

MAN IN INDIA

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Edited by

Nirmal Kumar Bose

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BIJAY CHANDRA MAZUMDAR LECTURES 1969* SCHEDULED CASTES AND TRIBES : THEIR PRESENT CONDITION

Introduction

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am thankful to the authorities of the Calcutta University and to those who have endowed this series of lectures in memory of Professor Bijay Chandra Mazumdar for the opportunity which has been given to me to offer my respects to the memory of one of the great teachers who introduced us to the science of anthropology nearly fifty years ago. The brilliance which marked the lectures of Professor Mazumdar is still fresh in our minds. What impressed us most was that he talked less of books and authors, and more of the life by which we were all surrounded, and he brought to bear upon these discourses a mind, rich in imagination, yet tempered by the needs of scientific discipline.

Fifty years ago, the science of anthropology had not attained the height which it began to reach nearly two decades later. It was usual in those days to describe different aspects of tribal life with great precision, and then bring them into meaningful relation with similar phenomena elsewhere by means of the theory of historical evolution. This tendency in anthropology had been directly derived from the works of Darwin and Huxley in zoology.

The late Dr. S. S. Sarkar who preceded me in this series of lectures, prepared a list of the Bengali and

* These lectures in memory of Professor Bijay Chandra Mazumdar were delivered under the auspices of the University of Calcutta on the 30th and 31st of January and 2nd February 1970.

MAN IN INDIA

PUBLICATIONS

Works
of
Sarat Chandra Roy

1. The Mundas and their Country
(Available with—Asia Publishing House, Contractor Building, Nicol Road, Ballard Estate, Bombay—1)
2. The Oraons of Chota Nagpur
3. Oraon Religion and Custom
(Available with University of Microfilms Inc., Ann Arbor-Michigan—48107 U. S. A.)
4. The Kharias, 2 vols.
5. The Birhors
6. The Hill Bhuiyas
7. Caste, Race and Religion in India

A few copies of *The Oraons of Chotanagpur* are available at Rs. 50. *Caste, Race and Religion in India* is also available at Rs. 10.

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18 Church Road, Ranchi, S. E. Ry.
Bihar, India.

English writings of Professor Mazumdar. It shows an astonishing range of his intellectual interests. My purpose will be more limited. Before I begin the series on the present condition of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes of India, it will be my purpose to describe in outline the theoretical stand to which Professor Mazumdar subscribed in anthropology.

For this purpose, we shall examine two of the books written by him, namely, *The Aborigines of the Highlands of Central India* (Calcutta University, 1927) and *Elements of Social Anthropology* (Calcutta University, 1936). Some of his ideas also lie scattered in *The History of the Bengali Language, Orissa in the Making* and other books or articles, among which mention should also be made of his Bengali book named *Jeevan Vani*. It is not necessary for our purpose to cover all these writings, for the first two books are sufficient to illustrate the theoretical stand to which Professor Mazumdar subscribed.

In his earlier book on the aborigines of the highlands of Central India, the author was primarily concerned with the origin and migration of the Savara-Kol people. He brought into service a study of place-names, and also the character of funerary stone monuments which were present in Assam and Chotanagpur. It goes largely to the credit of his scientific integrity that he refused to regard as identical or equivalent the stone monuments of the Khasis and the Munda or Ho. On linguistic grounds, Professor Mazumdar also refused to accept the view that Mundari was in any way akin to the Mon-Khmer family of languages.

In regard to Culture, Professor Mazumdar tended to favour the view that its character was largely determined by the geographical factors to which a community tried to adapt its life. In the *Elements of Social Anthropology*, the object of anthropology was defined in the following terms: 'Know thyself, said Socrates to the inquirer who to be happy in life wanted to get a panacea for all sorts of ills which beset the human existence. This is exactly what the science of Biology, on the bedrock of which Anthropology stands, is asking people to know' (1936, p. viii). 'To know aright then the nature and

character of our physical, mental and moral activities and to be in a position to know what possibilities are in stock for us for our future progress we should know *first* how Man as a species has evolved with some special capacities and *secondly* under what conditions Man has been expanding his mind and sphere of action since the day of his arrival on the globe'. (ibid., p. viii).

Mazumdar thus looked upon Culture as a unique characteristic of the human species, which had to be studied, not only for its own sake, but also because it might help him in designing the future course of his moral evolution. Throughout his small book, which had a supplementary title, namely, *Students' Social Anthropology*, Mazumdar tried to explain how the material life of man (which he described in a chapter entitled 'The Adventures of Man'), or the 'expansion of man', his social organization, and even religion could be regarded as having arisen out of the biological needs and characteristics of the human species.

It was, however, in the field of religion that he was faced by something which scientific men have not yet been able to explain or comprehend in full. Yet this is an element which is present in the culture of all men, whether 'savage' or 'civilized'. In poetic language, Bijay Chandra says in one place : 'This special possession of man, of thoughts of eternity, is an abiding factor which underlies all religious systems. Men are bound to brood over it, no matter what they might think according to their different creed(s) to be the destiny. It appears rather clear that it is *not the fear* of Nature or Nature's God that leads to the essential sentiment for religion ; what leads it is love, enshrined in beauty' (ibid., p. 122).

On another page of the same book, Mazumdar says : 'We have spoken several times of the urge of life for more, which is a phenomenon of the highest value in life, to notice the unavoidable tendencies of the natural inborn tropisms exhibited in all activities. This urge of life for more may fitly be called the prayers of man ; either unconsciously expressed in the activities of life or consciously uttered by man while desiring

for progress. Life is, therefore, a bundle of prayers. There is an abiding unshaken hope that the prayers would be answered even though it is a matter of daily experience with man that hope ebbs and flows like the wāves.

‘The prayers may be offered to a ghost, to a spirit of nature or to God as the Supreme Ruler, or to a blind Faith, but there is an undying *faith* in this act in the protective character and orderliness of the laws of nature. The conception as to the Ruler or rulers of destiny has been changing ever since, but the prayer of man has been one and the same through all times as a component part of the foundation of religion in this or that form. We are reminded of the pithy expression of poet Carducci: “Gods depart, but prayers remain”.’ (ibid., pp. 117-18).

Professor Bijay Chandra Mazumdar thus brought to bear upon his anthropological work a keen poetical insight by means of which he strung together ‘savage’ and ‘civilized’ alike into a brotherhood bound together by a unity of spiritual quest. I am indeed grateful that, after a long number of years, it has been possible for me to add my homage to the memory of a great teacher.

Scheduled castes and their condition

The problems of the scheduled castes are different from those of the scheduled tribes for, at least, one reason, namely, that the scheduled castes form an integral part of Hindu society and are distributed all over the country, mixed up with their neighbours. In contrast, the tribes are, more or less, gathered together in some of the remoter areas of the country, while their economic, social and cultural relationship with the peasant population is more limited in character. As the scheduled castes form a part of the caste system, their problems can be appreciated, or even solved, only in relationship to other castes. Untouchability is a custom by means of which the upper castes keep them away at a distance, yet give them a place, which is subordinate, within the system. As a preliminary step, let us therefore, present in outline a picture of the relevant features of the caste system itself.*

* For a fuller description, the reader is referred to Bose, Nirmal Kumar: *Culture and Society in India*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1967, pp.203-233.

According to the view presented here, caste is largely supported by a productive organization which is non-competitive in character. Traditionally, each caste is supposed to make its living by some occupation which is handed down from generation to generation. No such group which enjoys monopoly in a particular occupation within a given area is supposed to encroach upon the preserves of another. 'One cannot take away the rice from the other man's mouth', is the manner in which this moral code was described by a caste of weavers in western Orissa. Secondly, all such hereditary guilds are graded into a hierarchy, each element of which maintains its distinctness from the rest by strict rules regarding marriage and social etiquette. At the lower end are castes which are regarded as untouchable, and kept more or less segregated even within the villages.

In one form or another, untouchability is in vogue among higher castes also. A woman is, according to orthodox rules, untouchable to her husband during her menses. A family in mourning is not allowed to enter a temple or join in religious ceremonies within the formal period of mourning. The kitchen of widows in Bengal, who are strictly vegetarian, is taboo to many others in the family. Some of the latter are not even allowed to cook meals for the widow even if they are very close relatives. What is implied is that untouchability is a practice employed to mark off the ritually pure from the ritually impure. And when this is applied to communities, it is found that the custom is employed to mark off the so-called higher castes from such castes as those whose work has anything to do with blood, dirt or death ; for these three lead to defilement.

The outline which is presented above is, of course, a simplified one. The same caste may make its living by different occupations in various localities ; and there is no evidence that castes were able to live by their ascribed occupations hundred per cent even in the past. It is, however, necessary to emphasize the fact that elaborate rules about who should do what were framed by the makers of Hindu polity ;

and the rule was that, if a person could not make his living by the prescribed rule, he could change over to others, as an emergency measure (*apad-dharma*), after consultation with the colleges of Brahmins. What is patent in these rules is that the occupations of all communities should be, firstly, under full social control. Secondly, it was the object to build up a non-competitive society, in which the work of discrete castes would be complementary to one another.

The Manchester School believed originally in complete freedom of enterprise. But in actual practice, political force is applied in order to curb open competition in favour of some classes. Yet, it cannot be denied that a community which lives by this doctrine, tries as far as they can, to regulate their life in accordance with it. It was even so with Hindu social polity. It tried to string together a number of communities into an inter-dependent whole, in spite of the fact that each was left a large measure of communal autonomy. In actual practice, however, although each kept loyal to its own station, yet some acquired positions of privilege, while others were relegated to the subordinate position of artisans, servants or labourers.

It is not our intention either to justify the philosophy of caste or describe its history. But our purpose is to highlight some of its features in contrast to another productive system which has been thriving ever since the establishment of British rule in our country. Caste had one merit, namely, mutual assistance, regulated by Brahmins and the King, helped the rural folk to survive even when India was subjected to political disturbances, one after another. With this experience behind them, it is not unnatural for the masses to rely upon it when the new system of production, based upon free choice and open competition, is not able to offer work to all when they are in need of it.

The British came into India nearly two centuries ago. An urban elite consisting of bureaucrats and professional people, assisted by commercial classes, sided with them. All of them, moreover, tried to prepare themselves by education and social

reform for the new opportunities thrown open for economic advancement. But even after two centuries of 'modernization', out of the total working force in India in 1961, only 4.2 per cent are engaged in manufacturing industries, 6.2 per cent in household industries, 4 per cent in trade and commerce and 69.5 per cent in cultivation on their own or other peoples' land. In the same census, we find that 18 per cent live in towns and 82 per cent in villages. If, under the circumstances, some of the castes which are without much reserve strength, do not enthusiastically explore fresh avenues of employment under the new dispensation, how can they be blamed for it? Perhaps they do not have enough confidence in themselves; perhaps they do not have sufficient confidence in the political authorities to bring about promised changes. And if they consequently feel inclined to stick to their age-old hereditary occupation, or seek security in the possession of land, should they be condemned as conservative? If passengers gather at a ferry in very large numbers, and there is only one steamboat to carry them across, is it not natural that some of them will make use of country boats rather than wait indefinitely for their turn to come?

This is largely the predicament in which the scheduled castes find themselves today. The proportion of scheduled castes to the total population of India in 1961 was 14.67 per cent. Among India's total number of cultivators owning land, their proportion was 11.50 per cent; while among landless labourers, it was as high as 33.16 per cent. In household industries, they formed 16.63 per cent, while in manufacturing other than household industry, the figure was 10.45 per cent, substantially below their general proportion in the population. In trade and commerce or in transport-storage-communication they were at the levels of 4.52 and 9.61 per cent respectively.

It is quite clear therefore that while the whole of India remains backward with its heavy dependence on agriculture and low dependence on industries, the scheduled castes occupy a position lower still. This is also supported by the fact that while the percentage of literacy in the whole of India is 24.0

(including, of course, the scheduled caste population), that among the scheduled castes alone is 10.27.

Numerous voluntary organizations have tried to bring light into the lives of these people. They have also tried to raise themselves in social esteem by, either imitating some of the practices of upper castes, or by taking refuge in such equalitarian sects as are associated with the names of saints like Buddha, Kabir or Ravidas. But, on the whole, these efforts have not helped them to rise in the esteem of the upper castes. The latter have remained, more or less, unaffected by the reform movements among the lower castes; perhaps because the scheduled castes have remained as poor and uneducated as they formerly were. There have been, of course, exceptions on both sides. Some from among the upper castes have dedicated themselves to the service of the suppressed castes, while some among the latter have risen high both in education and personal influence. But the number of such exceptional people has been so small that the general relationship between the upper and lower castes has not been very much altered. And the reason for this has to be sought in the continuity of the productive organization which lay at base of the caste system.

Some change has undoubtedly taken place even within that system. For instance, the produce of the artisan's work or of that of the peasant has entered the market, and the rules of traditional exchange of goods and services through the local market has been considerably weakened. The monopoly of hereditary guilds has been considerably reduced, so that members of various castes are taking to occupations which they shunned before. A fairly large number of new occupations have also grown up in urban areas, and elsewhere, which have nothing to do with caste; and people of various castes from the Brahmin down to the untouchable are flocking to occupations like motor-driving, the upkeep of electrical services, small trade, and so on. Yet, in spite of this mobility, large masses of men make their living by caste-based occupations; while the superstructure of that system, formed by the grading of occupations into 'high' and 'low', still sways

the minds of men in the villages where 82 per cent of the people live. Besides this, we have to remember that there are occupations in which little change has taken place.

Let us take an example from Bengal prior to its division into East and West in 1947. In 1931, the number of Brahmins in their hereditary calling of priestcraft, Sanskrit learning etc., was 16.57 per cent ; but that of the untouchable Bagdi/Byagra Kshtriya caste of agriculturists and fishermen was 69.79 per cent and of potters 58.87 per cent. The last two thus still made their living by their hereditary occupation, while Brahmins had largely given it up. The latter had taken to the learned professions (30.76%) or to agriculture (15.38%). The case of the leather-working Chamar or Mochi is interesting by comparison. On account of a large-scale export of hides and skins to manufacturing towns like Kanpur and Madras, or to countries like the United Kingdom or Germany, the percentage of Chamars who were in their hereditary occupation had become reduced even in 1931 to 24.59, while 32.88 had taken to agriculture and 43.93 to industries.

The erosion to which caste had been thus subjected on account of the rise of the new system of open markets and free enterprise had thus been very unequal in the case of different castes. Higher castes were able, by means of their wealth and education, to take advantage of new opportunities ; while lower castes who lost their work found refuge in the ranks of labourers of various kinds. The result was that the relative position of the castes remained nearly what it was before. So 'caste' remained, and with it untouchability. We shall return to this question once more later on. In the meanwhile, let us turn our attention to some political developments which began about 1930, and which were specifically connected with the interests of the Depressed Classes.

One of the political reforms proposed by the British Government round the thirties was that separate electorates should be assigned to the Depressed Classes as they had already been assigned to Muslims in order to protect them from the dominance of Hindus. When this proposal was formally made in 1932 by Prime Minister MacDonald, it was opposed by

Gandhiji even while he was in prison at the time. He went on a fast, as a result of which, eventually, an agreement was signed between the leaders of the upper and lower castes, agreeing that there should be a joint electorate, but seats would be reserved in the Legislature for the Depressed Classes.

The Constitution of India which came into operation in 1950, provided for reservation of seats for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes both in the Parliament and State Legislatures. Provision, were also made for reservation in government services. Later on, in 1963, a further rule was passed which extended reservation to posts filled by promotion in Class III and Class IV services. In this way, the plan was to create an educated leadership from among the hitherto backward communities, and equip them with suitable political authority so that they would help in bringing up the rest of their community in line with their more advanced neighbours.

The strategy of ensuring progress was thus clearly laid down along one line. It is interesting in this connexion to read a statement made by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar before the Backward Classes Commission presided over by Kakasaheb Kalelkar in 1955. Commenting upon the kind of education needed, he said: 'I think that the means that have to be adopted for the purpose of bringing these people up are not that we should have primary schools and secondary schools for these people. Out of 100 boys 20 remain and 80 go away. My idea is something fantastic. I would suggest that schools should be opened for them in their own locality or some central place. I would suggest to collect the best boys from the primary schools and give them food, shelter and education in that very place, away from their parents. Up to the Matriculation Examination you give them education there. As soon as they pass the Matriculation Examination, send them in a college and give them tuition fee. After that select a number of students from amongst them and send them to Europe, Germany, France, America and similar other foreign countries where they can get the best of education. After that give them service in Government Departments. I would be quite prepared to spend one crore of rupees for the Scheduled

Castes and one crore for the Scheduled Tribes for 10 years and probably the Scheduled Castes are becoming vocal now. Thus you will create a few people with high qualification and place them in high posts. That will be 2000 times better than the 200 boys educated in Marathi or Gujarati'.

