

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<sup>31</sup> I really have no way of knowing how much plantation is occurring on government land, or who is accessing government land for plantation over others, but it is undoubtedly occurring according to interviews. Encroachment was a 'detail' that had escaped me until I was working with Rolli, who understood very well village land use.

<sup>32</sup> Crops and trees can co-exist for about 10-15 years, until the tree cover shades out the area underneath, making cropping unviable. Crop production also depends upon the spacing of the apple trees, determining how much light can reach the crops below.

were asked where they would choose to put their organic fertilizer (*gobar*) if they didn't have enough for both the apple trees and crops, they almost invariably responded in favor of the crops.

The next few years will be interesting to observe in terms of some of the negotiations that come about in land use, and women's activities and responses. It will also be interesting to watch the development of women's organizations in the face of changing livelihood strategies. There are already conflicts in land use arising from the extensions of orchards onto village common land (UPF and DPF). The *Mahila Mandal* in Chachoga is presently disputing the private right to ownership of apple trees that have been planted on village forest lands (UPF) where women gather forest produce. I can offer only a very preliminary analysis of the process of change occurring in the Kullu Valley. It would be prudent to note, however, that this is not the first livelihood shift, nor probably the last, to occur in the valley. During the 1800's, the Kullu Valley was deeply involved in the production of opium and tobacco for foreign markets (Harcourt 1972 [1871]). Today the 'traditional' system looks much more oriented towards household consumption of beans, corn, millets, barley, amaranth, rice and vegetables. Yet, this was not always the system, and clearly the agricultural system of the Kullu Valley has been a dynamic one responding and continually negotiating with new influences throughout history.

### ***History of the Kullu Valley.***

Historically, at least back to the first century AD, the Thakurs, who now form part of the Rajput caste and are predominant throughout the Manali area, were the

'aboriginal' or 'ancient rulers' of the Kullu Valley (Hutchison and Vogel 1933). The historical record is a complex one and poorly chronicled (Berreman 1972; Negi 1963),<sup>33</sup> and "the whole field of ancient history of these hills is veiled in dark mist" (Singh 1979:93). What emerges from the historical record is that the ancestors of the Rajput caste, the ancient Thakurs (a Sanskritized word meaning 'lord') or Khasa tribes from the plains, have a long history of land ownership and rule in the hills. Most of the historical record comes from the Khasa, or the invading tribes, and Hutchison and Vogel state that "[t]he oldest traditions in the hills refer to a time when petty chiefs, bearing the title of Rana and Thakur, exercised authority, either as independent rulers or under the suzerainty of a paramount power" (Hutchison and Vogel 1933:12). Much of the 'beginning' of history is framed in terms of Khasa history, and ignores earlier traditions of which there seems to be no historical record (Berreman 1972).

Berreman refers to the two major ancestral stocks of the area, the lower caste, early indigenous groups and the Indo-Aryan speaking tribes called *Khasa* (*Khasiya*, considered Kshatriya, of Aryan origin, or the soldiers and rulers) comprising the upper castes. The Scheduled Castes were associated with occupational specialties while the Khasas were the dominant agricultural groups or tribes from the Punjab plains. The same history has been given for the Ranas and Thakurs of the Kullu valley (Hutchison and Vogel 1933). Ranas and Thakurs historically referred to as Kanets, are of the same origin as the Khasas to which Berreman refers.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Hutchison and Vogel state that "[i]n Kashmir, Kangra and Kullu - states of much greater antiquity and historical importance - only a very limited number of epigraphical records has been found" (Hutchison and Vogel 1933:5) and suggest that much of the historical material has been lost.

<sup>34</sup> Depending on which source I am drawing from, the terms change. Berreman is clearest in his use of terms, and I prefer to use Khasa for Rajput history where possible. I have found the following terms to

Present day Rajputs have a long agricultural history in the area, whereas the Scheduled Castes, whose history in the area is very poorly documented, have a history of laboring for others, and of working as artisans, not as agriculturists. Some of the lower castes are commonly thought to have occupied the area at the time of the Aryan invasions, being pushed back, subjugated and assigned inferior status (Berreman 1972:20). Their cultural history seems to be largely lost and subsumed into the cultural heritage of the Khasas, or present day Rajputs. The best description of the Scheduled Caste history comes from Negi. He states of the Scheduled Castes (Dagis) of Kullu Valley that "[t]hese tribes must have been of non-Aryan origin like the other aborigines of India, but a great fusion of races took place in ancient times by intermarriage, and later by degradation from the so-called, high-castes, a process which is still going on" (Negi 1963:87).

The ancient Indo-Aryan invaders are now predominantly the agriculturists of the area. Hutchison and Vogel state that "[m]ost of these families [Ranas and Thakurs] now occupy the position of common agriculturists, in no way different from the agricultural community of which they form a part, but that they are lineally descended from the old barons of the hills is hardly open to doubt" (Hutchison and Vogel, 1933, Vol. 1:31). They continue:

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all refer to the "invading Indo-Aryan tribes," who have throughout different points in history, become the present day Rajput caste: Khasa, Kshatriya, Kanet, (Kanees, Kaneit), Thakur, Rana, Rathi, and *zamindar*. The variability in terminology and different records creates the complexity of the historical record. The Scheduled Castes are more consistently referred to as: Dagi (Daghee), Dom, or Koli.

From the information at our disposal the conclusion seems justified that the rule of the Thakkurs and Ranas was the oldest political system in the Western Hills....[T]he Thakkur caste which forms the upper section of the Rathi [now Rajput] community, are the principal agricultural tribes in the Panjab Hills...They are all indigenous to the hills or, more likely, indigenous by the half blood with the aboriginal races, and it is more than probable that the ancient Thakkur rulers rose to power from among them. These tribes were settled in the hills long before the Ranas, who were Kshatriyas, that is, Rajputs, appeared on the scene. (Hutchison and Vogel 1933, Vol. 1:39-40).

The name of Thakur gains significance when in the Kullu Valley. Thakur was the most common surname in the Manali area, and was prominent at village and regional levels. It is clear in the quote from Hutchison and Vogel that the Thakurs are not traditionally Rajputs, but in present day caste organization, Thakurs have been incorporated as part of the Rajput caste.

Pulling together different strands of history, it seems that the 'indigenous' peoples of the area mixed with the Thakurs who came probably from the plains and who became the agricultural peoples of the area. The nature of 'indigenouness' is difficult to establish, especially considering that the early invaders and rulers had established rule by the 1st Century AD. Negi exemplifies this point: "[The] Thakur and Rathi are almost certainly of ancient origin, and are regarded as indigenous to the hills" (Negi 1963:88).

Berreman helps to explain some of the confusion:

Doms [Scheduled Castes] have had no distinct language in history or tradition, and their religious and social beliefs and practices appear to be continuous with those of the higher castes. Whatever their cultural heritage may have been, it is now merged with that of the Khasiyas [Rajput caste] so that traces of their separate origin, if any, can no longer be identified (Berreman 1972:21).

An historical understanding of the two major caste divisions of the area, the higher caste Rajputs and lower caste *Harijans* (Scheduled Castes), brings some of the present dynamics into a historical context. The continual references to the Khasas as "agricultural tribes in the Panjab Hills" (Hutchison and Vogel 1933:39-40) relates to the predominance of forest-agricultural livelihoods among the present day Rajput caste. Equally, the subordination of aboriginal people, or lower castes, has a modern manifestation in wage labor and landlessness (until recent land reforms, which redistributed common land to the landless, although land largely unsuitable for intensive farming). In the present, as in the past, wage labor (agricultural labor and service work such as carpentry or blacksmiths) is predominant amongst the Scheduled Castes, while the Rajputs enter very little into wage labor and dedicate themselves to agriculture on their own land through support from common lands. It should be noted that this pattern is more marked in Chachoga than Goshal. Chachoga is essentially a much poorer village than Goshal, and the Scheduled Castes are generally poorer in Chachoga than in Goshal, although there is little difference in the economic position of the Rajput caste of the two villages (as reflected in Table 3.1, Figures 4.3 and 4.4).

Forest use has also traditionally been linked to caste, in that forest usufructory rights were given in the 1886 settlement report by the pre-Independence colonial government to landholders who were, in the Kullu Valley, from the Rajput caste. Thus, the forest and agricultural cycle is one that has been developed historically among landowners within primarily the Rajput caste, and only more recently been extended to

the Scheduled Castes of the area due to periods of land reform since the 1950's (ODA 1993, Vol. 2, Annex 2). The ODA report states:

Since forest rights are appended to those who cultivate or own land, those without land did not have any rights in demarcated forest land but had to rely on undemarcated areas to satisfy their needs. Usage of these lands would continue only as long as other local people permitted. (ODA 1993, Vol. 2, Annex 2:11).

The demarcated (DPF) and undemarcated (UPF) forest lands referred to can be seen in Figure 3.2. The undemarcated forest available for use for non-landholders is a small area typically bordering the village, where the least control is maintained over grazing and tree product use (the classification of UPF land indicates its low value to the Forest Department, for example, poor quality forest and grazing land, or 'wasteland'). The undemarcated forest is the land that was designated for allocation under *nautor* rights.<sup>35</sup> The land available for the landless to use as commons was the same land to be parceled out to individuals for private ownership.<sup>36</sup>

### Land Reform

Several land reform acts have been enacted since the 1950's. Lands have gradually been changing ownership starting in 1953 under the *Himachal Pradesh Abolition of Big Landed Estates Land Reform Act*, where land was redistributed from large landowners, in 1972 under the *Himachal Pradesh Tenancy and Land Reforms Act* as well as under the *Ceilings on Land Holdings Act*, and in 1974 under the *Himachal Pradesh Village Common Land Vesting and Utilization Act*, when *nautor* lands (or

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<sup>35</sup> The ODA report defines *nautor* as "an ancient right whereby landless people are allowed [to] break fresh agricultural land in common land areas. The land is allocated to the landless by village elders" (ODA 1993, Vol.2, Annex 2:6).

<sup>36</sup> In effect, *nautor* land reforms have been "robbing Peter to feed Paul."

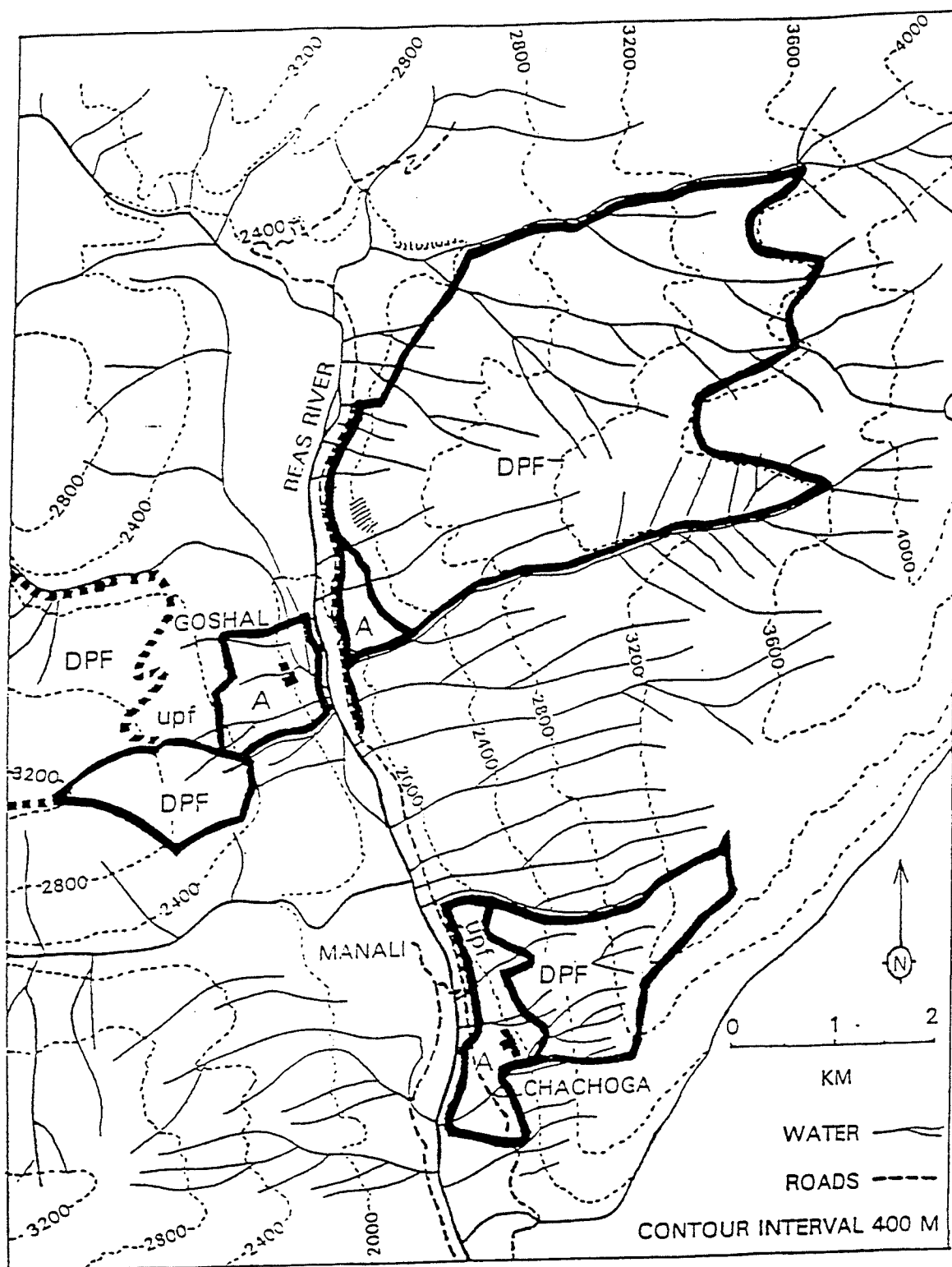


Figure 3.2 Village forest areas for Goshal and Chachoga showing agricultural areas (A), demarcated protected forest areas (DPF) and undemarcated protected forest areas (UPF). ■ indicates village sites (source: Colin Duffield, 1995).



village commons) were allegedly given over to the landless, largely the Scheduled Castes (ODA 1994, Volume 2 Annex 1:6; Sethi 1991:4). Land reforms, however, have not brought about the intended changes. Some of the land reforms had the intention of redistributing common lands to the 'landless' and land poor (Jodha 1986; Agarwal 1992) in order for agriculture to be adopted. Jodha (1986) discusses the complicating factors that ultimately created a less than effective land reform. He suggests that beneficiaries of land often parted with it easily for several reasons. First, the land was of low quality and held little potential for cultivation. Second, beneficiaries lacked complementary resources, for example bullocks, or experience in farming, to enable them to adopt full-scale farming. And third, many previously landless households were dependent upon wage labor. Thus:

Rather than sticking to a small piece of land that could not be developed and used for want of other resources, these households preferred to sell or mortgage the land and concentrate on wage earnings. (Jodha 1986:1179).

This describes how many Scheduled Caste households in Chachoga adopted land reform. However land reform in Goshal has accomplished the stated goals more successfully. In Goshal, the few Scheduled Caste households in the village (20/120 households) did manage to establish agricultural livelihoods. Goshal has also been able to draw upon a large expanse of common land (see Figure 3.2). As well, some Scheduled Caste households in Chachoga have adopted agricultural livelihoods on the basis of the land received during land reform (for examples see Table 2, household 10, 13, 29, 30, 31, 33). However, these 'successful' cases exemplify the point that:

Distributing common property resources to the poor deprives them of collective gains, while improving the position of individuals who receive the land....But limited evidence suggests that privatization has helped well-endowed landowners more than the poor. (Jodha 1985:260).

Therefore, while some Scheduled Caste households may have gained from land reform, many have not and, in fact, have access to a shrinking commons due to the process of privatization in this manner (Shiva 1986).

### ***Village Organization.***

Within rural villages of the Kullu Valley area, three basic village institutions construct the official village structure: the *panchayat*, the *Mahila Mandal*, and the *mimbers*.<sup>37</sup> Each acts in specific ways in relation to the village. The *mimbers* are, in fact, an 'unofficial' power within village affairs and act as a group of village councilors, while the *panchayat* and the *Mahila Mandal* are formal agencies of the Indian government. Although the *Mahila Mandal* is an official government institution, it interacts and works in close association with the village *mimbers*, being active in internal villages affairs where the *mimbers* are also active. The Panchayat acts at a level outside the village, as representative of the village, and acting as a funnel for any official contact at the village level (ODA 1994, Vol. 2, Annex 1:25).

### **The Panchayat**

The panchayat is a village council that has historical roots in village local government, and that was reinstated into post-Independence India in 1952. The primary

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<sup>37</sup> This was explained to me by the president of the *Mahila Mandal* in Shanag village. She clearly identified the *Mahila Mandal*, the *mimbers*, and the Panchayat as the "three powers" (her words) within the village structure.

intent of reestablishing the panchayat under the Community Development Programme of the Post-Independence government was an attempt at revitalizing village self-government that had, over centuries, begun to erode in rural India (Bhatnagar 1974; Shuka 1970). The ideals of the panchayat were heady in the post-Independence era, and the reinstitutionalization of the panchayat was anticipated to be a stage in democratic and decentralized local government. The traditions of strong local, self-government in rural India had been weakened over time through impositions of consecutive centralized governments, beginning with the Mogal and Muslim invasions, and was ultimately destroyed by the feudalistic control of the British (Bhatnagar 1974). With central control of land revenue under the British, and later village disputes, the autonomous village panchayat lost its authority (Bhatnagar 1974). While panchayats of present-day India are based on traditional self-government principles of ancient India, they are distinct in their organization: the former was a locally responsive organization based on hereditary rule, while the latter was instituted and regulated from a central government with the idea of establishing a decentralized system of local, regional and district levels of the panchayat as the basis of Indian polity (Shuka 1979).

The panchayat is made up of elected members, with the head of the panchayat being an elected head. The panchayat is required to have one woman sit on the panchayat from the *Mahila Mandal* as well as members of Scheduled Tribes or Castes (Desai 1992; ODA 1994, Vol. 2, Annex 1:24). Where there are smaller villages or hamlets, several villages will join together to form a panchayat (ODA 1994: Vol. 2, Annex 1:24). This is the case with both villages of the study. The village of Goshal is

located within the Shanag panchayat, and the village of Chachoga is in the Bashisht panchayat (see Figure 2.1). Although several villages form a panchayat, each village has an elected head (*pradhan*) and the villages together elect the *sarpanch*, or head of the group of villages that comprise the panchayat. Thus each village has its own village *pradhan* as well as having representation at the panchayat level. Representation continues upward through the block and district level *panchayats*, forming a three-tier system of decentralized local government (ODA 1994; Vol. 2, Annex 1:24; Shuka 1970). While a newly independent India had the ideals of the panchayat as a self-governing, strong and democratic local organization, Bhatnagar suggests that the structure has become one of formal institutionalized democracy that has little bearing on local initiatives and organization (Bhatnagar 1974:6).

### **The Mahila Mandal**

The *Mahila Mandal* is an organization of rural village women, also formed under the 1952 Community Development Programme, and strengthened again during the Indira Gandhi administration with the idea of facilitating the involvement of women structurally and economically into the life of rural India. As it is stated in the 1979 annual review of *Mahila Mandals*, the aim is to: "draw rural women into the mainstream of development and to enable them to function as instruments of social change by providing them with programs in which they will have a stake or a sustained interest such as improving their income or productivity and employability or employment" (Jain and Reddy 1979:3). The *Mahila Mandal* is a part of the same overall restructuring of an Independent India to bring rural India into democratic, local self-government (Shuka 1970).

While the *Mahila Mandal* is often considered a less than dynamic part of village organization (Jain and Reddy 1979; Desai 1992; Sharma 1980), the establishment of the *Mahila Mandal* seems to have been successful in one aspect at least, that of providing an official form of women's agency within village affairs. Some villages have utilized the *Mahila Mandal* more effectively than others in presenting a collective women's agency within village affairs. The Chipko experience is one example where the *Mahila Mandal* has been instrumental in bringing women together and asserting collective agency as a recognized village institution. In the Garhwal Himalayas the collective action of women through the *Mahila Mandal* has challenged decisions made at the panchayat level over village commons (Mitra 1993; Dankelman and Davidson 1988; Agarwal and Narain 1985). The relationship between the Forest Department and the *Mahila Mandal* is also a case in point. Women of the *Mahila Mandal* go to the *mimbers*, the village head, or to the Forest Department for support in their actions against timber poaching in order to act on their interests and obtain response to their concerns. The *Mahila Mandals* have been, in part, a response to an alienating structure at the village level, and have been able to bypass traditional leadership structures in the formation of a response to their own needs (ODA 1994, Vol. 2, Annex 1:25).

### **The *Mimbers***

The *mimbers* are a group of councilors who have an unofficial role within village affairs. The *mimbers* form an informal group of men from the 'original' families of the village, influencing decisions and providing counsel to the village. In Goshal, there were nine *Mimbers*; seven Rajput and two Scheduled Caste families. The *mimbers* operated at

such an informal level of village organization that it was difficult to obtain a strong sense of their activities and function. Awareness of the *mimbers* came about while working in Goshal village, where Rolli was familiar with village political institutions.<sup>38</sup> The *mimbers* deal with internal village problems, setting fines and bringing resolution to internal village conflict. They work at a different level from the panchayat, and the village head (*pradhan*) depends upon the *mimbers* to carry out village works such as road building and reparation, building schools or health posts. The village head was paid by the government, while the *mimbers* acted unofficially within the village. The *mimbers* have, on occasion, challenged decisions made by the village head.

The panchayat largely focuses on village matters relating to the state government and in capturing resources from outside the village to be drawn into the village. The *Mahila Mandal* and the *mimbers* deal with matters internal to the village such as quarrels, fights or theft. The *mimbers* claim they are not in a position to enforce forest use or management, but they support the *Mahila Mandal* in their regulation of village commons. The *Mahila Mandal* will be discussed in its local form of agency within the villages of Goshal and Chachoga in Chapter 6.

