

## Investigators: Ajay Kumar Singh/ Annapurna

### Jad community

#### People

In ancient times Jad community used to live in Nilang and Jadang villages, situated at an elevation of 3,400m in the Bhagirathi valley, in Harsil sub-division of the Uttarkashi district in the state of Uttarakhand, India. These villages are situated at the border area so due to National security reasons later on this community was shifted to other places. An old lady from Baghauri informed us that she was born in Nilang and got married there only, that earlier their community used to reside in Nilang, Jadung and Baghauri but after the attack of China that community shifted to Baghauri only. Presently they live in **Baghauri** village.

Jad is an **exonym**, a name given by the outsiders. The name seems to derive either from the name of the village Jadang or from a river called Jad Ganga that flows near their Nilang and Jadang villages. They call themselves **Rongba/Rongpa**. They are also known as “Bhotia”, the cover term for all the Tibeto-Burman speakers in the Himalyan region. During the winter season (November- April) they migrate to Veerpur ward of Dunda Block near Uttarkashi. The people who have sheep and goats they migrate to Chorpaani near Rishikesh. Earlier Jad people had their temporary residence in Dunda but after some time they made their permanent houses in a ward named-**Veerpur** and now several families do not go to Bagauri at all. Their main occupation is raising sheep and goats. Earlier they used to raise Yak but presently a few families have yak. They procure wool from their sheep and Jad women are very competent in knitting. One can see them constantly involved in knitting. Agriculture is the other important occupation in which this tribe is involved. Many families have apple orchards at Bagauri , that is why during the winter season when they migrate to Dunda some of them stay back to look after their orchards and other property. This place is covered in snow in winters. The total population of this tribe is around 2000. According to government records, in 2013 total number of voters at Veerpur was 948. Till 1962 they used to import items such as salt, metal, cotton and oil seeds from Tibet and export sugar, grains, wool and medicinal plants (jari booti). But after the war of India and China their business had stopped. At the same time, the Indian army shifted them from Nilang and Jadang to Baghauri.

#### Jad Language

They call their native language as **Rongpa** or **Rongma**. But their neighbors and government officials called it Jad. Thus Jad word is used as a name for the tribe as well

as for the language. Grierson treated Jad as being closely related to Spiti and other Tibetan dialects.

## **Festivals**

They celebrate a festival called **Lausar**. According to Hindu calendar which falls in the Amavasya of Phalgun. It is celebrated for three days. On the first day they lit Mashaals, lamps, candles and diyas. Next day they give a gift called **Hariyali** to their neighbors and relatives and invite each other to their homes. On the third day they play with wheat flour by throwing it on each other. On 5<sup>th</sup> September they perform puja of 'Lal Devata'. On this day they sacrifice goats and wolfs to worship the **Lal Devata**. In ancient time Buddhist Lamas were employed to conduct religious ceremonies and medical treatment. But now they have started celebrating various Hindu as well as Buddhists festivals.

## **Birth**

In this community when a child takes birth, they keep the child and her/his mother away from other people and they do not let the mother work for around 21 days. On 21<sup>st</sup> day they give a shower to the mother and her child which called **Nahaan**. On this occasion they called pandit to organize a small puja. After performing the Puja the pandit suggests the name for the child. Though Jad is a **matrilineal** community yet like Hindus they have started doing **Mundan Sanskar** of the male child and they don't perform the same for the girl child. This mundan sanskar is perform within 1 to 3 years. The right time is decided by the pandit and once mundan is over they organize a party for the community people.

## **Marriage**

Jad people marry within their own community and with the Jad people of Chamoli, Garhwal and Himanchal. The community is divided into two groups, one of them considers itself more enlightened and higher and they do not marry in the other group. Though all of them are scheduled tribe but it was noticed that the higher group members call the other group as STs. One informant informed that in earlier times there were not many wedding rituals. The boy used to go to the girl's house to bring her. Then boy's parent used to put **ghee** (a type of oil made of cow milk) on the girl's hair and they give One hundred and one rupees to them. This shows that the tradition of bride price was there. Next day they invite all the community and serve a type of

sweet made of rice flour and sugar. Presently for marriage they totally follow Hindu rituals. In arrange marriages the proposal always comes from the groom's side. It is interesting to note that the girl's parents never approach. There is no dowry system. Girl's side is considered more superior than boy's side. The boy and the girl are free to choose their life partner. Second marriage is not allowed until one's life partner is alive. If in case a couple does not have any child then they can adopt from their relatives or society but they cannot re marry. In this community if a widow wants to remarry by her own will she can and the rules are same for a widower.

## **Death**

At the time of death Jad people call the Buddhist priest (male /female), who decides the time and day for the funeral. On the basis of the Buddhist Calendar (Panchang) funeral can fall after 2 to 3 days so till then they keep the dead body at home only. On the third day of the **death** all the village children are invited to eat food and on the seventh day every villager is invited to eat food. After that the ashes of that dead is thrown in the river Ganga.

## **Communicative pattern**

Bilingualism is prevalent in the community. Jad is now mainly spoken by the older people. The younger generation knows only a small number of Jad words. They prefer using Hindi and are reluctant to learn their native language. They are also not interested in their traditional means of livelihood — weaving woollens and animal husbandry. The language has no script and people who were well versed in its oral literature have died. They have lost the songs that were sung on different occasions. Most of the young people are working in towns and prefer speaking Hindi over Jad.