What some in accordance with the strategy described above, a leadership has been built up over the years from among the scheduled castes. But before we examine what the positive results of this has been, let us describe what has been happening to the large mass of common people who have not found a place among the more advanced classes.

As indicated already, the majority of the scheduled castes make their living by agriculture or crafts and services of various kinds. Only a very small fraction among them have been able to secure the advantages of education or of official employment. The rest have remained more or less as before. In the meanwhile, the Government has laid down a policy that, wherever Government can, it should try to settle the unemployed on land. Once this became known, it has given rise to an increased demand for land. Not that the people in question do not want to work in workshops or factories, but it has hitherto not been possible to find work for all of those who want to work. Consequently, there is a greater pressure upon the Government for land. In a way, this can be looked upon as a symptom of disease rather than a healthy sign. It is an expression of no-confidence in the capacity of the Government to employ people in industries ; and as long as it is so, people flock to agriculture, as this, at least, assures for them a sense of security and also prestige.

Under these circumstances, there is still a continuing reliance upon caste-based occupations as long as they are viable. Two examples will help to illustrate this, and also the fact that, in spite of the rise of an indigenous leadership, the attraction of some hereditary services or industries has not become weakened. The Valmiki or scavenger-caste offers a case in point. When a certain Municipality decided to introduce largescale changes in its sanitary arrangements, it threw the local Valmikis into commotion. Not that they did not

appreciate the change ; but their demand was that they should be rehabilitated first and not merely thrown into the open market to compete with others for employment.

The case of some leather-working castes is also similar. Formerly they had an exclusive right over all cattle that died in the village. Some Municipalities have recently decided to dispose of the carcasses to the highest bidders in an annually held public auction. Such moves have been stubbornly resisted by castes which profited by the previous arrangement. Only lately, I happened to meet a fairly large number of representatives of the leather-working caste in Uttar Pradesh. Although some members of this caste have taken up Law or Education as their profession, yet the majority are still engaged in trade in leather, or the manufacture and sale of leather-goods. Their demand was that the Government should reduce sale-tax in leather-goods, help in the establishment of 'Scheduled Caste Co-operative Societies' and so on. When I asked them if they really wished that the majority of leather-workers should continue indefinitely in their caste-bound trade, they confessed that they had not clearly thought about the question, although this was virtually the demand which was being made. When I suggested to one of their leading lights in Delhi that Gandhiji's recommendation had been that Brahmins and other high-caste men should take to this industry, or even to the sweepers' work, the comment of this gentleman was that that would have been wrong, as the upper castes would have thus thrown out many leather-workers and sweepers from their hereditary profession.

My intention in citing these examples has been to show that where caste-based occupations are still viable, it is difficult to eradicate caste, and with it untouchability also. It is only when a large-scale mobility is brought about in different occupations, and non-caste occupations take the place of caste-bound occupations, that caste will go, and untouchability also disappear. But at the present rate of economic change, when the emphasis seems to lie in finding employment for the educated classes *within the existing structure of society*, it is natural that the productive organization associated with caste

will still linger on. The latter is in a tattered condition, yet people profess loyalty to it because the new open system of production, based upon freedom of enterprise, has yet to prove its success by finding jobs for all who are in need of it.

Theoretically, the stand taken is that it is the relation of men in a productive system which largely determines what their social relationships will also be like. And if there is little change in the first, it is hard to bring about a change in the latter. And this gives us a key to the persistence of loyalty to caste and also to the custom of untouchability.

Let us now examine how the indigenous leadership which Dr. B. R. Ambedkar wanted to build up through education and governmental employment, and the political leadership created by reservation in our Constitution, has fared so far in achieving social or economic equality.

The aim which the Constitution has set before the people of India has been 'the protection (of the weaker sections of the people) from social injustice and all forms of exploitation' (Article 46). Everyone will agree that one part of a nation cannot be freed from social inequality if other parts are allowed to remain in that condition. If a village is stricken by an epidemic, it is never possible to save one house, or a number of houses belonging to a particular community, so long as the whole village is not taken care of. Exploitation arises out of a system ; and if it has to be ended for one community, it has to be ended for all.

And it is in this joint task of building up an exploitation-free society that all leaders of the Nation, whether they belong to the scheduled communities or not, must bend their wills and work together. It is only by such an endeavour to build up an equalitarian society that the inequalities inherited from the past can be effectively wiped out.

There is a rather unhappy confession which has to be made in this connexion. Indigenous leadership has indeed grown to an appreciable extent both among the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. On the whole, these communities have so long been deprived of the benefits which, *even under the existing social and economic systems*, are being enjoyed by the privileged

classes. And the first thing which the rising, educated classes from among the scheduled castes and tribes naturally demand is a share of those benefits *right here and now*. They do not want to be put off till the day when a society of truly socialistic pattern will come into being. The task of sacrificing immediate benefits for engagement in an enterprise which will bring equality and justice to all is indeed tempting ; but not sufficiently attractive for which immediate gains can be sacrificed.

This is perhaps the prevailing mood among sections of the scheduled communities who have come forward in education. The indigenous leadership tends to be swept away, on the whole, from the task of building up an equalitarian society, and yield, even if it is only for the time being, to the pressing demands of their own community, which may be of a more sectional nature.

This is how the rise of an indigenous leadership has not so far succeeded in achieving the desired results. The special provisions of reservation were originally meant to come to an end in 1960. But they were extended for a second and third time for periods of ten years each, which is proof that the task of eradicating inequality still remains unattained. One may reasonably ask oneself if other ways of promoting equality should also not be tried.

An organized effort to develop local, regional leadership, cutting across castes and communities, has been made through the Panchayati Raj scheme. This was initiated in 1959, its object being to assign the major portion of development work to these local organizations. Several studies are available about its actual performance ; but it appears from them that power has mostly been added to those who were already in privileged positions in rural society on account of their wealth or personal capabilities. The interests of the poorest have frequently suffered by default, while those of the upper classes have become more firmly entrenched.

The real problem which thus arises is, how to eradicate, the inequalities which grew up either through castes' economic organization, or on account of the re-organization which arose

out of the open, competitive system which grew out of the British imperial system. The task of wiping away these inequalities is not one which belongs to the leaders of the scheduled tribes and castes. It belongs to the whole nation; and the chief instrument, in the opinion of Mahatma Gandhi, should be, not merely, constitutional reform but an organization of the non-violent strength of the masses, who will work through the twin programme of constructive endeavour and the assertion of their rights of equality through non-violent non-co-operation.

Scheduled Tribes and Their Condition

According to the census of 1961, the population of the scheduled tribes is 29,879,249 which is 6.80 per cent of the total population of India. There are altogether 427 communities, each distinguished from the rest by either political or social organization, or by differences in the language or dialect which they use. It is interesting that, out of these nearly thirty million people, 89.39 per cent returned themselves as Hindus, 5.53 per cent as Christians, 4.19 per cent as belonging to tribal religions, 0.34 per cent as Buddhists and 0.21 per cent as Muslims. Hinduism, of course, sits lightly upon them, as this religion spreads over a wide spectrum including simple beliefs and practices at one end to the highest forms of philosophical speculation and spiritual practices at the other.

Tribal languages belong to the Austric, Tibeto-Chinese, Dravidian or Indo-Aryan families. It has not been possible to find the affiliation of the languages used by the Andaman Islanders. Many tribes who come into frequent trade relationship with others are also bi-lingual. It is not our purpose to describe the characteristics of these communities; but we shall try to show in what way they stand economically or politically related to the rest of the Indian population.

At one end of the spectrum are the Andamanese, some of whom like the Jarawa or the inhabitants of the North Sentinel Island have no contact with any other community. The Andamanese live by hunting, fishing and gathering; and

according to one estimate of the Anthropological Survey of India, are able to support 1 or 2 people per square mile of land.

The second group of tribal people in our classification live by slash-and-burn cultivation. These are the inhabitants of NEFA, Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland, the Mizo Hills, portions of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. Where the rainfall is heavy, as in Mizo Hills (130 inches annually), nearly 30 or 40 people can be supported on the produce of a square mile of land; while if it is half of that or less, as in Keonjhar District in Orissa, the number is reduced to between 20 and 25. A little difference in each area is due to the slope of the ground where shifting cultivation is actually practised. The problems to which these tribes are subject also vary widely, although the mode of cultivation is more or less, the same. In Mizo Hills, the carrying capacity is nearly thirty or more, but the actual density of population is nearer ten. On the other hand, in Keonjhar District, where the carrying capacity is a little over 24, the actual density is nearly 70 per square mile. The economic problems of the Lushai in Mizo District, and of the Juang in Orissa are therefore very different from one another.

There is not very much of organized specialization of labour among these tribes. Every man is his own carpenter, house-builder besides being his own farm-hand. Women specialize in weaving; and every home produces almost all its textiles, which are often of excellent and colourful designs.

When the land is not merely treated under the slash-and-burn method, but levelled into terraces, with hill-streams utilized for watering the fields, the carrying capacity may rise very high. Thus the Apa Tani Tribe of NEFA, who do not use the plough or animals for cultivation, are supposed to support several hundred people on every square mile of land.

It is presumed that, if there is more specialization of labour, as under the caste system, it is perhaps possible to support even larger numbers of men than under shifting cultivation, with or without irrigation. Some enquiries have already been conducted by the Anthropological Survey of India on carrying capacity under shifting cultivation; but comparable information is not available for other forms of land management. Yet

this is a study which is likely to throw fresh light on the condition and problems of many of our tribal communities.

The case of the nomadic Birhors of Chotanagpur offers an interesting example of their relationship with the land on which they live, and also with their neighbours, the peasants. The total number of speakers of the Birhor language was given as 590 in 1961. Yet, they number a few thousands; many of whom perhaps recorded their language as the spoken form of local Hindi. This tribe generally lives on the fringes of the forested plateau of Chotanagpur. They collect certain creepers from the jungle and manufacture ropes which are bartered for paddy or millets with the neighbouring peasants. They also supplement their food in certain seasons by hunting small game, or even by selling the trapped birds and animals for cash in the local village markets.

In other words, the Birhors have become a part and parcel of the local economy which binds them into an interdependence with their non-tribal neighbours. All the cloth or ornaments which they require, the salt and the iron or tobacco which they use, is purchased from weekly markets nearby. In such cases, although the Birhors have succeeded in retaining their tribal identity, yet they have economically been transformed into a caste which specializes in the production of particular commodities.

A large fraction of the tribal population of our land has thus been drawn into the vortex of castes' economic organization; for after all, the latter is a more efficient mode of production than that which prevailed among the tribes before their contact with the Hindus. Undoubtedly, in the Hindu social system, the tribes, after absorption, are assigned a lowly position; something which is comparable to that of colonials in an imperial economy. But it should be observed that all communities were not treated in this manner. Even among the tribes, there were families of chieftains; and these were assigned a place in the Kshatriya and not the Sudra *varna*. But those who were favoured formed a small minority, while the majority were placed in a subordinate position in the local hierarchy.

There were two other features in this process of absorption into the Hindu social system which had nothing to do with economic relationships. The incorporated communities who became like castes were left free to follow the religion and social ceremonies of their own choice ; while upper caste Hindus also quite often paid homage to the gods and goddesses who had entered their pantheon in company with the absorbed communities. Sometimes, again, Hindu Sadhus retired into the fastnesses inhabited by tribal communities, established *ashrams* there, or built a small temple, and tried to live their own life of simplicity and austerity. This had undoubtedly some effect upon the tribal population ; and, it was in this way that an exchange of gods and goddesses, and of different ways of life, took place in the past over the centuries. This was like a process of osmosis in the field of higher culture ; while in respect of economic life, the communities in question became swiftly co-ordinated into a single whole. In economic life, the traffic was nearly one-way, while in regard to higher forms of beliefs and rituals, there was more interchange, and a greater measure of autonomy and of diversity.

The process described above must have gone on for centuries ; for even in the *Mahabharata*, which in its present form goes back to the early centuries of the Christian era, there are references to many communities, which were apparently tribal, which had taken shelter in the *varna* system, (Shantiparvan, Ch. 65. See Bose 1967, p. 210). There is reason to believe that the elasticity which is noticed in the Hindu social system was considerably reduced after the establishment of Muslim rule in our country. Social policy became hardened ; and we can imagine that the absorption of tribes into the Hindu fold also became a little more difficult because of the growth of Brahminical orthodoxy.

It was about this time that the Bhakti cults arose in India, and began to satisfy the spiritual needs of millions of common people. Life had become so much hardened by formalism and rituals that even sensitive souls among the upper classes suffered under its weight. This was the period when saints like Nanak and Chaitanya, Kabir, Tulsidas and Surdas arose,

and gave a call to the people to shake off the dead load of rituals, and live once more a life of devotion and spirituality. Something like this had happened more than a thousand years ago under the protestant banner of Buddhism ; but the influence of that cult, which had once liberated womankind and the Sudras, had become no more than a historical memory in the middle ages.

The movement initiated by the mediaeval saints in different parts of India led to an awakening among the lowly castes. It also penetrated in course of time among some of the tribal communities in middle and eastern India. Thus the Mundas of Tamar Pargana in Ranchi, the Tana Bhagats and Kabirpanthis among the Oraons of the same district ; the Meithei and Tripuri of Manipur and Tripura, and some of the neighbouring communities in Tirap in NEFA, became deeply influenced by various forms of the Bhakti cult. Such tribes thus entered the Hindu fold, not through the doorway of caste, but through religious sects which gave them an honoured and equal status with others.

The third phase of relationship between the tribal communities and dwellers of the low lands began in a new way altogether after India came under British rule, and a firm government was extended all over the country. The nineteenth century was an age when many traders and peasants began to penetrate into the hitherto inaccessible areas under the protection afforded by the new government. They went into the hills and jungles, sold goods and lent money, purchased the produce of the jungle at low rates. Eventually, some of them established zemindaris and proceeded to till the land more successfully than the tribal folk, with their limited resources, ever could.

The qualitative difference between this new class of traders and farmers and those who had preceded them was indeed very great. The relation of the former was one of business alone. It led to exploitation, because the tribal folk did not know how to protect themselves against deceit and usury. Among the traders also there was no intention of welding the two communities into an intergrated whole ; something which had

characterized inter-communal relationships under caste in the distant past or during the spread of the Bhakti movement.

Throughout the nineteenth, and some part of the twentieth century, as the condition of the tribal folk became more and more desperate, there were uprisings or rebellions, which the British government was able to put down with a firm hand. It must be said to the credit of that government that they tried to bring some relief to the oppressed tribes by means of several measures affecting land ownership and debt settlement. They tried to keep the reputation of the government for equity and justice, untarnished. But they perhaps overlooked one fact of history. They themselves were practising in relation to the people of India as a whole exactly what the money-lender or land-grabber was practising in respect of the tribal people.

The tribal communities had their own system or code of ethics ; and so had the caste system. What was now replacing both of these was the theory of free enterprise, unregulated by social responsibilities of any kind, except such as grew out of adjustment for mutual advantage between those who both subscribed to the theory of the Manchester School. When the mischief in the tribal areas became too patent, as when rebellions broke out, the government did try to put a brake upon free enterprise by restricting entry of outsiders into tribal areas, or by the enactment of laws preventing the transfer of land from tribal to non-tribal, and so on. But in spite of these protective measures, the whole economy of the country was being recast in terms of free enterprise. And if something was done in order to soften where it hurt most, it did not change the character of the larger transformation which was taking place all over the country. Indeed, while the tribes of Bengal and Chotanagpur were being offered protection by special laws a large number from among them were recruited as indentured labourers in the tea-gardens of Assam, where they lived and worked under the most shameful conditions under British planters. Where British commercial interests were concerned, the conscience of the government does not seem to have been touched by the sufferings of the tribal people.

In was in this way that the life of India, and with it that of the tribal folk, dragged on through the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. Then came the withdrawal of the British power from India, followed by the establishment of the Republican Constitution in 1950. It will be our purpose now to describe some of the steps taken in order to protect the interests of the scheduled tribes, and how effective they have been. We shall also attempt to show how the present situation differs qualitatively from the three phases which have preceded it in the past.

The Constitution of India firstly assures equality of treatment to all citizens without discrimination. Secondly, through adult franchise, political power has stepped down to the lowest levels. Thirdly, by means of a series of protective laws, the right of the tribal people over land has been safeguarded. Fourthly, in special areas like Assam or Nagaland, provisions have been made for allowing tribal communities to either retain or modify their tribal customs in accordance with their own discretion. District and Regional Councils with sufficient autonomy have been constituted to carry on administration in such areas as are covered by the Sixth Schedule.

