London School of Economics and Political Science

TENSION

An Ethnographic Study of Women's Mental Distress in Rural North India.

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Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to examine the embodied and mental forms of distress - expressed as *tension* – experienced by women of the Gaddi tribal community of Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, India. *Tension* is a polysemic term used across South Asia to describe the strains and scrapes of life, similar to 'worry' or 'stress' in Euro-American discourse. Amongst the Gaddi, the term provides a unique window into the intimate, embodied experience of politico-economic and social transformation. This community has experienced a rapid shift in livelihood over the past century, from agro-pastoralism to military service or waged labour. This has been paralleled by a transformation in structures of kinship, marriage and respectability, where the breakdown of the pastoral economy has precipitated the nuclearisation of the Gaddi household, increased control over women's work and sexuality, and rising wealth inequality between households.

Drawing on fifteen months of ethnographic fieldwork (October 2017-December 2018), this thesis investigates *tension* as an expression of the hopes, aspirations, speculations and fears that women have for upward social mobility**.** It works towards an emic bio-moral theory of *tension* as an imbalance of bodily humours that index strained domestic or community relations, and hence new inequalities of gender, class, caste and tribe. By paying attention to *tension* as it runs along the fissures of kinship, care and exchange networks, it is also the first application of a novel analytical approach that can be used to interrogate the relationship between intersectional inequality, social change and mental distress.

For Nan Nan and Nani, who led me here,
and for Shyam and Souji, who found me.

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Glossary of Key Terms

Bhoj	Pressure, weight, burden.
Bhuut	Ghost.
Bimari	Illness.
BP	Blood pressure.
Chela	Ritual or traditional healer.
Churel	Ghostly figure of an infertile woman, or a woman who has died in childbirth.
Dant-Band	Dissociative condition wherein a person's jaw locks.
Dain	Female witch.
Dagi	Male witch.
Desi	Local, traditional – referring to alcohol or medicine
Dharam	Spiritual way of life.
Ghavraat	Panic.
Ilaj	Treatment.
Izzat	Honour, respectability.
Jadu	Witchcraft.
Jungle Raja	Incubus who comes to women in dreams, tempting them into sexual forays.
Kam	Work.
Kamzor	Embodied weakness.
Khus	Happy.
Maike	Natal home.
Moh-maya	Web of worldly attachments and concerns.
Pagal	Mad, crazy, deviant.
Pani ki problem	Abnormal vaginal discharge.
Opara	Black magic.
Sariri	Natural, of the body.
Sasural	Marital home.
Shakti	Libidinised creative and destructive power.
Sukh-Dukh	Ups-and-downs, or happy and sad moments of life.
Takat	Embodied strength, vitality.
Utshuk	Excited, buzzing.

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A Note on Style

I represent Hindi and Gaddi words as transcriptions, to be as phonetically accurate as possible, rather than transliterations, in order to capture more closely the nature of vernacular speech. I alter personal, organisational, and locational names, as necessary, to protect the anonymity of my interlocutors.

Prologue

One could reach the hamlet of Mohli only by crossing through a small gap between the hardware store and the disused mill. Shyam had to draw me a map the first time I tried to go alone, but I was still left roaming through the fields somewhere behind the nunnery. "You'll know you're on the right path when you pass by a mother buffalo with bright blue eyes" he assured me. I would always nod to this mother when I passed, unnerved by her stare. I would come to Mohli when I needed some respite from listening to the painful stories of women in the village about the *tension* they suffered. I would eat Thukpa and Tingmo in one of the Tibetan Cafes. I would pass the buffalo, trace my way through the rice fields, pass the small crops of coriander and radish, and trail my fingers through the willow fronds as they draped like old crones, their sagging bosoms hanging low over the trail. There was a Gaddi hamlet nestled behind the monolithic nunnery, its mud houses seemed even smaller and darker in the nunnery's shadow. I had been to many gatherings here, for it was Shyam's mother's birthplace, and where he had been brought up for a time. As Shyam became my dear friend and constant research companion, his family would invite me in for tea or to share a moment in the winter sun.

One day when I was passing back through the hamlet, I noticed a woman who I hadn't seen before. She was stout, with a thickened belly and heavily lidded eyes. She called Shyam over and he greeted her warmly. He explained that she was his mother's cousin's widow, Meena. She had recently returned from cutting wheat, chaff clinging to her breasts and stuck in her hair. I noticed her sister-in-law watching icily from her own doorway. Meena led us into her kitchen, tacked onto the side of her brother-in-law's house. The space was like a cave, cramped, stretching only 4 metres across. The mud ceiling hung so low that not even Meena could stand up straight inside it. The array of utensils hanging on the walls tinkled as I brushed past them. It was cold in there, even though the day was bright outside. Shyam lit a fire with the meagre pile of wood that lay beside the mud stove.

Meena was slow and restless, her chapped fingers picking a thread in her kurta. Shyam jarred the wooden door shut as Meena began to relay, in fragments, the abuse and neglect she experienced as a widow at the hands of her in-laws. She folded her legs underneath her, as if trying to make herself even smaller. She rocked back and forth. This body, she told us, was battered more before her husband had died. His death was a kind of relief; cirrhosis of the liver caused by alcoholism, leaving her with two sons to care for. Meena looked up at me directly, a gap in her story, a familiar refrain *mujhe bahut tension hai* – I have so much *tension*. The space was laden with this *tension*. It was at once a feeling she expressed, but also a mood, an ebbing frequency. At its nadir, it was a slowly churning melancholy but as she spoke of her sufferings, it whipped up into a buzzing anxiety. *Tension* seemed to emanate from her body, it mingled with the smoke from the fire, making my throat catch and my eyes water.

Meena was not one of the women with whom I grew close, she was not one who visited my house, nor even invited me back. With Meena it was a fleeting moment of intimacy that then dissolved. Despite its brevity, it left an imprint on me, such that when I conjure my time with the Gaddi women of Kangra, I see her face. It was the face of so many other women who unfolded themselves to me; of Shruthi and Simrin and Seema. The lined face of Skuntala and the fresh rosy cheeks of Divya. Though the collective and common experience of distress, pain, isolation, hardship and despair blends, I retain the specificity of their stories with surprisingly sharp acuity. Perhaps I conjure Meena because it was in that squat room, drinking watery tea, that something struck me. When I looked out on this community from the perspective of any of these women like Meena, I was able to see both the mesh of potential relations of care and support; and the struggle and endurance that women had to show in order to sustain such relations. I was able to see the deep connectedness of these women, and the ways in which they were deeply isolated. "At the end of the day, everyone looks out for themselves", she told me. "They don't have time for me. My *tension* is my own".

Introduction

Tension is a polysemic term, wielded in different ways across the community I worked with during my doctoral fieldwork – the formerly agro-pastoralist Gaddi tribal community who inhabit the foothills of the Dhaula Dhar range in the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh, India. A ubiquitous idiom like 'worry' or 'stress', it is used across South Asia to describe the strains and scrapes of life. In the Gaddi community, *tension* was used by people without noticing, an ordinary expression that one heard so often it lost particular poignancy. "No *tension* madam" a taxi driver would reassure me after a near-miss on the road; "she gives me so much *tension"* a mother would laugh off her daughter when she spilled tea she was meant to place daintily on the table before her guest. Yet, as I came to be enfolded into the stresses of life, a harder butt of the term began to emerge. In this form, *tension* was used by my interlocutors to describe a state of strain that was simultaneously internal to the psyche, manifest in imbalanced bodily humours and present in intimate, particularly domestic, relationships. It was expressed through different acts of telling – a whisper through gritted teeth while sitting side by side on a public bus, an outburst in the privacy of an empty kitchen, muffled by tears during a domestic altercation.

Case histories, interviews, kinship maps, workshops, visits to healers and doctors during my fifteen months of fieldwork (October 2017-December 2018) revealed that *tension* was not just a descriptive phrase, nor was it a cultural idiom of distress that expressed a more natural bio-medical condition. Instead, it blossomed as a relational theory of distress with its own ethno-anatomical axes of health and illness, normalcy and pathology, suffering and agency. As I began to follow these acts of telling *tension*, a window opened to the material and existential uncertainty that this community was experiencing; into the ways in which social, political and economic change is experienced intimately in the bodies of Gaddi people.

I | Locating *Tension*

Tension (tenshun) is an English word, yet it is smoothly mixed into Hindi dialogue today. Its etymological origins have definitive roots in bodily and mental disturbance. The term can be traced to the Latin 'tens' – to stretch. Its first uses are noted in 16th century France, as a medical term denoting a condition of being stretched or strained. It grew in usage over the course of the 17th and 18th century, and came to be associated with the 'nerves', as a kind of nervous strain. As recounted by Crocq (2015), tension was used by the French medical nosologist, Boissier de Sauvages in 1772 to describe a condition of bodily pain caused by *panophobia phrontis*, also called worry (French: souci). Tension was part of a constellation of symptoms, where sufferers reported constant and extreme worry, and for this reason they avoided company. In the 20th century, tension came to be associated with a psychiatric diagnosis of anxiety. In Emil Kraepelin's 1909 psychiatric treatise, it is described as the association of inner

tension with anhedonia that completely permeates both the body and the mental state. Today, in Euro-American biomedicine, tension is defined as a feeling of worry and stress that makes it impossible to relax. Yet, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, it also has a non-medical meaning, implying conflict between parties or forces – 'a situation in which people do not trust each other, or feel unfriendly towards each other, and that may cause them to attack each other'. Or a physical state of suspension – 'the state of being stretched tight; the extent to which something is stretched tight'. Indeed, across Euro-American definitions, *tension* implies the individualising and physical or material state between relaxation and snapping.

I did not observe such physical or hydraulic definitions of the term *tension* in the Gaddi context, beyond its association with pressurised bodily states. Instead, South Asian use implied migrating and relational meaning, where *tension* was used to scale across the boundaries of the physical body, into the internal mind, and outwards across relationships or landscapes. Yet, in South Asian psychiatric and psychological literature, *tension* has been used as a synonym for 'stress', a bio-psycho-social illness that afflicts the individual body or mind (Patel and Oomman 1999, Rodrigues et al. 2003, Kermode et al. 2007, Paralikar et al. 2011). Scholars suggest that *tension* presents itself as a cultural manifestation of psychological symptoms consistent with common mental disorders like depression and anxiety, and somatic symptoms such as dizziness, asthma, diarrhoea, fever, and non-specific aches and pains (Patel et al. 1998). *Tension* has been associated with poverty and deprivation, a lack of education, exposure to violence and particularly intimate partner violence (Shidhaye and Patel 2010, Roberts et al. 2020). However, equating *tension* with Euro-American terms such as 'stress' or pathologies such as depression or anxiety obscures the way that individual stress is embedded in networks of social relations.

Anthropologists and community psychologists have begun to draw out the relational meanings of *tension*, seeing it as the embodied and psychologically internalised stress of supporting kin in conditions of scarcity. *Tension* is seen as serving a communicative purpose, expressing dissatisfaction with life, difficulties in fulfilling social roles, and allowing the sufferer to seek outside help (Qureshi 2019:123, Das et al. 2012). For men, it manifests the difficulty of providing for their family (Ramaswami 2003, Halliburton 2005). For women, it manifests the struggle to maintain strained marriages and domestic care burdens (Das 2015, Grover 2011, Atal and Foster 2020) without overstepping expectations of femininity (Snell-Rood 2015a). Yet none of these studies look at *tension* on its own terms, instead seeing it alongside a range of other chronic illnesses or idioms of distress.

Dedicated work on *tension* has been pioneered by Lesley Jo Weaver (2017), who focuses on middle aged urban women from North India, recruited through a clinical setting. Weaver reveals that *tension* is experienced passively by the sufferer, and involves rapid-onset anger, irritation, rumination, and sleeplessness as key symptoms, often linked to specific circumstances of domestic conflict. She points

to its association with the increased intensity of modern, urban life, the housing and financial insecurity it brings. These changes are manifest in kinship relations and gendered expectations – where women use *tension* to express loneliness and disappointment at non-ideal kinship relations. Weaver develops this analysis with a specific focus on women living with Diabetes in her book *Sugar and Tension* (2018). She gives a specific account of the demands of domestic modernity among middle class Delhiite women, as they struggle with type-2 diabetes (*sugar*) and the stresses of care giving. She highlights how *tension* is generated by and experienced through the relationships between women who suffer from diabetes, and their daughters or husbands who act as their carers. She challenges the boundaries in therapeutic models between emotional and physical health care, by presenting both *tension* and diabetes as they are managed by doctors, family members and women themselves.

Weaver's study plants the seeds for a relational study of *tension*, as she calls for further and more specific work on the condition in different demographics and geographies. Indeed, despite its ubiquity, *tension* has never been the object of a deep and immersive ethnographic study beyond the clinical setting. Neither has it been grounded in the cosmological world, historical context and relational networks of one community. As a result, studies of *tension* remain unmoored from emic theories of illness, affliction and bodily disruption. Taking up Weaver's provocation, my ethnographic study moved beyond the clinical setting to map *tension* across axes of caste, class, gender and tribe in the Gaddi community. Instead of moving from particular cases of *tension* identified in illness interviews or medical cases to a general category of distress – as is the classical move in social epidemiology – I sought to delineate and differentiate a seemingly ubiquitous category of distress by tracing the way it appears in networks of kinship, friendship and exchange. Here, *tension* is a language for expressing distress, but referring to it only as a language erases the particularities of bodily feelings, moods and emotions; and the illocutionary moments of witnessing, claiming agency or expressing suffering from which they arise. Looking beyond the idiom, I observed that it is expressed differently by people across genders, generations, class and caste groups, indexing concerns particular to their position in the community, household and the life-course.

I came to realise that *tension* was not just an internal state, but sometimes a voiced illocutionary claim or performance, other times an atmospheric state, a mood that emanated in domestic space or pooled miasmically in the landscape (Gammeltoft 2018). It was used by sufferers to scale between their individual bodies and the fractures of the household, community, landscape and nation. It pooled along lines of inequality, as a shadow of shifting social hierarchies, and concentrated in parts of the body and parts of the life-course that were structurally liminal, temporally uncertain. *Tension* gave me a window into the way in which the people of this community experienced risk, uncertainty and vulnerability in their bodies, as the values that structured their social worlds were being remade. This vulnerability was yoked to older forms of exclusion and intensified by newer transitions of life and livelihood. For most

importantly, *tension* seemed new. The condition spoke to the intimate experience of transformation and revealed the uncertainty of the present. Here, I hope to push beyond the frameworks provided by medical or psychological anthropology, to seek a more panoramic view that accounts for the historical processes and structural conditions that shape the experience of distress. The product of this kind of enquiry sheds new light on the observations made by Weaver and colleagues on tension. It reveals that *tension* might be understood as an analytic that alerts us to other circumstances where cultural descriptors of bodily conditions explicitly lead out from the material body and individual suffering to identify causes within networks of social relations at the domestic, communal and national scale. It is in this vein that I will show that *tension* can be used elsewhere to understand the experience of precarity in the global middle class.

In this introduction, I will begin by spelling out the politico-economic shifts that the Gaddi community has experienced, and where the advent of *tension* features in this transition. I will go on to examine *tension* as it was experienced by Gaddi women and differentiate this experience across the life-course. This will lead me to an explanation of the novel theoretical and methodological approach that I take to *tension* in particular, and mental distress in general.

Figure I.1: Overlooking Ranu and the Shivalik Hills beyond, from the high village of Thera.

II | The Advent of *Tension*

"*Tension* rolled in from the plains," Bimla told me one day, as we sat on her veranda that overlooked the valley. Once, from that veranda, you could see right down to the wheat fields and military cantonment of Pathankot, some four hours' drive away. Now, these clear days came only in a slice of October, when the September rains had washed away a year's worth of pollution, and before the Diwali firecrackers broke the sky. Of all districts of the Himachali hills, *tension* had hit these villages on the southern foothills of the Dhaula Dhar first, according to Bimla, for this was a fault line. Above these villages, the majesty of the mountains; below the villages, the scourge of the plains. Indeed, the Gaddi people – a formerly pastoralist scheduled tribal community – saw themselves as living at this fault line. In their fields, one could find both mango and fir trees. They enjoyed the rich meat of goats fed on mountain herbs, and rice grown in engorged paddies in the lowlands. Living on this fault line was not new, for the Gaddi people had made their looping grazing route, from the high pastures of the Dhaula Dhar in their homeland of Chamba to the hot plains of Panjab, for centuries.

The Gaddi people have experienced a rapid shift in livelihood over the past century (Wagner 2013), from agro-pastoralism to military or government service or 'petty work' (Axelby 2005, 2018) in the slate mining, tourism, hydropower and construction sectors. This shift is driven by the infeasibility of shepherding as a livelihood, as pastures and properties are enclosed, and the hardship of a nomadic life becomes less appealing. The precarity of nature has been replaced, they say, by the precarity of man. Gaddi people have watched as the urban sprawl of Dharamshala creeps up into the hills, and the upper classes of Delhi and Chandigarh buy up their land for escape or holiday homes in the cleaner air. They seek the quick cash of *masdoori* or waged manual labour over the long-term asset of livestock. They have profited as Hindu and Buddhist tourists from across the country and across the globe seek lodging, food and tour guides as they visit the sacred temples and shires that dot the valley.

As Kriti Kapila (2003, 2004) and Peter Phillimore (1982, 1991) have charted, this shift in livelihood has been paralleled by a transformation in structures of kinship and marriage, where the breakdown of the pastoral economy has precipitated the movement from exchange to hypergamous prestige marriage, the nuclearisation of the Gaddi household, and a renewed emphasis on conjugal intimacy. An educated bride is now desirable and expected to channel her literacy into the future trajectories of her children, who are hopefully educated in the local private school and sent to Delhi or Chandigarh or Dubai after matriculation. Where grandmothers are one of thirteen children, mothers are one of four or five, and daughters only want one or two. A woman and her husband supposedly treat their son and their daughter equally, yet girl children are increasingly aborted, and young women are surveilled even more acutely as they step beyond the bounds of the house to attend school or college or their job in an NGO.

New forms of inequality in income, education and status have deepened within and between households, where one brother is in the military and another runs a small corner shop, one neighbour sells his land to a hotelier and another remains a petty labourer on its construction site. These inequalities sometimes run along the existing social divides of caste, but sometimes depart from them, allowing lower caste Gaddis to appeal to higher class status; and leaving higher caste Gaddis struggling to maintain their prestige. These inequalities are politicised by policies for scheduled caste and scheduled tribe affirmative action obtained in 1947 and 2002 respectively (Kapila 2008), where he who can make claims to credit, government employment or a position in the military sees himself rise above he who cannot.

People spoke of the present as better than the past. The Gaddi people were wealthier, life was easier, people were educated. New forms of dignity have reached the mountains, people are no longer poor (*gareeb*) in Kangra, just as India as a nation is no longer poor. Indeed, the Gaddi people looked pityingly at the migrant labourers from Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand who lived in ramshackle tents on the construction sites that dotted the village. "We will never be like them," I was told, "because we

have our own land, and our women don't need to work like that". And yet the market for this land, sold for quick cash, was thriving. Though they remembered hungry, dirty childhoods, they would not struggle for their own children's food. "They don't see us as beggars anymore," one local businessman told me. "They can't even manage to keep their families together". It was unclear if 'us' referred to the Gaddi people vis-à-vis the Indian nation, or to the Indian nation vis-à-vis its colonial masters. Indeed, the advent of a Hindu Nationalist populist politics has only facilitated this slippage between Gaddi community and Hindu nation. As they appealed to middle class status, the Gaddi people saw themselves as holding a special place in a Hindu national imaginary, as India strives to become a global superpower.

Yet it is precisely in this moment of perceived prosperity that a darker force has raised its head. My Gaddi interlocutors spoke of a rise in jealousy, witchcraft, black magic, illness and distress. Here I choose to focus on *tension*, rather than these classic anthropological ways of understanding social change, as the condition is both the most ethnographically salient and ambivalent, and weaves together bodily, mental and supernatural concerns.[1] The central question of my thesis pertains to this partially hidden undercurrent of *tension*. Is *tension* specific to this moment? What does *tension* capture about this transition? Indeed, there is a salient sense by which *tension* has seeped into the Gaddi consciousness with this shift in livelihood, adoption of Hindi language, aspiration toward middle-class subjectivity, and inclusion in the Hindu nation. Yet *tension* did not work to provide existential certainty in the context of modernity, as scholars have shown for witchcraft elsewhere (Bubandt 2014, Comaroff and Comaroff 2002, Gerschiere 2003, Ashforth 2005, Niehaus 2013). Instead, *tension* reveals a particular kind of uncertainty, the terrifying cosmic instability of tribal belonging, of caste hierarchy, of class respectability and of gendered relations.

Precisely when or how the term *tension* came to be used among the Gaddis is unknown. My attempts to understand when it was first used were met with quizzical expressions by my interlocutors, the ordinariness of the term for Hindi speakers making it difficult to place linguistically or historically. Yet there is a sense among the Gaddis that it was introduced with the Hindi language, where the most elderly prefer to use Gaddi dialect terms for affects of distress or tend to complain less of distress at all. There are a range of terms that express feelings similar to *tension* in Gaddi dialect. *Bhiog*, for instance, is a term used to express grief, particularly for a lover or partner; *berry* to express the anger directed at a lover. *Ghum* is similar to the Hindi term *dukh*, used to express sorrow or sadness. *Rog* is used to express physical illness, like the Hindi term *bimari*. *Guttan* to express a feeling of suffocation, similar to that which is symptomatic of panic or anxiety. However, none of these terms capture the same kind of

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[1] It has been suggested that *tension* is a more medicalised discourse that has replaced supernatural explanations of bodily and mental disruption in South Asia as modernity disenchants (Halliburton 2005). However, it was my observation that *tension* and supernatural affliction were intimately entangled and could not be differentiated.

distress or bodily symptoms held in the notion of *tension,* with its precise link to the present conditions of uncertainty and aspiration. "There is no word for *tension* in Gaddi" I was told.

Indeed, there is a sense by which *tension* has seeped into the Gaddi consciousness with this shift in livelihood, adoption of Hindi language, aspiration toward middle-class subjectivity, and inclusion in the Hindu nation. Modernity itself is signalled in the eyes of Gaddi people by the advent of the contemporary, embodied condition of *tension* as it is framed by the loss of tradition, the breakdown of social relations and the rise of sentiments of jealousy, envy and greed that is characteristic of *kali yug* (Pinney 1999). [2] For the Gaddis, this is not a story of poverty, scarcity, survival. Bodies with *tension* are not scrawny or hungry, they are not riddled with the diseases of the poor – TB, polio, leprosy; neither are they riddled with the diseases of the city – cholera, diphtheria, hepatitis. Instead, these bodies were fattened on diets of rice and *chut-put* (junk food), and these minds were more concerned with how to manage house extensions, land dealings, repaying loans for scooters or whitegoods, new business ventures, lost job contracts, good marriage matches, school fee payments, college enrolments. *Tension* was about maintaining this web of worldly concerns, or *moh-maya*, as part of the struggle to maintain a footing on the precarious lower rungs of the Indian middle class. As Weaver observed, people express *tension* as the undercurrent of strain that comes with modern life in the present, and the uncertainty of reproducing status gains into the future. *Tension* emerges from this thick web of status concerns, the aspirational, speculative concerns of accumulation amid the growing inequality of a cash economy.

For a community hoping to shed their reputation as 'primitive', 'simple', 'savage', this project had high stakes. It involved accruing both wealth in land, cash, consumer goods and social respectability. Men did express *tension*, but it seemed that its effects were much more acute for women, speaking to new expectations of care, work and propriety as the community struggles to obtain middle class status. As Ortner and Whitehead (1981) remind us, the conversion of new forms of wealth into status or prestige is often articulated through the symbolic models of gendered propriety. In South Asia, scholars have shown how concerns for upward social mobility converge around issues of women's work and sexuality (Gardner 1995, Parry 2001, Shah 2006, Bear 2007). The stakes are highest for low caste and tribal women, as they struggle to emulate and reframe upper caste femininities (Kapadia 1995, Still 2014, Moodie 2015). [3] The vista that propels this struggle over respectability is an aspiration to be included in the pan-Indian nation state, newly shaped by the muscular values of Hindutva. Respectability was most

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[2] The *kali yug* is the fourth and final of an endlessly repeated cycle of epochs, characterised by intensifying moral decay. The *kali yug* comes to stand for present time and explains many dilemmas of everyday existence (Pinney 1999:78).

[3] Though I observed and collected data on the forms of *tension* that men experienced, a full comparative mapping of how women and men experience *tension* across the household and life-course, and its scaled meanings, is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, men's experiences will act as a foil to women's across this mapping and through subsequent chapters.

broadly understood as *izzat*, a libidinised, corporate value that can be loosely translated to honour (Mody 2008).[4] As wealth has accumulated, the stakes for accruing *izzat* or respectability have only intensified. New inequalities of class allow low caste families to aspire to the respectability of their higher caste neighbours; and, more generally, allow Gaddi people to aspire to respectability beyond their tribal roots. Maintaining and performing *izzat* is a means by which old social hierarchies are challenged and new social hierarchies emerge at this fault line as livelihoods shift.

Tension is entangled with concerns of *izzat* and hence reveals something specific about the struggle for upward social mobility or middle-class status in India. It illuminates the ways in which accumulation and respectability is contingent on new inequalities within and between households, and its strained experience as frustrated aspirations, speculations and unravelling dreams. *Tension* reveals the ambivalences of progress and growth, and flags the loss of simplicity, abundance and freedom that came with older livelihoods, as well as the new forms of ambiguity that mark Gaddi gender politics. I will return to this account of *tension* as part of the strained present at the end of this thesis, arguing how it speaks to a particular positionality in the Indian lower middle class, and perhaps even in the global lower middle class. But first, we must account for *tension* on its own terms.

III | Mapping *Tension*

Sitting together with a group of women assembled for their monthly savings group meetings in a house high in the Dhaula Dhar foothills, I was laughed at when I asked so tentatively about *tension*. "Every Gaddi woman has *tension,"* the strong voiced woman sitting in the middle of the circle retorted, sweeping her arms across the rolling valley. "Yes," another agreed, and she began to list. *Ghar* (household) *ki tension, bacce* (children) *ka tension*. Others jumped in – *financial tension, husband ka tension* – they rattled them off together. *"Tension* is part of the *sukh-dukh* (ups-and-downs, or happiness and sadness) of life," a quieter woman sitting on the outskirts of the circle muttered, looking up from her knitting. "Also, maximum ladies have pain (*dard*, *pire*) and *tension ka bimari* (illness)," cried a fourth woman as she brought in a tray of tea. *Back pain, knee pain, joint pain, high BP, low BP*. They each pointed to their ailments. "Too much *tension,* too much body pain". What about men? I asked. "Ah Gents, they have *tension* too, but they can just drink or go off to their duties. It is women who have to manage everything," the bolshy woman said dismissively. "They just drink and eat and sleep".

What about you? I asked of a younger, unmarried woman who sat beside her mother. "I have *tension* too, but it is different from my mother. It is like *future tension."* Her mother jumped in, "the young girls, they have mobile phones and want to go to college, this is their *tension*." And older women? The

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[4] I do not intend to define 'honour' as an operative of social structure (see Peristiany 1965, Herzfeld 1985), but examine the sexual subjectivities of my informants that emerge through negotiation of izzat.

woman with the tea tray gestured to an elderly woman, sitting in the corner of the veranda, alone. "See that woman there, she is my mother-in-law," the woman explained. "Her life has been very hard, she has lost many children, and done so much work, in the house, in the fields. Now her body is tired. She is weak (*kamzor*)." I wandered over to this woman, hunched in the corner. The woman was playing with a set of small rocks that were collected in a heap. She was counting them out, then returning them to the heap. She did this again and again, looking up to smile at me. "She took too much *tension.* Now she is *mentally disturbed,"* the quiet woman whispered to me later, pointing to the elder woman discretely, then pointing to her head.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

As has been established, *tension* expresses the strains of kinship and care, the frustrated striving for balance and wellbeing in the home (Snell-Rood 2015a, Atal and Forster 2020). Yet, I observed that *tension* was not used to directly describe conflict in relationships, to complain or assign blame. Instead, it was more diffuse, held in the atmosphere of a household, describing pressures that were experienced intimately, glossing over violence and severe distress or speaking about its causes obliquely, in a permitted way. Hence, I hope to push existing frameworks further, by conducting a deeper mapping of the symbolic forms and structural relations through which *tension* is expressed and experienced. This mapping involves accounting for the ways in which women themselves experience the changing humours and bio-moral substances of their bodies across the life course. I attend to the ways in which women use the term to scale upwards to identify the causes of distress in the domestic space, the landscape or the nation through idioms of *izzat* or respectability, fertility, vitality, propriety and wellbeing (Bear 2007). This cartography, developed fully in Chapter 1, allows us to both delineate the forms that *tension* takes across divides of gender, generation, class, caste and tribe (Reddy 2005), and to make assertions about its links to changes to political, social and economic life. Through this lens, we see that precarious kinship relations are not seen only as causes of illness, but as extensions of it (Pinto 2014).

Temporally, *tension* came in waves, ebbing and flowing according to the rhythms of the life-course. Spatially, it emanates out from the woman's body to the domestic mood, it pools through liminal spaces in the village and the landscape. In Hindu cosmology, the woman's life-course – from birth, through marriage and childbirth, and into death – is marked by the making and unmaking of relational bonds and attachment, called *maya,* and the growth and decline of *shakti* – a woman's potency, her sexualised creative and destructive power (Gold 1991, Menon 2002). As these bonds are made and unmade, the qualities or humours of the body – heat, cool and dryness – also shift. The particularities of these positionalities, and hence constitution of the body, are shaped by the structure of the Gaddi household, which in turn is the product of changing landscapes and livelihoods. This mapping (see Figure I.2), therefore, might begin by charting the ethical and symbolic distinctions in *tension*'s manifestations as

the gendered body is made and unmade through transactional flows across the life-course (Lamb 1997); and as it takes up different structural positionalities in the household according to sexual activity, seniority and variable belonging (Marriott 1998, Trawick 1990).

Adolescent Girl

As a child, a Gaddi girl's body is not sexualised, she has a 'free mind', and she enjoys a measure of freedom of movement – particularly if she is of a lower caste. Her body heats with her first menses in adolescence, consistent with potential sexual activity. At this point, her sexual energy or *shakti* is controlled by her natal family, her father and brothers. It is around the age of 10 that she comes to be taught the behaviours associated with *izzat*, veiling, modest bodily comportment. She is responsible for supporting her mother in sustaining her natal household and, as she grows up, she takes on more and more responsibility for housework, caring, farm work. Where her mother and grandmother might have been married in their teens, and promised even earlier, she remains in her natal home. She will have the pressure to go to school, do well in her studies and be expected also to further educate herself beyond graduation or get a job before she is married. This will augment her marriage prospects and feed a new source of income back into the natal home that can potentially be used for her dowry. Such an obligation was not held by earlier generations, as they were most often married in *atta-satta* or exchange marriage, and dowry was not necessarily demanded. Women between childhood and marriage are carefully surveilled, as it was of utmost importance that they maintain sexual propriety so that they can secure a good match that will elevate their whole family's status. This surveillance is particularly acute at present with the advent of school or college education, and mobile phones facilitating pre-marital relationships.

At this point, an adolescent girl's body is 'open', sexually active and 'hot', and thus impure and vulnerable to illness, supernatural attack, most often affecting her fertility and thus the lineage. This heat is sometimes manifest in menstrual ailments such as heavy periods or abnormal vaginal discharge (*pani ki problem,* Trollope-Kumar 2001, Rashid 2007b)*,* or acute dissociative events especially when norms of *izzat* are overstepped. Sometimes this sexual energy overwhelms them, and they become possessed or display *dant band,* where the jaw locks shut involuntarily in a fit of rage and must be prised apart (Marrow 2013)*.* Temporally, adolescent girls are stuck between the looping temporality of household work, and the vast expanse of the uncertain future that they can reach out to but not quite touch. Young women most often cited their *tension* as *future tension*, using the English word to describe the state of rumination they felt at their uncertain future in marriage, employment and education, and the conflicting pull to fulfil their reproductive responsibilities to their natal home. She feels confused, claustrophobic and guilty at her inability to navigate the liminal period.

Married Woman

When it is time for a Gaddi girl to get married, an arrangement is fixed by her father and his family, unless she is able to find a suitable match herself. Indeed, she is more concerned with romantic love for her husband than her mother or her grandmother was. During this period leading up to and immediately after marriage, the woman experiences the height of vulnerability. Her bonds of attachment or *maya* with her natal family are cut and reformed with her marital family. She is auspicious during this period – the joy for forming new relationships marked on her through the signs of marriage. But her body is simultaneously inauspicious – polluted by sexual activity, and potentially carrying the curses of her natal home into her marital home. The gift of the bride is also a threat (Raheja 1988). She will return home to her natal home for a month, *kala mahina* (black month), after her first sexual activity. Here, her *shakti* is strong and must be contained and domesticated. She is more likely to become afflicted by illness or possessed by demons during this period. Indeed, her natal family will send a continuous stream of gifts to her marital family, offerings to offset this inauspiciousness of the gift. However, unlike her mother and grandmother, she will be able to be in constant contact with her sisters and cousins through Facebook, WhatsApp and regular video calls.

The period between her marriage and the birth of her first child is wracked with *tension*. She must adjust to the new home, hoping to conceive and to have a son. She sits at the edge of the household, marginal; still stuck between the bonds being broken in her natal home and those being formed in her marital home. She is constantly criticised for her inability to make such adjustments. She might weather adverse reproductive events – miscarriages, stillbirths, but also forced abortion of girl children done silently at the behest of her in-laws in Pathankot or Amritsar. During childbirth and feeding infants, her body remains hot and polluted, though if her womb is too dry, she could experience infertility. If she fails to display *izzat*, she may develop more severe illnesses such as disrupted fertility, miscarriage or still birth (Pinto 2008, Unnithan 2010). The *tension* of this liminal period might bring her supernatural attacks, high BP or visits from the *jungle raja.* These illnesses are associated with the polluting heat of the body. If she fails to adjust to the new home, to produce a child, she risks violence or abandonment.

At the centre of the Gaddi household is the married woman, responsible for the care of all in the household, including the household deities (Marriott 1998:287). In her role as mother and wife, she is firmly entangled in the web of attachments that is *maya.* She is established in the household, having birthed children and ideally produced a son, and is approaching the height of female wellbeing (Menon 1995). Her temporal orientation is locked in the domestic time loop, the sacred time of domestic prayers layered onto the material time of housework. She must be careful to maintain her position within the household by providing well and performing superiority over younger wives through decision making and management of household finances, particularly if younger wives bring with them more wealth or their husbands have better employment prospects. Maintaining a household with *izzat* means enclosing

her own family unit in their own nuclear sphere. It means keeping the boundaries of this house secure from polluting or malign influences – people, spirits, curses – and the interior hygienic and filled with the latest kitchen appliances and gadgets. It means staying at home to invest in the aesthetics and poetics of the home as a housewife (Moodie 2015).

For Gaddi married women, *tension* was referred to as *ghar ki tension,* and was mostly used to express domestic worries (*parishan, chinta*; like how one would pay for school fees, or manage domestic animals), and distress caused by extraordinary events (like how one would manage to make a suitable match for one's child or manage through an illness or injury). However, in some cases when it slipped into pathology, it could crescendo into pain – temporary but acute and disabling; and in others it could extend indefinitely, chronic and unshakable. Women complained that they were thinking too much, or thoughts were going around and around in their head – a state that resembles the *pensando mucho* experienced by Latin American women (Yarris 2014). *Tension* made them dizzy (*chakkar ana*), or unable to sleep. Women who had too much *tension* were unable to relax or complete their daily tasks. Emotionally, they were quick to anger, or felt excess fear, shame or guilt about the inability to meet expectations of their family or community. It could also be characterised by exhaustion, a lack of interest in relationships, sex, food or their daily chores. For some women, especially those chronically afflicted by *tension* (*tension lag raha hai*), the condition seemed self-willed, rendering visible chronic suffering. For others, it seemed passive, unwilled or undeserved, where women were given too much *tension* by others (*tension dena*) or were unable to manage their *tension* or 'took too much *tension*' (*tension lena*). In these cases, women could become *mental, mentally disturbed,* or even *pagal* (mad).

The strains of maintaining a respectable household and the relationships within it are felt in her body, her household labour, making her back, knees and joints ache. She is plagued by the excessive rumination and density of thought that comes with these caring responsibilities. There is so much to worry about, that she feels isolated and alone. Married women's *tension* was often described as a bodily illness, as *tension ki bimari,* as a result of their body being overheated, overworked or oversexualised. Commonly, *tension* was expressed in terms of pressure (*bhoj*) and abnormal blood pressure, High BP, though not necessarily medically diagnosed as hypertension, and was experienced as an excess of heat and energy in the body, a state of excitement (*utshuk)* (Cohen 1998, Weaver 2017)*.* It was also held in the head, a chronic headache similar to the 'brain ache' or *dolor de cerebro* experienced by Nicaraguan grandmothers described by Yarris (2011). However, it could also manifest in non-specific aches and pains in the body, most often related to hard physical work, and hence concentrated in the back or the joints. It emerged as abdominal pain, considered a result of eating poor quality food or not enough food due to lack of self-care (Snell-Rood 2015a, 2015b). Alternatively, it could be concentrated in the heart and chest (Good 1977, Qureshi 2019). Here, it was associated with panic (*ghavrat*, *dil ghavrat*) or feelings of suffocation.

Married women were vulnerable to the jealousy of neighbours and other wives in their marital home and as such may become afflicted *jadu* or other ailments. Women explained that the negative thought and feeling that was present in the state of *tension* left one weak and unable to defend oneself against the jealousy or ill-feeling of others. Women who have *tension* have too much to think about and hence 'don't have the time' or bodily strength (*takat*) to think about protecting themselves against others. As a result, *tension* rendered the boundaries of one's mind and body permeable, and therefore vulnerable to the intrusion of supernatural forces; to witchcraft, *jadu* or black magic, *opara*. Such complaints were described as more common today, where people are 'jealous' of one another, as a result of increased inequality within and between households. These curses, from undefined others – neighbours, kin, affines, or strangers in the village – caused women to become sick, dizzy, faint, become possessed by evil demons or ghosts (*bhuut*). Commonly too, supernatural figures came to women in their dreams when they were experiencing *tension*; by night the *jungle raja* or Jungle Prince, an incubus, would come while they slept to tempt them into illicit sexual forays.

Aging Woman

As the woman approaches menopause, her body weakens with the strain of these relationships, and begins to cool as she weens her children, and they grow (Lamb 2000). She begins to ask her daughter for more help in the home and worries about what kind of match she might make for her son. The worry of this gives her episodes of low BP, even less likely to be diagnosed as any kind of medical ailment, experienced as a loss of mental motivation (*soosth*) and physical vitality (*takat*) – exhaustion and fainting spells (Das 2015). Low BP could result in fever (*bukhar*), in one's blood becoming 'bad' or in jaundice (*piliya*). She is unable to let go until she has a daughter-in-law to manage the house. When she finally finds one, and the girl arrives in her home, she gets episodes of fainting and dizziness – perhaps curses from the girl's family, or else from jealous neighbours. If her family, especially her daughters-in-law, do not provide her with adequate care, she begins to feel a cumulative weakness (*kamzori*) (Cohen 1998, Rashid 2007a, Varma 2020). She approaches old age and suddenly she feels redundant, neglected – for so many years she has sought her joy in her children and now they are too busy to care for her. The physical labour of a lifetime of work (*kam*) has settled in her bones, and she knows no medicine will make her better (Snell-Rood 2015a). Nobody even values the work she continues to do in the fields, they are only interested in keeping a proper concrete house. She begins to disentangle herself from the relationships of *maya* and, when her husband dies, she stops wearing any of her nice clothes or jewellery. If she is considered too angry, too hot, and especially if she is widowed, she might be accused of witchcraft herself. She looks back toward her beloved mountains, she feels anachronistic, simple in this time where everything is moving so fast.

TYPE OF TENSION ← Future tension → ← Ghar ki tension → ← Kamzori →

BODILY DISRUPTIONS

Abnormal vaginal discharge
Possession/Dant Band
Abdominal Pain

High BP
Palpitations/Dizziness
Rumination
Possession
Menstrual Problems
Jungle Raja visits

Low BP
Lethargy
Muscle wasting
Joint and back pain
Insomnia
Bowel disruption

HUMOURS, SUBSTANCES & SENITMENTS

Made through mixing of maternal & paternal blood & fluids

Body hot and open
Blood heats
Humours imbalanced
Anger, Impulsiveness

Body is fertile and wet not dry.
Vaginal fluids intensify.
Lactation

Body absorbs energy of household

Body becomes infertile
Body begins to cool and dry

Withdrawal from strong sentiment

SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE ACTIVITY

Menstruation

Becomes sexually active

Pregnancy, Childbirth & Breastfeeding

Childrearing

Menopause

Withdraws from sexual activity

Libidinised Shakti

FEMALE LIFECOURSE

HOUSEHOLD POSITION

Takes on responsibility in natal home

Transitions to marital home

Marginal to marital home until birth of (boy) child

Becomes responsible for marital home and web of moh-maya

Becomes marginal to home and web of maya

Exits moh-maya

ROLE (Marriott 1998)

Child

Daughter & Virgin

Wife, 'slut', affine

Mother

Chief Feeder

Mother-in-Law
Grandmother

Elder

Ancestor

⚡ Vulnerable to witchcraft

Figure I.2: A map of the Gaddi woman's lifecourse, indicating her changing household position and role, sexual and reproductive activity, humoural, substance and sentimental changes and bodily disruptions.

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IV | Chapter Outline

This narrative of *tension* is an ideal typical one, marked by moments of liminality and precarity across the life-course where the expectations of women must shift, leaving them laden with worries, netted in the worldly concerns of *maya*, or polluted by the force of their own *shakti*. The chapters in this thesis take this arc of the life-course as their organising thread, leading the reader across generations in the Gaddi household. **Chapter 1** provides a full cartography of vulnerability as it is experienced by the Gaddi people, by sketching out the field site according to observed social networks, key symbolic structures and important historical changes. It brings into focus the instabilities of tribal, class, caste and gender identity as a backdrop against which to plot the above description of women's *tension* across the life-course. This chapter also serves as an introduction to the fieldsite.

In subsequent chapters, I present three particular manifestations of *tension* that were experienced by women at different moments in the life-course. **Chapter 2** examines the condition of *kamzori* or weakness, of which elderly Gaddi women complained. Taking a genealogical approach, it traces the breakdown of the agro-pastoralist economy that sustained the Gaddi household as a result of changing property regimes and livelihood opportunities through the colonial and post-colonial periods. It argues that the condition could be linked to the devaluation of women's contribution to the household economy. This chapter also serves to provide historical context to the study. **Chapter 3** examines the condition of *ghar ki tension* or household worry that many Gaddi married women expressed. The condition pointed to feelings of fear and anxiety that could be linked to the inability of women to obtain the respectable status of housewife or manage the demands of a respectable and 'clean' home. **Chapter 4** examines the condition of *future tension* or worry about the future, of which many Gaddi adolescent girls complained. It attempts to understand it through the dissonance that Gaddi adolescent girls expressed, between their dreams and desires for the future; and the realities of incessant domestic labour and anxiety about controlling sexuality that they experienced from their families.

The last two chapters examine responses to *tension*, delineating two opposed directions. **Chapter 5** examines the condition of *pagal* or madness, of which some women were accused. It takes this condition in a very specific sense to analyse the pathway between the natal and the marital home, as women are promised in marriage and habituate themselves to their new household. It traces the stories of women who were unable to adjust, or were victims of physical, emotional and financial violence. It argues that madness must be understood against the inherent ambivalence surrounding women's sexual power, as the Gaddi community becomes increasingly Hinduised, and anxiety about sexual propriety increases. **Chapter 6** examines what relief from tension might mean for the women who experience it. It charts a cartography of care that includes the doctor and the healer but looks beyond them to the acts of care that sustained women. It offers three particular modalities of care – sharing, seeking help and having fun – as crucial to this cartography of care.

To propel the reader through the melancholic mire that is the middle of this thesis, I also build toward this chapter by providing small moments of relief that I observed amongst women, sandwiched between chapters. Through these I hope not only to foreshadow this final chapter, but also to cut any assumptions that women are suffering subjects or interpolated by systems of patriarchy. These moments show the resilience, joy and mutuality that exist alongside and sometimes alleviate experiences of *tension.* This thesis attempts to work toward a relational theory of *tension.* I will hence conclude by pointing to the ways in which *tension* might be used elsewhere as an analytic for understanding the embodied and intimate experience of precarity for the global middle class.

A Note on the Fieldsite

During my fifteen months of fieldwork (October 2017-December 2018), I was based in the village of Thera, some half an hour Southeast of the city of Dharamshala by motorbike (see Figures I.3 and I.4). The house – the focus of Chapter 3 – in which I lived was owned by a low caste Hali family, whom I refer to as Aunty and Uncle. I spent much time with their relatives, who lived close-by in the hamlet and whose stories pepper this thesis. This home became a buzzing site of activity, where I worked with my dear housemate – Assamese learning designer Soujanyaa Boruah – to host many an afternoon tea, and to run lively workshops for the children and young women of the village. With the support of Shyam Lal Kapoor, my Gaddi Rajput research companion and dear friend, I looked outwards and across the valley to map the experiences of all Gaddi castes (Brahmin, Rajput, Thakur, Hali and Sipi) and their neighbours (Pahari, Tibetan, Nepali, Panjabi) living in this village and surrounding villages of Ranu, Khagota, Mohli, Serbari , Kharota and Tatheri; and to engage key nodal figures including lawyers, healers, doctors, NGO workers, government officials in the Kangra region. As detailed in Appendix A, my deep engagements with Shyam's relatives (one of the last remaining shepherding families in the village) and friends in the village and high up in the mountain pastures also underpin this thesis.

[Removed for the purposes of anonymity]

Figure I.3: Map of Village Fieldsite
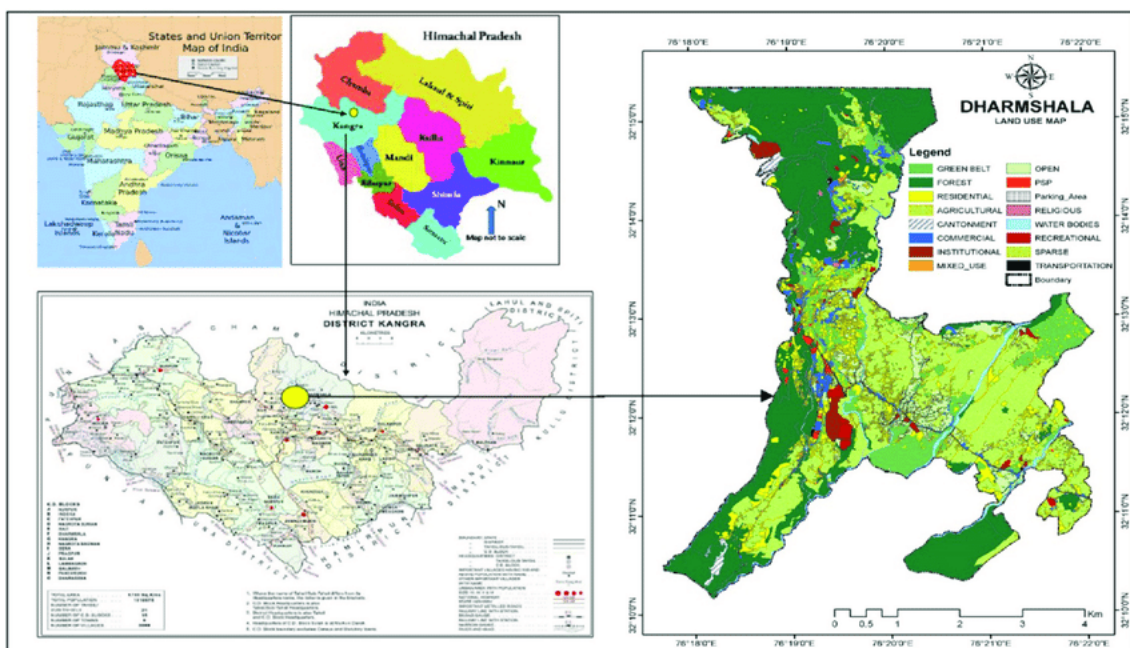
Figure I.4: Location of Fieldsite in Country, State, District and Tehsil respectively. (Courtesy of Sharma et al. 2019.)

V | Theoretical and Methodological Framings

The final section of this introduction foreshadows the conclusion by exploring the theoretical implications of *tension* as a relational analytic that reveals something specific about the experience of precarity for the Gaddi community and beyond. It does this by weaving together the literature that I found foundational to examining distress, affliction and illness, with the particular methods that I pursued in order to examine *tension* on its own terms (for a full methodological essay, see Appendix A).

To think about mental health and wellbeing as a matter of relationships is nothing new. Across the biological and social sciences, it is well documented that strong social connections and robust networks of social support are important predictors of wellbeing and recovery; but can also be the source of or exacerbate mental distress (Schon et al. 2009, Tew et al. 2012, Price-Robertson et al. 2017). Further, relationships produce not only mutuality and solidarity, but also exclusion, avoidance and stigma that can be externalised as prejudice or discrimination and internalised as distress. Perceptions of social isolation, or loneliness, are predictors of poor mental and physical health – increasing morbidity and mortality, and heightening feelings of vulnerability (Hawkley and Cacioppo 2010, Baumeister and Leary 1995). The problem, however, is that the tools we have for researching, thinking and writing about the relationships that produce and alleviate distress, and for building interventions that address it, are inadequate. The Euro-American fields of psychology, psychiatry and neuroscience remain moored in constructions of the self as individualist and independent, and distress as a product of biological processes (Deacon 2013).

The anthropological contribution to the study of distress or mental health is in its ability to draw nuanced accounts of relationality as the means and ends of analysis (Strathern 2020, Kohrt and Mendenhall 2015). The most extensive work on the relationality of distress has taken human experience as the subject of ethnographic enquiry. This work can be loosely and imperfectly glossed accordingly to literatures in phenomenological and psychoanalytic anthropology, respectively; the former privileging the outer – interpersonal, intersubjective, embodied – experience of distress; and the latter privileging the inner – interior, psychic, layered – experience of distress (Willen and Seemen 2012). A cultural phenomenological approach to distress seeks to understand human experience as it is shaped by the proximate interpersonal and intersubjective relationships that constitute the individual's life world (Good 1977, Desjarlais 1994, Biehl 2005). Often using personal narratives of illness, this approach highlights the ways in which adverse social events and relationships are entangled with or interpreted through experiences of pain and suffering across the life-course (Kleinman 1988). Scholars taking this perspective have issued powerful accounts of social suffering, mooring painful experiences in their self-represented interpersonal, social, and cultural meanings (Yarris 2011:227). They highlight not only the language used to express distress, but the illocutionary and perlocutionary effects of subjective

representations of risk within micropolitical contexts (Kirmayer 1994, Nichter 2010). Illness becomes a language in and of itself, by which the body speaks about and even resists social suffering (Das 1997, 2007). Kleinman, Das and Lock (1997) suggest the cultural framings often normalise or rationalise. They suggest a semantic or narrative approach as critical for ensuring that the politico-economic conditions of suffering do not overwhelm and silence local idioms. The most useful conceptual tools within this perspective are the 'cultural syndrome' – typical experiences, a set of words, experiences and feelings, which typically 'run together' for the members of a society (Good 1977:26-27); and the 'idiom of distress' – an evolving set of specific words, phrases, and even actions that people use in different cultural contexts to express and respond to distress (Nichter 1981, Kaiser and Weaver 2019). In their endeavours, distress comes to resemble a porous, yet defined, cultural and symbolic language for expressing disruption in relationships and life-worlds by somatic means, where they are otherwise inexpressible.

A second literature seeks to understand the ways in which relationships shape the interiority of experience by deploying psychoanalytic notions. The psychoanalytic approach is important for moving beyond illness narratives to examine what lies at the edge of consciousness, beyond language and in the latent aspects of social life (Gammeltoft 2016:428, Good 2012). Attention to the way in which symbolic meanings take deep root in the experience of the body, and structure present encounters and future imaginaries offers new biopolitical perspectives (Gammeltoft 2014b, Moore 2007). The approach also provides important models for alienation, isolation, desire, self, lack, drive, fantasy and motivation that might be deployed fruitfully to scale up from ethnographic observation (Hollan 2012). The (symbolic) psychoanalytic approach has been particularly important in South Asia (Daniel 1996, Obeysekere 1981, Daniel 1984). Most notably, Sudhir Kakar (1982) has argued that the genesis of disorder in the Indian psyche are not from early family connections like in Freudian theory, but related to the workings of karma over the whole individual's life cycle as well as across many lives. The (Hindu) self cannot be found through inquiry, like in the Socratic tradition; or teleology like in the Aristotelian tradition; but is unconfined by time and space, marked by ambivalence and permeability. Illness or disorder is understood as an imbalance of self or humours in the body, or the capture of the self by an external agent like a spirit or demon. Such an imbalance is not produced by the body as individual, but is always bound up in context of family, and environment through substances. In this theory, desire is a rush to obtain an object that pleases the body or mind, but when it oversteps its own mark, it excites the humours, making the individual a slave to its forces. Healing is hence the restoration of a sense of centrality in time and space, regaining balance in context and environment, it is not the extinction or release of repressed desire but its management. Gananath Obeysekere gives us a way of putting this back together with social, political and historical context. He argues that people make sense of and draw meaning from experiences through a process by which "cultural patterns and symbol systems are put

back into the melting pot of consciousness and refashioned to create a culturally tolerated set of images" (1981:169-170, 174).

This thesis takes experience as the heart of the ethnographic enquiry, informed by both the phenomenological and psychoanalytic approaches. It interrogates *tension* according to both sets of tools by drawing on the notion of idioms of distress and cultural syndromes, by taking seriously the fluid signs and personal symbols that structure social life. However, to focus only on the phenomenological aspects of *tension* would leave me limited by the opacity of the experience of the sufferer, the fundamental unknowability of the other's pain, and the poverty of language in its face (Scarry 1985, Throop 2012). To focus only on the psychoanalytic would leave me limited by the 'theological structure' (Crapanzano 1992:138) of psychoanalysis, at odds with the looseness of ethnography. I would risk more subtle affects and sensations of distress – neglect, exhaustion, frustration, longing, loss, panic, despair – becoming consumed by notions of desire and lack. The model of alienation that underpins distress – isolation, stigma, loneliness, disintegration, deviance – risks being seen as antithetical to the relationships in which the subject exists, rather than produced by them. Indeed, more fundamentally, to focus only on experience would leave me without an answer to the fundamental question that guides this thesis – to what extent is *tension* related to the conditions of intimate social and politico-economic change that have rocked this community over the past century?

An answer to this question requires a more panoramic view (Willen and Seemen 2012) that accounts for the historical processes and structural conditions that shape the experience of distress in the present. The move to provide structural accounts of distress has been strong in the epidemiological and social sciences. Appreciation of the structural causes of distress is critical so as avoid victim-blaming through a myopic exploration of only immediate causes of distress (Kaiser and Weaver 2019:594, Davies 2015). Indeed, from global mental health, there is frequent reference to the social determinants of mental health (WHO 2014), and particularly the contribution of poverty, social inequality and injustice as a cause of mental ill health (Lund et al. 2011, Collins et al. 2011). However, the choice to use biomedicine as a guiding principle, to focus on scale up of health services and to pursue 'one-size-fits-all' approaches to addressing mental ill health leaves the movement unable to tackle the complex, multi-layered and political processes that deprive so many people of the opportunities for mental health (Burgess and Campbell 2012:382, Summerfield 2008, Mills 2014, Kohrt and Mendenhall 2015). Recent calls for 'human rights-based' (Mann et al. 2016) or 'capabilities-based' approaches (Burgess 2014, Roberts 2020), and to privilege the processes of co-production and the voices of people with 'lived experience' (Jain et al. 2017) provide much needed models for interrogating structural causes of distress. However, they remain ethnographically unspecific in their conception of the ways in which the individual's experience is shaped by society at large or structural forces. Without the methodological and analytical

tools for understanding the relationality of distress provided by anthropological methods, too often its structural causes are conflated with or investigated as the social or cultural *context* of experience.

On the other hand, structural accounts of distress proposed by anthropologists too often overdetermine the individual experience of suffering.[5] According to this approach, illness and distress are both a means by which the aetiology of suffering is displaced from the state or structure to the individual through medicalised language (Scheper-Hughes 1992, Farmer 1997); and a 'weapon of the weak' (Scott 1985) that allows the oppressed to resist the conditions of their oppression, even involuntarily. Such structural accounts are important for appreciating exchange of meanings, images and representations between the personal body and the collective body, and the structural violence that produces suffering between them (Scheper-Hughes 1992:169, Taussig 1986). However, they sometimes risk locking the anthropological subject in its own suffering 'slot' or seeing the subject's experience as determined by the experience of poverty (Robbins 2013a). As the individual sufferer is seen as a unit of a total social whole, the suffering subject registers great structural forces in their bodies. Unlike the circumstances captured by these scholars, *tension* was not a dominant discourse that was condensed down into the bodies of Gaddi women. Instead, it was part of a process by which women scaled up and down their subordinate voices between body, household, landscape and nation (Rajeha and Gold 1994).

Both forms of structural analysis, with their emphasis on broad structural forces extrinsic to any sufferer, are marked by a kind of scale-blindness – they lack the tools for incrementally scaling up from experience or down from structural force (Singh 2021). Instead, we require a more ethnographically accurate analytical vocabulary for the ordinary everyday experience of social structure that we might find by paying attention to the forms through which women themselves scale between their bodies, households, communities and nation (Bear 2007). Indeed, I seek to develop *tension* on its own terms, an analytic built through symbolic and structural mapping that might be used elsewhere to understand how women themselves scale between intimate bodies, the local moral and symbolic economy, and structural forces. In order to do so, I combine, rather than reject, the approaches outlined above, such that no one approach colonises the theory of *tension.* In any given case, anthropologists must develop an approach to distress that accounts for the multiple and cross-cutting axes of disadvantage that people experience, as they are embedded in forms of social distinction such as class, caste, gender, age and

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[5] The most well-developed structural analysis of distress is conducted by those seeking to understand structural violence. Though not departing from the 'gritty details of biography', Paul Farmer for instance, attempts to explain rather than make sense of suffering by charting the historical forces that distribute suffering unequally (1997). Farmer accounts for the ways in which racist and classist colonial policy has shaped a present marked by poverty, HIV and hunger in Haiti, South Africa and elsewhere; arguing that no single axis can fully define increased risk for extreme suffering. In the same vein, Nancy Scheper-Hughes attempts to recuperate and politicise the use of the body as such a large part of the lives of the weak. She accounts for the embodied idiom of *nervosos* as a means by which the "*nervous-hungry, nervous-weak body… offers itself as a metaphor and a metonym for the socio-political system and the weak position of the rural worker in the current economic order*" (1992:186).

tribe (Shah and Lerche 2018). This approach sees *tension* not as a stand-in for a more *real* medicalised set of conditions, or a *register of* particularly precarious politico-economic conditions in history. Neither is it necessarily universally attributable to certain traumas or public sentiments (Berlant 2011). Instead, it is an expression of the hopes, desires and fears people have in the context of social change, their unmet aspirations and uncertain speculations about certain projects of respectability and risks that render them vulnerable. It is hence the first application of a novel approach to mental distress that can be used to interrogate the relationship between intersectional inequality, social change and mental distress.

