

# The Shauka Community: The Unsung Tribe of the Central Himalayas in Context to Rani Jasuli Devi

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## Abstract:

The Shauka community of the Pithoragarh region residing in the Central Himalayas holds a significant history in the annals of Uttarakhand. The research paper is a pathway to acknowledge the community on National as well International level. Also, the contributions made by the unsung heroes of the past and present belonging to the community. Besides, the call for restoration of the heritage and culture of the Shauka community is the sole purpose of the work.

**Keywords:** Shauka, culture, tradition, achievers.

Article 1 of our Constitution describes India, that is, Bharat as a 'Union of States'. Uttarakhand was carved as its 27<sup>th</sup> state on 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2000 by Uttar Pradesh Reorganisation Act 2000, accounting 53,483 sq.km across 13 districts with 28°43' N to 31°27' N latitudes. The region is bordered by Himanchal Pradesh on North- West , Nepal on West and Tibet (China) on the North – East. This adds to the uniqueness of the state on the global realm, owing to its position on National as well International domain. The state of Uttarakhand is further grouped into Kumaun Division constituting ALMORA, BAGESHWAR, CHAMPAWAT, NAINITAL, PITHORAGARH, UDHAM SINGH NAGAR and Garhwal Division constituting DEHRADUN, HARIDWAR, TEHRI GARHWAL, UTTARKASHI, CHAMOLI, PAURI GARHWAL, RUDRAPRAYAG.

The land of Devbhoomi is indeed the abode of Shiva, Vishnu , Brahma, Kubera, Yakshas, Gandharvas and a passage to the holy yatra of Kailash Mansarovar to China. The Almighty is integral to hearts of the inhabitants, seeking blessings from Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamotri. In addition, the snow-capped mountains with glaciers embedded such as Chorabari , Gangotri, Nanda Devi, Pindari, Satopanth of Kumaon and Garhwal possessing breath taking landscapes. The sanctitude of the land is worshipped in the form of holy river The Ganges, The Yamuna, The Mandakini, The Alaknanda as mentioned in the texts of Skanda Purana.

Furthermore, The physiographical aspect of the region can be visualized as :

- Trans – Himalaya
- The Great Himalayas
- The lesser Himalayas

- The Shiwaliks
- Terai – Bhabar

Uttarakhand is home to five tribes as listed in the Constitution of India dated back to the times of 1968 as Scheduled tribes. The Buxas and the Tharu inhabitants of the Terai – Bhabar region, the Ban Rajis located in the areas of Kali and Gori confluence whereas the Jaunsari spread into the area bordering the Himalayas and Terai – Bhabar. The Bhotias or the Bhot of the British regime are spread into the region bordering the Kali and Gori rivers. The variety of the community is under the title of Bhotia primarily because of the region they resided as per the records of the British Administration. The emphasis is to address them as Marchas, Tolchas, Johari, Shaukas, Darmians, Chaudansis, Byansis.

The census of India highlights the population of the Scheduled tribes accounting to 8.2% in 2001 and 2011 census with Uttarakhand holding 3% and 2.89% of the total share respectively.

### **STATISCAL DETAILS OF THE SCHEDULED TRIBES IN UTTARAKHAND CENSUS 2001**

- THARU : 82,390
- JAUNSARI: 74,656
- BUXAS: 57,995
- BHOTIA: 40,407
- BAN RAJIS : 680

### **THE SHAUKA COMMUNITY**

The inhabitants of the Johar valley were the pastoralists having a dialect of Tibetan and Kumaun origins. Their culture, tradition, heritage is heavily influenced by its closeness with Tibetans and the rule of Nepal in past. Moreover, the ritual aspect of the community is an influx of both Buddhism and Hinduism. The celebration of the Nandashtami festival paying homage to the Nanda Devi is a highlight. Their nomadic activity with the culmination of trading activities was based on barter system in which their goods from the Tibet region such as salt, gold dust and borax were exchanged in the plains for silk, jaggery, spices etc. with their local weights called pot or nalli. Munsa was their home during winters and Mat. Shauka during the summer. They belong to the Kshatriya Varna with customs same as the Hindu society.

The women of their community often accompanied their husbands which helped in possession of valued knowledge related to medicinal herbs. Also, the art of weaving was transferred to the Shauka women by the Khampa community of the Lhasa, Tibet during the course of their journey. The subtle art of mixing the dyes to generate colors was also one of their possessions. All these in turn helped them to turn masters of handloom, weaving Thulma, Dan (knotted carpets) and Chukkas.