But apart from these protective measures, we have to remember that the whole of India is undergoing a process of economic development, into which the tribal communities are also being drawn in. Areas inhabited by tribal people are often rich in mineral wealth, in contrast to the river valleys or alluvial plains inhabited by their more advanced neighbours. Mines and industries are progressively being established in such areas; roads are being built, and motor vehicles have begun to ply in areas where, even a short while ago, there was no approach except by means of foot or mule tracks. This has been leading to developments which were hardly anticipated before.

When mines or heavy industries are opened in places like Bailadila, Ranchi, Rourkela or Bhilai, they have to begin working as quickly as possible. It is uneconomic to wait until the local inhabitants are trained sufficiently to man the industries. So skilled, and even semi-skilled or unskilled

labourers are recruited from other regions to set the industries going as quickly as possible. As a large number of such labourers are gathered from various States, they tend to cluster into separate wards when there is a chance of doing so. Oriya speakers collect in one place, Telugu speakers in another and so on. In course of time each such regional group also establishes its temples and clubs in order to preserve its distinctive identity. The food, dress and general manner of living tend to be sharply marked off from one another.

The result is that the local tribal population finds itself thrown into sharp contrast with the immigrant labourers. And if they are not absorbed fast enough in the industries, or if adequate measures are not devised to train them up for participation, then a chain of reactions begins which lead to rather unhappy results. Rightly or wrongly, the tribal people feel that justice is not being done to those who have lost their homes or agricultural land on account of industrial establishments; while others from outside are being employed in all the lucrative posts.

This leads them to assert their separateness from the immigrants, as a measure of self-defence. There grows a heightened desire among them to maintain their cultural boundaries against other communities, in other words, to seek a distinctive identity. There are often differences enough among tribes in both language and social customs, even when they inhabit small areas like Chotanagpur or Nagaland. Under the conditions described above, there arises a keen desire among the separate tribes to sink their internal differences, and combine against the 'intrusion of outsiders'. Whether such an effort of 'national unification' is the best way of preparing them for greater and more effective participation in economic development, is an open question. But when there is a fear of loss of identity, it leads in several parts of India to a two-pronged process: One leads the tribes, willy-nilly, into greater participation in technological change, and the other to a re-establishment of their separate identity in contrast with the rest by a search for certain distinctive elements in their original culture.

The political mechanism of adult franchise has unfortunately accelerated this process of cultural polarization on account of certain special reasons. It has been pointed out by some anthropologists that new professional associations, suited to modern conditions in the industries or trade, have not grown fast enough. If they had, then they would have cut across many smaller, archaic loyalties based on caste or commonness of birthplace or religion. When such associations are lacking, it is natural that, for the sake of mutual assistance and survival, people would take refuge in associations on the basis of language or religion, for these can grow up more easily.

Thus the slow rate of social change, and the lag between it and the rate of technological change, has been responsible to a large extent in throwing people back upon comparatively archaic forms of social identification. This has led the tribal communities of India today into a new kind of relationship with non-tribal people, which is quite different from anything which happened in the past. Then, contact was on a comparatively small scale and spread over long periods of time. Today, the contact is swift and on a massive scale. This has led to tensions and unnecessary obstructions in the way of technological and social advancement.

The intention of the framers of the Indian Constitution, and of the majority of political parties operating it, is clearly to build up an exploitation-free society. Such an ideal is difficult to establish at one stroke. Yet, if that aim is kept clearly in mind, and all help one another to build it up to the best of their ability, then the present inequalities will tend to disappear more rapidly than otherwise.

We have already said with reference to the scheduled castes and their leadership that, instead of giving priority to such a joint endeavour, there is a tendency to share whatever benefits are being enjoyed by the privileged classes even under the existing circumstances. Such a desire is also evident among some sections of tribal leadership. But in quantity it is perhaps less than that among the scheduled castes. In place of that, there is in some of the border regions of India, a desire to cut themselves off from India. Such a desire may arise,

firstly, because there is a lack of confidence in the intentions of the Nation's leadership to build up a truly equalitarian society. Secondly, it may also be due to the desire of building up a state where some will thrive at the expense of many—a repetition of the exploitative society under which we are all living, and which prevailed in India for centuries in the past.

The commitment to the ideals of a socialistic pattern of society is not yet as firmly established among the leaders of the scheduled castes and tribes as it ought to be. But the responsibility does not lie with those who form no more than one-fifth of the Indian population. The burden of building up a social organization of the new kind lies more with the rest than with those who have so long been relegated to the backwaters of life. If the majority can prove by their action that they mean to stick to the national decision, and will make every effort to eradicate poverty and inequality, there is no reason to suppose that the backward classes of today will not respond warmly to that call.

Some Problems of Nationalism

During the last few years, a number of violent conflicts have taken place between upper and lower castes, landowners and labourers, men of different religious persuasions and between speakers of different languages within the boundaries of the same state. These have seriously led some to ask themselves if the Indian nation is eventually not going to break off into pieces in the near future. There are others again who have not given way to pessimism, but believe that a strong sense of national unity can be forged by a process of 'emotional integration', which will eventually help the Indian nation to remain united and strong. Under these circumstances we may pause to ask ourselves clearly as to what is meant by national unity; and for this purpose we have to go back to history if we are to find a satisfactory answer. Such an exercise does not arise from an idle, intellectual curiosity. For, the future of the numerous castes and communities who make up the body of the Indian nation depends very much upon the ultimate aim we set before ourselves.

There is one school of thought which favours the view that national unity can best be forged by the propagation of a common language and common culture. The present differences which mark off various parts of India have to be progressively obliterated. The examples of England and the United States are before them ; where the second or third generation of immigrants are thoroughly anglicized or americanized by means of a common scheme of education in schools. On the other hand, India has given official recognition to fifteen languages, and students in any part of the country are entitled to ask for instruction in their mother tongue, if their number reaches a certain minimum. Differences are thus maintained, while the policy should be to reduce them as in the countries of the West. In the opinion of this school, the divisive tendencies began when states were formed on linguistic grounds and not on the basis of economic needs. In opposition to this view there is a second school of thinkers who hold that the central theme of Indian civilization has been the establishment of 'Unity in diversity' in all spheres of life. Therefore, it would be wrong to give up this ancient commitment of the nation in imitation of the West.

Our concern about these views and opinions arises out of the fact that such ideas affect strongly the policies and programmes of different political parties. And if the latter come into conflict with one another, it is all the worse for the people of India as a whole. Let us, therefore, make our own position clear with regard to the question of Indian unity. We have now, in our country, a kind of political unity which was there never before. It does not matter that unity is no more than twenty-two years old, or that its roots were laid down under British rule, and strengthened by united opposition to the latter. Whatever may have been its history, howsoever young in age it may be, the fact cannot be questioned that we have now a political organization which binds together all parts of the country into one single whole.

Secondly, we have now a Planning Commission which plans for the whole country. Experts participate in it from all parts of the land for control and guidance and allocation

of resources, while a fair measure of autonomy is also left with the states, and even such small units as districts or blocks, in the matter of fixing priorities in development. The states of India are thus also economically bound together without discrimination. Complaints are, however, levelled from time to time against the Centre for discrimination in favour, or against, some states; agitations are also set in motion demanding more attention from the Central Government. But we hope that this does not actually prove the existence of any very large bias in the minds of those who run the administration either in favour of or against some states or communities.

It is with regard to certain higher forms of culture, and language, however, that a great measure of disunity continues to exist between one part of the country and another. Some enthusiasts of the Hindi language, which is our common, official language for intercommunication, are strongly of opinion that it should be propagated everywhere, so that a new unity can be forged throughout the land. This has led to the neglect of some of the languages of the minorities within Hindi-speaking states, while it has also created a strong resentment in the South against what has been designated as Hindi 'imperialism'. One need not proceed to examine the merits or demerits of programme of national unification through a common language. But the fact cannot be overlooked that India has given official recognition to fifteen major languages, some of which are richer in creative literature than others. Yet there are no signs that people of different linguistic areas learn with any very great enthusiasm languages of other areas, even if this is done principally as a measure of fostering national unity. The language of minorities within a State with a different majority languages, are hardly ever promoted with care, even when these are included in the schedule of national languages. They are left to fend for themselves; and thus the idea of promoting unity through languages is gone through in a half-hearted and inefficient manner.

Anyway the broader question which we should ask ourselves is, what should we do about our cultural diversity? Should

it be encouraged, or should differences be progressively levelled down? In this connexion, let us examine how India compares in size and population, and in cultural diversity, with the rest of the world. The U. S. is 2.9 times our size with only 41 per cent of our population. The U. S. S. R. is seven times our size with 48 per cent of our population, while the whole of Europe, minus Russia, is 106 per cent of what India is, and has a population of 70 per cent of our own. If India has not yet been forged into a cultural unity and fired by a common feeling of national patriotism, it is partly for the same reason that the whole of Europe has failed to become one nation, although local and communal differences between the states of Europe are perhaps less than the variation which we witness in India.

Supposing then, we feel that Indians today have not been welded into one strong nation, but they should, we may pause to ask ourselves what, after all, is the meaning and purpose of national unity. The question is apparently naive, but still it is perhaps good to ask ourselves some such simple questions from time to time.

Looking back at history, one realizes that 'national unity' was forged in Europe principally when one 'nation' came into conflict with another, either in the field of commercial competition or in open combat. This unity was necessary in order to make the community strong. Internal differences were reduced, a greater uniformity brought about through education and social reform, the feeling of patriotism was created, until the 'nation' began to feel that it could meet the challenge of other 'nations'. According to the view presented here, 'nationalism' was due to the demands of war rather than of peace. Consequently, the greater the unity, the stronger does a nation become in its hostility to other groups.

In contrast to this, the unity, or uniformity, which was forged in ancient India through the gradual extension of agriculture and of the hereditary guilds of artisans and workmen—i.e., the caste system—was of a different nature altogether. It is quite possible that Indian civilization tried to solve the problems arising out of the contact of many cultures, because,

India formed geographically a blind lane in the migration of peoples and was also guarded by a mighty range of mountains in the north and the sea on other sides. Thus she was not subjected to the same kind of migration and invasions to which the northern plains of Europe were subject.

The geographical factor is however not sufficient to account for the outstanding characteristics of Indian civilization. There was evidently something more. Even from the earliest periods of recorded history, it is apparent that India tried to build more for peace than for war. There was an abundance of the bounties of nature which all could share, particularly when the population had not become too heavy. And we have said already in another lecture how different forms of religious beliefs and practices, and even ways of life, were allowed to thrive within the structure of the caste system.

India tried to build up an organization of differences rather than a unity of the Semitic kind, where differences are levelled down.

While India thus tried to find a solution of some of the problems of social existence in one manner, Europe travelled on a path of its own, and more or less successfully showed how a community could survive with its culture and values even in the midst of war. The contributions which each civilization thus made were opposite, yet complementary, to one another.

Let us now turn our attention to the present age. India is beset with many problems, some of which are due to the vast size of her population, and some to the poverty and inequality which has resulted from an antiquated technique of production and distribution, which has become imperfectly modernized. In this predicament, we find that the solutions which have given strength to the European nations appear to us to be the right ones for us to follow. Europe's concern with the problems of everyday existence, and lack of concern for other-worldly affairs, her technology and the pursuit of an equalitarian ideal, all appear to us to hold great promises for the future. For these are exactly the elements which are absent in our present-day culture.

The new desire which has arisen in India for forging a strong nationhood by the spread of westernization, is perhaps due to a well-defined rule in Anthropology that a weak community tries, selectively, to incorporate those elements in the culture of a more powerful community, which, it rightly or wrongly believes, are the source of its superiority. Speaking in psychological terms, one may say that, through this mechanism, the weak try to identify themselves with the strong (Bose 1961, 88-89).

After this digression into the nature of nationalism and the phenomenon of culture contact, let us return to our original problem as to why there is so much of tension within India today, and how we can save ourselves from this vast wastage of human effort. We have described already how the scheduled castes and tribes stand in relation to the rest of their more advanced neighbours. Well-planned efforts are being made in order to bring them into the mainstream of Indian life ; but unfortunately, the result has often been an increased polarization, a heightening of tensions, rather than their eradication. The tribal communities have tended to swing backwards in order to preserve their identity. The inhabitants of various linguistic regions have been following the same track when they are located in the midst of an unsympathetic majority. And thus there is more tension today than was present in the past either under caste, or under the rule of the British Government. May be, this is a sign of growth, in which each community is trying to discover the distinctnesses of its culture as a prelude to a great merger. But, at the moment, this arises out of the fear of cultural submergence, rather than from a desire to be creative and add to the total wealth of Indian culture as a whole.

At this point, we may draw a lesson from the organization of caste, not from its attendant economic substructure, but from its cultural superstructure. Caste had one merit ; it was non-competitive in its aim. But under it, a whole community was treated as a unit, under which the individual was lost in subordination. Caste also divided men into privileged and unprivileged. All these can be avoided in India's new system

of production. But for that purpose, one need not, at the same time, discard the better elements in caste, one of which was that society and the king were ultimately responsible for the final welfare of the community and of the individual. Secondly, different communities were so organized that they played complementary roles in both production and distribution. What we are suggesting is that it is quite possible to plan for a society ruled by equality and justice, and formed by co-operating professional associations, whose joint purpose will be to assure prosperity by the application of scientific inventions, and yet avoid the concentration of wealth at certain points.

There is another feature of India's ancient civilization which can also be incorporated in the new. If in the political and economic structure, many communities and professional associations can work together, this is no reason why, in their superior cultural life, they should try to build up a uniformity of beliefs and practices. Caste left the faiths of people more or less to thrive without interference. Cannot a civilization be built up in which people will co-operate with one another in political and economic affairs in the pursuit of a common goal and yet remain free to express themselves in a hundred different ways in their intellectual, artistic and spiritual pursuits?

Today, when the world is becoming more and more sharply divided into a socialist and a non-socialist world, into one which works by means of totalitarian control, and the other by means of freedom and democracy, the dangers have become very great indeed for the whole human family. This is particularly so when both sides have acquired the power of massive and total destruction. There is now a re-thinking about how this can be avoided, and a new formula has been devised, namely, 'peaceful co-existence', even if that has been born out of fear, and as a measure of temporary, strategic significance. Under caste, there was something of the same kind, born, not out of fear, but of the recognition of the truth that no single individual, or community, sees Truth in its entirety, but only a fraction of it.

According to Gandhi, this respect for the truth, which is in others, lies at the root of democracy, and of his method of non-violent opposition, named *Satyagraha*. Our belief is that if we subscribe to this truth, discovered in ancient times by Indian thinkers, and try to build up a new society on its basis, then many of the problems and fears by which we are harassed today will progressively disappear. The principal thing is to keep our aims clear, and wipe out deliberately all that obstructs human growth, whether it is derived from the past or the present, or from the East or the West.

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ON HYPERGAMY AND PROGENY RANK DETERMINATION IN NORTHERN INDIA

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Introduction

This article aims to deal with the question: what is the relative significance of parents' ranks in determining those of their children in the strongly patrilineal society of northern India? It will particularly seek to understand how the women as mothers can (or can not) influence the rank of their progeny under hypergamous conditions, and how the cultural conceptions of sex, parentage, and progeny logically interrelate with the rules of progeny ranking at the ideal and actual levels of Hindu social system. If there are any discrepancies between the two, how are they explainable under the cultural circumstance?

These questions will be attempted by following the perspective Lévi-Strauss (1963a, b; 1966) variously employs to differentiate and interrelate the levels of ideal and reality, including those on Indian castes. Under this approach, as Leach noted (1961: 4), 'to create a class labelled matrilineal (or patrilineal) societies is as irrelevant for our understanding of social structures as the creation of a class of blue butterflies is irrelevant for the understanding of the anatomical structure of lepidoptera.' Instead the interest lies in discovering the 'constitutive units' (see Lévi-Strauss 1966: 131, 250) of the problem and then in finding out how 'the pieces of the jig-saw' fit to form a pattern (Leach 1966: 44). If they fit, what are the properties of relations, and if they do not, how the relations change. (For a recent useful summary of this approach, see also Buchler and Selby 1968).

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This study draws upon the traditional scriptural model to provide the ground rules (idealizations), and on the field situations to describe the strategic rules (actualizations). While interrelating the two, I subscribe to two basic contentions: (1) as Buchler and Selby (1968 : 126) observe, 'whether an empirical replica can fit the model (idealization) or not (and it surely can not), the idealization retains its value'; and (2) 'discrepancies' between the ideal and actual are, as Levi-Strauss (1966 : 124) shows, culturally explainable.