At its core, this framework builds on the approach developed by Gammeltoft and Oosterhoff (2018) that accounts for mental health in the domestic world, as it mediates intimate interpersonal relationships and broad politico-economic shifts (Yanagisako 1979). Indeed, foundational to my account of *tension* was the way in which it emerged as a product of my methodological focus on relations within and between households (Stack 1974). My methodological prerogative was not to seek out pathological figures by beginning in the clinic or traditional healing shrine, but to root myself firmly in the village life and its associated intimate economy. Together with Soujanyaa, Shyam and my boyfriend Hugo, I built a house in the village that became a space where women of all generations visited me (Simpson 2019). The fact that this space was both familiar – close to their homes such that it was easy and permitted to drop by for a tea or chat – and strange – the house of a foreigner – generated a particular domestic world wherein women of all generations felt as if they were able to unburden themselves of their *tension*. In this instance, the illocutionary act of expressing *tension* was performed in my presence, as a means of rendering visible suffering that might otherwise remain invisible. I felt that these women asserted a particular agency in claiming this suffering. This house was embedded in the domestic network of a wealthy low caste family, hence from it I followed and mapped the flows of goods, people and substances within and between households in the hamlet of Thera - and beyond to Ranu and Serbari ; Kharota and Kaniyara in the North, and Mohli and Tahteri in the East.

Here I moved beyond the domestic space and looked outwards across the timescape (Bear 2014) of the village and surrounding areas – the networks of kinship, care and exchange that animate social life within and between the household as they have shifted over time. Through a household, health and wellbeing survey of these domestic networks (Guyer and Peters 1987, Randall and Coast 2017, Snodgrass 2017b), semi-structured and illness narrative interviews (Groleau et al. 2007), and creative participatory workshops with women across generations (especially at liminal moments in the life-course including recent marriage, pregnancy, widowhood) I gathered stories of *tension* and yielded the personal symbols that animate it. Through the survey, I was able to tease out the material and symbolic inequalities between households, tracing the invisible lines of caste and tribe, and the more visible lines of class that cut across the village. I interpreted the illocutionary moments where *tension* was shared

against these inequalities. When I visited women in their marital home while in the presence of others, they often denied or sought to hide experiences of *tension*. In the natal home, *tension* was often expressed with laughter, humour or cynicism. I observed that upper caste women were more private, less yielding than their free-talking lower caste neighbours; that wealthy women in concrete houses were more serious, prouder than their struggling sisters who easily dissolved into tears. These differences in the acts of telling revealed profound insights about the dynamics of power that animated *tension,* and the way in which it was embedded in the modalities of connection and exclusion, *izzat* and shame within networks of kinship and care.

Through life history interviews, kinship mapping, secondary interviews with nodal figures (doctors, ritual healers, NGO workers, government officials) and archival work in the colonial gazetteers and settlement reports of Kangra and Chamba (held in the British Library, LSE and SOAS Archives), I was able to scale upwards from these ethnographic insights to the historical processes that shape this community. I observed that the Gaddi community's century of rapid change – to livelihoods, kinship structures, expectations of gender and political identity – has shaped the fraught experience of the present. There were two factors that make the present so fraught. First, shifts in the values that organised social life – where changes in life and livelihood rendered certain people, things, qualities and actions socially valuable and others devalued. Second, conflicts between values, leading to the destabilisation of existing hierarchies or orderings in household, community, work and marriage. As such, precisely *how* such historical, structural changes shape experience of distress is most usefully understood according to the notion of value. Ethnographic observation of the social roles and experiences that have been devalued, the lived experiences of conflict between notions of value, and the points of impasse and rupture where value hierarchies unravel or become unstable are signposts for distress. Here, the conception of value that helps me to build an analytic of *tension* is not the Dumontian or neo-Dumontian formalist approach that sees societies as holistically organised according to monist or pluralist structures of value (Dumont 1980, Robbins 2013b). Instead, it is a notion of value inspired by Feminist (substantivist and Marxist) scholars seeking to build theoretical tools that render visible the voices, sentiments and bodies of the subordinate and occluded; and the processes that make them so.

A feminist perspective provides a particular analytic approach for tracking the processes and models by which some relations are valued, and others are devalued. Gender provides this 'way of looking'; where the symbolic capacity for relations between men and women stand for other relations of inequality (Strathern 2016:xvii). The symbols of gender and sex become an instrument, a means, and a mechanism to recast and contest other relations and to interrogate processes of accumulation, transformation and devaluation (Moore 1988, Ortner and Whitehead 1981). Indeed, such processes occur as persons or things move across spheres or domains of society, rather than any given domain or form of action being the only domain for producing value (Collier and Yanagisako 1987, Strathern 1988). Instead, all human

activity is potentially productive, or generative of value (Bear et al. 2015, Dalla Costa & James 1972). For any person or thing to be valued more than another, some other person or thing must be devalued or have its value appropriated (Tsing 2013). Social hierarchy is hence dependent on generating and sustaining forms of difference (Federici 2004, Rubin 1975). What is critical about such an approach is that it allows us to understand the ways by which certain inequalities in value, or forms of devaluation, come to appear as natural or even desirable in order to produce or sustain hierarchy. These experiences of devaluation are hence not straightforwardly construed as alienation or exploitation but are subtly reframed according to unique, non-commodified *values* that cannot be compared or converted into money (Graeber 2001, Turner 2008). Most specifically, notions of (female) respectability (in this case *izzat*) reframe and transform material wealth into status along lines of caste, race, tribe, gender, class (Stoler 1995, Rofel 1999, Mills 1999, Reddy 2005), these are in turn experienced as bio-moral and symbolic constellations of belonging and exclusion such as sexual propriety and impropriety, cleanliness and dirt, purity and pollution (Daniel 1984, Bear 2007).

The notion of value that this approach – and any application of this approach to the study of *tension* – gives us is a fragile one, where structures of value are inchoate, partially emergent, always transforming in the muck of daily life. It is also dynamic – where I seek to understand the circulation and transformation of value as it flows through modalities of sharing and exchange (Gregory 1997). The value of any given person or thing is not essential but a palimpsestic product of their positionality within chains or networks of value (Strathern 1988), composed of their many interactions in everyday life, by which they 'sort out' their relationships (Sykes 2013). I argue that it provides us with a more nuanced structural perspective that accounts for the relationship between social change, inequality and *tension* (in particular, distress in general). In this account, *tension* is not 'contributed to' by inequality, poverty or injustice; neither is it an 'effect' of a structurally violent system. Inequalities and social differences do not simply *determine* individual experience of vulnerability; instead, intimate and fragile social relations are *generated* at their intersection (Bear et al. 2015). In this sense, material conditions of depravation and inequality are inseparable from ideological inequalities of caste, tribe, gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity. They are 'conjugated', to use Bourgois' phrase (1988, Shah and Lerche 2018), in various patterns that occur organically. Such approaches make plain that health cannot be understood separately from the histories of patriarchy, class and tribe inequality. Pushing this further, I argue that the experience of distress is generated by the very processes of value accumulation, transformation, devaluation and occlusion that constitute social hierarchy. These processes occur as society shifts – livelihoods, household structures, practices of kinship and marriage change. And the constellations of value that animate social life also shift.

Indeed, in this thesis I allow this theoretical notion of value to guide my analysis and shape the theory of *tension* that I build. I examine the historical processes by which certain social roles and forms of

action or work within the Gaddi households are invested with value in the present, and others are devalued. The accrual of respectability is unstable as multiple forms of market, domestic and moral value converge and conflict. Women experience the brunt of these struggles over value, as they strive to obtain upwardly mobile caste status, ascribe to the norms of upper caste femininity and eschew their tribal identity. Yet the female experience of this struggle over value is further differentiated, where elderly women experience a devaluation of their economic contribution to the households; married women struggle to manage and reproduce the value of respectability in their household; and young women experience an increase in their value to their natal home while struggling with their own devalued labour. In each of these instances, the experience of their own devalued work, combined with the struggle to maintain respectability, produces a situation of distress or *tension*. My argument is not that such struggles over value did not occur in the past, but that this particular form of distress is a product of the particular processes of devaluation that mark the present moment. Finally, a theory of value also provides the means for understanding how people seek relief from distress – by which women recover their own value or subvert the dominant structures of value.

Figure I.5. A Gaddi Shepherd ~1980. (Courtesy of Tejinder Singh Randhawa)

Chapter 1 | A Cartography of Vulnerability: Illness, affliction and distress

These people are the bone of the mountain. As the way of life changes, and a new economy moulds their life, perhaps they too will change. Yet so long as they live a life close to their wild land, subject to its weathers, something of its own nature will permeate theirs. They will be marked men.
Nan Shepherd, The Living Mountain

Preface | A Real Witch

The electricity had gone out for longer than usual that night. The fogs came in the early afternoon, thick, oozing through the widows and filling the rooms. They broke into fast rain at dusk that proved too much for Thera's shaky electricity supply. As it got dark, and we got hungry, we were forced to seek some warmth from downstairs in Uncle's kitchen. Like most monsoon evenings, Uncle and Aunty sat on either side of the blazing *culha* (hearth), where they were boiling a large pot of water. Uncle was seated on his small plastic stool, with his Gaddi *topi* (hat) tipped to the side. Aunty rocked on her haunches, turning twigs as they crackled in the fire. Uncle welcomed us in ceremoniously - "this was not a night to be wandering around outside the house" he warned.

Uncle turned to the pot. "If the water gets really hot" he remarked without turning to us, "you say it might be hot enough to boil a witch in." The still mood rippled. He turned to us, careful now to look us directly in the eyes.

> The mind these days is more mischievous, for it is *kali yug*, so there are many more *dain* (female witches). There are women here in this neighbourhood who practice *jadu tona* (black magic, witchcraft) and some men too are *dagi* (male witches). I won't tell you the names because I don't want to spread rumours.

I asked if they were real witches, or if these were just rumours about them. He and Aunty were quick to jump in. "*Sachi dain hai*" (It is a real/true witch). He spoke in Hindi to be sure I would understand. "Was it specific to this place?" I asked,

> Sometimes they are different, sometimes more powerful, but a witch is a witch. You see, in these modern times, there are more bad ideas in people's minds than good ideas. They speak a different language to one another, so they are always communicating in these dark mantras. People these days are terrified, there is more fear now than there has ever been. I will tell you.

Uncle switched to Gaddi, and he set his stance, eager that I understand the gravity of his words. He began to tell his tale.

Before I was living in my rented room, the summer before last, there was a 'foreign' lady living there. She lived alone and was here to study Thanka painting under one of the Tibetian lamas across the river. She employed one lady from the village to cook for her. The lady, Karmini, would come every day for a few hours in the morning. One day, she had finished all the cooking and she began to feel dizzy, her body ached. Her sister took her to the hospital, but the doctor couldn't find anything wrong. Then Uncle took her to a *chela* (ritual healer) near Palampur. He went into trance and told them that Karmini was indeed a victim of black magic, but she was not the intended victim. The lady's name was similar to

Aunty's name - Kamala. Someone had cast a spell intended for Aunty, but it had instead unwittingly affected Karmini.

After that incident, Aunty and Uncle became wary. Sure enough, some months later Aunty began to feel pain in her womb. She would get heavy bleeding when she was menstruating. The pain intensified, she would be unable to walk some days, and would lie beached on her side on the *manjee* (daybed). On the really bad days, she wouldn't leave her bedroom, greyish, under heaped *rasai* (blankets), whimpering in the summer heat. She couldn't work, the pain settling in the webs around her eyes. Uncle took her to gynaecologists, private and public, Tibetan doctors, *desi* (local) practitioners, Ayurvedic clinics. She had scans and blood tests, ultrasounds and bags of pills. "This has all happened because I am doing better than the others." Uncle said gravely.

> They are jealous. Bad things are easy to do. People want short cuts. They don't care about each other anymore. They want to do things quickly in these days. Before people were sad, and they accepted that they were sad. When they were happy, they cherished that they were happy. Now this life of *sukh-dukh* (ups-and-downs) is not ok.

He paused, remembering himself. "But we shouldn't talk about these things now. This is the time when they are strong." At that moment, the lights flickered back on and the dark navy of the room gave way to a sobering blue.

Introduction

"Life is better today", Gaddi people told me. There is much less hard work to do, people are no longer poor (*gareeb*), women are 'coming up', 'maximum' (most) people don't believe in caste anymore. Yet, if this was a time of progress for the Gaddi people, how can we account for the undercurrent of anxiety that ran just below the surface? It raised its head in, often embodied, forms of disruption - distress, illness and affliction. Indeed, I was told time and time again that *jadu* (witchcraft – spells and curses performed by a witch) and *opara* (black magic – curses that may be performed by anyone) were more common these days than ever before. What is interesting about the stories of witchcraft I collected is that they run counter to the observations made by the only scholar to write about witchcraft in Gaddi communities, Peter Phillimore. Drawing on more than 30 years of ethnographic fieldwork, Phillimore (2014) observed that during his last visit in 2009 the idea of witchcraft as a potent, malign force was losing its old persuasiveness. Phillimore worked in the Gaddi-speaking village of Kanarthu, more than four hours' drive along the foothills of the Dhaula Dhar from the village in which I worked but organised according to similar patterns of caste and tribe.

Phillimore charts how Kanarthu had a reputation for being a particularly dangerous '*jadu* village'. Indeed, this reputation was still remembered by my elder interlocutors who told tales of old *dain* who lived there. Phillimore suggests that Kanarthu had this reputation from the 1970s right through until

2002 due to its enclosure from Gaddi networks of exchange caused by relative geographic isolation, unusual practices of village endogamy and high concentration of shepherding families. As the forces of education, migration and transport opened Kanarthu up to the rest of the Kangra valley and beyond, the village shed this reputation. He observes that in the 1970s, Kanarthu was considered 'backward' in time and hence associated with the 'backward' practice of witchcraft. In 2002, the last time he heard of *jadu* spoken as a current threat, his informants described *jadu* in contradictory ways. On one hand, they suggested that 'modern life' may have been intensifying the urge to use the malign powers of *jadu,* and on the other weakening its grip in Kanarthu. By the time he visited in 2009, the village's reputation for *jadu* was but a memory - 'that used to be a famous village' - a Gaddi taxi driver told him. He contends that "[it] would be very hard to argue for the 'modernity' of *jadu* in this particular Kangra village" (2014: 173).

A straightforward explanation might suggest that the discourse of witchcraft and black magic, now seen as superstitious in a 'modern' age, has been replaced by more psychologising idioms of *tension* (Halliburton 2005). However, my own insights suggest that witchcraft has not bowed its ugly head for good. It may not be associated with this particular village, but it is folded into a broader idiom of distress, illness and affliction. Indeed, as will be examined over the course of this thesis, witchcraft and *tension* are enfolded in each other and used in new ways to speak to the dangers of modernity. Instead of asking whether witchcraft beliefs, distress and illness have a place in modernity, I ask instead what the diffuse anxieties of vulnerability can tell us about people's efforts to navigate modernity (Bubandt 2014, Roitman and Gershiere 1997, Moore and Sanders 2002).

What is so fraught about the present for Gaddi people? What *kind* of uncertainty do Gaddi people experience? The present time, people told me, was the *kali yug* – a period of moral decay signalled by the rise of greed and envy (Pinney 1999). The way of navigating this period, was to maintain *dharam* – or an ethical way of life. Such *dharam* was cut by expectations of gender, age, livelihood, caste, tribe and lineage, and indexed social distinctions between groups. To maintain *dharam* was to maintain health, wellbeing, propriety, lineage, fertility, upbringing, diet – the bio-moral categories of life. It was expressed through the management of bodily and relational substances and humours. Implicit in *dharam* was a notion of social distinction based on inclusion or exclusion from caste, tribal, class or gendered groups. Inclusion and exclusion from certain social groups was articulated through subtle claims and changes to the hierarchies of physical and moral substances (Bear 2007). Preventing illness was a matter of maintaining *dharam* - literal avoidance of 'bad', or 'polluting' people, substances, things and places. It was also a matter of maintaining bodily strength (*takat*) and vitality (*shakti*), necessary to keep the body bounded and safe from intrusion and the mind safe from negative thought or jealousy. A 'weak mind', excessive negative thinking, or *tension* left one vulnerable to *sariri, opara* and possessive affliction by malign forces. For Gaddi people, this *dharam* was threatened by the loss of pastoral

livelihoods, rapid urbanisation and advent of education. The breakdown of the pastoral economy was the breakdown *dharam* and its associated categories of social distinction. Illness, affliction and distress indexed the threat posed by such breakdown.

The overarching idiom through which Gaddi people discussed social distinction was that of *izzat,* a libidinised term loosely referring to honour. Gaddi people spoke of *izzat* as the 'good values' of life - *aacha sanskar* - that they would attempt to instil in their children and look for in their neighbours. The concept was used to scale between intimate body, community, nation and divine force. One's personal *izzat* can be damaged or ruined by others in one's family, lineage or clan, such that that lost *izzat* has a domino effect on all kin (Mody 2008:201). For women, it is dependent on regulation of sexuality that involves a learned set of dispositions and skills acquired through both positive engagement and the threat of punishment if the woman innovates too far from the norm (Ram 2012b)*. Izzat* domesticates and encompasses potentially destructive female sexual power - *shakti* (Lambert 1997). Indeed, the moral valence of *izzat* is derived from its diffusion beyond the axes of sex/gender to domains including caste, kinship, religion, class, division of labour, age (Reddy 2006:43). The performance of *izzat*, or what counted as respectable and what didn't, was understood according to a range of classical Hindu symbolic principles such as heating and cooling, purity and pollution, sexual propriety and excess, cleanliness and dirt (Marriott 1998, Dumont 1980). They also include locally manifest axes of civilisation and savagery, Hindu respectability and mysticism, vitality and decay, modernity and 'backwardness', fertility and barrenness, wealth and poverty. These axes of value don't map neatly onto hierarchies of caste, tribe, gender and generation, but they shape the work of *izzat*, and the ways in which different groups make claims to status across the life course.

The instability of *izzat* was the instability of social distinctions and their associated bio-moral substances and sentiments, manifest in two ways. First, instability in the content of Gaddiness – if tribal status is no longer dependent on livelihoods, then who counts as a Gaddi? Second, instability in the content of caste – if caste communities are no longer organised by their work and thus wealth, then what defines caste hierarchies? Cutting across these two domains, we see changes to two other important domains of respectability - gender roles and the rise of new class inequalities. This chapter takes these problematics as the backdrop to the rise of dangerous forces and works toward a cartography of vulnerability. Cartography is a means of unpacking and delineating the values, substances and bio-moral categories that index and express respectability or vulnerability. Unlike a taxonomy (Hacking 1998), it challenges hermeneutically sealed theorisations of difference by showing their embeddedness in other forms of difference as well as the manner in which these claims to identity are negotiated, contested and refuted by these individuals (Reddy 2005:45). Within this cartography, axes of respectability and vulnerability shift, spatially and temporally, with different configurations of identity emerging at different points in the life course (77). We can build this map of vulnerability by tracing the ways in which people

themselves build boundaries around their identity, focusing particularly on respectability in relation to Gaddi personhood. Thinking cartographically allows me to argue that illness, affliction and distress run along the grooves of these social distinctions, arising at the points at which *izzat* is threatened; where people experience unstable social status as bodily and psychic vulnerability, and articulate this instability through imbalanced humours or polluted substances. Indeed, focusing on the moments of contradiction, conflict, collapse and impasse in social life throws into sharp relief the cultural constructions of domination and difference that exist in any community (Tsing 1993:14), and unveils the flaws, vulnerabilities and enduring qualities of the normative (Harlan and Courtright 1995).[6] The focus on illness, affliction and distress opens a window into the ways in which social and economic change are experienced intimately and bodily.

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[6] There is a rich literature that sees these moments of strain caused by social change as manifest in occult figures such as ghosts (Bear 2007, 2015), witches (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000, Bubandt 2014), demons (Taussig 1986); or as forms of unexplained bodily or mental disruptions such as headaches (Yarris 2014), fatigue (Han 2012), nervous illnesses (Finkler 1994, Scheper-Hughes 1992) and fugue states (Hacking 1990).

Figure 1.1: A Passing herd blocks the road.

I | The Instability of Tribe

Looking across the valley from the village, you directly face the rugged Dhaula Dhar peaks rising starkly grey among the green hills. You can trace your eye along the plateaus one peak, and the next, as you turn you head out to the right. The majesty of the landscape, and the sheer awe it inspires, might lead even the most sceptical to encounter the spiritual and malign forces that run through it. However, increasingly few gnarled personalities from elder generations and shepherding families truly look back toward the mountain as a site of pristine, mystical potency (Allerton 2013). Changes to property rights and land custodianship that have come with a shift away from the agro-pastoral economy, giving way to a more extractive, commercial conception of the mountain's power. The breakdown of this pastoral economy, and especially the loss of livelihood for Gaddi shepherds, threatens the integrity of Gaddi tribal status and throws into question who counts as a Gaddi (Christopher 2020, Wagner 2013).

'Gaddiness' could be defined along different axes of language, livelihood, autochthony and bureaucratic status. To be a Gaddi was to speak *gaddi bolle* – including Rajputs as a reference group, Bhatt Brahmins as ritual officiaries and five lower castes - Sipi, Badi, Rihare, Dhogri and Hali - that have maintained a contested purchase on Gaddi identity since the earliest colonial documentation of the annexation of Dharamshala (Christopher 2020:5). To be Gaddi was also to claim Scheduled Tribal (ST) status, awarded in Kangra in 2002 only to Gaddi Rajputs, Thakurs and Brahmins[7] (Kapila 2008) and based on their unique lifestyle and shepherding livelihood.[8] Yet more fundamentally, Gaddiness was negotiated through connections to the landscape - to particular places, deities and potencies. Claims to Gaddi identity were made by tracing and performing links to the land near Brahmour in Chamba on the other side of the Dhaula Dhar, known as Gaddern, seen as place of origin, and the most sacred place for the Gaddis (see Figure 1.2). Gaddi speaking upper caste Brahmins would exclude themselves from Gaddi identity through the claims that they were landowners and cultivators, with vast holdings in the lower steppes of the villages and more 'cultural' similarities to their Pahari neighbours (though some were and are shepherds, and some claim ST status in order to reap its affirmative action benefits). Gaddi-speaking low caste Halis and Sipis would cite their own genealogical links to Gaddern in order to make claims of inclusion, through were unlikely to have ever practiced shepherding and were classified as Scheduled Castes (SC) not STs. Gaddi-speaking Rajputs claimed that they were the only *true* Gaddis – citing their land custodianship in Chamba and Kangra, their shepherding livelihoods present and past, their ST status and their connection to the gods. This section will delve deeply into this sense of place, and its role in making claims to, and reframing Gaddi identity.

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[7] Gaddis in Brahmour were granted ST status in the early 19th century, while until 2002 Gaddis in Kangra were classified in the general castes as then the Other Backward Castes (OBC); though this reclassification did not extend to SC Gaddis (Christopher 2020).

[8] Oral histories suggest that the shepherding economy was organised historically such that primarily Rajputs including Khatris, Ranas and Thakurs engaged in shepherding. In some instances, Gaddi speaking Pandits also kept herds. Not all Gaddi engaged in shepherding or had their own flocks, evidence suggests that some Gaddis threshed rice or worked in the homes of others during the winter months in Kangra (Chamba SG 1904:203); some shepherds were also hired by wealthy peasants in the plains to keep flocks. Lower caste Halis and Sipis were often employed as agricultural labourers, or as waged servants to shepherds - where they were provided lodging, food and shoes.
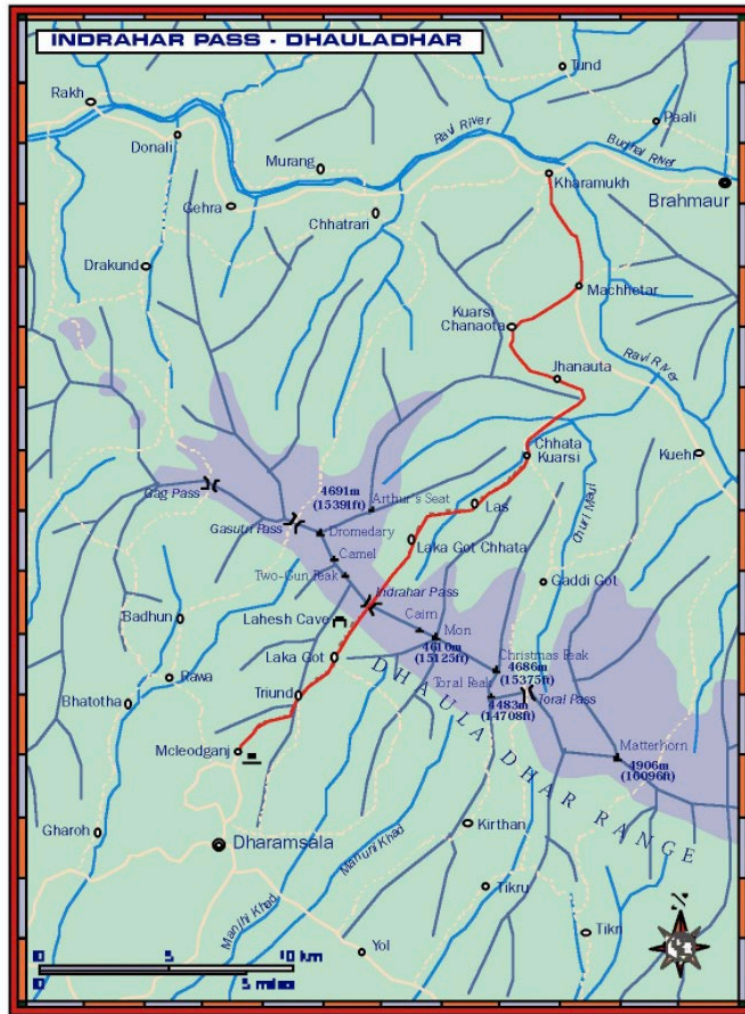
Figure 1.2: Map indicating Brahmour (Gaddern) in relation to Dharamshala region. South of the range is Kangra district, and north of the range is Chamba. (Image from https://factly.forumias.com/Dhaula Dhar-range/)
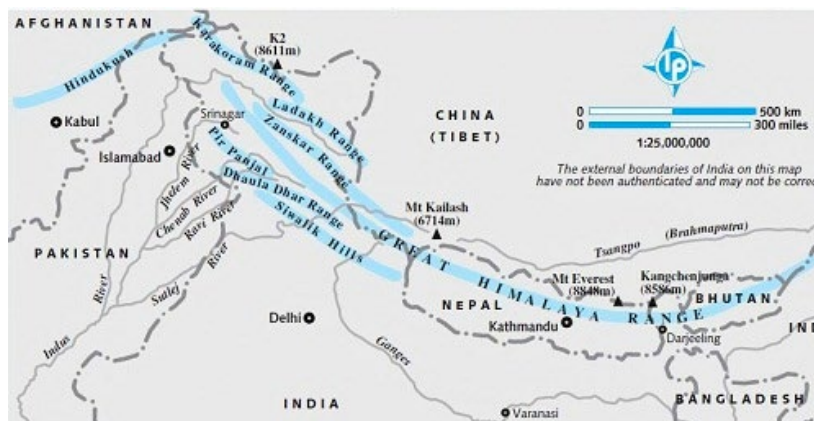
Figure 1.3: Map indicating Dhaula Dhar Range. (Image from https://factly.forumias.com/Dhaula Dhar-range/)
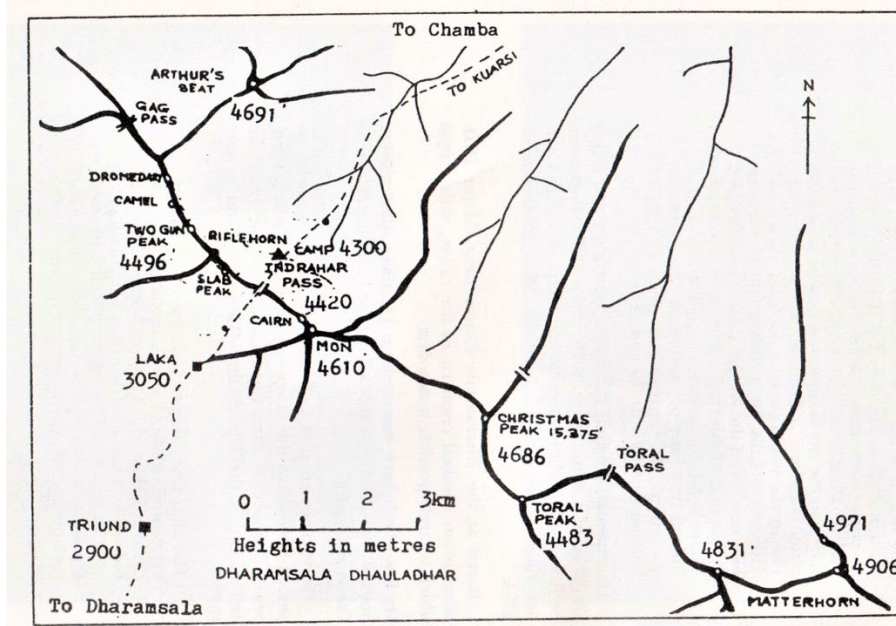
Figure 1.4: Map of Dhaula Dhar Peaks and Passes. (Image from https://www.harishkapadia.com/climbs-explorations/kullu/maps/)

The mountain is not thought of as a peak or number of peaks by the Gaddis, but rather as a kind of divine plateau marked by set of passes (see Figures 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4). They called it *Dev Bhumi* – the land of the gods, a place where the divine live in peace, without the disturbance of humans. It is not only the Gaddis who thought and still think of it that way, but across India the Himalayas are seen as a liminal frontier between this world and the next. Indeed, this area is known also to be particularly sacred as it is home to a number of the *Shakti Peet,* the parts of the mythical body of the Goddess Shakti, the first wife of Lord Shiva, that fell across the earth. The Gaddi version of this myth highlights the power held in the woman's body. I tell it here as it was told to me by a young Gaddi man, as we sat picking at roasted corn cobs by a fire:

> Shiva was in love with Shakti, whose father was a very rich man. When Shakti wanted to marry Shiva, her father did not allow him because he was a *yogi* (ascetic). Her father was having a function, but he did not invite Shiva. Shakti brought him anyway, and everyone at the function made fun of him. Shiva left the function, and Shakti was so hurt that she took her own life. When Shiva saw her body, he was wracked by grief and anger. He began to dance with her body in his arms. The gravity of his dance caused the destruction of all that was. From under his feet, the Himalayas were born and Shakti's body to be split into twelve parts. Her body fell across the land. Five parts of her body fell in the Himalayan region, two in Kangra.[9]

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[9] The emplacement of Shakti's body in the landscape shows how the potent power that emanates from these peaks is inherently feminine. Indeed, shakti was framed as a kind of vital but ambivalent life force, to be worshiped but also to be feared. It is manifest in smaller female deities that dot the mountains, residing in particular places and seeking offerings and prayer from those who pass by. *Shakti* is also defined more generally as the feminine energy of the universe, an energising principle without which there would be no motion (Wadley 1975). Importantly, this power is also held in a woman's body, and ebbs and flows in potency across the life course. Gaddi people consider Shakti's form of impulsive, angry and fearsome femininity to be a blueprint for the dangerous dimension of female worldly desire, and the strength of the feminine force to destroy if desire goes unmet.

It is this potency that that attracts visitors, pilgrims, tourists from across the globe. The reputation of the mountains as liminal has rubbed off on the reputation of the people who inhabit them. Gaddi people are seen by others as simple people, weathered by elements, habituated to remoteness, 'backward', 'simple' or even 'primitive' in their customs. They are also seen as marginal to Hinduism, practicing a mystical, animistic form of Shaivism characterised by brutal sacrifice. "They used to sacrifice humans" one Pahari businessman told me;

> [B]ut this was replaced by goats. I once saw one Gaddi man in trace take a baby goat when it was born and bite its head off, while it was still alive, and slurp out its insides. Their practices aren't mentioned in the [Hindu] scriptures, they are made up by man. So, they're not real Hindus, they came from Afghanistan and settled during the time of the Mughals, then they changed their *dharam* and became Hindus.

Today, this reputation for mysticism, migratory history, its associated animist and Muslim roots are hotly denied by Gaddi people across castes. Upper caste Gaddis especially seek to reframe identity through idioms of 'rajputisation' (Christopher 2020:6), anchoring their migratory roots in the Rajasthani plains, asserting military-political power and right to rule. They claim that they fled the rule of the Mughals in order to retain their Hindu practices and came to take refuge in the Chamba. Oral histories reinforce this story as Gaddi men remember their fathers murdering Muslim evacuees during the partition riots of 1947 in order to maintain the distinctly Hindu sanctity of this place. This Rajput identity is infused with Shaivite mythical tropes, allowing them to make claims centrality in mainstream Hindu nationalist politics - they see themselves as the custodians of the land of the gods. Indeed, their own origin myth maintains that Lord Shiva's (or *Dhudu* in Gaddi) winter abode is in Manimahesh, a sacred lake beneath the mountain peak of Kailash (18 500 ft). The first Gaddi man was created when Dhudu was trying to get over the icy Himalaya but were blocked by snow drifts. Dhudu created a flock of sheep to clear the way, and from a pinch of his skin, created the first Gaddi man and woman to look after them (Wagner 2013). Dhudu returns with his consort Parvati (*Gorji, Gaura*) at Shivratri to his summer abode in the plains, the Shivalik Hills below Dharamshala (Phillimore 1982:43). The relationship between Shiva and the Gaddis is reciprocal, where Shiva provides bounty for the Gaddis, as the Gaddi shepherds protect his land (Sharma 2015). Indeed, the Gaddi man identifies himself often with Lord Shiva,[10] and the Gaddi woman with his second wife Parvati.

The sacred temporality of Shiva's cyclical migratory movement mirrors the grazing cycle - moving North across the mountains in April, to graze the *ban* or upper pastures in Chamba in the summer, and south in October to graze in the *dhar* or summer pastures of Kangra and then Panjab in the summer.

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[10] This is particularly during the sacred thread ritual of a Gaddi marriage where the Gaddi groom is dressed as Shiva the ascetic, a yogi in a yellow loincloth and black *dora* (sheep wool rope), his body is painted with flour and small bread loops are hung from his ears. He is sent to beg, and his elder female kin give him pieces of *puri* (fried bread). His elder brother's wives try to pull of his loin cloth and hit him with twigs. After three rounds of beginning, he attempts to run away from the marriage and is pulled back by the women. He is then asked if he wants to be an ascetic or a householder, and when he answers a house-holder he is bathed and dressed as a groom (see Wagner 2013: 44).

Along this grazing route, other more emplaced gods reside in small stone temples that must be worshiped as the shepherds pass through. These gods are named for the place, and are manifestations of the Mata (Goddess), whose other manifestations are Parvati, Kali, Durga and Sherwali (Lioness) Mata. In some places, one must not utter any foul words or curses. In others such as Toral pass, women are prohibited from entering, stopping them from completing the full circuit of the shepherding route. If women cross these places, they risk inciting the fury of the Mata who resides there causing misfortune to fall on the flock and the shepherds. The few female shepherds, or consorts of their husbands, must cross at the different pass, leaving their flock with a fellow shepherd. The potency of the place is generated by the synchronicity of the climate, ritual, spiritual and shepherding temporo-spatial cycles. The disruption to this cycle caused by climate change is hence significant.

The custodianship of the land, as a unique dimension of Shaivite worship, is experienced as a privileged ability to read and navigate the social landscape and is expressed as a form of *izzat* or respectability in itself. This ability involves an embodied form of knowledge that grows from habituation to the conditions. But it is not only shepherds for whom a sense of place in the mountain is important. Before any interview, Shyam and I would engage in a long and detailed conversation about exactly where they had come from in Chamba. Once, when we were interviewing a Gaddi family in Ranu village, we sat down for tea with a visiting aunt. We were able to pinpoint the exact house that she has lived in since her marriage. We are now very welcome there when we cross the mountains to Chamba. For the shepherds, this open-door policy is crucial for their nomadic survival and precisely what has been lost, at least in the bit of their journey into the plains. Many-a-shepherd has lamented the old days, when villages would welcome the shepherds and their 700 strong flocks. They would even await their wisdom, knowledge of plants and remedies to be shared from more enchanted places, and for a dose of priceless goat's milk with its healing properties. However, such careful knowledge of place beyond Kangra is now only held by shepherds and a few Gaddi Rajput families who still keep houses in Chamba. Lower caste Gaddis who migrated to Kangra lack such links, and hence such knowledge, as before their migration they were likely landless such that they have nothing to return to. Among Gaddi Rajputs, particular areas of the mountain are understood by the community to be grazed by particular families, authorised by grazing permits historically granted by the Raja in the precolonial period, legalised in the colonial period and managed today by the forest department (see chapter 2). The privileged access to and knowledge of the landscape, and its temporal rhythms is a key axis of authenticity mobilised by Gaddi Rajputs from shepherding and non-shepherding families. It is used to exclude lower caste Gaddi Halis and Dogris who left Chamba generations ago and are now firmly settled (Kapila 2008). However, lower caste families are keen to prove their own genealogical links to Chamba in order to access this autochthonous connection.

The landscape beyond the village is also said to be haunted by supernatural figures who often channel malign forces. It is beyond the threshold of the village that stillborn babies, or infants who pass before the age of one are buried. It is in the jungle and along the shepherding routes that witches (*dain*) go to commune, and where *churel* (the ghost of infertile women, or women who die in childbirth), the Jungle Raja (an incubus who can come to women in their dreams and tempt them sexually), giants and ghosts (*bhuut*) reside. With the changing economy in the region, the encroachment of capital onto the mountain, the benevolent and occult forces are also disturbed. Indeed, there is a sense, expressed particularly by upper caste Gaddis, by which the disruption of the landscape is parallel to the disruption of Gaddiness. The privileged relationship that shepherding families had to the land, the privileged knowledge of the mountains has lost it currency in this new economy. The creep of human intervention up the mountains is said to disturb malign figures. More specifically, Gaddi shepherds lament that their custodianship of the mountain is eroding. The presence of Bengali gangs who supposedly reside in the mountains concocting and selling illicit drugs, the development of campsites and the drilling of natural resources, the harvesting of herbal medicines by Nepali traders. As a result, it is more dangerous for people to venture up into the mountains. This is particularly the case for women, grazing domestic animals or collecting firewood. Venturing into the spaces leaves people open to afflictions of witchcraft, black magic and illness.[11]

Indeed, land custodianship is taking on a new meaning in the present moment, particularly among the younger generations and lower castes, caused by two recent shifts (see also Axelby 2005, 2007). First, the increasing popularity of this area, the *dev bhumi*, as a site of Hindu tourism and pilgrimage and Buddhist tourism. Wealthy families from across India and even the diaspora seek the clean air and ritual purity of this place as they come and visit the significant Hindu sites - the Shakti Peet, the Jowallaji temple, the Aganjar Mahadev temple. Even Manimahesh Yatra in September, the most significant ritual in the Gaddi calendar, is swamped by Panjabi pilgrims who drive up from the plains in SUVs. Land is also bought up by orders of Buddhist monks and nuns who spread out from their base in Dharamshala, the abode of the Dalai Lama and Tibetan government in exile. This brings significant international tourism and business opportunity, such that every young Gaddi man is attempting to set up a small mountaineering, trekking for camping business that converts this local embodied knowledge into a financial asset. Acquiring credit to set up this kind of business is facilitated by new financial inclusion

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[11] The most significant time for such activity to occur is around the August, the time of Dain Mas. On one night during this period, there is a great annual war between the witches (*dain*) and the god Indra Nag, a manifestation of Lord Shiva. On this night, all the witches in the area congregate in an area in the Kangra hills close to Mandi, and together channel their black magic by lifting their dresses and taunting the gods. If they win, there will be no rain, famine and misfortune for the Gaddi community for the following year. If the Indra Nag (a manifestation of Lord Shiva) wins and the witches are defeated, it will pelt down with rain the following days and weeks to come (see also Phillimore 1982: 308-9, Rose 1911: Vol I 215, 473 for variations of this event). This is a popular event for children, who become very animated waiting for rain; but also for young people who frequently posted on Facebook about the coming events, praising Indra Nag for the coming of rain.

policies led by the State Bank of India that offer preferable interest rates to those who have ST or SC status. The precarity and drudgery of work in the farms or slate mines is replaced by the independent entrepreneurialism of such business ventures, which young Gaddi men describe as a reclamation of the independence they enjoyed as shepherds and farmers.

The second shift that has occurred is in the introduction of a new law by the Himachal state governments whereby land can only be purchased in the name of Bona Fide Himachali citizens. Aimed at protecting the land economy from the influence of capital investments by businessmen from Delhi and Panjab, and from upper class migrants from polluted cities, it has opened up significant business opportunities for Gaddi people to act as middlemen. Land is frequently bought in the name of a Gaddi custodian, funded by a foreigner, non-Himachali Indian, or Tibetan refugee. The Gaddi will receive a handsome ongoing fee for this provision, and often stay on to care for or maintain the property. Through these two shifts, we see that the notion of property and the status of being a custodian of this land is a means of cementing one's place in the national imaginary and realising a business-driven entrepreneurial progress promised by a liberal India and intensified under the Modi government.

The symbolic logic through which this shift in the meaning of custodianship is established is identifiable in ritual changes. Sharma (2015) for instance, traces the subtle changes to the *nuala* - the Shaivite ritual that is held to mark transformative events such as marriages, the construction of a new house or significant birthdays. Sharma describes how the *nuala* was understood as a meeting of the nine Gaddi clans, or *als*, that worked to reaffirm allegiance pledged to Dhudu, and cement the contours of a community usually dispersed along shepherding routes. Lasting a whole night, the nuala involves three parts - a creation or *brahmakhara*, which is sung in a very slow rhythm by the *Rehara-bards* (Sippi low caste singers), followed by bharath ("the middle"), and finally the var, or the finale, which is frenzied singing and dancing epitomized by the "dance of Dhudu" song (2015: 275). The sacrifice of a goat and the smoking of marijuana (*bhang*) was central to the ritual. After the sacrifice, the officiators of the ritual, *chelas* (ritual healers) were smeared with blood and the congregants broke out into trance like dance. Today, the *chela* is replaced by an upper caste Brahmin, the *bhang* is replaced by alcohol and even the sacrifice of a goat is replaced in many instances by the cutting of a coconut, jokingly termed a 'vegetarian nuala', as animal sacrifice has recently been made unlawful. The traditional Gaddi *anchali* songs have been replaced by Hindu *bhajans* (devotional songs) picked up from Panjab and the plains, and increasingly by 'DJ parties' - dance parties where Bollywood and popular Gaddi songs are played from huge *boofahs* (speaker sets). Nuala rituals are also often held by influential politicians, where caste groups are invited to public venues and kin from across the valley travel to attend. At these bigger festivals, there are performances from traditional Hindu stories drawn from the Gita and other such scriptures. Indeed, through this example we see the reworking of traditional Gaddi identity through axes

of popular Hindu identity and Hindu nationalism, such that the connection to the mountain and the gods that inhabit it is unyoked from the embodied knowledge of traversing the passes.

The cost of this reframing of Gaddi identity, the 'dilution' of the group as low caste Gaddis claim inclusion, the loss of land custodianship, is acute for those who have the most to lose. Elderly generations who have seen shape of Gaddi identity change in their lifetimes, who have seen urbanisation and pollution, experience these shifts acutely in their bodies. Gaddi people see the land as the source of their vitality and their bodily strength – *takat,* as they see their bodies as consistent of the substances drawn from that place (Daniel 1984). For Gaddi people, food nourishes the body, and is a source of blood (*khun*). Health is largely associated with having good blood that in turn comes from compatible foods, grounded in a caste-based theory that buttresses the ideology of descent, where those of lower caste have different blood to those of higher castes (Parry 1979). Eating the wrong foods resulted in bad blood,[12] which in turn caused bodily ailments and mental imbalance. People spoke of the fresh, nourishing meat they used to eat, goats grazed on *geribooti* (herbs and flowers), the healing properties of the goat milk they would drink, and the delicious taste of home-grown seasonal vegetables cooked into fresh *sabzi* (curry) for daily meals. It was necessary for people to eat 'heating' foods such as meat, eggs, alcohol, groundnuts, carrots, onions, garlic and mango in order to withstand the cold climate during shepherding or slate mining (Parry 1979:84-89). Such foods gave one courage to overcome the harsh landscape. Indeed, most people explained excessive alcohol consumption as rooted in healthy habits (*adat*), where alcohol was described as a 'medicine'.

However, habituation to such heating foods and alcohol ultimately spoiled one's blood and thus demeanour - leaving one with overt passions, lust and aggression. These qualities were said to result in alcoholism and domestic abuse for men. Continuing to consume such foods and alcohol in the same way by men who did not engage in the hard labour of shepherding and slate mining was considered by their wives and sisters a cause of failed masculinity. Indeed, Gaddi people frequently traced the impact of social change according to the changing rhythms and qualities of their bodies. The elderly particularly spoke frequently of the times before, when the bodies of their people had had strength (*takat*), fitness and agility. They had been able to climb the mountains with ease, to resist the cold, wind and rain as they spent nights sleeping out in the open, warmed only by a campfire and thick handwoven wool blankets. Those days were very hard, they told me. They were very poor (*gareeb*), but they were the kings (*raja*) of the mountain. The body experienced a different kind of precarity in those times, one that people framed as more 'natural'. This was expressed in fragmented memories of hunger, thirst, the exhaustion of hard labour and fear of falling from high outcrops or mountain passes. With

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[12] Parry elucidates two theories of blood among Kangra Paharis (1979:230). In the former, one's blood comes from father, and milk from mother. In the latter, blood comes from both parents, but the mother contributes the negative volatile element, which does not damage the purity of her descendants.

sedenterisation, the rhythms of their bodies have changed and the substances that feed the body have become polluting and incompatible with Gaddi *dharam*. Fathers lamented frequently that their daughters were unable to even climb to the high hills above the village to cut grass for their animals, their bellies had become swollen by daily consumption of rice. Today, the body was spoiled by the consumption of vegetables from the market, ruined by 'dependence' on the 'poisoned' foods imported from Panjab, sprayed with chemical pesticide. Such foods were the cause of new kinds of ailments unseen before in this community, particularly *patheri* - kidney and gall stones, but also forms of cancer and heart disease (*dil ka bimari*). Elderly people registered the disruption to their landscapes primarily though embodied weakness (*kamzori*) and disrupted digestive processes – gas or wind (see chapter 2). Families who still could access and feed their children this fresh meat (from their own herds) and home-grown vegetables saw themselves as healthier and morally superior to their neighbours. When elderly people were able to return to their monsoonal homes high in the mountains, their humours would return to balance and they would feel well and happy.

*Figure 1.5: Shepherds make a camp (*dhera*) in the lower Dhaula Dhar foothills.*

II | The Instability of Caste/Class

The second problematic that made the present so fraught for Gaddi people was the instability of caste, and the ways in which it was being upended by new inequalities of class. When I asked directly about issues of caste disparity, answers were curtly dismissive, they replaced an old lexicon of division with a more secular, pluralistic discourse of modernity and rights. "We are not backward" I was told, "in the past, people of lower 'community' would wear a black dot on their shoulders, we wouldn't share the same water tap. But this is no more, they have rights now." Caste groups were referred to as 'communities' and were not ordered along the lines of occupation (Bear 2007, Shah and Lerche 2018, Parry 2020). However, the fact that caste divides were no longer discussed explicitly did not mean that they did not exist. Instead, I came to realise, they had come to be articulated in different affects, stigmas and exclusions, with violence and distain that was perhaps less visible but certainly just as salient (Dirks 2001, Mosse 2012). These boundaries were grounded primarily in notions of caste endogamy – and thus the divisions of lineage, space and body as they were experienced and sustained. Yet new forms of accumulation in wealth cross-cut lines of caste in disruptive ways, resulting in new inequalities within and between caste groups. Upper caste families who lacked wealth saw their respectability eroded. Lower castes were able to make claims to upper class status based on new-found wealth. Families themselves experienced acute inequalities of status and income even within households. Upper class families sought to close off and bound their houses from even their kin, in order to curtail demands for resources, money and care. The result was a village that was cut by invisible caste lines that were continually being upended and crossed by new, more visible, inequalities of class. This section examines this fraught and divided village, as hierarchies of caste are upended and remade.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

On a clear night, sitting on the slate ledge of the *dhar* (shepherding hut) in the lower mountain foothills, the whole village opens like a map in front of wearied eyes. The most intense flashes of light - blue, red and green - concentrate on the Western fringes of the vista, the lights of Dharamshala, the newly declared 'Smart City' (Christopher 2018). From this point, the lights disperse into flickers up the mountain fringed by the high villages of Nehra in the West, Kharoma and Khagota in the centre and Thera in the East. The wounds of slate mines are shadowed by these flickering lights, marking the frontier of settlement that stretches right along the Dhaula Dhar. The mines signal an old, decaying form of wealth that once made this area 'the richest village in all of South Asia'. Today, the booming commercial centre has given way to an illicit trade that refuses to be killed by federal government bans but cannot thrive while young able men are drawn to glitzier livelihoods in business and tourism. You can point out the small fields that surround my house, perched just below Thera in the area overlooking the river called Hachichik, the Gaddi word for 'white clay'. This low caste colony looks more cramped than the rest, the houses built at close quarters, without the lush fields that can be seen below in the Brahmin area.

Houses are carved into the rocky crop of the mountain, organised by *tika* (hamlet). The *tikas* at the top of this artery, in the area where I lived, are mostly populated by low caste Hali and Dogri families, who bought or were granted land there for its proximity to the slate mines where they worked.[13] The architectural constitution of this hamlet was very mixed. Crumbling mud houses, with only slivers of fields surrounding them, were set between palatial concrete homesteads, consistent of multiple households rented out to foreigners and tourists. Two grand hotels were being built on prime river-side land in the centre of this area, skeletal now but swarming with labourers from central India. Brokered by Hali and Dogri entrepreneurs, this kind of outside influence is both desired and feared. It is desired for its financial capital - the entrepreneurial opportunities it brings for young unemployed men, and its spiritual capital - testament to the importance of this place on the map of the Hindu nation. But it is also feared, for developing the land like this is considered to poison its fertility with the immoral ways it brings. Indeed, a huge landslide rocked this area a decade ago, bringing down a whole *tika* with it. Villagers told me that this was because developers had built a new Airtel phone tower in the area. In order to build the tower, a scared lake inhabited by an old widow was covered over. It was whispered that the widow had protested and prophesised the landslide, but no-one listened. It was she who brought down the tower and the whole village with it, leaving families homeless and the tower to rust in the rubble and clay. It is visible from high in the shepherding hut, resembling a huge scar.

Figure 1.6: Shyam on the Ranu Road.

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[13] Village topography in this area did not necessarily mirror associations between caste purity and elevation indicated by Baker (2005) and Christopher (2020) due to sporadic urban development and landslides.

The house I stayed in was owned by one such displaced Hali family, forced to set up a home some 300 metres down the hill after their own home went tumbling away. From my house, your eyes can trace a winding white trail, the artery that is the Ranu Road, that leads right down through the villages of Ranu and Sidbhari, following the flow of the river to the Dharamshala-Palampur Road. As one winds down the open waste land under Hachichik, one passes through a different kind of dangerous area. The open land, marked only by smooth boulders and horse droppings, provides an ideal place for bands of young men from outside the village to park their motorbikes and taxis, and crack open fresh bottles of Kingfisher beer or Royal Stag whiskey. At night, this area felt dangerous as the men would eve tease those who passed by. They seem to ignore the auspiciousness of the Nag temple rising in the middle of the waste. The Nag temple was a source of wonder and marked another invisible boundary between this dangerous space and the esteemed Brahmin colony that stretched out across to the left of the village.

These Brahmin households were perched on the top of a cliff that looked out over vast fertile fields of mustard, rice, wheat and rape, owned and worked by their community. As agricultural families, their houses were not adorned by the trimmings of modern consumer life that many of the lower caste military or business families sought, but their wealth and prestige still showed in their sensibility - an avoidance by many of meat, and by some a tendency to mark their foreheads with vermillion following morning puja, and to dress in pristine white pyjama suits. The Gaddi Rajput households surrounded the central village thoroughfare, marked by the local school, the feminist NGO, health clinic, animal clinic and backpacker's hostel. Their households were surrounded by significant holdings, enough to provide subsistence, but not enough to commercially produce. Many had sold canals of their land to build a concrete house, near to their old mud house, introducing a form of micro-nomadism that increasingly replaced their macro-nomadism. Indeed, loans for families to build mud houses can no longer be accessed, and families can only secure credit from local banks to build these drafty, asbestos-filled concrete houses. This area of the village is marked too by gated off areas, holding the colonies of settlers from Delhi and beyond. Land has been sold by Gaddi landowners, who are sometimes then employed back in their grounds or kitchens. A few Gaddi men have taken advantage of this new land economy, and its ability to upend traditional disparities of land ownership, to fashion themselves into local real estate agents. Now living in luxurious concrete houses themselves, these few men are considered *chalak* (sly) but intelligent, able to challenge the stereotypical naivety and simple minded-ness of Gaddi people and take part in this new financial landscape.

Indeed, the seductive winds of business promise have swept along with Ranu road. It is dotted by freshly constructed concrete shops, most selling the same chicken fry and momos by day, and alcohol by night. Many of the newer shops also display signs for paragliding, homestays, trekking and camping. These economic opportunities have come with the advance of financial inclusion instruments that are now enjoyed by Gaddi Rajputs through their ST status, and by Halis and Dogris through their SC status.

Favourable interest rates, long repayment schedules and shifts due to demonetisation dovetail to make credit more available, particularly to young men who are unwilling to take up the tough lives of slate mining and shepherding that their fathers weathered. These ventures introduce a new temporal cycle into the village, as these micro-enterprises boom and bust, small shops thrive and then are abandoned and gutted. The high-class Nepali Gurkhas seem to be more successful in these mercantile pursuits, their houses surrounded by potted plants taking up much of the prized land between the Gaddi settlements and the main road. They own the more established grocery and vegetable stores, selling dry goods and household necessities.

The *jajmani*-like service system was historically founded on the shepherding economy, where Gaddi people would work on Brahmin land while passing through on the grazing route for board and lodgings. Sipi families (another lower caste, though there was only one family in my village) were the wool clippers for the Gaddi shepherds, and also performed ritual songs or took the role of *chela* (ritual healer). Hali families dealt with animal carcases and were considered on the same footing as leather-working chamars of the plains. The close quarters of shepherding meant that Halis could not act as servants or helpers to Gaddis along the shepherding route, this role being filled by non-Gaddis. Today, with the decline of shepherding, this system has fragmented. Shepherding families now take Hali servants (*nokar*) from Chamba or non-Gaddi helpers from Panjab or Rajasthan and foster their own trajectory to owning flocks. However, SCs are barred from official shepherding associations, crucial institutions to regional electoral politics, such as the Gaddi Welfare Board and Wool Federation (Christopher 2020:7-8). Young Gaddi men themselves are resigned to the fact that if they do want to engage in shepherding and don't have the support of their father or brothers, they would earn more as a servant than if they owned their own flock. Gaddi Rajputs, Brahmins, Halis and Dogris alike took up slate mining together. Within new systems of affirmative action, Gaddi SCs tend to be awarded lower ranking government positions as sanitation workers, guards or clerks; where higher castes disproportionately take more professional positions (Christopher 2020:7).

In my village, internal division between caste groups ran deeper than simply disparities of land ownership between the Brahmin landowners and ritual specialists; the Gaddi Rajput shepherds and cultivators; the Dalit Hali and Dogri slate miners. Phillimore (1982:110) and Parry (1979:93) observed during their fieldwork some three decades earlier four types of rank-defining transactions between castes focused on greetings, tobacco, services and food. During their time of writing, these were the main spheres in which inter-caste relations and patterns of deference are most regulated and formalised.[14] Today, deference through greetings is reserved only for Brahmin priests, where the suffix

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[14] Christopher (2020) indicates the stricter casteist separation is practiced in the ancestral villages of Chamba such as Kuarsi and Chunhouta, where access to pastoral land, temples and water sources are prohibited to SCs.

-ji is added to their name, and the previously regulated common smoking of a tobacco pipe is largely redundant due to the commonality of individual *bidi* (hand rolled cigarettes). The sharing of food was previously highly regulated. Uncooked food, such as milk, eggs, grain, vegetables, fruit and pulses were exempt from exchange restrictions, unlike cooked food (*rasoi*). Phillimore details the ambiguity surrounding inter-caste sharing of the latter, and the significant variation across villages - where Gaddis and Brahmins would share food in one village, but not in others.[15] Neither caste would share food with Sipis, Halis or Dogris.

Today, this pattern of avoidance largely prevails, where only a few Gaddi and Brahmin families would share food with Hali and Dogri neighbours within the household. However, in contexts of drinking and eating food outside the house such restrictions were relaxed, particularly among men. In festive contexts, the *kagri daam* - a multiple course rice feast served on leaves, food was always cooked by Brahmins. Largely, lower caste families come to higher caste festivities to be fed, but higher caste families do not come to lower caste festivities. Bonds of fictive kinship forged between high caste men and low caste women through the tying of *rakhi* (sacred thread) were the most significant breach of this caste boundary.

Tracing the relaxation of restrictions on inter-caste transactions is not to say that they are not present. Indeed, the appropriation of upper caste markers by Gaddi Rajputs, and upwardly mobile Gaddi Dalits are part of a broader project to reframe tribal identity and carve out a place for Gaddi people in the national Hindu imaginary (Kapila 2008, Moodie 2015). Tracing distinctions between castes becomes more important within this project. As the topography of the village is squashed by external settlers, wealth disparities cease to map onto caste community and education, business and employment opportunities act as a leveller. Yet, invisible lines of caste carve up the village, subtle allusions to areas that are 'less safe, clean or well managed' replace older more visible demarcations of caste through clothing or housing. Upwardly mobile, upper caste families who had given up subsistence agriculture for waged labour, military professions or business ventures lamented times before when lives were dirty, smelly and unclean. The discourse of cleanliness, perhaps absorbed from upper caste Pahari neighbours, permeates the household and the body. Here we see cleanliness invoking caste-based hierarchies of relative purity and *izzat,* class-based hierarchies of relative wealth and being used to reframe tribal stigmas. New forms of bodily hygiene are of utmost importance to women as they clean their houses and their children's bodies to prevent illness (see chapter 3). Upper caste and upper-class women express disgust at those who still engage in the unhygienic practices of collecting cow dung to plaster their hearths and courtyards. They tut and cover their noses as they pass a shepherd recently

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[15] *Rasoi* was divided into *nala* or boiled foods such as rice, and *suji* or foods cooked in the 'pure' substance of clarified butter (*ghee*) (see Phillimore 1982: 114-119, Parry 1979). This distinction was present in festive contexts.

returned from the mountain pastures, covered in sweat, dirt and animal dung. Mothers-in-law would often complain that they could not find a young bride who would be willing to keep domestic animals or look after the fields, as they were too used to studying and spending time in the house.

Apart from inter-caste jealousy and discourses of cleanliness, the most salient discourse of caste-based distinction was related to female sexuality and mobility. This became clear as Rajput and Brahmin families chided me on my choice to live in a low caste area as a young, unmarried woman. I didn't realise I had moved into a precarious bit of the neighbourhood when I agreed to lease the two rooms set from Uncle the day after Diwali. I came to realise, through whispered warnings and overheard conversations in the night that this place was dangerous for a number of reasons, for a young girl like me. One afternoon, I invited a friend from lower down in the village to visit me. He was a brilliantly educated man but had decided to spend some time at home looking after his mother. At the end of our chat, as he was leaving, he stopped me and warned that this is a place of death. I was surprised that such a learned, independent man was phased by the rumours about this place. "You don't understand" he said. "This is where people come to drink, but they don't just drink, there are women here, women who come to their cars when they are drunk, dirty women". "Prostitutes?" I asked. He nodded but explained that these aren't just young unmarried women who sell sex, this is a community where married women will seek to make money on the side. I asked hom how he knew this. He said everyone knows this about this area, about the women of this area, and what their husbands let them do. "But I know about it for a much more horrible reason" he said and looked away in the direction of the valley. "My cousin was killed here" he told me.