### **SHAUKA COMMUNITY AND SETTLEMENTS**

PITHORAGARH is named after the fort PRITHVIGARH built by Prithvi Gosain during the reign of the Chanda. Another fable states the naming of the region is credited after the Gorkha Raja PITHORA. It holds the North- Eastern portion of the Kumaun being 151 \* 119 kilometers in area constituted on 24 February, 1960 with 32 patts and was added to the Kumaon division in 1968.

On the lines of Administration the district can be categorized as sub divisions and also as tehsils:

- DHARCHULA : 5 patts
- DIDIHAT: 9 patts
- MANAYAR:3 patts
- PITHORAGARH: 15 patts

### **RANI JASULI DEVI : MOTHER OF THE SHAUKA COMMUNITY**

The philanthropist of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Rani Jasulidevi was born in the Dantu village of Dharchula tehsil of Pithoragarh. She was the only child of her parents. At a very early age she lost her husband and only son. The loss was beyond anybody's vision and the impact on her heart was beyond words. She was depressed and nothing in the world can fill the vacuum which the Almighty brought to her life.

One day, Henry Ramsay was on his inspection to the Dantu village. On his journey he noticed shattered women throwing away her riches in the Nyulamati river. This made him curious and surprised. On his tour, he questioned the villagers regarding the women he saw on the bank of the river. Later, he got to know about the demise of both her husband and son. Henry Ramsay then advised Jasuli Devi to use her riches for the unprivileged section of the society by the means of charity. This will bring peace to her mind and soul and also to their loved ones.

Jasulidevi realized the mission of her life and contributed all her wealth and riches for charitable activities. A total of 300 inns were built in the course of 20 years. To list a few:

- Nainital
- Haldwani
- Ramnagar
- Kaladhungi
- Pithoragarh
- Askot
- Dharchula
- Thal

Her motto of life was achieved when these inns proved to be helpful to traders on their journey from Nepal and Tibet, common man who were deprived of livelihood and pilgrims as well to the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra.

### **SHAUKA COMMUNITY AND ITS LUMANARIES**

The Shauka community of the Central Himalayas has indeed acted as the powerhouse with best human resource celebrating success in various sectors of our society. Some notable Achievers are listed below :

- Padma Shri Awardee, Sher Singh Pangti
- Surendra Singh Pangti, first IAS officer from Munsyari
- Dr. Raghunandan Singh Tolia, first Chief Secretary of Uttarakhand from Munsyari
- Sanjay Gunjyal, first IPS officer from Dharchula
- N.S. Napalchiyal, first Chief Secretary from Dharchula
- Pandit Nain Singh Rawat, renowned surveyor of the British era from Munsyari

- Lovraj Dharamshaktu, climbed Mt. Everest 7 times.
- Reena Kaushal Dharamshaktu, wife of Lovraj Dharamshaktu, first Indian woman to ski from the coast of Antarctica to South Pole covering a distance of 900 kilometers.
- Ranjit Singh Rawat, first Superintendent Engineer from Munsyari
- Jeetendra Singh Martolia, celebrated and successful singer
- Lt. Kailash Singh Tolia, ADM Nainital
- Vandana Garbiyal, first woman Director of Basic Education of Uttarakhand from Dharchula and many more are the luminaries in every sector of profession whether doctors, academicians, scholars, writers, artists, bureaucrats, engineers from the Shauka community. They are the prime examples of zeal, diligence and perseverance inspiring the youth to live their life for passion and achieve aims and goals of their lives even when resources are scarce or situations unfavored.

## CONCLUSION

The agenda and vision behind the research paper was to uncover the freshness held in the heart of the Pithoragarh district surrounded by two sides International boundaries that is Nepal and China with the Shauka community as an integral part. The reflections of their culture, heritage, rituals and livelihood are drawn on the present times. Since the days of civilizations the community has held its significance in various means and the recognition of the community is the urge of the time.

They are adorned by their rituals and belief on one side while efforts and endeavor of the heroic figure of the Shauka community are the example for present. One such was Rani Jasuli Devi ji epitomizing the role of motherhood. She can be visualized as the role model of social service. Also, her contributions require the attention on all levels in terms of preservation of the inns constructed by her. The rich treasure held in the walls of those inns requires restoration for the upcoming generation to remember.

Nevertheless, the achievers of the present era belonging to the community are epitomizing the endeavour required by an individual to possess. They are the examples on all levels defining and bringing honour and recognition to their community. The people of the Shauka community are indeed honest, humble and lucid in lifestyle. Also, **the Uttarakhand Academy of Administration situated at Nainital is named after Dr. Raghunandan Singh Tolia IAS.** Hence, describing the passage of the community which was once nomadic, trading and now holding top positions in the services sector and business sector of the country.

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