Viewed in terms of the above, north Indian 'patriliny' and parenthood, which deserve closer social anthropological scrutiny, hold interesting clues for understanding not only the problem of progeny ranking but also those various conceptions of nature and culture, and the ideal and the actual under which the ranking is regulated. The essay will approach the problem by stating the ground rule of progeny ranking in northern India (and the asymmetry contained in it), will follow it up by an examination of two empirical situations of hypergamous unions, and will conclude by noting the implications of the discussion on the 'nature' of north Indian women and her role in progeny ranking, and on the levels of natural-cultural conceptions of parentage and progeny.

The Ground Rule and the Entailed Asymmetry

The ground rule of progeny ranking is provided by the Hindu customary law. Although variations and complexities have always accompanied it (for a general discussion, see, Kane 1941, 1962 : Karve 1939, 1965), and although the modern (post-independence) public law (especially after 1955) has had a secularizing and simplifying effect on the traditional categories of marriage and progeny, the vast majority of the Indian population still follows the customary rules, some group-specific and some scriptural. For northern and central India, Karve (1965 : 75ff) notes the indubitable importance of *bijakshetra* (seed-field) rule as the one ordering the ranks of the progeny. It is most clearly stated by Manu (ix, 33-37) : 'by sacred tradition the woman is declared to be the soil' and the man 'to be the seed...On comparing the seed and the receptacle (of the seed),

the seed is declared to be more important, for the offspring of all created beings is marked by the characteristics of the seed... and the seed develops not in its development any of the properties of (women's) womb. (Italics provided.)

Under this rule 'man is 'seed'-possessor and the woman is 'soil', or 'field', or 'pouch' for allowing the 'seed' to develop into a progeny. The cultural model considers male 'seed' as a 'complete-in-itself-reproductive-unit', despite the knowledge that man and woman both are necessary to be able to actually procreate. (This is, as Leach notes in 'Virgin Birth', another case rejecting the facts of biological or natural paternity, explainable by cultural circumstance and not scientific fact.) The 'seed' is nourished in the woman's womb; its characters are neither influenced nor altered by the latter. In Levi-Strauss's terms this represents a sort of 'asymmetry' between natural (biological) and cultural conceptions. Under the cultural conception, as Manu postulates, male 'seed' exclusively carries progeny rank as a 'culturally manufactured' product and not as a natural (biological) combination of an egg and a sperm.

By the same token, a woman is a 'field', a culturally 'neutral' or passive nurturing medium, and not positive contributor to the 'seeds' properties. In contrast, under the biological conception, men and women contribute equally (in terms of the genetic material), satisfying a necessary, if not a sufficient condition for procreation. This 'discrepancy' is conceived and resolved culturally but the 'solution' is idealized as 'natural'. Levi-Strauss (1966 : 124, 127) probably hints towards this asymmetry by noting, 'Castes picture themselves as natural species' but 'castes naturalize a true culture falsely', where both nature and culture are conceived as idealized types.

On the level of empirical reality, the above idealized model again reflects the asymmetry in another form. While the ground rule envisages woman as merely a neutral or passive medium, the modern strategic (empirical) rules lay endless emphasis on 'encysting' women from all sides, especially with regard to their sexuality and social movements (see Yalman 1963, 1967). What seems to be incongruent here is that if the

system does not entitle women to carry any ascriptive status independent of men, why should it deal with women as 'precious commodities' to be continuously guarded. Is it some kind of variation of the ground rule, or a serious contradiction? How are these culturally explainable? We shall return to discuss these questions after the presentation of empirical data on two hypergamous variations, one at the caste and the other at intercaste level. Since the former is being described for the first time in ethnography, and since it affords to give us a case of institutionalized hypergamy, it will be dealt with in greater detail.

The empirical situation : Two hypergamous variations

Hypergamy (traditionally called *anuloma*) provides the non-preferential situation of Indian caste marriages. (Endogamy is a preferential rather than a prescriptive state with Indian castes, simply because, as Levi-Strauss (1965 : 17) argues, it is impossible to realize a prescriptive system empirically). It, therefore, provides a sort of 'test situation' for finding out how the progeny ranking rule is empirically applied.

Hypergamy can signify marital and/or mating conditions. Thus, under the Hindu customary law either a man can marry (by undergoing the attendant traditional ceremonies) hypergamously, or he can marry endogamously but can have hypergamous sexual relations with women of ranks lower than his own. Under the first situation if hypergamy is practised regularly as a means of getting married in a particular caste group, it is more institutionalized than in one where it is not (cf. Yalman 1967 : 179ff). Further, since hypergamous alliances basically signify rank order discontinuities, they can occur at intracaste and/or intercaste level(s). But under the systemic preference for endogamy, intracaste hypergamy is easier to accomplish and even to institutionalize. Although this practice has not been sufficiently described for various parts of India, there are sufficient indications about its prevalence (Srinivas 1966 : 29-30), notably among the Rajputs of northern, central, and western India (see Karve 1965), who practise it within and across their groups. Among the Patidars it is described as an

intensely prestigious game (Pocock 1955 ; 1957 : 21ff). Under such a system, women signify man's prestige and are asymmetrically 'given' and 'taken' as *prestigious commodities*. Finally, hypergamy may also be encouraged because of the process of incorporating diverse socio-economic status indicators within the system of caste ascriptive hierarchy. As the Kanya-Kubja Brahmans illustrate the institutionalized condition they will be described below representing the first type of hypergamous variation.

The second variation dealt with below is of different order and is no more found today. It was a circumstantial product found before Indian independence (1947). It was not institutionalized in the same way as the first one. It was at the intercaste level and it mostly signified sexual—'sullied-unmarried' or 'sullied-extramarital'—rather than regular 'sullied-married' conditions (for the conceptual scheme, see Leach 1968 : 129). Generally, social, economic and political influence and its attendant prerogatives engendered such contacts. They were not permissible ; they were merely condoned by the majority as a privilege of the ruling group. (The zemindars were conceived as miniature kings, and the latter, under tradition, were allowed to have legitimate extramarital sexual contacts, providing zemindars some kind of cultural legitimacy). Such hypergamous contacts most usually supplemented rather than substituted a regular same-caste marriage. All this pointed towards a very limited social recognition for such a contact ; but it was present, nevertheless.

This transient hypergamy of northern India is included because in reality it did create problems of progeny ranking, and most of which were peculiarly 'settled' in terms of lower caste customs of divorce, widow remarriage, and premarital laxity (including the practices of what Karve (1965 : 134) calls *ghar-batheli* and *ghar-ghusi*). While we will discuss these aspects later, here we may clarify certain terminological ambiguities that are likely to appear in such a discussion. Did such unions produce progeny (fully legitimate children), 'progeny' (children with limited jural status), or 'natural child'

(illegitimate ; see Leach 1968 : 129) ? From the view of lower castes the children of such unions could be called 'progeny' because they had greater social recognition in those lower caste groups to which their mothers belonged. From the view of high caste landlords, however, these offsprings were merely 'natural children.' While lower caste women were 'mistresses' or 'kept' (*rakhail*) for the higher caste landlord and his kin, they were 'concubines' (i.e., those enjoying less recognition than a wife but more than a mistress) for those lower caste groups from which these women came. Since I shall consider this hypergamous situation of the landlords primarily for progeny rank purposes, it will be helpful to call the children of such unions 'progeny' and the mistresses, the 'concubines'. This is not to blur the differentiation but to stress the more instructive lower caste point of view of these cases.

The hypergamy represented by these two types of cases falls within the possibilities provided by the traditional *anuloma* (hypergamous) model (conceived essentially in terms of *varna* scheme). While the traditional texts (see Kane 1941 : 52-66, 447-52 ; 1962 : 1256-66) are not unanimous as to the status of hypergamous unions (for decisions were mostly made on circumstantial considerations), they generally recognize three possibilities of *anuloma* (hypergamous) progeny status : First case holds that if a man married a woman of the rank immediately below his, the progeny belonged to the rank of the father. According to some authorities this privilege was restricted only to the union of a Brahman man with a Kshatriya woman. The second case regards that the progeny in such a union would be lower than the father but higher than the mother. The third case (the commonest) is that progeny of hypergamous union is of the same rank as of the mother's.

Kanya-Kubja Brahman hypergamy : The Kanya-Kubja Brahmans (Khare 1960 ; 1966) constitute a high ranking caste group of central and western Uttar Pradesh (U. P.). They are traditionally grouped with the Brahmans of the north (traditionally called *Panchgauda*) and are customarily reckoned as those living 'to the west of the river Sarju'. Although they

are widely dispersed today, they show a strong centripetal tendency towards their original or traditional places of concentration within U. P.

These Brahmans are characterized by an elaborated system of internal hierarchy. Briefly, the chief elements acquired by birth are: *gotras* (exogamous 'clans'), *aspad* (a surname or title), *ank* (genealogically fixed name/s of their concentration within U. P.), and the *Biswa* scale (literally, a land measuring scale in which 20 *Biswas* equal one *Bigha*, or less than one half of an acre; it is a numerical rank order of twenty equal divisions). All these elements interrelate among themselves to determine the rank of an individual Kanya-Kubja. Briefly, location, kinship, alliance, agnatic ancestor, 'clan' and *Biswa* jointly determine one's internal ascriptive caste status.

The Kanya-Kubja, for our present purposes, exhibit two main lines of hierarchization. First, there are actually two (ideally three) ranked *gotra*-clusters called *Uttam* or *Khatkul* and *Madhyama* or *Dhakara* (the third one—unnamed—is now 'nonexistent' according to the genealogies). The first is the higher cluster composed of six *gotras*, and the other one is lower and has ten *gotras* (see Table 2 for a listing). These two clusters are supposed to be endogamous, although there is increasing tendency to weaken it through hypergamous alliances. Second, there is the powerful *Biswa* scale. It assigns numbers 1 to 20 to the Kanya-Kubjas of all the sixteen *gotras*. But it is considered contradictory and controversial as this scale cuts *across* the *gotra*-cluster precedence.

This discrepancy is illustrated below by producing two *gotras* of the Khatkul cluster and three of the Madhyama. The range of *Biswa* variation is shown first along the *gotras* and then across the *gotra* clusters. First, it is important to note that while the highest *Biswa* (20) is found only in the Khatkul *gotras*, low *Biswas* (2 onwards) are found in both the clusters. Thus some groups of a Khatkul *gotra* may be of 20 *Biswas*, while the others of the same *gotra* may be as low as of 2 *Biswas*. It is because the *Biswa* rank is *not* directly assigned to *gotras* but to the numerous *anks* within it. Based on Misra 1959, our computations show that a *gotra* may have 12 to 264 AAGs and

a *Biswa* may have up to 47. (*Anks* will be called agnatic ancestral groups (or AAGs) in the following discussion because they are smaller and more definite ancestral groups than *gotras* (roughly clan), but less precise than lineages. The ancestral name of AAGs belong to actual human ancestors who lived in the past ; however, how many generations before they really lived is *not* remembered, although the published genealogies, according to my informants, do produce a patched account. The AAGs are also fixed in terms of a original location (*susthan*). Both together help ascertain the *Biswa* rank of a Kanya-Kubja).

Second important characteristic is that *Biswa* ranks *overlap* between the two *gotra* clusters. For example, one could find AAGs of 2 to 10 *Biswas* in Kashyap (a Khatkul) *gotra* and of 2 to 10 *Biswas* in Kāshyap (a Madhyama) one, signifying that, although their ancestral names and locations will be different, both *gotras* will have Kanya-Kubjas of 2 to 10 *Biswas*. The following tabulation presents this overlap (the *Biswa* limits are given according to Misra 1959 ; however, some variation is possible in other genealogies) :

Gotra cluster	Gotra	AAG with highest Biswa reported	AAG with lowest Biswa reported
Khatkul	1. Kashyap	20	3
	2. Sandilya	20	2
Mahdyama	3. Kāshyap	10	2
	4. Vatsa	7	1
	5. Dhananjaya	3	2

This overlap is a source of confusion and conflict and is basically attributed to the dichotomy in the conception of *Biswa* and *gotra* hierarchies. The *gotra*-cluster hierarchy is regarded as the older and original one, while the *Biswa* scale,

introduced during the Mohammedan rule, is thought as of different order. The *gotra* rank signifies ritual-purity order, while the *Biswa* emphasizes socio-economic order. This is the common view of the Kanya-Kubja, although both of them are now fixed by birth, and the *Biswa* rank today constitutes a very crucial element in settling marriages, especially dowry. Higher *Biswas* help bring more dowry in a son's marriage.

The above characteristics of Kanya-Kubja social structure help to explain the ways in which they practise their hypergamy (There is also evidence that the urban Kanya-Kubja girls may be married hypogamously. This tendency is weak but not absent). There are two main ways. First method is exemplified by those individuals who marry their daughters 'up' in the same Khatkul cluster primarily by a display of their economic status through sizeable dowry presentations (see Diagram 1, tendency 11). They can thus reach the highest attainable *Biswas*. On the other hand, those who are of the Madhyama cluster and are of 3 or 4 *Biswas* can hypergamously rise in two steps: firstly by rising up to 8 or 10 *Biswas* under the Madhyama cluster and then by crossing the *gotra*-cluster line for the eventual rise to 20 *Biswas* (Diagram 1, tendency 1b). Alternatively, the Madhyama Kanya-Kubja can also initiate the rise first by establishing alliances in the same *Biswa* range but *across* the *gotra*-cluster line; thus a Madhyama Kanya-Kubja of 3 or 4 *Biswas* marries his daughter to a Khatkul Kanya-Kubja of 5 or 6 *Biswas*. Once such alliances are secured by the Madhyama family, it claims the Khatkul rank for itself (with appropriate changes in the names of ancestral groups and locality), and then begins to work its way upwards much the same way as would any other Khatkul family of the parallel *Biswa* position (Diagram 1, tendency 1a). *Biswa* overlap, discussed above, only facilitates this initial step.

Today both of the ways are resorted to, depending upon the social circumstance in which a particular ambitious family finds itself. Some most favourable social factors are: personal kin-caste influence, economic status, migration, and expensive dowry gifts. Besides, there is always, the Kanya-Kubjas observe, an implicit or explicit desire on the part of both bride's

and groom's side to share the accruing benefits. One gains money and the other gets prestige and caste rank in return. However, both sides have to influence their kin and affines to let a suitable change occur in the ancestral alignments (*gotra*, *ank*, and *susthan*) of the artificially rising (*banuan*) family. Their active support is crucial for such a change to go uncontested.

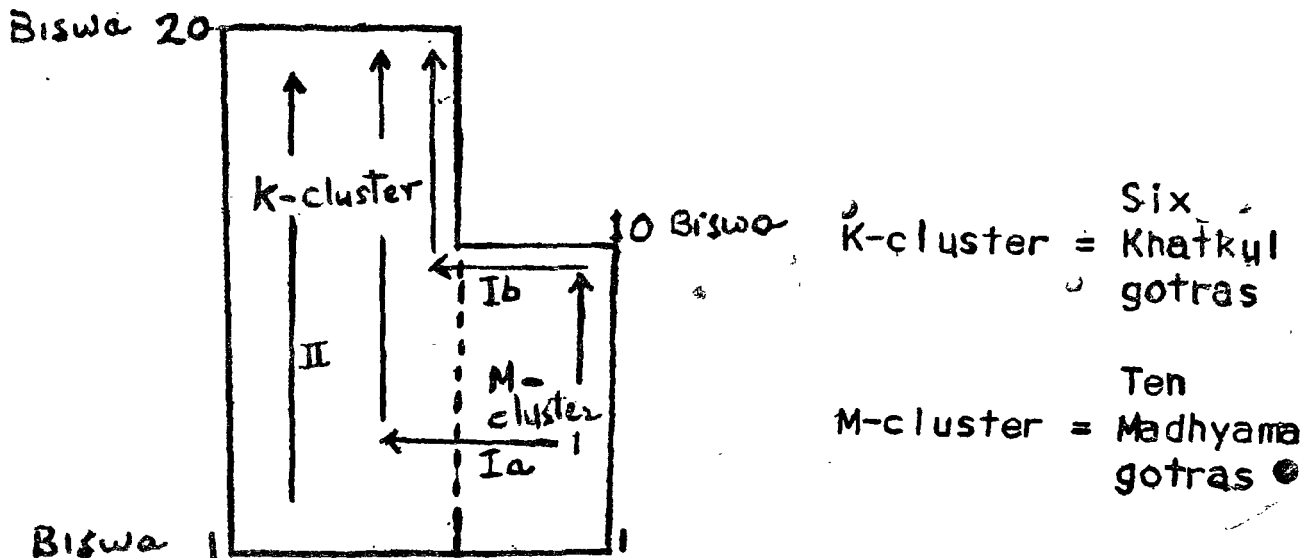


DIAGRAM 1. *Tendencies of hypergamous rise in the Kanya-Kubjas*

Further, the Kanya-Kubja hypergamy follows two caste-specific rules :

- (1) Daughter should be married into those groups which have *Biswas* either higher or equal to one's own. (The former is preferred.)
- (2) Sons should be married to the girls of lower or equal *Biswa* rank. Both rules imply that a young man should avoid marrying a girl of higher social status. (I may here allude to Leach (1961 : 116-119) for the reverse situation among the patrilineal Lakher, who practice 'hypergamy reversed'. There 'women may marry into their own class or the class below, but never into the class above' (p. 85), providing an opportunity to examine separately how the Lakher and the Kanya-Kubja schemes conceptualize 'patriliny' in two different ways, with two different loci of 'structural fragility' (p. 120) in the affinal tie and sibling link.)