> He had come up to this area to drink, he stayed here drinking for some hours and then he wanted sex. He found a woman, I assume he came to his car, or perhaps they were having an ongoing affair. Then her husband and brother-in-law came and found them having sex. They beat him up and killed him. Then they put his body near the Nag Temple. Someone found him there the next day. There was no prosecution. Everyone knows about this, but nobody tells.

"You know you are living in a kind of red-light district", another Gaddi Rajput friend shrugged as he told me the next day after I asked him about the incident.

After discovering this event, more goings-on in the hamlet started to make sense. The Tibetian man who could always be found reading the newspaper on the veranda of Lata's house while her husband was away in Delhi. The suicide of Kuldeep's mother that has occurred soon after an explicit video of her had gone viral. The drunk old Gaddi man often found lying prostrate in the courtyard of Anju's house at 9 o'clock in the morning. One interlocutor explained that there were two types of women who engaged in sex work or extramarital affairs. The first were women who were forced to start relationships with other men because their own husbands did not make enough money to sustain their household expenses or denied them of these funds. The second are women who are so fed up with their husbands' alcoholism or abuse that they seek solace in others.

Today, Brahmin and Rajput families rarely ventured into this area. Gaddi Rajput families historically had no such aversion, given their dependence on the wastes that surrounded the village, the fodder on the small steppe farms of all cultivators, for the grazing of their flocks. There was slippage between the ways in which people spoke of the fear of sexual impropriety and their fear of *jadu,* both of which seemed to cloud the area. Indeed, overt and all-consuming female sexuality is a shared trait of the low caste sex worker, and of the *dain* (Sundar 2001, Skaria 1997a).[16] *Dain* tended to be widows, or women who had bad relationships with their husbands, their mothers-in-law or their affines. They were often those who preferred to keep to themselves, isolated, self-sufficient. They often had significant misfortune surrounding them, for instance one or two of their children had died, or they had lost their land. In some cases, those accused of witchcraft had been rumoured to engage in suspicious or sexually deviant behaviour; they were contrarian, always starting conflict or they had shown that they didn't want the best for other members of their families.

Indeed, I will go on to argue that such norms have only intensified in the pursuit of respectability for both Gaddi Rajputs and Gaddi Dalits (see chapter 3). The fallout is that women who exceed, or are suspected to exceed, norms of sexual propriety are considered perhaps even more acutely threatening today (see chapter 5). Anxiety about domesticated female sexuality was a foundational principle of Gaddi aspirations for respectability, wherein tribal women were and are considered sexually 'wild' (Skaria 1997b) and low caste women are considered sexually improper (Still 2014). Embrace of lifelong marriage and conjugality is an inherent part of the female role in a collective aspirational pursuit of indigenous dignity and upward mobility (Moodie 2015:79). The articulation of this anxiety surrounding female sexuality is framed by both the discourse of cleanliness – the need to have a bounded, clean house (Donner 2008, Maqsood 2017); and the discourse of *jadu,* such that the more emphasis there is on the role of women in the project of respectability, the more vulnerable such communities are to *jadu.* Breeching such sexual norms renders women 'other' to the community, manifesting the 'darkness' and destructive power contained in uncontrolled female sexuality (Marriott 1998). The lower caste area's reputation for uncontrolled sexuality indeed dovetails with its reputation for *jadu.* Avoiding this area for upper caste Gaddis is a means of shoring up the respectability of their community against the wanton sexuality of the lower caste and excluding the lower castes from their project of acquiring prestige. Here we see the fractal symbolic formation between the female body and the boundaries of her community that is foundational to *izzat,* where shoring up the boundaries of the former against sexual intrusion is foundational to the formation of the endogamous caste groups (Menon 1995, Das 1995). Most

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[16] Phillimore (2014), in his reflections on his field site of Kanarthu as a '*jadu* village', argues that the increasing connectedness of the place, manifest in change in marriage, female education and lobbying for ST status, is associated with the decline *jadu*'s pervasiveness. Yet, in Thera, change in the status of women in education has not been matched by a relaxation of norms of sexual propriety.

poignantly, we see how casteism and classist stigma comes to be articulated through the cojoined idioms of witchcraft and female impropriety.

The reason why fears of *jadu* ran along the contours of caste and class in the village was that it primarily threatened the integrity of a lineage, the fertility of its women, the accrual of wealth and the *izzat* of the group. Hence, it was of utmost importance to maintain the boundaries of the house (Dickey 2000); to abide by the invisible boundaries of caste and class in the village, and even to maintain certain boundaries around the body – such as wearing sacred threads around the wrist or stomach or avoiding meat or alcohol. The flows of goods, gifts, debt and children in and between households threatened the boundedness of the household and were expressed through fears of *opara*. Indeed, the media through which *jadu* was transmitted, or curses were made, was through the same flows of substances, embodied or consumed. As afore mentioned, outside substances permeating the body or house both give nourishment and cause illness. Similarly, outside forces possess the body and mind in the form of malign supernatural figures, *opara* or positive spiritual forces. Those who have 'weak minds', caused by illness, previous affliction by *opara*, lack of intelligence, low class or being female are prone to possession,[17] witchcraft or *tension*. One needed only one such substance - a strand of hair, a clipping of a fingernail, a few drops of blood to successfully cast a curse on another. One could also transmit malign forces through cooked food, such that one was particularly vulnerable when one was eating at the house of a neighbour (particularly a neighbour from a lower caste); or when taking *prasad* (food taken at the end of a ritual). It was only in a few rare cases that I heard of people fashioning doll like figures of those who they wished to curse. Indeed, the unbounded household – one that was not sheltered from the prying eyes of others, was unclean or neglected – left those inside it vulnerable to the permeation of malign forces. The intimate work of checking food and protecting the household was also often performed by women; its cost expressed as *ghar ki tension* (see chapter 3).

Women's bodies were particularly vulnerable to the pain, dizziness and distress that was characteristic of *jadu*. Such vulnerability intensified at liminal periods of their life course - during menstruation, adolescence, immediately before or after marriage, during pregnancy, when inviting a new bride into

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[17] Possession by the Mata - sometimes as her general form and sometimes as specific manifestations - is a common occurrence for all Gaddis, but particularly for women at liminal stages of the life course, occurring during usually quotidian ritual prayers and festivals. Those who have 'weak minds', caused by illness, previous affliction by *opara*, or lack of intelligence, are prone to possession. It is said that the 'mata comes' (*mata aye*), to 'play' with the possessed (*khelna*). The afflicted will lose their sense of conscious reality, and perform all manner of erratic movements, which they will not remember after the Mata leaves them. When the Mata comes, the person is treated as if they are the Mata herself, where those around them bow and pray in her presence, muttering '*jai mata*'. Such possession has a variety of meanings, sometimes situational and sometimes therapeutic. However, it is often used as a therapeutic mechanism by ritual healers (*chela or cheli*) to cure or correct afflicted people from illness or the curse of *jadu*. The Mata will possess the *chela*, who will go into trance during which they will relay the wishes of the Mata in her voice. This is usually a vague and non-specific description of who or what has caused the affliction, and a prescription of the kind of actions, restrictions and avoidances that the afflicted must undergo in order to shore up the boundaries of the body and be rid of the malign force.

their households (Lamb 1997, Raheja 1988). These were key points where their blood, *pani* (female genital fluid) or fertility, and hence capacity to reproduce the lineage, could be spoilt (Rashid 2007b). Women could, knowingly and unknowing, be conduits for *jadu,* through their bodies malign forces could seep into a household, and effect all those within it. A new bride could bring with them the curses of madness from their natal home into their marital home, inflicted by her jealous mother on her new mother-in-law. An infertile woman could bring the curse of barrenness to her sisters-in-law; afflicted by an envious neighbour; a widow could bring the curse of death to her late husband's brothers. The threat of *jadu* runs not only along the lines of caste pollution and purity; but most acutely along the lines of class such that curses might be cast even within households, between sisters in law or cousins. These curses, as we will see in Chapter 4, are absorbed by the hot and open bodies of fertile women, and manifest in disruption to the reproduction of the lineage.

Conclusion

As the *dharam* breaks down over generations as a result of changing livelihoods, environments and kinship relations, we coincidently see a change in the way in which witchcraft is talked about, the rise of *tension* and more frequent illness. The instability of the social hierarchy leaves the Gaddi community living in a radically uncertain present. It leaves the content of *izzat* or prestige also up for grabs, embedded in a range of symbolic meanings that are used in different ways across the domains of society. As the body is also contoured by these symbolic forms, the uncertain present is experienced intimately and bodily as disruption, intrusion, possession, weakness, distress - as impasses in social life (Yarris 2014). To borrow from Mary Douglas, illness, affliction and distress are like- "a spontaneous coding practice which sets up a vocabulary of spatial limits and physical and verbal signs to hedge around vulnerable relations" (2005:xiii). Yet the goal of this 'spontaneous coding' was not to support some holistic social order through a logic of exclusion - as Douglas might suggest. This symbolic work was more speculative and messier than it was strategic and calculative.

It is here that we depart from the symbolic-structuralist framing that has been so useful for understanding *izzat* and illness; for the dependence of this analysis on social holism does not fit well with this complex and changing society. There was no singular symbolic principle under which all others were encompassed, neither was there a singular system of classification within which all symbolic principles fitted (Graeber 2007). As such, there was no singular direction in which accusations of witchcraft or expressions of illness and affliction were directed; nor a singular patterning of experiences and accusations of illness, affliction and distress according to one axis of social difference. For example, witchcraft accusations are not only made by the lower caste against the higher caste or vice versa. Experiences of *tension* are not only concentrated in one class group. Instead, experiences of illness, distress and affliction; and attributions of risk, blame or stigma were means by which people attempted to stabilise the content of *izzat* by wielding one axis of respectability over another in situ.

The *way* witchcraft, illness or *tension* exists as a discourse is marked by plasticity and indeterminacy, where the emphasis is not on the accusation but the currency of whispers, unspoken suspicions, anxiety and avoidance (Phillimore 2014:176). As such, illness, witchcraft and distress were *speculative* technologies by which people deployed symbolic idioms in order to elicit or appeal to a particular vision of social order, making claims to their own status or *izzat.* These technologies worked to project an invisible order onto a radically uncertain future in order to divine, anticipate or control it (Bear 2020: 8). We cannot see illness, affliction and distress according to a formal structural notion of social power or hierarchy, externally determined; nor a symbolic principle of social holism, if we acknowledge its speculative quality. Instead, they were means by which value was generated or destabilised in action. For, as Bear suggests "[speculation] proceeds by making value uncertain and then projecting unseen ethical orders using technologies of imagination that can help navigate this uncertainty." (2). It involves revealing the "hidden order of human and non-human powers that explain the past, present and future, making it possible to act" (8).

Hence, we come to a deep cartography of vulnerability (see figure 1.8) as it was experienced for the Gaddi community - a psychic and affective mapping of belonging, stigma and discrimination that responds to and expands calls deepen the interface between studies of caste and studies of transcultural psychiatry (Mosse et al. 2016). The cartography links the categories of social distinction – class, caste and tribe - to various bio-moral axes of vitality, cleanliness and strength. These in turn are performed and transformed through the relational exchange or avoidance of substances – blood, semen, dirt, sweat, bile – that exist in and join bodies. Disruptions and instabilities of relationships and groups are expressed through disruptions to bodies and homes – through the loss of bodily vitality, the pollution or pressure of blood, the imbalance of digestive winds, through unhygienic rooms, through minds permeable to *jadu* or *opara*. Ambivalences in social distinctions, where class and caste clash; where new claims are made to tribal status – are also indexed by haunting and uncanny figures like the witch, the *churel* or the jungle raja, where sentiment exists in excess or out of place (Gammeltoft 2014a). Crucially, the speculative work of witchcraft, illness and distress both reveal and reproduce existing social hierarchies and make it possible for people to mobilise new symbolic axes of *izzat* by rendering visible other forms of intangible power.

In this moment of radical and terrifying uncertainty, such technologies are used to stabilise existing orders, but also in creative ways to elicit new claims and futures. This insight allows me to argue that *tension* is a not proxy for more real experiences of resistance or oppression; an assumption that glosses over and, in some cases, even romanticises the experience of distress itself (Abu-Lughod 1990). Nor it is a 'weapon of the weak', a form of instrumental agency through which the body speaks where it otherwise must remain silent (Scott 1985, Das 1997, Nichter 1981, Boddy 1994). Illness neither distils complex material and social processes into comprehensible human motives (Comaroff and Comaroff

1999:286), nor is it a coping mechanism for broad socio-political changes that wreak havoc on people unable to adapt (Kapferer 2002). Instead, I argue that illness, distress and affliction were a means by which people incrementally sought to negotiate and recreate the balance of values that made up *izzat*, a means by which they projected new forms of value onto a radically uncertain future from a fraught present. This observation will be developed in relation to different ethnographic instances over the course of this thesis, but for now we are left with a cartographic mapping of the domains in which *izzat* is embedded, and the symbolic principles through which its content is expressed and reframed. Let us take a moment to explore more deeply the rise of particular forms of distress or *tension* as they emerge historically in the coming chapters.
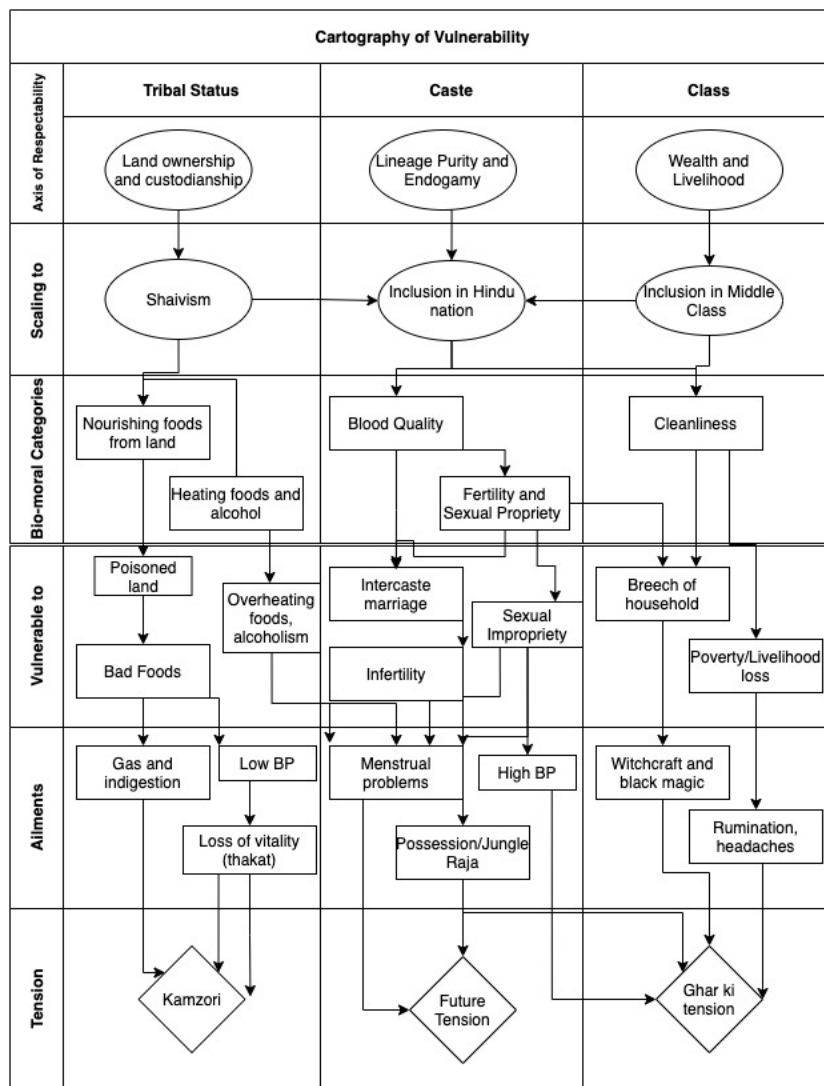
Figure 1.7: A cartography of vulnerability.

Chapter 2 | 'Kamzori': The devaluation of women's work

What the exhausted suffer better is the way bodies and time are so often at odds with each other in our time of overwhelming and confused chronicity.

Preface | Skuntala Devi

I first met Skuntala Devi on a chilly November day, a month after I began my fieldwork. Shyam and I were on our way to visit his flock that had climbed the low foothills from Una in Panjab. We ducked inside her home to warm our toes by the hearth. As her sons, daughters and nephews clucked around us, Skuntala remained unphased in the corner of the kitchen. She didn't look up to offer us tea or welcome us into the house, as was the usual custom, but remained fixed on her work. Methodically, she cut greens that she had foraged that morning with a hooked knife at her feet. The only sound from that corner was the fast click of the blade cutting mustard greens, then radish tops, then watercress. Her knees were folded around her ears in the way of the supple elderly, bodies gnarled like willow trees after years of hard work in the fields. Her daughters' bodies didn't look like that, they were softer, rounded, padded, preened.

It was impossible to tell if Skuntala was in her fifties or her eighties. Her cheeks sunk in deep cavities below her cheekbones, regal and haggard. Her nose was hooked and pierced on both sides by the rings that marked her as a married woman. Skuntala wore what was left of her hair in a thin plait at the base of her neck and kept her head covered by her scarf. She didn't wear it in the provocatively demure way of the younger generation of housewives, but tied it practically around her head, keeping her hair out of the way as she worked. Skuntala was extremely thin, yet her thin frame was capable of carrying extreme weight; rod-straight she could balance piles of dung on her head.

Skuntala was wedded to her work, she rose early to milk the cow and take it to pasture, she attended to breakfast for her sons, then padded over to the riverbank to feed the horses. After lunch she would go to the old mud houses to sow, weed or harvest until dusk, returning bleached and wearied by the sun. Skuntala would not visit her daughters in the village up the mountain as she had to stay with her cow, she would not attend functions in her natal home if there was work to do in the fields. It was when she was at work that she was most at ease.

Such withdrawal had come with deeper symptoms. She would frequently complain of feeling weak and fatigued. She saw herself as slow, leached. "I am *kamzor* (weak) now" she would mutter, absently, furrowing her brow. Her condition, she clarified, was not a product of her daily work, but of the *tension* she felt 'living in modern' times. Sometimes, she was unable to engage with the world around her, as if she was lost in translation. Sarla, Skuntala's daughter explained;

> My mother [has] suffered a lot, we all [have] suffered. It was my mother who cared for us. Taking us up to the shepherding hut, strapped to her back. Now she is tired, she can't really do anything, she can't make decisions anymore, and she is *kamzor*. We always have to tell her, do this, go there, do that. She is actually very disturbed. She has suffered a lot at the hands of this family.

Introduction

Skuntala was not exceptional in her experience of *kamzori. Kamzori* is used to describe embodied weakness or loss of vitality across South Asia and can be understood as a specific manifestation of the larger condition of *tension. Kamzori* was marked in Gaddi elderly women by feelings of exhaustion and lethargy (see Figure 2.1). Bodily, it was signified by wasting of muscles and weight loss, joint pain, back pain (*peet dard*), stomach pain (*pet dard*), headaches (*sir me dard*), loss of appetite, and 'low BP'. It rendered the body resistant to nourishment, medications and other forms of care. Some of its psychological symptoms included insomnia, hallucination and rumination. Being in a state of *kamzori* could lead to weakness of mind, leaving the boundaries of one's body permeable and hence rendering one vulnerable to attacks of black magic (*opara*) and witchcraft (*jadu*). It could also lead to opportunistic illnesses (*bimari*) such as fevers (*bukhar*), heart problems (*dil ka bimari*), and ultimately to death.

Though sometimes used by Gaddi younger women and children in times of illness, the condition of *kamzori* was most often used by their elderly grandmothers, mothers and mothers-in-law to indicate a loss of vitality (*shakti*) and physical strength (*takat*). Unlike their daughters-in-law, who complained more commonly of *ghar ki tension* (household *tension*), many elderly Gaddi women used the term *kamzor* to describe the condition of both physical and mental weakness that resulted from a lifetime of hard work (*kam*) - domestic, reproductive, agricultural and pastoral - that is no longer valued. As Saiba Varma has also observed amongst psychiatric patients in Kashmir, *kamzori* has more expansive meaning than the English word *weakness*, describing a mode of embodiment that is both social and relational (2020:36). For her interlocutors, it is a cumulative effect of structural violence that offers a bio-moral critique of occupation. Importantly, *kamzori* works as a moral discourse to render visible the effects of oppressive circumstances while preserving the moral integrity of the weakened (Cohen 1994:230-232).

In the case of Gaddi elderly women, I will demonstrate how the condition registers the cumulative effect of enclosure and devaluation of labour - working as a bio-moral critique of both the inadequate care they receive in from their kin, and contemporary circumstances that see their landscape, personhood, livelihoods and work devalued. To make this argument, it is necessary to trace how this deep history of property enclosure and livelihood change is refracted in the pains, joys and disappointments of the lives of women as they enter into old age. We must render this history relevant by locating the vulnerability that elderly women feel in the present, expressed as *kamzori*. This chapter begins with a reflection on the positionality of elderly women and the processes of aging in the Gaddi household, as indicated in the previous chapter. It goes on to present a politico-economic history of changing livelihoods, that frames the life history of Skuntala and allows us to understand the experience of *kamzori*.

Headache, fever, weakness of mind

Low 'BP', back and joint pain, muscle wastage

Disrupted bowels, stomach pain, loss of appetite

Vulnerable to Black Magic *(opara)*, Witchcraft *(jadu)*
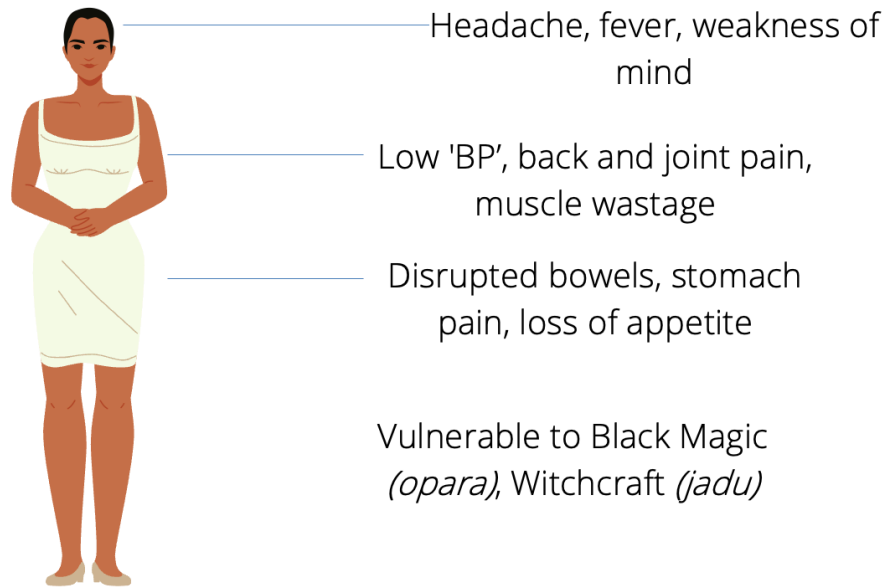
Figure 2.1: Body map of ailments associated with 'kamzori'

I | Aging, Sacrifice, Work

Gaddi women specifically related their condition of *kamzori* to the hardship of work that they faced during their lives, a hardship that they argued was not experienced by their daughters or granddaughters. Temporally, women expressed repeatedly that they 'had no time' to rest, they were always working, Elderly women explained that the reason that they had become *kamzor* was because they had done and were still doing too much *kam* (work) and, as a result, *kamzori* had accumulated in their bodies over time. In anthropological literature on labour in South Asia, *kam* is usually used to refer to as petty waged or informal labour, in opposition to *naukri* or formal employment (Parry 2020, Leichty 2003). Yet, in its more expansive emic sense, *kam* refers to any kind of labour - productive, caring or ritual – that generates or sustains life. Such labour is not divided into the productive and the reproductive but instead is the application of *shakti* (vital energy, power) to the world. As such, the products of one's *kam* - whether they be the fruits reaped from agricultural or pastoral labour, the relationships within a household, or the products of housework - are imbued with this vital force (Bear 2015). The word *kam*, for elderly women, referred to productive labour - marked by endless hard physical labour that they had to do in the fields, caring for animals; a condition that their daughters did not have to endure given the withdrawal of respectable housewives from the fields. It also referred to reproductive and caring labour - household work such as cleaning, cooking, sewing clothes, spinning wool without the support of modern appliances, family members, or their husbands but also, to literal reproductive work of birth and childrearing.[18]

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[18] Elderly women complained that they had birthed many children, and suffered many miscarriages, without the comforts or securities of modern medicine that their daughters and granddaughters enjoy. Relying on *dhai*

Beyond the Gaddi context, the condition of *kamzori* has been related to *kam* in this expansive sense elsewhere is South Asia and is most often linked to the sacrifices that women make for their families through their care work. Claire Snell-Rood's (2015a) interlocutors, women living in a Delhi slum, cite weakness as a bodily condition that resulted from emotional and physical endurance. One interlocutor, Geeta, explained "[w]omen have to endure the sadness of everything…They are weak (*kamzor*) so that if they have eaten, if they take medicine, they won't even feel its impact" (2015a:54). The condition was produced by both their excessive caregiving responsibilities, and the lack of reciprocal care that they received from others. Rashid (2007a) points out that adolescent married women living in Bangladeshi informal settlements also speak of the weakness (*durbolota*) that family care embedded in their bodies. She links weakness to the condition of *dhatu rog* or white discharge that many of these women also report. Lack of care - including good food, hygiene and comfort - result in the boundaries of the body becoming increasingly permeable, causing vitality, in this case literally in white discharge, to leak.[19]

Such cases show how, in *kamzori,* the body becomes the moral space on which the mundane and incomplete sacrifice of women's labour is marked, where there are no other ritual or symbolic means by which the sacrifice can be expressed (Mayblin 2014). The explanation of *kamzori* as an expression of sacrifice is helpful in the Gaddi case because it highlights the aporetic nature of the relationship a woman has with her family across the life-course. This is a relationship of asymmetrical exchange that parallels the logic of the Indian gift - where a woman herself is a gift from the natal to the martial home (Raheja 1988); and she must give herself wholly to the latter without expectation of worldly return (Parry 1986). Yet the giving of this gift of her care is harmful to her (Laidlaw 2000), and instead she seeks and expects its return in her old age, when she is cared for by her sons and their wives (Lamb 2000).

How this occurs is shaped by culturally specific notions of bodily health and wellbeing. In Gaddi and wider Ayurvedic ethno-physiology, a woman's bodily vitality is her *shakti* – a creative and destructive vital force. It is shaped by humoural forces that fluctuate across her lifetime, depending on the sexual openness of her body and her positionality in domestic relations. As a Gaddi woman enters old age, she

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(traditional birth attendants), women explained that their bodies were ravaged by successive pregnancies, delivered in their homes.

[19] We also see interesting parallels between *kamzori* and conditions of distress experienced by elderly women beyond South Asia, robbed of their rest in old age by shifts in the domestic cycle. Kristin Yarris (2014) shows us how Nicaraguan grandmothers experience use the condition of rumination - 'pensando mucho' - to express the moral ambivalence of economic remittances, as they struggle to care for their grandchildren while their daughters migrate. Clara Han (2012) shows how elderly women are left to care for their children as they experience poverty and substance abuse, left with nervous conditions and searing headaches as their sacrifice to their nation goes uncompensated.

must move from her position as chief 'feeder' or provider of the household, animating its rhythms and flows, toward death (Marriott 1998). This means she must disentangle herself from the web of *mohmaya* (worldly concerns and attachments) for which she has been responsible, and from which she has drawn her sense of self-worth; and aspire for other-worldly return (Lamb 1997, 2000). In order to do so, she must initiate a process of changing the kind of work she does in the household, the kinds of decisions she makes. At this point, she should be able to sit back, rest and enjoy the care of her children and grandchildren. She must initiate a bodily self-cooling process – through the foods she eats, the clothing she wears, her sexual activity, her expression of emotion. "Let me rest" one elderly woman muttered, "I need to be left to be."

Such removal from the enmeshed relations of kinship and care, and the act of rendering oneself marginal, was difficult for elderly women. As Cohen suggests "aging is a challenge not only to individual lives, but to the possibility of social meaning" (1994:147). It involved stepping away from the lifetime of work they had done to build, sustain and reproduce a household. This work was exhausting, but it was also foundational to their sense of self. Without this work, they felt lost, as they waited for other-worldly return after their death. Indeed, they had to depend on others to do this work for them, and hence the fear of neglect of both themselves and their husbands and children was a core concern. One explained "these days, the children don't understand. They don't understand the problems of their parents…. Life goes like that." As daughters and daughters-in-law enter the middle class and become consumed with the maintenance of a different kind of respectable household, care for their provincial, 'backward' elders was often not their priority. This generational rupture is experienced acutely by elderly women who have worked their whole lives in the expectation of care in old age yet are met with a reversal of power in age hierarchies within the household. Some women responded to this transition with irritation, anger and even violence taken out primarily against daughters-in-law or neighbours. Such women risked being accused of witchcraft and black magic. They were considered to be overheated, oversexualised, and were often widows. Other women experienced feelings of neglect, uselessness and isolation. Others still experienced the pain of this transition somatically. They spoke of upset stomachs caused directly by their daughter-in-law's bad cooking; searing headaches caused by the stress of trying to find their sons a bride; wasting muscles caused by neglect by their children. In *kamzori* and its associated ailments, the 'natural' process of bodily cooling was disrupted by the lack of replenished vitality being received from a woman's family or environment, leaving women unable to age peacefully.

Against this backdrop, it might be argued that *kamzori* is naturalised by the process of aging, that women would always experience this condition of weakness, would never be adequately compensated. However, there was a salient sense by which complaints of *kamzori* were used by women also to speak to the devaluation of their work and personhood as livelihoods have shifted. Indeed, the primary

distinction between elderly Gaddi women and their daughters is that the former participated in productive, manual labour along the grazing route and in the fields; where their daughters aspire to be housewives or engage in waged labour. We see a shift in the nature and meaning of *kam* as women are enclosed in the increasingly nuclearised household and relieved of decision-making power. Though women claimed that the work they have had to do their whole lives has left them weak in the present, they also highlighted that such work was life-affirming while they were or are able to do it. As livelihoods have shifted away from pastoralism, elderly women lamented the change in the nature of work, the fact that work no longer involved being with animals or in nature. Women looked back to their birthplace in Chamba, where most of them had migrated from, or had spent significant time in, as a place of plenitude, fertility and abundance. By contrast, urbanising Kangra is polluted, their lands were decreasing in size, their food was imported and poisoned. This rendered the Gaddi people dependent on market forces, as opposed self-sufficient. Yet Gaddi women also did not receive monetary or market compensation for the kind of labour they did in the form of the wage. There was a sense in which *kamzori* was a critique of the moral poverty of the present moment, both in domestic arrangements and social landscapes, and an appeal to the abundance and simplicity of time past. Dependency on 'outside people' for food, goods, water, electricity; the fact that people no longer ate, used, wore and lived in the products of their own labour caused them to become *kamzor.* Their bodily vitality was neither replenished by the care of their kin, nor the nourishment of the land, nor the dignity of a wage.

Hence, I hope to build on existing accounts of *kamzori* by paying attention to the historical processes – the shifts in livelihoods, land enclosure and domestic economy - that shape this experience; and to the ways in which women scale up their experience of *kamzori* to critique these broad changes. Indeed, the nature and value of women's work has changed dramatically over the lifetime of Skuntala and other elderly Gaddi women as livelihoods have shifted. Where women were previously significant contributors to household productivity – working in the fields, along the grazing route and sometimes as shepherds themselves upon the death of their husband – today they are encouraged to occupy themselves with housework and childrearing in order to protect the respectability or *izzat* of their households. The work that elderly women have done much of their lives is today increasingly redundant. As a result, *kamzori* speaks to a wider question about changing livelihoods; what is the health and mental health impact of a lost or devalued livelihood? Or what is the existential impact of the loss of work that gives meaning to life?

Here my analysis departs from the theoretical approach provided by cultural phenomenological or psychoanalytic accounts of distress. It is instead guided by the Marxist-Feminist approach in understanding the co-incidence between the shift from agrarian to capitalist society and the subordination of women. Scholars have shown that we should consider female subordination by looking

at women's relation to the means of production – labour and property ownership (Engels 1972, Moore 1988, Sacks 1979, Mies 1982); and its implication in other social forms such as prestige, caste, race and class that are not ordinarily understood as 'gender' (Rosaldo 1980, Bear et al. 2015). Silvia Federici (2004) provides an excellent example in her account of the shift from feudalism to capitalism in Europe during the middle ages in *Caliban and the Witch.* Federici contends that primitive accumulation[20] in the 'transition to capitalism' critically involved the destruction of the power of women in order to control the means of reproduction. Women, who benefited the most from common land, lost the most in this enclosure – robbed of their means of subsistence, autonomy and sociality. Federici suggests that such enclosure separated men's productive labour from women's reproductive labour through the instrument of the wage. Women were not allowed to work outside the home, and such 'housework' was both devalued and rendered invisible within the family. Women who dared to work outside the home had the lowest status, and were often portrayed as sexually aggressive shrews, or even as whores and witches. She contends that women themselves *became the commons*, their only property left being their honour.

In India, we see the co-incidence of patriarchy and property enclosure through the intensification of differences of caste, class and tribe first by the colonial state, and then following Independence as part of the Indian nationalist project. Prem Chowdhry's (1994) classic ethnography of peasant society in Haryana mirrors Federici's account (see also Mies 1982). She highlights how the project of 'liberal' colonial social reform (legitimate marriage, widow immolation, household constitution) used a stereotype of woman as victim to retain and reinforce the emergent dominant social ethos of rural Haryana. In the post-colonial period, the state's intervention in providing a major capitalist thrust to its economy in the Green Revolution resulted in the proletarianisation of certain sections of rural women, and the marginalisation of female agricultural labourers. Chowdhry's argument runs parallel to the Gaddi case, where she argues that;

> The cultural devaluation of woman's work which ignores it's obvious economic contribution, considering it inferior, secondary/supplementary, to men has clearly not allowed her contribution to be translated to economic worth; the justification for such an attitude being sought and provided in the moral duty concept of women's work…. The man emerges as the holder and controller of power in all spheres, external and internal. The woman, on the other hand, with hardly any socio-cultural recognition of entitlement rights to a share of resources, emerge severely deprived (1994:16-17).

Chowdhry's ethnography shows the foundational contribution of Indian scholarship to literature charting the parallel rise of patriarchy and capitalism. It critically develops the role of legislation and governance in creating categories of citizenship that facilitate the accumulation of capital - showing how economic, moral and legal reform coincide on the woman's body (Uberoi 1996). Indeed, women were central to the oparation of identity categories (caste, tribe) where they act as boundary objects in

the constitution of selfhood and the projection of otherness (Bear 2007). As such, in Chowdhry's case and in the Gaddi case, we cannot attribute the strengthening of patriarchal structures to 'cultural contact' with higher caste neighbours, but instead must acknowledge the work of social and economic reformist legislation and capitalist values in strengthening the hold of patriarchy, creating statutory caste and shaping rural ideology (Shah 2019). Hence, we take a journey into the deeper history of Gaddi economic and social life in order to frame the condition of *kamzori*. My intention is to create a more subtle way of understanding the intimate experience of politico-economic change in the body, in order to add nuance to feminist accounts of patriarchal enclosure.

Figure 2.2: Cutting wheat. (Courtesy of Peter Phillimore, 1977-8)

II | A Deep History of Women's Work

Pre-Colonial Domestic Economy

The British took over administration of Panjab in 1846, when both Chamba and Kangra were ruled by Katoch Rajput Kings. The King was the absolute owner of the land - pastoralists and cultivators used the land on his grant. Extensive seasonal movement allowed Gaddi people to exploit the lands. Gaddi families had access to the waste areas and the forest land that surrounded the villages and stretched up to the mountain passes (Singh 1998). Such exploitation was dependent on a good relationship between the shepherds and the peasant communities through which they passed. The Gaddi shepherds were even paid by peasants to settle in their fields nightly and provide manure (Chamba SG 1904:222). Indeed, as Singh suggests, the pastoral contribution to the peasant economy was a powerful binding force in the Himalayas – the Gaddis were essential to the overall fertility of the region, their nomadic cycles symbiotic with crop cycles.

Under the Rajas, mobile pastoralists were favoured and considered 'respectable'. They were a means by which the state extracted additional wealth from its natural resources and contributed to the external markets – flocks were not for subsistence but primarily for meat, and secondarily for wool. The Gaddi claim to graze the land was inheritable, not alienable - they had right and ability of access rather than ownership over land that they negotiated directly with the Raja (Kapila 2003). There was no distinction between public, communal (*shamlat*) and private land (Newell 1955, Axelby 2016). The head of the flock (*mahlundi*) was he who held this claim (*warisi*) from the Raja. Nominally, it was he who dealt with the tax arrangements with the Raja and the local village community – entitling him to use the *ban* (summer pastures) and *dhar* (alpine pastures). Pastoral rights to various areas were sanctioned by deeds, and valid so long as the herder was capable of using the pasture (Kapila 2003, Bhattacharya 1995, Saberwal 1999). Gaddi families had to manage the revenue demands of the Raja with the demands of the local village authorities (Singh 1998). Gaddi people – women and men - were astute, market savvy and distinctly visible – indeed they were self-reliant as they owned their own means for subsistence (Kangra SR 1874:39). Oral histories indicate that women played a significant role in building such local communal arrangements, renewing deeds and the lasting relationships that underpinned them.

The household economy that underpinned the agro-pastoral livelihood involved the pooling of family resources, where wealth was attributed to the head of the flock. Though women did not have control of the 'purse strings' as such, their contribution to the household income was essential. Men and women both engaged in agricultural labour, pastoral labour, business negotiation and production of wool and meat for market. Administrators suggest that Gaddi women in the Chamba and Kangra hills were distinct precisely because of this freedom:

> Generally, women in the lower hills take no part in agriculture, confine themselves to the domestic occupation of breadmaking, fetching water and all the field work devolves to males. About Kangra, the population consists of a lower caste, structurally agricultural and here the women work as hard, if not harder than their husbands. The men drive the plough and the harrow, sow the seed, and thresh out the corn, and the women carry out and distribute the manure, crush the clods, weed the fields and carry home the harvest (Kangra DG 1885:150).

Berreman (1960) suggests the distinctions of gender *and caste* were less pronounced in the Western Himalayan regions than in the plains, because local differences of wealth were less pronounced, and women of all castes took a prominent labour role in productive work (Sharma 1980, Phillimore 1982). Unlike in the plains, norms of caste respectability were not defined by women's behaviour. He notes that there was a distinct absence of female seclusion among the Gaddis in Chamba, and women more freely participated in many more areas of life than in the plains (1972:345).

Female contribution to production was mirrored by kinship structures and marriage practices that were not marked by strict patriarchal values or control of female fertility. Though marriage was patrilocal and wealth was concentrated in the hands of the head of the flock, the household structure was loose, neither nuclearised nor joint. Under customary law, married Gaddi men and women were free to set up separate households at their will. As explored by Kapila (2003, 2004) such, families had multiple houses along grazing routes and shepherds often had wives or mistresses in each house. Polyandry is absent from memory, but there is no legal reason why women couldn't select another husband, particularly from their first husband's brothers (O'Brien and Morris 1900). Female infidelity was not necessarily a matter of errant sexuality (Kapila 2004). Instead, if a woman transferred her affections from her husband to another, the latter could pay the price of her dowry to the former (*harjana*), inducing divorce, establishing a new conjugal bond, and legitimising the relationship. This indicated that customary divorce and remarriage was common.

Gaddis practiced a number of types of marriage (Phillimore 1982). The most common and first marriage, *shaadi,* was initiated by Brahmin priests. Gaddis favourably practiced *atta-satta* (exchange) marriage, where sons are exchanged for daughters. Such exchange between affinally related clan groups (*got*) facilitated equality within caste groups - as every family stood as a wife giver and a wife taker. O'Brien and Morris (1900) recorded that dowry had little significance, that before marriage Gaddi women are allowed 'freedom', but they are not allowed to prostitute themselves. Betrothal occurred prior to puberty, with a small ceremony. Subsequent marriages after divorce, called *jhanjhara* or *balu* consisted of the husband gifting his wife with a nose ring, followed by a small feast with only the witnesses. This was considered inferior but was still commonly practiced. Women from subsequent marriages enjoyed the same right to a share in her husband's property for her children, and households were not organised in hierarchy. Gaddis also practised widow remarriage, *rakhewa* (*karewa*); and *jaharphuki* marriage which involved circling a ritual fire and was usually ascribed to "love" marriages. Love marriages, though uncommon, were noted in the works of the colonial administrators (O'Brien

and Morris 1900, Middleton 1919). Finally, bride service marriages – *ghar juantru* were practised by poor families who were lacking in agricultural labour, oriented toward obtaining a bride for an unlucky bachelor as opposed to obtaining labour or a descent line in a family who had no sons.

Within this economy, the pooling of male and female labour was critical to accumulating wealth. Such female contribution was mirrored in inheritance practices. There were two systems of inheritance that prevailed in Kangra, as indicated by the Settlement of 1855 and 1874 and the Manual on Customary Law of the district – the *Pagvand* inheritance system – where shares in inheritance to half-brothers are allocated per head; and the *Chundavand*, or *per stripes* inheritance system, according to which property was first divided equally across the various uterine households and then equally amongst the male heirs within each household (Kapila 2004:387). The latter system allowed women, and particularly widows, to make claims to their husbands' inheritances because the notion of property that underpinned the system was not legally codified. This historical account points not to the fact that women weren't necessarily more free or better off under the pastoral economy than they are after the advent of waged labour, but that their contribution to the agro-pastoral household was significant and valued. Though the primary status women held in this society was a 'wife', and the dominant cross-sex bond was the marital bond, respectability within this role did not depend on the domestication of female sexuality.
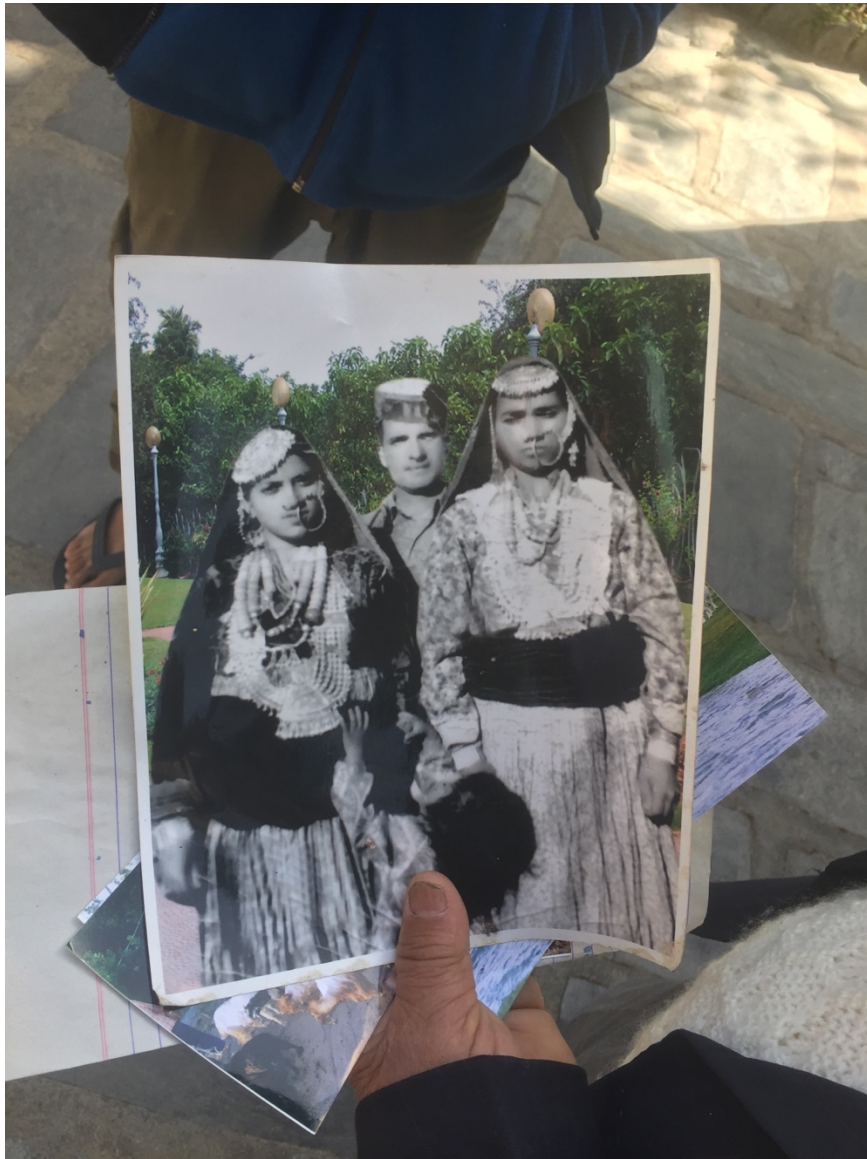
Figure 2.3: A Hali man shows me the photograph taken of himself, his wife and sister in traditional dress.

Enclosure of Common Land

Over the past century, agro-pastoralism has become increasingly unviable such that the agro-pastoral economy has given way to a waged labour economy.[21] The catalyst for this shift over the colonial period was change in property relations. In order that the colonial administration accumulate capital it was necessary to move away from a notion of property relations based on communal sharing, and household structure based on pooling of resources - to enclose the commons. Shyam, a shepherd himself, explained:

> When there was a king, we used to pay him. Then, a new ruler came with the colonial administration. The forest department was made, we were totally dependent on the forest and now we had to pay for it. If we had 100 sheep, the forest officer would come to the house twice per year and count our animals and require us to pay tax and get a permit. If someone complained, then they would come and fine them, the permits were not fixed. In the old times [under the Raja], if we had a permit, they didn't even count, there was a system of trust.

With the advent of the British following the annexation of Panjab, the new perception of proprietorship evolved which saw the partitioning and privatisation of communal lands (Singh 1998). Barnes' (the first District Commissioner) first step was to draw distinct village and household units that could be managed for revenue extraction (1855:226). Grazing land was hence internalised under village management while other 'wastes' were nationalised and brought under direct government control (Singh 2009:76). Gaddis found their access to forests closed, their rights redefined, their taxes increased, and the rhythms of their movements controlled (Bhattacharya 1995:54, Axelby 2005, Kangra DG 1926:439). Under colonial administration, demand for timber changed the use of forest resources, meaning Gaddis were seen as a burden on the state as opposed to a rich revenue source. With a view to reducing their flocks, the state doubled taxation on Gaddi herders between 1915-17 (Singh 1998). Middleton, the commissioner at the time, suggested even more 'repressive' measures in the outright restriction on the number of sheep any shepherd could have (Kangra DG 1926:439). The enclosure of common land did not result in an immediate transition but was the catalyst for a century-long shift in land-use arrangements, income generation strategies, domestic economy and moral values for the Gaddis. Processes of legal codification of property rights, and the domestic domains they structured, only intensified after Indian Independence in 1947. The Land Reforms Act 1947, Panchayati Act 1951, Village Commons Land Act 1961 and Himachal Pradesh Village Common Land Utilisation Act 1974 together wiped out the unique features of customary usage and patterns of village governance (Chakravarty-Kaul 2015:83).

As much as Gaddis were pushed out of pastoralism, they were pulled into other livelihoods favoured first by the colonial administration and then by the Indian state. Gaddi-speaking people began to buy

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[21] Critically, this was not a shift from subsistence to market. As previously evidenced, the pastoral economy was heavily integrated into market mechanisms. Instead, this was a shift from an economy based on barter, loans and the exchange of gifts to a cash economy.

land south of the Dhaula Dhar in Kangra district from the mid-19th century. Benefits included the opportunity for additional cultivation, access to the waste land that surrounded these holdings for grazing and the booming industry of slate mining that lined the southern slopes (Ahmead 2007). Amid fears that the new land market would be dominated by wealthy outsiders, the Punjab Alienation of Land Act of 1900 prohibited members of castes classified as 'non-agricultural' from buying land from 'agricultural castes'. This promoted cultivation in the rural population as a link to respectability in governance, therefore fashioning a hierarchy of professions (Chowdhry 1994). New roles were introduced, shaping the structure of local authority and causing deep divisions between caste groups that had not previously existed within the agro-pastoral economy (Kapila 2003:20). Gaddi Rajputs and Pandits were classified as 'agricultural', and hence they were able to successfully purchase additional land without competition by selling their flocks (Axelby 2007:69). This allowed them to move from *pahgiri* bonded labourers on the lands of Pandit landowners, to small landowners themselves able to engage in the cash cropping.

Lower caste Gaddi families did not have the option of selling flocks to purchase land south of the Dhaula Dhar, neither were they classified as 'agricultural'. Hence, the division between Gaddi Rajputs and Gaddi Halis and Sipis intensified based on unequal land ownership capacity and rights. However, they were drawn to migrate south of the Dhaula Dhar by a different new industry - slate mining. Of course, migration began first seasonally, then over the course of the past century families began to settle south of the Dhaula Dhar.[22] Slate mines were established along the foothills of the Dhaula Dhar - in Thateri, Dari, Khagota, Narawana, Bhagsunath and Kareti - from the 1860s. The centre of the slate mining industry was the panchayat of Khagota. Migrants came to work in the slate mines from Panjab, Kashmir, Jammu, Mandi and Chamba. Indeed, most Gaddi-speaking Hali, Dogri and Sipi families I interviewed cited the economic promise of the slate mines as the reason their *purbhaj* (ancestors) had migrated to Kangra. Gaddi Rajput families also noted that their ancestors would supplement their income from shepherding or agriculture with contract work in the mines. Critically, working in the slate mines precipitated a breakdown in the caste-based division of labour as the upper tiers of mine management were not necessarily run by Pandits. In 1868, partial ownership of this land was transferred from the colonial administration to the village landowners of Khagota and Dari (Ahmead 2007). They paid land tax to the colonial government, while leasing the land to a British investor, Mr Robert Barkley Shaw, who commenced mining operations in 1867 through the establishment of the Kangra Valley Slate Company. Profits were both distributed among villagers and invested by the local Panchayat into building community facilities.[23]

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[22] Note that this transition was not rapid but occurred over the past century in stops and starts.
[23] Indeed, the economic structure of the industry was unique, as it privileged the communities in which the mines were set. When the 'Company', for instance, stopped paying revenues to the villagers, the Khagota Panchayat took the Company to the Lahore High Court who ruled such non-payment illegal.

By the time of Independence in 1947, the threat to the agro-pastoral economy intensified with further opportunities as slate mining, the lure of state-provided education, and the dramatic increase in population and habitation in the Kangra valley, restricted the land and labour available for either pastoralism or agriculture. The project of integration for marginalised tribes begun in the early 1970s under the Himachal Pradesh Tenancy and Land Reform Act 1972. This invited Gaddis down the valley to take up new opportunities in agriculture. It also simultaneously forced them to hand their land over to families who farmed it (Axelby 2016) as part of a generalised trend toward the commercialisation of smallholder agriculture. This legislation granted non-occupying tenants the right to 1.5 acres of irrigated, or 3 acres of non-irrigated land. Locally called *Stai Vandovast*, this reform allowed 379 676 non-occupancy tenants of all castes to become landowners. Section 118 of the Act specifies that only 'agricultural' Himachalis can buy agricultural land (*benami* land). The definition of 'agricultural' was changed from its caste-based meaning to include cultivators of all castes. This worked to allow lower caste Gaddis to purchase small sections of land, and therefore to break down feudal structures of land ownership. However, Pandit *lambardhars* (landowners) still owned the majority of land in the region and hence maintain a high-class status. Importantly, it worked to somewhat mitigate material inequalities between low-caste Gaddi-speaking Halis, Sipis Dogris and their Gaddi Rajput neighbours that had been instituted during the colonial period.

*Figure 2.4: A shepherding hut (*dhar*).*

A New Sexual Division of Labour

The result of such a shift in property relations was the birth of a new Gaddi household structure - shifting the sexual division of labour and inheritance practices. As Gaddis took up sedentary agriculture or waged labour in the slate mines in Kangra, the female contribution to household income became less visible and devalued. Where pastoralism required the pooling of household resources, cash cropping or waged labour required the division of productive and reproductive labour. Where men were responsible for generating monetary income, women were responsible for small-scale subsistence agriculture and reproductive labour. They were no longer instrumental in productive activities such as tending to the flock or spinning wool. As Gaddi people settled in Kangra, they came face to face with new kinds of patriarchal norms of their Pahari neighbours who defined 'respectability' or prestige in terms of *izzat* (Philimore 1982). Parry details (1979) the marital practices of Pahari Rajputs and Brahmins in the Kangra plains was characterised by strict hypergamy, where brides were transferred up the hierarchy at marriage. No longer favoured by the Rajas, the position of Gaddi high caste shepherds vis-a-vis their existing Kangra caste hierarchy was insecure. As they purchased their own land in Kangra, it was necessary to align themselves with upper caste Rajputs and Brahmins and shed their historical position as dependent labourers.

Part of such alignment, Phillimore argues, meant adopting strict feminine social codes. Hindu community is *founded* on the regulation of female sexuality through the discourse of *izzat,* where the *izzat* of any family is located in the bodies of women (Das 1995). For Gaddi speaking people, particularly upper caste Gaddi Rajputs, to secure social prestige it became necessary to exhibit greater authority over wives and daughters. Normatively, this meant the rise of female seclusion in the home, the practice of *ghungat* - sexual avoidance and veiling in-front of one's husband's male relatives, the withdrawal of women from productive labour, and exploitation of their household labour. In the Gaddi case, this did not mean women ceased to work altogether, but that they engaged in subsistence agriculture and animal husbandry (keeping cows or goats) that came to be considered 'housework'. As such, women came to be considered an economic burden, as opposed to an economic asset, on the households of their fathers and then their husbands.

Figure 2.5: A sadhin from the village of Kanarthu smokes a hookah, a traditionally male activity.
(Courtesy of Peter Phillimore, 1977-8)

An excellent example of this increased anxiety surrounding female propriety and the domestication of female labour is given by Peter Philimore (1982, 1991) in his account of a new social status that was fashioned for Gaddi women as they settled south of the Dhaula Dhar (see Figures 2.5. 2.6 and 2.7). He examines a small population of *sadhin* - female renouncers - that he encountered during his fieldwork. *Sadhin* are Gaddi women who renounce marriage and sexuality, wear the everyday clothing of Gaddi men and keeping their hair cropped short. Phillimore is explicit that first, only Gaddi women could take on this status ie. Gaddi Rajputs and Sipis in his field site, or people who had migrated from Chamba, not their Pahari neighbours. Within this community, becoming a *sadhin* was a wholly respectable status for women to take on, so long as they renounced their sexuality, but not their gender. To become a *sadhin* was an irreversible decision, the woman's own choice, and ideally such a decision was made before menstruation began. He highlights that celibacy was crucial, and lapsed *sadhins,* who eloped or engaged in sexual relations, faced social abjection. Most critically, a *sadhin* had undisputed claim to inherit a share of her father's productive property, and in some instances his flock and grazing permits. The status of *sadhin* emerged only in Kangra and had waned by the time Phillimore conducted his fieldwork in the 1970s. During my fieldwork, I did not encounter any *sadhins* but was told only of three that still existed. Phillimore argues that non-marrying women became an issue of potential embarrassment in this new milieu. The control of female sexuality and labour in the Kangra Hills was the foundation of male social prestige. In order to mitigate such loss of social prestige in an unmarried

daughter, it hence became necessary to invent a social status that legitimated, and neutralised the impropriety, of these women. As a *sadhin*, women could contribute productively, and not just reproductively, to the Gaddi household, without breeching its corporate respectability.

Figure 2.6: A sadhin from the village of Kanarthu. (Courtesy of Peter Phillimore, 1977-8)

Figure 2.7: A sadhin from the village of Kanarthu. (Courtesy of Peter Phillimore, 1977-8)

Increased anxiety about 'domesticated' female labour and sexuality were codified in the creation of a new kind of Gaddi household, underpinned by a permanent conjugal bond – as Kapila argues. Part of the enclosure of the commons was the creation of distinct household units, such that the house began to assume a fixed legal character. Inheritance and registry laws served to shore up the boundaries; specify the make-up of the household; and prevent 'improper' practices of polygamy, divorce and remarriage (Kapila 2004). The passing of the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Act 1886 also made it mandatory for every panchayat to register all births, deaths and marriages in order to provide evidence of property claims and lineage. First marriages were given primacy. As mentioned, married Gaddi women and men, under customary law, were able to set up multiple households. However, conflicts did not arise as a result of social disapproval, but over conflicting inheritance claims. Legal records show that the *Pagvand* system was favoured under the colonial administration (see Middleton 1919) in arbitration disputes over the *Chundavan* system. The latter was defined as 'family tradition' as opposed to 'tribal custom' and had to be proven by extensive ethnographic investigation ordered by the judge and executed by the Assistant District Commissioner. This process was laborious and impractical,

leading to the demise of the system (Kapila 2003:121). Hence, men saw their dominance over property cemented through the codification of the single male descent line as the primary line of inheritance. Women saw their right to access or seek maintenance from acquired property diminished, unless it was linked to this ancestral descent line. As Kapila spells out – new ideas of property rights directly shaped the idea of the household and hence the woman's role in reproducing it:

> Over time, the Gaddi household became a reduced and a pared down version of itself, as more and more people became educated into a particular ideal of filial loyalties. The practical consolidation of this household ideal took hold and filial emotion was constrained by these laws and reinterpreted in the idiom of 'blood'. If in earlier times, services to a person during her or his lifetime may have eventuated in a share of their property, such transfers were getting more and more informed by the language of contractual reimbursements in the new legal definition of the family (2003:127).

Increased inequalities of material wealth and social prestige between Gaddi families animated a more hierarchical marital structure, further consolidating the ancestral line. Intensified divisions between castes, based on unequal access to land, necessitated hierarchised processes of social reproduction, as a means of separating out 'respectable' Gaddi Rajputs from their lower caste neighbours. Newell (1962) notes that by the 1950s, exchange marriage and payment of bride price was only practiced to mitigate financial trouble by the poorest of families. Phillimore (1982) asserts in the 1970s there had been a rise of 'marriage by gift' *dan-pun byaah* cast in the local idiom of hypergamy where wife givers pay a delayed inheritance, or dowry, to wife takers. His data suggests a transition, where 50% of marriages were *dan-pan*, 46% *atta-satta* and the remainder bride service. The latter, he notes, were highly stigmatised by this point. Phillimore argues that such stigma was generated by the cultural contact that Gaddi-speaking people had in Kangra with upper caste Pahari Rajputs and Pandits. In Kapila's research during the late 1990s, she recorded evidence of only dowry *dan-pun* marriages:

> The situation now is a preferred pattern of hypergamous marriages involving dowry with evident distinctions between wife-givers and wife-takers. Most informants were clear that these forms of marriage are thought to be more modern and more in keeping with legal requirements and Hindu precepts (2004: 391).