To this point I have spent considerable effort establishing the social and historical context for my research in the Kullu Valley. I would now like to focus on the two villages of my study, first describing the general land use system in which women are the

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<sup>38</sup> It wasn't until we had spent time with a translator with stronger English skills that we discovered the existence of the *mimbers* in Goshal, and it was still longer before I could confirm their existence in Chachoga. It was an amorphous entity that was not externally recognizable. My partner spent more time working in Goshal with Rolli and interviewed some *mimbers*. It was through my partner that I gained a basic understanding of the *mimbers*. The original families are known in the village and each forms a lineage. I have been unable to find any reference to such village organization, and cannot comment on the extensiveness of the *mimbers* in rural village organization.

main actors in establishing a forest-agriculture cycle (Chapter 4). Chapter 4 describes the intensity and intricacy of the forest-agricultural system, and the knowledge women hold in maintaining this system. The historical context presented in the present chapter is incorporated into the next chapter by the fact that the system I am about to describe is that of the majority of Rajput households, and less so of Scheduled Caste households. However, it is important to develop an understanding of the land use system based on forest resources, although not representative of all women's livelihood activities, in order to understand the different uses women make of forest commons, as well as some of the conflicts that arise between women in the management of village commons. The next chapter will give a brief description of the system as a whole, and discuss women's roles and knowledge that provide the very basis of the Himalayan forest-agricultural system.

## Chapter 4

### A GENDERED USE OF THE LANDSCAPE

#### *Women's Seasonal Activities*

There are plenty of opportunities for the males in Kooloo to engage in out-door sports, as for a considerable portion of the year agricultural operations are suspended or are conducted almost entirely by the weaker sex, who do all the rice-planting, and the majority of the house-hold work. (Harcourt 1972 [1871]).

I have asserted that my research has been designed to identify the differences that exist between women in relation to their use of village commons. Having said this, first it is necessary to view the overall land use system which women play a major role in maintaining. The purpose here is to establish women's intimate knowledge of their environment and the primary importance of women's activities within the forest-agricultural system. A secondary purpose is to conceptualize the primacy of village forest resources in the system. Women are the primary actors in bringing forest resources into the agricultural system, and the cycle is considered that of 'women's seasonal activities.' The discussion of women's seasonal activities as a whole is not meant to suggest that all women participate equally in all activities, or undertake them equally. In fact, all women do *not* participate equally in the activities of the forest-agricultural cycle. The specifics of women's situations will be discussed in Chapter 5.

While each household negotiates a unique livelihood strategy, most women are involved to some degree in the many activities that take them from the forest to the field. All households obtain firewood from the forest. Households with cattle need to bring



forest products to animals as fodder and bedding, and any household with agricultural activity needs manure as fertilizer to put into agricultural land, under orchard trees, or both. Fertilizer comes through the combination of forest products, in the form of bedding, with cow manure. If a household does not have cows to provide manure for their own land, they will most often have an established relationship with a relative from another household with cows, often a brother of the husband or of the wife (if a woman lives in her natal village), and will provide this relative's animals with fodder and bedding from the forest in return for animal fertilizer that will then be used on the non-cattle owner's fields.

Forests are the main natural resource around which both women's activities and my research revolve. The Pahari translation for the word forest is *jungly*, a word that is used for any land that lies outside the village. While it was difficult for me to get a sense of women's usage of the concept due to the language barrier, Ursula Sharma (1980) discusses *jungly*, as does Maya Unnithan (1994), and their constructs of *jungly* are similar to the sense I had of how women were speaking about the forest. Sharma writes:

Jungle land, i.e. waste land lying between the cultivated fields of one village and the next, is like the *bazar* in that it is also a category of space which women should avoid, but for somewhat different reasons. It is avoided not because it is public, but because it is lonely. The euphemistic statements of villagers about the need for girls to avoid 'jungly' places refer basically to the fear of sexual molestation....Many women have to go to the jungle in the course of their work, to cut grass, to graze cattle, to cut wood. But they do not go there unnecessarily (Sharma 1980:42).

Unnithan adds to the concept of *jungly* that *Jungali* in Rajasthan is the term for a group of tribal people, and she states that "*Jungali* was also a term used in Hindi to refer to a primitive, wild or savage state" (Unnithan 1994:108). The forest was not a place where

women would go alone, especially young women. Young daughters-in-law told me that they would always go to the forest with a group of women. Only a very few older women said that they would go to the forest alone. In this, Sharma's understanding is closest to how women spoke of the forest to me during interviews, in that young women did not feel safe going to the forest alone, and it was women who were secure in their positions in the household who would think of going alone. One woman who was only 35 years old, but very independent and who was married to an 80 year old man, was in control of all the household agricultural operations, stated very clearly that she had no problems going alone. Another younger woman told me that she preferred 'lighter' (i.e. less dense) forests, because they were not as scary. When women go to the forest at night to catch illegal poachers, they always go in groups, sometimes of up to twelve women. This is partly for support in their collective action taken against the poacher, but also for safety in traveling up to the forest.

Unnithan suggests that *jungly* is equated with the 'wild' or 'savage.' On this point I am less sure how women felt in the villages where I conducted interviews. I perceived a kind of respect for the forest from most women. One woman in a meeting with the *Mahila Mandal* told me that they felt every tree was sacred. I knew there were sacred trees that surrounded the village temples, and asked which trees were sacred, and her response was, "all trees!" When she said this, however, it was in a somewhat political context where the women's group was trying to impress upon us (the group of researchers) and the forest guard (from the Forest Department) who was with us, the importance of the forest to them and how men were abusing the forest in cutting trees

illegally.<sup>39</sup> It was clear to me, however, that women did not feel any connection to the forest without having an intense use of the forest. There were some women who gathered very little from forest resources, and I noted a distinct way of speaking of the forest from these women that was more akin to a utilitarian concept. I am suggesting, then, that the cultural construct of *jungly* takes on varied meaning for women with differing livelihood strategies, and that 'lonely' or 'wild' places take on distinct meanings within specific negotiations of livelihood strategies.

Any household agricultural or animal-rearing livelihood activity in the Kullu Valley depends upon common property forest resources. Manure from cattle is the essential element that sustains the agricultural system. Fodder needs for cattle are partially extracted from common property pastures and forests, depending on a household's land ownership. In addition, all bedding for cattle comes from village commons in the form of fallen needles or fern, and these make up the bulk and complementary content of fertilizer. All animal fertilizer is put into the soil after having served as bedding for cattle in the bottom floor of a traditional house. Fertilizer is, then, the combination of animal bedding brought from the forest, and cattle manure that is then stored throughout the year and put onto the soil in springtime following ploughing and planting (see Figure 4.2).

Cows are the main source for manure as they are kept in the village throughout the year for milk, while bullocks are taken up to high pastures to feed themselves, and

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<sup>39</sup> The same woman continued to say that men did not feel the trees are sacred, but only women do, because they go to the forest more often. I do think women have constructed a different perception of the forest from men based on their intense activity gathering from the forest, although this is not true of all women.

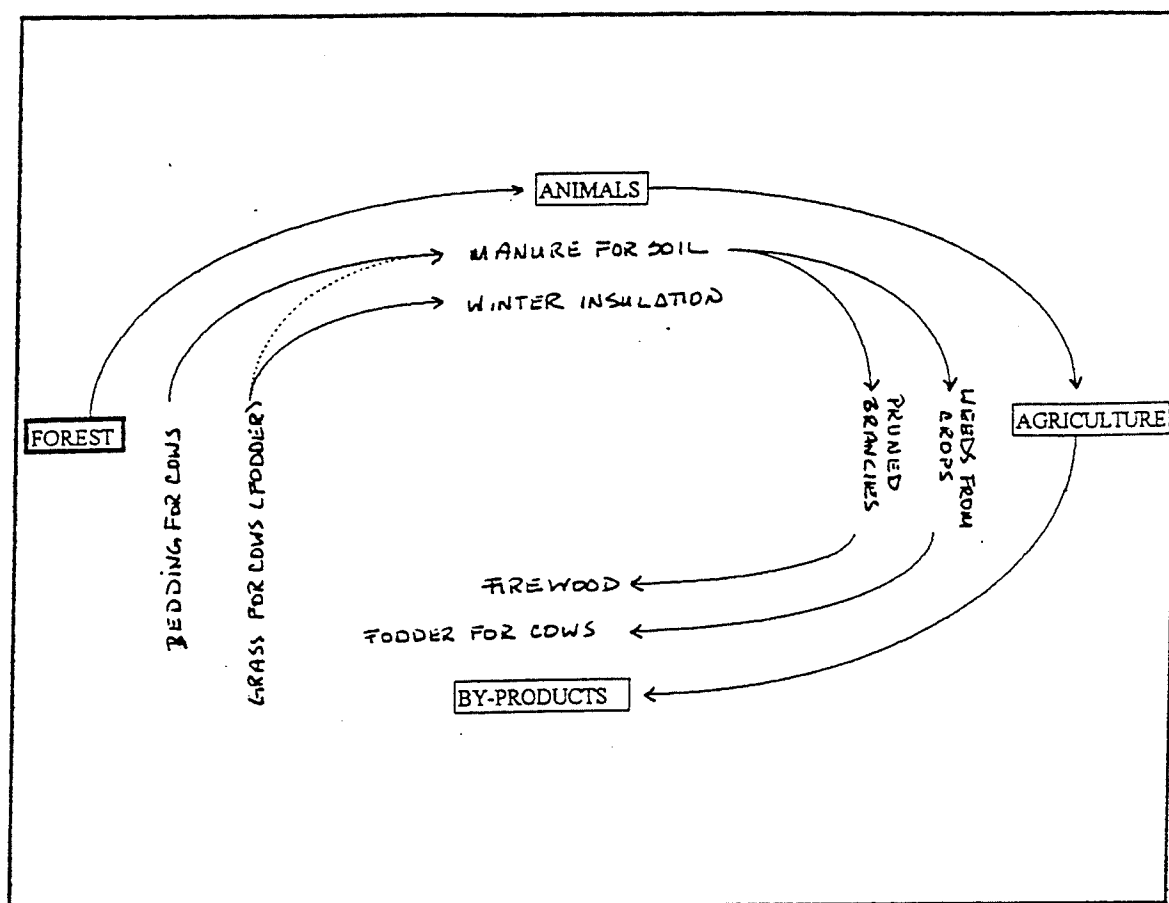


Figure 4.1 The centrality of forest resources to women's livelihood activities in animal husbandry and agriculture, and by-products stemming from the forest-agricultural cycle.

brought down into the village for a brief period during ploughing season. Many households have at least one cow, and they are the main source of fertilizer for the fields besides the chemical fertilizer that is also bought to complement organic fertilizer (76% of the households in the survey own cows, 16/25 or 64% being Rajput). All households that own bullocks also own at least one cow (see Appendix 1). Sheep and goats do not provide much manure as they are cared for by specific family or village herders who take large herds of sheep and goats on a seasonal cycle from one high pasture to another throughout the year, and over a great distance. These pastures are outside ('upside') the village.

Grass is cut at designated times of the year from the forest and village pastures and stored for winter fodder. The amount of grass necessary for the winter requires a great deal of collecting. It is dried and stored around the outer porch of a traditional style house, and provides some insulation for the very cold winters. Those with larger land holdings are able to cut much of their daily fodder needs from around their fields and by weeding during the growing season when women have less time to go to the forest. However, some grass from the forest is generally necessary for winter storage. 52% of respondents of the two villages said they gathered anywhere from half to all of their fodder needs from forest and pasture lands. These respondents had smaller land holdings and were unable to collect much of the daily fodder needs from their own fields. The remainder of households (48%) gathered from none to half of their fodder needs from their own fields. Only 18% (six of 33 women, two Scheduled Caste households from Chachoga and four Rajput households from both villages) suggested they did not

gather any fodder from the forest, and brought all fodder from their own fields. All had between three and 13 *bighas* of land.

In older orchards, women can get some firewood from pruned apple branches. These branches are small and thin and serve only as a complement to the firewood that comes from the forest. Fruit tree branches are not sufficient to provide all firewood for a household and therefore every household, regardless of the size of an orchard, will need to get some firewood from the forest. Through the collection of fodder and bedding, the agricultural system is fed through the by-product of cattle (mostly cow) manure. Manure, put into crop fields and apple orchards, also aids in the by-products of weeds as fodder, and branches from large apple trees that are pruned and used for firewood. In this way, indirectly, the fodder and bedding from the forest for animals goes into the agricultural system in the form of manure and provides for household needs through by-products of firewood and fodder for cows (see Figure 4.1).

In summary, the needs of a household in terms of agriculture and cattle raising are dependent upon common property village forests. Without the forest to provide bedding for cows, and the subsequent fertilizer that goes into agricultural lands, the soil would be much depleted and unproductive. Similarly, the grass cut from the forests as fodder for cows provides essential sustenance. It is a system that demands much time and energy to bring resources from the forest, to the animals, and ultimately to the soil. Women do much of the work of collecting animal bedding, fodder and firewood. Sethi estimates that 80-90% of the work related to cattle care is done by women (Sethi 1991:73) while Bhati and Singh (1987:WS-9) estimate that 69% of the work in tending

animals is performed by women. The trip up to the forest from the village to collect firewood, bedding or grass takes at least three to four hours to climb up the mountain, gather, and return to the village for each trip. It is no small task to bring a basket (*kilta*) full of firewood back to the village. The depletion of the forest is a process that has been occurring gradually and women spend much more time now than ever before collecting from the forest. Women estimated that a trip to the forest five years ago (when the *Mahila Mandal* was established) took only two hours. It is in this context that women's organization and commitment to protect village forests gains significance (to be discussed in Chapter 6).

### ***The Seasonal Cycle.***

Agriculturally based households negotiate cycles between agricultural fields and village forests and pastures (Figure 4.2). Winter comes with up to eight feet of snow and many activities, especially those from July to December, are in preparation for winter when no firewood, fodder or bedding can be collected. Snow can last for several months, beginning in January (sometimes earlier) and melting by March (sometimes February). The early part of the summer (March - June) is spent replenishing the diminished store and preparing for the agricultural season. The latter part of summer is dedicated to an intense effort at gathering for the winter months. The resources from the forests and fields are maximized at times when they are abundant and there is a constant interplay between field and forest activities, utilizing the resources that are available during different moments of the forest and agricultural cycles.

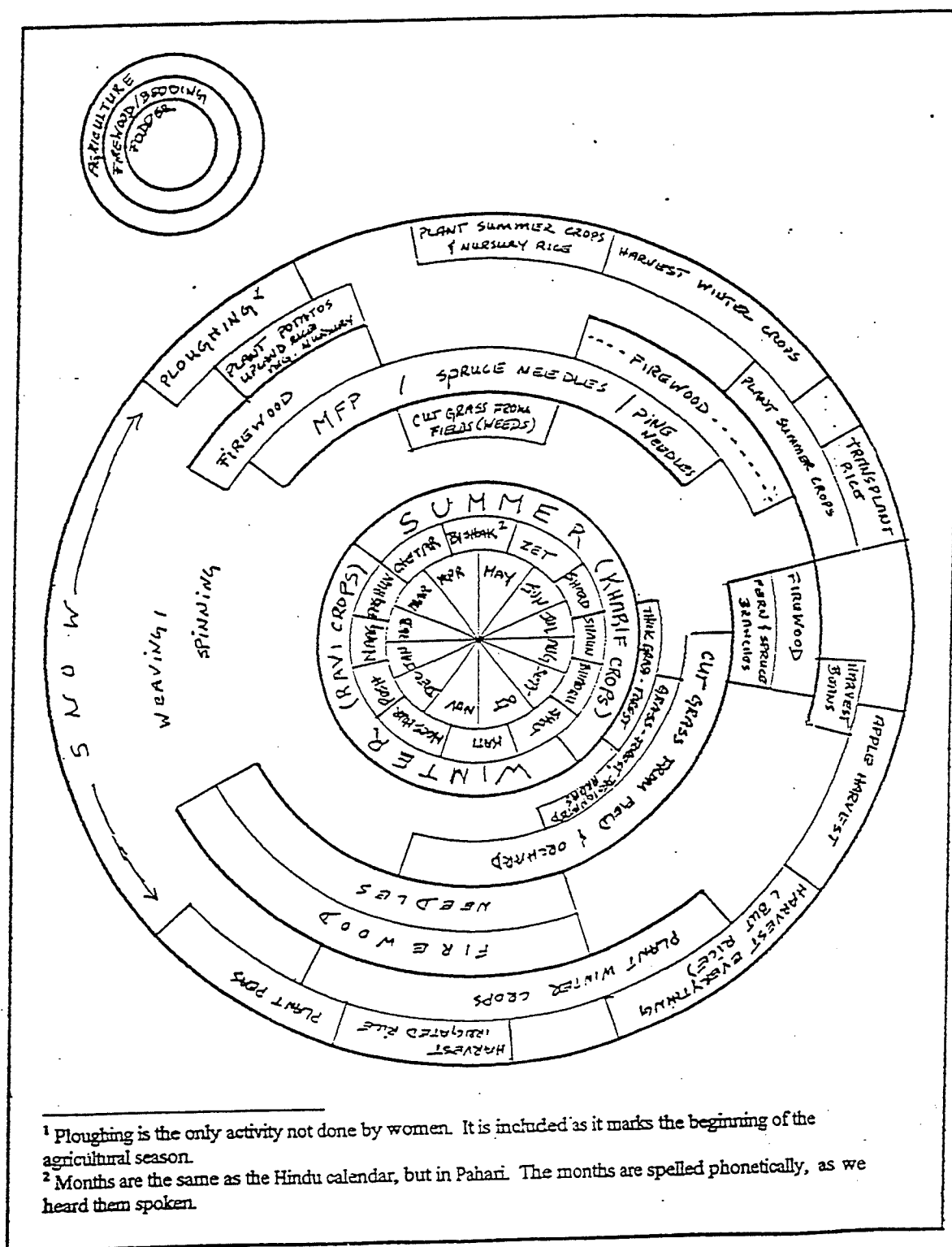


Figure 4.2 The intricate nature of women's seasonal activities, making up the seasonal cycle.



Forest gathering and agricultural activities (Figure 4.2) are those in which most households are involved to some degree, although it is more associated with the traditional farming Rajput caste of the valley. More recently, since land reform measures began in the 1950's, some Scheduled Caste households have also begun to farm their own land. Women are involved in every aspect of the cycle, while men help and assist at sporadic points throughout the cycle. There are specific activities for which men are largely responsible: ploughing, and to a large extent orcharding. Women do not plough, by social convention, and divorced or widowed women will have male relatives plough for them (inter-household cooperation will be discussed below). There are some activities for which women are solely responsible: weeding and transplanting rice. Figure 4.2 is considered a 'woman's seasonal cycle' as all the activities are ones in which most women are intensely involved. The main male activities are ploughing, caring for apple trees, and chopping firewood from the forest in work groups (during the months of November and December). Women will also join these work groups, especially helping to bring the chopped wood back to the village from the forest, although it is seen as 'men's work' at that time of year.<sup>40</sup> In terms of control of resources, men have control of cash incomes from apples, but women control and manage crop produce and inter-household trade. Women will also keep any income from the sale of milk and weaving.

The seasonal cycle details the seasonality of women's activities and the manner in which activities flow from one to another, implying a great deal of understanding of

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<sup>40</sup> 'Carrying' seems to be an activity largely associated with women. Women's major work in apple orcharding is to carry the harvested apples from the orchard to a central location where the apples will be packed. Although men cut firewood in preparation for winter, women are involved in carrying the firewood from the forest to the village. In Goshal, men who have access to a tractor will bring firewood across the river Beas to the village of Goshal by tractor.

forest and agricultural systems on the part of women. Women are continually mediating and negotiating between them, bringing resources from forest to field, forest to household, or field to household. Time is judged and balanced between present needs, availability of resources, and planning for winter, illness, and pregnancy. When time is not at a premium, women are constantly stocking for times when they may not be able to meet the household needs.

A complex and inseparable nature of forest and agricultural cycles is represented in Figure 4.2. The agricultural system cannot stand on its own without inputs from the forest, or at least not in any long-term sustainable sense, nor can cattle be raised without inputs from village forests (Moench and Bandyopadhyay 1985). For these reasons, village forests hold immense importance to household livelihood strategies, and these involve women to a great extent. The fact that it is largely women, and not men, connecting forest resources to agriculture and cattle-raising helps to explain women's interest in protecting common property forest resources from men who chop trees illegally and women who are seen to threaten forest health. Most women view the forest in a multifaceted way, finding it difficult to reduce the utility of the forest to a single resource. Some of the difficulties that arise within the village come from conflicting interests from the forests. Some men want the forest for lumber, and are willing to jeopardize other uses of a tree in order to obtain this single value from the forest. Similarly, some women with few needs from the forest also come into conflict with women who have diverse needs from the forest. Presently, in one of the villages of the study, women who need mainly firewood from the forest are in conflict with women who

gather for multiple uses from the forest. For example, women who lop branches off trees for firewood are in direct conflict with those who go to the forest to gather fallen pine or spruce needles from under the trees for bedding. Some of the dynamics of need, use and protection of village common forests will be discussed in Chapter 6.

To some extent, the differences in forest use can be related to caste.<sup>41</sup> The seasonal cycle is that of an agricultural household. Clearly, households that have little or no land do not follow this seasonal cycle in the same way that households with more land do. The land ownership data (see Figures 4.3 and 4.4 for charts on land ownership according to caste) for the two villages of the study suggest that in the village of Chachoga, an upper caste household on average owns nearly twice the amount of land, cows and bullocks as a lower caste household.<sup>42</sup> In Goshal the data are less dramatic but follow similar patterns whereby the average Rajput household owns marginally greater amounts of non-irrigated land, cows and bullocks, but substantially more irrigated land, apple trees and sheep (see Table 3.1 for fruit tree comparisons).

There are several things to consider on this point. The land ownership data presented in figures 4.3 and 4.4 for Chachoga and Goshal reveal historical patterns of Rajput ownership of land within the Kullu Valley. Present land ownership, however, is somewhat more equitably distributed between castes than was historically the case, and present figures reflect various periods of land reform as discussed in Chapter 3. These

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<sup>41</sup> I state this cautiously, as generalizations on forest use by caste are not entirely accurate, and also play into the tensions in the villages that exist between castes in the use of the forest.