How do these rules actually operate will be exemplified by the following cases drawn from caste history and field work. We may first note the two 'historical' cases which are given by the Kanya-Kubjas for illustrating the rank of hypergamous progeny. Both cases affirm the basic significance of father's rank.

- (a) The first case relates to the high-ranked (Khatkul) group, where a Bajpai married a dhobin (a woman of low washerman's caste) on the orders of his father, while his older brother, fearing the violation of the rule of caste endogamy, refused to obey him. However, the younger brother not only had the Brahman progeny from his dhobin (low caste) wife, he was also accorded *high* Biswa (20) over his older brother (19). In published genealogies this ancestor is now called *khaleke* (of lower), evidently neither because of his low rank nor due to his intercaste marriage, but since, as the informants explain, 'this ancestor lived on the ground floor of his father's house on the left bank of river Gomati in Lucknow'. Accordingly, the older brother's descendants came to be known as *uncheke* (of upper).
- (b) The second case is comparatively less well known, but is reported by Crooke (1896) as well as some of my informants. It is related to the lowest rung of this Brahman group called *Bhulnihai ke Panchdhari*. This group was created by marriages with lower caste women, and the progeny, so produced, remained a part of the Kanya-Kubja Brahman caste; however, it lost the high *gotra* and *Biswa* status of its forefathers.

Table I. given below, summarizes 21 cases based on my field work in U.P. during 1965, indicating the ranks of parents and progeny.⁸

TABLE 1

Hypergamous Marriages and Biswa Ranks of the Progeny.

Number of cases	Biswa rank of man		Biswa rank of woman	Biswa rank of progeny
7	20	Married to	15	20
3	20	„ „	10	20
3	20	„ „	8	20
4	15	„ „	4	15
*2	10	„ „	3	10
*2	5	„ „	2	5

*The last two categories are not from the Khatkul *gotra* cluster.

Let us note that these cases denote married rather than 'irregular union' situations; and that they underscore the application and validity of the ground rule of male 'seed' discussed in the previous section, upholding the supremacy of father's rank (while that of the mother's remains inconsequential) in determining the progeny rank.

In the above cases while the Kanya-Kubjas may marry across the two *gotra* clusters (Khatkul and Madhyama), they do not generally violate the rule of marrying their sisters and daughters into equal or superior ranks. The *Biswa* scale, along with its socio-economic indicators, provides an accurate and measurable basis for this asymmetrical 'pull'. Such a rank rise is also closely related to the size of dowry. The higher the *Biswa* rank rise aimed at, the more expensive and complicated the dowry transactions tend to be. Dowry, like woman, is another prestigious commodity and is a direct indicator of the groom's (rather than the bride's) status. Though presented by the bride's father, and dependent upon the latter's economic status, the size of dowry is directly determined in terms of the status of groom and/or his father. Thus both women an

dowry mean the same thing. Both complement man's status on two different planes, one at the genetic and ritual level, and the other at the economic. Accordingly, both move in the same direction in the system and strengthen the status of man—another indicator for 'Marked Father Right' (see Gluckman 1950: 115) and maximal status differentiation among these Brahmans, where hypergamy seems to have produced a generalized 'crowding' at the top of the hierarchy. Such 'crowding' provides us with a more direct indicator of the strength of hypergamy in the system.

By looking into the published genealogies, we can measure crowding, if only crudely, by computing the number of AAGs in different *gotra* and *Biswa* intervals. Obviously, AAGs are indirect and crude indicators because they may not provide exact clues about how many Kanya-Kubjas actually belong to each one of them. All I can then claim is that I shall be only speaking about the crowding of AAGs in various intervals of the *Biswa* scale along the *gotras* of Khatkul and Madhyama clusters.

Table 2 and the accompanying remarks are based on the comparative distributional data provided by some published genealogies in Hindi and Sanskrit, which have been popular in settling modern Kanya-Kubja marriages (Bajpai 1946, Misra 1959, Misra 1966, and Shastri 1966). Of these, I have relied most on Misra (1959) because it is substantiated and comprehensive. Yet there is no way of ascertaining if the genealogies are really exhaustive; it is likely that there may be many unreported AAGs of the geographically distant...the Kanya-Kubjas of the fringe.

This caste has 1188 reported AAGs (see Table 2) placed between the two extremes of the *Biswa* scale, and distributed between the two *gotra* clusters. The majority of the AAGs (931; 78%) belong to the higher Khatkul cluster, with only 257 (22%) AAGs for the lower ten-*gotra* Madhyama cluster. Although it is difficult to indicate exactly the tendency (for there could be several operating simultaneously) responsible for crowding the higher *gotra* cluster, hypergamy seems to be the most probable one. This indication may be examined in

the following background : If we look at the distribution pattern of the AAGs between the two clusters (Table 2), the upper ranks (that is between 6 to 10 *Biswas*) of the Madhyama cluster are unusually 'empty' (and if we except the Kāshyap, the highest of the Madhyama gotras, it is much more so). On the other hand, the 10 *Biswa* plank of the Khatkul cluster is heavily represented, containing 13% of all the AAGs found in this group. Between 10 and 20 *Biswas*, over 69% of all the AAGs of Khatkul are found ; between 15 and 20 *Biswas* are located about 34% AAGs of this entire group. The lower ranks (that is between 2 to 9 *Biswas*) of the Khatkul are correspondingly emptier (having about 30% AAGs), although they have more AAGs (288) than have all the ranks of Madhyama cluster (257). However, if we combine all the AAGs of 1 to 10 *Biswas* of both the clusters, we shall note that the Kanya-Kubja still have a strong pool of low ranked AAGs (545) to allow their hypergamy to flourish. The overall distribution indicates that among the Khatkul Kanya-Kubjas, five, ten, and fifteen *Biswas* are generally regarded as springboards for hypergamous rise (note the unusual concentration of AAGs on these planks in Table 2). But the highest plank (20 *Biswas*), as expected, contains the largest number of AAGs (161) also signifying a concentration of most prosperous and influential Kanya-Kubja Brahmans.

The above only roughly indicates the nature of hypergamous movement across the *Biswas* ranks, providing a sort of numerical substantiation of the hypergamous tendencies along as well as across the two ranked *gotra*-clusters. Still, however, the lower ranks have not disappeared ; they only show thinning. Though most of the above characteristics indicate that the Kanya-Kubja do very frequently practise hypergamy in their own caste group, it is still not an all out practice, for it is crucially linked with one's socio-economic status and the latter acts as a strong restraining force.

Table 2. Frequency distribution of agnatic ancestral groups (AAGs) among the sixteen Kanya-Kubja gotras for showing the relative "crowding" of upper ranks.

Biswa Scale	KHATKUL CLUSTER (Six Gotras)						MADHYAMA CLUSTER (Ten Gotras)										Grand Total No.	Grand Total %		
	Kash.	Shan.	Katy.	Bhar.	Upraj.	Sank.	Kash.	Garg.	Gaut.	Bhar.	Dhan.	Vatsa.	Vasis.	Kaus.	Para.	Total No.			Total %	
Highest 20	12	23	24	42	47	13	161										161	13.6		
19	4	10	21	13	13	3	64										64	5.4		
18	5	9	9	16	23	5	67										67	5.6		
17	7	6	5	7	14	--	39										39	3.3		
16	1	8	9	8	9	1	36										36	3.0		
15	2	9	4	7	8	3	33										33	2.8		
14	4	6	9	15	3	1	38										38	3.2		
13	1	5	4	12	4	--	26										26	2.2		
12	1	5	2	23	3	2	36										36	3.0		
11	3	1	1	11	5	--	21										21	1.8		
10	40	4	19	40	16	3	122	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	0.4	123	10.4	
9	8	--	--	5	4	1	18	10	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	10	3.9	28	2.4	
8	23	2	2	11	12	2	52	--	1	--	3	--	--	--	--	4	1.6	56	4.7	
7	15	4	1	8	7	1	36	5	--	--	--	2	--	--	--	7	2.7	43	3.6	
6	8	1	1	2	1	--	13	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	1	0.4	14	1.2	
5	36	5	2	24	22	6	95	5	1	1	8	--	2	--	--	17	6.6	112	9.4	
4	18	5	1	13	6	1	44	4	4	1	11	5	4	9	6	4	3	56	21.8	
3	3	13	1	5	1	--	23	9	4	1	12	19	7	10	7	6	8	7	101	39.3
2	--	1	--	2	4	--	7	11	14	12	19	7	10	7	6	8	7	101	39.3	
1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	2	2	--	--	3	1	5	2	3	18	7.0	
Lowest	191	117	115	264	202	42	931	32	23	21	49	12	37	17	17	14	15	257	100.0	
Total																			1188	100.0

Key:

Kash. - Kashayap
 Shan. - Shandilya
 Katy. - Katyayan
 Bhar. - Bhardwaj
 Upman. - Upmanyu
 Sank. - Sankritya

Kash. - Kashayap
 Garg. - Garg
 Gaut. - Gautam
 Bhar. - Bhardwaj
 Dhan. - Dhananjaya

Vatsa - Vatsa
 Vasis. - Vasishta
 Kaus. - Kaushik
 Kavista - Kavista
 Para. - Parasar

The Kanya-Kubja hypergamy is therefore a game essentially of the position and rank-conscious rich people. Those who prosper marry their daughters hypergamously to those who are prosperous. Class achievements greatly influence where one is going to be married. In this game, women and money, the commodities of restricted and non-restricted exchange, mutually reinforce and move in the same direction during a marriage. Men exchange these to establish or enhance a nonmaterial commodity: their progeny's ascriptive status even by non-ascriptive means.

(B) **Zemindari Hypergamy**: Though different from the previous case, it provides a useful testing ground for the preceding observations, and it also allows us to find out how the lower caste system handles varied problems of progeny ranking.

This variation of hypergamy concerns the pre-independence zemindars and Talukdars (meaning a landholder, which can cover the meanings of owner and/or tax-collector; Spear 1965: 96ff) of the villages of Karimpur and Gopalpur (pseudonyms) of Lucknow District. (These villages are situated 23 miles due east of Lucknow, the capital city of Uttar Pradesh). Both villages, medium-sized (each having between 650 to 700 people), were inhabited mainly by lower caste tenants and higher caste zemindars and Talukdars. The cases given below are reported to have occurred between 1900 and 1940, mainly as a result of the excessive social and economic power enjoyed by these rulers.

Zemindari system, introduced in 1793 and abolished on July 1, 1952, produced numerous hereditary zemindars and Talukdars, who became economically powerful by exacting all kinds of taxes from their tenants, for example, motor car tax, elephant tax, visit tax, husk tax, birth tax; etc. As Elder (1962: 17) noted, 'By 1946 the state was receiving only about 39 per cent of the total amount the zemindars were exacting from their tenants (contrasted with the original 90 per cent the state has been realizing in 1793)'. Thus becoming economically

powerful these landholders, most usually of high castes, exploited their lower caste tenants for free domestic services and agricultural labour. Those who rebelled were put down with a heavy hand, including economic sanctions, forcible ejection from tenancy, and confiscation of property. A zemindar's power was reinforced by his informal connections with local police (cf. Mayer 1960 : 19,96). Between 1900 and 1940, three generations of zemindars and Talukdars had exercised such a power over Karimpur, often resulting in the ejection of rebellious Kurmi, Ahir, Kahar, Dhobi, and Mali (servicing castes) tenants, who settled in neighbouring Gopalpur.

The Karimpur zemindars met their mistresses mostly as their domestic servants coming to help their family. Alternatively, a ruler met lower caste servicing women when he camped in a village during his tax-collection trip and when such women came in to perform his domestic chores. A brahman female cook (popularly called *brahmini* or *maharajin*) used to be the part of this servicing crew in the camp, providing an opportunity even for hypogamous unions. Although two such unions were suspected by some, they remained unconfirmed and are not included in table 3.

rules of high caste groups, the zemindars only had *mistresses* and 'natural children' (mostly in addition to their 'own'); but according to the rules of lower caste groups, these women were recognized as concubines, or nearly so; and the children so born were more than (socially speaking) natural children but less than regular progeny. This cultural relativity must be clearly differentiated and applied to the types described below for understanding the fuller implications of these cases on progeny ranking.

Case Types

- (a) The higher caste zemindars 'kept' lower caste unmarried women. The progeny through such unions neither had *pater* or *mater*; they started with known genetic father and genetrix. However, as actually reported, all these women were later on *married* (in some cases several times) to men of their own or a closely adjacent caste group, providing a *pater* (different from the genetic father and a *mater* (same as the genetrix) to the earlier zemindar-produced progeny. The women who were once mistresses to the higher caste people were obviously not barred from becoming legitimately married wives and mothers. Normative jural rights were accorded to the hypergamously produced progeny not at birth but afterwards when a *pater* could be found. Table 3 indicates that such unions were frequent and were solved with minimum social problems from the point of view of lower castes.
- (b) The higher caste zemindars 'kept' women who were married but were either abandoned or separated or divorced. Of the three cases in this category, two women had progeny from their ex-husbands, while one had none. Zemindar-produced children then followed. Actually, when the latter were born they were progeny approximately of the same order as in (a) (i.e. both *pater* and *mater* were not available to them). Later on, two of the three women married again, 'taking along' with

them the zemindar-produced progeny as well. Their ranks were as those of the latest husbands of these women.

- (c) The higher caste zemindars 'kept' those lower caste women who had been married earlier to comparatively higher (but neither in twice-born caste groups, nor that of the zemindars') caste men and had progeny of the latter's ranks from such marital unions. At the time when zemindars contacted them, these women had come to *reside* with lower caste men. (These women were thus 'kepts' of the latter). Two of the four such women were able to marry (i. e. by giving the feast of the second marriage) the men they were living with and thus the zemindar-produced progeny also received the ranks of their genetricks' latest husband. Mother's earlier higher caste natal or marital rank was of no positive consequence to them. On the other hand those two who did not marry could transfer the rank of their natal groups to their zemindar-produced as well as earlier husbands' children (the latter happened because the affinal tie is usually much more brittle among the lower castes than in those twice-born).
- (d) The higher caste zemindars 'kept' and produced progeny those lower caste women (previously married or unmarried) who had come to reside, at the time when zemindars contacted them, with the comparatively higher (but not twice-born) men. Through migration or caste council appeasement, two men married these women and were eventually able to transmit their ranks to zemindar-produced progeny. One woman remained unmarried, was a 'kept', and finally moved away from the village. Nothing more is known about her.

(As long as the residence of a woman is found preparatory to an eventual marriage, the lower caste members may consider her previous marital record with leniency.)

- (e) The zemindars 'kept' poor women of an intra-caste rank but lower than their own. The two confirmed cases deal with regularly practiced Rajput hypergamy and essentially present the same prestigious game described for the Kanya-Kubja Brahmans. These women, initially concubines, were later on married to the zemindars under the customarily permitted rule of polygyny. It may be noted that these woman had conceived premari- tally, but gave birth to the progeny after marriage and were offered full jural rights upon their birth.

The main principle of 'seed'-run progeny rank determina- tion is again demonstrated in the above cases managed mostly by lower castes. Their practices of divorce, widow remarriage, and 'kepts' allow us to examine the other side of the familiar high caste model.

On zemindari hypergamy and the fate of such progeny, several villagers of Gopalpur and Karimpur, including a Brahmin priest observed :

The zemindars of this area, when keeping lower caste 'concubines', favoured them and their kin to a degree which even created jealousy among other lower castes. There were such concrete acts of help as granting a piece of land free and without *batai* (shared crops), paying for a brick house, and presenting silver ornaments and some cash to help them send the progeny to school. As a result as long as these concubines lived, they lived well—much better than even some of the higher castes could. Many of their children are well-educated and now are employed in the cities.