The Hindu Marriage Act introduced a suite of prohibitions including – outlawing child marriage, polygamy and customary divorce. Further, it specified new rules defining the legitimacy of children (Kapila 2003, 2004). Prior to the introduction of the Act, children born from women's previous marriages (*pichhlag*), children born to a widow within four years of her husband's death (*chaukandu*) and adopted children (*dharamputar*) all enjoyed claims to succession (Middleton 1919). The Hindu Marriage Act specifies that only children born within the period of a legal marriage are legitimate and have claim to succession. This is qualified in the Hindu Succession Act 1956, to specify that such legitimate status is only awarded to sons (Kapila 2003:121-122). As a result, families became nuclearised, defined by blood rather than care, animated by a permanent conjugal bond and a rigid ideal division between male as breadwinner and woman as housewife.

Figure 2.8: Two, now elderly, Gaddi women pictured in traditional dress (nuāncarī).

III | A Lived History

This deep history reveals the changing structural position of women as this community moves from agro-pastoralism to capitalistic economy, and as caste-divisions intensify and produce inequalities in wealth and respectability. In sum, the colonial state's ability to extract value from the Dhaula Dhar region was dependent on accumulation of resources from the forest, and intensification of agricultural activity. The shepherds did not feature in this vision, but better served the state as agricultural labourers or in the slate mines. Hence, the necessary moves of enclosing common land and disincentivising pastoralism paved the way for the breakdown of the pastoral economy. For men to produce agriculturally or through waged labour, their productive capacities had to be monopolised, leaving women to maintain subsistence agriculture and reproductive work in the, now permanent, household. The complicity of women in this project of transition to intensive capitalism was made possible through the valorisation of *izzat* as the dominant moral framework for social prestige across caste and tribal groups. The outcome is a restriction on female mobility, and the devaluation of women's work - a

process that began during the colonial period and has shaped the lives of elderly Gaddi women like Skuntala.

Let us pause now, for a moment to reflect on how this history has been lived through the life of Skuntala. Skuntala's family was from a village in the next valley. She had grown up in a shepherding family - her father and then her brothers herding their flock from their house in Chamba across the Dhaula Dhar to their shepherding hut in the Kangra hills, through the ancient Shivaliks into the Panjab plains. Skuntala was thirteen when she married. It was not until some years later, past the brink of puberty, that she moved to the mud house in the low fields of her husband's village.

Skuntala's mother-in-law was a notoriously formidable woman – enterprising, quick-witted, cunning. Even today stories are told of her political skill in negotiating land use with local village leaders, making astute deals as she sold her husband's wool or meat. She herself has spent her life on the shepherding route - her own father a very wealthy herdsman. After eleven pregnancies, she maintained health and vigour. Indeed, as Skuntala conceived her first daughter, her mother-in-law conceived her own last child. Her elder four children took on the family's livelihood as shepherds, and as such remained illiterate and uneducated. The eldest daughter married into another eminent shepherding family in the village below Ranu and to this day maintains the family's land in Chamba. They still have a house there, perched on the hill overlooking the village. The eldest son inherited his mother's business acumen, initially brokering deals with Tibetan merchants in the wool markets of Dharamshala and Palampur and moving into the business of land purchase and sale. Skuntala's husband inherited his mother's charisma and gravitas, and as his elder brother showed no interest in the hard work of shepherding, took on the responsibility for the flock by securing not only his father's grazing permits but also those of his mother's brothers.

Skuntala's mother-in-law had purchased land in Kangra when her eldest sons were born. Before this, their family would stay as *pahgiri* or bonded labourers in Kangra during the bitter Chamba winter - working the fields of a Brahmin family when they crossed through Ranu and on the fields of a Hindu Gujjar family in the Shivalik Hills. They sold their whole flock in order to purchase agricultural land of their own in Ranu, the first of many times during Skuntala's husband's life that they would be forced to sell their flock. On this land they built a mud house in which, over the course of his life, their family would spend more and more time, such that the nomadic lifestyle of the whole family would fade into memory. Skuntala's mother-in-law had different aspirations for her younger children, and particularly great hopes for her younger daughters. They were educated and matched with men with brighter futures, futures that took advantage of the influx of money into the region. They would not be shepherding wives, but housewives to men who could provide for them.

Skuntala's children have told me of the horrific maltreatment that Skuntala and her sister suffered when they moved into their marital home. Villagers remember seeing them flee up to the tops of trees, blood running down their faces. Initially this abuse was part of the normal pattern of household authority - new brides obligated to serve their husbands' family. Then, Skuntala failed to produce a son. She had first one, then two, then three daughters, the violence worsened. Skuntala's children were seen as unclean, uneducated, uncivilised by their *booah*s (paternal aunts). Local doctors encouraged her to leave her husband and her marital family. Finally, for some time in the 80s, she took her youngest son and went back to live in her *maike* (natal home). They took her in with kindness, but the pressure to return grew, and she came back.

Throughout the course of his life, Skuntala's husband was caught between his wife and his sisters. Indeed, Skuntala's children would often remark on how different their parents were. Where Skuntala was independent, withdrawn, Jagadish was almost compulsively social - right along the shepherding route he was known for his quick, sarcastic tongue and warm heart. Where Skuntala's sense of self was drawn from her work, Jagadish was aesthetic, proud, preserving the elegant masculinity of Gaddi men. Jagadish enchanted me just as he had enchanted slate miners and shepherds alike on the grazing route. In May and in November, when he was crossing through the village with his herd, he would come to visit us often. I would be awoken early, at first light, with a knock on my door from Shyam announcing his arrival. He would climb our stairs slowly in his rubber shoes, the slow steady step of a hill man. Even at this hour, after walking hours down from the *dhera* (campsite), carrying heavy loads of goat milk or meat, he would be dressed immaculately. A crisp beige or grey kurta and pyjama, the distinctive coatee of the Gaddis - coarse goat hair hand-woven so thickly, so tightly that it was waterproof - fastened with gleaming buttons and cut high in the Nehru style around his neck. The embroidered Gaddi *topi* (hat) perched and tilted on the crown of this head. On these mornings when he came down from the mountains, he often had his gun slung over his shoulder. He had a face weathered by years of crossing the high passes. His features were typically Gaddi - small slit-like eyes, an arresting nose that was slightly off kilter having been broken years ago. He would chide us for being lazy, sleeping in. We would rush to get him a comfortable seat and serve him hot tea - always in a steel cup, he felt uncomfortable with it from fancy bone china. He would slurp his tea, take a biscuit. He would ask for a few small packets of bidi when he came down from the mountains. He would pull one out and savour the first burn at the back of his throat.

Skuntala and her husband mapped their personal history to that of the mountains. The slow looping of the grazing route mirrors the ups and downs of their life. Their lives were marked by long stretches of separation, loneliness, moments of extreme sociality, and a steadily increasing sense of hardship as the mountains filled up - leaving less space for their flocks. Significant points in their lives are plotted by the places the ridges, temples and streams mountains. The Chamba Nag temple where they had sought

the blessing of a son after the birth of their three eldest daughters, and two miscarriages, eventually rewarded with two healthy boys. The *dhar* (summer shepherding hut) high in the forest land of the Kangra hills claimed by Jagadish's mother, where Skuntala came to take refuge from the violence with her children and where they spend every monsoon to this day. The noxious lantana that began to creep up the hillsides, devouring the pristine grasslands, the herbs and flowers that sustained their herd. The great scar at the foot of the hills where the slate mines are, providing Jagdish with petty work while he built his herd after selling them to buy his own land in Ranu. The twist in the road where, while Jagadish slept, his 300 sheep and goats were stolen, loaded onto the back of a truck by thieves from the plains. The high valley where, when the snow came late, he was left stranded in the high pastures; and when the rains came early, his herd was washed down the river.

As the hardships of shepherding grew for Jagadish, so did the hardships of the household for Skuntala. Skuntala's skills became increasing redundant. There is no need to go with her husband and the herd, to help with the birthing of the kids or with the crossing of difficult places, for Jagadish keeps only 50 sheep and goats now. Even if he kept more, it would be cheaper to hire a Panjabi migrant worker. There is no longer any need to spin coarse wool into yarn to be sold at the market, nor to weave thick *pattu* (blankets) from the yarn - Tibetans buy their wool from the cheaper Rajasthani goats, and hand looms are considered cumbersome. There is no need to grow seasonal vegetables and subsistence crops of wheat, corn and lentils when they can be bought more cheaply from the market, subsidised by the government Below Poverty Line card they are entitled to because of their scheduled tribe status. As her husband's flock decreases in size year by year, his contribution to the household wanes, as does her own. Instead, the bulk of the household income comes from their children. Their daughter is married to a military man. Their eldest son who has a steady job now as a hospital peon and is on his way to completing his own MA in Computer Studies. Even their youngest son, after eight years of shepherding with his father, gave up the profession, painfully, to begin his own trekking business after their herd was stolen for a second time by thieves in the Panjab plains. In their new house, recently built from concrete in new land purchased for their eldest son's nuclear family, Skuntala and Jagadish look anachronistic. Often unable to sleep in the raised beds given to them, they curl up by the fire in the kitchen, or can be found creeping back to their old, deserted mud house to sit on the low balcony that overlooks the fields. Skuntala's commitment to keeping this old house clean, applying fresh *lipai* (dung paint) every season, sowing, harvesting, dusting - goes largely unnoticed.

Skuntala herself explained how the enclosure of common land had impacted her life one day while we were sitting by the river watching her cow graze. Looking out on the opposite riverbank, she remarked of a time when all women used to come and graze their animals in the afternoon by the river. It was a time to share news, feelings, friendships. As fewer women keep animals now, the margins of common land decrease, and women are pushed into their homes where is mobility restricted. Indeed, Skuntala's

life has been marked by a shift in the division of labour in her household, where women have withdrawn from productive labour and taken up positions as housewives. Skuntala has lived this devaluation, and the rise of a new world into which she does not quite fit. The change has driven Jagdish to drink. Beginning as a habit to fight the cold and hardship of the nomadic life, he, like many elder men of the village, has come to drink daily. The more Jagdish drank, the more her children neglected her, the more Skuntala saw herself now as *kamzor*. The condition peaked in the height of summer, which I recorded in my field notes:

> She had been sick for some weeks, with fever and a cough. Last night she didn't sleep at all - when she would close her eyes she would see - trees, concrete house, lights like in a wedding, a lot of needles, a flower garden, lots of people, particularly women she didn't know. Couldn't sleep in new house because of the concrete and the construction. Still, when her temperature was 104, she went to the fields to work. Her son told me her body is used to this, this is something that she does automatically - her purpose. This morning, as we were walking with her to the old house, she was telling me about her worries. She seemed to sway a bit, from side to side, but she warmly put her hand in mine in a rare gesture of intimacy. I asked her if she was ok, she said "I am thin and weak, and since I have moved to this new [concrete] house I have been ill".

"I haven't had any health problems in my life." She looked me straight in the eye as she spoke, "I don't get sick very often. But now I just have this *kamzori*, I just have this *kamzori,* always *kamzor."* She muttered and repeated. "My main problem can't be solved here in the hospital, because I know what it is. It is "*tension ki bimari*" She waved her hand dismissively and rolled her eyes in resignation. "It is my husband who is my biggest worry. He will get killed when he is off with the herd in Panjab for his gold jewellery. He will get drunk then he'll slip. All these men have it coming to them."

IV | Kam and Kamzori

Skuntala's cynicism toward her husband's abilities and plight was shared by many elderly women. Elderly women scoffed at their daughter's performative devotion to their husbands through *karwa chauth*[24] fasting, and daily prayers. Elderly women saw themselves as tough, forced to bear the burden of work and care alone, unable to depend on their drunken husbands. "How could I spend time for myself?" They told me, "there was always *kam, kam, kam,* (work, work, work) nobody helped me." However, Skuntala still wears a chain around her neck - a fraying string, with a small silver tablet engraved with the image of Gard Mata – a local manifestation of the Goddess. When I asked her what it meant, she told me - "it is a blessing, it gives you strength to deal with your husband, to look after your sons. Gard Mata married into the clan, she loved her husband so much that she committed *sati* (widow immolation), and with such sacrifice she became very powerful." Skuntala also prayed to Kelu Mata, a women's goddess whose shrine was high in the hills in Chamba. Kelu gave women strength to fulfil their responsibilities to their household. It was Kelu Mata who Skuntala sought when she could not bear a son. It was Kelu Mata who gave Skuntala two healthy sons. The strength Skuntala has needed over the course of her life has been immense - to deal with her husband, his family, the loss of children, the loss of a livelihood – a process of enclosure.

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[24] Hindu festival where women fast for the good health of their husbands.

Skuntala sees herself as the subject of a lifetime of hardship at the hands of her family, but also sees this lifetime of hardship as a necessary exertion of her life force, her *shakti*. Her experience of *kamzori* is an expression of this sacrifice that she has made of her body to work. However, the very worth of this work has been devalued over the course of her lifetime, and she is not receiving the return of either wages or respect and care from her kin. As such, we see her returning endlessly to sow fields that her family is no longer dependent on for their flour, to tending cows that her family is no longer dependent on for milk. Her sharp tongue is the first to scold her husband for shameful drunk behaviour, her long neck is the first to turn away at the sight of sympathetic eyes, her quick hand is the first to dismiss any attempt at help in her cooking, gardening, sowing, weeding, threshing. But why does she keep working, when the impact of it on her body is so great, when her life-force is depleting?

The means by which elderly women sought to regain their vitality and stay connected to the world was to continue to work. To regain their *shakti*, they had to be willing to sacrifice more for their family and retain belief in god; particularly in figures such as Gard Mata who sacrificed themselves for the sustenance of their households. One informant explained, "your whole life is up and down. Everyday you have to say to yourself, I have *shakti*." Another explained that part of this was remaining pious, "I get my *shakti* from God only. I worship my husband's god. This is the only god."

Women still cite *kam* as having life-affirming qualities, but it is clear that it also has limits where such vitality slips into decay - embodied in the condition of *kamzori* (Bear 2018). The (woman's) body is both the condition of labour power and its limit, and the sacrifice of this body is necessary for their labour power to live (Federici 2004:141). Indeed, expressions of *kamzori* spoke to the limits of Gaddi women's vitality in work; the points where the exertion of their *shakti* did not reap any worldly reward and were not revitalised by kin but instead left depleted, where the fruits of their labour were devalued, and their milieu no longer nourished them. *Kamzori* allowed elderly women to express and make sense of this the disruption they feel to their life-course, *without* giving up on the work that so sustains them and the relations they have to their families. Speaking about her condition of *kamzori* allows Skuntala to highlight the impact of a life of sacrifice for her family on her body while also expressing pride in her ability to make such a sacrifice. More specifically, elderly women expressed how their body was all they had to give, and that this body itself was losing its strength. As such, they are able to render visible the contradiction between their own ethic of productivity and care for the household and the sapping of that productivity by the same people who inhabit that household.

Figure 2.9 Women return from the harvest.

Conclusion

The Gaddi case shows that the enclosure of common land and the breakdown of the pastoral economy resulted in the devaluation of women's contribution to the household, and increased control over sexuality. This is lived as a decline in status in relation to younger generations – especially daughters and daughters-in-law - where they both no longer provide reciprocal care. As women's bodies cool and dry, as they become marginal to the household and disentangle from relations, their approach toward death is not met by the comfort and respect of their kin as the shape of a respectable household shifts. This is also lived as a devaluation of labour and personhood, where elderly women are not even recompensated by the wages that are valued in the present. The embodied vitality that they draw from their work is doubly lost – first, as they are not recompensed of care and respect from their children at the appropriate time in the life-course and because they are not recompensed in the form of a wage or in the valuation of the work they do in the domestic economy. The condition of *kamzori* allows women to critique both the conditions in the household that render then redundant, and the broader conditions of modernity that deplete the landscape and provincialise or even stigmatise those who live, work and draw nourishment from it. The experience of *kamzori* might hence be understood both as a particular form of alienation, and as an assertion of agency. Such a contradiction at the heart of the condition can only be understood by layering a close analysis of the embodied experience of *kamzori* as its lived meaning with an appreciation of the structural processes in which it is embedded. This kind of scaled

analysis allows us to appreciate the co-incident processes of property enclosure and female subordination that shape the meanings of labour and its symbolic vitality.

[Removed for purposes of anonymity]

Figure 2.10: A Gaddi woman poses with a photo of herself as a young woman.

Interlude | Skuntala's Relief

For Skuntala, abundance was only truly left in one place - the *dhar* (shepherding hut) where she spent her monsoon summers, high up in the hills. It was only here, she said, that her feelings of *kamzori* would leave her, she would be able to become strong again, and she would be free from *tension.* "After we plant the corn" she told me, "we will go back there. It is such a beautiful place, it is our place, so peaceful" she repeated. Sure enough, she left for the *dhar* as soon as the corn was in the ground. Her son dropped her up there. She was slower than usual, hard callouses had formed on the soles of her feet, rubbing against the sides of her plastic shoes. She carried one hand-stitched bag of supplies and a tattered blue rucksack making a hump on her curved back.

We went to visit them in late October, only a few months before my departure from Kangra. We left at around three in the afternoon and began to climb as the heat of the sun turned into the autumnal evening. We arrived at the *dhar* late in the evening, as the sun was setting. As we went over the crest of the ridge into the clearing. The *dhar* was set high in the mountains, on the last ridge before the tree line that broke up into the high passes. As you looked down from the stone ledge that surrounded it, you could trace out the whole map of the Ranu road. The fields receded as the sun set, and the lights of the hotels blinked on showing the clusters of villages up into the high hills, like swarming fireflies that merged into at the bright epicentre of Dharamshala town. They had done up the *dhar* beautifully. When I entered it through the low hanging door, I was struck by how different it looked from the last time I was there. Before, the floor and walls were cracked and entirely ripped up in places by visiting languor monkeys who mine the mud for salt. Dust had hung in the air and rubbish left by unwelcomed foreign campers lay unburnt in the fireplace. This time, it was neatly organised and replastered. The careful work of Skuntala and Jagadish was evident in the detail, such that the room held an anachronistic dignity. The *culha* was painted smooth with a fresh layer of lipai (*dung paint*), with the bay below it neatly swept from ashes. There was a small posy of wildflowers in the nook to the righthand side of the *culha*, in the place where Aunty sat, next to the salt, dried chillies and ears of smoked corn. On the floor next to the *culha* were two mats laid out, made patchwork from stitched plastic rice bags. The right hand one for Aunty, who would sit with her legs folded up near her ears while she cut and stirred and rolled. The left hand one for uncle, as he chatted with visiting shepherd friends, and smoked bidis between pegs of evening whiskey. His big knife lay along-side him, its wooden handle smooth from use, and the long, curved blade sharpened nightly before being used to cut firewood or meat. Along the back were shelves cut into nooks in the thick mud wall. One held necessities, a small tube of Carmex, a tub of moisturising cream, three leaves of tablets, a mirror, trimming scissors and a packet of henna hair dye, a screw driver and a pocket knife. Hung next to this was a thin log, suspended with ropes on either side from the wooden eaves, that served to hang the thick hand-woven Gaddi blankets. On the far-right hand wall were three old oil drums, washed clean and refilled – one with last years' harvest of rajma, one with

rice and the last with the ground whole-wheat flour from the winter crop. Beside this lay a broken spinning wheel, cobwebbed in the corner.

Skuntala sat on one side of the *culha*, on a dirty old sheep skin, beginning to make tea for us. Somehow, she looked more alive than I had ever seen her, crouched with her legs under her. It was her place. Uncle sat on the other side, in his long johns, a woollen beanie, and his coatee. His legs stretched out in front of us. Skuntala cooked dinner, slicing *gondoli* (marrow) she had harvested from in between the corn stalks this morning. As she worked, she was completely absorbed, so much so that she couldn't hear when we called to her softly. She absently cried '*jai*' under her breath, '*jai mata, jai shiva, jai ram*'. After we ate the spicy gondola and thick sticky rice around the fire that evening, Skuntala lay down beside by me. I asked if she wanted a pillow, but she said she was fine. Her hollow cheeks were slightly fuller. As she lay there, she smiled her gummy smile and let her hand fall away from the stubs of her teeth. "How do you like our place?" She asked tenderly. I said many times it was so beautiful. She smiled more widely, contentedly, and reached to hand me a corn cob she had charred in the embers. She spoke of her wishes to spend more time with her daughters, how much work they had to do for their husbands, so good they were at making *roti*. She spoke of how she would bring her children to this *dhar* in their childhood, how her daughters would climb up here in one hour, loaded with big sacks of supplies, where now they can't even make it to the slate mines. She spoke of the passing of time, of her hard life, wearily but with acceptance. That night we slept soundly, swaddled in thick blanket, side by side. The next day she sent us home with a bag of corn, a bottle of goat milk and a pot of vegetables for her son, which we would give and find again days later, untouched in the fridge of the new concrete house.

Chapter 3 | 'Ghar ki Tension': Dignity, distress and domesticity for the Gaddi housewife

She couldn't stop imagining her sewing threading winding itself around her neck like a hangman's noose.
Jokha Alharthi, Celestial Bodies.

Preface | Seema Devi

Seema lived across the road from Shyam. She would sit out in her courtyard shelling peanuts, staring out from behind the bracken. She never spoke to us, only nodded respectfully as we tramped up the hill past her house on our daily rounds of visiting. She kept her hair tied severely back in a tight bun at the base of her neck. Her teeth slightly protruded, her skin was smooth. But most strikingly she had deep blue-green eyes. They were like no others that I had seen, they weren't the light brown or even the turquoise-flecked green of some Gaddi women. They were deep, pooling, sad.

I first spoke with Seema one blistering May afternoon. It was the kind of heat that sets your teeth on edge, that the Himalayan villages only get for a month before the monsoon. Seema gingerly invited us inside and led us into a small room off to the left side of the house. Seema offered me only a plastic chair. The light was white-blue and weak, washing us all out. What began as a number of routine questions about daily life escalated quickly. Her worries thickened the air between us, and I began to feel suffocated. She kept her eyes fixed on a pair of green sand shoes lying in the corner. Seema looked up at me directly, a gap in her story, a familiar refrain *mujhe bahut ghar ki tension hai* - I have so much 'household worry'.

Introduction

The window into Seema's *tension* closed as quickly as it had opened. Indeed, as I made my way from house to house, woman to woman, this kind of window opened and closed time and time again. As I began my interviews with married women of the village, attempting to understand their daily routines, housework and marital relations, I realised that such a condition of distress within and about the household or *ghar ki tension* was almost ubiquitous. Though some women laughed it off, many needed only the gentlest probe - an inquiry about their marriage, about the state of their finances, or their children's prospects - to be flooded with anxiety or go to pieces. Their retellings of sicknesses, stretched household budgets, alcoholic husbands felt like vain struggles to be free of a sticky web of worries. Used mostly by Gaddi married women, *ghar ki tension* described a state of strain that simultaneously afflicted a woman's household and her body. It spoke to distressed relationships – marital discord, conflict with or within their husband's family, with their children; economic distress – food insecurity, lost employment; and physical distress – adverse reproductive events, the impact of household work and poor self-care on the body. It was used as a negative discourse to refer to everything from the

ordinary, daily demands of the household, through to major disruptions to wellbeing caused by death, disease and violence.

Where *kamzori* was associated with the cooling of the body with aging, a loss of sexual drive and bodily strength, *ghar ki tension* was its opposite – a condition of hyperactivity in the body and the mind of the woman whose body was hot because of her sexual activity and centrality to the household (see Figure 3.1). Women described *ghar ki tension* as a condition of rumination, typified by thoughts swirling around in their heads. This condition made them dizzy (*chakkar ana*), or unable to sleep. Women who had too much *tension* were unable to relax or complete their daily tasks. Emotionally, they were quick to anger, or felt excess fear, shame or guilt about the inability to meet expectations of their family or community. They would experience hot flushes in their body, chronic headaches and abnormal blood pressure, as either 'high BP'.[25] High BP, though not necessarily medically diagnosed as hypertension, was experienced as an excess of heat and energy in the body, a state of excitement (*utshuk)* (see Cohen 1994, Das 2015, Weaver 2017)*.* Yet it could also be concentrated in the heart and chest, like the condition of heart distress that Good (1977) found in Iran. Here, it was associated with panic (*ghavraat*, *dil ghavraat*) or feelings of suffocation. Women also explained that this condition left them vulnerable to attacks of *jadu* and *opara;* and very commonly from visits of the Jungle Raja - an incubus who stole into their dreams and tempted them into sexual relations.

Ghar ki tension was spoken of in markedly different terms to the bodily condition of *kamzori* experienced by elderly women that expresses the pain of self-sacrifice and devalued labour. Though *kamzori* could be an impact of *ghar ki tension,* the latter was more directly related to the work that women did trying to build and maintain a bounded and respectable household. This work was framed differently to the hard physical labour that their mothers had done when they were central to the household. It involved the affective labour of caring for children, husbands and elders; the material labour of cleaning and creating a particular atmosphere of peace where their family could flourish; and the ritual labour of building boundaries around the house to mitigate vulnerability. Hence, *ghar ki tension* was intimately linked to the new, distinctly middle-class, expectations of respectability - or *izzat* - placed on married women that aligned with the increasingly nuclearised Gaddi household. Though elderly women sometime cited their experiences of *ghar ki tension*, it was most often used by their daughters to express their frustrated attempts to build a respectable, peaceful (*shanth*) home. For elderly women, the home was not a private, bounded, nuclear space, but a sprawling domestic network. Indeed, I was struck by the bounded, spatial aspect of *ghar ki tension*; its location in the atmosphere or mood (*mahaul*) of the private household, the ways in which it infused the intimate domestic world

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[25] Low BP was more likely to be associated with elderly women and kamzori. It was even less likely to be diagnosed as any kind of medical ailment, was experienced as a loss of mental motivation (*soosth*) and physical vitality (*takat*) - weakness (*kamzori*), exhaustion and fainting spells (see Das 2015).

(Gammeltoft 2018, Gammeltoft and Oosterhoff 2018). Deeper symbolic mapping revealed a homology between the woman's body and the household, such that its disruption in *ghar ki tension* indicated imbalances and incompatibilities in the substances and sentiments that sustained domestic relations, as they were shaped by broader structural forces (Bear 2007).

Headache, dizziness, rumination, insomnia

High 'BP', panic, heart palpitations

Vulnerable to Black Magic *(opara)*, Witchcraft *(jadu)*, and visits from the Jungle Raja
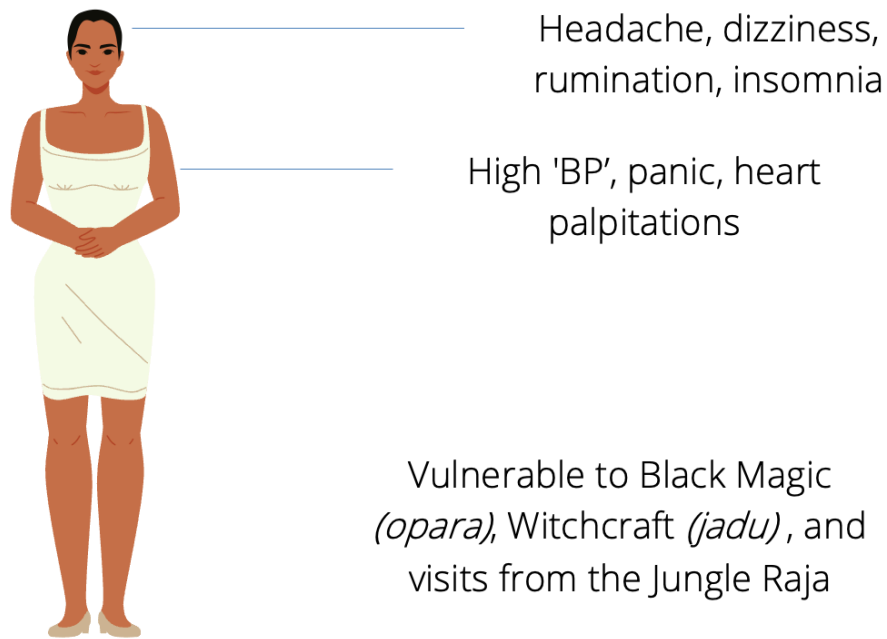
Figure 3.1: Body map of ailments associated with 'ghar ki tension'

Ghar ki tension hence provides a window into what is at stake for women as they seek to build a respectable household and maintain the relations within it. But why does it occur now? What makes the present so fraught for Gaddi married women? As the Gaddi community is drawn into the peri-urban peripheries of Dharamshala and the price of land increases, the economy shifts away from pastoralism and subsistence agriculture. The proliferation of waged labour opportunities, and the advance of education, means that slate mining, shepherding and small holder agriculture have become undesirable. New opportunities in the military, government service and tourism are open to all caste groups, and as such patterns of wealth accumulation no longer run along caste lines, resulting in increased inequality within and between families. Upward social mobility, particularly for low caste families, means retreating from the fields and engaging in 'modern' professions. Consolidating wealth means enclosing their nuclear household from sprawling and demanding domestic networks (Stack 1974, James 2015). However, such accumulated wealth can only be preserved and converted into social prestige through respectability or *izzat* (Ortner and Whitehead 1981). *Izzat* is dependent on the domestication of female sexuality and the division of household labour between the 'productive' male breadwinner and the 'reproductive' female housewife. Men's respectability is dependent on this control of women (Gardener

1995). Such a division of labour is underpinned by a permanent conjugal bond, sustained by romance and intimacy between husband and wife (Kapila 2003, 2004).

However, for most families, the job security of *naukri* - the military, government service - or business is unobtainable (Parry 2020). As such, the desire of most women to be housewives is not matched by the male capacity to earn sufficiently. Many men are unemployed or engaged in *kam* - precarious, uncertain labour as construction workers, kitchen hands, taxi drivers, illegal slate miners. Many men are also alcoholics. Women remain responsible for their families, doubly burdened by the need to maintain the aesthetics and expenses of the house *and* to keep up its reputation of respectability. This project of domesticity, however, is seen not only as drudgery but entails the ethical, relational and aesthetic work of cultivating their household as part of the Hindu middle class. This chapter attempts to probe what is at stake in building a respectable household in the present, how this is achieved or not achieved by the women who pursue it, and how this immense pressure is experienced in the body. It is hence a uniquely Gaddi story of a tribal woman's (embodied) place in processes of upward social mobility, but it speaks to trajectories of contemporary Hindu femininity as cut by class and caste across India. I will begin with an exposition of the timescape of the Gaddi house, and how its material culture, flows and boundaries take on new characteristics within contemporary projects of domestic respectability. I will then explore the ethical work that women must do in order to maintain it, and how this crystallises in the fantasy of the housewife. I will show how the failure of the fantasy of the housewife is experienced by women in the body as *ghar ki tension.*

I | The Timescape of the Gaddi Household

Place for Gaddi people is not only a designation but a relationship that is constitutive of personhood; wherein the substances of the house, the land on which it rests, and the gods that dwell there imbue the bodies of those who live in it with particular qualities and vice versa. The house itself is also made from substances, and as such constantly in flux as substantive flows and boundaries constitute and maintain its qualities (Daniel 1984). Drawing together insights from the anthropology of time (Bear 2014, Harms 2011), with careful attention to the material cultural of the household (Trawick 1992, Dickey 2000, Allerton 2013), this section presents the timescape[26] of the Gaddi household and points to the ethical,

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[26] Following Bear (2014), I propose the timescape as a means for understanding how this shift has impacted women within the domestic cycle. Generational disparity might be seen as an unresolved suspension in time, representing a presence that is caught between past and future (Carsten 2007). Temporal orientation is crucially tied into the strategies people fashion to reproduce themselves as ideal social persons (Harms 2011:142), which is in turn linked to their expectations of normative feminine behaviour. Indeed, temporal orientation is the foundation of a form of agency (Day et al. 1999). As Ringel and Morosanu suggest "people individually and collectively attempt to modify, manage, bend, distort, speed up or slow down or structure the times they are living in" (2016:17). Contradiction between such orientations may yield the kinds of 'crises of social reproduction' or 'moral impasses' that produce deviant figures or behaviours.

aesthetic and relational work that women undergo in order to build and maintain respectable houses and respectable selves.

Figure 3.2: A Gaddi mud house, after the corn harvest.

An Aesthetics of House Building

The timescape of the Gaddi household in the past was animated by the shepherding migratory cycle, and/or the agricultural cycle. For shepherding families this meant moving between a home Chamba in the summer and one in Kangra in the winter. Gaddis cultivated red kidney beans, apples and walnuts in the former, and wheat, mustard seeds or rice in the latter (Wagner 2013). Importantly, in these times, men were away from the household for most of the year leaving women to manage affairs without interference, except during the times that they were together on the shepherding route. Today, only a few shepherding families still own land in Chamba or a *dhar* in the hills and visit it during the monsoon season.[27] The majority of Kangra Gaddis, across castes, have settled permanently in Kangra, and invested in building households sustained by sedentary cycles of subsistence agriculture and seasonal migration based on tourist demand. The household is hence marked more significantly by financial flows of wages, receipt of government gas cylinders or BPL (below poverty line) rations, debt repayments, construction work and by the educational cycle of the school or college.

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[27] Note the introduction of the *culha* tax making it expensive to keep more than one house.

Gaddi settlement is patrilocal, where women are said not to have married a particular man, but to have married in 'such and such' a place, and to take on its qualities (Wagner 2013:79-91). The Gaddi household (*ghar*) is hence understood not as a building but as a whole place. Though no longer distributed geographically across the year, members of the household are often away for work or social visiting - though men are significantly more present. Sons or husbands who spend the some of their time in military cantonments, in Delhi working in hotel kitchens, or in Dubai as construction workers, are still counted as household members. The house itself remains permeable to the intrusion of playing children, *sadhus* (renouncer) demanding alms, salesmen hawking fish, plastic goods and household cleaning products, and most importantly visiting relatives. Increasingly nuclear household composition has intensified the criss-crossing patterns of visiting between both kin and affines, referred to as '*ghar ke log*' and '*ristedar*' respectively, that can be traced between households across the southern slopes of the Dhaula Dhar[28] and has not broken down the significant unity of person and place.

Gaddi houses are traditionally made of mud, displaying a unique form of craftsmanship (Newell 1952) - handcrafted from bricks of earth, dug up and shaped form two squat storeys, with low hanging doorways and wooden shutters carved with intricate designs. The interiority of the mud house is musty and damp, not with the flowering mould that plagues the new draft concrete houses, but with the earthy smell of *lipai* (dung paint) used to plaster the floor and walls, reapplied by the women of the house. Such craftsmanship has found a new value in the houses built for foreigners by vernacular architects, ironically at the moment when the Gaddi community themselves desire (and can only obtain credit for) the security of concrete (Contractor 2017). Today, the shame of having a mud house was acute for householders, a sign of poverty and ill fortune. Concrete provided both a sign of wealth and displayed the enduring strength of the lineage, where home improvements offered an opportunity to assert wealth and visibility in the community. Houses that were made wholly or partly of mud were made up for by effusively cleaning the house and filling it with the things of dignity. A few hand embroidered cushions were laid out on plastic chairs set around a small cane stool. I was always struck by the immense dignity that lived in these objects, even for the poorest of families. They are largely the same in each place – cream doilies, a print of white horses running framed on the wall, fake pink flowers, peeling posters of Rani Mukerjee in *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*, a number of studio photos of family members of their wedding day posed awkwardly. Both the exterior and the interior of the house were seen as important spaces of

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[28] For both women and men, the obligations of 'doing' kinship involve visiting one's patrilineal group but also one's affines. This visiting occurs frequently within the village, where women will visit their sisters in law, drink tea, and share in childcare responsibilities in the afternoons; and men will visit their brothers or cousins in the evenings to drink alcohol and sometimes share a meal. However, it also occurs significantly across villages, where women will return to their *maike* (natal home) approximately once per month and at festivities (nuala, jatra, birthdays) for a few days, and their husbands will also join them for an evening or a night. Despite a trend toward prestige marriage, these visiting relations and the provision of hospitality is symmetrical between kin and affines, referred to as '*ghar ke log*' and '*ristedar*' respectively. Symmetrical kinship relations result in strong caste-based networks that are activated for the sharing of resources, employment opportunities and the care of children (Phillimore 1982: 412).

aesthetic work, whereby – as Elinoff asserts – "the arrangement, manipulation, use, and reuse of specific material things can be read as an important political resource for subaltern actors wishing to assert their commensurability with other, better-off citizens" (2016:614).

An Ethics of Housework

The centre of commensality, warmth and life in a Gaddi household is its small mud kitchen, detached from the rest of the household, even in the most elaborate of new concrete houses. A house today is marked by the existence of a hearth (*culha*), though some households that contain more than one nuclear family will have multiple hearths in the same building. A new hearth is set up with the marriage of any given son, today often accompanied by a set of rooms or new storey in the house. Inside this room, the floor painted thick with green dung, swept clean each morning and laid with mats and cushions for family and guests to sit and eat their three daily meals. This kitchen is the primary responsibility of the mature wife of the household, the woman Marriott (1998) might call the 'feeder', responsible for the care of all in the household, including household deities. This woman's labour in building and maintaining her household is not just the caring labour of cooking, feeding, washing, but is also the work of sustaining the relationships of the household, drawing boundaries around the house, and those who inhabit it, including household gods. This labour is understood not as drudgery, but as ethical work wherein the substances and vitality of this woman's body literally feed and nourish all those who live with her through her housework.

The web of relations, objects, desires and concerns that constitute the household is understood according to the concept of *moh-maya*. Sarah Lamb suggests that the web of *maya* is formed by sharing and exchanging bodily and other substances through acts such as sex, touching, living together, sharing food, owning things, and eating the fruits of village soil; and sustained materially and affectively through sentiments of love, compassion and care (1997:283). She makes the important link between relational personhood and the concept of *maya*, arguing that *maya* itself is the notion by which people imagine themselves as inherently relational beings. Yet *maya* is also conceived of as an illusion (Gold 1991), where attachment to worldly things leaves one unable to understand the true shape of reality. This was most poignantly put by Anju, an upper caste Gaddi widow, while sitting on the roof of her house. I was helping Anju to pack large sacks of grain she had harvested from her family's vast fields over the last week. It was a year after the death of her husband in motorcycle accident, and she had complained to me earlier that she not only experienced acute grief from the loss of her husband, but also *tension* in navigating her household and bringing up her young son without him. But that morning, she was distracted by the menial work of threshing and packing, and she allowed herself a moment to remember.

> [Before my husband died], we were always together. We rested together, we did our work together, we ate together, we didn't spend time with anyone else. But now, after he has passed, I am not interested in worldly things. *Sab moh-maya hai* (Everything is illusory).

For women, maintaining the web of *maya* was both their responsibility and their burden. It sustained them and their dependents, giving them purpose and wellbeing; but it also left them in the clutches of illusion. As we will see, *tension* seems to elicit from the strains of navigating this illusion.

The care that went into maintaining *moh-maya* was the constant work of weathering worldly storms of conflict, and managing competing care demands with scarce resources in the household. The dominant patriarchal ideology indicated that illness, mental distress, affliction, misfortune for children, in-laws and husbands, or even fighting within the family were most often attributed to a lack of care given by the women of the household. This is indexical of her failure as a wife, mother, or daughter-in-law to maintain the boundaries and *mahaul* (atmosphere) of household as tranquil and prosperous, and the insufficient vital nourishment she is able to give through her body. The inability of the men of the house to provide financially for the household is not discussed in such vital terms but framed more so by pragmatic reflections on economic scarcity. For contemporary Gaddi women, unlike in other presentations of the woman's plight in South Asia (Das 2015, Snell-Rood 2015a), and beyond (Han 2012, Yarris 2014) this did not involve the strains of social reproduction in the context of extreme poverty. The Gaddi women I befriended struggled with money but did not consider themselves poor. Crucially, the work of the household was the aspirational work of upward social mobility characteristic of a middle-class subjectivity (Donner 2008, Maqsood 2017). It was the ability to reproduce the household in the present, to project the household into the future. It was the ability to articulate and sustain the boundary between private domestic space and dangerous public sphere. In this sense, the women's struggle was not just about 'getting by', but about realising a family's dreams to accrue *izzat,* and the frustrations experienced at moments when this dream unravels.

[Removed for purposes of anonymity]
Figure 3.3 A young woman tends to the small crop of corn in her parent's house.

Boundary Work

Gaddi women expressed the work of *maya* and *izzat* as informed by the symbolic axes of cleanliness and dirt, purity and pollution. The nuclear Gaddi household is not an established entity, but a space that must be made and maintained through the ethical work of women. This work is to build a boundary between the pure, clean, private space of the household and the malign, polluting external influences and flows that threaten it and those within it. Women articulated this work of boundary making as the need to keep the household and relationships within it 'clean' (*saaf*). Women told me - *zindagi ka saaf koi nahin karte* - there is nobody else who will keep life clean. Cleanliness involved material order within the house, relational order between members of the household themselves, and ritual order in proper worship of the gods. Such work involved physical care for and feeding of relatives; domestic chores like cleaning to keep a space hygienic and tidy; emotional labour of keeping relationships in the household smooth; and ritual labour of daily worship of household gods. This is not a new idea, as elderly Gaddi shepherds described the role of women in the past as 'keepers' of place within the shepherding lifestyle while men are on the move and highlight their role in fulfilling their *dharam* (religious or spiritual way of being). However, today as families shift away from pastoralism, the keeping of the *dharam* has become synonymous with the keeping of the Hindu house and the maintenance of its boundaries. Indeed, it is a woman's duty to maintain the atmosphere of the household (Gammeltoft 2018), and from dwelling in a tranquil, prosperous atmosphere that excludes the intrusion of dangerous gazes or incompatible substances that the men of that household will be able to flourish. This responsibility is acute for women in upwardly mobile Gaddi families, for whom it is necessary to curtail demands of credit, care and other resources in order to cultivate a distinctly Hindu form of respectability and prevent the depletion of their newly acquired wealth. Now, more than ever, it was a woman's prerogative and responsibility to keep the space of the household, the materiality and atmosphere, and these relationships smooth, or *saaf*. Importantly, the aspiration for inclusion in the Indian middle class, and frameworks provided by Hindu nationalist femininity, gave a new dignity to this housework, meaning this care burden was both women's source of self-esteem and their source of exhaustion.

We can see this at play in the case of Bimla Didi, a Gaddi Rajput woman with two young children who lived alone in a small house with her husband, a hotel chef. Bimla Didi has a history of experiencing extreme distress. Her marriage has been marked by extreme periods of physical illness caused by a problem with her back that forces her to return to her natal home to be taken care of by her sisters and mother. Such periods are also marked by mental distress, times when she feels she is unable to cope in this house, where she struggles to find the courage to continue on. "Women's work is very hard" she told me, "there is no time for yourself". However, when I asked her where she does manage to find solace, she replied that it is when her house is calm and peaceful, "neat and clean" she used the English words. Bimla and her husband had purchased a small block of land high in the hills, in a village ten

minutes' ride away from Thera. It had a spectacular view that looked down to the sweeping valley and caught the dramatic Kangra sunsets in the evening. Bimla loved to have guests, to invite them to share a meal and stay the night together on mats on the floor. Though she has insisted that she did not host her parents in law, they too were often visiting and requiring her support. The space was small, only two rooms, a small kitchen and an attached bathroom outside, but Bimla kept it fastidiously clean. "When it is not clean, I feel very stressed" she told me. Daily, she would wash the pots from the night before, cook the morning breakfast meal and pack a tiffin for her sons. She would do the morning *puja* (prayers). She would sweep the house with a wide palm broom, polish the ornaments, scrape any mould that creeped in through corners, beat out blankets, wash and hang her children's clothes. By this time, she would need to make the lunch if her husband was home. If she was alone, she would eat a small portion of vegetables left over from the night before or cook herself a simple egg that she ate with sweet bread. Her sons would come back on the school bus, and she would play with them and help them with homework in the afternoon, until it was time to cook the evening meal. These endless rituals of care (Aulino 2019) were the source of her home's tranquillity, and thus her own personal sense of wellbeing and pride.

A source of concern for Bimla was the work of maintaining household expenses. This was not the strict ideological work of maintaining a written household budget (Zaloom 2016), but the resourceful work of making small sources of income stretch, and the relational work of seeking support from other family members. As Streinzer (2016) observes, these acts of stretching budgets involve a kind of 'time-tricking' that housewives engage in as they face the temporal constraints of economic life. Bimla insisted on sending her children to a private nursery, and then to a local Catholic private school, despite her husband's meagre income from the restaurant. Bimla's husband is *conduce* (tight with money), he "will always go out and eat in nice restaurants himself but will never take [Bimla and her sons] out". Bimla was often forced to beg her husband for money or seek small loans from kin or neighbours to pay for basic expenses like her children's schoolbooks. She explained:

> The main worries are about food, and about money. How will we get it? All this *tension*, ladies have. Gents don't have *tension* like this. If, in the house, the rations are finished, the gents will say don't worry I'll earn some money, but they don't say where they will earn that money from. They will say that I will give you this money, and you bring the rations. But ladies think, where will they do that from? If ladies need 20 rupees, their husband will only give them 10 rupees, and say just make do with that. Men say, get the rest of the things later. Ladies say, how will I manage with only 10 rupees, those things are important and are needed right now. Ladies have to adjust.

As waged labour conditions have become more precarious for men in the slate mining or tourism industries, women are forced to absorb new expenses. Women also expressed that they bore the brunt of any adverse life events because they were responsible for their household. Bimla Didi explained that she cannot get the basic check up from the private hospital that she needs because her husband won't pay for it:

> 2500 rupees, he will start to shout and tell me that I don't have any pain. Women have no time for pain, not body pain or pain in the mind. But when it comes to his costs, like he wants to buy a car, he will just spend the money.

It was of crucial importance that women stopped fights in the home and dealt with domestic violence themselves so as not to disturb the peace of the household. Bimla's husband was not violent, but when he came home from a night of drinking, he was often rowdy. He would expect to be served his meal with hot, freshly made bread at any time of the night when he returned. He would complain that she had not cooked the food he wanted, or that it was cold by the time he got to it. Bimla was always worried that he would wake up their two sons, yet she saw it as her responsibility to satiate him, at least for the sake of her children.

Bimla and other women expressed their need to preserve the household temporally, representing their housework as a kind of time-loop. Women listed their unchanging daily responsibilities, their simultaneous exhaustion and boredom, the fact that they never had time for themselves. Bimla explained:

> You don't have the time to go to others' places, to come and go, you have to stay in your own house, eat your own food. You are busy with your own time, you don't have time for anything else, for anyone else. If someone from the road says something bad, then you just have to keep going with your own work. You make your own food, you stay busy. This is what it's like.

We see the housewife as engaged in an eternal present of domestic labour, getting by in the face of economic precarity (Han 2012). Indeed, it is precisely the concealment of eternal labour in the present done by the housewife that allows men, the old and the young to engage in leisure time (Harms 2013, Elias & Rai 2018). This emphasis on the domestic eternal present might be paralleled to the eternal present of the intimate conjugal bond, where the Hindu wife must retain her respectability through confinement to the household and devotion to her husband's every need (Harlan and Courtright 1995, Kapadia 1995).

Private Gods, Public Gazes

However, women's ethical work of maintaining the household and its web of *maya* did not only involve caring for the worldly beings, but also the invisible powers that run through the household and infuse those within it (Trawick 1990:7). This ritual worked to project the household and lineage into the future. Each morning and evening Bimla would conduct a *puja* for the household deity of her husband's family, she would fast for her husband at *Karwa Chauth,* host her relatives at Navratri. It was only through care and ritual worship of deities that the house, those within it and indeed the future of the lineage would be protected. One's clan was referred as *kul,* or in an older form of Gaddi as *al*, and is identified primarily through the worship of a common household deity (*kul devta/devi*), though if a clan has a large geographical spread and size the gods worshipped may be numerous.[29] When a woman gets

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[29] See Phillimore (1982: chapter 3) for a detailed discussion of the difference between these terms, that has largely become obsolete in the present. Within my data, people do not marry within a clan (kul), but Phillimore notes that gotra is a now obsolete term that connotes distant agnation wherein inter-marriage is permissible.

married, she assumes the *kul* of her agnates and their descent line and takes on the responsibility of caring for and performing daily prayers to the household deity. However, many women still trace their kinship relations to their natal household deity and tell their oral histories through figures who were of this *kul*, as Gaddi kinship relations between affines and kin are fairly symmetrical within caste groups. Some households noted that their household deities had lived in Chamba and had been 'carried' or 'brought' from their ancestral lands to reside in their Kangra households. However, many identified Hindu gods as their household deities or referred to deities by their Hindi as opposed to Gaddi names, perhaps indicative of a shift toward mainstream Hinduism. Still others could not identify their *kul devta* and highlighted instead that their household prayers are directly to Lord Shiva. The choice of god is a means by which they might seek and articulate projects of tribal, caste or clan prosperity and dignity.

The way in which women care for household deities provides an important window into the way in which they scale between their body, household, caste and tribe. It articulates which communal and national intimate publics they seek to be included within or excluded from (Berlant 1997). Piety is performed (Mahmood 2005) through morning and evening prayers, regular larger ritual festivities such as *kirtan* (devotional songs sung by women in the community), and the marking of significant ritual events. The latter provide an opportunity for women to display their wealth among their neighbours through the preparation and funding of a common meal or a *daam.* Such piety is a means of drawing the ritual boundaries around a household, securing the health and fortune of those within it from illness or malign forces. Indeed, worshiping of the gods was both a way in which women attempted to keep the concerns of her household private, and the concerns of others – their jealous gaze, and even curses of *jadu* or *opara* – from passing the boundary of the house. Bimla explained that it was very important that she was able to keep her worries to herself. Bimla was terrified that if others knew about her family's financial troubles, or overheard a fight between her and her husband, they would 'would talk'. When asked if they might seek help from sisters, in-laws or neighbours they complained of gossip and jealousy, a fear that others 'would talk' - they preferred to depend only on their husbands.

Sharing one's household worries indicated a lack of respectability; and absorbing those of others was considered polluting. Indeed, in the past where the household was less bounded, it was the work of many women to keep the space and relationships within it clean. Today, where the household becomes increasingly nuclearised, this work falls to one woman alone. Women would sigh as they told me, *apne apne ghar, apne apne tension* - to each her own house, to each her own *tension*. This was used to highlight the ubiquity of *tension* to all households, but also to its privacy - justifying why it was necessary to keep one's own *tension* away from the prying, jealous eyes of neighbours, affines and even kin. As such, most women expressed an overwhelming sense of isolation, loneliness (*akelapan*) as their nuclear home became increasingly private and the work of maintaining this boundary between private space and public flows became essential to respectability. Women could not leave their useless or

abusive husbands, as this would result in an absolute loss of *izzat* and leave them in social abjection –
exposed to even greater *tension* and abuse. New inequality within and between households,
compounded with a tendency to accumulate and retain wealth in the nuclear family, work to atomise
women. Such atomisation is felt as anxiety that one's own household is not good enough, and that others
'will talk' if one expresses the anxieties of one's own household. Gossip and rumour indeed worked as
a powerful force, threatening to permeate the privacy of the household, and was imagined too to be the
source of *jadu* and *opara.* As such, seeking help or support from others beyond one's immediate nuclear
household compromises the respectability of the household, and the housewife. We will see how the
fantasy of the housewife both provides dignity to the domestic project and sustains stigma surrounding
mental distress, leaving women socially isolated in their homes.

II | Fractured Domestic Networks

To this point, we have examined the ethical work of boundary making that women perform in order to build and maintain a respectable household. Why is this work so important in the present? This section will look outwards from the house itself, and the labour of women within it, to track the inequalities emergent across domestic networks along lines of class as new opportunities for wealth accumulation arise. We might begin by looking at the household of Aunty and Uncle, where I lived for 15 months.

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Aunty and Uncle's house sat apart from that of their kin and neighbours. Their compound had a reputation for its wealth beyond the usual boundaries of caste. They went to great lengths to ensure its privacy and curtail the gazes, rumours, demands and people that passed through. Unlike the rest of the houses in the hamlet, it was obscured from view – hidden behind a thick line of fruit trees. Yet as one enters the courtyard through the leafy pathway from the road one realises that it was princely in comparison to the mud houses that made up much of this low caste Hali hamlet. Its cobbled compound shows the steady accumulation of wealth Uncle has managed. A long main concrete building, topped with a new floor. Adjacent, another two-storey boxy house. Backed by a cow shed. Life was organised around a courtyard, paved with smooth slates bought from the mines behind the village. A small mandir to the family's *kul devta* holds pride of place in this courtyard, a candle burning from dawn to dusk below a fading picture of their Mata that Aunty lit each morning. Uncle told me of a time when they had only one mud house built on onto this courtyard. This had been knocked down in 2002. It was replaced first with a one storey concrete building, lined by a wide porch out the front that wrapped around the side of the house toward the garden. It has four rooms – one for Uncle and Aunty, where the family's china and other prized items are kept. Another that used to be their son Lucky's before he went to Delhi to work as an assistant in an NGO. A third that is where his youngest daughter Priya sleeps, with a big bed facing an old television, after long days of tending to the cow, the goat, the kitchen, guests, the fields, the gardens, her own sewing piecework. The last room I was only led into once, a small formal room, musty with disuse. Mounted on the walls of this room were nostalgic photos of Uncle in various military scenes in Sikkim, Arunachal, the Chinese border. He was careful to note how he and his cousin were the only ones from this community who had left for the army, leaving the others behind to work in the slate mines.

It is the stable, secure income that comes from his military pension that has allowed Uncle and Aunty to steadily add to the compound and accumulate wealth. Like only a handful of ex-servicemen from the Gaddi community and an even smaller minority from his low caste group, Uncle was not at the mercy of the arbitrary opening and closing of the slate mines as a source of income like most of his kin and affines. In 2014, with his discharge money, he built the two-storey concrete block adjacent to his own house, with two floors of two room sets and a porch that looked up toward the mountains. For the

duration of my fieldwork, I occupied the upper floor and the porch, surveilled from across the courtyard by Aunty as she sat, as she always did, for most of the day on a *manjee* (daybed). The lower floor becomes stagnant and mouldy in the monsoon season. It was rented by another low caste Dogri couple, whose children have moved to the city some time ago. Nora is a plump woman employed as a domestic worker in the house of a British expat, with a high-pitched laugh. Her husband is half her height and width and has a distinct hunch back as a result of a lifetime of chipping rocks in the slate mines. They lived in this rented house because he had been tricked into selling his own land by a conniving brother. It brought them considerable embarrassment, not to have their own place. People who live in rented accommodation are often the subject of rumour. In their case, this embarrassment was compounded with the inconvenience that Nora had to work to support her husband.

In 2018, Uncle added another storey above his own house, rented out to my housemate. We had suspicions about the coincidence of this building project and demonetisation. It was haphazardly designed, and quickly built. At the border of the courtyard and the garden he had erected a shed where Calli the goat was tied for most of the day, her bleating right under my window waking me up each morning. Uncle had enterprising plans for this shed area. He could be found on his own porch sketching out the designs for another two-room set he would build the following winter to house the increasing number of foreign backpackers who sought rooms while they learnt Tibetan at the nearby institute. He had originally been propositioned by a Delhiite passing through the village who was looking for a place to set up an Air B and B. This man had seen the mud and stone cowshed that stood at the far end of the garden near the bus stop and fancied it as a 'traditional home stay'. The man proposed to rent the land from Uncle and invest his own money in doing up the house. Uncle thought this was a good idea, and promptly decided to decline the man's offer and do it himself – going into business with an outsider would be sure to make his family even more suspicious of his fortune.

Aunty's family lived close by, across the road on land that they had come to settle on. Today, three families live in a one block mud house with three separate hearths. Altogether, sixteen people share five dank rooms, bound up in a dense domestic network where they cared for each other's children, shared firewood and gossip. While I lived there, Aunty's house had five toilets. One for his family, another in my room, another for the Dogri couple below, plus two more in the newly built upper storey. By contrast, Aunty's brother only built a toilet for the 16 of them at the end of my fieldwork. Before this, they would trail down to the open drain that ran along the back side of their house under the cover of night.

In the biggest set of three rooms, Aunty's younger, more enterprising, brother lived with his wife Ruchi and their two younger children. We christened him Hairdo-Uncle, thanks to his ever-changing mop. Over the course of my stay, the couple had claimed a small piece of land by the road in front of our

house, and, like many men in the village who did not want to take up slate mining, proceeded to build a small shop. It consisted of a boxy concrete room painted pink, fronted by a large blue roller door that was always tended to by his wife. Off to its left-hand side, was another room made of slate, hidden from the view of the village. The front room stocked daily essentials, eggs, refined oil, mustard oil, hair oil, henna, bags of rice, chocolates, chips, Amul milk, bidis, matches. But such everyday items were not the source of their income. Aunty's mother, Juganoo, lived with them, a four-foot-tall woman who wore children's Velcro sneakers. Like many of the low-caste Hali women, she brewed rice beer and spirits in this back room that she served for 10 rupees per glass to the slate miners who came back along the road to the lower village. Much to Uncle and Aunty's disgust, this illegal practice allowed Hairdo to send his two sons to a private school in Khagota.

At the lower end of the mud complex, ailing Harvinder lived in the last room of the main building and a small, tacked on, mud kitchen. Harvinder was Aunty's father's brother, he had a reputation as a cheat and a thief - his debts abounded for stolen animals and unpaid loans. Now in his 70s, he was tall and emaciated. He spent much of his time squatting on his porch, puffing at bidi after bidi despite his wracking cough. His wife, Loku often avoided his company. A kind woman, she seemed both exhausted and resigned. After Harvinder became too sick to continue working in the slate mines, Loku took up labour work in one of the hotel construction sites below the village. She would limp back from a day of carrying bricks to rest her aching knees for a while on our porch. I would ask her how she was, "*Bacca*, it is what it is, *tension* always *tension*." She felt demeaned, doing the same work as the migrant workers from central India who hoisted the saris above their knees as they rendered and carried and cemented. She would shrug and continue on her way, her one remaining tooth protruding out over her bottom lip.

In the last, most mouldy, rooms closest to the road, Aunty's elder brother, Jagjit, lived with his wife Sonam, and five wily daughters who ranged between the ages of 24 and 10. Aunty's brother was a small quiet man who had worked since he was 15 in the slate mines. His wife Sonam was an *anganwadi* helper in the Chakvan school. She was still young, despite having given birth to five daughters, her face was smooth, and her hair well kept. She always lined her eyes with *kajal*, and her lips, heavily with bright pink pencil. Sonam was a centrifugal force in the village - her eyes were quick and kind, but they seemed to be keenly able to spot dirty laundry. She was always there, it seemed, when a fight was heard in the neighbouring houses, a young girl had not come home after dusk. Sonam was an ideal informant - a mill for the rumours circulating in the hamlet. However, unlike Aunty and Uncle, she did not have a tight grip over the behaviour and mobility of her daughters - her husband's piecemeal income kept her too busy to bother.

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The case of Uncle and Aunty's domestic network helps us to understand two flow-on effects of the change in livelihoods to the Gaddi community. First, an increasing emphasis on the conjugal bond and the space of the household as the medium through which new-found respectability is articulated. Second, an increasing inequality between households based on accumulated wealth that causes the boundary between public and private space to be problematised in new ways, cutting across domestic networks. As such, we see inequality based on class rupturing networks of care between households, and inequality based on gender expectations enclosing women within the household. As described in the previous chapters, the breakdown of the agro-pastoral economy has precipitated a shift in the Gaddi household economy and the sexual division of labour that sustained it. The diffuse domestic network has become increasingly nuclearised, centred around the romantic conjugal bond (Kapila 2003, 2004). These conditions locate the project of respectability for the whole lineage in the actions, behaviours and abilities of the housewife. Women themselves are left in an ambivalent position – their status and decision-making power has declined, while their housework is given new dignity and significance.