<sup>42</sup> The *pradhan* of Chachoga estimates that 70% of Chachoga's land is presently owned by Rajputs, a significant amount when one considers that Scheduled Caste households make up 56% of Chachoga's households. The largest land owning family owns 60 *bighas*, which is divided between two brothers who live in separate parts of the same house.

periods of land reform did not accomplish all that was intended, however, and many already landed Rajput families obtained common lands (*nautor* land) or escaped giving up their extensive land holdings. As well, much of the land redistributed to the landless during this period was categorized as undemarcated protected forest (UPF, see Figure 3.2), and was primarily land with a high vertical gradient, and thus incompatible with agriculture (Jodha 1986). This land, however, can be used for planting apple orchards. The end result is that Scheduled Castes now have more land than before, but land that is often unsuitable for agriculture, while both Rajputs and Scheduled Castes took advantage of land reform that essentially privatized village common lands, and converted it primarily to private orchards (which both Rajputs and Scheduled Castes own).

The women's seasonal activities, as presented in Figure 4.2, are suggestive of an agricultural system that has historical linkages to the landed Rajput caste. The lines are, in reality, quite blurred between upper caste and lower caste livelihood strategies where many Scheduled Caste households are agricultural households, especially in the village of Goshal. While the differences between castes should not be over-emphasized, there are perceptible differences, some of which help to explain the conflicts in forest use and issues of control that occur within women's actions in forest protection. Caste does not define one's economic situation, nor the use one makes of common resources, but is indicative of historic and present patterns of economic, social and political conditions within a village.

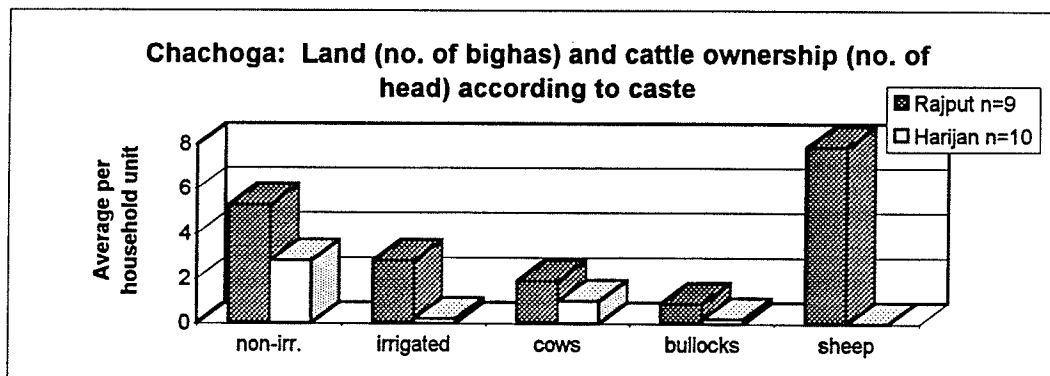


Figure 4.3 Chachoga: Comparison of average land and cattle ownership by caste.

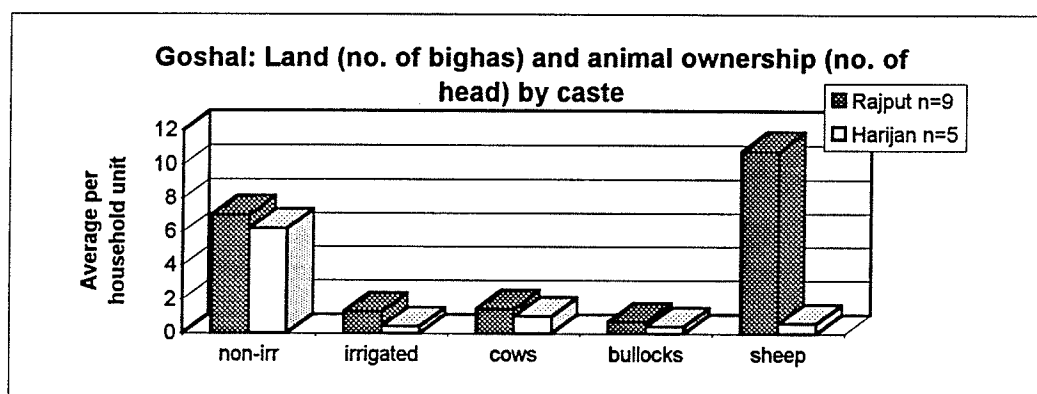


Figure 4.4 Goshal: Comparison of average land and cattle ownership by caste.

### ***Reciprocal Labor Sharing Arrangements***

There are many periods throughout the seasonal cycle when a household depends upon the labor from another household in exchange for their own labor. Reciprocal labor-sharing relationships (Agarwal 1992; Sethi 1991) have been institutionalized in Pahari culture in the Kullu Valley through the concepts of *pleidi* and *suari*, both of which largely involve cooperation between women. There are also other moments of activity that do not involve labor exchange, but simply women accompanying each other in their daily activities. Through reciprocal labor-sharing relationships and the work women do together, women have built a strong presence within the village and exert a sense of informal agency through their collective labor activities and exchange (Sharma 1980). I would suggest that these relationships are possibly the foundation of women's formal organization, and provide the basis for women to act collectively in an organized manner, as this is a pattern well established in their informal relationships.

*Pleidi* and *suari* are both reciprocal labor-sharing relationships, although each comes into play at different points in a livelihood cycle. *Pleidi* is associated with short-term work that requires many people for a day or two to work through an intensive labor period. *Pleidi* is most often drawn upon in building a house, when large stones need to be brought from the river, or mud from the forest. Men and women both participate in *pleidi*, and the host family is required to feed people for the day of work, and to reciprocate when those who gave their labor need work done at their own households. *Suari* is closely associated with agricultural work, and women form the bulk of *suari* labor. *Suari* is heavily used during the agricultural cycle when work needs to be done

quickly at a critical period, for example, in the transplantation of rice, and in harvesting. These are the basic tasks that require *suari*, although women will often get together in *suari* to pass other intense work periods, such as weeding. *Suari* involves a group of three to 12 people, although it is most often women who get together.<sup>43</sup> *Suari* labor exchange requires that the person who receives labor from others on their own household's field work the same amount of days on the fields of those who helped.

Women will also work together in forest gathering activities, but in ways that do not form part of a reciprocal labor exchange. When women travel up to the forest together, each woman is gathering for her own household. On August 20, a date that is specifically set by the *mimbers* for the cutting of grass from the *jungly* (referring to both pastures and forests), women will go in a large group to the forest to collect grass (fodder), but this is not considered *suari*. Women go together, but collect their own basket (*kilta*) of grass for their own households. One woman explained to me that they cannot cut grass in *suari* because all the good grass would be cut the first day for the woman benefiting from *suari* that day. It is, therefore, necessary to collect grass individually, although women go together to do so. Firewood collection is the same as grass collection--women work alongside each other, but each for her own household. The exception to firewood collection is during the months of November and December, when firewood collection is done in *pleidi*, and largely by groups of men. Men will cut trees for firewood in groups, and help each other bring the wood back to the village, a point where women will also become involved in firewood collection in *pleidi*. In the

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<sup>43</sup> *Suari* is not limited to women's labor exchange, although for weeding and transplanting rice, women form *suari* labor. Harvesting is a mixed endeavor, where both men and women work in *suari*.

months of November and December, when men are responsible for firewood, trees are cut and chopped for firewood, as opposed to the everyday collection that occurs throughout the year by women in gathering twigs, branches and shrubs.

There are other forms of labor exchange that occur during the cycle of activities, and exchange in labor in animal rearing is common. Taking cows daily to pasture can be done by taking turns caring for a herd of cattle between several households that own animals. Taking sheep and goats to pasture can also take the form of labor sharing when shepherds trade off in taking herds of sheep to pasture for a period of time. Other forms of exchange involve households without a cow that provide fodder and bedding for someone else's cow. Households provide these services for a period of time in order to collect cow manure for use on their fields. These relationships are often between kin who live in different households. In two cases, the young daughter-in-law provided fodder and bedding for her mother-in-law's cows and took all the dung to the fields of her husband. In one of these cases the mother-in-law, as a widow, had divided all her land between her three sons and did not have land any longer. In both cases the mothers-in-law lived in separate houses. In another household, a divorced woman took care of her brother's cow to carry out her farming, as her brother was a shepherd and away for much of the year.

There is also exchange between households in the use of bullocks. As most households do not own two bullocks (only 3/33, or 9% of households own two bullocks: one Scheduled Caste household, which actually owns two bull calves, and two Rajput households), some relationship is required to ensure that fields are plowed, especially for



a single woman (five of the 33 households interviewed were female-headed households, either divorced women or widows) who cannot plough her own fields, according to social convention. Sharing bullocks does not necessarily occur between households of kin, except in the case of a single woman who will depend on a brother or son to plough her field for her. If a household has one bullock (12/33 or 36% of the households between the two villages owned one bullock; two were Scheduled Caste households and the remainder were Rajput households) they will combine with another household that also has one bullock, working each other's fields with the pair. In this instance, using bullocks that "walk well together"<sup>44</sup> is as important as the kin relationship between these households. Households that do not have any bullocks (only 20% of Scheduled Caste households had any bullocks, while 80% of Rajput households own at least one bullock) must either rent a pair of bullocks, work in exchange for the use of the bullocks, or prepare the soil by hand. The rental fee for a pair of bullocks is extremely high at Rs 200/day (\$10/day; the daily wage is Rs 24/day) and the pair is needed for at least two days. Poorer households without much land will dig up the soil by hand, work that is done by both men and women. One Scheduled Caste woman from Goshal explained that she dug up the soil in *pleidi*, calling upon other women to help. The four households that said they dug the land by hand were all Scheduled Caste households from Goshal.

In summary, households maintain livelihood strategies in many different ways. I have given an overview of the dominant agricultural cycle in which women contribute substantial labor and knowledge. Agricultural work and gathering work undertaken by

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<sup>44</sup> As one of my consultants put it.

women incorporate strong social components and women, at various points in their cycle of activities, draw upon and contribute to a network of cooperation with other women.

Throughout this chapter I have alluded to the fact that the seasonal activities in the seasonal cycle (Figure 4.2) represent, in varying ways, aspects of most women's activities, but are most representative of households with a land and cattle base of agricultural resources. The next chapter focuses on the household interviews and the use women make of forest commons, but also details how Rajput households more characteristically maintain the seasonal cycle in their predominant forest-agricultural strategy. It will also become clear that, regardless of actual ownership of land and cattle, almost all women need and use forest resources to sustain their household in some way.

The intense nature of household cooperation and labor sharing exchanges between women is an important element in livelihood strategies. I have suggested that the labor sharing arrangements between women may contribute to the strength of a women's organization, and that the structure of the Mahila Mahdal functions because of the informal networks women have amongst themselves. But even within this 'women's network' there are divisions; women from land owning, agricultural households require and reciprocate labor in a different way than do women earning a wage labor income. For example, women with agricultural fields will need help at critical points in transplanting rice, weeding and harvesting, and can benefit from reciprocal labor in large groups to get work finished on her field, and then be able to work at someone else's. Women who are involved in wage labor may not have the time disposable to help out on others' fields, and also depend on intense agricultural work periods for a waged

agricultural work, and would not have reciprocating needs in the agricultural cycle to enter into a labor exchange in the way a woman from a landed household would. Implicit in this is a caste distinction that could contribute to the social divisions within women's organization. I will return to the *Mahila Mandal* in Chapter 6. First, however, I will discuss in more detail the household survey, and the similarities and differences between households in their use of village commons based on caste and economic factors.

## Chapter 5

### DIFFERENCE IN LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: ANALYSIS OF HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS

#### *Caste and Ownership of Resources.*

In the previous chapter I outlined the general forest-agricultural system of the Kullu Valley that uniquely characterizes the Himalayan livelihood system (see also: Sethi 1991; Bhati and Singh 1987; Moench and Bandyopadhyay 1985; Shiva and Dankelman 1992). This characterization of rural Himalayan village systems would not be accurate nor complete, however, were I to leave the system as a homogeneous one, in which all households negotiate identical livelihood strategies. Households within villages in the Kullu Valley employ various livelihood strategies, some based on small land and cattle holdings, some on larger holdings, and some on wage incomes. Therefore, in this chapter I would like to look deeper into the livelihood strategies of households with differing caste and economic backgrounds.

It is not sufficient to suggest one identifiable livelihood system for the rural villages of the Kullu Valley. In this chapter I will describe both the activities that are similar between households by caste and economic status, as well as the differences between households by caste and by economic status as evident in the pursuit of various livelihood strategies, and in use of village forests and pastures. As will become apparent, there are no clear boundaries that set apart lower caste and upper caste livelihood strategies. However, it will also become apparent that Rajput households tend to own more resources and are in a stronger position to negotiate agricultural livelihood

strategies than Scheduled Caste households, although this is more the case in Chachoga than in Goshal. If I were to construct an image of the interactions of caste, economics and livelihood strategies, more lower caste households would be at a wage labor/little ownership of land and cattle end of a continuum while more upper caste households would be at agriculturally-based livelihood/greater ownership of land and cattle end of the continuum. In the middle are a myriad of Scheduled Caste and Rajput households negotiating varying degrees of agricultural livelihoods based on small amounts of land and cattle and some combination of wage incomes or small business enterprise with small-scale agriculture.

My intention in this chapter is to show, through the data gathered in the summer of 1994 field trip, the kind of interaction that exists between caste and economic status. As well, I will draw upon field data that suggest that greater land and cattle ownership correlates to some degree with more intense gathering activities from village forests. There are two issues I am ultimately addressing in this chapter. The first is the kind of use or need a household demands of forest commons. The second is the differences in women's activities that are associated with their households' economic requirements from forest commons. Ultimately, the question is whether the use different households make of forest commons affects the composition of women's groups and their subsequent actions in guarding and defending forest resources.

The latter question derives from queries at both fieldwork and theoretical levels. The literature that gives attention to class issues and the commons emphasizes that the poor are those who depend upon village commons (Jodha 1986), as well as those who

actively defend the commons (Agarwal 1992). While this may be the case at a macro level, through interviewing in Chachoga it seemed that the poor at the village level were not intensely involved in commons activity, nor those who actively defend forest commons. In the village of Chachoga it was actually the case that increased land and cattle ownership correlated with increased forest gathering activities. Because it was Rajput households that owned more agricultural resources and gathered extensively from village forests, at some level it stood to reason that Rajput women were dominant politically and numerically in the *Mahila Mandal*. This is, in fact, the case--but in Chachoga only. Other aspects that emerge from contrasting village data from Chachoga and Goshal suggest that management and issues of control over village forests is not as clear-cut as they first seemed in the village of Chachoga, and that there are social and political dimensions to the management of village commons that need to be recognized and addressed.

I will begin by presenting each village in its caste context and describe household ownership of resources and resultant forest use. In both villages, greater amounts of land and cattle correlate with greater forest gathering activity. In both villages Rajput households own more resources of land and cattle than Scheduled Caste households, although there is greater economic stratification between castes in Chachoga than in Goshal. In Chachoga there is more contrast in livelihood strategies between Rajput and Scheduled Caste households than in Goshal, and in Goshal Scheduled Castes are more agriculturally based than Scheduled Cases in Chachoga. However, in spite of the fact that Goshal Scheduled Caste households negotiate intense forest-agricultural livelihood

strategies similar to Rajput households, there is little representation of Scheduled Caste women in the Goshal *Mahila Mandal*. In Chachoga there is also very little representation of Scheduled Caste households in the *Mahila Mandal*. In Chachoga, there is also a good deal of conflict between members and non-members of the *Mahila Mandal* within the village.

Therefore, despite the material correlation between caste, economic status and forest use which forms the content of this chapter, there are good reasons to conclude that local institutional management of village forests is not a direct result of use, dependence and interactions with village commons, but ultimately the result of village socio-political dynamics on this material basis.

I should clarify that land and cattle are not the only indicators of economic status, although they are easily discernible ones and are significant indicators of socio-economic status. For this reason, land and cattle ownership are the main indicators I use for classifying a household's economic position within a village, although some households have the ownership of other means of production that are also indicative of economic status (such as hotels and tractors). Although generalizations can be made about caste and economic status, it is worth reiterating that a household's economic status is not a direct reflection of caste, and economic status is actually quite variable within castes.

Traditionally speaking, Scheduled Castes have been in inferior positions both economically and socially throughout the Kullu Valley (discussed in Chapter 3). Changes have been occurring over the past decades as more Scheduled Castes have gained some land through land reform, obtained government and teaching positions

throughout the country, and as caste status changes with urbanization (Jayaraman 1981). In Himachal Pradesh, as in other states, land reform has had the intent of converting common lands into private ownership, intended primarily for the poor (ODA 1994, Vol. 2, Annex 1). This has occurred to some extent, and more Scheduled Caste households have entered into 'agricultural livelihoods.' Goshal is a good example of this, and the Scheduled Castes in that village pursue agricultural livelihoods with the aid of *nautor* land (see Figure 5.3). However, although changes have been gradually occurring in land ownership and in livelihood patterns, some basic distinctions remain between upper and lower castes. A village-by-village discussion of caste ownership of resources reveals the firmly established pattern of economic dominance by upper castes in the Kullu Valley.

To aid in distinguishing between the households within my survey I have classified the households within the study into three groups: those having 'poor,' 'small' and 'larger' land and cattle holdings. These terms are used in the discussion of village level economic difference. 'Poor' in this context does not correspond with anyone's classifications but my own within the village context I studied, as all households within my study are 'poor' by the standards set out by others, such as Jodha (1986) or Agarwal (1992). Although the differences may seem based on minute distinctions, the differences in the classifications set out below are, in reality, quite significant at the village level. In fact, I will argue subsequently that the 'poor' at this village level actually constitute a distinct class of essentially landless laborers as they are unable to pursue agricultural livelihoods on the land resource base they own.



I classify 'poor' households as holding less than three *bighas* of land with an accompanying small ownership of apple trees (less than 100) and one or no cows. 'Small' holders in ownership of resources are defined as having three to nine *bighas* of land, with over 100 apple trees and one or more cattle. 'Larger' sized holdings are defined as those with more than nine *bighas* of land, more than one cattle (cows and bullocks) and more than 100 apple trees. The real difference between 'small' and 'larger' households is in land ownership, as cattle ownership is between one and four cattle in most households. Ownership of apple trees is also variable, and not dependent upon the actual land holdings of a household as each household varies anywhere between 50 and 800 apple trees in 'small' to 'larger' holdings. In general, however, 'small' holdings average between 100-200 apple trees while 'larger' holdings average 200 to 400, although there are outliers in both categories. The classifications are somewhat arbitrarily decided, and provide units of analysis for my study only and are not hard and fast classifications for households.

For both villages covered in the survey, 11% of Rajput households, and 47% of Scheduled Caste households interviewed were 'poor.' Of the 'small' owning households in the total survey, 33% of Rajput households and 40% of Scheduled Caste households owned 'small' amounts of land and cattle. 56% of Rajput households and 13% of Scheduled Caste households were 'larger' owning households of land and cattle. These are based upon combined data from both villages, although Goshal village has a similar breakdown of 'poor,' 'small' and 'larger' households.

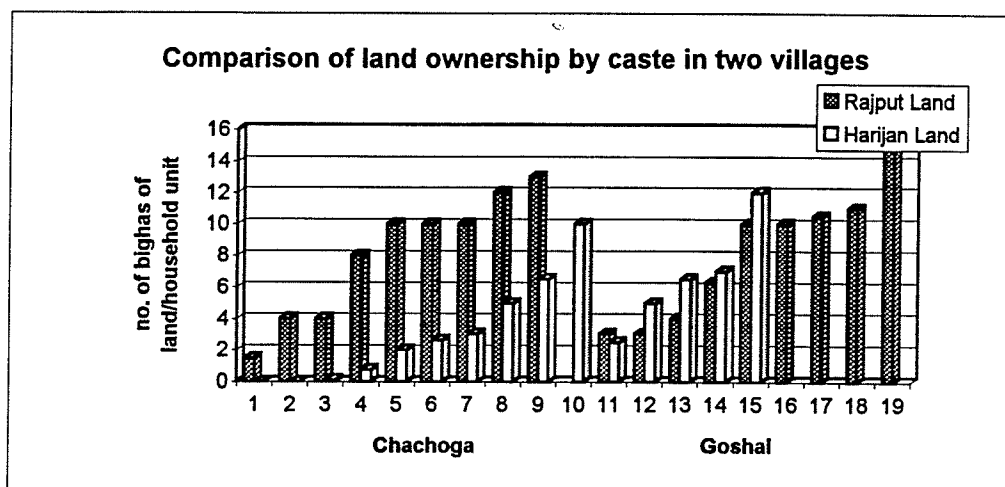
### ***The Village of Chachoga.***

Chachoga's population consists of 56% Scheduled Castes and 44% Rajput caste. Even with over half its population being from lower castes, the village *pradhan* estimates that the Rajput caste owns 70% of village land. Chachoga, and more specifically the lower castes from Chachoga, has the greatest proportion of 'poor' households between the two villages in the study (see Table 5.1 for details of village caste ownership). Seven out of nine (78%) of the poorest households in the total survey (from Goshal and Chachoga) are from Chachoga and six of the nine poorest households in the total survey are Scheduled Castes from Chachoga.

The majority (60%) of Scheduled Caste households in the Chachoga survey are 'poor' relative to other households within the village, while the majority of Rajput households in the survey (56%) are of 'larger' size land and cattle ownership, most owning large apple orchards (ten out of twelve, or 83% of larger land owning households own 200 to 800 apple trees). Sheep in the past, and presently, are primarily owned by Rajputs. In the past (10-20 years ago), six out of nine Rajput households had sheep (anywhere from 18 to 400 sheep and goats owned by a household). Presently only four out of nine Rajput households have sheep in very diminished numbers (20 or less).<sup>45</sup> No household in the survey owns more than four cattle, and three cows is the most owned by any one household. The real differences in economic status comes in land, in type of land, and in ownership of sheep (see Figures 4.3 and 4.4). All of the 'larger

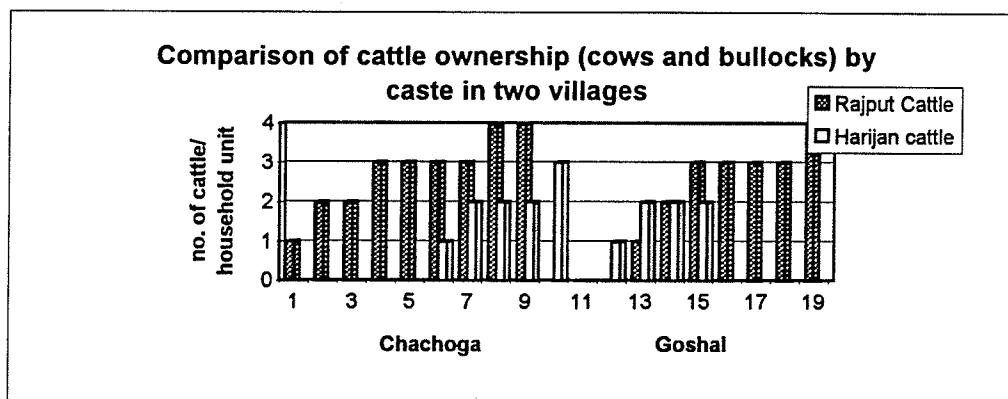
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<sup>45</sup> The decline in the ownership of sheep can be seen in Appendix I in the two columns 'sheep' and 'past sheep.'