Some implications

I started with the question of asymmetrical, unilateral, and crucial role of man in determining the progeny rank as postulated by the traditional ground rule of *bija-kshetra* ('seed and soil'). After Levi-Strauss (1966), I also noted that the problem is to be understood as an idealized nature-culture

confrontation, contending that in a cultural scheme, nature stands culturalized ; that the resultant conceptions are cultural, although they may be presented as natural.

The preceding hypergamous situations involving varied progeny ranking decisions particularly illustrate this general problem, and suggest us to conclude that the nature of man's 'seed' is insuperable in the system. This conclusion is basically in conformity with 'Marked Father Right' displayed by the north Indian society. However, under high preference for caste endogamy, this basic emphasis is also expressed in inverted terms : Men are always the bearer of 'seed' (i. e. the genetic ranking element), and it is women who actually effectively control the seed's expression by becoming *properly endogamous* (group exclusive) 'soil'. The higher the caste rank the greater is this indirect control of caste hierarchy by women (Yalman 1963). Women, particularly of high caste, must therefore be treated, as Levi-Strauss (1966) observes at an idealized level, on a model of natural species. They are to be retained within a caste group because they can unite only with men of the same caste ; they are incapable of uniting across this *sub species naturale* line, as is exhibited in the animal kingdom. However, in practice this emphasis is in contradiction to the ground rule but it does not dispute the latter primarily because the restrictive rules of exchanging caste women are to maintain and to elaborate the seed-rule and not to abolish it. Kin and jural rights, for example, continue to organize around the male seed even under strictest caste endogamy. The latter in reality emphasises the protection of woman as a field for male seed ; ideally, it can not and does not award her any positive intrinsic rank of her own. At the idealized level, the concern for caste woman is a kind of necessary price paid to stabilize the seed-based asymmetrical (cultural) hierarchical precedence of the system. It is also to underscore the natural complementarity between man and woman without having to alter the basic importance of the cultural (asymmetrical) model. Thus under endogamous as well as hypergamous situations⁴, a man alone is the complete bearer of progeny rank ; he is the sole culturally recognized

natural begetter of children ; and he is exclusively capable of determining ascriptive rank. On the other hand, caste women are only capable of depriving the progeny of its due status, but are not capable of awarding it any rank independent of men.

In order to minimize this negative influence of women on caste hierarchy, the basic traditional rule is that they should be kept well *protected*, especially against any kind of sexual lapse (see Yalman 1960, 1963), by men (Manu 11, IX). Accordingly, the system postulates extensive attention (ritual and social) to the woman at all stages of her life. The special concern of protection starts well before puberty, and is dramatized in rituals and ceremonies as well as in intrafamily socialization of girls. The feeling of alienation in father's home (for she does not belong to the house) and the incomplete incorporation in husband's (for she can at best bear but not beget children) are characteristic of woman's existence (for a noted Indian lady anthropologist's expression of such sentiments, see Karve 1965 : 72ff). Father, brother, husband, and son are the successive 'protectors' of a caste woman (for the traditional view, see Kane 1941 : 577, 594 ; for a field example, see Madan 1965 : 87-91). As a related aspect, the woman of the caste system is conceived as a naturally (sexually and temperamentally) dependent but essential dimension of man's society. Consequently, the cultural interpretations of the caste women are also caught between these two polarities : They are considered 'naturally wicked' (Manu 11, 213-215 ; IX, 17-20) on the one hand, and deserve to be exceptionally honoured and well treated for 'men who seek (their own) welfare' (Manu 111, 55.62), on the other.

Thus the discussion of parentage, progeny and women's status is multilevular, for they are culturally conceived from different angles. The nature-culture, and idealized-actual binary oppositions, especially as Levi-Strauss handles them, seem to be crucial for understanding the entire issue of Hindu patriliney (see Table 4), because they help to systematize its constituent categories, referents, and direct and inverse relations. While actually these levels deserve a separate

treatment, this brief allusion will, I think, further help in tying together various threads of the preceding discussion on cultural conceptions of parentage and progeny.

This tabulation differentiates within and among natural-cultural levels of conception, contending, as I noted in the beginning of this section, that these explanations are cultural, including the categories, genetic and sexual. Various items of the chart are different pieces of conceptions fitting together to form a logically consistent cultural pattern. These inter-related pieces are drawn from a single context but depict a range of variation in order and meaning.⁵ The table also

TABLE 4

Natural-Cultural conceptions of progeny and parenthood

Levels of Conceptions	Woman	Man	Child
Biological (Natural)			
(a) Sexual	Consort	Consort	Offspring or "Natural child"
(b) Genetic	Ovum	Sperm	(biological existence) ³
Cultural			
(a) "Natural"			
(i) Biological or Sexual	Passive consort	Active consort	"Active" or "Passive" child (depending upon sex)
(ii) "Genetic"	Neutral "soil", "field", or "pouch" (genetrix)	Positive character-bearing "seed" (genetic father)	"Progeny" (limited jural social recognition)
(b) Sociocultural	Neutral bearer of children ; negative on religious values ; exaltation as mother. Subroles : genetrix, mater, fosterer	"Natural begetter of children. Subroles : genitor pater, fosterer ³	"Progeny" or progeny (limited or full award of jural status, depending upon the rank of pater)

NOTES

1. Even this so-called settled mechanism of having progeny can undergo modification. For example, with biological knowledge and practice of artificially improved human insemination, the conceptions of "union", "progeny", "parents", "marriage" and even the *source* of an ovum and a sperm that meet to produce a particular child of predetermined sex and qualities, shall have to be sociologically re-examined and reconceptualized (for a recent lucid presentation of such emergent issues, see Taylor 1968).
2. This role is more pronounced in lower caste marriages and remarriages, where both man and woman bring along their previous progeny. Depending upon the case, a man may be able to become a pater or only a fosterer to such progeny. The latter role is more especially applicable when the social resistance is high against total incorporation of a progeny from an ex-husband or an ex-wife.
3. Strictly speaking, every biological conception is culturally conceived. Accordingly, in a society a "natural child" has the "biological existence" which is largely culturally defined, usually by the *absence* of certain jural or social criteria which accompany a regular progeny.

suggests how cultural categories (11a, b and c) translate as well as transvalue the biological 'givens', and how they build an idealized cultural model and attempt to explain the biological reality and its diversity. Transvaluation (which here means cultural conceptualization of the universal biological 'givens') is evident in the table through such words as 'active and passive'; 'neutral and positive'; and 'bearer and begetter'. This paper thus shows how the system naturalized 'the true culture falsely', how the asymmetry is culturally postulated by the ground rule of 'seed and soil', and how it is followed up logically consistently in various ways from sexual and genetic planes to that of the socio-cultural. The general tenor of this paper also confirms Leach's (1968 : 129) general thesis 'that what seems logical common sense is determined by context—by cultural circumstance not scientific fact.'

FOOTNOTES

- (1) This paper is based on the fieldwork done during 1958-1960, and 1963 and 1965, on the villages of Gopalpur and Karimpur and on the Kanya-Kubja Brahmans of Uttar Pradesh. I thank my lower caste informants of both the villages who, with understanding and insight, gave me information on how the lower castes function as a system, distinct from that higher.

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- (2) Very close to this extremely patrilineal rule come that which Leach (1966 : 44) notes for the Egyptians in the words of a Greek author : "The Egyptians hold the father alone to be the author of generation and the mother only to provide a nest and nourishment for the foetus."
- (3) However, ascertaining such cases during the course of fieldwork became a problem because those who had "artificially" risen in Biswa rank would say that they were always higher, and those who helped them by receiving their daughters in marriage would not readily admit it. Only a careful genealogical check of the consanguineal and affinal relatives may help locate such cases.
- (4) This material also indicates that under the uniform ground rule endogamy, hypergamy, and exogamy can combine variously within one caste group. Hypergamy, which is a special kind of exogamy, can be found within an endogamous caste and subcaste, although the reverse is not true. The Kanya-Kubja case illustrates this situation. On the other hand, endogamy and hypergamy can exist side by side but in only a restricted manner. The Zemindari case is only a weak and transient example of this kind.
- (5) The relations between various pieces, as Leach (1966 : 44ff) observes, are not amenable to any "straightforward single

answer", for they present a jig-saw puzzle, especially when, as mentioned in the notes appended to Table 4, the recent strides of genetic and biological research are trying to redefine even their "spohisticated" views on progeny and parenthood. What anthropologist considers to be a yardstick for measuring the "primitive" notions of parenthood and progeny today is fast becoming ignorant naivete of the scientific tomorrow.

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TENURE AND ALLOCATION OF PHOOMPHAM AMONG THE THANGA FISHERMEN OF MANIPUR

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&

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Abstract : This paper is designed to throw some light on certain aspects of economy of a lake-fishing community of Manipur in the perspective of the tenure and allocation of a *phoompham*, fishing ground of a traditional method of fishing locally called *phoom namba*.

THE Thanga fishermen inhabit the foot-hills of Thanga ching, a couple of islet hillocks standing in the south of the Loktak (about 100 sq. miles in area during monsoon), the biggest lake of Manipur (latitude 23' 50" and 25' 4" North, and longitude 93' 2" and 94' 47" East). Sixty per cent of the total males in the sample are primarily fishermen ; fishing for the rest being a secondary occupation. Besides house-keeping, Thanga females do take part in fishing to supplement their household income by fishing with one kind of life-net which is locally called *nupi een*, i.e., net used by females, other fishing methods being conventionally forbidden for them. However, they can freely weave fishing nets and use a canoe while fishing.

The lake is referred to by these fishermen to be the most beneficent place on earth. Their dependence on it is figuratively expressed through such phrases as *loktak ima* (mother Loktak), *eikkoigidi patna louchani* (lake is our paddy land) etc. Besides

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fish, they also collect edible vegetables from the lake area. During lean months they depend on *heikak* (*trapa bispinosa*), a product of the lake.

The Government of Manipur leaves the lake unreserved for public fishing. Loktak is all the time alive with fishermen not only from Thanga but also from other sister fishing communities, Ithing and Karang, and from the mainland villages on its fringe. This is, so to say, an arena of their operations humming with fishing activities.

The multitude of fishermen plying there day and night are, however, governed by certain traditional rules relating to ownership of fishing grounds. Two forms of ownership are recognized : permanent and temporary. Permanent ownership is claimed over *phoompham* (fishing grounds for *phoom namba*, a typical fishing operation of the Thanga fishermen), *Panpham* (site for fishing by traps on weirs), *kom* (depressed points in the lake which retain water even when the surrounding areas are dry) and *khong* (water strips mostly dug out artificially connecting two adjacent pools of water). *Ad hoc* ownership is held over a fishing spot by anybody so long as he utilizes it ; but when he moves away to some other areas, he loses his right over it. Temporary ownership is associated with ambulant types of fishing and it can be held anywhere in the lake by anybody except on the above-mentioned fishings sites over which permanent ownership is claimed when the respective types of fishing are operated thereon in the appropriate seasons. Most of the permanent fishing grounds belong to Thanga fishermen. This paper deals with the tenure and allocation of a *phoompham* only.

As has been mentioned above, a *phoom pham* is a fishing ground for *phoom namba*, a method of fishing typical to the Thanga fishermen. It is interesting and essential to make some observations on this method of fishing in the context of the tenure and allocation of the fishing spots. For this fishing a long sheet of *phoombi* (cut from a piece of floating island of matted roots of aquatic plants) is made to float in the shape of a ring on the surface of the water at the fishing spots by passing bamboo poles at wide, but regular distances,

through it into the bottom of the water. This ring of *phoom* sheet is locally called *pali*; it measures about 180 fathoms in length, one fathom in width, and one and half a feet in thickness.

Mostly the *phoombi* used as *pali* (floating dam) is purchased. A *phoom* shelter requires *phoombi* worth about Rs. 5.00. There are a few persons who collect patches of *phoom*, claim ownership over these and sell these piece by piece to others. The encircled water is stuffed with water-hyacinth and other aquatic plants to serve as a shelter for fishes. Only a small portion is left uncovered—a space for the free play of the fishes inside. In order to ascertain the probable quantity of fishes therein weeds are fixed here and there inside the encircling dam. If there are many fishes, many of the weeds shake simultaneously because of the movement of fishes. An estimate of good prospects is soon followed by preparation for fishing operations. Generally it takes one month or so for the final fishing operation.

The fishing of *phoom namba* starts, as a rule, each year after the full moon of *wakching* (a lunar month of the Meitei calendar that roughly corresponds to January). *Nongma panba* (the first day), *taretni panba* (the seventh day) and *ekada si* (the eleventh day) of a month are unlucky days for the operation of this mode of fishing. Certain days of a week are also observed as ominous ones in relation to the direction of the fishing ground as determined by the location of the house of the individual concerned. Tuesday (*Leipakpokpa*) is most strictly observed as one such day when the Ego does not move if his *phoom* is to the north. On a day other than the aforesaid ones, the first course of preparation for fishing is undertaken by purifying the *phoom* shelter by sprinkling *tairol* (*cedxela toon*) leaves dipped in water. The ritual practice of *khayom lakpa* (*Khayom* is a bundle of banana leaves that contains oblations of at least rice and flowers) is performed to appease Pakhangba, the snake-deity guiding fishes, for bumper catches. No sooner the ritual courses of preparation are performed than a long well-joined sheet of tarpaulin is hurriedly released all along the dam. Its upper border is fastened at intervals to the

dam while the lower border, being provided with a bag of stones, all along the length, sinks to the bottom. Formerly, before the introduction of tarpaulin into this economy the dam of *phoom* itself was used as the enclosure by fixing a close series of upright bamboo poles through one margin, by action which this margin got submerged to the bottom whereas the other margin rose above the surface of water. This technique of enclosing is still used in shallow water and when tarpaulin is not available. In both the methods of enclosing two or three men dive into water to see if there be any leak. Meanwhile, aquatic plants are cleared up to facilitate easy catching of fish. Generally it takes two or three days from the day of enclosing the shelter to the day of fishing operation.

Wallowing of water precedes actual fishing operation. Wallowing is done either by men with bamboo poles or by buffaloes or by both. These activities are attended by *hoi laoba*, i.e. rhythmic utterance of sound to lighten the burden of hard labour. In the meantime a few women start fishing with *nupi een*, each from a dug-out. When water is well wallowed, men also join hands in catching the stranded fishes by scooping nets and multiple-headed fishing spear. During actual fishing operations they strictly observe a tabu of not uttering the name of *houdong* (cat) which is believed to frighten the fish. Fall of a person from a dug-out inside the enclosure during fishing operation is also a tabu. Such an incident immediately brings the fishing operation to a close. A popular belief is that such an accidental fall from a canoe within the enclosure magically drives away the fish. It is also strictly forbidden to carry dried paddy stalks inside the enclosure because of a belief that the presiding deity over paddy is a deadly enemy of the guardian deity over fish. During fishing operation many persons other than the members of a *phoom* group are seen; they are close friends and kins who on request assist the party. It is a matter of shame to catch fish in another's *phoom*-fishing without having some sort of relationship to some member of the party and without helping the party in some previous activities in the preparation stage.

Phoom namba is the biggest and most economically gainful type of fishing at Thanga ; the record of gross returns during the period of January 1968 to July 1968 on a single occasion of fishing varied from far below Rs. 100.00 to Rs. 9,500.00. Winter is the best season for *phoom namba*. During the winter fishes, because of the cold, take shelter under patches of water hyacinth floating here and there in the lake. An intimate knowledge of the habits of fish particularly during the cold season led them to devise the idea of making an artificial shelter of aquatic plants encircled by a long sheet of *phoombi*. The Thanga fisherman carry on this method of fishing till the beginning of the summer when, as the level of water decreases, fishes concentrate at deeper points in the lake. Hence the points that remain undried in the summer are selected as suitable fishing grounds for this mode of fishing. Thick layers of pieces of *phoombi* are submerged on the bottom of the selected fishing spots at two points : one in front side and the other behind. Logs or stones are deposited on these as permanent marks of ownership and sources of finding out the site for necessary arrangement of the processes involved in this method of lake fishing.