III | Housewification and Beyond

Such a story both resonates with and moves beyond existing South Asian literature on the relationship between patriarchal norms and upward social mobility (see Still 2014:5-7). The South Asian model of caste-based social mobility follows a thesis of 'sanskritisation', wherein the respectability of lower caste women depends on the ability of their husbands to protect their sexuality from the advances of upper caste men.[30] Therein, upwardly mobile lower caste or tribal women mimic the values of upper caste women - adopting *purdah* (seclusion)*,* restricting mobility beyond the household and retreating from waged of agricultural work. Such literature highlights the inverse relationship between upward social mobility and female sexual liberation, or 'empowerment'. Indeed, scholars have argued that the intensification of capitalism in India has only made patriarchal structures of marriage, domesticity and honour stronger and more flexible - particularly for low caste or tribal groups (Still 2014, Moodie 2015, Parry 2001).

Maria Mies argues that this is no accident. Mies contends that under equal conditions of domestic labour in the household in India, capitalism could not have developed the way it did. Women's productive labour is thus mystified by their role as housewives, and such production does not upset the patriarchal reproduction relations within the family (1982:197). Women cannot improve their own personal status, or afford to reproduce themselves, thus they remain dependent on their husbands. Their husbands are free to increase their own class status, because productive and reproductive work is done by their wives.

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[30] Upper caste women are the most constrained by patriarchal norms, limited in their mobility and unable to work. Often represented in *purdah* or seclusion, these women bear the burden of their sexual chastity to maintain the honour of their families and to bare a legitimate heir for the family's transmission of property. By contrast, lower caste and tribal women who are more likely to work are relatively 'free' both in their mobility and their sexual relationships. Their inherent lack of *izzat* leaves them exposed to the sexual advances of higher caste men.

As such, Mies contends, any rise in class status of men is dependent on the domestication of women. She elaborates how this model fits into the caste hierarchy, wherein women of high caste, and/or high class are able to remain fully 'domesticated' - wherein their reproductive work remains unacknowledged and undervalued, but nevertheless the role is desirable. Women of low caste, tribal and/or class status are often unable to be 'true' housewives and therefore remain 'semi-domesticated' - compromising their respectability. Mies calls this process 'housewification';

> A process by which women are socially defined as housewives, dependent for their sustenance on the income of a husband, irrespective of whether they are de facto housewives or not. The social definition of women as housewives is the counter part of the social definition of men as breadwinners, irrespective of their actual contribution to the family's subsistence (1982: 200).[31]

Returning to Aunty's domestic network through the lens of 'housewification', we can draw a comparison between the figures of Aunty and Sonam. Aunty might be seen as the 'pure' housewife. Aunty spends most of her time sitting on the balcony overlooking the courtyard. She does minimal domestic work but runs a tight household with significant expectations of her daughter, Priya. Aunty adopts the bodily motility of a modest woman, she only leaves the house to walk the dog around the hamlet, she keeps *ghungat* (veiling) in front of her husband's male relatives. She is careful to show her deference to him in decision making, she will always serve and watch him eat from his copper bowl, before serving her own plastic bowl. Aunty is envied by the other women of the village, many whispered to me that she keeps to herself - she doesn't drink, dance or laugh with the other women. As we will see in Chapter 4, Priya does the bulk of the domestic work in the household, and also stitches clothes for 50 rupees a piece for a tailor up the road. She has a number of beauty clients who visit her house for eyebrow threading or pedicures. Her work is endless and backbreaking, though it is counted only as 'housework' by her family. Uncle is proud that his daughter is earning but would only let her earn to contribute to the family communal coffers. She doesn't keep any of her income for herself. Sonam, by contrast, does not have the luxury of being a 'pure' housewife, or even working from the home. Her husband's, now insecure, labour in the slate mines leaves her without a choice but to work as a domestic worker in the houses of others and as an *anganwadi* worker. She complains about the burden of doing this work, seeing it as undesirable. Her daughters are also made to work for the family, in the houses of rich foreigners and doing MNREGA[32] labour, where they have to travel (relatively) long distances on

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[31] She goes on to argue: The conceptualisation of women as housewives and of men as breadwinners is based on the erroneous assumption, shared by Marxists and non-Marxists, that capitalism will develop the productivity of labour to such an extent that the reproduction costs of all workers will be covered by the male wage. It is obvious that the income of the vast majority of men in underdeveloped countries does not cover these costs and that their own reproduction depends largely on the hidden subsistence of their women. The propagation of this conceptualisation in under-developed countries and the building up of legal and institutional frameworks to support it has the effect of creating the illusion among people that 'development' will eventually give all men a wage sufficient to keep an unlearning housewife. It leads to defining the bulk of women's subsistence work as non-work and hence to unrestricted exploitation (1982:200).

[32] MNREGA is a government employment scheme which provides social security by guaranteeing a minimum of 100 days paid work per year to all the families whose adult members opt for unskilled labour-intensive work. It is taken up mostly by women in the Gaddi community.

public transport. As a result of both their unstable income and lack of respectability, Sonam and her family occupy a lower-class position. Sonam feels she could be a better mother, a better wife, if she didn't have to work for a wage, though the wage does provide her with value to her husband and affines.

Within the paradigm of women's waged work, there are also gradients of desirability. Indeed, the work of respectability is as much about creating distinctions within the community as they are about external perceptions (Moodie 2015:80). Working in a government role is fairly desirable because of its security and adequate remuneration - being an *anganwadi* or ASHA worker, MNREGA work. Except for women from the Brahmin caste, very few women above the age of 35 have completed secondary school, with many only studying to third of fifth class. Hence, illiteracy means very few women are able to work in the better paid formal, government positions. Doing domestic work in the house of a foreigner or at an institution such as an NGO or hotel is acceptable, dependent on how far one has to travel and if one is exposed to potential sexual harassment. Indeed, the further one works from the home, the more this breeches respectability such that women who work in Dharmsala or Palampur, for instance, are subject to significant gossip, speculation and surveillance. Very few women from extremely poor families engage in construction work, like Loku. Indeed, even if women's work is productive and contributes to household income, it is devalued precisely because it breeches the norms of respectability. As such women who are unable to depend on their husbands as breadwinners must manage waged productive work and work to maintaining the *izzat* of their household.[33]

By contrast, unpaid housework *is* valued - where women are able to maintain a coherent status as housewife, and successfully reproduce their household, like Aunty, cite feelings of wellbeing (*aacha lagta*) at times where the *mahaul* in the household is peaceful (*shanth*), everyone is well-fed and content (*kush*). This picture, the evident dignity and value of housework as opposed to waged work is significantly more complex than Mies' notion of housework as only exploitative, alienating drudgery. Where does this value come from? Here we must pay attention to the ways in which women imagine the housewife. I will show that this fantasy does not imply a kind of false consciousness, but allows them to scale up from house, to tribe and nation.

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[33] Feminist anthropologists have added nuanced cases to this ethnographic record, highlighting that the terms 'better' and 'worse' off must be excavated and seen through the eyes of their informants. As Judith Heyer (2014) found in her study of rural Tamil Nadu, the quality and quantity of work beyond the house affect levels of autonomy; when work is menial, exploitative and poorly renumerated, it is exploitative overall. Deshpande suggests that women make various trade-offs between 'material wellbeing' and 'autonomy and mobility' (2011: 108), such that they do not move 'up' or 'down but rather their situation is changed: they face new constraints at the point that they are freed from others (Still 2014:8).

Figure 3.4: A Hali man is keen to show me his photograph taken in a traditionally Gaddi scene.

House, Tribe, Nation

The ideal respectable household was a household that was free of *tension*. A woman who was free of *tension* was she who was able to keep her household *saaf* (clean). Keeping the household clean was both about maintaining a beautiful place through housework, and about maintaining smooth relationships within that household. A *saaf* house was one without violence (*larai*), as much as it was one without dirt. An ideal housewife could achieve such cleanliness through devotion to her household and family, as she did not have to work because her husband provided for her through his government, military or entrepreneurial work. His job was stable enough to weather the waxing and waning of personal adversities like sickness. She had a loving, romantic relationship with her husband, that would stand the test of time. Her husband was not an alcoholic and was not violent with her. They lived in a concrete house and had to engage only in minimal subsistence agriculture which she saw as her responsibility and called 'housework' (*ghar ka kam*). She did not need to keep a cow, or goats. Her house was well equipped with necessary items, utensils and electric appliances; it was also well decorated with smooth tiled floors and corniced ceilings, and well-kept with flowers in the courtyard, swept daily. They cared for their extended family, but ultimately lived in a nuclear household such that the demands placed on her were first and foremost from her own children. She was able to send her children to private school and pay for private medical care. It was not necessary for her to have many children, but she did have to have a boy soon after she married. She wore signs of her marriage - vermillion in her hair, bangles and a nose ring - she did not stray unnecessarily from the household but

was there always when she was needed by her husband or in-laws. Her demeanour was affable and caring, she smiled widely and was kind to visitors, but was not too friendly to strangers, she made her limits clear by veiling (*ghungat*) in front of her husband's male relatives. She dressed up in a silk suit and applied red lipstick to attend family functions. Each year she will perform the rites of *karwa chauth*, praying for her husband's good health and happiness. When asked what her profession is, she waves her hand - 'housewife' - she uses the English word.

For Gaddi women today, being able to stay at home - to invest in the aesthetics and poetics of home making - is a personal and dignifying project of upward mobility (Moodie 2015) that is central to the collective aspiration for inclusion for all Gaddi people in a national Hindu imaginary (Kapila 2008). The woman's role in the project of national inclusion is well established in the literature on Hindu femininity. Indeed, the role of the Hindu housewife has historically been central to the Indian national imaginary. As Sarkar (2001) points out, the management of the Hindu home by the Hindu mother was the primal scene for the generation of a respectable Hindu nation. The organising principle of this household is the absolute and unconditional chastity of the Hindu wife, so much so that her commitment to the conjugal order is bound the system together. Amongst the Gaddis, the project of national inclusion is increasingly framed by Hindu nationalist politics. The ideal of the militarised, assertive Hindu male (Sen 2018) is refracted through the struggle for wealth accumulation and national inclusion for Gaddi men. The most explicit manifestation of this Hindu nationalist masculinity was in party politics, where Gaddi men from the Brahmin and Rajput castes, aligned themselves to the BJP as a means of differentiating themselves from low caste, Congress voting Hali and Sipi Gaddis. However, there was a sense by which this Hindutva extended beyond party politics, that crystallised around the figure of Narendra Modi. "I hate politics" one young Gaddi Rajput interlocutor, Mintu, told me in English;

> [B]ut Modi, he is above politics, he is not a politician. He has been the only one to get things done in our country. If he doesn't win the next election, he has told us, he will just leave his post quietly and walk. He will walk all over India, visiting its people and enjoying its diversity.

For Mintu and many other Gaddi men, Modi was a gateway into a new India. An India where he was a citizen, with a bank account and an Adhaar card, but also an entrepreneur able to seek his own wealth, pursue his own ventures with dignity and honesty. For Mintu, it seemed, in this India even his class, his tribe, could benefit from a shared national vision. Mintu saw the promise of Modi as directly at odds with the shame that his father and uncles brought to him, their lack of literacy and habitual alcohol use. Yet the sexual politics that underpinned this hegemonic masculinity across castes was not only based on ideals of male virility. Drawing often on the ideal of Shiva as ascetic, Gaddi men would point to the necessity of sexual control, where mental and physical strength is drawn from the retention of the seed (Doniger 1981). This resonated with their image of Modi as a celibate *sadhu*-like figure, committed to restoring the dignity of the nation for the common man, and uninterested in personal accumulation.

In the present turn to Hindu nationalist politics, the role of woman as housewife is even further reified, and dovetails with post-colonial aspirations of civilisational flourishing in both Gaddi and pan-Hindu culture. Women enter into the masculinist environment of Hindutva through the roles of the heroic mother, the chaste wife or the celibate warrior (Banerjee 2006). In the ideal of the housewife, these first two ideals combine as the woman's body becomes a site of national and familial honour or *izzat*, and her chastity and virtuosity becomes the condition of both familial *and* national thriving. This ideal might be said to work as an intersubjective fantasy (Gammeltoft 2014b, Lacan 2006) that recasts the personal symbols of that woman and her body (Obeysekere 1981), and the fluid signs of the Gaddi household (Daniel 1984, Moore 2007) around a particular constellation of identity that allows women to imagine new forms of belonging within the nation.

Indeed, the very purity of the woman's body, not only her abstinence from extra-marital sexuality, but her careful performance of chaste femininity is part of the work of national striving. This is particularly acute for tribal women, who were previously considered sexually 'wild' (Skaria 1997b). The embrace of lifelong marriage and conjugality is an inherent part of the female role in a collective aspirational pursuit of indigenous dignity and upward mobility (Moodie 2015:79).[34] Moodie contends;

> For women who have been excluded from national images of the good Indian woman, the shift to housewifery marks an important step toward domesticity. To see this domesticity celebrated… makes daily life more meaningful. Domesticity is a marker of freedom… not a cage from which one must seek release, but a space of security and freedom from worry (2015:90-91).

In this discourse, her modesty is inseparable from her biological role in producing the nation. One male interlocutor explained;

> People used to come to India and see poverty in the streets. Now they see wealth and opportunity. They all want to come here. Soon we will overtake those people in the west. They don't even have wives who will have children, so they won't be able to reproduce themselves.

Indeed, women in the Gaddi community also bought into Modi's promises – "with democracy like this all women can do what they want, no-one will say anything" one Gaddi woman told me. We can see that the ideal housewife is often a military wife, where the gendered division between masculine public and feminine domestic sphere presents an opportunity particularly for low caste and tribal women to reframe their subjectivity. Indeed, Hindu nationalism offered a particular vision of empowered femininity for Gaddi women that was embodied in the ideal of the housewife. The appeal to this status came through as much through self-care, household management and consumerist culture – products women chose to buy and television soaps that they watched daily – as it did through direct support of the BJP (Longkumar 2018, Donner 2008, Dickey 2000). The inability to obtain such status, to produce a respectable household, is conceived not only as a failure on the part of a mother to her child, or a wife

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[34] Indeed, the Gaddi case parallels case studies of the Satnamis in Bhilai from Parry (2001, 2020), and Bhils in Rajasthan from Moodie (2015) and dalits in Andhra Pradesh from Still (2014) and Kapadia (1995); the accrual of economic status leads to tighter management of female sexuality. Indeed, the 'conversion device' by which economic status is converted into prestige or social value - in this case *izzat* - is through particular norms of femininity.

to her husband, but a failure to the communal or national project. Such women are conceived as an 'enemy within', and their moral impurity is viewed and experienced as bodily impurity (Sen 2018).

The representation of women as devoted Hindu housewives is also enfolded in the representation of women in India's economic liberalisation. The emphasis on women's empowerment policies through financial inclusion has rendered visible women's committed care work, but also cemented her role as a housewife. Being part of the burgeoning Indian middle class is contingent on access to these financial inclusion streams of credit for many communities, including the Gaddis. In microfinance, a woman's commitment to her family and fear of gossip is exploited as an asset to induce swift loan repayment and disciplined spending (Kar 2018a, Moodie 2013, Schuster 2015). In women's banking, women are offered opportunities to contribute to household income without promoting their role in household decision making (Kar 2018b). As Sohini Kar shows us, women as housewives are offered;

> precautious empowerment, or empowerment that contains or manages social and political risk rather than promoting structural change. Access to credit can become a way to secure and sustain the physical and spiritual security of the gendered domestic sphere rather than challenging the masculine public (2018b: 310).

In sum, the collective aspiration for upward social mobility is simultaneously an aspiration for middle class status, and inclusion in a national Hindu imaginary. It involves shedding the reputation that Gaddis have of 'backwardness', mysticism and provinciality. For Gaddi Rajputs, this involves the double burden of aspiration for upper class status, and the resignification of 'Gaddiness' according to Hindu norms of respectability. For Gaddi Halis, Dogris and Sipis, this involves the triple burden of class aspiration, proving their inclusion as Gaddi tribal people despite their lack of connection to pastoralism, *and* resignifying their lower caste status. This project is built on and through the fantasy of the Hindu housewife, through her dignified work of boundary making around the house and through her chaste, unpolluted body. Through this fantasy, ideas of Hindutva enshrine the value of domestic work, and provide a route by which it might be scaled up to national and divine cosmologies, reconnecting this household with an imagined public sphere of shared Hindu worship.

Figure 3.5: A Gaddi housewife dressed in nuāncarī for a wedding.

IV | Ghar ki Tension

It is against this backdrop that the embodied experience of *ghar ki tension* must be read. In this section, I will show how *ghar ki tension* works as a partially normalised, subordinate discourse by which women express their struggles to maintain the respectable household. But first, let us return finally to the story of Seema, and her sister-in-law Sanjana.

Seema and Sanjana

Seema was married to the eldest son of an upper-caste Gaddi family who had given up shepherding some time ago. Her husband's father was a slate miner, but her husband had great prospects as the eldest of three sons. After they married in in 1996, he went to Delhi to work in a 'private company'. From when she was very young, she had to make decisions for the household, but she was proud of her husband earning for the family. She had two sons quickly after she was married, who are now completing school and college respectively. She and her husband built a beautiful concrete house, with a slate-paved courtyard lined by flowers that she tended regularly. They rented out their lower floor, supplementing the income that her husband remitted, such that her sons could be educated privately. Yet, as we will come to shortly, Seema's fortune had shifted as her husband's health waned and her ability to sustain her household waned with it. Seema looked longingly at her sister-in-law Sanjana, whom she considered an ideal housewife.

Sanjana was like a number of 'housewives' across caste groups in the village, mostly wives of successful military men, or men who have secured government postings in Dharamshala or Kangra. Holding a good position, Sanjana's husband's income exceeded that of his brothers, allowing him to build a beautiful concrete cottage that sat amidst the fields just in from the road. Unlike Seema's house, which had begun to crumble and chip after ever monsoon, Sanjana's house was painted a pale peach. Its floors were not cold moulding concrete, but tiled and shiny. Their toilet was connected to the house, and their ceilings were fitted with elaborate cornices. Indeed, Sanjana embodied the ideal of the Gaddi housewife. She was stocky, with a broad, pretty face and long hair that she combed incessantly. She was warm and open, but quick and smart, she wasn't letting us into anything. She listened intently, and spoke a very clear Hindi, not the Gaddi twang that her sister fell into. Her *maike* (natal home) is in a popular tourist spot, frequented by foreigners. She told me this proudly, shooting me a knowing glace that said this place is so different, so backward. I asked her what she does on a normal day, she told me that her day revolves around her kids. She sends them to school, makes their tiffin. She does the housework, makes the daily meal. "This takes my whole day" she smiled. "And you watch TV", her young son who hung off her chair mentioned. "And TV" she repeated and laughed. She told me her favourite shows were popular Hindi serials. Sanjana proudly told me that she doesn't have *tension* like the women of this village. "Gents drink a lot here" she told me;

> [T]here is a lot of violence against women here. Women have to cope with all of these problems. Where men don't drink, like in my house, they don't lay a hand on ladies. In this place, women aren't strong and assertive… People here talk a lot, particularly about women, people in this place aren't open minded.

Seema had an ambivalent relationship to her sister-in-law, both envious and respectful. Seema was content until two years ago when her husband began to have pains in his leg and hip. He had to give up work in Delhi, and for the first time came back to live in their house permanently. He started to drink, going to the tea stall by the school. What began as a habit (*adat*), driven by boredom and frustration, became an addiction. Their wealth waned, and Seema was forced to find ways of making money. She negotiated with a neighbour to take care of their fields of wheat and corn. She would get half the crop that she could sell. She also began a milk business with her cow, selling to foreign neighbours. When I met her that blistering May day, Seema explained that the root of her problem is that she has to both earn and care for the crumbling household. "When my husband was ok then it was ok" she said. "When he did a job and when we made the house, then we used to joke around. The problem is that my husband can't work and the burden [of earning and making household decisions] has come to me. Now the pressure has come to me." She began to cry.

> I am the one who has to make the decisions. I have *ghar ki tension*. My husband is always drinking, there is so much fighting [in this house]. There is always *tension* when I try to go to sleep, I think of the wheat, if it is outside will it get wet? Because all of the financial decisions are mine.

But Seema doesn't only worry about her own household, but how her household is seen by others. She feels ashamed by the financial and relational struggles in her house, by their lack of security, and upward immobility – "I just have one house, and other people have done so well compared to us, they have three or four houses, and we just have one house." Holding these responsibilities puts her in a state of constant anxiety that infused the atmosphere of her house, and the relationships it held – "The *tension* I have is about my children, what will they do, what will they study, I have *ghar ki tension*." She repeated. It becomes bad when there is so much *hallah* (commotion) in the house. Such a state was experienced bodily. "Then the result [of all this tension] is that you get all sorts of other illnesses."

Indeed, she has been pushed to the brink – "When I have so much tension, I feel like just eating something and dying [laughs nervously], but then I picture my children there and I think who will look after them?" Seema knows she needs social support, but fears a loss of face, especially to her sister-in-law – "So you must share. But I don't like to share with anybody, I don't like to tell what is happening in my house, then they will talk. Also, everyone has their own tension, *apne ghar apne tension* (to each their house, to each their worries)." Seema worried that if others knew too much about her house, they would become jealous. Then they might be tempted to curse her with *opara*. She told me that her neighbours had already cursed her goats and her sheep, making them sick and even causing death. She had recently felt "*ghavraat* – my heart going tuk tuk". This is the feeling one gets when one has been cursed by black magic.

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To experience *ghar ki tension* was considered normal, even expected, for Gaddi married women, though it was never a desirable state. It was neither framed according to a logic of victimisation or sacrifice used to re-value their suffering;[35] nor was it used directly or functionally to blame one's husband, children or relatives for disruption. Like in the case of Seema, narratives of *ghar ki tension* often began with a happy marriage. A familiar chain of events followed - a sick family member, a lost job, decreasing household income, putting pressure on their husband, pushing him to drink and shirk his responsibility as a breadwinner, bringing shame to the household, sometimes becoming abusive. However, women's stress was not just about not having enough money to cover household expenses. Women wanted to be housewives, to not have to do waged or agricultural work, and to depend on their husbands as breadwinners. However, only men in a few formal jobs were securely able to bring in a household income. Most men did precarious informal jobs. Alcoholism was common, driven by the stress of financial insecurity and the shame of not being able to provide for their families. Their wives were left with the double burden of working for money and caring for the household. Such responsibility was exacerbated by the feelings of shame they felt for living in poverty relative to their kin or neighbours.

Recent anthropological attention to women's mental distress has shown that, in some conditions, "domestic worlds and inner worlds tend to collapse; household tensions and inner tensions blending into one dense feeling of worry and distress" (Gammeltoft and Oosterhoff 2018:534). In such cases, conditions of distress, otherwise diagnosed as depression or anxiety, neither start or end in the mind or the body of the sufferer (Snell-Rood et al. 2018). Gammeltoft proposes the concept of the 'domestic mood' to designate such assemblages of intersubjective affective states that coalesce in a given household (2018:3). Drawing on Heidegger, the concept allows her to probe a state of tension that Vietnamese women as neither inside nor outside their bodies as they manage pregnancy and childbirth in tense domestic environments. Similarly, g*har ki tension* was not imagined by women as a somatic or mental condition located in the body, but instead it was envisaged as a *mahaul* - a mood or atmosphere that transfused the domestic sphere resulting from disruptions in the web of *maya*.

We can build on the concept of the domestic mood by returning to the deeper mapping of symbolic forms by which women enact and sustain kinship relations – the substances and sentiments that link the woman's body to her household. If a peaceful, balanced household was the expression of a the ethical,

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[35] The valuation of suffering through the logic of sacrifice is discussed in depth in Latin American literature on Catholic femininity, domesticity and distress (see Mayblin 2014, Han 2012). However, such a logic did not emerge from Gaddi emic accounts of *ghar ki tension*, it was more common in expressions of *kamzori* which attempted to render visible the sacrifice of the body in hard work.

aesthetic and relational work of a Gaddi housewife and the product of her chaste, vital body, then an overheated, stressed and anxious body was the expression of an imbalanced household and disrupted relations. Women experienced and expressed *ghar ki tension* through the same symbolic forms through which they imagined the household as vital and potent (Daniel 1984:124). Women like Seema felt the heightened, pressurised conflicts of their household as heightened blood pressure, as their blood became overheated and spoiled with over-thought. They felt the burden of decision making and budget management in their mind as headaches and rumination, rendering their mind permeable to malign influences. They felt the infidelity and lack of sexual attention of their husbands as disrupted menses, or visits from the *jungle raja* at night. They felt a lack of emotional nourishment from their husbands as loss of appetite (Snell-Rood 2015b).

The circumstances in which women did choose to unburden themselves of *ghar ki tension,* as Seema did to me that May afternoon, were illocutionary acts that marked their suffering, and they sought to scale between their disrupted bodies and the disrupted domestic mood. In these instances, cracks in the ideal of the housewife and the project of domesticity formed through an oblique, permissible language that did not directly attribute blame. The dominant Hindu discourse indicated that women's work within the house to build and maintain peace scaled up through the substances and energies of their body to their kin, and on to projects of tribal and national dignity. Yet in these moments of expressing *ghar ki tension*, wherein women went to pieces before me, lamenting the immense pressure sustaining *maya*, these worldly concerns were revealed as illusory. In this sense, *ghar ki tension* worked as an uncanny form that returned to threaten the precarious construction of reality as organised by the fantasy of the housewife (Gammeltoft 2014b, Zizek 2006). In these moments appeared a gap, wherein the expression of *ghar ki tension* indicated not the failure of women to achieve this fantasy but the failure of the fantasy itself (Gammeltoft 2016). It was the plastic, miasmic quality of *ghar ki tension* that made it a permissible form of critique. It was the fact that it was understood through the same flows of kinship and used the same symbolic grammar of vitality, sentiment and substance that made it persuasive (Obeysekere 1981, Kakar 1982, Daniel 1984).

Conclusion

Ghar ki tension did not work to transform women's situations, nor did it elicit radical breaks or changes in the household relations. Instead, it worked as a partially veiled, subordinate discourse that indicated women did not receive the ideal of the housewife without ambivalence (Raheja and Gold 1994). This discourse was not a straightforward act of resistance, but instead alerts us subtly to an alternative moral perspective where women can scale between their bodies, households, tribe and nation, not to reproduce patriarchy, but to express inadequate conditions of intimacy, care and provision. The reality that this condition revealed was not one in which women blamed themselves for their failure to sustain *maya*, but one where its illusory quality became evident, and women saw beyond worldly concerns. In *ghar*

ki tension the Gaddi housewife is able to imagine her reality otherwise and hence holds some part of herself back from the dictates of patriarchal power (Moore 2007:15). It is through this subordinate discourse that she is able to critique inadequate care, disrupted relations in the household and speak to the broader economic inequalities that cut her community and nation.

Interlude | Kirtan

Fieldnotes: August 27th 2018

Today I was incredibly ill, but in the evening, after Anita gave me some amla, I went to a Kirtan being put on by Ritu and her sisters. Ritu came by specifically to invite us. Her mother's sister was also there, she had come from Chamunda with her son Rishu and her daughter. We came by around 6pm, as the sun was just dipping in the sky and traipsed up to the village Kali Mata Mandir that is above their house. It is nestled in the fields overlooking Ritu's house, above the fallow land. All the kids followed us up, with pillows and mats so we could sit on the raw ground. Ritu's daughters brought up a flask of halwa and a big basket of freshly made pooris wrapped in a green cloth that was for *prashad*. We came up and sat in front of the mandir, and Ritu began to light the *diya* in front of the image of Kali Mata. Her middle daughter, whose voice is quite beautiful, began to sing and play the drum. Everyone joined in, especially all the children, and really especially all the girls. They all knew every song. As the sun set, more and more women came to join. Older aunties from in the village, but also women with their babies. Kamla Aunty came, with Sonam and Aparna. When Sonam came, she immediately took over the singing of the songs and playing of drums. The singing lasted about an hour, until it was dark and begun to get cold, and the attention of the children began to fray, and the women had to go back to their duties of making dinner for their husbands.

Chapter 4 | 'Future tension': The potential and risk of investing in adolescent girls

Oh, but we were only little girls, little girls on the cusp of female individuation, not little girls for long.
Claire-Louise Bennett, Pond.

Preface | Rhea

One day, I was shopping in the Dharamshala city market when Rhea called in a panic. I could barely hear her rasping voice over the traffic. I finally calmed her enough to hear her story. Rhea explained that someone had called her mobile phone, someone she didn't know. They had encouraged her to apply for a job in Delhi at one of India's biggest consumer banks. Rhea, having recently finished school and started a course in business administration, had jumped at the chance, for this was precisely what she had been desperate for, a chance to repay her family by getting a job. They interviewed her over the phone and had asked her to scan all her documents and her bank details to a new email - Rhea.v2@gmail.com. She explained that she had followed the instructions vigilantly. A few days later, they had called back to notify her that she had been accepted for the position. She should be ready to make her way to Delhi next month, but first she needed to pay 5000 rupees in uniform fees to a PAYTM account. She asked her mother for the money and they wired it immediately. This had been 5 days ago, and she now hadn't heard from them. She had called the number she had been given repeatedly and sent a deluge of emails to the email account – to no response. When I tentatively explained that I thought she had been scammed, Rhea did not reply.

Rhea and I had become close after she had attended a workshop that I had run with adolescent girls in Ranu. After the workshop, Rhea had lingered behind and tapped me on the shoulder. She explained that her family was struggling, and she needed to take responsibility for them. Rhea's father was a Gaddi upper caste Rajput slate miner. She told me he was also a drunk. He had recently left the family for another woman, after years of abusing her mother. He refused to give her mother any money. Rhea's mother, she explained, was a 'simple' woman, she was uneducated and spent most of her time tending to her cows and small fields. Rhea's mother refused to believe her father would not come back to them. She had no way of making money for the family. To add to this, Rhea's brother was useless, addicted to smoking marijuana and always off on his motorbike doing *time-pass*. Rhea's sister was meant to get married soon, her engagement was fixed, but the marriage could not go ahead until they had enough money for the dowry payments. Rhea told me that the *bojh* (pressure) was placed on her as she had completed high school and had begun the business course at a private college in Dharamshala. Her father had paid for this, and now expected her to start making money for the family. She repeated, she has to help her family, she must support her mother and bring her father back, she must make enough

for her sister's dowry and indeed for her own, for, she said, she owed it to them – they gave her the money for her education and now she was "just sitting at home" doing household chores.

Rhea wanted a job "like those women who dress up in western clothes". When I tried to probe about what kind of job she wanted, she only repeated that she wanted to have a desk and a computer, but not one that would mean she would have to come home too late. Rhea had no guidance or support from her parents, neither from her siblings. She explained that this burden gave her "so much *future tension*". She was always thinking, ruminating, the ideas going around and around in her mind until she felt dizzy, her body ached, and she felt like she had 'high BP'. She explained how she was getting thinner, paler, but, she said, if she got her career right it would all get better. Rhea only repeated again and again that she had so much *future tension* that it was making her sick.

Introduction

Rhea was one of many adolescent girls whose stories of *future tension* came bubbling up during our shared encounters. *Future tension* was a condition expressed by adolescent girls, referring to a set of embodied vulnerabilities that were specific to their positionality in the household and life-course. It was revealed tentatively, privately, an illocutionary act that rendered a shameful kind of suffering visible. This condition involved excessive rumination, insomnia and overwhelming feelings of guilt (see Figure 4.1). Girls were also commonly affected by 'blood problems' - their 'overheated' blood resulted in dizziness, acute abdominal pain and abnormal vaginal discharge (*pani ki problem*) (Rashid 2007b, Trollope-Kumar 2001). *Future tension* also sometimes involved supernatural element where young women reported feelings of uncanny presence that was attributed to *opara* (black magic) and sometimes to attacks of *jadu* (witchcraft). In the worst cases, girls were struck down with random acts of fitting, spirit possession, wanton violence or a particular condition called *dant band* where the adolescent girl would drop to the floor and clench her teeth, such that they had to be prised apart by a crowbar (Marrow 2013). Another friend, Prithi, who was also afflicted by *future tension* explained,

> Teenagers are more vulnerable to these kinds of attacks of *future tension*, they are not protected, and they don't understand. In their body they feel weak and their muscles and joints ache, they don't sleep, they don't speak to other people, everything in their lives is *minus minus* (negative). They go to the doctor, they have *tension* but the doctors are confused because there is nothing wrong with them. So, they go to the *chela* (ritual healer), and sometimes it works sometimes it doesn't.

Rumination, Insomnia, Guilt

High 'BP', Overheated Blood

Abdominal Pain, Vaginal Discharge

Dissociative Episodes, Possession, Black Magic *(opara)*, Witchcraft *(jadu)*
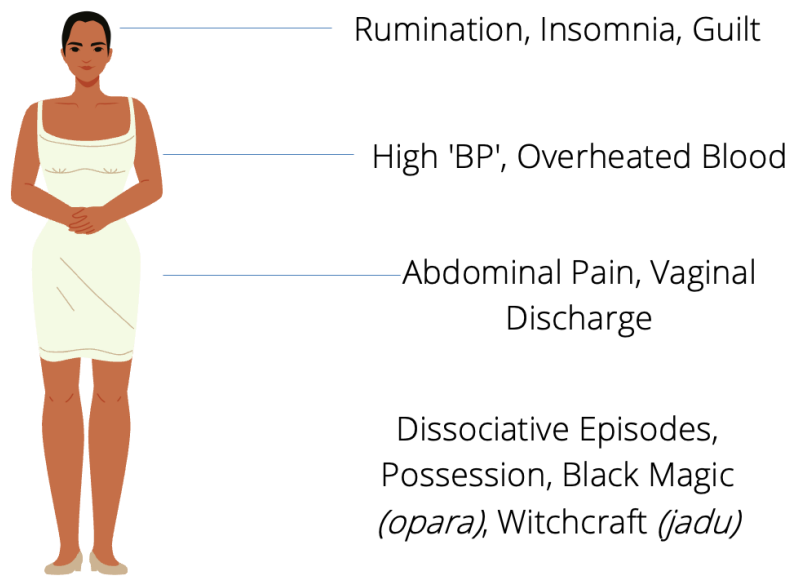
Figure 4.1: Body map of ailments associated with 'future tension'

Most uniquely, the condition of *future tension* was underpinned by a specific temporo-spatial orientation, unlike the nostalgia of their grandmothers, or the looping temporality of their mother's. Overwhelmingly, adolescent girls related their *tension* to a conflict, or dissonance, in time. On one hand, they lived in an eternal present in which they felt inert, stuck in the 'looping' time of domestic chores, they said they were 'doing nothing', just 'sitting at home' after they finished school and waited for their marriage. Spatially, this eternal present was located in the space of the household, nested in the claustrophobic surveillance of the village. On the other hand, they reckoned with a limitless, but fundamentally unknowable, future that they were compelled to participate in by their families in order to earn money and garner prestige. This future was marked by employment and college, by consumer goods and city lights, but not by clear pathways to flourishing. Spatially, the future was located below in the sweeping plains and stretched out to the bright lights of Dharamshala, Delhi, Bombay. At the fulcrum of these opposing tendencies was a sense of immense pressure - girls felt their minds and bodies ripe with both educational and sexual potential that had to be directed, channelled and controlled lest it be lost, and their family's honour lost along with it. As such, *future tension* was simultaneously a register of the value placed on the adolescent girl, and a register of the risk that came with such value. Managing these tendencies required adolescent girls to stretch time - always thinking to a future of employment, marriage, education, while remaining careful to meet the present demands placed on them that came with opportunity.

We can't understand this condition of *future tension* without accounting for the value of the adolescent girl in the contemporary Gaddi domestic economy. Past decades have seen dramatic changes in the

expectations of girls and young women across India, which have been felt acutely by the urbanising and sedenterising Gaddi community. The advent of primary education for all girls was enjoyed by the last generation of women, but today all adolescent girls and young women will attend school to secondary standard. After this, many will go on to college or to seek employment in formal waged jobs, or to work in informal roles in order to contribute income to their families. As such, the age of marriage is significantly later than it was a generation ago, now 24 for a girl and 30 for a boy. The meaning of marriage has also shifted, where a movement from exchange to prestige marriage sees inequality between wife givers and wife takers, and the girl as a gift or *dan.* This kind of marriage is sanctioned by dowry, which is used by the wife giver as a means of attracting a good match in order to reproduce status gains. From the top down, we have also seen government policy move to 'save the girl child, educate the girl child' through a range of financial inclusion policies that aim to increase the value of a girl to her natal family. However, this value is contingent on the control of her sexual behaviour. The interests of her family, the nation and the development agenda converge around the restriction of her sexuality to the conjugal bond and management of the number of children she has.

Indeed, the story that my interlocutors told was one about the changing value of the adolescent girl in their family and community. However, this value is not independent or individual, instead it is her value to the domestic group in the context of patriarchal structures of kinship and hierarchal structures of prestige (Ortner 1981). Where the 'value' of the adolescent girl in the past was linked to her domestic labour power, today it is linked to her role in the accumulation of social and financial capital through education, employment and prestige marriage for upward class mobility (Jeffrey 1976, Kapadia 1995). However, new forms of value for class mobility and employment are not matched by changes to the status of the girl in the household. Instead, they are matched by an increased emphasis on virginity and sexual propriety, an increased need to control the economic and status gains that the girl might bring. Indeed, it allows one to track how patriarchal structures have flexibly adapted to new opportunities allowing the value adolescent girls generate to be domesticated in new ways.

Looking at the changing value of the girl child through the prism of *future tension* allows one to probe the convergence of domestic, market and moral value around questions of women's dignity (Sykes 2013), located in the girl's body. I will argue in this chapter that *future tension* should not be construed only as a means by which girls attempted to resist pressures placed on them, but instead presents a more subtle means of experiencing the control of their bodies and behaviours as they present new risks to the lineage. In this chapter we will begin with an examination of the position of the adolescent girl in the contemporary Gaddi domestic economy and its associated marriage market - with particular analysis of the changing role of education, dowry and financial inclusion policy in shaping the value of the adolescent girl. It will then move on the account for the rise in anxiety around adolescent virginity and sexual propriety, framing sexual control as a means by which new value and investment in adolescent

girls is 'securitised' and domesticated. Finally, it will move to analyse the condition of *future tension* against this backdrop.

Figure 4.2: A girl does her homework before attending to dinner.

I | A New Time for Adolescents

Deepak was already in the courtyard on that hot May afternoon. He lounged lazily on the day bed, propping his head up on a spindly arm. His moustache and nose hairs were neatly trimmed, and his greying hair combed flat on his spotted scalp with mustard oil. He waited for his daughter-in-law to leave her work chopping leaves for her goats, she greeted us, pulling her scarf low over her face. Once we were settled with steaming tea, he checked his gold watch, twisted the gemstone on his middle finger and looked me straight in the eye. "*Dekho* (look)" he said, "I'll tell you". He launched into a monologue that would take us well beyond our allocated meeting time.

> I am speaking about one hundred years ago, now we have had freedom for 70 years. I am 70 or 72 years old. I am talking about things that have happened in my lifetime. Our *purbhaj* (ancestors) were very uneducated and didn't develop themselves. We didn't develop our culture (*sanskriti*). Pahari people, those who lived in mountain areas, they ate simple food and made woollen things to cover themselves. People who lived in the plains in District Kangra or Panjab, grew cotton and sold it to the mill. All Gaddi people made their own woollen clothes. People were uneducated and they had to work to fill their stomachs. There weren't any special government schemes to provide work. But now it is a new scientific age (*bigyanik tarika*) and everyone has left that old lifestyle, and young generation is all studying. Now they are doing learned jobs and they will earn 70-80 thousand [rupees] per month, they will eat, and they buy everything. They will not make their own things. They are forgetting their culture. They depend on others.

The narrative that Deepak told me on that sleepy afternoon was repeated countless times by resigned parents and grandparents. This narrative involved three elements. An acknowledgment of the shift in livelihood from shepherding or slate mining to 'learned jobs'; of the shift in lifestyle from self-sufficiency to consumerist dependence on the capitalist market; and of generational rupture. This time, my interlocutors told me, was a time for young people. For it was only young people who had the opportunity to go to school or college, the skills to use technology and hence to participate in the modern Indian public sphere. This public sphere was inaccessible for elder people, whose way of live was more suitable to the 'simple' old ways. This section will examine the relationship between education, work and marriage that converge around the figure of the adolescent girl in the domestic economy.

Education

The 'new time for young people' was defined by the aggressive promotion of the right to education for all. Though a right to education has been enshrined in the Indian constitution since Independence, it is only since the parallel implementation of affirmative action policies through the Mandal Commission and education policy reform in the 1980s that marginal communities like the Gaddis have been able to access it (Higham and Shah 2013). Indeed, many elder Gaddi shepherding and slate mining families cited educational opportunity as a pull factor for settlement in Kangra in the latter part of the 20th century. As their livelihoods were devalued, the stakes in 'investing' in their children's education increased as a means of investing in their lineage. It was no longer viable for their children to take up the same jobs that they had, and it was only through their children's education that new livelihood opportunities and higher-class status could be obtained. The relative wealth from land assets, particularly for upper caste Gaddis, meant they were able to carve out a new period in their children's

life course devoted to secondary and even tertiary education. All young people today have completed their secondary education to 10th standard, and the majority have completed their +2. The accessibility of free government colleges and now online courses means that young people today often have multiple master's degrees, where their parents are illiterate. It is only by getting a stable or prestigious employment in the military, government service, a corporate business or starting one's own business, that a son or daughter might reproduce and grow the wealth and status of their lineage.

Adolescence, as a new period in the life course, has also been seen as an opportunity for the Indian state to expand its reach. As Nita Kumar (2007) observes, the centralised nature of the education system means that schools and colleges are a key site of nation building. Though this project is not totalising, the school is certainly an important site where young people might 'learn modernity', and their parents might expand the limits of their own lives, imagining the nation through their children. As a result, we might see adolescents as the frontier of the nation state, and the school as the archetypal space where 'wild' or 'backward' tribal people are integrated into the nation and made modern (Froerer 2012). Such an agenda for social welfare is a means of strengthening uniform social citizenship and expanding the popular reach of the state (Harriss 2013, Ruparelia 2013).[36]

Indeed, the push for Education for All included the advent of female literacy. The discrepancy between the literacy of young women and men is negligible today among the Gaddi community. In the village, most women under the age of 30 have completed school to at least 5th standard, but often 10th standard or even +2, where their mothers are largely illiterate. People are proud of these advances. The Sarpanch, head of the village Panchayat (council), told me: "In the last twenty years the literacy rate has exploded. Before the 1990s literacy was a problem for girls because not all families sent their daughters to school." However, the meaning and value of education is mediated by the social and sexual division of labour, thus producing a different experience of schooling for girls and boys (Rao 2010:167). As Peggy Froerer (2012, 2015) observes amongst Adivasi communities of Chhattisgarh central India, the ideology of education as a liberating force does not square well with the everyday realities of marginalised girls and their families. The decision to send a girl to school for Froerer's interlocutors, as in the Gaddi context, was made by the whole family as part of the aspiration for upward social mobility (see also Zaloom

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[36] This logic has been bolstered by the liberal developmentalist state through policy during the Congress era. In 1986, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi introduced reforms to national education policy that aimed to reduce disparities and equalise access. This particularly expanded the reach of public universities, with the opening of the Indira Gandhi National Open University, and the implementation of the 'rural university' model. This was further cemented by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in 1992, who centralised examination. As part of Indian's liberal rights-based 'empowerment' agenda in the 2000s, the Congress government introduced The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, making the enrolment, attendance and completion of schooling of every child under 14 the obligation of the state. Education for All has been promoted by eminent economists as the key to India's 'development'. Working from a liberal 'capacities' model of empowerment, Drèze and Sen (1995) see education as central to the promotion of 'substantive freedoms', such as employment and political liberties, and in social change, enabling people to overcome historical inequalities such as those of caste, class, gender and race.

2019). Froerer highlights how education hence did not translate into substantive benefits in employment or status for girls themselves. Instead, education is seen as a means of obtaining a good match - ideally a boy with a stable income, who was not a drunkard - and a form of training in respectability for the marital home. Further, these status gains are only possible for a family who is able to spare the girl from household chores or petty income generation. As Nieuwenhuys (1993) highlights, increased household labour by girls is often required 'pay' for schooling. Importantly, we see that education is a 'contradictory resource' (Dyson 2019) – more a collective asset of the natal household than an individual asset of the girl herself.

Hence, decisions around girls' education involve a complex calculation between the benefits to the family of an educated bride and the amount of labour that could be spared in the household on one hand, and the risk that education will not lead to economic or status gains and will instead produce an errant daughter on the other. As Gaddi families enter the lower middle class, educating their daughters is often seen as a better investment than educating their sons because girls are both more employable in the time between school and marriage, more obedient, and their educated status improves marriage prospects. As Jeffrey (2010) and Nakassis (2013) also observe elsewhere, sons were seen as 'exterior' to the household and only wanted to do '*time-pass*', they would only go and use their money on their own wives; where daughters are seen as 'interior' to the household, and more likely to care for their parents in their old age, even if they moved away in marriage. Girls from upper class families (often also upper caste), the daughters of men in the military for instance, are able to go to school, even private school or college. The value and meaning of their education was to attract a good match from a family of equal class status. Girls from lower class (often also lower caste), the daughters of slate miners or labourers go to school until 10th or +2, often rushing home or bunking off school to do their household chores, unable to commit to homework. Yet for those in-between, the ability to send at least one daughter to school, perhaps one who shows the greatest propriety, is a means of gaining status - where she might be married into an upper-class family or get a well-paid government job.

Employment

As Deepak observed, this educated young population all wanted *naukri* - government or white-collar jobs. They are part of a generation of educated young men groomed to expect a salaried government job, and the class status and consumer purchasing power that came with it (Jeffrey et al. 2008). However, the withdrawal from agriculture and skilled labour was not met by secure employment opportunity, but instead by widespread unemployment, underemployment and stagnating wages (Parry 2012). Precisely at the point that young people are taught to be modern at school, college, and their aspirations to middle class identity intensify, there has been a decline in real opportunities for white collar employment across India (Fernandes 2006), leading to a culture of aimlessness particularly amongst men (Jeffrey 2010). As the popularity of the military, mining and shepherding has waned in

this generation, those who don't obtain *naukri* are not considered to be a good match (Jeffrey 1976). Young men aspire to be entrepreneurs, taking advantage of loans made cheap by reservations, increased tourist demand and migration opportunities. However, the security of this new range of livelihoods is questionable - meaning most men are reliant on vast caste-based networks of patronage for employment, networks that are crucially not open to women.

As such, many of my interlocutors told me that 'investing' in their daughters has a better logic than investing in sons – where sons only wanted to do '*time-pass*', they didn't have the same respect for their families, and they would only go and use their money on their own wives; where daughters were more likely to care for their parents in their old age, even if they moved away from marriage. In order to exploit the value of the adolescent girl, parents talk of investing in stitching courses and sewing machines, in computer skills courses and laptops, providing capital for small enterprises often in or close to home like beauty parlours or boutiques of hand-stitched *kurtas*. However, girls are expected to pursue education, business and employment while continuing to perform their domestic chores; and staying close to home. The nuclearisation of the family for upwardly mobile Gaddis has indeed shifted the household economy of care. Where in the past young women were encouraged to cut ties with their natal family when they were married, today advances in transport and social media mean they are able to visit and care for their families much more often. Further, the tendency to set up a separate concrete house for a son and his new wife, as opposed to setting up only another hearth in the same mud house, weakens the ties between the couple and his parents. Daughters, even if they are married, are called back to care for their ageing parents and give money in times of need.

Marriage and Dowry
In the past, girls were promised in childhood and stayed with their natal family until the age of 13 or 14, when they would be married, in *atta-satta* or exchange marriage within caste groups, without dowry (Phillimore 1982), and move to live in their marital home. Their value to their natal family was in their domestic labour, that would have to be replaced when they would be married. In the context of exchange marriage that Newell observes in the 1950s, some marriages involved dowry and others involved bride wealth or even bride service, a diversity related to economic status (Newell 1962, Kapila 2004:389). Gifts were contributed by all the guests of the bride's family with whom the family had exchange relationships and were made from the father-in-law to the bride and sometimes her father in secret. In high class marriages, the function of dowry was to provide a form of moveable inheritance to the daughter, a form of safety net as she moved into her marital home (Oldenberg 2002). It was a form of 'women's wealth' or *stridhan* in place of property rights. The result was a general equality in ritual and real status between wife givers and wife takers, as reflected in the equality of affinal relations in the Gaddi kinship system.

However, the past 50 years have seen significant changes in marriage practices – where the average age of marriage has increased by a decade driven by a shift from colonial customary law to the Hindu Marriage Act 1955. By the 1970s, Phillimore observed most marriages were framed by *dan pan* or marriage by gift; a trend that intensified in Kapila's research in the early 2000s, where almost all marriages involved dowry in the form of household goods, bedding and linen and varied in value from Rs 1,000-6,000 depending on the wealth of the family. Her informants were clear that these forms of marriage are thought to be more 'modern' and more in keeping with legal requirements and Hindu precepts.

Today, the meaning of marriage has been further appropriated as a means of gaining status. Upwardly mobile Gaddi families have adopted hypergamous prestige marriage practices – where marriage becomes an opportunity to increase class status *and* cement caste endogamy. In this context, dowry takes on a different meaning. It becomes a means of attracting a good match, a suitor from a family of high-class status. It is often given in the form of a moveable modern and consumerist goods such as cars, blankets or whitegoods. A bride's family is expected to keep sending gifts of jewellery, sweets and other small gifts at least until the birth of the first child. The dowry has become a net for the natal family to catch a good suitor and reproduce a good lineage (Oldenberg 2002, Ortner 1981, Bear 2007); and a means by which the marital family might speculatively extract wealth from the natal family, to control and suppress a new bride. The increased permanence of the conjugal bond and stigmatisation of divorce makes dowry more a demand of the latter than a form of moveable wealth for the former (Kapila 2004). Education is crucial to this system on both sides, an educated bride is desired for an educated groom. Hence, the value of women's education becomes the ability to attract a good match; and the employment becomes a means by which she can contribute to her own dowry. As such, gathering this dowry is a great strain on family resources in the speculative expectation of flows of resources from the bride's natal family and a source of great complaint from the marital family. On both sides, this strain falls on the bride herself.

II | Invest in a Girl

Yet there is one more missing piece of the puzzle that makes the experience of the adolescent girl particular in the present moment. My interlocutors spoke constantly about all the work that the government was doing for girls. Indeed, the position of the adolescent girl in the Gaddi domestic economy is underwritten by the increased value of the 'girl child' in Indian women's empowerment policy that filters down through local government and NGO efforts. For example, the launch of the 'Beti Bachao, Beti Pradhao' (BBBP) – 'Save the girl-child, Educate the girl-child' program in 2014, promotes the increased 'value' of the 'girl-child' in the household through a suite of education, awareness raising and financial inclusion policies that aim to prevent sex-selective abortion and encourage families to send their daughters to school. One of the most interesting policies is the Sukhaya

Samriddhi Yojana, an initiative that encourages families to set up a bank account for their daughters before the age of 10 years, where payments made by the family will be matched by an 8.5% interest rate provided by the government. The account remains open for 21 years from establishment, 50% can be withdrawn after the age of 18 for higher education expenses, and the full amount can be withdrawn by the family when the girl gets married. Critically, this kind of financialised 'empowerment' policy is aimed at changing the cultural attitudes of families toward their daughters by increasing their financial value.[37]

These kinds of policies to 'invest in the girl' are part of a global economic agenda that sees educated girls as yielding a higher rate of return than other forms of investment in the developing world. The shift in the subject of development policy from the worker or consumer to the 'entrepreneur' sees, in Michelle Murphy's words;

> [T]he 'Third World girl' becomes the iconic vessel of human capital. Thoroughly heterosexualized, her rates of return are dependent on her forecasted compliance with expectations to serve family, to adhere to heterosexual propriety, to study hard, to be optimistic, and hence her ability to be thoroughly 'girled'" (2017: 117).

These novel Indian policies see young women as assets to the household not only through their labour power, like older policies of MNREGA; or through the need to control directly her reproductive decisions like in the Anganwadi and Asha programs. Instead, they see the abstract figure of the adolescent girl as an entrepreneurial asset to both the domestic and national economy. This is manifest both in opportunities given by the government to integrate women into the workforce to generate economic value; and in the need to put cash into the hands of their household in order to increase its consumption power.

Here we see that the condition of the investment in a girl - her education and her entrepreneurial potential - is her compliance with the gendered expectations of her family and community. These policies are aimed not at providing her with decision making power independent from her family, but at increasing her value to the household as a whole. Indeed, they exploit the expectation placed on young women to remain obedient to the decisions made by her father, and to absorb caring labour in the household so that value she accumulates might be channelled back into the household. The move to invest in daughters is unmatched by a logic of independence, and any idea of women's empowerment is not an assumption of individual flourishing. Instead, as anthropologists studying women's microfinance have found (Schuster 2015, Lazar 2004, Kar 2018a, Huang 2020), the very foundation of neoliberal empowerment policy is this gendered, radically relational subject. Young Gaddi women see themselves as implicated in constitutive intimate relations to whom they are accountable (Strathern

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[37] The Modi government has launched a number of social media campaigns to bolster the image of the daughter as an asset to the family. In September 2019, he launched the #BharatkiLaxmi campaign, mobilising the image of Laxmi, the Hindu goddess of wealth and prosperity, to 'honour' the financial value of the 'girl-child' to the family.

2004). Envisaging a future for themselves did not involve cutting themselves off from these networks, but finding a way to improve the comfort, security and wellbeing of those in both their natal and future marital homes. As one young woman told me, "there's no such thing as independence. It's more important to have a good husband than to have individual freedom." Yet, as we will soon see, these girls cannot be reduced to either calculating or suffering subjects, but instead live somewhere in between, speculating, anticipating, aspiring to an uncertain future.

Figure 4.3: A young girl stands before a wall of 'trees of life' made during an adolescent workshop.

III | Potential, Risk and Security

Young women, as they become sites of entrepreneurial activity and investment, also become sites of risk to the lineage that must be controlled (Donner 2017). As Madhok and Rai argue:

> Risk is the inherent danger that dwells in the moments of transgression of these social relations; it disciplines agents and attaches itself to defiant bodies and social spaces where acts of defiance are performed (2012:545).

Culturally, such risk is framed as her *shakti* – her sexualised power to create or destroy the lineage and its *izzat*. Her *shakti*, contained in her body and especially in its substances of blood and vaginal fluids, must be controlled and domesticated through a learned set of bodily dispositions and skills acquired through both positive engagement and the threat of punishment if the woman innovates too far from the norm (Ram 2012a, Lambert 1997). The particular changes in Gaddi kinship and marriage systems have worked to amplify the 'riskiness' of the adolescent girl in the present moment. In the past, girls were promised in early childhood, before being married when they reached puberty.[38] Today, due to the illegality of child marriage, the engagement and marriage rituals are performed in the same period, opening up a period of adolescence wherein she might go to school her sexuality must be controlled (Still 2014). During this period, the adolescent girl's body is described as hot and open (*khola*). She is vulnerable to the intrusion of the sexualised gaze of men from other communities, as she is to the intrusion of supernatural forces. It is for this reason that adolescent girls are often the subject of attacks of *opara* and *jadu*, they absorb a curse that is directed at the whole family as they are like the 'weak spot' in the family's constellation of honour or *izzat*. During this period, it is of even greater importance that the adolescent girls' body, movements and behaviours are controlled and surveilled in order to maintain her chastity. Indeed, this potential is particularly acute in the period of adolescence between school and marriage. In Deepak's words;

> In the new generation, the [mental] changes that have happened to girls have been caused by the control of society. We and our society try to control them and put pressure (*bojh*), because they aren't able to live like we did in the old times. We want them to live with *izzat*. We lived like that because we feared our parents and respected them. In those times, people were very uneducated and respected each other. When they are all educated, they become more cunning (*chalak*). Girls particularly, they want their own things. Now girls are all out of our hands. But if we're not able to give them those things, then they'll run away. They think, if they live like us then they will become *dafar* (useless, idiots). If they live in their own way, then we'll become *dafar*.

As she becomes more educationally and economically independent, virginity and sexual chastity become important means by which the family maintains control over her decisions and domesticates her value. Indeed, the amplification of women's social vulnerability and the absorption of both risk and social reproductive responsibility, is precisely a condition for the creation of her value (Moodie 2013). For if the girl does not comply with the expectations of the domestic group, their potential for reproducing gains in status is lost. Such loss might occur though the allegations of pre-martial sex, elopement, inter-caste marriage, or marriage with someone from a lower class. As such, young women must now engage in intensive 'relational work' (Zelizer 2012) to navigate the competing models of

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[38] The case for women over the age of 50

expectation thrust on them in order to fend off allegations of deviance or impropriety (Huang 2017, 2018).

As Sohini Kar (2018b) puts it, control over sexuality becomes a means by which the investment in the woman is *securitised*. Here I draw on her playful use of financialised metaphors that foreground the slippage between the girl's economic and sexual value in the intimate domestic and national economy. Adolescent girls are permitted to generate economic value for their families, allowed the freedoms this necessitates, so long as they stay within the terms of the investment, terms securitised by their honour, or *izzat*. So, we see an adolescent girl whose family has invested in her education – first, acutely burdened by the responsibility to channel return from this investment back to her family. And second, acutely aware of the risk of such endeavours lest she step too far. My interlocutors told me stories of the risk they undertook in working in Dharamshala, travelling to and from college; where parents, teachers and news media blared spectacular stories of girls who went too far - found raped on buses, kidnapped in taxis, abandoned by boyfriends, sold into sex-slavery in Goa. Through the gendered value of *izzat*, the economic risk of investment is transferred to the hot and open body of the adolescent girl. Spectacular instances of sexual violence at local and national level become the means by which the adolescent girl as a 'risky' subject is imprinted in the popular imagination, defining the limits of their freedom and the consequences of stepping too far (Bumiller 2008, Baxi 2014a, 2014b). Managing gendered risk is necessary to buttress and reproduce the lineage, while also exploiting the potential economic value she can create (Bear 2007).

IV | Three Young Women

In this context, how does the adolescent girl herself reckon the future? It is here that we see inequalities of class and caste playing out - where some have the skills and ability to act on their potential more than others. Let us see how these constellations of education, employment, marriage and sexuality play out in the domestic economy by turning to the cases of three cousins from Uncle's a low caste Hali family whom we met in the last chapter – his daughter Priya, and nieces Divya and Vaani. We can pay attention to the relative emphasis placed on marriage compared to employment as related to the class positionality of their parents.

Priya

Before I even awoke each morning, 20-year-old Priya had already mixed and pounded the dough for the breakfast *roti* (bread), rolled it into oiled golf balls, and lit the fire in the mud kitchen that sat adjacent to my room. Usually, I rose to come and sit with her as her chapped hands rolled the balls into flat discs and placed them on the *tawa* (cooking plate) in quick succession. Priya didn't sing like some of the elder women did when they made *roti*, sometimes she had a Bollywood or Gaddi song playing from the

phone, checking her Whatsapp messages from her cousins or school friends. But she kept her eyes darting from the rolling pin to the fire.