Note: Each bar in the graph is arranged in numerical order from smallest to largest in order to illustrate an household by household contrast. The first three households for Chachoga do not have any land and do not show up on the graph, while the last four households for Goshal do not have Harijan comparison households.

Figure 5.1 Chachoga and Goshal: Comparisons of household land ownership by caste (each histogram represents a household).



Note: Each bar in the graph is arranged in numerical order from smallest to largest. The first five households for Chachoga do not have any cattle while the last four households for Goshal do not have Harijan comparison households.

Figure 5.2 Chachoga and Goshal: Comparisons of household ownership of cattle by caste (each histogram represents a household).

sized households own some irrigated land (see Table 5.1), while only one of the six 'poor' households own irrigated land, and it was only one *bigha*.

### **Scheduled Castes of Chachoga.**

Poverty amongst the Scheduled Castes of Chachoga is more predominant than in Goshal and 60% are 'poor' land and cattle owning households. Three out of ten (30%) Scheduled Caste households in the Chachoga survey are 'small' with three to nine *bighas* of land and one to three cattle. One Scheduled Caste household (10%) in Chachoga stands in contrast to the rest and has 'larger' sized holdings with ten *bighas* of land (no irrigated land) and one cow, as well as a pair of bullocks. Only two other households in the survey own bullocks, and both are Chachoga Rajput households. The woman interviewed from this 'larger' owning Scheduled Caste household is one of the few active members from the Scheduled Castes in the *Mahila Mandal* and also works for the NGO in its daycare programme. Two Scheduled Caste households own over 100 apple trees. In terms of forest use, in spite of the fact that Scheduled Caste households in Chachoga have mainly 'poor' and 'small' land and cattle holdings, all of the ten Scheduled Caste households in Chachoga in the survey draw upon common property resources for at least firewood, and in seven of the households fodder is cut from common property forests and pastures, and in seven out of the ten bedding is gathered from village commons. Wage labor, primarily agricultural labor, is predominant amongst Scheduled Castes in Chachoga. Nine (90%) of the Scheduled Caste households in the survey draw upon wage labor as a livelihood strategy, and in seven of these households women work as agricultural laborers for other people in the village.

Table 5.1 Summary Information of household ownership of resources, use of forest and income activities in Chachoga and Goshal.

Village and household	Caste	Total land owned (irr & non-irr) (bighas)	Total cattle (cows & bulls)	Total apple trees (sm & lg)	days gathering from forest (women) <sup>1</sup>	uses of forest <sup>2</sup>	Outside income (non-household based income) <sup>3</sup>
Chachoga1	Rajput	10	4	200	130	bgf	F:works in village daycare
2	Rajput	10	4	200	0	—	H:owns saw mill
3	Rajput	4	2	60	127	gsfmb	—
4	Rajput	1.5	1	70	87	smf	F:works in village daycare
5	Rajput	10	3	450	158	fsmbgk	—
6	Rajput	13	3	800	93	bsmgkf	—
7	Rajput	8	3	100	156	sfbmg	—
8	Rajput	4	3	90	86	sfbmg	—
9	Rajput	12	2	450	91	sfgb	—
10	Harijan	6.5	2	60	96	sfrm	FIL: Notary Republic/tea stall
11	Harijan	0.75	0	63	121	sfrm	H:tea stall
12	Harijan	2.6	0	35	145	fsmbg	W:ag labor/tea stall/D: rug laborer
13	Harijan	10	3	335	114	sgf	W:daycare/H:gov't
14	Harijan	5	2	550	88	fsrm	W:ag labor/H:bazaar stall
15	Harijan	0	0	0	52	f	W:ag labor/H:bazaar stall
16	Harijan	2	0	5	67	fmg	W:ag labor
17	Harijan	0.1	0	3	69	fg	W:ag labor/H:laborer
18	Harijan	0	2	0	126	fsfb	—
19	Harijan	3	1	250	40	fsmbg	W:ag labor/H:carpenter
Goshal 20	Rajput	3	0	60	81	fsbrg	—
21	Rajput	6.3	3	182	106	fsbrg	—
22	Rajput	11	4	300	109	fsbrg	S:trekking guide/owns hotel
23	Rajput	15.5	1	350	—	—	H: contractor
24	Rajput	10	3	320	123	fsbrgm	S:stall in bazaar
25	Rajput	10.5	3	570	78	fsbrgm	H:vender/S: bazaar
26	Rajput	4	0	185	113	fsbrg	F: sells forest produce/sells rice wine
27	Rajput	11	3	75	84	fsbrg	S: owns tractor (rents out)
28	Rajput	3	2	115	94	fsbrgm	S:takes yak to pass (tourism)
29	Harijan	7	1	440	125	fsbrg	W:midwife/H:drives tractor
30	Harijan	12	2	135	139	fsbrg	S:hotel owner/FIL: military
31	Harijan	5	2	50	148	fsbrg	H: tailor
32	Harijan	2.5	0	20	56	fg	W:weaves for others/H:religious man
33	Harijan	6.5	2	?	111	fsbrg	S:owns tractor

<sup>1</sup> Number of days spend gathering in forest is based upon the main female worker of the household and her activity gathering from village pastures and forests.

<sup>2</sup> Letters indicate the following (same as Table 1):

f=firewood; s=surd (bedding); b=barn (bedding); g=grass (fodder); m=minor forest produce (e.g. mushrooms, tender ferns)

\* k=kadari (goat fodder)

\*found only in Chachoga

\*\* r=rakti (bedding)

\*\*done only in Goshal

<sup>3</sup> W=Wife; H=Husband; D=Daughter; S=Son; F=Female (single, widowed, divorced).

### **Rajputs of Chachoga.**

One of the more striking differences between the upper and lower castes in Chachoga is participation in wage labor. While 90% of Scheduled Caste households enter into wage labor, only two out of nine (22%) Rajput households in Chachoga have wage labor incomes, and both of these are the women within the household who work for the village daycare (see Table 5.1). Livelihoods are more securely based upon land amongst the Rajputs of Chachoga. Of the nine Rajput households interviewed in Chachoga, three (33%) are 'small,' and five (56%) Rajput households are 'larger' holders of land. Only one of the Rajput households in Chachoga (11%) falls into the 'poor' category, with 1.5 *bighas* and one female calf. This woman is a divorced woman living on her own and is one of the workers in the daycare. She is actually a woman who wields considerable power within the *Mahila Mandal* and is from one of the original families of the village. Animal ownership in Chachoga amongst the Rajput households is high, and every Rajput household has at least one cow, while six out of nine (67%) have two cows, and one family has three cows (but no bullocks). The two Rajput households with a pair of bullocks each have ten *bighas* of land and two cows. Ownership of two bullocks is significant in that a household can rent a pair of bullocks to households that do not have bullocks, or require labor for the use of a pair of bullocks.

Rajput households in Chachoga are predominantly agricultural households, with little wage labor income. This is partially attributed to livelihood security through agriculture. In relation to commons use, the intensive agricultural nature of Rajput livelihood strategies draws upon common property resources, especially for firewood

and bedding for cows. All households obtain firewood from the commons, while eight out of nine households collected bedding and most (six out of nine) need to collect at least some of their fodder from forests and pastures (anywhere from 50-100%). The three remaining households collect grass mostly from their fields, with some collection from the forest.

In summary, if one contrasts the Scheduled Castes with the Rajputs from Chachoga, while there is economic stratification between upper and lower castes, it is remarkable how similar dependence upon village common lands is for firewood, cattle bedding and fodder. In fact, Scheduled Caste and Rajput households are both dependent upon products they can gather from village forests, even though there is great economic stratification between them.

### ***The Village of Goshal.***

In Goshal, the most marked difference between castes is in the ownership of irrigated land and sheep. Seven out of nine (78%) Goshal Rajput households in the survey own irrigated land while two out of five (40%) Scheduled Caste households in the survey own irrigated land. The overall amount of irrigated land owned in Goshal is smaller than in Chachoga, but, in contrast with Chachoga, some Scheduled Caste households own irrigated land in Goshal.

### **Scheduled Castes of Goshal.**

The Scheduled Castes make up only 17% of the household population in the village of Goshal, and five Scheduled Caste households were interviewed in my survey.

Of the five Scheduled Caste households interviewed in Goshal, only one falls into the classification of 'poor.' Three out of five (60%) households are 'small' holders of land and cattle, while one household owns a 'larger' land holding of 12 *bighas*. The four 'small' and 'larger' owning households have at least one cow (one household has two cows) and two of the five have one bullock. Two Scheduled Caste households in the survey have over 100 apple trees (up to 440 trees) while the other three Scheduled Caste households also have trees, but fewer than 100. Four out of five households gather firewood and bedding from the forest, while three gather grass mostly from the forest (two gather mostly from their fields). None of the Goshal lower caste households enter into agricultural wage labor, but all have diversified types of household incomes. For example, one woman weaves for others and another is a midwife. Among the men in these different households one drives a tractor, one owns a hotel, one is in the military, one is a tailor, one is the village religious man, and one owns a tractor (see Table 5.1).

In summary, Scheduled Caste households in Goshal are better off than Scheduled Castes in Chachoga (Table 3.1). They tend to own more non-irrigated land and on average slightly more irrigated land, cattle, sheep and fruit trees. Table 3.1 also indicates that Scheduled Castes from Goshal on average spend more time collecting from village forests and pastures than Scheduled Castes from Chachoga. They also gather more than Rajputs from Goshal (see Figure 5.9). Scheduled Caste households from Goshal have more resources of land and cattle by which to develop intense forest agricultural livelihood strategies than Scheduled Castes from Chachoga. No lower caste people entered into agricultural wage labor in Goshal. It is interesting to note, however, that



Goshal Scheduled Caste households pursue agriculture without owning, renting or sharing bullocks, but by preparing the land by hand.

### **Rajputs of Goshal.**

The Rajput caste in Goshal makes up 83% of the households of the village. One out of the nine (11%) Rajput households interviewed is considered 'poor' by the standards indicated. Three (33%) Rajput households interviewed have 'small' holdings, while five (56%) in Goshal have 'larger' holdings of over ten *bighas*. No Rajput household in Goshal owns a pair of bullocks, as two Rajput households do in Chachoga, but six (67%) have one bullock. Seven households have over 100 trees (up to 570 trees). Eight Goshal Rajput households (89%) make use of the forest in collecting firewood and cow bedding while six out of nine households (67%) gather grass mostly from their fields and orchards. Only three Rajput households from Goshal gather 50-100% of their fodder from the forest. Therefore, Goshal Rajput households do not draw heavily upon village commons for fodder, but use commons mostly for firewood and bedding, whereas in Chachoga, Rajputs draw heavily from village commons for firewood, bedding and fodder.

Employment outside of the agricultural household is also very diverse amongst Goshal Rajputs, as it is amongst the Scheduled Castes of the village. It is mostly men who undertake outside employment: one is a trekking guide, two own stalls in the bazaar, one owns a yak and takes it to Rohtang pass for the tourists, and two own tractors. One divorced woman sells rice wine and grass collected from the forest.

***Differing village contexts: Chachoga and Goshal.***

While in both Chachoga and Goshal the average Rajput household owns more resources than the average Scheduled Caste household, each village context presents its own dynamic of caste composition and economic stratification. There is a more equitable ownership of land and cattle between castes in the village of Goshal than in Chachoga, although ownership of sheep and irrigated land is still predominantly maintained by the Rajput caste in Goshal (see Figures 4.3 and 4.4). In Goshal as well as in Chachoga much of the non-irrigated land owned by lower caste households is *nautor* land (see Figure 5.3), and predictably poorer quality land. An accompanying study (Iain Davidson-Hunt 1995) shows a more detailed pattern of land and cattle ownership in the village of Goshal. Figure 5.3 specifies the ownership of *nautor* land (encompassed into non-irrigated land data in my survey), indicating approximately 60% of this redistributed land being owned by lower caste households. Ownership of *nautor* land is evidently a problem in Chachoga more than in Goshal. Goshal Scheduled Caste households have been able to pursue agriculture on this land and it was especially in the village of Chachoga where Scheduled Caste women complained about the quality of their land, and the fact that it only served for building a house. It is worth repeating that Goshal has few Scheduled Caste households and a considerable amount of common land (see Figure 3.2).

Goshal and Chachoga both have very different patterns of non-agricultural incomes. Goshal is a much more diversified village in terms of male employment outside of the village, amongst both the lower and the upper castes. Men from Goshal engage in

the tourist industry to a greater extent, through the ownership of hotels or tea stalls, or by working at Rohtang Pass during the tourist season (see Table 5.1). Three households from Goshal also own tractors, whereas no households in Chachoga own tractors. One reason for this is presumably Goshal's proximity to the main road. Goshal is located directly across the Beas river from the main road, where there is a small village. Bhang serves the flow of tourists as buses and taxis stop in the village, and there are hotels and tea stalls set up to serve travelers.<sup>46</sup> Chachoga is up the mountainside, not accessible by road, and draws from the resources available in Manali, the major centre. For example, instead of setting up shops in Chachoga, or nearer by, people will take the 15 minute walk to Manali to go to the main market.<sup>47</sup> Tractors were inaccessible to Chachoga, which partly explains the lack of tractor ownership.

Women's livelihood activities are also quite distinct amongst the Scheduled Castes in Goshal and Chachoga. Women in Goshal Scheduled Caste households are more active in pursuing a household-based agricultural livelihood, while women from Scheduled Caste households in Chachoga are more involved in agricultural wage labor (Table 5.1).

The differences between Goshal and Chachoga in the village common property resources available to Scheduled Castes is a factor in the kind of livelihood strategy a Scheduled Caste household may negotiate. In the village of Goshal, where people are

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<sup>46</sup> The new bus station for Manali is expected to be built in Bhang, which will likely draw more people into working in Bhang from Goshal.

<sup>47</sup> This does not explain, however, Chachoga's lack of involvement in tourism. I cannot comment as to the reasons men in Chachoga are not interested in working in areas that some men have embraced in Goshal. Chachoga is simply less involved with the diversity of activities in the area, while Goshal is enmeshed in the tourist industry to a greater extent.

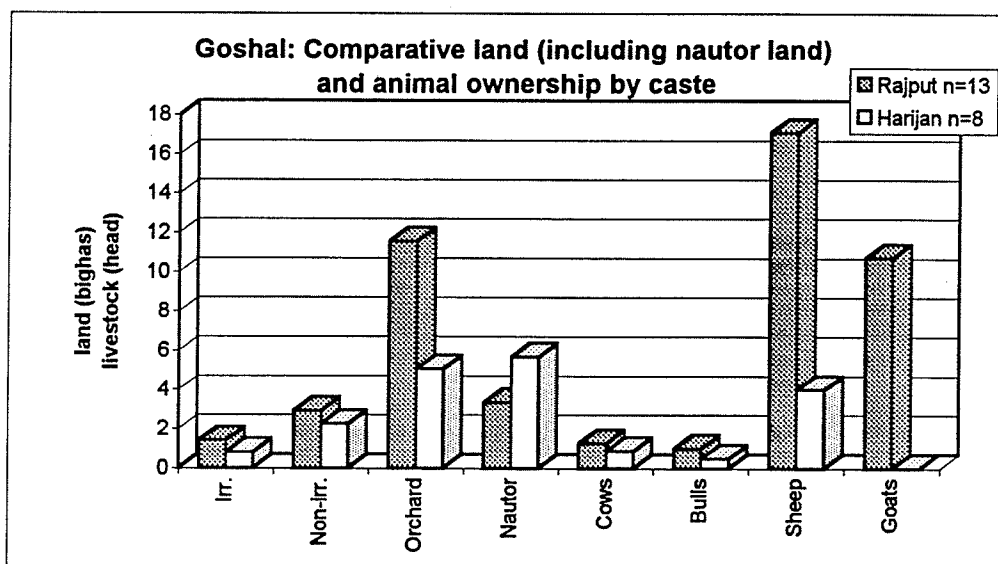


Figure 5.3: Goshal nautor land: Average caste ownership of land and livestock, including nautor land (included as non-irrigated land in all other figures) (source: I. Davidson-Hunt, 1995).

more economically homogenous between castes and in their needs from village commons, the women's organization has not developed an active component of forest protection. As well, the area of forest land for the pursuit of agricultural livelihood activities is much more extensive in Goshal than in Chachoga (see Figure 3.2). In Chachoga, where there are more striking differences between castes economically, which reflects diverse needs from forest commons, there is an active organization of forest protection in favor of preserving village commons for agricultural livelihoods. There is also more tension between upper castes and lower castes in the village of Chachoga regarding forest use and management.

### ***Ownership of resources and forest use.***

How, then, does a household's ownership of land and cattle influence a woman's time spent gathering from village forests? Some basic components of forest use are illustrated through combining the data from Chachoga and Goshal. Figures 5.4 and 5.5 show land and cattle ownership, and how ownership of these resources is reflected in forest use.

Most women belong to households that own more than three *bighas* of land and one or more cattle (24 out of 33, or 73% of respondents), and use the forest in at least four basic areas: firewood, bedding in the form of fallen needles from evergreens (*surd*), bedding in the form of ferns (*barn*), and grass as fodder (see Table 5.1 for each respondent's use of the forest). Although there are several respondents who do not have much land or cattle (nine out of 33, or 27% of respondents) and are 'poor' by my

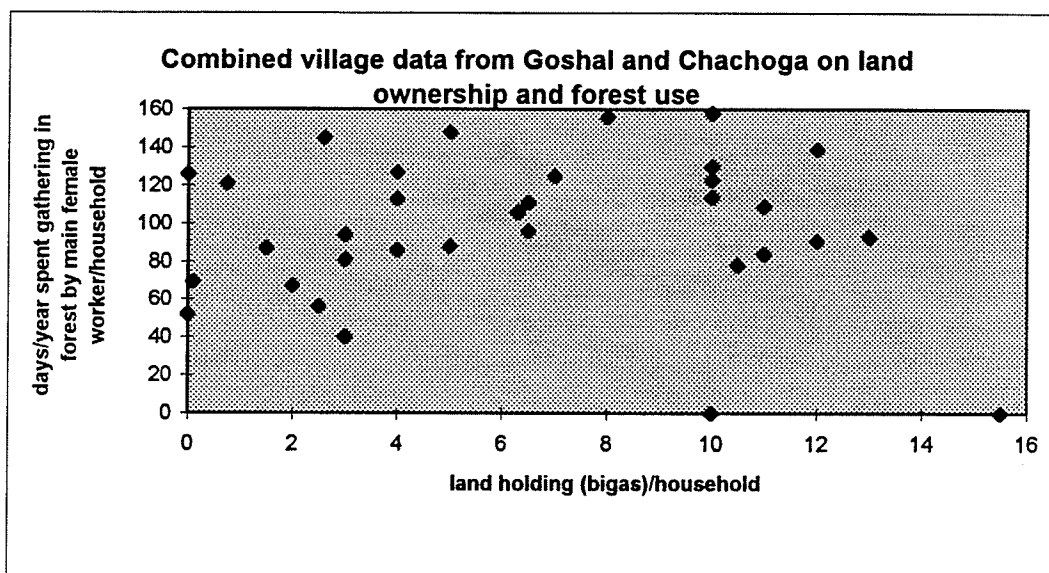


Figure 5.4 Chachoga and Goshal combined: Household ownership of land in relation to forest use ('days/year spent gathering in forest by main female worker/household').

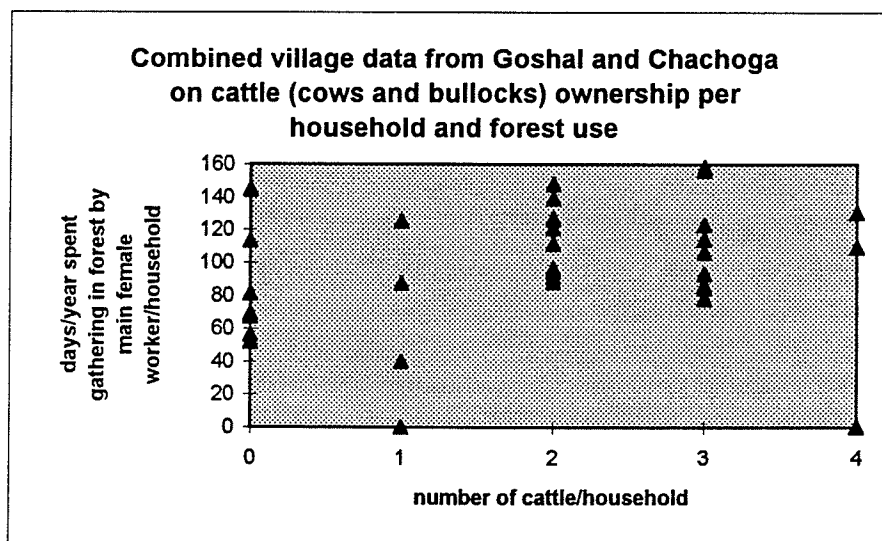


Figure 5.5 Chachoga and Goshal combined: Household ownership of cattle in relation to forest use ('days/year spent gathering in forest by main female worker/household').

classification with less than one cow or bull and three *bighas* or less of land, eight of nine cases still use the forest for meeting needs other than simply firewood. Five of these households, even though they do not own their own cattle, maintain established relationships with kin households with cattle. The other four of the nine 'poor' households in both villages collect grass to sell. One other household sells grass, and all of the five households that sell grass have less than four *bighas* of land. Three of the five are Scheduled Caste households which have very small plots of *nautor* land. The other two of these households are female-headed households managed by divorced Rajput women. There is one 'small' owning household in the survey that uses forests for the single purpose of obtaining firewood (household 15). Thus, 73% of the survey has 'small' and 'larger' land and cattle ownership and gather from common property resources to directly sustain their own agricultural production. However, overall, 97% of the women in the survey (32/33) use village commons for the collection of firewood, fodder and/or bedding, although different women gather for different purposes. Figures 5.4 and 5.5 establish that the great majority of households use village commons in some way to pursue different kinds of livelihood strategies. However, it is also evident that there are different degrees of forest use according to each household's ownership of resources.