Spotting of a *phoom pham* is surely a puzzling matter to a stranger. The Thanga villagers, however, tackle it easily by means of certain traditional techniques. With their familiar knowledge of the locations of the various points of demarcation of the different parts of the lake (each of which is also specifically named by the Thanga villagers) such as ridges, knolls, tracts of elevated dry land etc. which are exposed during dry season, they can easily, though approximately, demarcate one part of the lake from another when the lake is fed with water. It is with this pre-knowledge that they can also locate the existence of a particular *phoom pham* in a particular part of Loktak. Their traditional common technique is observation of the nature of the lake water. Water is equally open both at a *phoom pham* and a water-route, but the latter stretches lineally whereas a *phoom pham* is roughly circular (wallowing in the time of fishing operations hampers the growth of weeds there ; moreover, those points being deep,

weeds cannot grow abundantly). The complexity of locating a *phoom pham* is aggravated by the fact that fishing grounds lying in a particular area are not of the same owner; many *phoom pham mayam*¹ belonging to different owners are usually scattered irregularly, particularly at *lamyai phoomlak*, the area in the Loktak where *phoom pham mayam* are so densely located that one *phoom* shelter, during the fishing season, is hardly at a distance of more than five fathoms from the other. In such a situation, the Thanga fishermen employ the technique of referring to the relative positions of a known neighbouring *phoom pham*. Every owner of *phoom pham* knows the neighbouring owners. When a *phoom pham* is approximately located in the manner noted above, a long bamboo pole is dipped into the water to search for the stones or logs placed at the bottom. It is reported that they seldom commit error in exactly locating a *phoom pham*; even if partial overlapping of adjacent *phoom* shelters takes place as a result of slight deviation from the terminal points, they voluntarily withdraw slightly to create a clear room for demarcation. No dispute arising out of such a situation has been reported by the villagers.

When a *phoom pham* is found out by means of the above techniques, an artificial shelter is prepared. It is this spot encircled by the sheet of *phoombi* measuring nearly 180 fathoms in length over which the owners claim ownership. In other seasons the spot is freely accessible to anybody. Even during the season of *phoom namba*, if the spot is left unutilized by the owners, anybody can exploit it by any method of fishing, but invariably with the permission of the owners in case of *phoom namba*. Temporary occupation through permission cannot, however, entitle the occupier for permanently using the *phoom pham* site. Such a false claim is considered immoral. Besides, dispute regarding ownership of a fishing ground is supernaturally believed to cause the fish to refrain from entering the spot under dispute. This is a veritable threat of loss to either party. Though few and far between, dispute of clandestine utilization of another's *phoom pham* is, however, not altogether unknown. One such case² is added in the

note. The reason for not allowing some one else to exploit one's *phoom pham* is not far to seek. Types of fishing other than *phoom namba* are mobile in nature: so the fishermen who operate any of these ambulent fishings can immediately vacate the spot on demand of the owner. But it is not so easy in the case of *phoom namba*; once the *phoom* shelter is set up by someone else, the owner has to wait until the final day of fishing operation, i.e. about one month or so.

As soon as the *phoom* shelter has been prepared, the right of access to it is restricted to the persons who have collectively made it. An incident involving bloodshed⁸ took place during the period of field investigations—obviously on account of violation of this norm. A fisherman can operate his netfishing very close to the fish-shelter. The sound of beating the freeboard of his dug-out as a technique of herding fish into his nets makes, of course, disturbance to the fish beneath the shelter; but still it is tolerated by the owners. What is not allowed is the setting of nets from the boundaries of the dam since this is most likely to obstruct entrance of fishes into a prepared shelter. It is also forbidden to anchor one's dug-out on the dam. This is more due to suspicion that *charoo* (dried paddy-stalks), *hentak* (fish-paste) and *sumjit* (broom), etc. might be dropped down out of jealousy into the shelter. A woman, too, is equally prohibited from anchoring her dug-out on the floating dam. Presence of a menstruating woman on the dam is highly suspected to be a cause for adversely affecting the entry of fish into it. Menstrual blood, *charoo*, *hentak*, *sumjit* etc. are all profane to Ngaleima (the female deity presiding over fish). Many persons, however, anchor their dug-outs on the floating dam to take rest after a long journey, or to pluck some edible vegetables growing there. But, if they are seen perchance by the owners, they are sure to be abused by the latter with harsh words, the meaning of which are harsher than the sound itself.

A *phoom pham* is owned by either a unilineal kin corporation of variable sizes⁴ or by a single individual. If it is owned by a unilineal kin corporation, all male members belonging to it share the right of ownership. Ownership is handed down

from one generation to another both vertically and horizontally. Migration of a member to other places does not touch his ownership. Such a *phoom pham* is locally called *shagei phoom pham*. Here the principle of kinship that underlies these kin corporations, however, exist more in form rather than in function. To all intents and purposes, the utilization of these *shagei phoom pham mayam* does not conform to the above rules of ownership. Thus, the migrant members of any unilineal kin corporation hardly join *phoom* fishing on any of their *shagei phoom pham mayam* since they have adopted quite different occupations in their respective new habitat. Even all those members who still inhabit the tiny islets within the lake area do not necessarily always join hands in exploiting their common fishing grounds. Since various preferences and choices of fishing methods are open to them, even during the season of *phoom namba*, they relinquish the right of *phoom* fishing in the *shagei phoom pham* when they find that other types of fishing offer better prospects. So, a *phoom* group is often found to be organized in collaboration with consanguineal kins other than those belonging to the same kin corporation, close affinal kins and even friends. Furthermore, a *phoom* group may be joined by a few members who are neither relatives nor neighbours nor friends of all the owners, but simply an acquaintance or neighbour or kin of any other member of the *phoom* group. In short, the relation between two members of a *phoom* group may not be one of direct kinship and friendship or neighbourhood. If some members of a kin corporation have adopted some other types of fishing, the rest of the members who are interested in *phoom namba* can utilize all the fishing grounds of their corporation as if they were the only owners. Thus they can even lend out some of the fishing grounds for the whole season to their respective close kins and friends. Whether they do or do not, the borrowers are expected to present, in return at least *nga charama* fish of a requisite quantity which will serve one meal of the household of the lender, kin or friend on every single occasion of fishing on the hired out *phoom pham*.

To a person who is neither kin nor friend, a charge of

Rs. 20.00 to Rs. 30.00 is made as rent. Again, it so happens that a prepared fish shelter is sold off at Rs. 30.00 to Rs. 50.00 for one season. Apart from exploiting the *phoom pham* under the circumstances described above, the second party can even lend out or sell off, temporarily for the season, to a third party in the same way as the first party did in relation to them. After the season, the borrower or short-term-purchaser, whether primary or secondary, must return the tenure to the original owners. Though the temporary sale of a *phoom pham* is in vogue in this economy, it is in many cases forgone in preference to lending a *phoom pham* to close kins or friends free of charge. Their motive is : 'It is good for us when our near and dear ones gain something. None but they will come forward to help us in need ; and moreover, money cannot buy labour.' As a matter of fact, their labour relation is primarily a kinship or friendship relation. There is no market for labour. It is thus observed that the process of allocation of a *phoom pham* is a matter of stabilizing their social relations. It should, however, be noted that they regard as close kins only those belonging to the same *chagok* (see note No. 4) in the consanguineal line, and wife's father, sister's husband, daughter's husband, wife's sister's husband, mother's brothers and father's sister's husband, etc. on the affinal side.

A member of a unilineal kin group is thus given full freedom as to the utilization of their corporate fishing grounds unless the question of sale arises. Since *shagei phoom pham mayam* are corporate property, one individual member alone cannot sell any one of these. No difficulty arises in the case of a *phoom pham* owned by a single individual. An individually owned *phoom pham* sells approximately at Rs. 100.00.

NOTES

1. *Mayam* : It is a plural suffix in Manipuri language.
2. Dispute over *phoom pham* leading to a feud :
The dispute relates to unlawful utilization of another's *phoom pham*. Without giving notice to the owner a person made *phoom* shelter on the *phoom pham* at issue. The owner came to know about it and asked for the inclusion of

himself and some of his associates in their *phoom* group. When this was refused, the real owner demanded an immediate removal of the shelter. The encroacher also claimed ownership of the same *phoom pham* and this led them to a duel at the very spot. The two persons are cousins in a very close range of classificatory category (belonging to the same *Kabu*, the smallest patrilineal group). The case was, therefore, decided by elders of the same kin group: its ownership by the original claimant was admitted but he, being junior in age, was ordered to show respect to the encroacher by prostrating himself before the latter.

3 Feud over a *phoom pham* leading to bloodshed :

It was attributed to previous personal grudge between the two parties in question. It burst out when a person unlawfully trespassed into the *phoom* shelter of the other person and took away a few reeds therefrom for use in his fishing by nets. That day the trespasser was sharply rebuked with reference to the past grudge. Irritated by this intolerable treatment, the trespasser and his elder brother went again to the area on the following day and operated fishing by nets very close to the *phoom* shelter in question by way of disturbing the fishes under the shelter. This was challenged by the owner of the shelter leading to a bloody feud.

4. Unilineal kin corporation of variable sizes :

The whole social structure of the Meitei is divided into seven exogamous social groups, each of which is called a *Salai*. A *salai* comprises of several *yumnak mayam* (*mayam* meaning 'many'). Thanga society is a part of the greater Meitei society. At Thanga, each *yumnak* has three subdivisions, each of which is locally referred to as a *chagok*. These are *hanjabam* (group of the eldest line), *iwaibam* (group of the middle line) and *atonbam* (group of the last line). A *kabu*, which is a further subdivision of a *chagok*, is based on ritual pollution of the birth of a new baby and the death of a person into it. It is the male members of a *kabu* that form a kin corporation and jointly hold the ownership of a *shagei phoom pham*. The vertical and the

horizontal extension of a *kabu* is variable. Again, some *kabu* have *shagei phoom pham mayam* while some others have none.

5. *Shagei phoom pham* ;

A *phoom pham* owned by a *kabu* is called a *shagei phoom pham*. *Shagei* stands for close kins of the consanguineal line. A *kabu*, being a patrilineal social group, is composed of consanguineal kins. This is why a *phoom pham* belonging to a *kabu* is known as *shagei phoom pham*. Here the word *shagei* is used in a narrow denotation, being confined to the pale of a *kabu* only.

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CASTE STATUS AND RITUAL OBSERVANCES IN A WEST BENGAL VILLAGE¹

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SATADAL DASGUPTA

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Abstract: The object is to test the empirical validity of the notion that in a village dominated by Brahmin caste, relative statuses and ranks of the different castes in the local caste hierarchy will be significantly related to their extent of observances of Brahminical rituals as determined and mediated by the locally dominant caste. The theoretical orientation of this study is provided by the two distinct but inter-related concepts—Sanskritization and caste dominance—originally proposed by M.N. Srinivas. The theoretical position taken in this study is that in a village dominated by Brahmin caste, the Brahminical model of Sanskritization will be mediated by the dominant caste and will be preferred by other castes to any other model for improving their statuses in the village caste hierarchy. The village studied was a multi-caste village in West Bengal, India, dominated by the Brahmin in terms of ownership of locally available land, numerical strength and position in the local caste hierarchy. The analysis of the data revealed that there was a high degree of agreement among the house-holds belonging to different castes regarding the position of each caste in the local caste hierarchy. Also, there was a high degree of homogeneity in each caste in terms of observance of the rituals. Finally, when a rank order correlation (ρ) was performed between the caste status and ritual observance the resulting coefficient of rank order was found to be highly significant.

Problem and Hypothesis

The conceptualization of the twin processes of Sanskritization and westernization by M. N. Srinivas has been found to be useful to many anthropologists and sociologists in analyzing contemporary social change in India.³ Although the

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concepts of Sanskritization and westernization are analytically distinct, these are interrelated, and even complementary, as processes.⁴ Sanskritization has been defined by Srinivas as a process 'by which a 'low' Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its custom, ritual, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently, 'twice born' 'caste'⁵ Thus a caste may improve its relative position in the local caste hierarchy by Sanskritizing its rituals, customs and way of life although its hierarchical mobility does not necessarily lead to any structural change in the local caste system.⁶ Westernization, on the other hand, is a process by which individuals, regardless of their caste affiliations, can improve their positions in a secular class hierarchy by taking to a way of life created and influenced by western ideologies. Ironically, it is the upper castes which have been mostly exposed to the western ideologies and way of life, and have been in the mainstream of the westernization process while the middle and lower castes have by and large, adhered to the process of Sanskritization. Notwithstanding the risk of oversimplification, it may perhaps be stated that while the members of the upper castes are becoming more and more westernized in their effort to move through the ladders of secular class hierarchy, the other castes are becoming more and more ritually Sanskritized as groups to improve their positions in the traditional caste hierarchy.⁷

Indeed, westernization as a process of social change is dominant in urban-industrial centers in India although with the improving communication and transportation facilities relatively remote rural areas are also gradually coming under its influence. Nevertheless, in the traditional village societies of India, Sanskritization is more dominant as a process of social change and thus, acts simultaneously as a modifying and reinforcing mechanism of local caste hierarchies.

There are several models of Sanskritization, and dominance of one model over another depends upon the type of dominant caste in a particular locality.⁸ For example, in a village dominated by Brahmin caste, the Brahminical model of Sanskritization as mediated by the dominant caste will be the most preferential one. The Kshatriya model of Sanskritization will

be most desirable in an area dominated by Kshatriya castes. Life styles of the merchants (Vaishya model) and peasants (Sudra model) will be dominant in localities where these groups are dominant.⁹ In other words, as argued by Srinivas, the concept of dominant caste supplements in some ways the concept of Sanskritization. Thus the existence of a dominant caste is an important structural feature of rural India. The dominant caste plays an important role in the process of cultural transmission by mediating the various models of Sanskritization¹⁰ Ownership of a sizeable amount of locally available land, numerical preponderance and a high position in the local caste hierarchy are the three most important attributes to decisive dominance of a particular caste in a locality.¹¹

This paper will empirically test : a hypothesis reflecting the above theoretical conceptualization, that is, that in a village dominated by Brahmin caste, the Brahminical model of Sanskritization will be mediated by the dominant caste and will be followed by other castes for maintaining and/or improving their statuses in the village caste hierarchy. Operationally, it is argued this process will be, at least partly, indicated by the significant correlation between the positions of the castes in the local caste hierarchy and the extent of their observances of Brahminical rituals.

Area and Method

The data utilized in this paper came from an intensive study of a village in West Bengal, India, in the year 1965. The village was located only 12 miles from an industrial town, Kharagpur, in Midnapur district of West Bengal. The village was small in size of population consisting of only 262 persons distributed in 56 households. Financial and temporal limitations compelled one of the authors of this paper to select this village which was not too far removed from the industrial town, not too near to it to be considered as its suburban extension. The smallness of the village enabled the sole investigator to complete field work within a month.

Although the village was located only 12 miles from the industrial town, it was relatively isolated. The nearest bus

station was located about three miles from the village, and one had to walk three miles or ride a bicycle to reach the bus station. The nearest railway station was about six miles and was connected with the village by a dirt road. Thus, although in sheer physical distance the village was quite near to the industrial center, lack of communication and transportation facilities contributed to its social isolation to the extent that the village would appear to an observer to be more rural than he would have expected it to be judging by its physical distance from the industrial town.

The data were specifically obtained on caste structure ; land-ownership, occupation and income ; caste ranking and on observance of Brahminical rituals as related to birth, marriage and death by interviewing each head of household in the village. The specific details of the method of collecting data on caste status and ritual observances are discussed later in the relevant sections of this paper.

Findings

Caste Structure : As can be seen from Table 1, the population of the village was divided into ten caste groups. The Brahmins as a caste group were most numerous both in total number of persons and in number of households. The only other group which was numerically close to the Brahmins was the Majhis. However, although in number of households the Majhis were closer to the Brahmins, in total number of persons they were closer to the Tantis. This was due to the fact that the average size of the Brahmin, Malakar, Napit and Tanti households were slightly larger than those of the other castes in the village. The Tantis came next to the Majhis in numerical size of the caste group. Thus, the main bulk of population in the village (67 per cent) was constituted of the Brahmins, Majhis and Tantis coming in that order of numerical preponderance. The other castes namely the Hadi (Hāri of Risley), Malakar, Mahisya, Dhopa, Jugi and Bagdi comprised the remaining one-third of the population.

TABLE 1

Castes by number of households, number of persons, percent land owned and annual income per capita (in rupees)

Castes	No. of households	No. of persons	Percent land owned	Annual income per capita (in rupees)
Brahmin	15	70	70.0	452
Malakar (Florist)	3	15	8.9	200
Napit (Barber)	2	9	3.6	248
Tanti (Weaver)	8	50	6.4	133
Jugi (Weaver and Tailor)	2	8	0.8	86
Mahisya (Peasant)	3	12	2.8	101
Dhopa (Washerman)	3	10	0.5	89
Bagdi (Fisher and Laborer)	2	6	0.8	51
Majhi (Agri. Laborer)	13	57	4.2	47
Hadi (Scavenger)	5	25	2.5	54
Total	56	262	100.0	193

If not numerically, the Brahmins were decisively dominant in the economic sphere. The Brahmins owned more than two-thirds of the available land in the village and consequently, no other caste came anywhere near them in ownership of land. The Malakars, who came next to the Brahmins in ownership of land, owned less than one-tenth of the available land in the village.