After her morning kitchen duties, Priya went down to the cow shed where she milked Calli and her mahogany calf, before taking them out to graze in the pastures by the river. Perched on a great boulder by the riverbank, she would untie her scarf and let her hair out to dry in the sun. She bought down a pink comb, which she would run through it, thick and luscious, her small vanity. Her hair that seemed to belong to someone else, someone with more time. Soon it was time to come back up for lunch, which she dutifully prepared and served. She herself always ate quickly, sitting on her haunches and shovelling rice into her mouth, unlike her father who ate slowly, ceremoniously from the copper plate. Priya would leave when she had finish eating and take up her place on the enclosed veranda behind her sewing machine, for she had orders to complete for her *Masterji* - the tailor who gave piecework to her and other young unmarried girls in the hamlet. The click and whirr of the sewing machine marked the sleepy afternoons, while her mother bundled herself up in on the *manjee* (daybed), scraps of fabric littering the granite floor. She kept her orders neatly in in an accounting book, that she kept in an old biscuit tin in the wardrobe. Her work was halted sometimes by a passing client, who came to have her eyebrows threaded or her feet massaged, for Priya also ran a small beauty parlour from her front room. The money she generated from the enterprises was fed back to her father, for he told me, he has instalments that he must pay at the beginning of every month for the new scooty he has bought, for the loan he took out to build the new storey that he rents out. Priya had a role to play in this debt repayment.

Priya's beauty skills were exceptional, her head bobbed as she threaded and shaped. Some time ago, she was an apprentice at a parlour at the bottom of the Ranu road, until fears about her having to travel the 20 minutes along the road, alone, were too much for her father. Anyway, there were too many visitors for her parents now, they needed someone to make the tea and serve biscuits. Her elder brother, currently working in Delhi in an NGO was meeting suitors. These visitors criss-crossed the village after the monsoon. With their handbags tucked ceremoniously under their arms, and their scarves wrapped modestly, they begin journeys by on foot up the hillsides, or by bus across the valley to visit their natal homes, the homes of friends, potential suitors or sick relatives. In this time, marriages are fixed. Good matches between college going girls and boys who have passed their government service exams. Bad matches too between families of slate miners, labourers, extra girls, mouths to feed, who need to be offloaded to another's household, another pair of hands to wash the dishes and care for the children. Quick matches, hastily made in secret between lovers still in their teens, relations that have begun with harmless text messages on Facebook, or wayward looks at weddings and have left both parties tainted, shame, and their families to tie up the mess.

Priya's would also be a good match, as her family was uniquely wealthy for their low caste status. In order to maintain this wealth and the status it brought, it was critical that Priya marry up - to a respectable family, even from a higher caste. Priya's +2 education, good grades, her demure looks, and capacity for hard work would mean such a match was feasible, so long as she was not caught between now and then by the winds of romance. Uncle would not have this. He was not, he said, like his brothers and neighbours who were all slate miners. He taught his children, and particularly his daughters *izzat*. Priya eventually confided in me, at the end of her day as we curled up watching soap operas, that she would have liked to be a nurse, that she would have liked to go to college in Dharamshala like her cousin. She shrugged, "I am not a city girl".

Priya's daily cycle changed only on ritual holidays, and once when she went to visit her relatives over the mountains in Chamba. For Priya, the household was the limit to her lifeworld and her responsibilities to it the primary marker of her time. Though she watched soap operas, chatted to her cousins on Facebook and played the latest Bollywood and Gaddi hits, she did not seem to imagine her life beyond this scope. Priya was resigned when I asked her if she wanted a different future for herself, she showed no signs of frustration with the looping time of household. Instead, she was habituated to it, seemingly lulled, even content with the ever present click of her sewing machine. The particular combination of a strong patriarchal figure in her family, and their chance at upward social mobility, made it critical that Priya shore up the boundaries of their respectable household and stay within them. For this reason, Priya was rarely seen galivanting with the other adolescent girls of the village, she had no need for external employment. Priya's future was determined for her, it seemed comfortable, she did not resist it or show any kind of errant or excessive behaviour. The thought of it, or how she might obtain it, did not incite in her *future tension.*

Divya

For Priya's cousin Divya, the future was not so secure. Divya lived in a mud house directly across the road from Priya's. Today, three families - Divya's, her *chacha*'s (father's young brother), and her *thaya* (father's elder brother) - lived in that one block mud house with three separate hearths. Altogether, sixteen people share five dank rooms, bound up in a dense domestic network where they cared for each other's children, shared firewood and gossip. Priya's father had implored us to employ Divya to help us with the cleaning of our house, but I would also give her some computer lessons at her request.

Divya and I progressed from typing a few words to writing short paragraphs. She would bring a small notebook to carefully write down the English words that she was learning and their Hindi equivalents. She was determined and committed. I would leave her to work on her own during these times for half an hour, an hour at a time while I got to work preparing lunch. Sometimes when I was out doing an interview, or away in that other world, she would let herself in and use one of the old laptops, tracing

the keys out onto a sheet of lined paper in her exercise book, trying to establish the pathways between the high *W* and the low *B*, the lines across from *P* to *R* and back again from *E* to *Y*.

Sometime just after the spring wheat harvest and before they planted the monsoon corn, Divya began to stop halfway through her typing. She would look around to see if I was busily doing my own work. I would avoid catching her eye, so I could see what her next move was. She would swiftly switch to the Safari browser and sign into her Facebook account. But I soon realised that the reason why she really wanted to go on Facebook was to speak with her fiancé. I began to probe by teasing her. I touched her shoulder and gave a knowing smile – "Who's that?" She looked away shyly. She told me in a coy outpouring how much she liked him, how much she was dying to get married, how much she wanted to leave her chaotic home to go and live in his newly built concrete house, with its three tiled bathrooms, marble kitchen bench and freshly painted peachy walls. It was clear that thinking about this boy – part romantic fantasy, part exhausted dream of rest – filled many of her idle moments.

But by the time the corn stalks had grown high with the deluge of monsoon, her voice had begun to crack a little as she spoke about her pending marriage. She would sigh and put her hand to her head, "I have so much future *tension* Di." Day by day, I would hear a little more of the story. Her troubles seemed to multiply. The guilt of being born a girl to a family still fixated on nurturing boys and sending girls away. Her father's meagre wage doing labour work at a hotel construction site, 200 rupees a day, machinery slicing his fingers. The realisation that her first fiancé wasn't right and the shame of such a blemish to her future marriage prospects. The long and precarious second engagement she had to endure while she waited for her cousins to marry first. However, Divya main worry was that her mother had taken out a set of loans - from their family, from the bank and also from a local money lender - to help the family get by. The loan went to basic food stuff, paying for necessary gifts for relatives, for school uniforms and books. With their father's income cut, there was much more pressure to repay. Divya felt it her responsibility to help her mother repay this loan. As she revealed these troubles, they thickened the air between us. "*Itne sare soch, Di*" – I have so many thoughts – she would explain how the thoughts and worries whirred around her mind.

Vaani

We can see the potential to destroy at play in the case of Vaani, another cousin of Priya and Divya who lived close by. Vaani regularly dropped in to see us, after school, or in the early evening – she would flash her coquettish smiles and come to look at herself in the mirror that was hung on our almirah. Vaani was one of the "*frank* girls" at school – popular but cunning. She wore thick black eyeliner on her top lids, and sometimes even wore jeans and plimsoles. One morning I woke to her shrill shrieking. Through the crack in the curtains, behind the walnut trees, I could see a number of people milling around two women who were clearly pitched against each other.

The younger woman, Neha - Vaani's mother, pulled at her thinning hair and appeared to double over as the elder, her mother-in-law and Vaani's grandmother, waved a long stick just above her bowed head. She brought the stick down against the slates, missing Neha's feet by centimetres. Neha's fraying kurta hung loosely on her slight frame, it seemed skewed to one side, baring her shoulder like a boiled hen's egg. I could just see Vaani's face behind the door frame, her eyes wide. It was as if the publicity of the scene was specifically for the benefit of the neighbours.

Vaani had gone missing last night with two girls from the upper village to a DJ party in the nearby military cantonment, but she hadn't asked her parents' permission. Her father and uncle went to find her. They searched every wedding that was going on in the neighbouring villages but returned empty handed. Neha had even called her brothers in Chamba who had driven through the night to join the search. It was not until the early hours of the morning that she had returned home in an unmarked car with two other girls, driven by an unknown boy. From our vantage point, Uncle muttered, "She has no *izzat,* this is what happens when you let girls go too far." For months to come, Vaani's story acted as a warning to Divya and Priya - reminding them of the careful work of managing risk that they must undertake.

That evening, Shyam, Souji and I were huddled in my room around the strip heater, when we heard a knock at the door. "Nikitaaaaaa" Sonam's high-pitched nasal voice made us cringe as she poked her head around the door. "Do you have a broom? I need it to do the floor in the morning." Sonam's voice always proceeded her; she was Divya's aunt and at that time also helping with the cleaning while Divya was away. Sonam knew precisely where the broom was, upstairs in the cleaning cupboard where she had put it back earlier that morning. I had expected her to drop by soon after the story about Vaani broke. Whenever you met Sonam, you were sure to hear of some elder woman who had found a pile of ash in her kitchen pantry – a spell laid by a jealous sister; some young girl run away with her college boyfriend – only to return with flowering bruises.

Sonam excused herself humbly for disturbing us. She drank in her surroundings; she had never been into my room before. It was itself a treat for her because I shared it scandalously with my boyfriend. Satisfied, she crouched down in front of us and promptly forgot the guise of the broom. It was clear that things had changed since the morning, and the tide had shifted against Vaani – within the space of the day she moved from being a victim to a dangerous influence. First, Sonam told us about what exactly had happened. The incident was clearly an opportunity to let the flood gates open against Vaani and her mother. Her visit to us was a means of distancing herself from their shameful ways, setting herself and her own daughters safely in the shallows of critique. Sonam paused, allowing us to fill the gapping period with our dangerous speculation. "There is no knowledge of where she was or what she was

doing, she has no *izzat*" she accentuated. Sonam's tone changed, and she leant forward slightly on her haunches. The reason she was telling us was purely, she said, to warn us. And here she paused to allow the sense of danger to fill the space between us. Vaani's behaviour was unacceptable. She warned us not to allow Vaani, or any of the other children, to come to our place, else we might be blamed for facilitating their errant behaviour.

After the incident with Vaani, most mothers stopped sending their kids out to run from kitchen to kitchen. Women became more suspicious of one another, especially those coming back late in the evening. Even we kept to ourselves more. Just as Divya had used our house as a place of escape from her mundane chores, Vaani had used our house as a place of escape from her family and as an alibi to slip away unnoticed. Indeed, Sonam's warning was also a threat. Vaani's story shows us the explicit limit of young women's behaviour, and what happens if they cross it. In the months after the incident, Vaani was not seen outside her house. She was not allowed to go traipsing around the village during Holli, nor was she allowed to any more village weddings. She could be seen peering out from the threshold of the kitchen door, head modestly wrapped in a scarf. Indeed, the capture and domestication of new forms of value women can generate in education and employment is contingent on their maintenance of the norms of respectability or *izzat*. Loss of *izzat* through transgression of feminine norms - which might mean anything from pre-marital sex or elopement to simply being sighted outside the bounds of the village – is the potential loss of social personhood and the value of a whole lineage.

V | Future Tension

Comparing the plight of these three girls we can also gain insight into the primal scene of *future tension*. We see that Priya and Vaani did not really experience the condition in the way that Divya did. Why? We see that Divya sits sandwiched between her family members who are the most economically secure - Priya's family - and those who are the least - Vaani's family. She sees how she might aspire to the former, but she also sees how easily her life and that of her family might slip into the plight of the latter. Divya's only chance at upward social mobility is if she herself is able to present herself as sufficiently respectable to secure a match with a good suitor who is of a greater class than her. This will also help her to contribute back to her natal family after marriage. In the meantime, she must support her mother to care for her three sisters by earning her own income and cultivating her own skills. This requires Divya to continuously be stretching time - always looking to an ill-defined future, but at the same time remaining cognisant of the demands placed on her labour and sexuality at home. She was shouldering the demands of both production in the present and future social reproduction of her lineage, yet there was no roadmap for fitting the two together.

This particular kind of relational work of risk management that Divya must undergo issues a different, more unstable personhood than the 'cultural struggle' or 'split woman-hood' that Aihwa Ong (1991)

and Nancy Mills (1998) describe of young women in Asian factories.[39] Instead, managing this risk requires young women to anticipate, speculate in order to elicit a radically uncertain future; and to mediate it with a looping domestic present. This speculative, relational work becomes part of her emotional and caring labour. For those like Divya, Prithi and Rhea, for whom class and caste status concerns render the stakes most high, the everyday management of financial, sexual and moral risk tips into *future tension.* I argue that the condition of *future tension* is the empirical and embodied experience of this web of anticipation, speculation and aspiration - in Murphy's words - "both a temporal orientation toward the future and an affective state, an excited forward-looking subjective condition of yearning, desire, aspiration, anxiety, or dread" (2017: 114). The condition was experienced in the hot and open adolescent girl's body because it was synecdochally linked to the lineage. Its substances of blood and vaginal discharge symbolising the risk and potential of its reproduction and integrity (Trollope-Kumar 2001, Rashid 2007b); these leaked, became overheated or polluted in instances where the girl overstepped the mark with her family. The boundaries of her body became permeable, vulnerable to the intrusion of malign forces that would in turn effect the whole lineage. Let us see how this condition plays out for Divya.

<div align="center">***</div>

Divya soon left my house and went to work with her sister Kitty, for a 'foreigner' couple some 20 minutes on the bus from our village. The couple ran a massage parlour from their house that catered to other foreigners in the area. They were employed permanently, from 9 to 5pm each day, 7 days each week, to clean and to learn basic skills in massage. It was unclear if their obligations involved any kind of sex work, but such parlours dotted the valley. They were paid 16 rupees per hour.

Divya and Kitty would go back and forth on the bus each day for the next month, until one week when I noticed that they had stopped going. I asked Priya why they hadn't gone to their job, she told me that Divya was feeling very sick - she had a sharp stomach-ache, she felt weak and dizzy, she was losing weight. I went over to see Divya, she was wrapped up in a thick blanket despite the 30-degree heat. She couldn't bring herself to sit up.

First, she had gone to the Dharamshala Zonal Hospital, where she had been kept for four days. After seeing a succession of doctors in the crowded outpatient departments, they could find nothing wrong with her. Kitty told me that she too had a sharp pain in her side, she clutched her abdomen as she began

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[39] As women move away from the surveillance and responsibility of home for school, college or to work in factories, Ong argues, that their new experiences generate new aspirations, such as consumption practices, but these oppose traditional expectations of womanhood (1991:280). The result is a form of personhood that is conflicted or divided across space and time - she calls this process 'cultural struggle'. The concept of cultural struggle, and its associated 'split womanhood' has allowed many scholars to envision the creative forms of agency, and the new ethical positionalities, that women generated by moving across time-space (Mills 1998, Dyson 2010, 2015, Huang 2018).

to weep. Their mother, Sunita, tutted and fussed around them. "It's *tension ki bimari"* she told me, shrugging her shoulders. Divya cried out. She whispers that she had all the same *tension* as before. A line of relatives began to congregate in the courtyard. Two men stood out from the relatives as those I didn't know - a thin man in spectacles and an old man in tattered trousers. I snuck off back to my own house. Those men, Uncle told me when I returned, were a *chela* (ritual healer) and his assistant. I asked what he thought was wrong with Divya, he only said "people are following shadow things these days. It is a very sad kind of time. For it is *kali yug* (a period of darkness)."

That night the family held a ritual to exorcise the curse from Divya, and from the rest of the family. The communality of the ritual showed that the threat to Divya's body was also a threat to the whole extended domestic network. Divya's mother spoke of how they needed to remove the bad spirits and reclaim the family lest they take a human sacrifice. Three days later, I found Divya curled up in front of Priya's kitchen. Dark patches bloomed under her eyes, and she smelt of stale sweat and smoke, after having spent the night next to the *hoven* (ritual fire). For three nights, we had heard a drumbeat coming from Divya's house. The *chela* had performed an *ilaj* (ritual treatment) to cure her of her ailments and her *tension*. Divya had become possessed by the goddess, her hair had come lose and her eyes had rolled back in her head. The chela had pulled her head up by her hair, and she was whipped with the *sangal* (a whip studded with metal spikes). This morning Divya's eyes were glazed over. I asked if she felt better. She said that the pain in her stomach was gone, but her neck hurt from all the thrashings.

<div align="center">***</div>

The potentials imbued in the adolescent girl by her family and the state provide new possibilities for imagining a future. Yet, taken together, instances of *future tension* show that this future is stymied and fraught; such that this position holds an embodied cost. This is particularly the case for aspirational low caste girls like Divya and low-class girls like Rhea who are given the responsibility of the whole family's wellbeing.

In both South Asian psychoanalytic and phenomenological anthropology, young women's illness and spirit possession has been often framed a form of subversive, individual female resistance expressed, sometimes unconsciously, through the body (Obeysekere 1981, Kakar 1982, Ram 2013). Jocelyn Marrow (2013), for instance, suggests that mothers and daughters understood instances of 'clenched teeth' as an index of worry about uncertain futures, rather than a manifestation of trauma from their past. Resonant with the cases I experienced, Marrow's interlocutors were caught between the promises of modern education and the anxieties of entering into a public sphere where their respectability could be defiled. Marrow frames instances of dramatic adolescent female mental illness in terms of a deficit or surfeit of feminine agency. Where adolescent girls who display the illness either have too much *shakti* as a result of their participation in a modern public sphere, or not enough preventing them from

participating. However, she also observes that this agency is not individual but generated from the mother-daughter dyad, a means by which they inter-subjectively register the uncertain future - where the illness creates a space by which concerns and conflicts over emergent adolescent female agency come to the fore and might be addressed.

This approach is useful for thinking through the ways in which adolescent girls introduce a pause into their exploitative social relations through the expression of *future tension*. Divya, for instance, finds a means through her illness to leave her workplace, and finds rest for a moment. Rhea's illness allows her to express the impact of such pressure to provide for her unravelling family on her body. However, to see *future tension* as instrumental, individual resistance would miss the important ways that it also works as a collective, relational moment (Boddy 1994). The resolution to their distress is most often their further integration into domestic structures through public discipline or ritual exorcism (Nabokov 1997). Such acts of therapeutic ritual work collectively to hold the ambiguities of *future tension*, and to disperse its negative effects across the domestic network (Sax 2009).

Thinking through this condition in terms of future reckoning - anticipation, aspiration and speculation - is part of broader move in anthropology to understand the impact of precarity and financialisaton on people's modes of navigating the present as their dreams unravel (Berlant 2011). As Bear suggests (2020), the negative effects of speculation are reduced to bad intentions or faulty agents, in this case selfish, weak or deviant adolescent girls; and turned inward by adolescents themselves – my adolescent interlocutors who were unsuccessful in employment or education saw it as a measure of their own inadequacy. It is risk - the constant fear of 'defaulting' on investment, failing to repay the family or overstepping the boundaries of *izzat* caused the body to experience *future tension*. The labour in/of time (Bear 2014) involved in maintaining both the looping reproductive labour of the domestic sphere, while speculating about how to produce economic value in the endless future leaves young women exhausted and confused. Yet in expression of *future tension* and its associated aliments, responsibility for this failure is pushed outward from the girl's body and is held by the whole lineage. In all cases, the arc of *future tension* culminated in the retrospective attribution of causality and the 'cancellation of the future' (Fisher 2014). The act of agency on the part of the adolescent girl is a relational one - to articulate the immense pressures of care, risk and work placed on her; to identify its' causes in fraught, particularly domestic, relations; and push such pressure back onto those relations themselves so as to seek help.

Conclusion

To conclude, *future tension* might be seen as the gendered experience of potential and risk that pools in the body of the adolescent girl as a result of historical transformations to her positionality in the household and lifecourse. It is experienced somatically because the symbolic idiom of sexual risk is conceived through ideas of the hot and open adolescent body, vulnerable to the penetration by external

actors, and holding the honour of the group. The body holds the imagined and experienced weight of household relations at a particular point in the life course. The burden is too much to bear for some, particularly those of low caste or class aspirational households for whom the stakes are highest. As with *ghar ki tension,* in this context anxiety does not necessarily index personal failure to realise fantasy, or their eschewal of this fantasy, but the failure of the fantasy itself. As Sarah Ahmed (2010) points out, unhappiness is a disturbance to the hegemonic functioning of patriarchy, an act of telling that renders visible forms of suffering that are otherwise occluded. In expressing *future tension,* girls reveal the cost they pay for absorbing both risk and responsibility in this time of new potential.

Interlude | Holli

The girls were in one gang, and they met the boys in another. The boys had buckets of water and would rush at the girl gang, who would splinter. The girls would shout insults and taunts, luring the boys over. They edged their way up the street. The girls would run at the boys with colours, and even flirtatiously put the colours on their faces in a slower way. There were chains of motor bikes and scooties that raced up and down the main roads, each laden with three young boys dipped in different colours. They screamed through villages, yelling Happy Holli and stopping to throw colours on groups of girls.

Uncle remarked through a drunken haze at 5pm over a plate of leftover vegetables – "look its 5pm and we're only eating lunch now!" He smiled at Priya who had just returned, sodden and exhausted. From the morning, she had acted as a kind of leader for her sisters and younger cousins. She and all the others disappeared off to a DJ party in someone's house in the afternoon, we could hear the music from our house. Now she sat wrapped in a towel, her hair ran half up half down, streaming behind her, and her pink and white kurta was drenched and tinged red, showing her white bra underneath.

Chapter 5 | 'Pagal': Trauma and ambivalence at the heart of Gaddi femininity

But the tentative first stones were already falling around the crazy lady. She dodged them, she tried to catch them, laughing, at last, people to play with.
Maxine Hong Kingston, The Woman Warrior.

Preface | Shruthi Devi

There was only one woman dressed in black. She wore an unadorned black kurta and a thick black shawl wrapped tightly around her shoulders. She had lined her eyes with black kohl and bruises bloomed under her eyes. Her skin was sallow and dark. She bared her teeth - the left incisor was decaying. She stood out against the other women of the village, as they spun and swayed to the pulse of the *nuala* (Shaivite ritual). They moved synchronously, a palette of green, blue and crimson, singing the tale of Shiva's marriage. Step out, arm up, step, arm down, cyclical, meditative. The woman hovered at the threshold of the circle, moving with, then stepping out. Her eyes were elsewhere, she kept stopping to check her mobile phone, to wrap her shawl more tightly.

I didn't have to wait. She approached my friend Soujanyaa and I as the music broke. She edged closer, then pulled us in. She began to speak quickly, erratically. She gripped my arm, spilt my tea. She launched into her story, it tumbled from her in stops and starts. Her voice pitched, she rocked as she spoke, sometimes embarrassingly loud, sometimes so quietly that I had to strain my ears. Fragments of her childhood, her present struggles, a comment on my haircut. She was close, I smelt her breath. She spoke of her sufferings candidly. She repeated phrases, one too many times, she stuttered. When the music started again, she would dip into the dancing mid-way through her sentence, she cackled, pulling me with her, and then again abruptly she stopped, sinking to the ground. She looked small, bird-like, then she would extend her arms and her hair would slip from its clasp. Suddenly she was acting, coquettish, she pulled her shawl over her eyes like a new bride, batted her lashes. She seemed to appeal to the gaze of someone out of sight.

"That's Shruthi" Soujanyaa whispered to me. She pieced the fragments of story back together for me, weaving it with whispers from the village. I learned Shruthi lived across the river from us, she was married to Sorab, Aunty's cousin. Shruthi was from Chamba, she was the eldest of five children, two sisters and three brothers. When Shruthi was a born, a priest told her she couldn't cut or brush her hair for five years when they had to have another *nuala*. Then someone died in the family, so they couldn't have a *nuala* for 7 years, and by this time she had deadlocks and she looked, she said, like a *sadhu* (renouncer). She was only in 9th standard when she met Sorab. They fell in love, but her parents weren't happy as they were from a higher caste and he was from a low caste Hali family. They eloped and married, returning to live with his parents. Her family cut contact. She was pregnant by the time she

was sixteen and living in the house with his mother and father. Shruthi had two daughters, Leena and Beena, before she had a son, Arjun and a daughter Pinki.

"My mother-in-law is a horrible woman" she said. She has suffered immense horrors at her hands. *Bahut ganda kam,* very dirty work, she repeated, muttering. She talked of how she would be beaten and locked in the house, how she would watch her children play from the window.

Now Shruthi has left her husband, she lives in a separate room next door with her three daughters. Arjun and her husband live in a house across the courtyard with her mother-in-law. Her husband is a drunk. They have separate kitchens. She earns her own money - as a cook at a campsite, cleaning rooms in a hotel across the river, doing laundry at a hostel higher up in the valley. She complained that her husband came to each working place drunk, pining for her, hitting her, he blubbered to her employers that he forbade her from working there. They had to fire her to stop him making a scene again. Shruthi told us she had been to the local NGOs and women's court, but her case never went through.

I came to know Shruthi very well, I would skirt the jagged edges of her story. We had many fraught encounters. She would seek solace in me, she would use me. I would cover for her. She would put my own reputation in the village at risk, I would put hers at risk. That night Shruthi left by saying only that she was a 'an empty vessel', a 'skull'. "I look happy, beautiful on the outside, but inside I have nothing. My husband has taken my heart. But now I earn the money for my children. My family gives me nothing."

Introduction

To this point, we have seen the ways in which women of different generations attempted to manage the vicissitudes of life and the increasingly rigid expectations of Gaddi femininity. We have seen how women registered and expressed feelings of devaluation, imbalances and strain through *tension* and its associated bodily and supernatural ailments. In this chapter, we begin with a new question – what happens if women *don't* manage their *tension*? Women across generations told me that if they didn't manage their *tension,* they would become *pagal* - mad, crazy. *Pagal* was a general term used to describe a state of psychological and humoural imbalance that manifest as behavioural deviance. It could be applied to both women and men as either a temporary accusation or descriptive label. However, there was an important sense in which the term was gendered. When applied to men, it indicated a state of mental disorder that was caused by biological imbalance, neglect or transgressive behaviour by one's wife or female kin. When applied to women, by contrast, it indicated a state of disorder that was the result of weakness and inadequate control over the balance in the household, sexual body and mind. In short, both the madness of men and the madness of women were the result of women's failings or deviance. This double standard, observed ethnographically, leads me to argue in this chapter that one

cannot separate out an analysis of madness and severe mental disorder from historical changes in Gaddi patriarchal kinship structures.

Indeed, more careful attention to the life-histories of women accused of being mad revealed a deeper meaning of the term. Women who were said to be *pagal* were most often those who had suffered some form of trauma at the hands of their marital family – violence, abuse, adverse reproductive events. As a result, they had failed to adjust to their marital home. *Pagal* was used to render visible and sayable this trauma, and to register the ways in which that woman's own needs and desires were unmet by her husband or affines. Attention to the condition of *pagal* reveals the symbolic ambivalence at the heart of Gaddi femininity - subordinate and subversive qualities that erupted in the figure of the mad woman when their desires went unmet. Indeed, the shifting form of the mad woman in the collective imagination reveals what is at stake in the patriarchal structure of society, in this case, the collective project of caste, class and tribal respectability.

Importantly, this ambivalent picture of madness emerges from attention to the structures of kinship, marriage and exchange in the flux of village life - rather than looking for it in a clinical space. In this chapter, I begin by laying out my ethnographic approach to madness. I move into an analysis of the symbolic and structural paradigms within which madness becomes meaningful – giving particular attention to the ambivalence at the heart of Gaddi femininity that must be managed through marriage. I then show what might go wrong in this process – how traumatic acts of violence, abuse and adverse reproductive events send women mad. I conclude by questioning the kind of ambivalent agency that might emerge from such traumatic events, and how this subversive form for maligned femininity offers an alternative womanhood. This chapter takes Shruthi's story as window into the discourse of *pagal* and is punctured by encounters I had with her as retold in my fieldnotes.

I | Madness Beyond the Asylum

The condition of *pagal* cannot be directly equated to the English term madness. Instead, it is a more fluid discourse that denotes an array of deviant forms taken on by women, men and children. There was one form of *pagal* that was attributed to biomedical imbalance in the brain. Such 'mad' people were also called *mental* or said to be afflicted by *dimarghi ki problem* (problems of the mind). This idiom was used to indicate problems related to chemical imbalances in the body or brain caused by developmental delays, brain damage or traumas to the head, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, dementia, epilepsy (*mirgi*), strokes (*attack*) or substance abuse. Such madness was not necessarily gendered, nor was it necessarily related to a breakdown in relationships or marriage (though it could cause their undoing) or caused by *jadu* (witchcraft). Critically, such figures were considered to be afflicted bodily (*sariri*), as opposed to through magical means (*opara*). Importantly, this form of madness was located in the brain or mind and was not caused by imbalanced humours in the body or supernatural attacks. It

could be treated through psychotropic medication sought at the psychiatric Out-Patient Department at the Zonal hospital or the psychiatric hospitals in Natara or Shimla. Rural families were unlikely to abandon such members, despite the stigma that surrounded their condition. The accusation that someone is biomedically *pagal* neutralises the moral transgressive element of madness, thus rendering it less dangerous.

Though I did collect data on such cases, this chapter is not focused on this form of *pagal,* but on the specific use of the word *pagal* to describe deviant female behaviour. The term could be used humorously, to indicate and admire behaviour that flirted on the edges of social acceptability - a mother laughing that her daughter was *pagal* in her adolescence; a community health worker remarking that the younger generation of girls were *pagal* because they all demanded sanitary products these days. It was also used as an accusation against women, laden with stigma, to indicate deviant behaviour or to speak to the trauma that a woman had experienced. Such an accusation was rarely made publicly, but more often whispered along the rhythms of gossip. It was distinctly associated with humoural imbalance in the female body – especially an overheated, oversexualised body – that held an excess of uncontrolled or undomesticated *shakti*. Its effect was marked by a double movement - it worked to extinguish the agency of the *pagal* woman by questioning if she was the author of her own actions; but it also worked simultaneously to award her a kind of ambivalent agency - an excessive and dangerous ability for destruction. When interlocutors recounted the stories of the women that they called *pagal*, they most often highlighted the slow process of unravelling that the woman encountered, as a result of ongoing abuse, violence and failed relationships. The term indicated both a woman unbalanced and worked to accuse her husband and wider kin or affinal group of being unable to meet her desires or control her. Importantly, the accusation of *pagal*, therefore, did not render the woman in question entirely abject, but revealed an important impasse in Gaddi kinship relations.

Madness as Traumatic Impasse

Women's madness across cultures has been seen as a window into social anxiety about changes in family life and gender norms, explored for what it reveals about sexual politics, concepts of biology, labour patterns and (gendered) rationality (Pinto 2014:22-23). In the ethnographic record, female madness has been understood as a form of 'deviance' that occurs at the points where kinship structures dissolve (Eliacin 2016, Marrow 2016, Luhrmann and Marrow 2016). Madness has been used to shed light on the 'zones of social abandonment' that fringe society, where unwanted members are left to die (Biehl 2005); the grids of legal rationality allowing families to abandon unwanted members (Dhanda 1996, 1999); and to the stains of kinship that were women's undoing, the strains of care that dissolved marriages after diagnosis, the strains of intimacy that left women abandoned (Pinto 2014). These accounts importantly see women's madness as an acute manifestation of the precarity of women's position within patriarchal kinship systems and nation states (Gammeltoft 2016). As Butler (2002) puts

it, one might see it less in terms of women's essentially aberrant behaviour or desires; but more about women's predicament of being caught in a web of relations that produce no coherent position in kinship. In this sense, madness speaks to a particular socio-cultural process of recognising trauma – where woman are "pushed to the very precipice of physical and/or psychological annihilation, the bonds that tether [her] to the everyday world become stretched, distorted, and even torn; sometimes irreparably so" (Lester 2013:753).

My approach to *pagal* aligns with this literature, however it adds analytical depth by offering a different ethnographic approach. Often in ethnographies of madness, we meet the deviant figure after they have already been abandoned and cast out by their community. We meet them in institutional settings - the asylum, the hospital, the prison, or in medical records or legal case studies. The ethnographer's task is to piece together a disjointed narrative, as told by the mad figure themselves and their family, or by sifting through archival documents (Lakoff 2005, Pinto 2020). As Pinto (2014) describes of her interlocutors, their stories were unstable and unfinished, such that a 'true' account of their travails bobbed away as soon as one felt one had them in their hands. Part of the accusation, experience and expression of madness they displayed is the ambiguity of this narrative - where linear time empties out, leaving one with only episodic encounters (Desjarlais 1997, Mattingly 1998). Such approaches are revealing of the workings of psychiatric discourse and institutional power as they shape the experience and expression of madness (Foucault 1967). However, in meeting them as individuals, their biographies written over by medical case files, they *become* their madness. I seek to understand the condition of *pagal* that was used in various ways, as a descriptor, an accusation and an observation without fetishising or stigmatising the condition itself. To do so, as Lurhmann observes, does a terrible disservice to its pain by reducing them to its epistemological explanatory power (2000:11). Instead, it is important to understand moral discourses of deviant and normal femininity as they are situated in what people do, how they live and the larger material worlds they inhabit (Hacking 1998:86).

In order to do so, it is necessary to garner a deep ethnographic appreciation of the positionality of these 'mad' figures in the webs of relations that simultaneously produce and exclude them. This can be achieved by deploying classical anthropological tools for understanding the symbolic and structural systems of kinship, marriage and exchange from which these deviant figures emerge. We have seen in the previous chapters how the discourse of *izzat* or respectability structures the boundaries of permissible gendered behaviour, where control of female sexuality is passed from her father to her husband. This form of sexual restriction creates particular attitudes toward male and female qualities (read: men are strong and sexually controlled; women are weak and easily tempted) and inter-gender relations (Cucchiari 1981). This gendered system is embedded in other cultural idioms that are not ordinarily understood as gender (Collier and Rosaldo 1981), including in this case, *izzat* and *shakti* refracted through the experience of the body in humoural tendencies toward heating.

Transgressive female behaviour might be literal transgression of sexual taboos, such as elopement or inter-caste marriage. However, it might also be the appropriation of symbols and qualities that are not ascribed to gendered expectations - a woman who displays anger, a man who displays weakness, a married woman who flirts. Transgressive female behaviour is dangerous for structural reasons (ie. reproduction and claims on resources that threaten the patriarchal marriage structure); and for symbolic reasons (i.e. behaviours, associations and meanings that threaten the coherent vision of society held in ideology or fantasy). It is often represented in embodied means (ie. the overheating of the body). Within this context, the question of intent - whether someone *meant* to transgress sexual restrictions is not of great import. As such, women who have extra-marital sex, for instance, as a choice or without their consent, both breech the norms of *izzat* and thus threaten the structural hierarchy and symbolic ideology. Hence, the difference between a victim and a perpetrator of sexual transgression is not absolute.

It is against this structural and symbolic system of sexual restriction that we must understand the accusation of madness*,* and how capricious and expansive it is when applied to women. The particular form that deviance takes in the present is a reflection, or a negative, of the present structure of gendered sexual restriction. This might be a small aberration or an explicit breech; it might be purposeful and intentional, or it might be imagined or real. Hence, the veracity of an accusation of madness is unimportant. Instead, the mad woman marks the boundary of socially permissible gendered behaviour. The illocutionary accusation of madness hence works to shift, renew and enforce this boundary. Madness becomes a discourse by which to acknowledge moments of 'impasse' - disturbance to these boundaries where interruption to the norms of reproductive life can be adapted to, felt out, and lived (Berlant 2011:199). As the structural form and symbolic language of sexual restriction shifts in tandem with legal, politico-economic and religious change; the contours, symbols and affects associated with this deviant form also shift. At this impasse, a solution must be sought to the changing world (Bubandt 2014:28). Hence, the deviant figure is both a source of anxiety and a source of creativity, for their failure to adhere to sexual restriction is also the refusal of these norms. This figure reveals another way of thinking and being that is otherwise unsayable; a form of symbolism that exceeds or escapes the symbolically constructed reality (Gammeltoft 2014b, Zizek 2006).

Hence, looking to the deviant and mad figures in the Gaddi community within the context of structures of kinship and symbolic forms of femininity reveals how norms endure, what is at stake in processes of social change and other, emergent, ways of living. It is near impossible to conduct this kind of analysis from the clinic or institution out into the community, for any ethnographic data collected will remain coloured with the supposition of deviance and any case will resist comparison with other instances that may not have resulted in explicit accusations of madness. Instead, we can look from the household

outwards, contextualising accusations of madness within the situations from which they emerge and triangulating them within larger histories of social exclusion.

II | The Symbolic Paradigm

We might begin to map the symbolic landscape, or personal symbols (Obeysekere 1981), that animate female sexual restriction and deviance through attention the mythological forms that guide Gaddi femininity. As afore mentioned, women, in Hindu and Gaddi mythology, hold both the libidinised power to create and to destroy - their *shakti* - within their bodies. This power can be both auspicious and inauspicious and fluctuates over the life-course. It becomes potent and dangerous at liminal moments, where it must be captured and channelled by her kin then affines – particularly through the ritual of marriage. In *shakti* we see that femininity has no single quality or form but is complex and deeply ambivalent. In Gaddi mythology, two goddesses – Parvati and Kali - animate the symbolic poles of this ambivalent femininity, yet both hold this inherent ambivalence (Harlan and Courtright 1995:9-10). Let us take a moment to examine these two figures.

Parvati

Across India, Parvati is worshiped by Hindu women as the paragon of wifehood, a devoted consort of Lord Shiva, a domesticating, if passionate, female force (Pinto 2014: 36). Parvati's story as told by Gaddis, however, is slightly different. I tell it here as it was told to me by a Gaddi Rajput shepherd (see Wagner 2013:43 for an alternate telling);

> Parvati (*Gaura* in *Gaddi Bolle*) always worshiped Shiva, even when he was a *sadhu* (ascetic). She would go to his cave, clean it and bring his fruits. But when she saw how dark he was, she decided she didn't want to marry him. Shiva came out of meditation and decided that he wanted to marry Parvati. He went to her [mother's brother] house (Himraj, the ruler of snow), and asked their family "what gift do you want to marry me?" She said, I don't want anything for my house, not utensils. I don't want sheep and goats, they will just be killed by the leopards. He asked again. She told him that it was snow that she wanted, because a draft of snow would stop Shiva from coming to take her back to his house and marrying her. When it was the time for the *bharat* (marital procession), the whole sky was filled with stars. She woke in the night, and saw the snow starting to fall. She was very happy.
>
> By the morning, everything was covered in snow. Shiva was on the other side of the mountain, waiting to go and pick up his bride. He was very worried. How would he go? He knew he had to 'open' the road. He ordered elephants, then horses to unblock the route. But they could not. So he fashioned, from the snow, a Gaddi man and his herd. It was only this first Gaddi man who could open the route. They were able to cross the passes. Parvati, back in her Uncle's house heard the instruments of the *bharat* playing. At last Shiva and his consort reached her house. Her friends called her, saying that her beloved Shiva was in a bad way. She saw him, and still saw that he was ugly. She was very upset, but the marriage went ahead. As they began to walk around the fire, Shiva transformed into his most beautiful form. Before the last circumambulation, Shiva ran away. Parvati, now enchanted, followed him up Mount Kailash. She ran behind him, and they went off together.

This story is further enacted in the Gaddi wedding ritual with the four circumambulations (*pheres*) of the ritual fire (*hoven*) at the bride's home, and three around a water pot at the groom's home; and an instance where the groom dressed as Shiva the *sadhu* attempts to run away. As Wagner observes (2013: 45-46), the story of Shiva and Parvati for Gaddi people is not the representation of an abstract model for marriage, but marriage is considered a way of living *as* the divine couple.

Parvati's story here speaks to the necessary devotion of wife to husband *and* of the origins of the Gaddi people. But it also speaks to the counter-narratives of refusal that women display. As an expression of Gaddi female desire, it indicates the structural precarity of women in the marriage system, and the ambivalence of intimate relations that is carried by love (Berlant 2012). Neglect and violence are an important part of this blueprint for wifehood. We see the Goddess as a wife, always attempting to pull her husband back from his ascetic life, enticing him into the role of householder with her beauty and sexuality. Her inability to let her husband go as an ascetic is precisely what renders her weak and profane in comparison to her sacred and all-knowing husband. As Doniger observes, "Parvati, being a woman who places Kama [desire] foremost, cannot fathom the ascetic nature of the 'terrible' Shiva. She sees the mortal, domestic, superficial level… but is ignorant of the immortal, cosmic, inner level" (1981:223). Parvati's marriage story is much more fraught than it might appear on the surface. It is the story of a woman in pieces, a shape shifter, constantly divided against herself, suffering in love and in the attempt to obtain her own freedom; her form speaking to the incompatible and uncomposed elements of womanhood (Pinto 2014:37).

Most importantly, Parvati's story reveals that the task at hand for women is not to render this ambivalent femininity coherent, but to manage this ambivalence across the life course (Kakar 1982). In contemporary Gaddi culture, when a girl reaches puberty, she becomes a potential threat to the purity of her lineage and her sexuality must be domesticated in the promise of marriage. Today, as she is engaged, an adolescent girl faces the anxiety of a potentially abusive household, having to leave her natal family and the threat of a broken relationship (see chapter 4). Though as a bride she is considered the very embodiment of auspiciousness, she brings with her a measure of inauspiciousness from her natal family (Raheja 1988). As described in Chapter 1, a woman's body before, during and after marriage, is considered 'hot' (*garam*), as a result of its undomesticated sexual energy. It is thus vulnerable to malign forces and holds the potential to bring curses or black magic spells to afflict her affines. This overheated body also makes her short-tempered, impulsive and weak-willed. Her dowry is sometimes described as a payment from the natal to the marital family for taking on this measure of inauspiciousness. As we will see, *pagal* is the state of such embodied imbalance and excess sexual desire that tips the woman as creator into woman as destroyer, the latter signified by the goddess Kali.

Figure 5.1: A Gaddi woman possessed at a wedding.

Kali

The dark form of the goddess, in Hindu mythology, is most often represented as Kali, depicted with shrivelled breasts, a garland of skulls, her sharp tongue dripping with the blood of demons. Kali is both seen as the destroyer and as a source of warrior-like defiance. In Gaddi society, Kali is most often represented as Sherwali Mata, riding on a tiger, her hair dishevelled and free, with a sword in one of her many arms. When Gaddi women become possessed, it is most commonly by Sherwali Mata, Kamakya or Durga, other manifestations of Kali as a radiant warrior goddess. Gaddi people also worship manifestations of the Mata who dwell in local places. Their stories are of potentially destructive female power domesticated by violence, offerings or by marriage. For instance, slate miners worship and provide offerings to Slatewalli Mata. If she is not satiated, she may release her anger in deadly rockfalls on the miners. Further, the tale of Rakshani Mata, the female giant told to me again by a male interlocutor as we passed her temple;

> There was once a man who was cutting down wood in the forest. Rakshani Mata, a huge giant approached and said to him, I want to eat you. The man continued cutting the wood, and he said ok you can eat me but first I have to work. "What is your work?" She asked. He said, I have to chop this sleeper into two

> pieces, but I don't have enough equipment. She said, "I am very powerful" and took her axe and brought it down on the sleeper. A big crack began to form in the sleeper, then she tried to put her hands in the middle, but they got stuck. "I will help you get out, but you have to promise to marry me" the man said.

In all such pathways, women who display such undomesticated *shakti* must be vanquished by men through violence, marriage or gifts. The chief characteristic of these women before such vanquishment is selfishness, where women do not subvert their own desires to the needs of the community and thus threaten to consume or destroy it.

Through attention to both of these goddesses, we see the ambivalence at the heart of Gaddi femininity, wherein the inability of male figures to meet the needs and desires of such female figures leads to dangerous consequences. Raheja and Gold (1994) point out that women do not internalise the dichotomy between Parvati and Kali, woman as good mother or destructive force. Instead, they overwhelmingly displayed fortitude in the face of adversity through a sense of their own strength, power and worth. Women displayed their own sense of agency in manipulating and stretching kinship relations to their own benefit. It is this multiplicity, their ability to hold on to their ambivalent femininity, that made women strong. Returning to the story of Parvati, we see that she doesn't simply put up quietly with the ascetic travails of her husband. Instead quarrel, conflict and discord abound in their marriage and are construed as an essential part of any sexual relationship, enhancing rather than impeding it (Doniger 1981:226, 233). Indeed, the unity of Shiva and Parvati is conceived as a cyclical symbolism - where Shiva quarrels with Parvati in his ascetic aspect and reunites with her in his erotic aspect (235).

Fieldnotes: January 30th 2018: Toilet

I was inspecting the foul trail of plastic wrappers that littered the stream as Shyam and I climbed the hillside up to Thera village when I heard someone shriek my name. Shruthi came running out from her courtyard, the same ratty shawl streaming out behind her. Shruthi's side of the compound backed directly onto the drain, cut like a wound into the mountainside, such that the stench reeked into her home. Her eyes darted as she leaned over the gate to clasp my hand, pulling me inside. "I hoped you would pass by and come into my home" she panted. "I wanted to ask if you needed someone to come and clean for you, someone to do your housework. I could start right away. I need the money, you see, my husband is useless, and I have four children to provide for, all on my own." She fiddled nervously with her hair, with the clasp on her wallet, she spoke rapidly and didn't wait for me to answer before she turned her attention to Shyam.

"Look at this space" she pointed to a shallow patch of over-turned dirt next to the gate of the compound. She grabbed a spade that was stuck into the dirt and began to drive it into the soil at random. Shruthi explained that she wants to build a septic tank and a toilet for her daughters, Leena and Beena to use. She tutted that, now, they have to go down in the drain next to the house, leaving them open to the advances of strange men who drink at the tea shop a few houses below. She winced with what felt like shame. She explained that she has to do it herself, her useless husband and his mother won't help her at all. She asked Shyam about the cost of labour, how much would it cost for her to get some local men in to help her build it? Would he help? Did he know anyone who would do it for her? She only had a budget of 10 000 rupees. Shyam didn't get the chance to get a word in before she launched on. "My father-in-law gave me some money before he died, but I have to use it for everything, they give me nothing, they do nothing for me." She gasped for air. "For seventeen years I faced this without respite", Shruthi launched into exposition of her travails that she had told me that first night. At that moment, we heard a lashing of expletives come from the other side of the courtyard. Shruthi's mother-in-law came lumbering out of her kitchen, shooing us away, screaming about how our dogs would pee on her flowerbeds. We scurried away up the hill, the dogs following. We never did see that toilet built.

III | Managing Ambivalence in Marriage

Marital arrangements can be understood as 'conversion devices' (Bear et al. 2015) by which wealth can be consolidated as prestige or status; sanctified and reproduced in bodily substances of blood, thus inherited along the patrilineal descent line (Das 1995).[40] Love-marriages or inter-caste marriages taint or dilute character, violating the structure of society and the integrity of a descent group (Mody 2008, Grover 2011). What is specific about the management of ambivalent femininity today is that it is newly framed according to ideals of conjugal intimacy. As Kapila observes (2004), the movement from exchange marriage to prestige marriage, from large households to nuclear households, and toward legalised Hindu marriage has located intimacy in the permanent conjugal bond. As such, breakdown of marriage - in elopement, divorce, second marriage - is no longer tolerated as it was in previous generations. Today, where the age of marriage is even further increased, and young women will finish secondary school and often aspire to a college education, this emphasis on conjugality dovetails with ideas of individual personality, self-expression and free will (Fuller and Narasimhan 2008, Shah 2006). From adolescence, women's desires for future flourishing are encompassed by the image of the husband as both provider and romantic companion. By contrast, their mothers scoff at the idea of romantic love or intimacy in marriage, instead seeing marriage as a practical arrangement that sustains household labour and livelihood. This new emphasis on romance and conjugality ideally renders female sexuality exclusive to her role as wife and channels her *shakti* into the patrilineal line. However, the high stakes of such an ideology leave much room for failure or refusal on the part of the woman. The enforcement of this ideology in violence, abuse and discrimination results in new forms of trauma. This section reveals the challenges that women undergo as they move through marriage, and the traumas that they might experience as they seek to adjust.

Adjust Karna Parega

The ambivalence at the heart of the marriage cycle plays out amongst the Gaddi according to the idiom of adjustment. Are women able to adjust to the household of their husband, are they able to adjust to his needs and the needs of his family? For women, the path of marriage is emotionally fraught, where women must grapple with their own in-betweenness while habituating to her marital home (Allerton 2013, Strathern 1988). After marriage a woman is expected to subjugate her own desires and needs to those of her marital family - shouldering a great deal of household work and serving her affines. She must be careful to control her emotions so as not to be considered wanton by her new family - in Marriott's terms she risks being considered a 'slut' (1998), her body hot and polluted by her new sexual

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[40] In Hindu society, marriage arrangements are the primary context for sorting out where a certain family, lineage or kin group ranks in relation to others (Bayly 1999: 54, Mody 2008: 1). Control over their sexuality is crucial to the maintenance of any family within a particular social hierarchy and defining the contours of a social group (Harlan and Courtright 1995:5-6; Das 1995). Anxiety about female propriety *is* anxiety about group identity. As such, marriage in Hindu society is the only way a woman can live a meaningful life and obtain full personhood (Lamb 2018).

maturity. She must wear the signs of her constricted sexuality - marital jewellery, her hair tied, apply vermillion to her parting (*sindoor*) and veil in front of her male affines (*ghungat*) (Harlan and Courtright 1995:10-11). The process of adjusting to a new home is fraught, one is under the intense speculative gaze of immediate and extended family member, who find fault in your every move.

Manju, a Hali neighbour who lived across the road from Uncle, explained to me one evening as we sat on her porch drinking evening *chai*. Manju and I were close, she was busty, young and bright, with a sing-song voice and a wide smile. She had three children under the age of five, all with pale turquoise eyes. She also cared for her husband's dementing parents and three cows, one of whom was particularly naughty. She could often be seen running down the hills toward the river when he escaped, her dupatta flying behind her. She explained to me:

> You have to adjust [to marriage], it takes time. The thinking in this family is different to the thinking in that family. You have to restrain yourself until you understand the set up in that family, your thinking isn't free. This is married life, this life is different to the life before marriage. But married life can be beautiful too. Before marriage everything is open, it is your own, at your own choice you can eat what you like, wear what you like, get up, sit and sleep as you like. Before marriage, if I felt like sleeping anytime I would go to sleep, but after marriage you can't. Everything is going on in the house, people are fighting in the house. Before marriage, I didn't cook anything, and I didn't know if they would like it or not. After marriage, I get tired but can't sleep. Life is very different.

A newly married woman also hopes to build an intimate romantic relationship. However, this is often obstructed by her mother-in-law or sisters in law. Manju went on that evening:

> Girls, they get married, and then husband and wife, they have sex, and there is a new kind of feeling that happens. They get together, and then they get used to it. Then she'll get pregnant. Then she has to have so many tests, then the delivery happens.

Here she stopped to chuckle.

> You have so much pain, and so much fear, what will happen? In the first delivery, you come to know what's going to happen. In the next delivery, they know. Then when the baby is born, they don't know how to breastfeed. Then slowly, slowly they learn everything. A different type of feeling comes.

I asked her what this 'different feeling was' –

> After marriage, [sex is] like a routine. It becomes an essential part of your life. If you don't do it, you feel weird… For husband and wife, it keeps them together. If nothing else, it's the sex that keeps them together. In the day you're working hard, but in the evening the husband and wife get together.

A newly married woman is also expected to fall pregnant within the immediate period following her marriage, preferably with a boy-child. Only when a woman has had boy children is she integrated into her marital family, cementing her status in her new household. If her first child is a girl, her family is often disappointed. If her second child is a girl, she might be shamed. Abortion is common, particularly in the upper castes, clinically accessed illegally and secretly by many Gaddi families who can afford it in Pathankot or forced through non-clinical means. An *anganwadi* (government nursery) worker explained the traumas of these first years to me:

> If they have one girl and she is pregnant, then they worry about the second baby. If that baby is also a girl. *Bechari* (poor thing)… She worries, what will my mother and father-in-law say if it is a girl, how will we look after a girl. She has all of these worries during the birth of her baby. But this shouldn't happen, if the lady takes *tension* then the baby will be affected. Whatever is in the mother's mind, will also be in the baby's mind.

But there is another thing in this village, not just in this village, in all places. If you have two girls, they don't come until three months, they will only come after three months. We don't come to know when [they get abortions] done, but they will register when they are pregnant and find out. If it is a girl then they will get the abortion done. They will say that it just miscarried by itself. You can't tell whether they have done it themselves or not. But how can it miscarry itself? But we don't have any proof. They do get depressed. The people in the house make them do these things. Then she gets depressed. How can the mother recover if the whole family is after her. It's wrong to do it. Then they will get pain around the uterus and infection there. They become very weak (*kamzor*) inside. If this happens again and again, they get very weak and depressed. If they get weak inside, then what can we do for them? If they get it done repeatedly, and they get pregnant again then they miscarry because they aren't strong enough to carry the child. This is the main problem. Then they can't have children. It's not her life, it's her family who does this. They put a lot of pressure on her. Their thinking isn't good, that's why they have problems. Some people have good thinking, they have two girls and they say – that's ok. But some people's thinking isn't good, they have two girls, three girls, four girls because they need a boy. What can you do?

Figure 5.2: A new bride after her wedding day, in her husband's house.

Domestic Violence

In many cases, the initial romantic attachment following marriage collapses with the weight of strained relations with affines, financial insecurity, infertility, miscarriages, the absence of a boy child. Women's hopes of intimacy, respect and mutual care are shattered by husbands whose frustrations boil over. Pia, a 25-year-old woman was married three years ago and left from her home in Palampur for her husband's home in Narota. In the back of her husband's shop on a quiet afternoon she broke down in my arms. Pia had been full of hope when she married, her and her husband courted on Facebook before their wedding. The year after the marriage was golden, their intimacy grew, and she fell pregnant. Her in-laws allowed her to continue with her law studies. After her daughter was born, her husband began to drink, his business ran slowly, and she was forced to give up her studies to run the shop. He began to hit her. The abuse became constant. She felt trapped, she mimed gasping for air. As she told her story, I could tell these were thoughts and feelings that were well formed, she had gone over them over and over again and now she was cracking, and they were coming out and I happened to be there at that moment. At first, Pia's brother took her in back in Palampur. But after some time, he urged her to go back to her husband, to work it out, to 'adjust'. She was a burden on her natal family, if her marriage failed it would bring them shame. Indeed, women who experience violence can go back to their natal home. However, most often this is for a short period, after which they are encouraged to return to their marriage. Women who have engaged in a love-marriage and eloped and are thus estranged or far from their natal home, don't have this protection of their brothers and father. Like Shruthi, they are considered more inauspicious, their humours and substances incompatible with this new place (Daniel 1984).

As we see with Pia, the obligation to adjust persisted through the experience of domestic violence. Once, during visit to the village parlour, I struck up a conversation with a woman getting her eyebrows threaded. She was an Gaddi Rajput woman, Saya, with two grown up children. Her husband worked in the water department in Natara . I also knew her sister, Nandini, who lived in a beautiful concrete house in the village below Ranu. She was married to a teacher in the local school and known for her beauty. Nandini's husband and her mother-in-law ferociously beat her. When I passed by her house, she was often found crouching in the small waterfall washing clothes. She would often come running to the road to whisper to me of her *ghar ki tension*. In the parlour that day, I tentatively began to ask Saya some questions about marriage and motherhood. Interested, the other ladies in the parlour joined in the conversation. I pitched to them a number of scenarios. A woman whose husband was an alcoholic, unable to provide for his children. A woman abused from the outset of marriage by her mother-in-law. A woman whose kind and loving husband had become violent after the birth of their first girl child. In all situations, the women were adamant that the woman must stay with her husband. They screwed up their faces and shook their heads - of course she must stay, she must 'adjust' (*adjust karna parega*). They were unsympathetic, agreeing with each other, they should get on with things.

The inability to adjust was a significant source of trauma for women. Edith Gahleitner's study of domestic violence in the Kangra district here provides significant evidence for the link between domestic abuse, reproductive failure and mental distress in this context (2015).[41] In parallel to my study, she found evidence of wife battery, dowry dispute, economical violence, depraved sexual violence, extreme verbal assault and emotional violence, forced prostitution, forced abortion and systematic stigmatisation. Gahleitner found that instances of abuse significantly surrounded domestic acts. Husbands and affines abused women for the giving them bad food, not keeping the house clean. Beatings were symptomatic of the failure to be a 'good wife'. Indeed, in drama workshops with adolescent girls from the village that I conducted, participants were given prompts and asked to act out a classic scenario in their home. The participants acted a familiar scene - a man drinking with his friends, returning to his house and demanding food from his wife for himself and his friends, his wife dutifully providing this. Her husband, unhappy with the food, throws it across the room, and pulls his wife by the hair, screaming abuse.[42]

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[41] Gahleitner was unable to track the incidence of domestic violence across class or caste groups. However, she did find that poverty was as significant driver of abuse. In my study, I found that incidence of domestic violence high across castes, associated both with wealthy upper caste men beating their wives to exert power; and lower caste women being beaten by their husbands who are appropriating upper caste, class respectability without the financial underpinning.

[42] Gahleitner found significant evidence of the links between such domestic abuse and 'mental tension'. She highlights that such mental tension surrounded food, shelter, children's education and, most notably, about a daughter's future, abuse of children or about the effect of the domestic violence on the children. Women blamed themselves for not fulfilling their responsibilities to the children when their husbands were violent. Women suffered PTSD, medically unexplained somatic illnesses such as dizziness, suicidal ideation, sleep disorders, memory and concentration loss and dissassociative symptoms. Though she found that emotional violence was more significant than physical violence, women *only* left their husbands if they reported a threat to their own life or their children's lives. She found evidence that the peak of their depression occurred when women had separated from their husbands, and living in their natal home or alone, facing the shame and stigma of a failed marriage and of being an unwanted burden on her natal kin.

Fieldnotes: May 23rd 2018: Tea

Shruthi was climbing the stairs before I realised what I had gotten myself into. I had spotted her getting down from the evening bus against the summer sunset. She shouted up from the road, asking if she might come in for tea. Uncle forbade me from allowing any of that family into the house after Leena's incident. She was particularly raucous that day, she laughed gleefully, pinched my cheeks and slapped her hands together. She kept pulling her peach-coloured scarf around her face, and then again flinging it to the ground. Usually when I met her, I had company. Perhaps her intensity struck me so much that day because I was alone with her. I didn't have to ask her any questions, her news came pouring out of her. "I don't have much to do with the children anymore. I have totally escaped the household. I don't have time for them, and I don't see what they do. I am always at work at my new job."