It is interesting to observe in Figures 5.6 and 5.7 that when caste is not taken into account, and when only ownership of cattle and land are analyzed, both villages show the same pattern. In Figures 5.6 and 5.7, the main female worker in households from both Chachoga and Goshal with more land and cattle ('larger land holding with more cattle,'

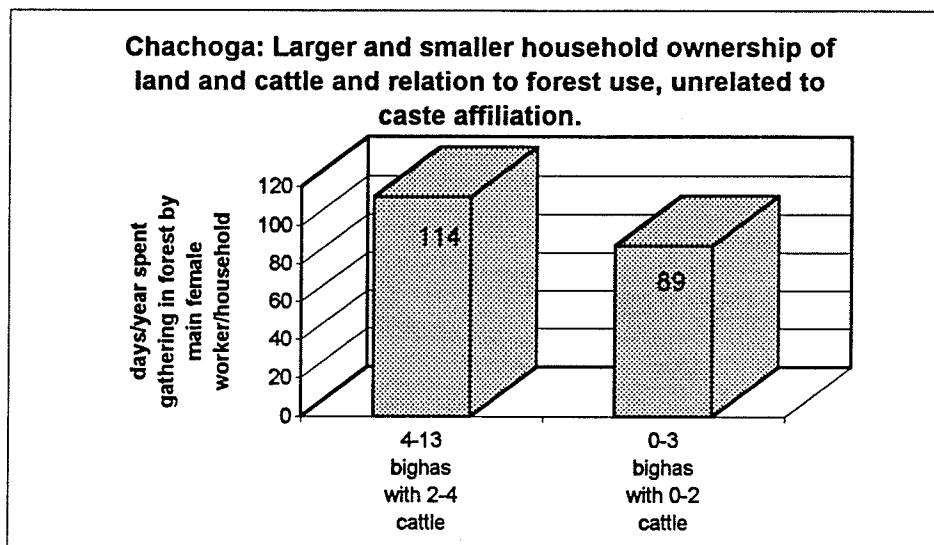


Figure 5.6 Chachoga: Larger and smaller sized land and cattle ownership and forest use ('days/year spent gathering in forest by main female worker/household').

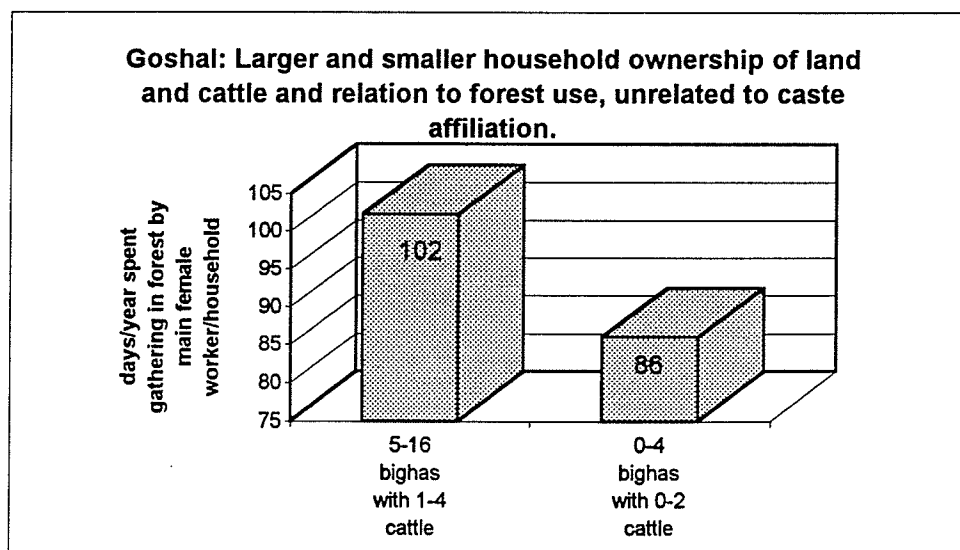


Figure 5.7 Goshal: Larger and smaller sized land and cattle ownership and forest use ('days/year spent gathering by main female worker/household').



or 4-13 *bighas* with 2-4 cattle) do spend more time (days/year) gathering from village forests than 'smaller land holdings with fewer cattle' (or 0-3 *bighas* with 0-2 cattle). These data suggest that by virtue of having more land and cattle the need to bring forest inputs into household agriculture is greater. It also seems that some of the 'larger' land and cattle owning households can meet some of their needs, primarily fodder, from their own private holdings (see Figures 5.4 and 5.5). The most intense forest users (see Table 5.2) are from 'small' and 'larger' owning households, but also from 'poor' households. While it is true that increased amounts of land require manure for fertilizer and therefore more cattle, and subsequent increased collection of bedding and fodder, the point still needs to be reasserted that 97% of households interviewed spend time gathering from village forests, albeit to varying degrees of intensity, to sustain a household.

Table 5.2 lists the households that make the most intense use of the forest, and those that make the least use of village forests (see Appendix I for each household's use of village forests). Table 5.2 lists households according to 'days spent in the forest' on the part of the main female worker in the household and incorporates households from both villages and all castes, illustrating some points that have been discussed throughout this section. Those listed as 'highest forest users' all make a multiple use of the village forests and all, except household 12 and 11, have at least one cow. The woman in household 12 has a mother-in-law in another household with two cows, as does the woman in household 11, and both collect for their mothers-in-laws' cows. Land ownership is extremely variable, from 12 *bighas* of land to less than one *bigha*. All of

Table 5.2 Highest and Lowest Forest Users in Goshal and Chachoga

Village/caste <sup>1</sup>	Days/year <sup>2</sup>	Land	Cows <sup>3</sup>	Apple trees	Forest use <sup>4</sup>	Outside employment/business <sup>5</sup>
HIGHEST: Women who spend most days per year gathering from forests and pasturelands						
#5 Ch-R	158	10	3	450	fsmbgk	—
#7 Ch-R	156	8	2	100	sfbmg	—
#31 Go-H	148	5	1	50	fsbrg	H=tailor
#12 Ch-H	145	2.6	0	35	fsmbg	W=ag labor/D=rug laborer
#30 Go-H	139	12	2	135	fsbrg	S=hotel owner/FIL in military
#1 Ch-R	130	10	2	200	bgrf	F=works in daycare
#3 Ch-R	127	4	2	60	gsfmb	—
#18 Ch-H	126	0	2	0	fsgb	—
#29 Go-H	125	7	1	440	fsbrg	W=midwife/H=drives tractor
#24 Go-R	123	10	2	320	fsbrgm	S=stall in bazaar
#11 Ch-H	121	.75	0	63	sfmng	H=tea stall
LOWEST: Women who spend the least days per year gathering from forests and pasturelands						
#17 Ch-H	69	0.1	0	3	fg	W=ag labor/H=carpenter
#16 Ch-H	67	2	0	5	fmg	W=ag labor
#32 Go-H	56	2.5	0	20	fg	W=weaves/H=religious man
#15 Ch-H	52	0	0	0	f	W=ag labor/H=bazaar stall
#19 Ch-H	40	3	1	250	fsmbg	W=ag labor/H=carpenter
#23 Go-R	0	15.5	1	350	0	H=contractor(tractor)
#2 Ch-R	0	10	2	200	0	H=owns sawmill

<sup>1</sup> Numbers in column correspond with the household number in Table 2 and in Appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup> Indicates the number of days per year a woman spends gathering from village forests.

<sup>3</sup> Cows, rather than cows and bullock ownership, are listed as this table directly relates to forest use, and ownership of bullocks does not affect the collection of fodder from forests to any great extent.

<sup>4</sup> Refers to the main female worker of the household who does most of the household gathering activities.

Column lists the different uses made of the forest. The letter indicates the following:

f=firewood

s=surd (bedding)

b=barn (bedding)

g=grass (fodder)

m=minor forest produce (e.g. mushrooms, tender ferns)

k=kadari (goat fodder)

r=rakti (bedding)

\*found only in Chachoga

\*\*done only in Goshal

<sup>5</sup> W=Wife; H=Husband; D=Daughter; S=Son; F=Female (single, widowed, divorced).

these households, however, make an intense use of village commons for supporting cattle rearing, agriculture, orchards, or all of these pursuits.

Households that are considered the 'lowest forest users' also make multiple uses from village commons with the exceptions of household 15, 23 and 2. Household 15 is the only household in the survey that makes a single use of forest resources, for firewood. Households 23 and 2 draw from village commons, not through their own labor, but through paying others to gather for them. They are both households with 'larger' land holdings with some cattle. Each of these households owns more than 10 *bighas* of land (at least one hectare), and these are conservative figures as these women did not want to give specifics on their land holdings.<sup>48</sup> Both of these 'larger' owning households have cattle, although only one cow in household 23 and two in household 2. The latter owned two bullocks as well. These two households are sufficiently secure economically that they are able to pay people to do the work of gathering from the forest and working in their fields for them. Both of these households were Rajput households, each with an outside business (a contracting business and a sawmill respectively), which also made them less dependent upon household agricultural pursuits.<sup>49</sup> It is interesting to

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<sup>48</sup> Ursula Sharma had the same problem gathering land data from households of larger holdings, and ended up estimating their holdings (Sharma 1980: 60). As she states, these estimations should still be useful as the purpose is to allow comparisons to be made between households.

<sup>49</sup> It needs to be mentioned that not every wealthy household pays someone to do their work for them. I spent considerable time with the mother of Rolli, Mani Devi, and although her household is one of the largest land owning households in the village of Goshal, she worked extremely hard going up to the village commons, as well as in agricultural work. Mani Devi is not included in my survey as I do not have specific information on her time spent gathering. I include Mani Devi at this point to emphasize the fact that there are no easy characterizations as to how a household negotiates a livelihood strategy, and strategies are not simple calculations based upon land ownership, cattle ownership and resultant forest use.

note that their apple orchards are not the largest found in the survey, but of intermediate size (350 and 200 trees respectively).

Factors such as size of household, and availability of female labor could also affect a household's use of village forests. However, there does not appear to be a strong correlation between either size of a household (see Appendix III), or the number of adult women in a household (Appendix IV) in relation to forest use. In terms of size of household, more people would require more firewood, for example. There are two households that have over 10 people within the household (households 13 and 22), although neither is an intense forest user (Table 5.2) in relation to other households interviewed. Both of these households own more than 300 fruit trees, and some of their firewood would come from pruning branches off their orchard trees. Firewood is not the only source of fuel, and kerosene is also bought to supplement firewood. Firewood is also the one 'gathering' activity that has support of men's labor, and men cut firewood for the winter months.

One could have also expected that the availability of women's labor within a household would affect forest use, since some forest produce can be gathered for sale. However, there does not seem to be a strong correlation between adult women's available labor and forest use (see Appendix IV). One possible explanation could be that the sale of forest produce is not as lucrative as other wage incomes. The sale of forest produce is undertaken by Scheduled Caste women, who also enter into wage incomes (mostly agricultural labor).

Each household is distinct in the specific ways it organizes household activity, but the overall pattern is one in which, generally speaking, households with larger numbers of cattle and larger plots of land use village commons more intensely. Reality, of course, is not this clear cut, as is illustrated by Table 5.2. There are clearly personal, familial, cultural, historical, political and many other factors which influence a woman's time, need or interest in negotiating her specific livelihood strategy. While one Rajput woman was proud to be able to pay a servant to go up to the forest for her, another, equally well off, spent every waking hour working in her fields, going up to the forest, taking care of the animals, and so on. Similarly, not every 'poor' Scheduled Caste household with little land will choose a non-agricultural livelihood. Some, having very little land, decide to invest in cattle and maintain a small orchard, while others work entirely in wage labor, agricultural labor for others, or perhaps choose to gather and sell forest produce.

In summary, all households represented in the survey in Goshal and Chachoga make use of common property resources in some way. 22 out of 24 (91%) of the households with 'small' and 'larger' sized ownership of land use commons for collection of firewood and different forms of cow bedding. Eight out of nine 'poor' households of the survey also use village commons for firewood, grass and bedding collection. Only at the extreme ends of the socio-economic spectrum do households, both the very poor and the wealthier, use village commons in a manner distinct from the majority of households. Two of the wealthier households in the survey pay others to bring resources from village commons for them, and one of the poorest households, household 15, uses common land for gathering firewood only. Over half (five out of nine) of the 'poor' households use

commons for firewood and for collection of grass from the forest to sell as fodder. Five of these nine households collect fodder and bedding for someone else's cattle in exchange for manure. The other four collect grass to sell, as does one other household not within the 'poor' category. Although selling grass or firewood is an illegal practice, made illegal and enforced by the *Mahila Mandal*, the *Mahila Mandal* is not overly concerned with regulating grass cutting as it 'grows back.' Four out of nine 'poor' households make multiple uses of common property forests and pastures similar to that made by 'small' and 'larger' owning households in the collection of firewood, bedding and grass.

### ***Patterns in Forest Use by caste.***

In both Chachoga and Goshal the pattern in lower and higher caste ownership of land and cattle is similar, with Rajputs in general owning more resources in both villages, although to differing degrees (see Figures 4.3, 4.4, 5.1 and 5.2). However, looking at the use lower and higher caste groups make of village forests in each village reveals different patterns between villages. In Figures 5.8 and 5.9, Scheduled Castes from Chachoga maintain a less intense use of village forests. In the village of Chachoga, the main female worker from upper caste households averages 116 days per year gathering in the forest as compared to the 95 days the main female worker from lower caste households averages. In Goshal, forest use is reversed, and the main worker from Goshal Rajput households spends an average of 87 days as compared to the 115 days the main female worker in Goshal Scheduled Caste households spends gathering from the forest each year. This suggests that livelihood strategies for Scheduled Caste households

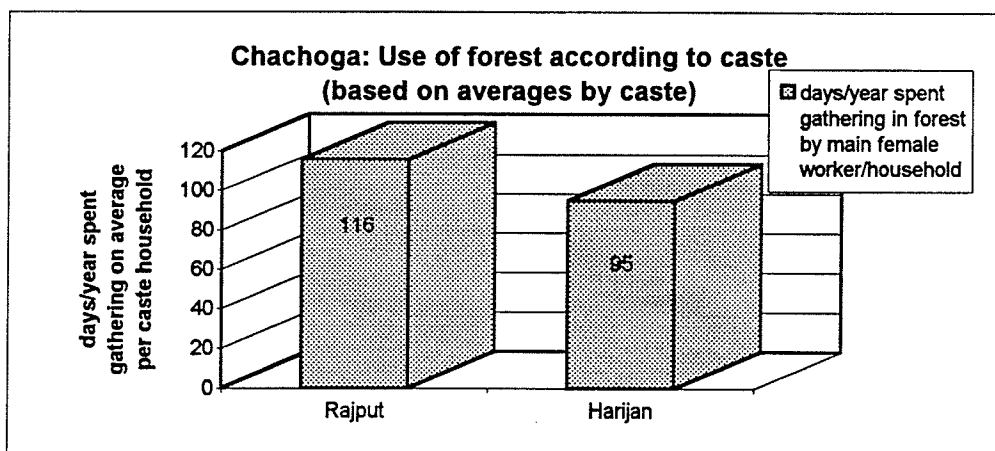


Figure 5.8 Chachoga: Average use ('days/year spent gathering in forest by main female worker/household') caste groups make of forest resources based on household averages.

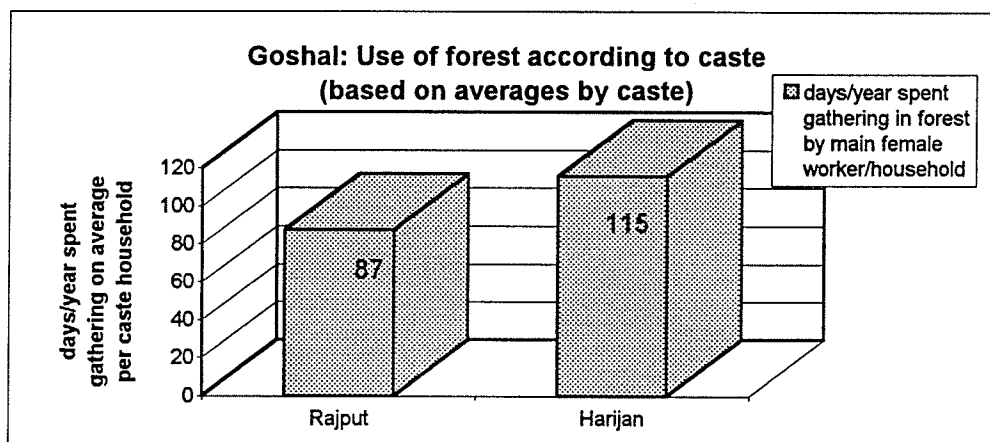


Figure 5.9 Goshal: Average use ('days/year spent gathering in forest by main female worker/household') caste groups make of forest resources based on household averages.

from Goshal and Chachoga have been negotiated differently and that Scheduled Caste households from Goshal are more actively pursuing agricultural livelihoods than Scheduled Caste households from Chachoga.

The differences between the villages in the intensity households from different castes use village forests can be understood through distinct village contexts. Goshal has a large forest area (see Figure 3.2) and few lower caste households (17% of village households), and the survey suggests that lower caste households in Goshal own more resources of land and cattle than the lower castes in Chachoga (Table 3.1). In Goshal, the combination of access to more common lands as well as ownership of more private resources allows the lower castes to pursue agricultural livelihoods to a greater extent than in Chachoga, reflecting a higher use of village commons for forest-agricultural livelihoods. Many Chachoga lower caste households have neither the ownership of land or cattle, nor access to large areas of common property resources to merit the pursuit of an intense forest-agricultural livelihood (see Table 5.1). Lower caste women in Chachoga tend towards agricultural labor while none of the lower caste women in Goshal interviewed undertake agricultural labor, but invest themselves directly in their own forest-agricultural livelihoods.

Throughout this discussion I have incorporated an analysis of both caste and basic economic factors in the consideration of the question, 'who are those who become active in the defense and protection of village commons,' as it is apparent that not all women participate in the *Mahila Mandals*. My data suggest that distinct patterns exist in relation to caste ownership of resources wherein Rajput caste households consistently



own more resources than Scheduled Caste households, although this trend is more extreme in the village of Chachoga than in Goshal (Figures 4.3 and 4.4). In the village of Chachoga, where the difference between Rajput and *Harijan* ownership of land and cattle is greater, Rajput households spend more time collecting forest resources, compared with the village of Goshal where Scheduled Caste households spend more days per year gathering (see Figures 5.8 and 5.9).

The differences between the two villages in the extent of involvement of lower and higher caste households in forest use (Figures 5.8 and 5.9) is significant because an initial hypothesis I worked with was that those who had 'intense involvement' in the use of village commons would be those to actively protect village commons. This understanding was based on the research done in the village of Chachoga where the Rajput caste owned more resources (Figures 4.3 and 5.1) and had a more intense interaction in gathering from village forests (Figure 5.8). Thus it *almost* stood to reason that the *Mahila Mandal* in Chachoga was dominated by Rajput women as they were those who pursued intense forest agricultural livelihoods, even though Rajput households made up only 48% of the population of Chachoga. However, 40% of Scheduled Caste households in Chachoga were 'small' and 'larger' owners of land and cattle, but still had minimal representation in the *Mahila Mandal*.

With consideration of the data from Goshal, and through analyzing the complexity of caste ownership of resources in Chachoga further, it becomes apparent that the use a household makes of village forests does *not* directly translate into action or inaction in the protection of village forests. Figures 5.9 shows that in the village of

Goshal, Scheduled Caste households actually use village forests to a greater extent than Rajput households, a contrast to Chachoga's pattern of caste interaction and use of village forests. In both villages, however, the *Mahila Mandal* is dominated by Rajput women who maintain substantial control of decisions over common lands. This evidence points to the conclusion that although a household's ownership of resources is a factor influencing the intensity of forest gathering (Figures 5.6 and 5.7), the political and social dominance of the Rajput caste strongly influences participation in the *Mahila Mandal* and the organized response of some women to protect and manage village commons. The political dynamics of women's organization in the two villages of the study is the focus of the next chapter.

## Chapter 6

### WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION IN PERSPECTIVE

This is our property. If no one protects it, the future is not certain.  
(*Mahila Mandal* president, Shanag village).

In the previous chapter several issues were addressed regarding forest use and the interactions of caste and economic factors in relation to forest use. The general patterns presented linked caste with economic status, although there is also a broad grey area where upper and lower castes overlap on the economic continuum. It is important to point out, however, that where upper caste and lower caste households meet economically, there is still a definable difference of social and political status between them. While the focus of Chapter 5 was a discussion of the interactions of caste, economic status and forest use, this chapter will discuss the influence of caste status at the institutional level of the *Mahila Mandal*.

The village of Chachoga presents a scenario whereby increased ownership of resources is associated with increased forest gathering activities, which could explain the predominance of Rajput women in the *Mahila Mandal*, and subsequently a strong Rajput influence over official management of village forests. However, Goshal does not present the same data, calling into question the assumptions made regarding ownership of resources, use of village forests, and women's differing organizational activity regarding village forests.

