

The Sacred Langurs of Chamba, Western Himalaya



Colobine Dushaalas:

The adult male Chamba Sacred Langurs are a handsome lot. They flaunt a brownish-grey cape like Dushaala*, falling loosely down their arms and shoulders, swaying as they walk and leap in the mountains. The females lack the Dushaala and are relatively plain but sport a characteristic long fur on the shoulders and back that give them a furry appearance.

Patriarchal duties: Adult males protect their group from vagrant bachelor bands and neighbouring groups and engage in subtle scare tactics to keep the miscreants at bay. The males have also been observed to look out for their groups while feeding, scouring the feeding area for danger and alerting the members.

The 'Sacred' Call: Chamba Sacred Langur call is a mix of deep grunt followed by a strong burp. Only the adult males have been observed to call, either to collect the group before a movement or to signal the location of one male to another.

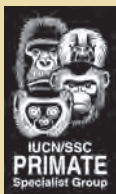
Sacred status: The langurs are worshipped as embodiments of the Hindu god Hanuman and considered sacred by the local communities in Chamba.

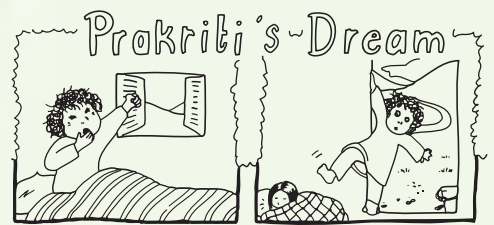
Conservation threats: Deforestation and habitat degradation due to unsustainable tourism is a considerable threat to the langur habitat. With the decreasing forest cover, langurs increasingly come in proximity to human settlements and agricultural farms, often resulting in a conflict situation. Such issues threaten the conservation of the already dwindling population of Chamba langurs and demands pro-active conservation.

The Himalayan Langur Project is an initiative of Wildlife Information Liaison Development (WILD) and works to establish sustainable conservation in Chamba through research and education.

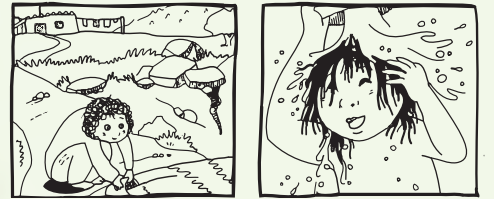
To learn more about the project and its activities in Chamba visit www.zooreach.org/hlp.htm or write to wild@zooreach.org.

*Dushaala is a Punjabi/Hindi term for a handmade shawl worn by men over their traditional long sleeved tops in northern India.





A pleasant morning in Chamba. Prakriti wakes to the song of the whistling thrush and gets on with her morning routine.



The cool mountain water is fresh and Prakriti has a refreshing bath.



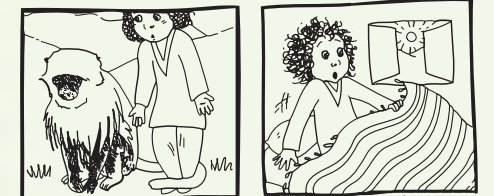
After her sumptuous breakfast, Prakriti kisses her sister bye and gets ready for school.



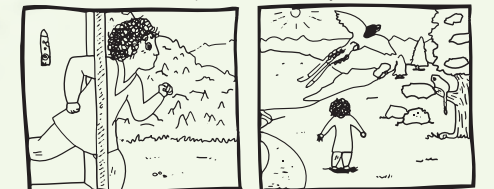
On her way to school, she realizes that the mountains are barren. Not a tree left. Just dead tree stumps.



Before she could recover from her shock, she notices a dark shadow walking towards her. Oh! It is just a langur.



"What happened?" she asks the langur. Despair loomed when Prakriti wakes up to realize it was just a bad dream.



She rushes out of the house to make sure it was indeed a dream. What a relief!!! The trees and the birds are still around.



Suddenly she noticed the langur she saw in her dream on the tree and rushed to enquire about the barren mountains of her dream. "Calm down! Prakriti" said Gaula, the langur. "Come with me and I will show you all about it."