Shruthi was working as a cleaner at the swimming pool in the Tibetan compound that borders the village. The pool was busy these days, with Tibetan young men who came to drink beer and play pool. "They all come to see me!" She giggled. "They come to speak with me, especially Bhai [a local businessman]". Shruthi recounted how Bhai had visited her last week and remarked on how beautiful she was. Shruthi laughed uncontrollably and slapped my hand again. "But my family aren't happy. They say - you are always roaming about, getting back late, always on the phone." She stopped and looked at me grinning. "Where is Hugo? I haven't seen him on the bus." I explained that Hugo had bought a motorbike and now didn't need to catch the daily bus into town. "People are always asking, where is your boyfriend to me!" She dissolved into a fit of laughter. She noticed that I was getting uncomfortable. She grabbed my wrist. "I am ok now, you know" she said. "My tension *is ok. There is nothing wrong with me. But Sorab is* ganda (dirty)*, his mind is so bad. We are always fighting. If I hadn't run away, I would have been literate. One person I'll never forgive in my life is this man."*

New Anxieties

If sexual intimacy has come to be located exclusively in the conjugal bond and the patrilineal descent line is newly cemented, then extra-marital sexual exploits - elopement, affairs, flirtations - and reproductive problems – infertility, girl children, abortion - are also newly problematic. New forms of mobility, communication, employment and shifts in legal rights also generated significant panic as they offer new opportunities for supposed impropriety. First, as described in chapter 3, women who had to work, and particularly those who worked in Dharamshala, Kangra or Macleod were considered suspect. Macleod was conceived as a place of debauchery, where tourists and gangs from the plains engaged in sex work and drug dealing. Such accusations reached any woman who was spatially mobile. Women who breeched the boundaries of the home and the village, particularly after dark, where the butt of much speculation. Men spoke of the boundaries of the village as unsafe for their daughters today in a way that it was not in their childhood. The intrusion of seasonal workers, tourists and louts from the plains necessitated an extra level of vigilance for women and those who sought to 'protect' them from others and from their own temptations. The intimate and surveilling gaze of men in the village served to both sexualise and secure women's *izzat*. "If all our family is watching - uncles, brothers, cousins - nothing will happen. The brothers protect the girls, particularly against the tourists." Watching and protecting are articulations of care whereby individuals come to identify with the community by virtue of their sense of security. When I conducted workshops with young women, however, asking them to draw maps of the village space around their house and shade in the areas where they felt safe or unsafe, it was not only the outsiders that caused them anxiety. These young women saw the teashops that dotted the village and filled with local men from their own caste drinking home-brewed alcohol as just as unsafe as the areas where men from other castes or from outside the village tended to dwell.

Figure 5.3: Adolescent girls mark a map of their own village, making out the places where they feel safe or unsafe.

Second, the use of technology - mobile phones, social media and phone cameras - was seen to facilitate their aberrant behaviour. A woman who was seen on the phone too often or took photos that were considered too provocative, was considered dangerous and suspected of sexual impropriety. Young women's phones were checked for secret boyfriends. Girls were told stories of visiting men from other caste and religious groups who would attempt to contact them via their mobile phones. Such 'wrong number' relationships were on one hand a source of excitement and potential for women due to their combination of emotional intimacy and physical distance (Wardlow 2018). As Huang (2017) describes of Bangladeshi young women, the mobile phone offered a means of negotiating strict gender norms without being openly transgressive. However, on the other hand, the obscurity of such intimacy led to speculation on the part of others. As Mehtta (2019) contends, the mobile phone was seen as a euphemism for disallowed intimacies. However, unlike in Mehtta's context, such a euphemism was not used to explain away these illicit affairs. Instead, a woman's use of a mobile phone in any circumstance was an excuse for moral reprimand. "That woman is always on her phone." Uncle would often shake his head as he spoke of Shruthi. Indeed, Shruthi would often come over to our house under the guise of dropping in a small gift or wanting a cup of tea. She would then take a lengthy and animated phone call

from our kitchen. Uncle soon realised the pattern and banned her from visiting. He wouldn't want to be suspected of facilitating this kind of behaviour.

Third, recent progressive legislative shifts had provoked anxiety. Most specifically the Domestic Violence Act in 2005 and the outcomes of the Verma Commission Report in 2012 empower women and their families financially and legally to leave abusive relationships. This also works the other way, where the legitimacy of marriages that are deemed aberrant are contested on legal grounds - elopements become kidnappings, inter-caste marriages are annulled on grounds of abuse or dowry torture - undermining women's choices (Mody 2008, Grover 2011). However, appeal to such legislation in the village is seen as an act of individualistic cunning and the veracity of women's claims are often disputed. As one policewoman explained:

> Their husband beats them, maybe there is less dowry so they beat them. Or about money, the husbands don't give money to the wives for household and the children's education. If [this] is reported, then [the courts] make [the husband] give a certain amount of money to his wife… every month. This is very common, but some people just tell lies…When a lady is raped, then they get 4 lakhs from the state. So you know what ladies do? They tell a lie about it. Many say this, that they were with someone, and they were fighting, like if a boy and girl are living together, and then the boys off with someone else, then if he is not fulfilling her demands then she might say that he has done this with me. But this is wrong, because they were living together because they wanted to live together. The court is always in the lady's favour. They know they will get this money.

Within this context, a woman who is suspected of sexual exploits and who refused to fall back into line when she is called out is newly dangerous. She who is actively resistant to the reprimands or violence that are inflicted on her or unable to be reintegrated into the marital household - whose *izzat* cannot be domesticated - is seen as a threat. It is this kind of woman who is called *pagal*.

Fieldnotes: July 11ᵗʰ 2018: The Blue Uniform

We were leaving Sita's house when a flash of cobalt blue caught my eye. Shruthi was standing on the threshold of her kitchen, holding up a brilliant blue kurta top. "Hey!" She called us over. She danced with the kurta, twirling it around and cocking her head. "Do you like it?" She sung and beckoned us over. We jumped over the gap between the farms and climbed the stairs to her kitchen. I was shocked by its cleanliness. The floors were well swept and there was not one dirty pan in the sink in the corner. But the shelves were bare, unlike other kitchens, there were no packets of daal or coconut biscuits. Shruthi handed Pinki a 10 rupee note from her wallet and rushed her to pick up a packet of tea leaves and biscuits to serve us. Her hands shook as she set the pot on to boil for the tea, and when Pinki arrived back only added one teaspoon full over leaves. She didn't look at us as she spoke.

> It's very difficult for me, very difficult. Here, nobody gives me anything, nobody speaks to me. These days, I can't go anywhere in the village without people saying something about me. Who have you been going with? They ask. I just even go to Khagota to get some vegetables, and they say where has she been? Who has she been with? My husband gets so angry, so angry, he says don't go now…. Because I don't have a *maike* (natal home) here, I have nowhere to go… The people in this village are so dirty.

She paused to pour the tea. "How is your work?" I asked her. "Yes, it is good work." She replied, taking care to put the silver teacups on a tray before she passed them to us. "But I get very little money, and the expenses [of the household] are a lot…. Everyone needs something, I have to get everything for the children, every morning [there is something more]." Shruthi began to speak about how this condition of constant rumour and gossip made her ill.

> I have fear. I have fear inside me, I don't know what's happened. All the time…I feel better [if I speak about my problems], but people listen to my problems and they don't understand. The voice comes into their ears, but they don't understand.

Soujanyaa asked if she ever thought of leaving her husband. This time she looked up, straight at us, defiantly. "I must do it. I have to go and get it done in the court, but it costs alot, 10 000 rupees. I will get expenses if the divorce goes through from the court…." Shruthi was worried though about where she would go if the divorce went through.

> If I go back [to Chamba] to find work, then all of those people will ask what has happened. What's happened to her? If I go back there and take quarters in their house, they will say - how many years have gone past? She is their oldest daughter, she is too old to stay here. What can she do? They will sad very bad things about me. I have so much izzat (respect, honour), but they will say I have none. They won't keep me. Those people get upset if I am inside, or if I am outside. I think I will go and rent a house here. My children can choose themselves if they come with me or stay with their father.

The pain welled up, she began to whisper,

> When I was married, I tried to do the right thing. They gave me so many utensils to wash, I had so much to do. I was so scared of them. I cooked so much for so many people… My hands were cracked. I was only sixteen. When I was seventeen, Leena was born. I washed so many clothes. They would all hit me, all hurt me. They would only leave me such a small amount of food in a bowl, and I would have to just eat that and sleep. They were so dirty…Here in this village they only want this from women. Have children. Do the cow's work. If you do anything else, they talk about you.

IV | Pagal Women

The accusation that a woman is *pagal* is common for such women whose marriages are frayed. As an illocutionary act, it works to blame women for their failure to hold together broken kinship relations, to adjust, to remain silent. But it also works to acknowledge the forms of trauma that they might have experienced at the hands of their marital family. My interlocutors told me that madness can be caused by "taking too much *tension*" or "not sharing [one's] *tension*". People were accused of crossing the threshold from *tension* to *pagal* if they are unable to sustain their relationships and meet the expectations of kin and affines. For women, the inability to make a smooth transition from their natal home to marital home was determined due to abuse at the hands of the husband or affines, inability to fall pregnant, to have a boy child, to adhere to the expectations and patterns of household labour often express extreme mental distress, or excess *tension* that, I was told, left them vulnerable to madness. Instances of reproductive failure, miscarriage, infertility, the loss of a child or forced, sex-selective abortion; and marriage failure - widowhood, separation, divorce were strong determinants of extreme mental distress. Such women are vulnerable to both domestic violence, and structural violence - harassment, discrimination, social isolation, stigma, economic vulnerability, feelings of worthlessness (see Lamb 2018). We might think of such traumatic events as relational injuries rather than a purely intrapsychic or structural ones (Lester 2013), where worlds of kinship are unmade in pain (Scarry 1985). The discourse of *pagal* might be seen as a socially sanctioned and culturally inflected means of acknowledging such trauma and its impact on a woman's body, articulating both pity for a woman who is failed by her kin, and critique for a woman unable to 'adjust' and meet the expectations placed on her, whatever the situation. We have begun to episodically chart Shruthi's story, let us delve deeper.

Shruthi's Story

One afternoon, I was sitting with Shruthi's neighbour, Sita. She had promised to show me some photos of old days in the village. We chatted as she spread out the photos on the crisp sheet. I began to slowly rifle through. A picture of Sita's husband the day he left for work in Delhi. Of her sister in traditional Gaddi dress dancing at a function in Dharamshala. Then I found it. The picture showed a woman looking directly into the camera. She stood against a metal mesh, like the fencing that lines a prison or zoo enclosure. She was dressed in a purple spotted suit and a cheap red *dupatta* (scarf). This was her wedding day. Her hands were adorned to the elbow with bangles, nails painted red. She held them aloft, as if not quite sure where to put them. She clutched a tissue. The *sindoor* (vermillion) in the part of her hair looked thick and fresh. Even in the grainy photograph, her eyes looked deep, pooling, sad. She was so young, even then she didn't smile. "Shruthi was so different when she came, before it all started." Sita remarked.

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In the village today, few women still remember Shruthi like that. She was more often the subject of rumour, gossip and speculation. The moral opinion about her behaviour oscillated between pity and blame. On one hand, she was seen as *bechaari*, a 'poor thing', a victim of her mother-in-law's cruelty. However, Shruthi was blamed for bringing imbalance to her mother-in-law's household as a result of her initial elopement. The transition Shruthi had made in the eyes of her neighbours from subject of pity, to object of distain had occurred over twenty years of drama. At first, they told me, they worried about her. The fights in that house were frequent, theatrical and public. She was seen as young and foolish to have eloped. But also seen as unlucky to have found her way into such a turbulent family, where Sorab's mother was notoriously scathing, known for her quick tongue and agility with a stick. Some said Sorab's mother was a *dain* (witch), she knew the spells of *opara* (black magic). Others said she kept poison scattered on her fields for any dog who came sniffing at her fields. As Shruthi grew older, the torture hardened her, scars calcifying around her wounds, she began to fight back, often I could hear her screams from my house in the early hours of the morning, she would curse, foul-mouthed. The more public the fighting grew, the more isolated Shruthi became. Her neighbours lost their patience. The women of the village told me they would often call the police in the beginning, but when they arrived Shruthi would always deny being beaten. She didn't want to lose her husband, they sighed, she still has an attachment to her husband and her children. She still loves him.

As Shruthi's behaviour became more erratic, they begun to whisper about the affairs she was having. They tutted – "how else would she have so much money? How else could she afford to leave her husband? How else did she have the money for that smart phone, those earrings, those blue jeans?" She was always on that phone, they muttered. Like a choir in a Greek play, they always had something to say about Shruthi. Her husband was admittedly useless. He didn't protect her from his mother, he couldn't choose, they pursed their lips. But this didn't excuse her from entertaining other men. They would come to her in the dead of night, the women conjectured. "Wasn't she seen in the back of a car on the way to Dharamshala?" they chided. Shruthi's daily journey to and from whichever place she was currently working at served as fodder for rumour. Indeed, she played the part well. She would dress up coquettishly, lining her lips a little too much. She would always return after dark.

Shruthi didn't behave like other Gaddi married women, she was effusive, flirtatious, she screamed in public, she let her children run free. Sorab was also considered in some way *pagal*. He was often found singing old Gaddi songs in a drunken stupor up and down the Ranu road. He was known for his unpaid debts, his unsolicited sexual advances on the village women, and his inability to keep his wife in line. He was even rumoured to have beaten up his own Uncle over a minor disagreement. However, Sorab was not blamed himself for his deviant and even violent behaviour. Instead, Shruthi was chastised for her inability to adjust to her marital home, sending her husband to alcoholism as a result of her failure

as a mother to his children, and her extra-marital sexual exploits. It was her selfish failure to care for her husband and children that led the village to label her as *pagal*.

The nexus of violence that engulfed this household led others to avoid them. When I asked Uncle about her and the family, he screwed up his eyes and spoke slowly and carefully. "We aren't on good terms with that family", he said.

> Those children have no guidance, and we ask them not to come to this house. The problem is that you can't trust them, and the biggest problem is the mother-in-law. They live separately, but the father and his mother are both very violent. This leaves the mother as a *bechaari*, but she gets angry very easily and has suffered a lot.

As if her deviance were polluting or contagious, Uncle discouraged me from visiting Shruthi, from playing with her children. If I spent too much time with Shruthi, neighbours would talk, and I could even be cursed by some kind of *opara*. Shruthi madness had some kind of dark power over the community that threatened to undo the careful work of *izzat*.

<p align="center">***</p>

There were four other women who were accused of being *pagal* in the immediate proximity of the village. First, Shalini, also a Hali woman who lived a few houses away from Shruthi. Shalini's husband was in prison, accused of murdering another man in a drunken brawl, leaving Shalini alone at home with two children. She was an ASHA (sexual health) worker, dressed in slacks and dangly earrings. She was rumoured, like Shruthi, to have visitors during the night. Second, a high caste Gaddi woman who lived in the lower part of the village. She had 'taken too much *tension*' because her husband didn't give her enough money. She started to withdraw and stopped caring for her children. Third, Bittu, who was rumoured to have had a number of psychotic episodes where she stripped off all her clothes and drunk full bottles of whisky. Bittu was said to have been cursed before she was married to her husband, bringing the curse into her new household. After birthing two children, Bittu had then run away with a Nepali man to Kathmandu, before her father-in-law had gone to bring her back. This led her husband to go mad as well, drinking excessively and becoming violent before being admitted to the psychiatric ward in Natara .

The narratives of these *pagal* women displayed contradictory behaviours, incoherent ethics and fragmented fantasies that ran along the grooves of feminine ideals of care, motherhood, housewifery - but always seemed to spill over and go sprawling. These women were undone, often very publicly; forced to improvise in "normless experiments in life, where people engage to mitigate and normalise pains and distress at moments when these pains are problematized in everyday life" (Han 2012:30). They were seen in the eyes of the village to have failed as daughters, as mothers, as wives, and to have been failed by husbands, parents and in-laws. They struggled to resist the lacunae of their own shame, while they attempted to piece together their selfhood, care for their children, and love their husbands in

new constellations. In each of these cases, moral opinion of the *pagal* women oscillated between pity and blame, but always the accusation of *pagal* was associated with failed marriage and kinship relations. These stories were moored by comments about the accused woman's poor family, whose *izzat* or respectability had been breached as a result of their misbehaviour, and about the poor woman herself whose family inflicted such trauma on her.

The last woman who was referred to as *pagal* was slightly different to these others. This woman wandered around in the no-man's land on the fringes of the village, where the taxi-drivers parked and shared bottles of whiskey. My neighbour, Anju, told me of when she had first seen this woman:

> She was wearing a jacket. Her hair was all over the place. And she had so many plastic bags and packets, toffees hanging off her jacket pockets. It was 5-6 years ago. I didn't know who that woman was. Then I went to Khagota, and I asked who she was, where she was from. They said her name is Rani, meaning 'queen'. She looked very strange, but the name is very beautiful. I asked why has she become like this?
>
> After some time, I found out that she was a very pretty girl, and [one day she was walking] and the [taxi] drivers picked her up… the whole day and night, so many of these drivers had sex with her. I don't know how many of them there were. Her mind must be so tortured. The family must be looking for her, but then the family hides her because they don't want people to know. If the family is like this, then nobody knows for years what has happened. I don't know how many [have been] with her, 20, 30, 50 or something like that. You can't count how many. There are so many. I don't know, her brain must have been numbed, or failed because of all of it.
>
> I don't know where they are from, but I just heard that this happened. The family must have reported to the police. They tried, but they couldn't find her and now she has reached here. How long will her family look for her? For 6 months, one year, and after that they will lose hope. They will think she has been killed or beaten. They don't know what's happened. Her brain has so much *tension*. Where will she eat? Here, there. And then her brain totally failed. She had a baby girl, and somebody adopted her. Then she was just bleeding like this. In the rain or in the sun she would just be walking around. Her mind had completely lost it. Now I don't know where she's gone, I haven't seen her, she might have died.
>
> When I saw her I had so much *tension*. When I see ladies like that, I get very sad. I said to my husband, can we pick her up? Here and there, she will say a few words, or people will talk about her. She has lost her mind, she would just go anywhere. Then the driver would take her.

Given Hindu community is contingent on the monopoly on female sexuality (Das 1995), when a woman is raped or if she engages in extramarital affairs the intimate bonds that constitute her kinship or affinal community are broken. As Anju explained,

> The biggest effect is mentally, it happens physically, but the biggest effects are mental ones. She gets scared that this might happen to me again. She has *tension*, everything affects her. Her family is bad to her, she worries everyone is watching her and thinking badly about her.

In comparing the case of Rani to that of the other women who were accused of being *pagal*, we see that there are gradations of deviance within the use of the term based on classification of women into those who can potentially be integrated back into the structures of alliance and those who cannot - those who can regain their *izzat* and those who cannot. To become *pagal*, or to die, was the only conceivable outcome of a situation of rape, wherein the body of the victim becomes a living corpse of shame (Baxi 2000). This logic similarly applied to women who committed suicide, wherein social death and actual death are seen as viable and acceptable outcomes to situations of extreme kinship breakdown. For

example, a woman from the village close to Thera died by suicide at the very end of my fieldwork. The victim of obscene violence at the hands of her affines, she had taken her own life and that of her two sons. She arose one morning, put poison in the morning breakfast, and fed it to her children before taking the poison herself. The three died. A local policeman tutted, "now the whole family's peace is gone. They are all in the jail – in-laws, sister-in-law, brother-in-law."

Fieldnotes: October 26th 2018: Sorab's drunken visit

Sorab staggered up our stairs, clutching the railing, spittle dripping from his mouth and sobbing fat tears. He stumbled onto the veranda and slumped against the wall of the house. We were bemused. Sorab was always drunk. He haunted the small tea shops around the village, waiting for a drinking partner. He was meant to be a security guard at the hydroelectricity project behind the village, but I never saw him leave for his duties. He would sing old Gaddi women's songs as he traipsed up the road by the river. One tended to cross the street to avoid his advances. Today was the first time he had come directly up to our house. "My wife has left me." He wiped his nose on his shirt. "My wife and my children don't speak to me, it's because of my mother. This is why I drink." He stopped to slurp the open bottle of thum's up he had filled with home brewed spirit. "Please get me something to eat." He pleaded, attempting to salvage some kind of respectability by eating a small snack while drinking. "What can I do? All I can do is drink! My wife has become Pagladevi Mata*." Again, he broke down, he muttered about how much he loved her. "These people have done some* jadu *on my wife." He cried out. I realised Sorab drunk from the shame of his wife's* pagal*, and from the shame of his ability to protect her from it.*

V | Pagalamata Devi

When Sorab came drunk to my house, decrying his wife, Shruthi, was *pagaladevi mata,* the mad goddess, he was expressing his own feelings of defeat. He was unable to protect his wife from his mother or the forces of gossip, rumour and *jadu* in his own family and community. To call her *pagal* was to express that she was a victim of the precarity the woman's position in marriage but could not be saved or reintegrated back into kinship structures. To call her *pagal* was simultaneously to extinguish her agency to act rationally, but also to acknowledge her excessive, destructive power.

Indeed, unmet female desire is conceived of as a powerful force that has a tendency to spill over in excessive displays of mania, possession or sexual deviance; the overheated female body unable to harness this creative energy leading to 'hypomantic' or even orgasmic states (Obeysekere 1981). According to Kakar's Jungian reading, rather than being conceived of as a negation of the ideal woman, this inferior, dark side of the personality is consistent of the forbidden desires that are incompatible with the strivings of the conscious persona (1982:75). This shadow self is always there and must be managed, and at times released, so that it doesn't come to eclipse the persona. In moments of trauma, where a woman is pushed to the brink of her existence, she might draw on cultural forms – in this case the symbolic form of the maligned goddess - to regain her footing (Lester 2013). Through these forms, do women work to reclaim some form of ambivalent agency? We must be very careful when broaching the of question agency so as not to jump to the romantic notion that madness offers women a way out of the oppressively patriarchal structures of *izzat.* Indeed, the opposite is also the case, mad women invite the most vicious forms of moral policing and violence.

Negative Agency

Models of subversive female behaviour in Northern India have been primarily characterised by the language of strategic or collective anti-structural agency (Chowdhry 1996, Berry 2011, 2014).[43] They draw on an idea of 'negative agency' - a refusal to cooperate or commit their bodies to the project of social reproduction (Wardlow 2006:14, Kratz 2000); or a 'negative immanence' - a radical condition of vital negative becoming where the conditions of desubjectification became the conditions for a radically new self (Bessire 2014). Such approaches are illuminating, as they highlight the potential for women to manipulate and reclaim the categories that render them marginal. For example, Chowdhry (1996) has

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[43] Such an approach has been more comprehensively developed by Holly Wardlow. Wardlow's (2006) ethnography of *pasinja meri,* or passenger women among the Huli of Papua New Guinea, explores the use of sexuality as an agentive resource for women. In parallel to the Gaddi context, Huli female agency and sexuality is 'encompassed' by male kin. Wardlow traces the stories of *pasinja meri* as they refuse to 'remain under the legs' of male kin and leave behind reproductive responsibilities to engage in sex work at 'bush discos' and in urban centres. She argues that such passenger women are not propelled to leave their families and sell sex for economic reasons but are driven by the anger and emotional pain at having kin who *fail* to protect them from exploitation or abuse. They deny their families and clan their own reproductive potential and claim it as their own. In doing so, she argues, they gain a form of 'negative agency' - a refusal to cooperate, a refusal to commit their bodies to the project of social reproduction (2006:14, Kratz 2000).

explained how widows in colonial Panjab rejected the custom of *karewa* marriage to one's brother-in-law and were subsequently labelled *badchalni* (unchaste) women; affording them the right to live in their husband's home with relative economic and sexual autonomy. Closer to this ethnographic context is Berry's (2011, 2014) ethnography of *Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan* (single women's movement), where 2600 Himachali single, abandoned, abused, divorced women marched for the right to land, employment, healthcare and rations in 2008. They collectively reclaimed the marginal position of the single woman. However, my interlocutors, like Shruthi, who were labelled as *pagal* or actively engaged in sexual impropriety did not make successful or strategic acts of refusal. They did not display collective action or actively accept labels of unchastity. Neither were my *pagal* interlocutors propelled, without any volition, by broader structural forces into their marginal positionalities. Their tales were messier, more painstaking, less empowering; such that describing their actions as a form of negative or collective agency doesn't quite fit. Indeed, such a definition of agency as anti-structural fails to capture the source of *pagal* itself, a rumination on the persistent precarity of a woman's position within structure of alliance that continuously, throughout the life course, threatens to spill over into excess. As Doniger observes, when the cycle of eroticism and asceticism unbalanced and there is excess in either element it poses a threat to the marriage, and in general to the functioning of the universe - "the excess of anything, bad or good - such a virtue in the ascetic - poses a threat to the balance of the closed universe" (1981:282).

Excessive Agency

The *pagal* women occupies a space on the boundaries of the community. Though marginalised, she still offered an alternative way of living as a woman on the margins of marriage and an alternative form of independent femininity beyond the role of devoted wife. This form of agency is less related to the direct subversion of patriarchal values, but instead the simultaneous threat and potential of a more sustained imbalance of these values. If a woman takes too much *tension*, if her body and her household are too imbalanced and overheated, she is at risk of becoming *pagal*.

I argue that the defining feature of *pagal* is this excess. By excess, I mean that women who are mad do not negate female values or virtues but embody the ambivalence at the heart of femininity. In their mad acts, they are agonisingly aware of their own condition of trauma, and immanently in touch with their own suffering such that their thought becomes eroded (Sontag 1981, Bear 2007, Nelson 2011). In the symbolic models of Parvati and Kali, and in the discourse of madness, they are given a language through which to represent such trauma, revealing to others their unmet desires. As an accused *pagal* woman, Shruthi is seen by those in her village as a polluting and inauspicious presence, shattering the fantasy of the good housewife by showing its contingency on fragile structures of marriage and kinship. Her husband was unable to meet her needs or the needs of her children. Instead of simply putting up with this, she fought back and attempted to take things into her own hands - seeking her own sexual gratification, earning her own money, seeking help from other men to get her jobs done. It was only by

doing so that she could maintain what she thought was *izzat*. What made Shruthi *pagal* in the eyes of the village was that she was acting on her unmet desires, that she eschewed the balance that was characteristic of Gaddi femininity. In doing so, she chose to clearly and visibly represent the conditions of her own suffering. As such she offered an alternative way of living as an independent, albeit excluded woman, beyond the structures of alliance.

Conclusion

The kind of agency that comes with this form of madness is thus not wholly resistant or directly political, but something more experimental. It is characterised by simulation, performance, in order to become something else (Lakoff 2005). This act of excess creates a situation that breaks the familiar frame of perception, falling outside the bounds of social stereotypes and culminates in nothing but a logical dead end (Yurchak 2007: 208). This words to introduce the uncanny into the fabric of the political world - where actions appear suspiciously political and yet their explanation is not, subversive but not wholly anti-structural. Displays of madness may not have been full aesthetics of living otherwise, but they did display an agonising awareness of the precarity of their condition within patriarchal kinship relations, rendered acute in the contemporary project of upward social mobility. These women dramatised the axes of life that are very normal, if in heightened form (Pinto 2014). *Pagal* women caused ripples of disturbance that amounted to no clear opposition but expounded from the contradictions of Gaddi marriage, mobilised the ambiguity of feminine tropes and, as a result, remained aporetic to those around them. Their power, *shakti*, was in mobilising the inherent ambivalence of Gaddi femininity, rendering visible the simultaneous dependence on and disavowal of women in the upwardly mobile Gaddi community.

Interlude | Leaving

30th September, 2019

[5:20 am, 30/09/2019] Souji: Oh, you know they've moved out
[5:20 am, 30/09/2019] Souji: Long time ago
[5:20 am, 30/09/2019] Nikita: Seriously
[5:21 am, 30/09/2019] Nikita: To where?
[5:21 am, 30/09/2019] Souji: I probably forgot to tell you
[5:21 am, 30/09/2019] Nikita: Sorab too?
[5:21 am, 30/09/2019] Souji: They have been living in Daari
[5:21 am, 30/09/2019] Nikita: The whole family?
[5:21 am, 30/09/2019] Souji: No
[5:21 am, 30/09/2019] Nikita: With another man or rented
[5:21 am, 30/09/2019] Souji: Only her and the kids
[5:21 am, 30/09/2019] Nikita: What her daughters too?
[5:21 am, 30/09/2019] Souji: But her son came back to his grandmother
[5:22 am, 30/09/2019] Souji: The kids cried a lot
[5:22 am, 30/09/2019] Nikita: Yeah god that's terrible to split them up
[5:22 am, 30/09/2019] Nikita: Is she ok?
[5:22 am, 30/09/2019] Souji: They really miss their brother
[5:22 am, 30/09/2019] Nikita: Where is Sorab?
[5:22 am, 30/09/2019] Souji: He's still here I guess

Chapter 6 | A Cartography of Care: Finding relief from tension

I told you I wanted to live in a world where the antidote to shame was not honour but honesty.

Maggie Nelson, The Argonauts

Preface | Maya's Birthday

Didi called me away from the festivities of little Maya's birthday to come and join them. I followed her past the stables to a tiny mud cottage around the back of the house. The square room was filled with soft light and the thick smell of breastmilk. This was Vanita Mami's room that she had shared with her only daughter, Anya, before she had married. It had quietly seen this mother and daughter through death and growth and pain and new life. Vanita Mami had been married to Didi's aunt, her mother's brother who had passed while Didi's cousin Anya was still an infant. Since then, Vanita has lived alone, a widow, working as a cook in the nunnery close-by to put her daughter through school, then college, then into a happy marriage to a Army Officer from Chamba. Didi was very close to Vanita Mami, who had who had cared for her like a mother when they had returned to her mother's *maike* (natal home) to escape her abusive aunts. Whenever I entered this small hamlet with Didi, I could see the taught muscles in her neck loosen slightly and the soft wrinkles around her eyes smooth out.

Anya was propped up in the corner feeding her infant, she swaddled him in a thin blanket as she herself was swaddled by her aunts and cousins who lay about the pallet bed. The room was lined with stacks of her law books, read vigilantly during five years of law school at the local college. She was a criminal lawyer now but had paused her career as she had fallen pregnant soon after she was married. Anya had come home to be with her mother for the birth of her son some two weeks ago, and now the legal tomes formed small ledges where she kept bottles and nappies and half-knitted booties.

Today, Anya sat beside Vanita with her infant cradled in her arms, surrounded by her sisters and cousins and friends. They ushered me in, and made space on the corner of the bed, pulling me under the thick *rasai* that they shared. The women had travelled from near and far, from Brahmour and Kangra and Panjab to visit Anya and the new baby, but now they rested together. Normally quiet, Vanita began to speak slowly of the *sukh-dukh* (ups-and-downs) of her life, of the difficulties of being a mother alone, the hardships of being a widow. She reflected on how she had brought up her child herself, with money earned from *chota-mota kam*, small pieces of work in kitchens and laundries, not her own. The others held her reflections and began to share their own. Didi sat beside me and squeeze my knee as she listened, "I am so happy here Niki" she whispered to me in English, "with my child in my grandfather's house. I am so happy." For a moment, there was relief.

Introduction

This thesis is an invitation to consider an approach to distress as relationally constituted, informed by the gendered and generational structure of social relations. Methodologically, I have charted the intra-household and inter-household relationships that women work to sustain and attempted to understand the imprint that such a burden of relationships leaves on their bodies and minds. I have traced the contours of tribe, caste and class as they have shaped these household relationships over time with the transition from agro-pastoralism to waged labour, leaving some upwardly mobile and others aspiring to be. *Tension* has emerged as a relational condition, experienced as a bodily, mental and supernatural disruption in response to the demands of contemporary Gaddi femininity. It is only fitting, therefore, that I take a similar approach to identifying the ways in which women find relief from *tension.* This chapter considers the ways in which the very structures of kinship, neighbourliness and friendship that contribute to *tension* also produce the sources of social and emotional support that allow them to weather its storms. It asks how these structures of support have changed over time, as the shape of the Gaddi household has changed. It asks which forms of social support are available to women across the life course, and how they became accessible through the very utterance or admission of *tension.*

For Gaddi women, care and support was framed as a verb and a practice that lasted through time and space. To care for the self or another was mostly spoken of as *apna khayal rakhna, dhayan rakhna,* or to look over or look out for (*dekhna*). To provide or give support for another was *sahara dena,* and to care for space was *sambalna.* Caring was part of one's ethical work (*kam*) - both a gendered moral duty and a form of physical labour. Care involved a practical element, meeting the needs of one's husband and family, and an emotional element, cultivating the appropriate affects of attachment and concern. The work of care and its associated affects shifted across the life-course, dependent on expectations of women as a daughter, wife, mother and mother-in-law. Health and wellbeing were outcomes of care, as the labour of care accumulated in the body and its absence caused one to become sick. For Gaddi women, as laid out in previous chapters, care for one's husband, family and children were both life-affirming and the very source of their distress. Women's own inability to see the fruits of their caring labour left them *kamzor* (weak). Their inability to adequately build a space of care in the home caused them *ghar ki tension* (household tension). Their inability to manage aspirations and caring demands left them with *future tension.* A lack of care could potential make them *pagal* (mad). We have also seen how the structures of care for women have shifted over the past century, where women's ability to seek care from their neighbours is threatened by new inequalities; where households as caring spaces have become increasingly nuclearised; where the division between the natal home and marital home has weakened allowing women to move more easily between the two. We have seen how the affects of care that animate these structures have also shifted - where romantic love in the conjugal bond is crucial to marital care.

In delineating the different forms of *tension,* our focus to this point has been on what women care *about*, how women *give* care, or the results of a *lack* of care. In order to understand how women find relief from *tension*, we might pay attention to the ways the expression of *tension* allows women to seek out, demand and receive care from one another. My research revealed three modalities by which women sought out care – through the act of sharing *tension* with intimate others; through the act of independently seeking help from alternative spaces; and through collective acts of joy. Through this provocation, we can map out the alternative spaces, events and acts of care that have less obvious therapeutic potential for women to produce a gendered cartography of care. The cartography of care that we are working toward might be seen as the negative of the cartography of vulnerability that was presented in the first chapter. Where the latter was concerned with the ways relations of kinship, tribal, caste and gendered belonging had shifted to make people vulnerable in new ways; the former is about how these relations offer alternative sources of support. The productiveness of thinking cartographically is that the salience of different spaces in an individual's life shift, not just spatially but categorically and temporally as well, with different configurations of relief emerging at different points in the life course (Reddy 2005:77).

These modalities of care are not seen as a solution to *tension*, neither are they always freeing, reflexive or effective at improving bodily symptoms. Instead, they might be seen as means by which women seek to distribute their *tension*, allowing it to be held by other, momentarily (Raschig 2017). Yet in these moments, the expression of *tension* allows women to elicit alternative kinship relations, and alternative values of femininity. This chapter will first show why it is important to look beyond the clinic and the shrine to find these less obvious modalities of care. It will then elucidate these modalities – sharing, seeking help and joy - that I observed as critical to the ways in which they sought relief. Such modalities have been overlooked and under theorised in both anthropological accounts of mental illness and provide the seeds of an important alternative way of building interventions to address gendered mental distress.

I | Therapeutic Landscapes

When the pain got too much, Aunty would curl up on the daybed on the front veranda and pull her scarf over her face, blocking out the midday sun. I got used to seeing her like this, clutching her abdomen, grinding her teeth. When things were good, she would tie the scarf around her head and get to work sweeping the courtyard, back stooped, neck bent. "Aunty, why are you working!" I would yell from my window. The next day, even sitting on the daybed would be too much for her. She would be prostrate and groaning in her bed.

Aunty had a litany of health problems such that her pain was a composite thing. There was the sharp, excruciating pain of her slipped disk, she showed me, holding the X-ray to the afternoon light. There

was the dull ache in her abdomen, that came to a crescendo during her menses, when the bleeding grew heavy and the blood drained from her face, forcing her to swallow the pills that left a metallic slick in her mouth. Then there was the sluggish pain of her thyroid problem, that seemed to turn her blood into a thick goop. These differed layers of pain sedimented in Aunty's body, such that now they formed a hard shell that kept her away from others.

She had no interest in the home remedies dropped off by her sisters-in-law at dusk. "She keeps to herself these days, the sickness gives her so much *tension*" Aunty's sister-in-law muttered. However, Aunty was no stranger to the range of healers that dotted the valley. Indeed, Dharamshala, being the place of the gods, is also a place where people come from across the globe to learn, practice and seek out different forms of healing. As one walks through the gulleys of MacLeod Ganj, one cannot help but cross the paths of yogis clad in saffron and monks clad in crimson; the strings of small stores selling pink, blue, green bottles of Tibetan medicines and Ayurvedic remedies; signs prescribing courses in yoga, tapping, tai chi for the lost modern mind. The plethora of options that are available to peri-urban villagers range from psychoanalysis to martial arts, psychiatry to yoga. Graded, however, by barriers of affordability and knowledge, such variety is mobilised by women as they seek help for their bodily and spiritual ailments.

Aunty had begun by taking *desi* medicine from her neighbours, women who knew which herbs to collect from the high pastures and grind into sticky pastes and poultices. Their ineffectuality propelled them first to the general OPD at Dharamshala Zonal Hospital, then to a series of specialists at the teaching hospital in Tanda, the military cantonment hospital in Yol, then another private hospital in Kangra. Aunty would dress in her best mustard-coloured silk suit to visit these doctors. Uncle would trail behind her, with his moustache neatly trimmed, carrying a thickening wad of test results. There was anxious talk of an operation that they just couldn't quite afford at this moment, put off until the next season when the monsoon had passed so she wouldn't get infections, when the winter passed so she wouldn't get a cold, Uncle promised. In the meantime, there were visits to the local homeopathic clinic, to the Tibetan hospital for needling, to the Ayurvedic hospital for bitter brown balls, to the Homeopathic clinic for massage. They had turned to traditional healers when they had realised that the problems could not only be *sariri* (bodily) but had to have some kind of malign cause driven by jealousy of their wealth and security. Such multiplying pain must have its roots in evil. Visits to family healers built up to referrals to renowned ritual therapists and culminated in a dramatic ritual that involved the whole extended family and lasted the better part of a week.

It was by witnessing Aunty's pain that I came to understand the landscape of care that marked the valley. I also began to realise that declaration of suffering, in the exclamation of *tension* or bodily ailments, elicited attention and care from her husband and affines that was otherwise lacking. Following

Aunty and Uncle as they criss-crossed between dispensaries and clinics and shrines, I began to trace out a topography of healing that could be accessed to relieve the body in pain. Such a landscape offered different causal models of illness - physical, mental and spiritual - and different framings of the body and the meanings of its aches and grumbles. However, it was the layered combination of these treatments and the acts of tender care, affection and acknowledgment that were important for the women who sought them. I came to realise that the sources of relief that Aunty found were not only in the healers and doctors, but also in the shape of kinship and community that surrounded her.

The Clinic and the Shrine

The most obvious figures of healing for Gaddi women were the medical doctor and the Chela, or ritual healer. Most women told me that if their illness was *sariri,* or had bodily symptoms as its primary manifestation, they would go first to the local dispensary or informal health provider. If they didn't get the *dhuai* (medicine) they needed, or the medicine wasn't working quickly enough, they would hitch a lift from a son or nephew who had a bike and climb the winding roads up to the Dharamshala Zonal Hospital. There, they would make their way through a warren of corridors, take a ticket from the administration desk, and spend the next few hours waiting their turn with all of the other screaming children and elderly grandfathers in the waiting room for the general Outpatients Department (OPD). After seeing the doctor fleetingly, they would begin a number of days of crisscrossing the hospital, forking out a series of fees to get the tests, X-rays or medications prescribed by the authoritative doctor. A few of the wealthier families, or the women who had chronic, complicated illnesses would go straight to Kangra to one of the many mushrooming private hospitals.

The sagas of such illnesses often lasted months, or years, the folders that their consorts carried getting fatter and fatter with test results. Women were keen to show me these meticulously kept files, bringing them out in interviews and spreading the paper across the beds where we sat. Was I a doctor? Did I have an opinion? They looked crestfallen when I tried to explain that I was trying to become a doctor, but one who would not be useful to them; but perhaps my parents - a Paediatrician and a Gynaecologist - could help? My parents began to receive a series of photos of ultrasound reports, MRI scan results and bloods set to them via Whatsapp. Indeed, the work of the doctor was to measure, prod, test and touch the diseased body, to prescribe fast-working medicine and strict advice that could be brought home to worried families. If these tests revealed nothing conclusive, a woman would be sent to the Psychiatric OPD at Dharamshala Zonal, the ward at Tanda, or the private mental hospital in Nagrota. These visits were stealthy and occluded, for the stigma that surrounded a visit to the mental health clinic was acute. Yet these visits to the psychiatrist would rarely come at the volition of the sufferer or their family. The work of the doctor was not to smooth social relationships or build boundaries around the body against malign forces. Hence, it was not unless someone was truly *mental*, or *mentally disturbed* (the English word was used) that a psychiatrist or psychologist was consulted. Even then, the route to the mental

health OPD was usually via referral from another doctor, who could not identify the source of pain. What could a doctor do for *tension?* For *low BP*? Women questioned, when its causes were the imperfect home, the alcoholic husband, chronic unemployment (see Roberts 2020).

[Removed for purposes of anonymity]

Figure 6.1: A Gaddi woman gets her eyes checked at the Dharamshala Zonal Hospital.

Fixing relationships was not the domain of the doctor, but sometimes the traditional healer could help. If symptoms were not reduced quickly, the doctor was not adequately authoritative, money to spend on healthcare had run out, or the problem was related to *opara*, they would call in the help of a Chela or traditional healer for *ilaj* (treatment, healing). There were two types of Chela - one who healed through *mantra* and the other who healed through trance, channelling the spirit of the Goddess (Sharma 2010). Yet my research, traipsing up and down the hills, between villages, shrines and temples, showed that market of traditional healers was broader. Chelas could be either men or women, but most often they were figures form lower castes, who might have experienced some kind of isolation or abnormality. The work of the Chela, Shyam explained to me, was the work of building boundaries against the malign forces that caused it to provide protection for the afflicted;

> See if you believe in [*jadu*], then it might happen to you. If it does happen, and someone doesn't go to get protection or a cure, then the problem becomes *sariri* (bodily). So, they have to go to a Chela, and the Chela will give them something like a *dagi* (sacred thread), that gives validity to their problem or their sadness. After that, they are able to think about the problem, and slowly it becomes better. When [the problem] is more dangerous though, this doesn't work, the Chela has a technique, he will take the victim and perform some things, and then the victim will go into a trance and they will tell themselves what has happened to them, the Mata will explain the problem. Slowly they will tell everything. They will then give more strict boundaries, and you have to put these boundaries in place. Like you can't put onion in your food, or you can't go to certain people's houses, or you can't eat meat or drink alcohol.

The ethical sign of an effective Chela was a 'pure heart', and the practical sign was the number of success stories or devotees. I met many a Chela whose industry seemed opportunistic, confirming the fears of my interlocutors - "They do bad things all day, and then they go into a trance and try to heal people or get what they want. If their heart is not pure, how can they really go into trance or heal others*?*" One Gaddi man pointed out. Yet I also met others whose soothing words and entrancing rituals filled me with feelings of wellness and vitality. Chelas who went into trance in the Kangra valley were mostly channels of the Hindu Mata (Goddess) in her various manifestations, though I did work with a range of others who were able to invoke the spirits of other Muslim sacred and mystical figures such as one healer who invoked the Sufi saint Pir Baba in trance and dreams. The sociality of such encounters ranged from private ritual exchanges, through to public events of devotional worship.

Indian therapeutics has always been characterised by pluralism, as opposed to a binary division between biomedical and the traditional spheres of healing (Khare 1996). Once we take up this observation, we are freed from looking microscopically at the mechanisms of healing that occur in any given encounter. However, we might go further than Khare, to suggest that the source of relief in the therapeutic space might not even be in the mechanism of healing itself, but in the means by which the very visit allows women to be acknowledged in a different way and elicit care from kin (Pinto 2011). Further, it is not only through formally therapeutic spaces that women can access relief and support, but also through the small acts of care between women themselves, between women and alternative figures in the community, and in women's spaces. This approach draws on classical feminist thinking in South Asia that seeks to understand the alternative spaces that women inhabit within the patriarchal kinship system (Raheja and Gold 1994). It is methodological as well as analytical move, to look at mental health care and relief beyond the institutional confines in which it has been located in the literature, beyond the shrine and the clinic. Apart from some notable exceptions (Han 2012, Das 2015, Bessire 2014, Snell-Rood 2015a, Singh 2021), anthropologists of mental health have tended to focus their ethnographic pursuits on the clinic or asylum (Luhrmann 2000, Pinto 2014, Biehl 2004, Garcia 2010, Marrow 2015, Behrouzan 2016, Varma 2020), following interlocutors from the clinic outwards to the community, rather than allowing situations of distress to emerge from the community itself. These accounts are rich in their analysis of the ways in which the epistemic construction of mental illness, and the psychotropic medication they are given, comes to produce the individual's experience of psychological affliction. On the other hand, anthropologists of healing in India have continued to focus their ethnographic pursuits on the shrine, where ethnographic work is focused on the ritual encounter itself and the anthropologist is placed beside and observes the work of the healer (Kakar 1982, Obeysekere 1981, Nabokov 1997, 2000, Sax 2009, Ram 2013). Through such methods, anthropologists have built sophisticated tools for moving beyond the binary of universalist or culturally particular notions of healing, and thus understanding how and why healing is efficacious within cultural contexts. However, in both cases this methodology yields ethnographic insights that resemble individual case studies and lack an historical and holistic account of the social, political and economic relations from which such disorder has emerged.

Figure 6.3: A Gaddi Cheli (female ritual healer).

Care

Veena Das (2015) points out that there is much that sits between the clinic and the shrine. Through her ethnographic study of an informal settlement in Delhi, she constitutes an 'ecology of care'. Das observes of the slum neighbourhood in which she is working;

> There is an interesting assemblage here of biomedicine as embodied in the local strategies of care and the household as located in the materiality of the informal economy, which is characterized by precarious employment and small flows of cash. Through this assemblage, both biomedicine and households mutate to create a unique neighbourhood ecology of care (2015: 43-44).

Das' concept of an ecology of care is productive because it allows us to rethink the subject of traditional and allopathic healing encounters, to pay attention to the ways in which they are enmeshed in one another and sought simultaneously.

Taking this provocation, we might move even further than Das to map and historicise the pathways by which structures of social and emotional support work to achieve relief of physical and mental manifestations of *tension* for Gaddi women. In order to gain this wider lens, I find it productive to draw on philosophical and anthropological work on 'care'. Caring, Kleinman and Van Der Geest note, is about "acknowledgement, concern, affirmation, assistance, responsibility, solidarity and all the emotional and practical aspects that enable life" (2009: 161). Yet we are warned by Tronto (1993) that care is culturally defined, and the only way of understanding it is by listening to those who are directly involved in it and observing their actions. Lest we allow care to nebulously encompass all dimensions of sociality, calcify its analytical use, or assume it to be unthinking benevolent in its equation with good feeling (Berlant 2016). Instead, we might appreciate the specific work that the concept of care does for excavating processes of value accumulation and devaluation. Tronto and Fischer build on the feminist appreciation of social reproduction to define care as an ultimately devalued "species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world, so that we can live in it as well as possible" (1990:40).

A feminist approach allows us to deepen the ecology of care, to render visible the ways in which women sustain themselves and each other through *tension* by creating alternative spaces of value within structures of patriarchy. Women do not internalise patriarchal representations of femininity, but instead their imaginings of their own social roles, and representation of structures of kinship, marriage and gift-giving are ambivalent if not divergent from dominant ideologies (Raheja and Gold 1994:18). As we have seen, *tension* works as an emic, subversive discourse to draw attention to the inadequate ways in which they are being cared for by their kin or affines and to express the pressures of care on their bodies. The voicing of such concerns, however, are the first step toward finding relief from such pressures and eliciting support. The act of telling *tension* initiates relations of listening, borrowing, visiting, often between women, that work to relieve distress (Han 2012:38, Stack 1974). Yet social support need not only be material and pragmatic exchanges between two women. A rich literature in feminist studies

highlights the ways in which women's oral traditions, song and dance can open up collective spaces of mutual support within patriarchal structures that are subversive and sustaining without being wholly resistant (Raheja and Gold 1994, Narayan and Sood 1997, Abu-Lughod 1986).

Such flows of care are shaped by and shadow the structure of kinship and exchange. We might recall the discussion of the changing structure of the Gaddi household from Chapter 2. There, we saw that Gaddi marriage structures were formerly arranged according to relations of exchange between households of equal status within endogamous caste groups. Within this system, as elderly Gaddi women cited however, the divides between households were acute such that the movement from the natal to the marital home was absolute and women rarely returned unless their marriage broke down. However, the household into which the new bride entered was embedded within a broader and more fluid domestic network. Though a woman and her husband often had their own hearth, there was a larger pool of potential social and practical support in this joint family from sisters-in-law. However, the specific type of support that came from sisters-in-law was also graded by positionality and seniority in the household. Where the bride was a perpetual stranger in the house of her husband, his sisters (the woman's *nanand*) were comfortable in their natal home. This disparity could lead to various tensions, as a husband was pulled between the needs of his sisters and his wife. However, the wives of her husband's brothers could be a source of support. This was less likely for brides of elder brothers (*devrani*) than those of younger brothers (*jhetani*), who occupied a more senior position in the household. We can recall this structure playing out in the memories of Skuntala, whose story was portrayed in chapter 2. Both Skuntala and her sister married into the same family. Though they weren't able to go back to their natal home very often, they were able to care for one another. Such solidarity was necessary, as the women's relationships with their husbands unmarried sisters were fraught and, at times, abusive. When this abuse became too much, she returned to her natal home with her youngest children and stayed there for some years with her brother before she returned to her husband. However, Skuntala remembers how she used to spend a lot of time outside the house when the violence was intense, she was able to graze the sheep, goats and cows that she was responsible for in the village, accompany her husband on the grazing route, take time up in the shepherding hut in the monsoons or work in the wheat fields during the winter. This time was very precious to her, where she left the most at ease and was able to meet and talk with her neighbours and friends.

Skuntala laments that her daughters aren't able to spend this time outside of their houses. As Gaddi housewives, they live alone with their husbands and children. They no longer keep animals, and are on friendly terms with their neighbours, but largely spend time in the home. Their households are nuclear, such that they don't live near their sisters-in-law. When her daughters do see their sisters-in-law, they are always careful of undercurrents of envy related to disparities in the wealth of their respective husbands. Skuntala takes respite in the fact her daughters have the kind of intimate relationships with

their husbands that she never could with hers, and that both of her daughters can call on their brothers if they need help and return home to their *maike*, much more regularly and for much longer periods of time. For instance, it was Skuntala's son who paid for her daughter to have an urgent operation that she needed when her husband couldn't afford it. She was able to stay and recover in the care of her mother. Her daughters also contribute to the household, putting money in, for instance, for their brother's wedding and new concrete home.

We see in Skuntala's story how the shifting structure of the household economy has also reshaped women's structures of social support, resulting in physical and ideological isolation for women. The emphasis on the romantic, conjugal bond sees women encouraged to seek support and share with their husbands in a way they could not in the past. New inequalities of wealth and class status within and between families causing jealousy, atomising neighbours and sisters-in-law, exacerbating old inequalities of wealth and caste status. These inequalities work to cut women off from sources of female friendship and solidarity. "*Apne ghar, apne tension*" – to each their house, to each their worries. Women spoke constantly about the need to hide their stresses from others, lest they further open themselves up to the forces of gossip and further threaten their respectability. However, it has become more acceptable to return to the *maike* frequently as a source of support. The flows of wealth and care that move from a woman's martial home back to her natal home buttress this source of support. New forms of support from NGOs, health and statutory services ring the community. Within this new context, we see that the very ethical content of relief takes on a different character. We can trace three different modalities of care that are embedded within these structures of support that provide women with relief.

II | Sharing

Shalini, whom we met in Chapter 5, was constructing a house just above my own in the Hali hamlet. At the moment it was only a concrete shell, windows patched over with cardboard until she could afford glass. Shalini lived there alone with her two children, Nina and Vishal. Shalini's husband was held in the Dharamshala jail, convicted four years ago of the manslaughter - a drunken brawl, a cracked skull, bloodied hands. Shalini was adamant that her husband had been pinned for a murder he didn't commit. When the verdict was read, she was crushed. Shalini and her husband were childhood sweethearts, living in the same hamlet, they had threatened to elope if they were not allowed to marry. As a result, there was no geographic separation for Shalini between her *maike* and her *sasural*. When her husband had been taken away, it was her brother, Rajesh and his wife, Anjana that had supported her. It was Rajesh who encouraged her to train as an ASHA sexual health worker, a good government job that would give her the money to support her children, even to send them to the small private school across the valley. Rajesh reassured her that the stigma surrounding the job, the stigma of working on intimate issues of contraception and sex, was not worth worrying about.

When we arrived for tea, Shalini was sitting on the bed with her sister-in-law, Anjana. Shalini's children were sent for biscuits, as we settled on the bed and Anjana pulled down her *kameez* and undershirt to breastfeed her daughter, curled in her lap. She sung softly as she coaxed her daughter onto her breast. Shalini's ASHA book, where she records the contraception status of all the married women of the village, lay open on the bed.

That afternoon, as the last rays of sun shone through the cracks in the cardboard windows, Shalini conjured for me her darkest moments. Clutching Anjana's knee absently, silent tears streamed down her cheeks, making inky pathways across her freckle-dusted cheeks. Shalini's depression had been deep, she explained, after her husband was jailed and her mother passed suddenly. As if disbelieving, she looked up from her tears and laughed at the memory of such despair. She remembered her suicide attempt, the precipice she only stepped back from as she imagined the faces of her children. She told me she didn't go to a doctor for this. How could a doctor help her in this moment? Could a doctor get her husband out of jail? Could a doctor help her to feed her children? Nobody understood what was going on, what she could do.

At first, she tried slowly to share her problems with her friends, enough so that they could understand her condition. This understanding was fleeting, the rumours began again when she took the job of an ASHA worker. "How was her health?" turned into, "how was she earning?". There must be another source, they whispered. It was only when Anjana came into her natal family that she truly began to get better, Shalini said. "It was she who gave me support, who looked after me, who came to visit me. She helped me with daily things, and we spoke and chatted. She gave me support (*sahara dena*). Before that, I thought I was alone." They shared a moment, their eyes met, Shalini touched Anjana's cheek and Anjana blushed as she bobbed her baby on her hip. "Anjana is my sister, my friend" Shalini said. "If I hadn't shared my *tension* with her…" she trailed off.

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The women whose homes I entered, who broke down into tears in front of me, who complained of the searing pain of recent injuries, neglected illnesses, or of the dull ache of poverty, overwhelmingly had one answer for me when I asked them how one might respond to *tension*. If someone has tension, what must one do? Women responded that the most important thing was to share their problems, *share karna parega*, they demanded of themselves and of their peers. If one did not share, the *tension* would just get worse, it would keep them up at night, making their mind spiral, causing their 'BP' to become low, their bodies to become weak, and their minds to become vulnerable to *jadu*. If women did not share, they would end up *pagal* (mad). The emphasis on the act of sharing was not about getting strategic advice, or finding a solution to a problem, but on the very act of mutuality itself. Women explained that if one shared their true feelings and concerns one's mind would be clean *saaf* and their heart could rest. It one

unburdened themselves to another *dil ka bhoj utana* (lit. take off the pressure of the heart) *or dil halka karna* (lit. make the heart lighter)*, their *tension* would be relieved. Women knew that such unburdening, such sharing, would not do away with their problems. However, it was necessary to distribute the polluting nature of bad sentiment, and to realign unsettled bodily humours (see also Good 1977, Wikan 1990).

Sharing was an intimate act of care between women, and sometimes between a woman and her brother. Such intimacy was marked by brevity and privacy (Berlant 2000). Indeed, brevity characterised the information that was shared, the mode of communication, and the moment of mutuality that it formed. A window opened between two women, or a group of women, something was shared, the women were pulled together in a fragile moment, and just as suddenly this window closed. I was told about these moments of sharing - a woman mentioned that she felt lighter, calmer after sharing with her sister-in-law about her husband's lost job. I observed these moments of sharing - a visit from a sister-in-law at dusk, before it was time to prepare the evening meal, a complaint about a husband's alcoholism, a curse in Gaddi that I was not meant to understand, a shared laugh. I also participated in these moments of sharing. This occurred initially in turbulent moments of unburdening during interviews, where fears and anxieties would cascade and then dry up. Yet as I began to build deep friendships with women, and as I opened my house to passers-by this became a two-way act whereby my worries and anxieties were shared, my caring needs met by the women around me (Simpson 2019).

I was struck by this emphasis on sharing in the context of a community who defined vulnerability as the insufficiency of boundaries. Was not the revelation of one's private matters the very source of gossip? Was it not this gossip that matured into jealousy and resulted in vulnerability to *jadu?* Indeed, I began to map the contours of this sharing - how and when did it occur? With whom? Under what circumstances? From this mapping, I found, on one hand, the poignancy of female friendship and the power of female spaces; but, on the other, the precision in the choice of whom to confide in and the anxiety that surrounded such a choice amidst the increasing opacity of neighbours and affines. I came to realise that sharing was a little like playing music, the right note at the wrong time ruined the performance. Something shared, with someone with a 'frank' personality, who did not occupy the right positionality within the kinship or neighbourhood structure was not right. Something shared in a space that was not adequately private, or structurally correct was not right. Something shared at the wrong moment, when the atmosphere was not sufficiently jovial, or intimate was not right. I realised these acts of sharing were underpinned by trust, and confidence that what was shared would not be passed on or spun along the webs of gossip that animated village life. Such trust was structured by the very shape of the Gaddi household economy.

[Removed for the purposes of anonymity]

Figure 6.3: Chatting after a function.

The Maike

The archetypal space for sharing was the *maike,* or natal home. In this space, sharing was mostly about the demands of one's husband, mother-in-law, or affines. Women looked forward to returning to their *maike,* monthly for festivals and functions. "It's so relaxing here!" a close friend, Simrin, exclaimed as I curled up with her by the bar heater in her father's house. Her children's giggles could be heart in the front porch, as they played horses with their *mama*, Ram. Simrin had asked Ram to pick her up last week after she had had enough of her husband. Though she reassured me that she loved her husband, she was sick of having to get hot *roti* to him at first light before he went off to work. Sick of staying awake until he came back into the house stinking of whiskey.

> The men come home after working and they do nothing, as if I haven't been doing anything all day. They don't even lift a finger, but demand tea early in the morning and hot roti to their table. But I've been here working all day too and I don't get paid.

She spoke of how the pain spread through her body as she had to serve his relatives when they passed by, demanding different kinds of *sabji* and rice, *daal* and *roti* hot to their table. She's expected to do everything for them and then get up early to make tea in the morning. She was exhausted, and the pain in her abdomen was flaring, caused by a gynaecological issue that he refused to let her fix. As we sat by the heater, we discussed how men were brought up here by their mothers to be waited on.

Like many women, Simrin often returned to her *maike*, when she could no longer struggle alone with her pain and her husband. As afore mentioned, the fact that in Gaddi culture, men will visit their wives' natal homes, and that the flow of gifts, care and financing goes both ways, means that women are particularly attached to their *maike.* Women of younger generations saw their *maike* as a space to rest, recuperate, to 'chill'. Some men complained that their wives were returning more and more frequently to their natal home today, "She is going twice a week now! My mother could never have done this!" Indeed, the stigma attached to returning to the *maike* was held mostly in the elder generations, with younger married women feeling freer to move between their natal and martial homes, particularly if their natal family could also contribute sufficiently to her husband's family through aid and gifts.

When they were not able to go physically to their *maike*, they would share by calling, texting or Whatsapping with their natal family. Women were always sending photos of themselves dressed up in Gaddi dress to their cousin sisters or receiving video calls from their newly married daughters showing off their new bedrooms. As the household has become increasingly nuclearised, women are no longer surveilled in the same way by their mothers-in-law. As a result, the ability to return home, and to stay in touch via technology, has strengthened the bonds between women and their mothers; and the bond between women and their sisters or sisters-in-law in their natal home, as relations of care, sharing and friendship. In the past, mothers dismissed the importance of building a relationship with their daughters, "why would I?" A very elderly woman retorted, "when she will just go away". Elderly women, however, did tell me stories of moments in their lives when they had returned to their *maike* when their

husbands were abusive. They were able to call on their brothers for money, care and support in moments of need, a responsibility cemented each year through the rites of *raksha bandan* (celebration of the brother-sister relationship). Widows explained that it was only their brothers and brother's wives who had helped them when their marital family had attempted to take their late husband's land. Though women may be restricted in their mobility beyond the household in their marital home, or to go to and from work or college, returning home to one's *maike* was increasingly permissible. The women who were the most isolated, and thus often the most distressed, were those who were unable to return to their *maike,* like Shruthi in chapter 5. Most often, broken relationships caused by a bad love marriage, an elopement, a conflict prevented them from accessing such support. The women who could not call on their brothers, who were unable to tie *rakhi* in August each year, expressed their sense of claustrophobia.