Scheduled Caste households in Goshal own more resources of land and cattle compared with Scheduled Caste households in the village of Chachoga (Table 3.1), and gather from forest resources, on average, to a greater extent than the Rajput caste within the same village of Goshal. The intense use that Scheduled Caste households make of forest resources in Goshal is not, however, borne out in the membership of the *Mahila Mandal*. If the scenario presented for the village of Chachoga were to be repeated in Goshal, Scheduled Caste women in Goshal, the most intense forest users in the village as a caste group, would presumably be active members of the women's organization, and those to establish regulatory functions over village forests. In actual fact, the Goshal *Mahila Mandal* is dominated by Rajput women who also maintain strong control over its functioning, just as in Chachoga,<sup>50</sup> although each village embodies different socio-economic contexts and patterns of forest use by caste. Although Rajput households make up the vast majority of Goshal's population (83%), this would not preclude the possibility for involvement of Scheduled Caste women in the *Mahila Mandal*. The dominance of Rajput women in both *Mahila Mandals*, regardless of the use women make of village forests, indicates a socio-political dimension in women's organization that now needs to be addressed. First, the organization of the *Mahila Mandal* in general will be discussed in order to present a background for women's organization in the Kullu Valley.

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<sup>50</sup> One other president I spoke with (from Shanag) described the same composition of the Shanag *Mahila Mandal*, which also had a majority of Rajput women (of 36 women 5 were women from Scheduled Castes), although I do not have any data regarding caste composition of the village as a whole.

### **The *Mahila Mandal***

The *Mahila Mandal* has been in existence for decades throughout India although it has not been, nor is it presently, always an active and vibrant part of village institutional life (see Chapter 3 for general background on the *Mahila Mandal*). Jain and Reddy (1979) comment that many *Mahila Mandals* are less than effective, although the potential is great for a grass roots organization to develop. What the *Mahila Mandal* in India has established, however, is an official form for women's agency within village affairs. As was mentioned earlier (Chapter 3), at least one representative from the *Mahila Mandal* sits as a member of the village panchayat (Jayaraman 1981), and the *Mahila Mandal* also forms its own form of women's official agency within the village, and manages matters that may be of particular interest to women (for example, village daycare, reforestation, or community activities). A good example of this is the *Mahila Mandal*'s management of conflicts that arise in the village, or their efforts in organizing work for the village, such as fixing the walkways through the village, or putting in a water system (which the Chachoga group is doing with the aid of an NGO). These are matters that bring the *mimbers* and the *Mahila Mandal* together in working towards the development of the village.

The government offers financial incentives to villages establishing *Mahila Mandals*, with an initial sum to aid in organizing and registering with the government. Programmes are offered to women in economic and community development (Jain and Reddy 1979), although to date neither of the *Mahila Mandals* in the villages of the study have benefited to any great extent from these government initiatives. In the Himachal

Pradesh state office, they are largely focusing on improved agricultural practices, orchard growing, making jams and jellies, cattle-rearing, tailoring, embroidery, and other income-generating activities, as well as family planning, health education (Dhoman 1989), environmental education, and forest plantation (interview with *Mahila Mandal* head office for Kullu District, August 27, 1994). These development schemes are carried out by a small regional office in Kullu, with direction from the state and national offices.

In many ways, the centralized and institutionalized nature of the *Mahila Mandal* in India makes the organization less than dynamic in some village contexts (Sharma 1980). The same criticisms that are leveled at the panchayat (Chapter 3) can be appropriately applied to the structure and function of the *Mahila Mandal*. The *Mahila Mandal* is a centrally administered and developed programme for rural women, and not necessarily responsive to local needs that come out of the local context. In some instances the *Mahila Mandal* is nothing more than a top-down bureaucratic creation for women's formal participation in village affairs (Desai 1992). In other instances it can strengthen grass roots efforts and village interests. In either case the existence of the *Mahila Mandal* as a forum for women's formal agency has legitimized women's actions within the village structure.

### **Grass Roots or Government Institution?**

Each of the villages of the study presents its own dynamic of village organization. In simplest terms, the Goshal *Mahila Mandal* functions as a government institution for all intents and purposes, while the Chachoga *Mahila Mandal* follows more of a grass roots orientation. This distinction between the two groups reflects the locus of decision-

making and the level at which initiatives for development programmes originate. The Goshal *Mahila Mandal* is more closely associated with the state office of the *Mahila Mandal* in Kullu, while the Chachoga *Mahila Mandal* functions quite independently of the state office. Discussions with the president of the *Mahila Mandal* in Goshal indicate that it exists in large part to take advantage of the programmes the government is offering, although they also act as a formal institution in dealing with internal village affairs. For example, the Goshal *Mahila Mandal* is planning to build a weaving centre where women can make articles to sell to the state office (conversation with *Mahila Mandal* president).

The Chachoga *Mahila Mandal* operates under very distinct circumstances that accentuate the group's dynamism. The Chachoga *Mahila Mandal* is associated with a national Non-Governmental Organization (SHARE: Society for Holistic Action in Rehabilitation and Ecology) that is located in the Kullu Valley, working with *Mahila Mandals* of the Valley. This relationship serves to strengthen the *Mahila Mandal's* desire and capabilities to act in accordance with certain village issues. Women from the Chachoga *Mahila Mandal* are active in training programmes sponsored by the NGO. With the NGO based in the area, activities sponsored by them are more closely linked to issues emanating from the Kullu Valley and from the village level. While women in Chachoga did not emphasize or credit the NGO for the actions they were taking in forest conservation, they were supported by the NGO in their actions. For example, the NGO was considering a request from the Chachoga *Mahila Mandal* for a camera to take pictures of poachers caught felling trees. SHARE is very concerned about the ecological

degradation occurring in the Kullu Valley, and with the Forest Department's inaction in the face of it. SHARE is also aware of the conflicts that are occurring at the village level not only between the *Mahila Mandal* and poachers, but between women of different castes. Their response is to work with the *Mahila Mandal* as it is, but pursue an educational/reflective component in their courses on caste organization and its consequences for 'community groups.'

In effect, then, the respective organizations of *Mahila Mandals* are partial reflections of the responsiveness, proximity and interactions between the local *Mahila Mandal* and its varying types of institutional support. The distinctive types of organizational parameters for each of the *Mahila Mandals* are partly imbedded in the responses of the respective presidents when asked the question, "Will your *Mahila Mandal* continue in the future?" The Goshal president's response was that they would continue to organize because the government is giving support for *Mahila Mandals* to start up small businesses and the Goshal *Mahila Mandal* is making plans to set up a weaving center in the village. The response to the question in Chachoga was that the group would continue, because if it did not, who would take care of the forest?

The NGO/government distinction is not, however, sufficient in explaining the different modes of operating in the two *Mahila Mandals*. The Chachoga group had a dynamic leader who was very articulate and held much respect in the community. There were also several other very active and astute women who supported this leader. The link with SHARE was a source of support for the interests of the women in Chachoga who were active in forest preservation. However, I did not hear about SHARE within



the village unless I specifically asked about it. It was clear to me that while women in the *Mahila Mandal* were fully willing to take advantage of SHARE's programmes and activities, they did not see SHARE as being overly responsible for the direction they were taking in forest protection.

The strength of the Chachoga Mahila is a result of several factors. The institutional support the *Mahila Mandal* received from SHARE, and the tacit support from the Forest Department strengthens the position of the *Mahila Mandal* to act against illegal poaching. In and of itself, however, this institutional support does not create the dynamics of forest protection in Chachoga. The situation regarding Chachoga's forests is coming to a critical point, and Chachoga has less forest than, for example, Goshal (see Figure 3.2), which intensifies conflict over village forests. The Forest Department also suggested to me that Chachoga has had problems with 'headloaders,' or people gathering and selling firewood, in the past, which has resulted in the present situation of conflict and strong response to forest use. In addition to the specific history and condition of Chachoga's forests, the role of women's leadership in Chachoga cannot be minimized. All of these factors come together in a strong women's organization in Chachoga that is taking actions in protecting village forests, but also in continuing and creating conflict not only between village women and men, but among village women over the management of village forests.

### **The *Mahila Mandal* and Forest Protection**

It was with the recommendation and assistance of the Forest Department that we established a relationship with the *Mahila Mandal* in Chachoga, as they were known

for their strength and interest in environmental protection. The relationship between the Forest Department and the *Mahila Mandal*, however, is not a clear one, although the four *Mahila Mandal* presidents I spoke with from the Kullu Valley<sup>51</sup> stated that the idea of forest protection came from, and is encouraged by, the Forest Department. In principle, the Forest Department recognizes the importance of women's involvement in the management and protection of forest resources and is attempting to bring women into social forestry programmes run by the Forest Department, and in plantation and management of tree seedlings (Dhoman 1989). In the Kullu Valley, the *Mahila Mandal* has the support of the Forest Department, at least officially, to enforce local control over village forests. In the event that a woman or group of women from a *Mahila Mandal* catch someone illegally cutting a tree from the village forest, the Forest Department will back the *Mahila Mandal* in the prosecution of them.

In reality, it is doubtful whether the Forest Department is actually carrying out the prosecution of those who are illegally felling trees. The women in Chachoga complained that the government was not following through with fining men who were caught and turned in by the *Mahila Mandal* to the Forest Department. The *Mahila Mandal* at the village level can only draw on social sanctioning, placing pressure on the person (most often a man from the same village) to give a tree up that was cut illegally and ask him to cease cutting, and depends upon the Forest Department to fine those caught poaching to discourage people. Thus, the *Mahila Mandal* needs the support of the Forest Department for cases that are not easily worked out at the village level.

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<sup>51</sup> I spoke with presidents from Chachoga, Goshal, Shanag and Rampur (see Figure 2.1).

Ironically, the Chachoga *Mahila Mandal* has a stack of confiscated lumber from men caught, and is storing this wood in order to build a new building for the *Mahila Mandal*.

Both the villages of the study have organized to stop poaching, although the Chachoga organization is much more active in this. Of the 120 *Mahila Mandals* in the Kullu Valley, SHARE estimates that 15-20 are actively working to protect village forests (they work with eight of them). The *Mahila Mandal* in Chachoga is most concerned about the trees that are being poached on the steep side of the mountain slope above ('upside') the village. Their concern is not only for trees; they are also determined to control the erosion, as well as the avalanches, that can occur if deforestation is too heavy on the slopes above the village. They are not as vigilant of the forests that lie at the top of the mountainside, which are also much further from the village.

The president of the Chachoga group, Kumla Devi (a pseudonym), described the process that follows when the women of the *Mahila Mandal* decide to actively enforce forest protection. The women will organize amongst themselves to go up into the forest at night in groups (when most of the illegal felling occurs). Groups can consist of up to twelve women. This group of women is made up of Rajput women, and Scheduled Caste women did not form part of the group of women who would go together into the forest. The subtle accusations from Rajput women in the *Mahila Mandal* were that it was Scheduled Caste men who were poaching, although, as a group, they were not explicit about this. Some Rajput women in the *Mahila Mandal* did state, however, that Scheduled Caste women did not go with the group of women into the forest at night, because it was their men who were poaching. By extension from these comments, one

could expect that women do not act against 'their own' men, but against 'others' men' with support from their own men, creating caste and class dynamics in forest protection.

When the group of women finds someone, they bring him back into the village. Kumla Devi described how the group of women forms a circle around the person felling trees illegally. The women begin to pressure him, and ask him to give up the tree and agree not to cut any more trees down. If he does not immediately cooperate, the women can take the individual to the village headperson (the village *pradhan*), or they can go to the group of village counselors (the *mimbers*) to support their claim against the individual. If the person does not cooperate at any of these levels, the group of women can then take him to the Forest Department. The *Mahila Mandal* works well with the *mimbers*, although the *mimbers* do not see their role as that of enforcing forest activity. They will, however, support the women if they wish to regulate forest use. One such incident occurred while I was interviewing in Chachoga. The village was alive with tension, especially when our team of researchers arrived with a forest guard from the Forest Department. In this case, the group was successful in confiscating the eight 'sleepers' (cut logs of eight feet) from the poacher, and obtaining a promise not to continue.

### ***Parallels to Chipko.***

As for Chipko, it still exists. But it has migrated from the hills of its origins to seminars and conference halls further south and overseas. It lives in university courses, academic tomes and in articles like this one, which keep the controversy, but not the issues, alive. (Aryal 1994:23).

There are immediate parallels that can be drawn between the Chipko movement of the Garhwal Himalayas and the actions some *Mahila Mandals* are taking in the Kullu Valley. While the women of Chipko of the Uttar Pradesh hill districts (the Uttarakhand) are world-renowned for their actions in protecting village forests, similar actions are occurring in other parts of the Himalaya, but without any attention from the outside world. In this sense, the Kullu Valley permits a study of the dynamics within a rural Himalayan village, without the distortion of media, academics or well known leaders such as Sunderlal Bahuguna or Chandi Prasad Bhatt who have given so much prominence to women's actions in the Garhwal Himalayas (Aryal 1994). Guha (1989) suggests that the activism of Chipko is a traditional/historic element of the Uttarakhand (see also Aryal 1994; Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey 1987), but while clearly the magnitude of the Chipko movement is of a different scale, many of the issues are the same for the Kullu Valley.

Chipko is now well known and established as predominantly a women's fight against the destruction of village forests. Conflicts over village resources have arisen as women challenge male-centered decision-making over village forests. The most famous examples come from the Garhwal Himalayas, under the leadership of several key village women. The actions of the Chipko movement range from joining with men in direct challenges to non-local contracting companies (one of the first 'Chipko' incidents, 1974), as well as standing in opposition to village men over decisions made about village forests (Jain 1984; Agarwal 1992, 1989a; Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey 1987). Some of the responses are more spontaneous in nature, such as the 'tree hugging' incidents that have stopped contractors from cutting down village forests. These spontaneous reactions

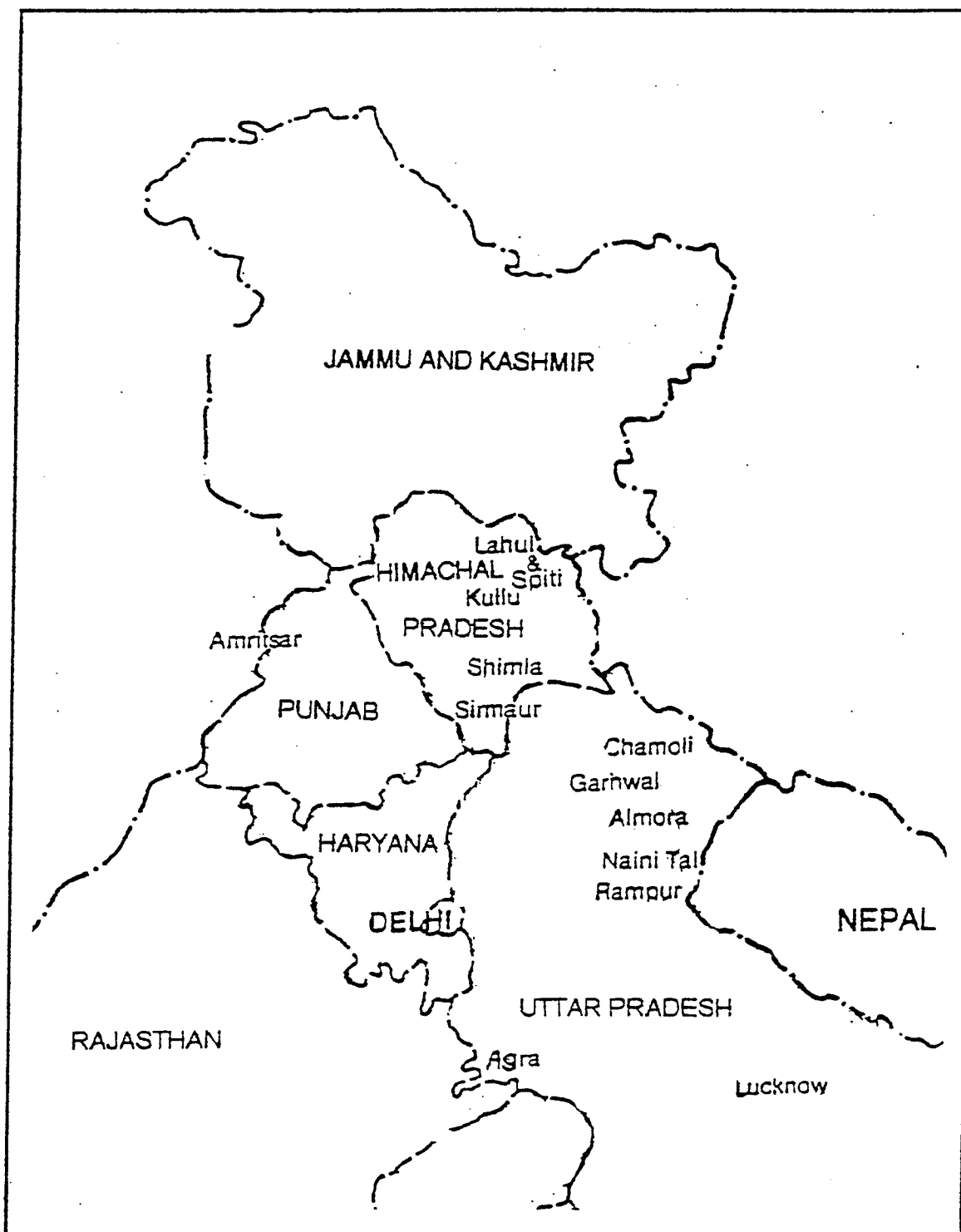


Figure 6.1 Map of Northwest India covering districts of study and areas central to Chipko activity.

work alongside organized activities where women assume some control over village forests by stopping poachers and fining men who are found taking from the forest illegally. Women also guard the forest and regulate household requirements that can be collected from the forest (Dankelman and Davidson 1988).

None of these actions, however, are taken within a small village without creating tension and conflict, even though the writings on Chipko suggest that women, united, challenge village men and male-centered decision-making without struggle among themselves, or repercussions. Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey (1987) discuss this point, and delve into an area of internal village conflict between caste and economic strata over Chipko actions that is consistently evaded in most accounts. While interviewing in a remote 'Chipko village,' they were able to perceive tension within the *Mahila Mandal* where one woman in particular, Guara Devi, has led other women in strong actions against village men and the village panchayat. They discuss the effect of these actions and believe that Gaura Devi is now isolated within the village because of her strong stance against those who have threatened village forests. Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey write that class struggles are not only occurring between villages and non-local contractors, but within villages where "[t]he movement has not only sharpened conflicts between women and men but also between different economic strata" (Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey 1987:49). They go on to say that "[i]n many cases the unity among women was fragile as the priorities of women from different sections were different" (Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey 1987:49).

I witnessed many of these same responses, as well as conflicts addressed by Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey, surrounding environmental protection by *Mahila Mandals* of the Kullu Valley. In the Kullu Valley, the struggle over village resources presently focuses on conflicts in village use, such as confronting illegal poaching when men cut and sell trees on the black market, or restricting specific activities of women in forest use, and not against non-local threats such as those posed by outside contractors, although this has been part of the history of the area. Kullu forests were under pressure from loggers during the two world wars, when the road was opened up into the valley (1950's), and once again during the Indo-China War (1962), as a result of further road construction into the area that opened up many areas for forest exploitation (ODA 1993, Vol. 2, Annex 2:14). At present, however, the *Mahila Mandals* are organized to regulate, guard and enforce the use of common property resources against threats from within the village, as well as from people from other villages who use their village commons without an established right to do so.

There is some debate as to the kind of movement Chipko actually represents. Some question whether Chipko can be considered a women's movement because Chipko does not act explicitly to overcome male-centered structures of decision-making (Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey 1987; Jain 1984). For example, the Chipko movement has not led to a conscious objection or challenge to village structures, social and cultural norms, or legal structures that prevent women's equality within India. Agarwal (1994) uses the term "group-overt" in contrast to "individual-overt" actions that reflect women's struggle against oppression. A feminist movement should, in practice,



consciously confront gender oppression as exhibited in a group-overt stance. Agarwal explains that:

A shift to the group-overt state in gender resistance appears crucial, since this implies a combination of things: a recognition by women of their common gender interests, a willingness to collectively pursue those interests, and an explicit challenging of the structures of inequality. (Agarwal 1994:437).

It is doubtful that this kind of conscious struggle against sources of gender oppression has occurred within the Chipko movement. Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey, in agreement with Jain (1984), state that:

Studies of women's role in the struggle led by men have revealed that in the most critical period when the overall struggle reaches a high tide, women break through their traditional role patterns and take active part in protests. However, in the peaceful and normal situations, women in most cases are hardly 'visible.'...Women's demand about share in power and decision-making has not been articulated through the movement. (Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey 1987: 50).

Guha (1989) and Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey (1987) also question whether Chipko can be considered an environmental movement. Their perspective is that Chipko needs to be assessed within the context of historical peasant rebellions and social movements in the Uttarakhand (Guha 1989; Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey 1987). None of these perspectives take Chipko to be the feminist environmentalism (Agarwal 1992:146) some chose to make it (Shiva 1988; Dankelman and Davidson 1988). Again, Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey state the issue clearly, and conclude that:

The 'Chipko' movement has given women a strong forum to articulate what obviously are women's concerns. However, their participation has not helped them in their own struggle against oppression although claims have been made that it is a 'feminist movement.' (Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey 1987: 51).

There can be no doubt, however, that Chipko has mobilized primarily women in a response to threats to the environment. The reality is likely somewhere between feminist environmentalism and peasant rebellion. Guha diminishes the essential role of women within Chipko, while Shiva, Agarwal and those who use Chipko as an example of Third World ecofeminism in action (Dankelman and Davidson 1988; Mies and Shiva 1993) tend to idealize the role of women in environmental protection. Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey (1987) suggest that generally the role of women in historical political movements of the Uttarakhand have not been taken into consideration, nor have women's actions in the Chipko movement been seriously analyzed and considered. For example, they ask why it is that extensive participation of women in the Chipko movement has not lead to wider participation of women in the political process, or in forming coalitions or networks of women in the Uttarakhand (Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey 1987:48, see also Jain 1984).

In terms of why the movement captured women's interests, however, Agarwal comes perhaps closest to describing a movement that has primarily mobilized women, and why it is that women have responded. Agarwal states:

...I locate the perspectives and responses of poor peasant and tribal women...in their material reality--in their dependence on and actual use of natural resources for survival, the knowledge of nature gained in that process....This is because hill and tribal women, perhaps more than any other, group, still maintain a reciprocal link with nature's resources--a link that stems from a given organization of production, reproduction, and distribution, including a given gender division of labor. (Agarwal 1992:149-50).