The Sasural and Beyond

Sharing was more fraught in one's marital home. As described in Chapter 1, the marital neighbourhood was a space of gossip and blame for women. When women were first married, they expressed anxiety that they did not know who they could trust amongst their husband's family, they didn't know who they could share with. It was down to chance and the atmosphere (*mahaul*) of the extended household, largely defined by the behaviour of their mother-in-law, and their elder sister-in-law. If the two were kind and caring, women expressed that they were able to build strong bonds with them. These bonds were more fraught, contingent on women fulfilling their duties to care for the family, produce children. They were marked by inequality between households, and how wealthy one wife was compared to another. As a result, friendship between women in the marital home was often momentary - a lent bag of lentils, a passing conversation while working in the fields. Women expressed that the more they were needed within the confines of their home, and not out in the fields or grazing their animals, the more these moments were eroded. Like Skuntala, elderly women expressed nostalgia for the times when they would graze their own herd of domestic animals in the wastes on the outside of the village or go to cut grass for their animals. These were times where they could unburden themselves, laugh and joke with each other. It was not safe to share their thoughts and feelings in the home, someone might be listening, it felt like a betrayal.

The fraught nature of women's relationships in the marital home infused the more formal women's spaces that they attended. The Mahila Mandal (government sponsored women's circle), for instance, was a space dominated by the most influential women of the community, those with the most wealth and status within the kinship systems and local politics. As a result, this was not a space where women felt that they could share, it was insufficiently intimate and private to be a space of relief. Similarly, women's savings groups set up in their marital homes by visiting NGOs and consistent of neighbourhood women were not considered to be spaces of sharing. The formation of such groups instrumentalises women's competitive social relations as collateral for loans and other financial

arrangements. Hence, their success depends precisely on a *lack* of intimate care between women, where gossip and competition were essential for smoothing erratic behaviour and reinforcing class difference within the group (Kar 2018a, Schuster 2015).

I saw such dynamics at play when one day Shyam and I climbed up to a high village close to Palampur to seek out a women's group I had heard of named the *Noa Rani* - Nine Queens. We were invited inside for tea by a young woman, who said she was the daughter of one of the women in the Nine Queens group. She led us into her small room smelling thickly of mould. Soon her mother entered, panting and holding her chest. She introduced herself, and encouraged us to settle, as she caught her breath. I began by asking a few questions about how the women's group worked. The woman was proud of participating in the group, but she was also clear that it was only a savings club, specifically for Gaddi women. The purpose of the group was only to share financial aid, it was set up long ago by a local NGO and had continued because a pushy, imposing woman ran it as her own kitty. The woman, Ambika, was part of this Nine Queens group, but it was useless to her, she sobbed. She, as a widow of this hamlet, needed the money the most. When she lost her husband and was plunged into the deepest of poverty, unable to pay for electricity in the house, the group had turned their back on her. She was inconsolable, the word tumbled from her mouth, and her ears closed to our words of support. As I left the room, I felt lightheaded. As I crossed the threshold of her doorway, I was met by the eyes of a dozen women sitting in the late afternoon sun, peering from the balcony across the *angan* (courtyard). *Bechaari,* one of the women said coldly, gesturing to Ambika's small cottage.

III | Khud Se

Indeed, not all women had access to supportive or sororal relationships in their natal homes or in their neighbourhoods. Moreover, the causes of *tension* could not all be relieved in acts of mutuality but required the formal support of state or NGO actors. For some women, seeking help required women to be alone. Such women took on a particular narrative of their own suffering the emphasised their absolute isolation from their husband and his family, and their individual strength in overcoming such challenges. These women got better themselves - *khud se* - when it wasn't enough to share their feelings elsewhere.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

We might return to Seema's extended household, who we met in Chapter 3 in the throes of *ghar ki tension.* Seema may have been jealous of her young *devrani* (husband's younger brother's wife)*,* a perfect housewife; but it was with her elder *jhetani* (husband's elder brother's wife)*,* Anita, that she really fought. One icy December day when I was making my way down the Ranu road, Seema rushed out to the road to meet me waving a heavily bandaged hand. Her hair had come loose around her ears, and there was a manic glint to her eyes. She explained that she had been stabbed in the hand by her

jhetani. They had been fighting in the kitchen and it had come to blows. Anita was a bolshy woman, stout and round. Her keen-mind and cunning only accentuated Seema's helplessness. Her house is also much less well kept, the garden was scattered with building materials and overgrown with wildflowers. The bottom floor was an old, bright pink, house, and the upper floor was still semi-finished. When I first spoke with her, she had come in straight from the farm and she was very smelly and sweaty. She self-consciously picked the hay out of her hair and sat down on the stairs after ushering us to sit on the outside bed. Anita had been through her own struggles and come out the other side. Her husband had lost his job as a labourer and started to drink some six years ago. He had become violent. She was defensive when we first began to ask her about her daily life, her marriage. She was quick to tell me that she had never met anyone who experienced depression, or madness. I had to be careful. I probed. She contemplated. Finally, she turned to me, proudly, defiantly.

> I was myself like this. My husband used to bother me after drinking a lot. I never told anyone, but I saw it myself. I was thinking, if I keep thinking like this, thinking like this, then I will go mad. So, I went myself to the hospital and they gave me counselling. I had to, for my children. Once or twice, I kept all of this in my own heart within me, and so I decided to take myself to the hospital. Now I don't take any *tension*, I don't take anything. It happened like that. I went myself. I am very strong.

Anita maintained her defiance, but tears began to slip down her cheeks. Anita explained that when she was really at her lowest point, she was scared that she would die of the worry that she was facing. It was this fear of death that propelled her to go to the hospital, and from the hospital to the Women's Police Cell. She shared her story there, and they called in her and her husband, attempting to understand them both. She faced gossip from her community when she decided to seek out the police. I asked her if she ever considered leaving her husband, but she retorted that leaving him would not have helped. Her husband would just have died of a ruined liver, or in a drunken brawl. Anita stopped to look me in the eye, she wiped her tears and seemed to rise in statute. My strength came for myself, she proclaimed, *khud se.*

Tapas

These words, *khud se,* were repeated again and again in the narratives of women who did choose to seek help from alternative spaces in the attempt to relieve their *tension* and overcome their broken relationships. Yet exactly what these alternative spaces were was different for women of different generations, and subsequently we can see differences along the lines of generation in the use of the term *khud se*. For elderly women, and particularly widows, who did not enjoy the ability to return to the natal home on a weekly or monthly basis and who could not communicate with their sisters and mother via mobile phone, the sense of isolation in the marital home was greater. They spoke of their days as a young bride as days of struggle and loneliness, and when asked how they managed they invariably replied *khud se.* Widows were even more likely to use this language to highlight their own personal resilience in overcoming adversity. "My *shakti* (power, strength) to continue, to go on, to care for my children came a bit from God, but mostly it came from myself" one elderly widow told me after

explaining how her husband's family had left her and her children with nothing after his death. Elderly women stressed that their strength came from god, they pointed upwards and to the mountains. However, in elder generations, the pressure to stay within the marriage was not as acute, as the emphasis on the conjugal bond was less strong. Women made their own independent decision to return to their natal home when in danger.

By contrast, younger women have a stronger pressure to stay in their marriage and marital home permanently, even if they can return to their natal home more frequently on a day-to-day basis. Doing things *khud se* was no longer valued in a marriage paradigm defined by conjugal romance. To overcome the stigma of independence, it was critical that younger women sought support from spaces dis-embedded from the goings on of their community like an NGO, the police or the Panchayat such that they could seek help without news of their weakness getting back to their family. Indeed, accessing such spaces involved women steeling themselves against the ways that others "would talk" about them, and increased vulnerability to abuse and violence that it might bring. Overwhelmingly, women had exhausted their other options to seek help from any one of the local NGOs - their counselling services or Nari Adalat women's court; to go to the hospital for counselling or to beg the psychiatrist to help their husbands overcome their alcoholism; to go to the Women's Cell at the police station in Dharmsala and report a case of domestic violence; to visit a lone elderly psychoanalyst practicing from her home, or even to seek support from one's employer. Such actions broke the private sanctity of their household and tainted the woman's own status that she gathered from holding together her family. As a result, the women who accessed these spaces were forced to confront their own sense of isolation. Women who were abandoned by their husbands or had love marriages or elopements were more likely to acknowledge such isolation.

Yet in these words, *khud se*, we see that this sense of isolation is also turned into a source of strength, as the act of seeking help is construed as an act of care for the self. This sense of individual agency is different to the agency of excess that we saw emerging in the case of mad women like Shruthi. Yet such agency was not anti-structural, for women like Anita drew their pride and dignity precisely from their ability to maintain their houses and sustain their families through their own actions, rather than leaving their husbands or taking up new relationships like the women who they would consider *pagal.* We are reminded of the peculiar kind of independence that the Goddess Parvati displayed in her attempts to win over Lord Shiva. The story of Parvati, as Wendy Doniger (1981) observes, is also marked by acts of individual, ascetic strength. Parvati is most commonly represented as desiring and devoted to her husband despite his failure, across lifetimes. As Shiva struggles between the two poles of house-holding and asceticism, Parvati suffers chronic neglect. As he leaves this world to practice asceticism, he fails to provide her with a proper house, a child or to meet her sexual desires. She is left constantly coaxing him back into his role as a householder and is met with constant resistance. Parvati's story here speaks

to the necessary devotion of wife to husband, but also to the struggle of women within marriage. Perseverance through this kind of neglect, and the sense of isolation it brought, is framed in the story of Parvati as a kind of asceticism or *tapas*. It is through such *tapas* that Parvati is able to win back her husband.

We have seen in Chapter 3, the way in which women see self-denial, and self-sustainment or endurance in the same act of seeking help and caring for the self, and the roots of this in ascetic ideals (Snell-Rood 2015a). Yet here, we see a different constellation of asceticism present, where the woman is seeking help independently, of her own volition, to sustain herself first. This is not an act of self-denial, but an independent act of care for the self that sustains her family. We see this in the case of Anita, who argues that she only sought help for her husband who would otherwise die, and for her children. We see it in the earlier cases of Shalini and Seema, who were prevented from committing suicide by the image of their children in their mind's eye. We see this in the self-isolation of elderly women, neglected by their husbands, like Skuntala who see their own weakness as a product of their persistent unreciprocated care for their families. As such, the peculiar meaning of '*khud se*', doing something by oneself, for oneself, is simultaneously an act of supporting the many others whom one feels is dependent on oneself in order to cultivate merit. Yet there was also an important difference in the source of such merit. Where for elderly women the source of such strength to seek help was divine, for younger women it was more likely to be construed by feminist discourses propagated NGOs, rights-based organisations and gender empowerment policy. Where the former is an individual in a divine relationship with God, the latter is a disenchanted individual with inherent rights.

Ekal not Akeli

Through tales like the one of Anita, we see the significance of spaces that were once closed to lone women's claims - the court, the police station, the Panchayat - as important sources of care and support as the household becomes increasingly nuclear. Yet how did women engage in these alternative spaces? Martial arts training workshops for young women, gatherings of the *Ekal Nari* single women's group, or workshops for village women on domestic violence were popular in the village. These spaces were most often led by incredible women, who had suffered themselves, and refashioned their experiences to serve and share with others. In some cases, the language they used was shaped by a feminist discourse that felt far from the ways in which women expressed their own *tension*. They learned that the way their husband spoke with them was tainted by the patriarchal values. They learned that their husbands' reluctance to give them enough money for their children or their own health was economic abuse. For some women, this language was liberating. It helped them to understand and express concerns and experiences that they were unable to with the existing language they had. Kim Berry (2011, 2014) has written fascinatingly about the potential of such language in providing alternative subject positions for women otherwise subject to stigma. Her ethnography is of the *Ekal Nari Shakti Sunghan* that begun in

2006 to promote the rights of single women in Kangra and now across North India. It highlights the role of political organising in promoting grassroots feminist resistance. In her study, we meet widows wearing the bright red cloth and jewellery associated with new brides, abandoned women showing up at court to fight for property and alimony, wielding sticks to protect their daughters from violence. Through solidarity, the movement has been able to rework norms of femininity that were otherwise deviant and reframe them as sources of respect in the community.

In following up Berry's work, and spending time with some women who were part of the *Ekal Nari* movement in Ranu, I also observed the importance of collective feminist resistance to women otherwise excluded. However, I could not help but notice that another dynamic of social support was also at play here, that was perhaps even more powerful and enduring for the women who participated in the movement and its associated activities. This dynamic moved beyond the liberational education and feminist language that women learnt, which many indicated was limited in its potential "these women go to the workshops, they enjoy them, they enjoy learning and being together, they enjoy the education, but then they leave and they forget it all, it doesn't apply to their lives, and the violence will continue." The potential solidarity that Berry identifies in the *Ekal Nari* movement and other such alternative women's spaces I saw to be drawn also from their more pragmatic redistributive work.

At present, the *Ekal Nari* movement in Kangra is oriented more toward a program of workshops, meetings and advice services for single women, run by an extremely accomplished woman called Rinky. Though Rinky was from the surrounding community, she did not dress or hold herself like one of the village women. When I met her in the NGO's workshop room, after a long monthly meeting of one of the women's support programs, she embraced me warmly, and pulled me to the cushions that were on the floor along the front wall. Rinky was dressed in an Indo-Western suit, her hair hennaed orange. Rainky explained to me that she organises a monthly meeting for single women, open to any who have left their husbands, been abandoned or widowed. They also sometimes attend large rallies in Dharamshala or Delhi, where she will organise a bus down for women to join a protest or event. But what was most striking about Rinky's work was her descriptions of walking beside women through their challenges and helping them to find their own path (*rasta doona*) through adversity despite the fact that they were single. She explained

> If a woman's husband has just died, and she has three children she must care for, her husband's family will not support her, and their land is in his name and not hers, she thinks - what can I do? Where can I go? The woman might experience gossip or stigma from her neighbours, she will stop leaving the home, and she will go into depression.

Rinky explained that her work is to walk alongside these women, to make them understand that they are single but not alone, *ekal* but not *akeli*. She will support them to get an education for their children, lodge a court claim to get their land back, help them to get some work in the local Panchayat, or school as a Peon, a water carrier, an Anganwadi worker. She will help them to organise their pension, and

access community funds to get their children married. Through this practical support, women were able to take their lives 'into their own hands' in a different way to that of elderly generations.

Indeed, I observed that it was the persistent hard work of individual actors within these institutions - social workers, fieldworkers, psychologists - that acted to support isolated women. The kind of care that such actors provided, and that women received in these alternative spaces was not necessarily intimate, like the act of sharing. Most often it was practical advice about how to navigate the complex demands of the court system, filing documents to access welfare, seeking the right referrals to get free medications or access to medical care - the practical ways in which women could navigate the services available to them. Women such as Anganwadi and ASHA workers, Panchayat secretaries, health centre administrators played caring roles in their community beyond their training or job description. The role of community health workers in provision of care has been central to the global mental health movement, with the emphasis on task-shifting and task-sharing as a cornerstone of mental health service delivery at scale in low resource settings (Patel 2002). Yet what I hope to emphasise here is not the delivery of any kind of curriculum or set of therapies as instrumental to the healing encounter in alternative spaces for women, but the work such community workers do in supporting women to 'build their own path' through the ecology of care. The work that figures like Rinky do in understanding the complex and relational needs of people experiencing mental ill health has been highlighted by scholars working at the intersection of the disciplines of social work and global mental health (Burgess and Campbell 2012, Jain and Orr 2016, Burgess and Matthias 2020). These individuals were driven by their own personal pursuit of equity and relief for the women that they met, yet the cumulative potential of such efforts had a redistributive effect (James 2020). Figures such as Rinky, driven by their own sense that the newly delivered aspects of citizenship are not being provided equally to women, fill this gap between NGOs, the state and the community (Jain and Jadhav 2008). As such, the rights-based welfare schemes, and their new financial inclusion policies, are delivered and made meaningful though the caring labour of intermediary figures. It is only though such caring labour that any measure of gender equity in welfare provision, or gender equality in redistribution, is achieved.

IV | Joy

I couldn't understand why Madhu suddenly kept shooing me away from where the women had congregated in the courtyard of the Groom's house that evening after dinner. We had climbed up the slope together, Anita and me, her daughters and her sister-in-law, to the house, garlanded with strings of marigolds. This was a 'ladies sangeet', Madhu had told me as she looped her arm through mine on the ascent, for ladies only, she emphasised. The groom and the male members of his family had headed off earlier in the evening, announced by a tuneless brass band. As we entered the tent, there were only women seated, standing, chatting, with their children playing at their heels. These women were from across the Hali community, neighbours from the hamlet, and relatives of the groom. There were no men

to be seen. The women were served tea in small cups as they settled in and greeted their relatives, before settling down in the courtyard to sing *bhajans,* the customary devotional songs I had heard many times before. As the night went on, the *bhajans* blended into Gaddi marriages songs, and the energy began to heighten as one of the women began to beat a small drum between her thighs.

It was when the groom's mother produced a bottle of whiskey and a tall stack of small cups that I was shooed out of the courtyard along with all of the other unmarried women. The atmosphere seemed to suddenly shift. The girls proceeded to pull up a line of red plastic chairs at the edge of the tent, with a good view of the courtyard, but their hopes were dashed by the groom's mother who shook the whiskey bottle at them. I was forced to peer through a rip in the tenting, crouching down on the dusty floor. What I saw through that rip in the tenting astounded me. '*Full masti* (fun, joy)*'*, Madhu's daughter nudged me cheekily as she peered over my shoulder.

Behind the confines of the tent, the women had settled down in an impromptu circle, making space in the centre for a stage. At first, they continued to sing the traditional Gaddi marriage songs. Some of the elder women stood and began to dance the classical Gaddi style, twirling up and down in repetitive movements, keeping the pace of the drum. As the whiskey went to their heads, their steps became stumbles, and an elderly Aunty I recognised from the village rose to join the others. This woman had a bulky frame and lived in the newly constructed concrete house a few steppes above my own. From what I knew, she had terrible ailments in her legs, a thyroid problem and chronic asthma, making it usually impossible for her to do much housework. Her husband was a drunk, and her son a lout - the former working when he could in the slate mines and the latter zipping up and down the road on his scooter. She had complained to me of the *ghar ki tension* she felt constantly, her mind going 'tah tah tah' at that thought of her unmarried son, her inadequate housework, her drunken husband, the cost of her medical bills.

But now, this Aunty rose on unstable haunches, and made her way to the centre of the circle. She began to dance. She threw her head back in laughter and her arms flailed. Then, she pulled her scarf from her head, and wrapped it around her waist, bunching it up at her groin. She twisted it until it resembled a phallus, and then she set upon one of the other ladies. Aunty began to pursue her first victim, another elderly woman dancing demurely. Aunty grabbed her breasts, and forced her to bend, then she began to thrust her groin into the lady's bottom. They both fell apart with laughter. Soon she rose and turned, scanning the other women while rubbing her penis with her hand as if she was masturbating. Another older woman rose to join her, cackling, she tucked her shirt into her pants, leaving one bit out the front like a penis. Encouraged, the first Aunty donned a cardboard cut-out mask of Narendra Modi and began to obscenely hump some of the other dancing women. The women fell about in a flurry of laughter, their swollen stomachs bouncing off each other like beachballs. Now another woman came in, she had

drawn a moustache on her upper lip, and wound a turban around her head, she held a stick in her hand as if she was about to herd cows. She and the Modi Aunty cornered one of the other women, who had pulled her scarf over her eyes like a demure new bride. They descended on her, as if coaxing her into sex, pulling apart her legs and jumping into her lap. Before I could see any more, the groom's mother spotted us peering through the tent, and sent us home for good shrieking with laughter. "You're not ready for this!" she exclaimed.

Effervescence

When I asked some of my friends about what I had seen later, they also fell about laughing, slapping each other's hands together - "It's just ladies' fun (*masti*)!" they shrieked. Didi explained that this was called *Nachogan*, a singing and dancing event that happened when all the men of the groom's family had left to perform the wedding at the bride's house and pick her up to bring her back to her marital home. The sangeet, or musical night, is an important part of the series of marriage ceremonies across India, but the raucous sexual performance of this particular event is less common. Though some men suggested that it only happened in the lower castes (they tutted), I found evidence that it was performed across the Gaddi community and was looked forward to particularly by elderly women who were able to lead its frivolities. I was explained that such events are usually led by one elder woman who is particularly loud (in this case it was Modi Aunty), who whips up the atmosphere and initiated the explicit sexual role play. This begins the laughter and humping and is followed by a number of skits that satirise particular moments of marriage and courtship. These skits include, for instance Didi explained, one where a woman plays a Kashmiri doctor, coming to ask women about their ailments and 'inject' them with a needle; another where a woman dressed as a shepherd asked the audience where they can find goats to milk. In these skits, the 'injection' and the 'milking' are euphemisms for sexual intercourse, where the man is looking for women who are willing to engage. Anja Wagner describes this event based on a number of such occurrences that she observed during her fieldwork among the Gaddis in Kangra, where she details a set of skits that were popular at the time (2013:104-108). One such skit involves:

> Two women leave quietly. The first woman comes back dressed as a man in shirt and pants with a cap. She has drawn a charcoal moustache over her mouth and taken out her nose-ring or rings. She enters the room crouching like an old man over a stick, carrying a bundle over her shoulder. The second woman is dressed as a newly married bride. Like the real bride, she wears a *nuāncarī*, the Gaddi women's dress, and a long veil that covers her head, face, and the upper part of her body up to the waist. She enters one step behind the 'man'. The 'man' faces the audience and starts to tell a story, saying that the girl has told 'him' that she has to go and get married. 'He' would be from village x and – what should one do with the poor girl who had no one – he had agreed to bring her here. 'He' asks for the mother of the groom, who is made to stand up. After this introduction of the mother of the groom, the 'bride' immediately throws back her veil revealing her face and jumps at her 'mother-in-law's' neck, hugging her and shouting 'ah, my mother-in-law, ah, I found my mother-in-law'. Subsequently she peers over the groom's mother's shoulder into the audience asking 'now, where is my husband?'

In this skit, and others like it that Wagner details and that I observed, women show none of the modesty that they should during marriage, but instead are willing and full of lust for their husbands and other

passing menfolk like the shepherd or the doctor. Yet when I asked Didi and other women about the event, they all blew over its importance. "It's just fun! Jokes! Laughter!" they insisted. Wagner observes that these skits verge on real moments where women transgress norms of acceptable behaviour. Raheja and Gold (1994) highlight the role of subversive songs or *galis*, also performed by Gaddi women, as key sources of transgression nourished by ritual, art and folklore, that introduce subversive sub-texts that challenge hegemonic ideas of femininity across North India. They stress that the work of such songs, stories and imagery do not replicate exactly, but imagine real life situations marked by a lack of communication, female restraint, or self-imposed silent. They point out that the ideas of femininity represented, such as the sexually eager wife, are transgressive and non-hegemonic, but not necessarily deviant. As such they ironically dramatise the contradictions at the heart of kinship, and the forms of power they bring - the woman's ability to disrupt her husband's relationship to his kin, the new bride's simultaneous polluting and auspicious qualities as a result of her fertility and sexual desire. Such tales, songs and skits, they argue, therefore reveal that Hindu kinship ideology does not split women against themselves and against one another uncritically, but within such traditions are the seeds of transgression.[44] Indeed, the insights from Wagner, Raheja and Gold, amongst others (Narayan & Sood 1997, Harland and Courtright 1995), indicate the importance of humour, irony and joking as central to women's ability to endure and resist patriarchal kinship norms.

Yet, returning to the central question of this chapter, what exactly is it about such events that provides relief from *tension*? We might answer this question by moving beyond 'alternative discourse' analysis, by paying attention to the temporal and phenomenological experience of the collective event. Indeed, the form of happiness provided by the Nachogan was not the antidote to *tension*, neither did it provide a solution to its causes. As such, it did not tend to general wellbeing. However, it did provide for women an acute and powerful source of hedonic joy (Robbins 2015). Such joy was experienced phenomenologically - women fell over themselves with laughter, the atmosphere was one of elation. Bodies that were usually aching, groaning, immobile were filled with energy and vigour. Minds that were usually rattling and spinning with worries, were wholly consumed by song and dance. The event was effervescent in the Durkheimian (1926) sense. It conjured a collective energy that could not have been held by a single individual, and thus allowed women to move out of themselves, forging a form of solidarity between women that did not exist before. In contrast to the previous two modalities, it would not have been effective if it wasn't collective and public.

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[44] Among the Gaddis, Wagner points out that such 'alternative discourses' of femininity are not cut by the public and private spheres, nor are they invisible to or not participated in by men - giving the examples of the *bhabi/nanand, jija/sali* and *bhabi/devar* joking relationships that dramatise and normalise sexual desire beyond the conjugal bond. She highlights that among the Gaddi, such joking and irony is part of everyday morality.

Such effervescence, marked by the temporal exceptionalism of the ritual event, suspends existing relationships and anxieties, rupturing the looping temporality of the domestic sphere for women. Women are left with the overwhelming joy in the present (Day et al. 1999). This space brought together women in a neighbourhood otherwise paralysed by vulnerability to gossip. Snodgrass et al. (2017a) build on the link between effervescence and healing to argue that some rites have the potential to instil psychosomatic resilience in people in situations of high uncertainty. We might add nuance to their argument by taking the perspective of women. The 'alchemy' of such events, the effervescent quality that builds the resilience they point to, is dependent not on the confirmation of collective bonds of the community – in the Durkheimian sense - or dominant ideals of femininity, but precisely their opposite. The effervescence of the collective event, and subsequent (temporary) solidarity between women, is drawn from the transgressive nature of the event - women drink when they should cultivate sobriety, display overt lust where they should cultivate chastity, parody their men folk where they should cultivate respect.

Yet importantly, who is allowed to take the lead in this ritual is highly hierarchical and specific to one's position in the life course. Participation is only accessible to married women and is not encouraged in new brides. Instead, this kind fun is inflected by the cynicism cultivated by Gaddi elderly women as they reach a position of seniority in their marital home and the acuteness of surveillance and responsibility by affines wanes. Younger married women look on and chuckle nervously as they mothers-in-law and elder sisters-in-law dance lewdly. The sexual risk and potential for pollution held in the body of a younger women cools as she grows older, leaving acts of transgression like this one less dangerous to her kin. The joy that elicits from such experiences for all in this unique time-space is an important source of relief from *tension.* As such, the power of events like the *Nachogan*, and other informal instances like *kirtans* performed for Navratri, or marriage songs sung by women in the days before a wedding is in both their potentially transgressive elements, but also in the collective, temporally bound, embodied experience for women.[45] The micropolitics of such events mean that such events are not effective at relieving *tension* for all women, but for some act as an essential form of self-care alongside the need to eat well and share with others. When I returned to ask Modi Aunty about the *Nachogan*, and what about it she enjoyed so much, she just chuckled and smiled knowingly.

> Yes, I do have a lot of *tension*. If I have *tension* in the day, then I get a terrible headache in the night. Then when I get up in the morning and I have absolutely no energy. But if I have t*ension,* what can I do. There might be a lot of tension, and still I keep happy.

Modi Aunty's attitude was paralleled in many women, particularly elderly women, I met. She, and many others, explained that they try to just have 'fun' (*mazzar, masti*) and 'laugh' (*hasna*) when things

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[45] Indeed, ecstatic dance is central to the Gaddi tradition - as the cornerstone of the most important Shaivite ritual, the *nuala*. Fuelled by alcohol and *bhang*, the events last all through the night, beginning today with a 'DJ Party' of Bollywood music and building to the repetitive looping of the Gaddi dance after the sacrifice of the goat, as described in Chapter 1.

got too much. They explained that life is full of '*sukh-dukh*' or ups-and-downs, yet they as women had to maintain some sense of cynical indifference ('I don't care too much') in order to remain '*khush*', happy.

Figure 6.5: Women dance together in the traditional Gaddi style, at a wedding.

Conclusion

This chapter has mapped the beginnings of a cartography of care as it was traversed by Gaddi women seeking to relieve their *tension*. The expression of *tension* works as a subordinate discourse by which women can express disruption in their bodies and households; and to scale such disruption to critique community and nation. Expressing *tension* is a means by which women assert their own suffering and seek help. Encounters with doctors and ritual healers work not only through their obvious healing mechanisms, but also through the act of acknowledging the pain that a woman experiences and rendering it visible to her husband or family. Beyond the clinic and the shrine, women seek such acknowledgement and relief through encounters with other women – through acts of intimate sharing; through encounters with statutory or alternative services *khud se*; and through collective, subversive moments of joy. None of these modalities alone work as a solution to *tension*. Instead, they provide fleeting and fragile moments of relief, that are not always open to all but are shaped by dominant kinship structures and ideologies. This relief holds self-determination, resilience and love, but also acknowledges women's multiple identities and obligations and the ambivalence of their own desires. It involves finding both temporary suspension of their fears and worries and composure through long-term accommodation of pain.

There are significant implications of this cartography of care for the way we might build interventions in women's mental health. This mapping reveals that women have access to sources of support that have real effects on their mental health within patriarchal kinship systems. Certain bonds of sisterhood, friendship and neighbourly support; and certain figures within the community might be called community 'assets' or 'competencies' that can be leveraged at the micro-level in the design and delivery of mental health interventions as a way of correcting imbalances of power in global health systems (Burgess and Campbell 2012). Anthropological methods such as kinship and household mapping, engaging with traditional healers and alternative medicine, can be deployed, not just in ethnographic evaluation of interventions, but in the identification of such assets and competencies (Sax 2014, Orr and Jain 2016, Burgess 2016, Varma 2016, Sood 2016, Gammeltoft and Oosterhoff 2018). There are important precedents for this approach in intervention design. For instance, Buena Semilla's women's circles for Indigenous women of Guatemala are built on principles of indigenous mutuality and prove effective in improving wellbeing and maternal mental distress (Chomat et al. 2019). Further, Phola's COURRAGE+ intervention is uses culturally moored narrative therapeutic techniques to improve depression in South African women experiencing domestic violence (Burgess et al. 2021). Finally, Burans uses participatory and ethnographic methods to map existing structures of social support and design mental health interventions accordingly in Uttarakhand, India (Matthias et al. 2020).

This chapter calls for the deepening of this line of enquiry, toward systematically mapping the sources of social support available to people experiencing mental distress as indexed by gender, class, caste,

race, over time and across the life course. Such an approach complicates the romanticised and politically neutral notion of community that appears in accounts of other disciplines by delineating the networks of intersecting and often unequal relationships that animate it. It highlights the life-sustaining work of care in these networks, but also the ways in which care can be constraining such that it is a source of distress as much as a source of relief. It provides a method for contrasting the range of perspectives on what might constitute solutions to mental distress within a community, without relying on consultation with privileged individuals. The evidence within this chapter calls for the systematic integration of historical mapping of care networks into the design of mental health interventions. It suggests that such methods, when paired with participatory co-design processes, can led to interventions that are designed for range of interests and situations within communities.

Figure 6.5: The sun sets over the valley, a view from my home.

Conclusion | Tension as Theory, Tension as Analytic

By mapping the networks of kinship and care that constitute the Gaddi community, and tracing how they are cut by inequalities of caste, class, tribe and gender, this thesis has come to an emic theory of *tension*. This theory involves, in its most general affective state, an experience of mental and bodily disruption conceived as humoural imbalance. The body was either overheated, the mind overactive, the blood pressure was high; or the body was cool and dry, leaving one lethargic and weak, the blood pressure low. It caused a state of pressure located in the head, as a chronic headache, but manifest itself differently in the body as aching bones and joints, fever, weakness, other ailments of organs. *Tension* left one vulnerable to intrusion from the supernatural, a weak body and an unpeaceful mind was prey to black magic, witchcraft, possession and visits from incubus.

This affective and experienced condition was an expression of gendered and relational distress. Indeed, women scaled their *tension* between disrupted bodies and disrupted relationships. As a general condition, it resists the taxonomic organisation required of diagnostic categories. Instead, it might be delineated across the relationships from which it emerges - primarily the relationships of the household or domestic world. Hence, *tension* appears differently for women and men, and shifts in its form across the life course as social expectations and bodily humours shift. For elderly women, whose bodies are cooling and drying, it manifests as a cumulative weakness or *kamzori* that indexes their sapped vitality and strength resultant from unreciprocated relations of care from sons and daughters in law and devalued livelihoods. For married women, holding in their own bodies the relationships that constitute their households, it manifests as *ghar ki tension* and allows them to express insufficient care from husbands and affines and the failed fantasy of the housewife. For young women, seeking to realise their educational, employment and marital potential, it manifests as *future tension* and indexes the risk to the lineage that pools in their hot and open bodies.

This household itself is embedded in a neighbourhood or community, cut by old and new relations of caste, class and tribe. These social divides are invisible, but emerge as subtle formalities, forms of avoidance, of stigma and shame. They are lines that carve up the space of the village, and also shape the opportunities available and expectations of women. Women become entangled in the struggle of their families for prestige or status in different ways, as female propriety, marriage and childbearing become conversion devices for status gains (Bear et al. 2015). This entanglement is expressed in different ways as *tension*, the pressure to improve class status, to redefine the content of tribal or caste status, experienced intimately in the body. Women themselves use *tension* to scale upwards from their bodies to register the instabilities of tribal, caste and class identity. The vista that propels this struggle over respectability, that frames the struggle over value, is an aspiration to be included in the pan-Indian nation state, newly shaped by the values of Hindu nationalism. Obtaining the dignity that this muscular

nation promises requires this community to shed its tribal roots, and to appeal to modern, middle class citizenship (Moodie 2015).

In studying the Gaddi community, a careful analysis of *tension* provides a window into what is at stake for people as their livelihoods shift. In any of these manifestations of *tension* and in responses to it, we see market, domestic and moral values shift, conflict and meet at impasse. We see dominant narratives of progress belied by fear, anxiety and insecurity. The value of scaling upwards from the condition of distress is that we are able to bring into view the local notions of mutuality and networks of care as they are shaped by and mediate large-scale politico-economic transitions. We see how love, marriage, childbearing, friendship, inter-generational care and social support are invested with new forms of value as market forces enter intimate relationships (Donner 2008). We are also able to identify the forms of labour and life that are devalued, captured or occluded in the process of transition, and how such processes of devaluation generate new hierarchies of caste, class and tribal difference that sustain accumulation. Attempts to make sense of and steady these fluctuating values come into view through the discourses of witchcraft, affliction and illness as people encounter new forms of vulnerability and risk.

Could this mode of analysis, this careful scaling from intimate affective state to structural inequalities, by means of shifting value structures, be extended to other contexts? Does this emic theory of *tension* have purchase as an analytic for understanding the embodied experience of social change elsewhere? Perhaps, I argue, if we lean on a recent wealth of anthropological literature that seeks to understand the affective and experienced state of insecurity that characterises the global middle classes (Jeffrey 2010, Fernandes 2006, Shielke 2015). Middle class and middle-class culture, as elucidated by are the lived experience or manifestation of particular kinds of socioeconomic relations that arise within certain historical and spatial circumstances and are articulated in and through culturally specific parameters of gender, nation, race, caste, ethnicity, and empire (Heiman et al. 2012:13). Produced by the particular transnational relations of production that characterise contemporary globalised, neoliberal capitalism, the middle class is associated with democracy, individual freedom and entrepreneurial pursuits (Harvey 2005). Middle class lifestyles see consumption as an indicator of status, driven at a national level and embedded locally (Fernandes 2006). The global middle-class world is characterised by an obsession with the public/private divide, that associates women with domestic activities and highlights their role as mothers and wives (Donner 2017), and propels through the media a public moral politics dependent on the fraught balance of women's individual empowerment and collective obligations for the reproduction of status. The struggle to consolidate status gains by maintaining boundaries against relations below sees shifts networks of kinship and care (Stack 1974). Ethnographic analysis of the subjective state of middle-class reveals it's pervasive insecurity, wage stagnation, expansion of debt

and credit and precarious livelihoods entangle aspiration and hope with fraught speculation over radically uncertain futures (James 2015, Bear 2020).

Against this backdrop of pervasive insecurity that is writ small in the Gaddi case, *tension* captures the ways in which people intimately experience the struggles of mutuality and care that are involved in middle class mobility. It shows how such aspiration, speculation and often failure is personal and political; lived not as a kind of game or rational set of decisions, but as a painful state of anxiety. We can read the analytic of *tension* back into a number of examples across India. For instance, into Parry's (2012) description of suicide in an Eastern Indian steel town, which he suggests is driven by the anxious and often failed attempts by young people to maintain their family's new-found class status acquired through secure *naukri* that now do not exist. Further, into Chua's (2014) description of Keralan young people as they hold on to their capacity to aspire in a time where confidence in the Keralan model of development is fraying and suicide rates are skyrocketing.

Yet, as global inequalities widen and growth slows post-2008, and now with the Covid-19 pandemic, such a state of middle-class insecurity is bound only to deepen - the promise of security is achievable for fewer and fewer people in both the global north and global south (Piketty 2013). We hence see conditions similar to *tension* emerging beyond India, that capture the strains and frustrations of upward mobility, transnational migration and insecure labour. Kristin Yarris (2014) observes the condition of 'pensando mucho' in Nicaraguan grandmothers caring for children of migrant mothers and shows how it expresses the moral ambivalence off economic remittances and the uncertainty surrounding migration, particularly given the values of unity and solidarity in Nicaraguan family life. Tine Gammeltoft (2018) accounts for postpartum depression among Vietnamese women as the weight of conflicting and tension household relations in the context of economic insecurity. Like *tension*, these conditions are both locally specific manifestations of strained bodies, minds and relationships; but also capture the experience of vulnerability and frustrated aspiration for those involved in insecure networks of global capital. Seeing these conditions through the analytic of *tension* highlights their gendered and relational dimensions, their embeddedness in networks of care, their interpolation with conflicting and changing expectations of childcare, elderly care, marriage, friendship and kinship. Attention to such an analytic allows us to move away from uniformly global etiologies such as colonial occupation, neoliberalism or post-Fordism that are condensed down into suffering bodies (Singh 2021), and toward nuanced accounts of the ways in which people themselves scale upwards from their bodies through local ecologies toward such structural forces.

Yet it is not only in the Global South that we see this kind of experience, but increasingly in the Global North. We see the erosion of this lower middle class in the post-industrial towns of the US and the UK, and the unravelling of their lifestyles as a result of privatisation since the 1980s and austerity policy

over the past decade. Lauren Berlant, for instance, accounts for the unravelling dreams of the American public through the analytic of 'cruel optimism' - the kind of relation that exists when one desires an object that is ultimately an obstacle to one's flourishing. She hints that as the fantasy of the American dream - upward mobility, job security, social and economic equality, durable intimacy - began to fray, people were left in a holding pattern that was marked by an incoherent mash of depression, disassociation, pragmatism, cynicism, optimism and activism (2011:2-3). Like *tension*, the experience of cruel optimism is just as much about economic life as it is about the management of intimacy, it is as much about ethical imagination as it is about embodied affects. The economists Anne Case and Angus Denton provide sobering statistical evidence for the impact of this kind of fraying fantasy in their study of Deaths of Despair in the US (2020). They suggest that the stagnation of wages, the destruction of the material and social quality of work, and collapse of social norm in marriage and organised religion for the white post-industrial working class has resulted in pain and distress so severe that mortality from substance abuse and suicide outweigh advances made in reducing the mortality and morbidity of other conditions like heart disease. Indeed, we see parallels to this case in recent studies of the impact of austerity policy on communities across the UK (Koch 2018, Koch and James 2019). As Covid-19 ravages these deeply divided societies, and care networks are truncated by government restrictions and livelihood lost, we see the emergence of a new wave of mental distress (Rose et al. 2020, Bear, James and Simpson et al. 2020).

If *tension* captures a particular experience of gendered and relational insecurity in the middle classes, what does this mean for how we address distress? Great strides have been made to increase the profile of and provisioning for mental distress across the globe in recent years, with wellbeing and happiness becoming increasingly important to the policy agenda in both the global North and global South (Patel et al. 2018). However, findings from this study show that a bio-medical model that ignores the structural inequalities that shape mental distress is not only ethnographically inaccurate but can serve to individualise suffering and even blame suffers themselves (Davies 2015). Efforts to scale up mental health systems in the global south in order to improve mental wellbeing have been met by a lack of demand, as distress is not conceived of as a medical problem to be fixed in a hospital or clinic (Roberts et al. 2020). Instead, this study shows that addressing distress means, first, understanding the localised social hierarchies as they are constituted by conjugated forms of difference and embedded in relations of household and neighbourhood kinship and care. Against such a backdrop, interventions must subtly ask, what constitutes wellbeing for these communities, and how might it be achieved across a kinship network. Second, it requires developing interventions that work to re-value the forms of labour and life that are devalued and appropriated. For minority and disadvantaged communities, this means providing secure and respected livelihoods. For women across the globe, this means building interventions that re-value the work of care in our households, communities and economies both financially and symbolically.

Epilogue

The connection wasn't very good, and the phone shook in her grasp, blurring the picture. Didi struggled to hold it far enough away from her so I could see her new baby girl, swaddled in her arms. She had delivered the night before, rushed to Tanda teaching hospital in the height on the pandemic, leaving her son behind. India had set five days of successive record Covid-19 death rates, and the hospitals in Kangra were beginning to fill up with the middle-class elderly who managed to negotiate beds and ventilators. Didi had tested positive when she had arrived to begin her labour. But now she was still, she felt good, she told me. Her daughter opened her tiny mouth to yawn, unaware of what waged around her. "We haven't thought of a name yet." Didi lifted her scarf to her eyes to wipe a tear before it spilled down onto the newborn.

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I captured but a slice of life during my fifteen months of fieldwork, and the *sukh-dukh* of life went on without me. Shyam and Souji moved away from that house in the Hali hamlet, and settled in a beautiful studio lined by glass windows that show the full vista of the Dhaula Dhar. Skuntala continues to look after her cow, she always wore her scarf tied around her mouth to obscure her rotting teeth, but now she wears a mask to protect from Covid. Priya, Divya and Vaani are still waiting for their weddings, but have watched as their cousins – previously seen as the paragons of virtue in the village – have gone astray. One ran off with a Muslim man, the victim of some kind of 'love jihad', the villagers say. Shruthi has moved away with her children, and no one has heard from her since. I don't know what has become of Rhea or Seema or Anita. Somehow, I hope that they have found a way through their *tension*, to share or to seek relief.

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Appendix A | A Methodological Essay

Relationality is not only a theoretical intervention but also a method in anthropology (Strathern 2020). Hence, achieving a relational account of *tension* required a methodology that contextualised the case histories, illness narratives and institutional responses to *tension* in the social, symbolic and historical structures in which they were implicated. Indeed, the methodological danger of conducting a study of any kind of illness and pathology is that one's data sample, by definition, is hardly representative of the total experience. My methodological and ethical prerogative was not to seek out pathological figures, but to root myself firmly in the village life and its associated intimate economy; and listen to remembered stories, present manifestations and future fears of tension as they haunt the dark side of care and kinship relations (Gershiere 2003).

Building a Home

My original intent was to settle in the village of Nehra, high in the hills above Macleod Ganj. I had spent a monsoon season living there in 2014, gingerly attempting to conduct fieldwork for my undergraduate dissertation. I was hosted by an NGO whose income was drawn from managing the visa application processes of volun-tourists and desperate students like myself. When I arrived again in Nehra, just before Diwali in October of 2017, I became immediately aware of the frayed and deeply problematic relationships between the NGO's leadership and the Gaddi community for whom it was meant to provide 'development'. The village itself had changed too. Small clusters of mud houses had been replaced by great lines of, mostly empty, hotels with polished marble floors and Gaddi locals dressed as door men. Construction materials lined the streets, piles of sand, discarded bricks and rusting iron rods. The proximity of this village to Macleod Ganj, the site of the Tibetan government in exile and popular holiday destination for German hippies and Panjabi parties alike, meant that Nehra had become a site of intensive capital expansion. Indeed, I was told that the darker sides of the hotspot - drug dealing gangs from Bengal, the pimps from Pathankot - preferred to hang out in Nehra, beyond the gaze of the police. My choice not to stay, though, was less to do with the NGO or even the drug lords, but because of harrowing stories of sexual harassment and assault that were rumoured to have occurred in the village. "A place like Nehra is not safe for a girl like you, there is no-one to protect you." It was not respectable for an upper class, unmarried woman like me to be in a place like Nehra. On reflection, this was a racist, classist, gendered refrain that articulated the same attempts to avoid unknown others in moments of uncertainty that expressed fears of witchcraft and illness. But at the time, I felt it as fear, shame and exposure. And for this reason, I was forced to look for another village.

As such, I was shepherded by new friends to view houses for rent in the villages of Serbari, Ranu, Thera, Khagota, on the lower fringes of Dharmsala's urban sprawl. Further from the epicentre of tourism in the region, this area was only now beginning to see an intensive program of building works.

However, its spectacular beauty overlooking the Kangra valley and into the Shivalik hills had made it attractive to Delhites and foreigners seeking to settle in clearer air. One such connection recommended that I go and visit Soujanyaa. I went to see Soujanyaa on the day before Diwali. Soujanyaa is a designer from the North East of India who had already lived many lives in the Kangra Valley. In this particular moment, she was setting up her own house-cum-design lab, where she intended to work with the local village children to produce new learning materials and experiences. Soujanyaa came to meet me on the road as the sun was setting, washing the house a bright pink. Watching her come down the steep stairs from the house, followed by a gaggle of children, I knew this was the place. That evening felt auspicious, as I lit *diyas* (candles) with the children, Soujanyaa, and Shyam, a Gaddi Rajput shepherd-cum-trekking guide.

Shyam and Soujanyaa conferred that they needed to look after me as I wandered the trails of this village. It is to this decision that I owe this thesis. I was thrown into their daily routines as the three of us crammed onto a single scooty and criss-crossed the village. I was introduced to the hamlet, the long road the snaked North to the slate mines and up into the Dhaula Dhar range beyond. To the pine forest and Brahmin fields in the East, and the steep road down to the bustling, urbanising villages that lead to Dharmsala in the South. To the fading riches of Khagota in the West, previously said to be the wealthiest village in South Asia thanks to its slate deposits. In these first few months of my stay, we were very busy, for Shyam's elder brother, Raman, was finally getting married. From a well-known Gaddi shepherding family, Shyam's father, Dileep wanted the wedding of his eldest son to be spectacular. Raju's bride was from a wealthy family close to Palampur, and there was much at stake in impressing her family. I was pulled into the orbit of Shyam's family through this wedding, one of the last families in the area who still practice pastoralism. Through these months of festivities, errands and family disputes, I came to know the Gaddi Rajput community, and they came to know me. It was through this event that I observed first the central concern of this thesis, the attempts of a community, previously considered poor and simple, made claims to respectability, through the reframing of Gaddi identity and over the behaviour and exchange of women. For this community, on the cusp of India's lower middle class, the marriage of a son was as most important means of performing and cementing status.

After the wedding, we three began to build a home together in earnest. We rented the house from a retired army man who (like many village entrepreneurs) seemed to construct and rent out a new pillar box every summer. We took the upper storey that had been hurriedly built during demonetisation. It was haphazardly designed. The entry to the bathroom was in the middle of the kitchen. The sitting room was sealed up, without even one window overlooking the magnificent valley below. It was cheaply made from chipping asbestos. But the glorious veranda made amends. It wrapped around the whole front of the house and was lined on either side by the tops of almond trees.

Building this home was strategic for a number of reasons. First, as I discuss elsewhere (Simpson 2019), this house became a sanctuary not only for me and my make-shift family, but also for the many bouncing kids, shy girls, tired housewives, toothless old women passed by our house. They were mostly girls and women who came, despite often being confined to their own homes by responsibility. I believe my place was sufficiently close to their own homes to permit them to come, but sufficiently far to remain thrilling. I thought it might take me until I left to be close enough to reveal even a little bit of intimacy with these women. But increasingly, the women came to me. I didn't have to prod and probe. I believe they came precisely because I was a stranger. In the beginning, they were curious about this strange half-Panjabi, half-Australian girl who had come to their village with broken Hindi and a dubious visiting 'fiancé'. It seemed as they began by sticking their heads through the door, sniffing out the new smells of the house, that they were simply inquisitive. But the initial scouting led into a steady stream of visits. I learnt quickly from Soujanyaa and Shyam that this visiting, dropping in, was a very important tenant of sociality in the village. Soujanyaa began providing free tutoring for some of the girls of the village with their Board exams. Together, we ran movie nights, cooking classes and crafting workshops for the children. As such, women and girls came to share, to gossip, to play, to learn. They also came to unburden themselves. Some of these encounters were quiet, concealed. I brought a sobbing girl on her way home from school into the privacy of my bedroom to comfort her about her ill father. Others were performatively public. One woman would grab me by the waist and slap my hand as she told me about her flirtatious banter with her employer at the hotel where she worked. It seemed, because they were unable to trace my context, they didn't know my people, that I represented a window of opportunity for them to open up, share, confide. These were often half-stories, partial truths, latent and tender. These encounters became the stuff of my fieldwork, the data I recorded carefully and filed away. But these intimate windows could close as suddenly as they had opened if they found a peer had followed them into our house, or they heard their mother calling them from the stairs.

Building a home was also strategic because it allowed me to become enfolded into the flows of goods, people and substances within and between households in this hamlet (Trawick 1990). I had successfully embedded myself into the networks of a Gaddi Rajput community in the lower village through Shyam's family. However, my home, by contrast, was embedded in a Hali hamlet, marked by a radically different set of exchanges, relationships and norms. Our landlord was a low caste Hali man that I call Uncle, he lived in large compound of buildings surrounded by his relatives. Uncle's case was of particular interest to this question of respectability, for despite his lower caste status, he was much wealthier than his own family and neighbours. Reaping the spoils of a military wage then pension, he had been able to accumulate the financial capital to construct number of extra buildings that he now rented out. This collateral gave him access to a range of loans, that allowed him to buy new household goods, a scooty and to begin to act in a role of patronage for his kin. Uncle and his family aspired to a class status beyond their kin, that was previously only accessible to upper caste Brahmin who were privileged for

government jobs and owned significant land. I spent the next year tracking the flows of money, goods and care between Uncle's house and those of his kin and neighbours. I watched how he provided them with cash, advice and employment, and they provided him with labour, gifts and support during family rituals. I watched as these relations between households stretched and strained as Uncle tried to cut the networks of obligation that he had inherited in order to consolidate his wealth. Interestingly, as I explore in Chapter 1, I also watched as Uncle attempted to prove his inclusion in the Gaddi tribal community through rituals, aesthetics and storytelling, asserting his belonging to a tradition of pastoralism that his forebears had never engaged in as anything but servants. I watched as Shyam's upper caste family avoided coming to this house, and as they warned us against the sickness and evil eye that we might encounter there - just as my own family had warned me of coming to Nehra.

Being with Uncle and his family also allowed me to learn the internal dynamics of a Gaddi household, to contrast these to those of Shyam's family in the lower village, and those of the host of other close interlocutors and friends that I grew close to. As I explore in Chapter 3, Uncle's household included his wife, Aunty, and his daughter Priya. Their only son was away in Delhi training to be a vet, and their two eldest daughters were married and living in nearby villages - returning regularly to visit the family and stay at festivals. I observed closely how Soujanyaa and I came to be adopted by Uncle's protective and surveilling gaze; and how this changed when Shyam was around, or when my boyfriend came to stay. I noted the looping daily chores that Priyanka was responsible for, tending the farmland, the cow, cooking, sweeping, harvesting, drying, sorting, washing. I contrasted this to what her mother or father took account for. I watched the flow of visitors they allowed into their house, and which they chose to exclude - as he and his wife chose carefully which families to associate with in order to perform their class status and maintain their respectability. I watched as the household was rocked by fears of witchcraft, evil eye, illness and pain, and how they attempted to protect themselves from it by building boundaries. I also noted their obligatory visits - plump and happy after a visit to their daughter's families; soberly washing their hair and clothes after returning from a household rocked by an inauspicious death. Observing the relations within Uncle's household, and between his house and those of his relatives, kin and neighbours became the primary source of my fieldwork and shaped the more structured methods that I then pursued.

Figure A.1: Soujanyaa and some of the girls from our hamlet, after a workshop.

Household Survey

Based on observations about this domestic network within which I was intimately entwined, I sought to scale my insights through a household and health survey. The explicit aim of this survey was, first, to capture wide-reaching data on the demographic constitution of the field site along the lines of class, caste and tribal affiliation. Indeed, as Shyam and I criss-crossed the village, moving from house to house, our sampling strategy as based more on following out his networks of kinship, care and exchange than it was neutral or unbiased data capture. Hence, what I really got out of the survey was less of a comprehensive picture of the constitution of the site, and more a comprehensive picture of Shyam's various relationships, where they were germinated and which were strained, dependent on my observation of how he greeted them, how they responded to him, how he explained his relation to them. I came to learn how the rules of sociality were graded by these invisible lines of caste, class and tribe.

However, I was still able to collect data on the livelihoods, household constitution, education, income, household deities, religious practices, land use, care practices, division of labour of households across the village. My survey was constructed on the assumptions that households are not discretely bounded groups, that different members are embedded in different personal networks, that these households were not fixed forms and that they were differentiated along the lines of gender and generation (Guyer and Peters 1987). Hence, my survey became a measure of the density and distribution of flows within and between households, a means of tracking the ideal and real flows of care and avoidance (Randall and Coast 2015). This survey was footnoted by a set of questions about health and mental health perceptions and experiences, and health seeking behaviours, drawn from a Hindi-language translated and validated combination of the General Health Questionnaire-12, the Patient Health Questionnaire-9, and affect perception questionnaires built by Snodgrass and colleagues (2017b). My experience of delivering this questionnaire was fractious at best and embarrassing at worst. Asking about intimate experiences and perceptions of health, negative affect and the supernatural was inappropriate at this stage of my fieldwork. Though I did learn much about the relative stigma attached to different forms of illness and care dependent on what people were willing to talk about. I became attuned to the language of illness, affliction and distress as it was used by different gender, caste and generational groups; and the range of meanings associated with its manifestations. It was during these interviews that I was first acquainted with *tension.*

Kinship Maps

The breadth of understanding that I was able to draw from my household survey left me with a range of questions about household constitution and family history. As such, my next step was to conduct deep and long interviews with a range of families where we worked together to map their kinship structure. I conducted eight of these interviews, each lasting more than half a day, with two families from each of the Gaddi Rajput, Brahmin, Hali and Dogri castes. With large pieces of A3 paper, Shyam and I would sit, most often, with the household head to map outwards from their immediate family upwards to their ancestry and across the valley to their relatives. These maps became the source of oral history interviews, that allowed me to track the family's migration narratives, livelihood change, key events, moments of wealth, poverty, political privilege and exclusion. It allowed me to build a fuller picture of how these household structures had changed over time, I collected stories of living arrangements, flows of care and kinwork in the past and in the present. It allowed me to understand how these kinship networks were plotted geographically across Kanga and Chamba, and extended to Delhi, Panjab and even Dubai or Sydney. From the silences in these conversations, I came to grasp the latent stories of illness, affliction, madness, deviance, death and loss that marred these kinship networks, and the different attitudes that families had to these events and people. Shyam and I would pour over these maps back at home over hot tea and pakoras, he would fill in the stories of failed marriages, family disputes, debt, suicide, murder and infertility that he knew from a lifetime of living in this place. He

contextualised these maps with accounts of in the broader historical processes of marriage, livelihood loss, outward migration, political leadership change that shaped this locality.

Women's Interviews

These kinship maps provided a roadmap for understanding the ways in which social and economic change had been experienced across generations. It became clear that any deeper interviews that I did to understand this experience of change had to span the life-course. Hence, with the support of Shyam's sister, Vandana Didi, who herself had worked at a women's support NGO, I built a semi-structured interview guide adapted for women at different points in the life course. I interviewed elderly women, married housewives, new mothers, pregnant women, new bride, young women, adolescent girls. As I became more adept at managing these encounters, what began as a few questions about their home or their marriage opened up often into deep and desperate accounts of distress, illness and affliction - framed according to the idiom of *tension*. It was during these interviews, across the women's life course, that this harder butt of *tension* began to emerge. I probe the embodied symptoms that came with *tension,* the associated mental and physical conditions, household contexts, relationships neighbours, with husbands, children and in-laws. It was here that my cartographic work of contrasting and ultimately delineating the experience of *tension* begun.

I followed up these initial encounters with those in distress with further visits. With some of these women, I began to collect illness narrative interviews using the McGill Illness Narrative Guide (Groleau et al. 2007). Considered the gold standard in transcultural psychiatry, such illness narrative methodologies seek to understand the meaning of symptoms, pains and bodily events against their cultural and social context. I complemented this with further interviews with these women's family, neighbours and friends to garner the perceptions of illness and its causalities. I probed the differences between the self-narration and the narration of others, then mapped this back onto my understanding of the total system of kinship and care relations in those households and communities. I sought to deepen my understanding of the woman's life course through a range of complementary methods. From these interviews, the salience of the idiom of *tension* began to emerge, I began to collect data on the subtle differences by which it was expressed. I then adapted my interview approach in order to pursue these details further. With elderly women, who spoke of *tension* as related to their experience of devalued labour, I conducted life-history interviews. With married women, who spoke of *tension* as related to the strain of managing a respectable household and the relations within it, I worked to track their daily routines, time use patterns and experiences of rest and stress. With women who were pregnant or had recently given birth, I also drew on the Edinburgh Post-natal Depression Scale (Joshi et al. 2020). With adolescent girls, who spoke of *tension* as related to their future, I conducted workshops with Soujanyaa, where we explored their desires and aspirations for the future and their fears and barriers that marred this picture using creative visual and dramatic techniques. I also attempted to deepen my understanding

of liminal points than woman's life course by conducting specific interviews with women as they experienced miscarriages, pregnancies, new engagements and marriages, as they left abusive husband's houses, as they were widowed. These women dwelled in the ambivalence of femininity, and I often met them as they worked in the houses of others, at the doctor's surgery or in local NGOs.

Secondary Interviews
I followed women's stories out to the places that they moved through. This meant conducting interviews with nodal figures who saw across many kinds of experiences (Bear, James and Simpson et al. 2020). I interviewed women who provided statutory support for other women - ASHA workers, anganwadi workers, local health volunteers; and women who worked in local NGOs and domestic violence shelters. I interviewed local lawyers and bureaucrats who managed domestic violence and women's property issues; and the village Panchayat and Mahila Mandal leadership. I interviewed local religious leaders and priests. Perhaps most importantly, I followed women out into the therapeutic spaces that they accessed. Though much of this data does not make it into this thesis, I conducted extensive participatory and interview work with ritual and traditional healers at shrines and in their homes across the district, travelling far and spending much time in these spaces. I also conducted interviews and observations with psychologists, psychiatrists, obstetricians, gynaecologists and public health specialists in Dharmsala Zonal and Tanda District Hospitals; and with Ayurvedic and Tibetan healing practitioners.

Archival Research
Historical research for this study was conducted in the LSE, SOAS and British Library archives, where I drew on colonial settlement reports and district gazetteers to build a comprehensive picture of politico-economic and household change. This extends the work of Kriti Kapila (2003), Richard Axelby (2005) and Peter Phillimore (1982). I did further archival research in local newspapers and court records, accessed online.