Agarwal goes on to say that this argument should not serve to entrench women within the established division of labor, but should propel the 'declassing' and 'degendering' of

productive and reproductive activities. In other words, the challenge is to redistribute the knowledge, labor and power that poor women, in Agarwal's terms, gain through an established division of labor, and universalize the link women presently hold through a gendered and classed construction of knowledge of the environment.

### ***Women's Response to Environmental Threats.***

Every time a man [person] dies, a tree dies.  
(Kumla Devi, president of Chachoga *Mahila Mandal*).

My research was undertaken within a perspective very similar to that Agarwal elaborates. That is, I have suggested that women hold environmental knowledge because of their specific gender roles and an established gender division of labor, or the economic and material reality of women, that brings women into close contact with the natural environment in the hill regions of the Himalayas. This perspective differs from a radical ecofeminist perspective which assumes that women, because of reproductive potential, hold a close and innate connection to nature (Hessing 1993). I have also made the assumption that women differ in their use, understanding and influence over decision-making of natural resources (Agarwal 1992). In general terms, however, the material relationship women have to the natural environment partially explains women's response to threats against the resources that sustain their livelihood. Discussions with the *Mahila Mandal* as a group exemplified this point. In a group discussion setting, women explained that "because we go to the forest a lot, we want to protect it. Men don't need to go to the forest much, so don't care as much." They also said that if it was not for them, there would be no one to protect the forest (group interview, July 15, 1994).

A gendered conceptualization of village resources was expressed to me by the leader of the *Mahila Mandal* in Chachoga, Kumla Devi. Kumla Devi made the distinction between women's and men's perceptions and understandings of village forest ownership. She stated that men will say: "this is not our jungle; it is the government's." The women understand that ultimately the forest belongs to the government, but they feel it is theirs. In talking about forest rights with Kumla Devi, she made the following comment: "if you gave me a house, a nice house, I would take care of it. It's like the jungle; if the government gave the forest to use, we would take care of it." She then added, "but the women feel it is their house." Women, by virtue of using the forests, have incorporated some sense of ownership even while recognizing that legal ownership lies with the government.

Kumla Devi's comments, and those of the group, suggest that village men accept and are more tied to, official political processes of decision-making, while women form their opinions and understanding not from meetings with government officials, but from their everyday activities that link them to the forest. Jain (1984) supports this perspective and suggests that women are in a position to act against government decisions because they are outside of the formal and official political structures at the village-state level. In a sense, then, men are more restricted because of their involvement in state politics, and immobilized by their very participation in the political process. Women's marginal involvement in the official political processes may actually liberate them to actively respond to situations they believe inherently opposed to their interests.

This point need not contradict the suggestion made previously that the *Mahila Mandal* has established an effective form of women's formal agency within rural villages. In many ways there are two functionally parallel village political structures; the internal one of everyday village affairs of which the *Mahila Mandal* forms a part, and the external village political structure where the *pradhan* and the political people act on behalf of the village by gaining resources from government agencies for benefit to the village (ODA 1994, Vol. 2, Annex 1). In general women are active in the former and only rarely in the latter, while men are active in both. This dual structure has been alluded to at different points. The *Mahila Mandal* has become an official element of internal village affairs and the *Mahila Mandal*, especially in Chachoga, is very active in village affairs. The real power of women, both informal and formal, through the *Mahila Mandal* is at the village level and the *mimbers* recognize and support the actions of the *Mahila Mandal* within village affairs. The importance of the *Mahila Mandal* was expressed not only by women in the *Mahila Mandal*, but by the *mimbers*, who were very forthright in their recognition of the *Mahila Mandal* and women's roles within the village. Where there was little recognition of women's official roles within the village was with the village *pradhan* (headperson) who evidently did not take the actions of the *Mahila Mandal* very seriously. One *pradhan* expressed some amusement at the activities of the women and stated: "the women think they are quite smart to do this. So, they go ahead and do it."

Women in the hill regions of the Himalayas are extremely important to all household activities. They do the majority of agricultural work, as well as most of the

collecting and gathering from the forest. Jain believes that the dependence of men upon women in the hill regions is another factor that enables women to act in defiance to decisions made by village men over village forest resources at the panchayat level (Jain 1984). The women interviewed did not present the idea that their men were dependent upon them. However, women did hold a fair amount of independence, and went to the field or forest to work, and to the bazaar without men. The cultures of the Himalayan hills generally do not follow the practice of seclusion (Bhati and Singh 1987; Berreman 1972), which may also assist in the public participation of women in forest protection.

The fact that women are largely responsible for household production and maintenance may well give women a sense of strength to confront the men of their village. However, in group discussions women would not criticize their husbands or complain that they did not do much of the work. Women stated that they "respected their husbands," and did not want to criticize them. One woman suggested that it was not a good idea to have our meetings during the day as their husbands might become angry that the women were not working. The respect women hold for their husbands, and possibly even fear to some extent, throws into question the position from which women are acting against village men. As suggested previously, Rajput women, from their position of economic, social and political strength are in a position to take action against men from lower castes. But it is questionable whether Rajput women directly challenge Rajput men's decisions, although this is suggested in the accounts of Chipko, where caste dynamics are not addressed.

The issue of forest protection at the village level, and between people within a village becomes more complex when caste dynamics are analyzed. At the level where women are in conflict among themselves over the use and management of village forests, upper caste women, and women who pursue agricultural livelihoods based on small plots of land and cattle holdings, have the livelihood security to want and to need to ensure the survival of village resources. For lower caste women, especially in Chachoga, who do not have livelihood security based upon land and cattle, their present needs from village forests bring them in direct conflict with those women who have not only a long-term vested interest in village forests, but at present maintain the economic security and political dominance from which to control local women's organizations. Part of women's strength comes from feeling a sense of ownership and guardianship of the forest, but another part stems from a socially and economically secure position (in relative terms) from which to stand against people from within the same village.

### ***Social Stratification and the Mahila Mandal.***

Some of the dynamics that exist within the *Mahila Mandal* are also characteristic of village organization throughout India. Jain and Reddy discuss the social composition of *Mahila Mandals* across India, and find that they are predominantly composed of, and controlled by, the upper castes. Swarup and Chand (1987), in a study of social forestry in Himachal Pradesh, also discover that social forestry programmes are most successful with, and accepted by, the upper castes and landed classes. An analysis of the social forestry programme also points to the fact that village or government institutions generally respond to upper caste and landed people's needs.

In the valley in general, the Rajput caste wields political and social dominance and could be considered, to use Srinivas' term, the 'dominant caste' of the valley (Srinivas 1987). There is no question that within village and regional affairs the upper caste Rajputs control political processes. There is representation from the lower castes within the village political structure (*panchayat*), as there is within the *Mahila Mandal*; however, they are not involved at decision-making levels or within power positions to the same extent as those of the Rajput caste. It has been asserted that the Rajput caste dominates social and political affairs, and that the *Mahila Mandal* is dominated by Rajput women. It was also suggested to me that those who were poaching from village forests were men from Scheduled Castes from the village. Therefore, forest protection takes on a caste and class dynamic that exposes the structures of political, social and economic oppression within village India. It is an historic and established pattern that is clearly entrenched in present social and political functioning. The social and political structure of the *Mahila Mandals* was not any different in this respect from the village social structure as a whole.

One of the problems with the *Mahila Mandals* is that their meetings are often held in spaces which prohibit the entrance of lower castes. For example, in Chachoga, all of the meetings were held in a big room adjacent to the village temple. This is the space where the group did all the cooking for village occasions as well as providing a daily lunch for the village daycare. Kitchens, or the cooking fire in this case, are spaces which are deemed 'clean' and cannot be polluted by unclean castes. Therefore, when meetings were held in this space where the cooking also took place, women of lower



castes were automatically excluded from the meeting or had to remain outside the building where the meeting was held.<sup>52</sup> Jain and Reddy (1979) also comment that the *Mahila Mandals* which were evaluated for their study held their meetings in the home of the president, who was almost always of upper caste status. In this case, a lower caste person could not enter into a *Mahila Mandal* meeting, because they are prohibited from entering the home of an upper caste person. While the site or space chosen for meetings may not be a purposeful exclusion of lower castes, it effectively inhibits lower caste participation.

SHARE had environmental issues as a focus for its organizational efforts, but it also focused on the social and political restrictions of caste, and how a *Mahila Mandal* could, and should, work around the barriers that keep people from different castes apart.<sup>53</sup> Their work with the *Mahila Mandal* of Chachoga was quite successful in meeting village interest in environmental protection, but it seemed that their ideas of breaking down caste barriers and working toward full participation of lower caste people were more difficult to realize.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> We were allowed to enter into the women's building adjacent to the temple, and were even allowed to enter into the temple itself. In Chachoga, women gathered almost daily near or on the porch of the temple as it was in the centre of the village. It would have been difficult to get to know the Rajput women in the *Mahila Mandal* in Chachoga if we had been treated as people of lower caste. In Goshal, where more caution was observed with us, the village temple was on the upper outskirts of the village, and we therefore did not need to go near it.

<sup>53</sup> I attended one workshop for the *Mahila Mandals* in the area with which this particular NGO was working, with eight groups in attendance at the workshop. The social system of caste organization formed a focus for the meeting. I was also given the opportunity to ask the group questions, the responses of which are reported periodically throughout the paper. The NGO was operated by Indian people, with funds from different European agencies.

<sup>54</sup> I only knew one Scheduled Caste woman in the workshop I attended, and she was very quiet during the discussion about caste. I do not know what percentage of women in the meeting were of Scheduled Castes.

### ***Management of the Commons. Whose Commons?***

I began working through my data expecting that the situation in Chachoga, where greater ownership of land and cattle was associated with greater forest use, would result in an organization of women who used forest resources intensely and were thereby prepared to actively guard against forest degradation. However, the social and political dimensions to village organization are factors that overcome those of economic status and forest use. The social and political stratification between women of different castes was much more significant than the economic differences between women of different castes. The three levels of economic stratification, 'poor,' 'small' and 'larger' holdings as developed in Chapter 5, attempt to discover those who may be inclined to actively organize to protect forest resources. These classifications, however, have not been capable of taking into account the dynamics of caste organization or village politics. Such equations as were constructed based on initial research in the village of Chachoga (such as, land + cattle = increased forest use = women who organize to protect village forests) have been necessarily confounded by the differences between Chachoga and Goshal, which have alerted me to village socio-political dynamics in the management of common resources.

Goshal is a village where poverty does not exist to the extent that it does in Chachoga, and where the majority of Scheduled Caste households (60%) are 'small' holders of land and cattle, working out forest-agricultural livelihood strategies. The majority of Scheduled Caste households in Chachoga (60%) are 'poor' by my standards and could, in fact, form a distinct class of landless or near-landless households which are

unable to secure a livelihood from the land resources they own. As a class, near-landless households were not represented within the *Mahila Mandal*, although most near-landless households used village commons for collection of firewood, grass and/or bedding.

Much of my understanding of the Kullu Valley comes from the village of Chachoga and the *Mahila Mandal* in this village as it demonstrates unique characteristics that make it a particularly interesting study. First and foremost, the dynamism of the group, and their commitment to forest protection is inspiring, even recognizing the conflicts that abound surrounding the group's actions. Part of the dynamism of this group could be attributed to a few key, and remarkable, women who lent their vision and strength to the group. Without the leadership of these women, the *Mahila Mandal* in Chachoga might well be like many other *Mahila Mandals* throughout the country. Socially and economically the dynamics within the village of Chachoga are more marked than in Goshal, allowing one to observe social and economic processes in more defined forms. Chachoga also has a smaller forest area which intensifies, as it has in the past, the need to protect these same resources. The last point, and probably the most important, is the fact that I developed a closer relationship with the women, and the *Mahila Mandal*, of Chachoga and was privileged to spend a good deal of time with the women in this village. For all of these reasons, I have drawn mainly upon the dynamics of the Chachoga *Mahila Mandal*, bringing in contrasts and comparisons from Goshal when applicable, and where existent. Because of the shorter amount of time spent

interviewing in Goshal, the dynamics of the Goshal *Mahila Mandal* organization are not as well understood as those of Chachoga.<sup>55</sup>

The Chachoga *Mahila Mandal* has 22 Rajput members and seven members from the Scheduled Castes. Without betraying some of the discussions that occurred within the interview setting, suffice it to say that there existed a good deal of misunderstanding and mistrust between women of higher and lower castes. Some of the leaders (Rajput) of the *Mahila Mandal* suggested that the origin of the formation of the *Mahila Mandal* was to stop Scheduled Caste women from taking wood from the forest and selling it. One woman told us about the history of Chachoga. In her understanding, the Rajputs were the original inhabitants of the village and the Scheduled Castes came to the village to take advantage of the forest to gather and sell firewood. Some conversations with women of lower castes who used to be in the *Mahila Mandal* conveyed a good deal of bitterness towards the *Mahila Mandal* in the regulation of their use of the forest. Some women of Scheduled Castes are, in fact, considering submitting an official complaint to the government against the *Mahila Mandal*. One lower caste woman commented on the restriction of the sale of firewood by the *Mahila Mandal* and explained: "we are poor, and the *Mahila Mandal* took that away from us. We make money how we can."

These personal anecdotes reflecting the views towards persons of other castes are used to express the tensions that exist between the Rajput and Scheduled Castes, and to give a sense of the caste politics that are occurring around the issue of forest

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<sup>55</sup> The Chachoga *Mahila Mandal* was also a very active group, and I was able to spend time with different members of the group almost every day at the village temple and daycare (*balwari*), which was the meeting place. In the village of Chachoga I also had a 'key consultant' who would direct me to different members of the *Mahila Mandal* who were around to be interviewed.

protection. Each woman creates her own bias in understanding people of other castes. I therefore use these stories cautiously, and do not wish to characterize any caste through its representation by the other. Generally, Rajput women depicted people from Scheduled Castes in a negative light, while the comments on the part of lower caste women were bitter and angry comments that expressed their resentment at being in a subordinate position to the dominant Rajput caste.

The tensions between women regarding forest use came about through differing needs from the forest in some cases, but also simply through the act of regulating forest use by others. The prohibition of lopping branches off trees<sup>56</sup> was an issue which caused tension as the *Mahila Mandal* was basically controlling lopping of trees in order to preserve the collection of fallen needles for cow bedding underneath the trees. This was an action that benefited those with cattle, but not those who mainly need firewood (either for sale or personal use) from the forest. The lopping of branches resolves a present need for firewood, but depletes a regular source of animal bedding (spruce needles) for those with cattle, and may kill the tree if over-cut. The restriction on the lopping of trees does hold some ecological, as well aesthetic merit. The aesthetic cannot be understated and Kumla Devi, the president, explained: "If you cut off your neck your body doesn't look so good. The rest of your body doesn't function." All the *Mahila Mandals* had prohibited the lopping of trees (cutting *rakti*); however, in the village of Goshal women went to a part of the forest that had joint ownership with the neighboring

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<sup>56</sup> Women lop trees when they climb up a tree (spruce) and cut off all the branches, leaving only the top of the tree. Apparently a tree will grow back if the crown is left in tact, although this will take years. Most firewood, however, was not cut in this way but gathered in the form of scrub brush, small bushes and fallen branches.

village of Old Manali, and that was also farther from the village, to lop branches for firewood and bedding.<sup>57</sup> Essentially Goshal women would not lop their own trees but would do so in a neighboring forest where there was no one keeping vigil over the lopping of branches. However, if you consider that Rajput households own more cattle and use bedding eventually for fertilizer in their fields and many Scheduled Caste women are primarily wage laborers making a daily existence off of available resources, the regulation of cutting *rakti* supports a Rajput forest-agricultural livelihood while cutting off part of a Scheduled Caste livelihood strategy.

In summary, I have established that, as a general trend, increased land and cattle holdings correspond with more intense collection of forest produce that is based upon the a livelihood strategy strongest amongst the Rajput caste (Figures 5.6 and 5.7, also Figures 5.4 and 5.5). However, even households without much land or cattle need to make use of village forests. This is because even though a household may not have a great deal of land and cattle owned privately by the household, they may optimize resources of land and cattle among kin households that then requires them to draw upon village commons (for example, the cases between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, discussed in Chapters 4 and 5). As well, some draw from village commons in order to meet daily livelihood strategies through the sale of forest products.

In the two villages, while 73% (24/33) of households have 'small' and 'larger' sized holdings of land and cattle, 97% of households interviewed gathered from forest commons for multiple products of firewood, bedding and/or fodder (only one did not).

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<sup>57</sup> When the branches are cut, the needles are left to dry around the courtyard, and used for bedding, while the branches are stored for firewood. Therefore, lopping provides both firewood and bedding, but both in the short term only.

This being the case, almost all women would have an interest in managing and regulating the commons through the *Mahila Mandal*. This is not the case, however, and I have already surmised that women's involvement in the *Mahila Mandal* is not based solely on their use of village commons, or ownership of land and cattle, but on social and political relations. In both Chachoga and Goshal the *Mahila Mandal* is disproportionately dominated and controlled by Rajput women, although lower caste women in Goshal, and also some in Chachoga, placed a high value on the forest in their estimation of the days they spend gathering in the forest (Table 5.2).

The conclusions I have drawn throughout this chapter are not the direct result of my household interviews, but rather based on discussions with women in and outside of the *Mahila Mandal* organization, and on the work of people writing on women's organization in India. In this chapter I have presented some of the social and political dimensions of women's organization, especially regarding the protection and management of village forests. Incorporating this dimension into forest use, as well as forest use through ownership of resources, depicts a village organization that has economic, social and political aspects that contribute to a gendered management of village commons. Any one of these elements of social organization on its own would be insufficient to explain the complex character of community-based, or village management of common lands.

## Chapter 7

### CONCLUSIONS

My research on women's roles in the use of common property resources has drawn upon a perspective in difference (Moore 1988) in order to understand variation between women in how they use village commons, and their different needs from village commons associated with factors of caste and economic status. This focus on difference has allowed me to see that women are situated very differently within the village context, and that distinctions such as caste, and the apparently minute distinctions between households in land and cattle ownership, are in fact the basis for 'class' and caste conflict at the village level over the management of village commons.

With a focus on difference between women, three classifications of economic status have been formulated at the village level. Within the villages of the study households are distinguished as 'poor,' 'small' or larger' land and cattle owners. In making these distinctions, I have developed an argument suggesting that the poor as defined in my study (with less than three *bighas* of land, with one or no cattle) are effectively a class of near-landless households which own an insufficient land resource base to sustain an agricultural livelihood. Seven of the nine 'poor' households in my survey were Scheduled Caste households, and the two 'poor' Rajput households in my survey were female-headed households managed by divorced women. Rural villages not only have divisions of caste, but also of class status within them, and these do not exactly coincide.



How then does this relate to women's use of common property resources and differences between women in the use of village commons? The classifications laid out are, in fact, quite related to common property use and the theoretical debates, as well as the case studies, on common property management. Writers within the field of common property management who give attention to class issues assert that the poor are those who are more dependent upon village commons (Jodha 1986, 1985; Shiva 1986) and poor rural women are those especially affected by environmental degradation and the decline and/or degradation of village common land, and are those with an interest in protecting these resources (Agarwal 1994, 1992, 1989a; Mitra 1993).

Within the context of the above discussion in the literature, the poor are classified as the landless and those who own less than two hectares of land, or 24 *bighas* (Agarwal 1992, 1989a; Jodha 1986, 1985). Since 80% of land holdings in the Kullu Valley are less than two hectares, and 58% below one hectare (1980/81 census, ODA 1994 Vol. 2, Annex 1), almost all households within rural villages in the Kullu Valley are the poor discussed within this analysis. My research, then, supports the assertion at a broad level that the rural poor are those who depend upon village commons, as I find that although the use women make of village commons differs between households, 97% of the households interviewed for my fieldwork use village commons for collection of firewood, evergreen needles and ferns as cow bedding, and/or grass as cattle fodder.

Although 97% of the households surveyed use the commons for more than simply gathering firewood, there was substantial difference in the specific uses, and intensity of use, women made of village commons through distinctions of caste and

economic status. Two wealthier households did not gather directly from common lands, and paid others to gather for them. Other households (four of 33) gathered from forests and pastures partly for sale of produce, a livelihood activity undertaken in the villages of the study by poor women of Scheduled Castes, and women of female-headed households. Other women (four of 33) maintained kin relations with people owning cattle, and provided their relative's cow with fodder and bedding in exchange for the fertilizer that would result during the period of care given to the animal. The majority of women (73%, or 24/33) were from households that owned 'small' and 'larger' plots of land (3-15 *bighas*) with one or more cattle, and who pursued intense forest-agricultural livelihoods which drew heavily from village commons in the rearing of cattle, and in sustaining agricultural production. These households were mostly from the Rajput caste (16 of the 18 Rajput households interviewed), but also included over half of the Scheduled Caste households interviewed (8 of 15 interviewed). However, even these 'small' and 'larger' land owning households that pursued forest-agricultural livelihoods varied in their use, and in the intensity in which they gathered from village commons.

Amongst the diverse and varied uses and needs from village common lands, emerges a women's organization to manage these lands. What I have found through my research, contrary to Agarwal's (1992) assertion at the macro-level that poor rural women are those who actively protect village commons, is that the poorest women of the villages of the study were not those who had organized to regulate and manage village forest use. The poor did, indeed, use forest resources for the collection of firewood, bedding and/or grass, but were essentially powerless in social, political and

economic ways within the village structure to affect management of the commons. Some poor women within the village who formed this class of near-landless drew upon village commons for the sale of forest produce. The sale of produce was prohibited by the *Mahila Mandal*, effectively closing off poor women from one of the livelihood strategies available to them from a common resource. Village commons were managed in support of forest-agricultural livelihoods based on the ownership of land and cattle.

The many accounts of the Chipko movement in the Garhwal Himalayas have not addressed the internal class/caste struggles in the management of village common land (with one notable exception, see Sharma, Nautiyal and Pandey 1987). Where internal village struggle is discussed, it is placed at the level of gender conflict (Agarwal 1992, 1989a; Sharma 1987; Jain 1984). Within these accounts of gender conflict, struggle arises due to differing interests between men and women within a village as the result of a distinctly gendered use of village forests.

The literature on Chipko, the closest parallel to the situation found in the Kullu Valley, recognizes a difference between women's and men's relation to, and interest in, forest resources that is based on a gender division of labor. This establishes women as the major agriculturists as well as collectors of forest produce, bringing women into a different relationship of use and need from forest resources than men. Equally, women from households with land and cattle resources differ in their use and needs regarding village forests from women who depend more on wage labor. But ultimately, women not only differ in their negotiations of livelihood strategies and use of village forests

(according to caste and economic status), but also in social and political positions of power within villages.

Most of my time spent doing research was in the village of Chachoga. It was while I was undertaking interviews in Chachoga that I began to see what I thought was a clear relationship between forest use and forest protection. In Chachoga, Rajput households owned substantially more resources than Scheduled Caste households (Figure 4.3), and women in these households on average spent more time collecting from village forests (Figure 5.8). Having spent a considerable amount of time with the women of the *Mahila Mandal* in Chachoga, I also knew that the *Mahila Mandal* mostly consisted of Rajput women. I thought I understood why, since I had come to realize that Rajput households undertook intense forest-agricultural livelihood strategies that required heavy inputs from village pastures and forests, and many Scheduled Caste households were more wage-labor oriented in Chachoga.

It was not until, back in Canada, I began working through the data from Goshal collected in the final weeks of my time in India, that I noticed a divergence in how forest use, ownership of resources and caste all worked together. In Goshal, it was women from Scheduled Caste households who, on average, made a more intense use of village forests (Figure 5.9), but who still had very little representation in the *Mahila Mandal* which regulated forest use. This divergence in patterns between Chachoga and Goshal made me go back to my data, but also reflect on the socio-political aspects of social organization I had observed during my time in India. Ultimately I have come to appreciate the interaction of class, caste, ownership of resources, and so on, as a

complex relation, each factoring into the construction of a dynamic which favors upper caste households in social, political and economic positioning in village affairs and in the management of village commons.

Land reform was supposed to equalize rural villages and provide the landless with resources to pursue agricultural livelihood strategies. Jodha (1986) discusses what in fact occurred during land reform, and suggests that those who had previously been landless did not have adequate human, natural or economic resources to pursue agricultural livelihoods. Land reform was based on dominant cultural assumptions, assuming that with the redistribution of land, all could adopt the dominant agricultural system.

In the *Mahila Mandal*, the same assumptions are still being made. The assumption is that the dominant agricultural cycle is that which should be supported through the inputs of common property resources. In many ways this may be an ecologically viable position. However, it is clear that not all households will, or can, adopt agricultural livelihoods. Women from households that do not negotiate agricultural livelihoods are denigrated, and also socially and politically marginalized. Their marginalization extends into the women's organization where their voices, needs and interests cannot be heard, and their needs are therefore not incorporated in the management of common lands. In the village of Goshal, Scheduled Caste women are a part of the dominant agricultural strategy and, although they are not involved themselves in the functioning of the *Mahila Mandal*, their agricultural livelihood needs from village forests are similar to that of the Rajput caste. As such, Scheduled Caste needs from

village forests in Goshal are represented through Rajput women within the *Mahila Mandal*, which minimizes conflict between Rajput and Scheduled Castes in the management of village commons. Nor are the needs from village commons of Scheduled Caste households in Goshal as diverse or as opposed to those of upper caste households as are those of poor, Scheduled Caste households from those of upper caste households in Chachoga, where there is more direct conflict in needs from villages commons.

While many women use the forest in intense and multiple ways, not all women are involved in the protection and regulation of village forests. That is to say, the material relationship to the environment, and the types of interaction one has with the environment, does not translate directly into an organized response in forest protection in this case study. The main reason for this is that the management and decision-making over forest resources is very much affected by the political and social nature of caste organization, and the political strength upper castes maintain over village affairs, including management and substantial control of village forests.

The dynamics of caste organization are something I have only gradually been able to appreciate. My reading about caste in India before fieldwork prepared me in a theoretical way, although I now feel I have gained some understanding of the complexity of this system. I now understand that my initial, and somewhat simplistic, understanding of interactions between people and their environment was not sufficient in explaining the dynamics that lay behind a powerful and impressive organization of women who were determined to protect and control village forest resources.

India has provided an unique opportunity to reflect on the everyday aspects of difference in women's lives and the political and social manifestations of it, but I have come to realize that these are simply more observable and visible in India. Difference is a part of every society at all levels and is not particular to a caste system. My research supports the view that villages, or 'communities,' are not homogeneous entities that can be isolated and identified by 'common interests.' Community is an ambiguous word that connotes 'solidarity,' 'cohesion' and homogeneity, although anyone involved in community activism to any extent knows differently. The women's actions that have been presented in this study as in many ways propagating unjust structures within a community, are, in fact, an everyday part of village life and the reality of village affairs.

Having arrived at the conclusions that I have concerning the multiple levels of difference amongst village women does not preclude the possibility for more equity within village structures. My conclusions argue for an analysis of difference that exists between women at the micro-level in order to understand more fully the differing needs of specific groups within villages, and the conflicts that exist in relation to differing positions within a village. Wieringa writes: "[t]ransformation itself should never be accepted as a given concept, but be continuously problematized by all actors involved, a process in which conflicting interests are spelled out and temporary coalitions...negotiated" (Wieringa 1994:844). With village functioning put into this perspective, village organization can be recognized as imbued with conflictual elements, but that organization is a part of a process of constant negotiation. Such a perspective brings the possibility of equity into a processual context. Within this context, it is

entirely conceivable that recognition of conflict and differing interests from village commons could lead to a negotiation and more equitable sharing of decision-making over village resources. An analysis of conflict within institutions, even community-based institutions, incorporates and depends upon a recognition of difference. Recognizing difference allows for inequities to be acknowledged, and thus brought into community negotiation rather than being submerged into false assumptions of equity predicated on 'community based' management of common property resources.

Perhaps my research will contribute to a more realistic working knowledge of 'the developing world' and the community-based action and cohesiveness we often wish to put on others, if only because it is so lacking within our own culture. International feminism has also had a hand in constructing the 'Other' in Third World women by presenting them as 'oppressed,' even within sympathies of solidarity, which only serve to reinforce our own positions as 'liberated' Western women and cultures (Mohanty 1991). I would like to believe that I have moved from idealizing someone else's poverty, or alternatively denying someone else's power in poverty and the actions that spring from such human injustice, to witnessing the human construction of community, in all the complexity that it encompasses. Some of my conclusions have shown the limitations of women's active agency within two villages of India, but also its power.

The discussion presented here on women's differential use of village commons and their agency in commons management has not ended with my thesis, and the women in Chachoga and Goshal will continue to negotiate their positions in relation to each other. I do not believe the poor women I spoke with are powerless, or simply victims.



There are, indeed, inequitable structures and relations that propel socially and economically disadvantaged groups, but these people are not powerless. They are a part of the dynamic of community, and when the group of Scheduled Caste women I spoke with send in their petition to the government to protest the workings of the *Mahila Mandal* in their village, new negotiations within their community may occur.

Through my research I have done nothing revolutionary in outlining the activities women contribute to society, as it has long been understood that women's activities have not only been overlooked, but that they are central to any complete understanding of social, environmental, political and, in effect, every aspect of cultural organization. I have, however, gone beyond the generalizations made about 'women,' to think about the differences that exist between women in their everyday lives. This is no academic pursuit, but critical in the understanding of the many levels of oppression that occur within any given society. It is not sufficient to claim that all women are oppressed when, clearly, women differ in their specific oppressions due to race, class, ethnicity, or a combination of these and other factors. A poor woman's experience cannot be analogous to the experience of a wealthier woman, simply because they share a common gender. My study concludes that women do differ amongst themselves not only in economic conditions, the use they make, and the needs they have of village commons, but also in social and political ways that make the everyday lives of women distinct, each with a different and unique story. I have not, unfortunately, been able to individualize the lives of the different women that have been incorporated into this work. I have, however, within a framework based on a perspective in difference, attempted to go

beyond generalizing on gender terms, to looking at different women's experiences in relation to their differing use, as well as management, of 'common' resources.

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APPENDIX I																	
Summary of Information from Interviews in Chachoga and Goshal (33 Households)																	
	AGE	Marital	No. in	Adult wo. <sup>1</sup>	LAND (bighas)		ANIMALS (head)		TREES			FOREST USE		MIL in HH <sup>5</sup>	WAGE LABOR <sup>6</sup>		
		Status/ children	HH	in HH	non-irr	irrigated	cows	bulls	sheep	past sheep <sup>2</sup>	large	small	Total trees	days (wo) <sup>3</sup>	no. of <sup>4</sup> uses		(HH)
CHACHOGA																	
Rajput 1	20	single	6	2	7	3	2	2	0	18	200	0	200	130	fsbg	no	F:daycare
2	40	married/4	8	2	7	3	2	2	6		200	0	200	0	--		
3	40	married/4	7	1	1	3	2	0	0	25	25	35	60	127	fsbgm	no	
4	50	divorced/0	1	1	1.5	0	1	0	0	75	0	70	70	87	fsm	no	F:daycare
5	32	married/2	6	1	7	3	3	0	20	250	250	200	450	158	fsmbgk	no	
6	25	married/0	4	1	10	3	2	1	20	0	800	0	800	93	fsmbgk	no	
7	40	married/4	5	2	7	1	2	1	0	0	60	40	100	156	fsbmng	no	
8	40	married/5	9	2	3	1	2	1	20	400	30	60	90	86	fsbmng	no	
9	35	married/3	5	2	4	8	1	1	5	100	150	300	450	91	fsbg	no	
Harijan 10	21	married/1	5	3	5.5	1	2	0	0	0	60	0	60	96	fsmg	yes	FIL: Notary/Republic/tea stall
11	35	married/0	7	3	0.75	0	0	0	0	0	13	50	63	121	fsmg	yes	H:tea stall
12	35	married/5	7	1	1.6	1	0	0	0	0	35	0	35	145	fsmbg	yes	W:ag labor/teastall/ D: rug laborer
13	37	married/3	22	4	10	0	1	2	0	0	300	35	335	114	fsg	yes	W:daycare/H:gov't
14	35	married/4	6	1	5	0	2	0	0	0	250	300	550	88	fsmg	no	W:ag labor/H:bazaar stall
15	29	married/4	7	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	52	f	yes	W:ag labor/H:bazaar stall
16	33	married/5	7	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	67	fmg	no	W:ag labor/sells grass
17	25	married/2	4	1	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	69	fg	no	W:ag labor/ sells grass/ H:laborer
18	45	married/6	6	3	0	0	2	0	0	10	0	0	0	126	fsgb	no	
19	25	married/2	9	2	3	0	1	0	0	0	175	75	250	40	fsmbg	no	W:ag labor/H:carpenter
GOSHAL																	
					LAND		ANIMALS				TREES		Total trees				
Rajput 20	45	divorced/0	2	1	3	0	0	0	0	90	60	0	60	81	fsbrg	no	W:sells grass
21	35	married/3	5	2	6	0.3	2	1	70	200	12	170	182	106	fsbrg	no	
22	50	married/4	14	4	10	1	3	1	7	200	150	150	300	109	fsbrg	no	S:trekking guide/owns hotel
23	35	married/4	6	1	14.5	1	1	0	12	300	100	250	350	0	--	no	H: contractor
24	45	divorced/2	6	2	9.5	0.5	2	1	0	300	300	20	320	123	fsbrgm	no	S:stall in bazaar
25	50	married/6	6	2	8	2.5	2	1	5	60	20	550	570	78	fsbrgm	no	H:vender/s: bazaar
26	45	divorced/1	1	1	4	0	0	0	0	30	185	0	185	113	fsbrg	no	F:sells grass/sells rice wine
27	40	widow/4	10	4	6	5	2	1	3	30	15	60	75	84	fsbrg	no	S: owns tractor (rents out)
28	35	married/3	5	1	2	1	1	1	0	200	15	100	115	94	fsbrgm	no	S:takes yak to pass (tourism)
Harijan 29	35	married/3	5	1	7	0	1	0	0	60	40	400	440	125	fsbrg	no	W:midwife/H:drives tractor
30	40	married/5	8	2	10.5	1.5	2	0	0	45	90	45	135	139	fsbrg	yes	S:hotel owner/FIL: military
31	30	married/1	3	1	5	0	1	1	0	0	50	0	50	148	fsbrg	no	H: tailor
32	45	married/0	2	1	2.5	0	0	0	1	0	20	0	20	56	fg	no	W:weaves for others/H:religious man
33	25	married/3	9	3	6	0.5	1	1	2	10	?	?	?	111	fsbrg	yes	S: owns tractor

<sup>1</sup> Indicates number of women in household over 13 years of age.

<sup>2</sup> Indicates number of sheep family owned 10-20 years ago.

<sup>3</sup> Indicates the number of days the main female worker in the household gathers from the forest per year.

<sup>4</sup> Indicates the non-timber forest products that a woman gathers from the forest

f=firewood

s=surd

b=barn

g=grass (fodder)

m=minor forest products (mushrooms, tender ferns)

k=kadari (goat fodder)

r=rakti (bedding)

\*found only in Chachoga

\*\*done only in Goshal

<sup>5</sup> Indicates whether a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law live in the same household.

<sup>6</sup> Indicates the wage income a household has by any member of the household

W=wife; H=husband; D=daughter; S=son; F=female (single, divorced, widowed).

## APPENDIX II

### HOUSEHOLD INTERVIEW

#### HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Caste \_\_\_\_\_  
Age \_\_\_\_\_  
Marriage Status (married/single/divorced) \_\_\_\_\_  
Home village \_\_\_\_\_  
Years married \_\_\_\_\_  
Children: (ages/sex/married/where they live) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Members of household: (relationship to consultant)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Number of years living in village/household \_\_\_\_\_  
Type of marriage (arranged/love) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### HOUSEHOLD RESOURCES

##### Land

Amount of land held by household (bighas) \_\_\_\_\_  
Held between how many people? \_\_\_\_\_  
Who? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How much land does each person hold? \_\_\_\_\_

Type of land:                      irrigated              non-irrigated  
amount (bighas)

Do you have any land that is saved only for field crops, and not to be put into orchard?  
How much? \_\_\_\_\_  
Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Trees

Number of trees:

small

large

age:

Trees owned by whom \_\_\_\_\_

Types of trees:

apple

plum

How many types of apple trees do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

## Animals

Do you have any animals?

cows

bullocks

sheep

goats

Did your parents have animals?

cows

bullocks

sheep

goats

What did they do with their sheep and goats? (sold/passed on to sons) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Did you used to have more animals yourself?

How many? \_\_\_\_\_

How long ago? \_\_\_\_\_

If no bullocks, how do you fertilize the land? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Does anyone from this household work in a waged income? \_\_\_\_\_

what type of work? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## GATHERING ACTIVITIES

(Following discussion on activities month by month)

### Firewood

How long does it take you to collect firewood?

to go up the mountain? \_\_\_\_\_  
to gather? \_\_\_\_\_  
to return? \_\_\_\_\_  
time for total trip \_\_\_\_\_

How long did it take you, for example, five years ago when the Mahila Mandal first organized? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What types of firewood do you collect? (tree or bush type) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

what months do you collect it? \_\_\_\_\_  
is it green (live), or dry (dead) wood? \_\_\_\_\_  
when do you collect green wood? (months/season) \_\_\_\_\_  
when do you collect dry wood?(months/season) \_\_\_\_\_  
Why do you collect during these months? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you use other forms of fuel? (kerosene/cow dung) \_\_\_\_\_

when do you use it? \_\_\_\_\_  
why do you use it during this time? \_\_\_\_\_

Who collects most of the firewood? (m/f) \_\_\_\_\_

Which women of the household? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you gather alone, or with others? \_\_\_\_\_

with whom \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

how often: (times/day or week) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How does collecting firewood today compare with the past? (e.g. 5 years ago, 10 years ago, when your mother collected) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you gather firewood in *suari* or *pleidi* (labor-exchange) ? \_\_\_\_\_  
when? \_\_\_\_\_

with whom? \_\_\_\_\_

why is it done in this way? \_\_\_\_\_

### Fodder

Where do you bring your fodder from?  
forest fields/orchards

% from  
which months

How long does it take to collect fodder from the forest? \_\_\_\_\_  
trip up the mountain \_\_\_\_\_  
time to collect \_\_\_\_\_  
return trip \_\_\_\_\_  
total time required for trip \_\_\_\_\_

Who takes the cattle to pasture? (male/female/male children/female children) \_\_\_\_\_  
which months \_\_\_\_\_

Who do you collect fodder with? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Who do you take cattle to pasture with? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you collect fodder at any time in the year in *suari* or *pleidi* (labor-exchange)?  
when \_\_\_\_\_

with whom \_\_\_\_\_

why is it done in this way at that time? \_\_\_\_\_

## Bedding

What types of bedding do you collect?

*surd* (needles)      *barn* (ferns)      *rakti* (spruce branches)

which months

What do you use most of? \_\_\_\_\_

Which is most abundant? \_\_\_\_\_

Which is better cattle bedding? \_\_\_\_\_

Who collects bedding? \_\_\_\_\_

How long does the trip take?

up the mountain \_\_\_\_\_

to collect \_\_\_\_\_

return trip \_\_\_\_\_

Total time for trip \_\_\_\_\_

Who do you collect bedding with? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you collect cow bedding in *suari* or *pleidi* (labor-exchange)? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you use chemical fertilizer (*khaad*)? \_\_\_\_\_

amount (in %) \_\_\_\_\_

what types of crops do you put it on? \_\_\_\_\_

If you don't have enough organic fertilizer (*gobar*) to put on the fields, where do you prefer to put your *gobar*? (field crops/orchard/both mixed) \_\_\_\_\_

Is there a difference in using chemical fertilizer from natural fertilizer? \_\_\_\_\_

if yes, what? \_\_\_\_\_

## CROPS GROWN BY CONSULTANT/FOREST PRODUCE COLLECTED

### CROPS ([S]Sale or [C]Consumption)

#### Ravi (winter crops)

shai (mustard)  
joa (barley)  
gehun (wheat)

#### Kharif (summer crops)

makhee (corn)  
kodra (millet)  
rajma (kidney)  
both (bean - yellow)  
chaval - jatu dan (irrigated)  
- batla dan (non-irrigated)  
sierra (amaranth)  
mash (lentil)

#### Vegetables

brinjel (eggplant)  
gadu (pumpkin)  
guia (squash)  
kadu (squash)  
kira (cucumber)  
shugutri (eggplant)  
chili pepper  
palik (spinach)  
gobi - ful (cauliflower)  
- band (cabbage)  
matar (peas)  
bajar (carrot)  
piaz (onion)  
pazbin (green bean)  
bindi (lady finger)  
mulu (radish)  
tomater (tomato)  
katu (green leaf)  
allu (potato)

#### Edible Forest Produce

lingari (fiddle heads)  
popra (green leaf)  
shoosh (green leaf)  
zerca (green leaf)  
mushroom  
- chochi  
- gucchi  
- bandalo  
- kiown  
- gunnipuru

#### Fibre (for making rope)

zrahan (stinging nettle)  
bhang (cannabis)

#### Medicinal Plants (sale or consumption)

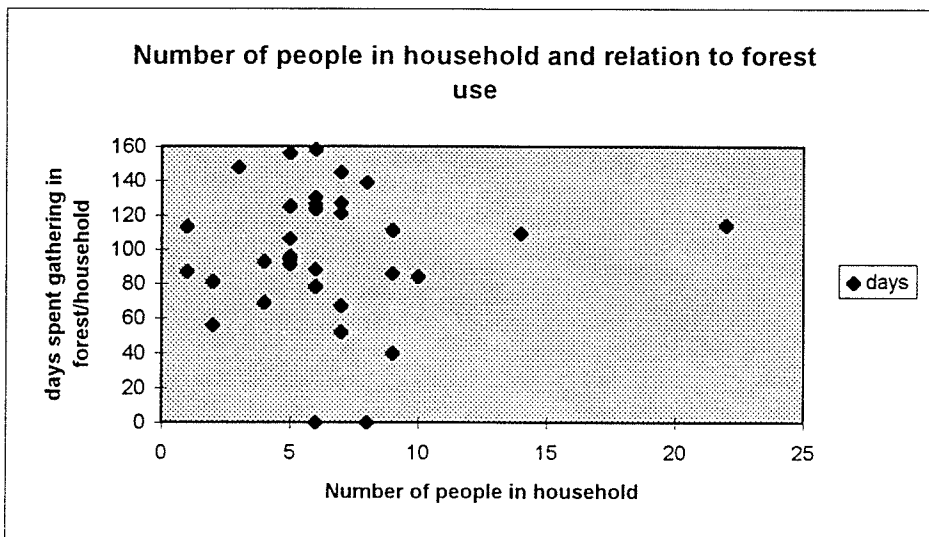
garu patish  
grocha  
milim malori  
shamale  
shingli  
zorra  
karoo  
dhoop  
singli mingli  
ban kakri  
mushak bala  
kakar singh  
sathjaalori  
dori

## SPECIFIC SEASONAL ACTIVITIES OF CONSULTANT

Chetar (15 Mar - 15 April)	firewood	needles for bedding ( <i>surd</i> )	mushroom	plough fields	take fertilizer to fields	plant potato, non- irrigated rice, veggies	weed wheat, barley
Bishak (15 April - 15 May)				collect grass from fields (weeding and cleaning)	plant millet, corn, irrigated rice	transplant veggies	
Zet (15 May - 15 June)			harvest mustard, wheat	weed millet, rice, corn potato	plant small corn, amaranth, beans		
Shard (15 June - 15 July)				transplant rice	harvest wheat	harvest apricot	weed non-irr rice
Shaun (15 July- 15 August)	firewood	collect fern ( <i>barn</i> )	cut spruce branches ( <i>rakti</i> )	cut grass from orchards	harvest beans	apple harvest starts	
Bhadru (15 August -15 Sept.)				cut grass from forest, fields, orchards			
Shoj (18 Sept. - 18 Oct.)					harvest off all crops	plant barley, mustard	
Kati (18 Oct. - 18 Nov.)					harvest irrigated rice	plant wheat	
Mocshur (18 Nov. - 18 Dec.)						plant peas	
Posh (18 Dec. - 18 Jan.)	spinning	weaving	pruning fruit trees				
Maag (18 Jan. - 18 Feb.)							
Faghun (18 Feb. - 18 Mar)			grafting fruit trees				

## APPENDIX III

### Size of household in relation to forest use



## APPENDIX IV

Availability of women's labor in relation to forest use