The economic dominance of the Brahmins was further reflected in annual income per capita. Per capita income of the Brahmins was not only highest in the village, it was almost twice as large as that of the Napits who came next to the Brahmins in income. The social and ritual dominance of the Brahmins was reflected in the superior position they held in the village caste-hierarchy.

Caste-Hierarchy: The data on caste ranking were obtained by asking each head of house-hold in the village to arrange the

castes in a rank order of descending status. Thus the household-heads of each caste ranked the other castes in the village including their own. An arithmetic mean was computed of the rank scores given by all household-heads of a particular caste to each of the castes in the village. The average of these means of the scores given to each caste by all other castes in the village was considered to be indicative of the position of each caste in the village caste hierarchy.

TABLE 2

Distribution of the Mean of the rank scores given by each head of of the household of a particular caste to all other castes, including his own and mean ranks by castes.

Caste ranking	Castes Ranked									
	Brahmin	Malakar	Napit	Tanti	Jugi	Mahisya	Dhopa	Bagdi	Majhi	Hadi
Brahmin	1	2.13	2.13	2.87	3.6	3.8	4.73	5.7	5.8	6.9
Malakar	1	2.0	2.30	2.60	3.7	3.3	4.7	5.0	5.0	6.0
Napit	1	2.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	3.5	5.0	5.0	5.5	6.5
Tanti	1	2.0	2.1	2.0	3.4	4.1	5.2	5.6	5.9	6.9
Jugi	1	2.0	2.5	3.0	2.5	4.0	5.0	5.5	5.5	6.0
Mahisya	1	2.0	2.0	2.3	3.7	3.3	4.7	5.0	5.0	6.0
Dhopa	1	2.0	2.0	2.3	3.0	4.33	5.0	5.3	5.7	6.7
Bagdi	1	2.0	2.0	2.5	3.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0
Majhi	1	2.0	2.1	2.3	3.5	3.8	4.8	5.4	5.4	6.4
Hadi	1	2.0	2.2	2.4	3.2	3.8	4.6	5.0	5.4	6.4
Mean Rank	1	2.04	2.13	2.46	3.41	3.84	4.86	5.39	5.54	6.52

Table 2 shows the distribution of the means of the rank scores, given by each head of household of a particular caste to all other castes including his own, by castes. Interestingly, the

respondents belonging to a particular caste had a high degree of agreement among themselves regarding the position of each caste in the local caste hierarchy. Also, there was a high degree of agreement among the households belonging to different castes regarding the positions of the castes in the local hierarchy. This could be seen by reading each column in Table 2 from top to bottom. For example, respondents belonging to the various castes including the Brahmin themselves invariably gave a rank score of 1 to the Brahmin caste. On the other extreme of the table, it may be seen, the different castes including the Hadis themselves consistently gave a point score of 6 or more, never less, to the Hadis. The same thing was true for every other caste. This high degree of agreement among the heads of households in the village was perhaps indicative not only of their awareness of the existence of a caste hierarchy in the village but also of its functional significance in inter-caste relationships.

The row at the bottom of Table 2 shows the 'mean rank' of every caste in the village. This mean rank, as noted earlier, was the average of the means of the scores given to each caste by all other castes of the village, and the mean rank of a caste was considered to be indicative of its position in the village caste-hierarchy. Thus, the Brahmins were unquestionably at the top of the caste-hierarchy with a mean rank of 1. The Malakars, Napits and Tantis, who came in that order had a mean rank between 2 and 2.5. The Jugis and the Mahisyas came next in order with mean ranks of 3.4 and 3.8 respectively. The Dhopas were between the Jugis and the Mahisyas, on the one hand, and the Bagdis and the Majhis, on the other, with a mean rank of 4.86. The Hadis were unmistakably at the lowest rung of the caste-ladder as its mean rank of 6.4 would indicate.

Ritual Observances : For the purpose of obtaining data on ritual observances, an inventory of Brahminical rituals as observed in relation to the passage rites—birth, marriage and death—was developed by interviewing number of household-heads belonging to the Brahmin caste who were thought to be experienced and knowledgeable of both Sanskritic and local traditions. The inventory included a total of seventy-nine

rituals ; sixteen rituals related to birth ; thirty-three rituals related to marriage ; and thirty rituals related to death. A house-to-house survey was then conducted in the village to determine the extent to which each of these rituals was observed by the households belonging to different castes. Each household was given a point score of 0, 1 or 2 on the basis of non-observance, partial observance and complete observance of each of these rituals respectively. A summation of these scores constituted the 'ritual observance score' for each house-hold. Thus, a household received a total score of 158 for complete observance of each of the 79 rituals. A composite ritual observance score for each caste was computed by averaging the ritual observance scores of the households belonging to a particular caste. All the castes in the village could be arranged in a rank order according to their composite ritual observance scores as shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3

Castes by composite ritual observance scores and mean deviation of ritual scores.

Castes	Composite ritual observance scores	Mean deviation of ritual scores
Brahmin	157.6	0.6
Malakar	116.0	0.7
Napit	114.0	0.0
Tanti	114.0	1.5
Jugi	114.5	0.5
Mahisya	110.0	2.0
Dhopa	103.3	0.9
Bagdi	98.5	0.5
Majhi	97.7	1.4
Hadi	81.0	2.0

It will be observed from the table that the complete ritual observance score decreased with the descending caste status with

the Brahmins having the highest score, and the Hadis, the lowest. Perhaps this is indicative of the fact that observing Brahminical rituals in a Brahmin-dominated village is an important mechanism of not only improving but also of maintaining the position in the village caste hierarchy. Not only the observances of Brahminical rituals increased with the increasing caste status, there was a high degree of homogeneity in each caste in terms of observance of the rituals. In other words, the households belonging to a particular caste had little variation among themselves in ritual observances. This is indicated by the low mean deviations of ritual scores of each caste. The mean deviation of ritual scores for each caste was computed by subtracting the ritual observance score of each household belonging to particular caste from the composite ritual observance score of the caste and then averaging the deviations.

One very striking aspect which can be seen from Table 3 is that the low castes such as the Hadis, Bagdis and Majhis, had surprisingly high composite ritual observance scores. The Hadis, the lowest caste in the village, observed at least half of the rituals completely, or most of the rituals partially. The Majhis and the Bagdis also observed a majority of the Brahminical rituals. Not only the composite scores were relatively high among these three 'low' groups, there was high degree of homogeneity among the households belonging to each of these groups in observance of the Brahminical rituals. To these castes observance of Brahminical rituals was essentially a mechanism of improving position in the caste hierarchy while to the upper castes it was more a mechanism of maintaining the positions than improving them.

It can also be seen that although the Jugis had a slightly higher composite ritual score than the Napits and Tantis, they had a position lower than the latter two groups in the caste hierarchy. The Jugis, however, have an ambiguous position in the caste system of Bengal. They never completely identified themselves with the Hindu caste structure in Bengal and in places where they have enough numerical strength they even claim a higher caste-status than the Brahmins. They have their own priests, separate temples and somewhat different

cultural tradition. While the Brahmins and other upper castes would not attribute to them a high caste-status and consider them as a Sudra caste from whom the Brahmins and other upper castes would not accept water, the Jugis, in their turn, would not accept water from these castes nor would accept the priestly service of the Brahmins. In other words, in Bengal the Jugis have generally alienated themselves from the other caste groups at least in ritual sphere.

It is interesting to note, however, that Jugis of the village of this study who were few in number (only two households) elected to identify themselves with the local caste structure instead of alienating themselves from it. They had taken to the Brahminical rituals and exactly knew their position in the local caste hierarchy as recognized by others.

Caste Status and Ritual Observance : Table 4 shows the mean ranks of the castes as determined by the respondents of the village and the corresponding composite ritual observance scores as computed from non-observance, partial observance, and complete observance of Brahminical rituals by households belonging to each caste. As noted earlier it was seen from the table that caste status corresponded closely with the extent of observance of Brahminical rituals. Observance of Brahminical rituals decreased with decreasing caste status. When a rank order correlation was performed between caste status and ritual observance, the resulting co-efficient of rank correlation was very high (ρ 0.967). When the co-efficient of rank correlation was transferred into 't' the 't' value (3.394) was found to be significant at 005 level.¹³ This showed that status in the caste hierarchy and observances of Brahminical rituals were strongly related in the Brahmin dominated village.

TABLE 4

Castes by Mean Rank and Ritual Observance Score

Caste	Mean Rank	Composite Ritual Observance Score
Brahmin	1.00	157.6
Malakar	2.04	116.0
Napit	2.13	114.0
Tanti	2.46	114.0
Jugi	3.41	114.5
Mahisya	3.84	110.0
Dhopa	4.86	103.3
Bagdi	5.39	98.5
Majhi	5.54	97.7
Hadi	6.52	81.0

Co-efficient of Rank Correlation (ρ) = 0.967, "t" = 8.394

Level of Significance of "t" = .005 (one-tailed)

Summary and Conclusion

The objective of this paper was to empirically test the hypothesis that in a village dominated by Brahmin caste, the Brahminical model of Sanskritization will be mediated by the dominant caste and will be followed by other castes for maintaining and/or improving their positions in the village caste hierarchy.

The village in which the study was conducted was dominated by the Brahmin caste, numerically, economically and socio-ritually. The Brahmins had numerical preponderance both in total number of persons and total number of households. They owned more than two-thirds of the available land in the village. They were at the top position of the local caste hierarchy.

The analysis of data further revealed that there was a high degree of agreement among the households belonging to different

castes regarding the position of each caste in the local caste hierarchy. This was argued to be indicative not only of an awareness on the part of the members belonging to different castes of the existence of a caste hierarchy but also of its functional significance in inter-caste relationships.

Also, there was a high degree of homogeneity in each caste in terms of observance of the Brahminical rituals. In other words, the households belonging to a particular caste had little variation among themselves in the extent of ritual observances. Although the extent of ritual observances decreased with decreasing caste status, the low castes in the village had surprisingly high ritual observance scores. This was interpreted to be an effort on the part of these low caste groups to improve their positions in the caste hierarchy by more and more Sanskritizing their ritual observances and way of life. It was also argued that the observances of Brahminical rituals to the upper castes was more a mechanism of maintaining positions in the caste hierarchy rather than improving them.

Finally, when a rank order correlation was performed between caste status and ritual observance, the resulting co-efficient of rank correlation was found to be highly significant. This showed that status in the local caste hierarchy and observance of Brahminical rituals were strongly related in a Brahmin dominated village.

NOTES

1. This paper was originally presented at the annual meeting of the Southern Sociological Society, U. S. A., held at New Orleans, April 9-12, 1969,
2. Harsha Nath Mookherjee is a Research Assistant at Social Science Research Centre, Mississippi State University and Satadal Dasgupta is an Associate Professor in Anthropology at the St. Dunstan's University, P. E. I., Canada.
3. The concepts of Sanskritization and westernization were first put forward by M. N. Srinivas in his book, *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952); these were further modified and elaborated by him in a later article, 'A Note on

- Sanskritization and Westernization,' *Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. 15 (August, 1956), pp. 481-496; for a most recent treatment of the concepts, see his book, *Social Change in Modern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).
4. Although essentially conflicting, the relation between westernization and Sanskritization can sometimes be seen as complementary. For example, technological westernization in India has directly contributed to reinforcement of Sanskritization. Improved communication and transportation facilities have helped Sanskritization to reach previously remote areas. Increase in rate of literacy enabled Sanskritization to spread to the lowest levels of the caste-hierarchies. On the other hand, Sanskritization has sometimes acted an intermediary step to westernization as noted by Srinivas: 'one of the many interesting contradictions of modern Hindu social life is that while the Brahmins are becoming more and more westernized, the other castes are becoming more and more Sanskritized. As far as these (other) castes are concerned, it looks as though Sanskritization is an essential preliminary to westernization' although there is no logical necessity for Sanskritization occurring prior to westernization' as an intermediary process; see, 'A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization'. *op. cit.*
 5. M. N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
 6. Although Sanskritization as a process may change *positions* of the castes in a hierarchy, it does not bring in any structural change in the caste hierarchy in the sense that 'a caste moves up, above its neighbours and another comes down, but all this takes place in an essentially stable hierarchical order'; *ibid.*, p. 7.
 7. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-10,
 8. *Ibid.*
 9. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.
 10. *Ibid.*, pp. 14.
 11. *Ibid.*, pp. 10.
 12. M. G. Kendall. *Rank Correlation Methods*, (London: Griffin, 1948). pp. 47-48.

THE KORA

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Abstract : In this paper, an attempt has been made to present an analytical study on the relationship between the spatial distribution and the major economy of the Kora, a wage earning manual labouring tribal group. In this matter, we shall limit our observation to the situation in Pargana Barabhum which is at present merged with the Purulia district of West Bengal and the Singbhum district of Bihar, since the re-organization of States in 1956.

Introduction

There is a great deal of controversy regarding ethnic and linguistic affiliation and the history of migration of the Kora. The authorities of different census operations since the time of Risley, were somewhat perplexed, as they placed the Kora either in the tribal or in the caste category. In the 1931 census, over 90 per cent of the Kora were returned as Hindus and the rest as following tribal religion. In 1951, the Kora were recorded as a scheduled caste. But in the recent 1961 census, they were again listed as a member of the scheduled tribes. In Barabhum we find them at present within the threshold of Hinduism. The Kora are regarded as specialists in earth-working. They also work as agricultural labourers and are experts in the digging of tanks. They regard themselves as a Hindu caste and are accepted by the standard Hindu castes in the region.

As far as could be ascertained, the bulk of the Kora migration into Barabhum took place around the middle or the last quarter of 18th Century i. e. about one hundred and fifty to two hundred years ago.

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When they appeared in the demographic scene of Pargana Barabhum, they found it to be the estate of the powerful chieftain, *Barabhum Raj*, probably of the Bhumij descent (Sinha:1962). This hilly tract covering an area of 634 square mile was inaccessible and was overspread with dense forest and was inhabited mainly by the tribal group like the dominant Bhumij, and the Kharia, Pahira together with a few lower artisan castes. Then came the Kora Mudi, Orang Mudi, Santal, Mahato and other artisan groups subsequently. The rapid exposure to the outside world since 1866 brought a large influx of the immigrant population from Bengal, Bihar and Orissa

At the time of our over-all survey of Barabhum Pargana during 1957-60, we found it to contain 576 villages. About 64 castes live in the pargana with a total population of 244,733. Various ethnic groups, starting from the level of the hunting and food-gathering tribal groups like the Kharia, Pahira to sacerdotal castes like the Brahmin and the Vaishnava are living here. The numerical dominance is shared by the following groups : the Mahato (30%), Santal (16%) and the Bhumij (15%). The Kora possess a small numerical strength of 2677 people and form 1.09% of the total population of the Pargana and are comparable in number to the ritually significant groups like the Brahmin (3.44%), Vaishnava (1.72), Napit (1.79%) and the Dhoba (.07%). All these castes and tribes, including the Kora Mudi, have been sharing 'a single land tenure system, an economic system primarily based on cultivation of rice, crafts and weekly markets, a more or less agreed system of regional power hierarchy and caste ranking, gods, festivals and a local dialect' for more than a century (Sinha, *et al* : 1961).

Spatial Distribution of the Kora

Before entering into the analysis of the spatial distribution of the Kora in the Pargana Barabhum it may be of some use to us to know the distribution pattern of the Kora population in the states of West Bengal and Bihar.

In Bihar : Total Kora population : 13,824 (according to 1961 Census).

TABLE 1

District-wise population figures : (1961 Census)

Divisions	Districts	Population figures
PATNA	Patna	×
	Shahabad	3
	Gaya	×
		<hr/> 3
TIRHUT	Saran	×
	Champanan	×
	Muzaffarpur	×
	Darbhanga	×
		<hr/> ×
BHAGALPUR	Monghyr	6,100
	Bhagalpur	187
	Saharsa	×
	Purnea	2
	Santal Pargana	6,198
		<hr/> 12,487
CHOTANAGPUR	Palamau	×
	Hazaribagh	4
	Ranchi	34
	Dhanbad	332
	Singhbhum	964
		<hr/> 1334
<hr/> Total		13,824

In West Bengal : The total population of the Kora in West Bengal is 62,029 according to 1961 census ; 32,251 are males and 29,778 are females. The Kora constitute about 3% of the total tribal population of this state.

TABLE 2

Districts	Population	P. C. of the total Kora population
Bankura	8,122	13.09
Birbhum	5,514	8.89
Burdwan	11,919	19.22
Calcutta	57	0.09
Cooch Behar	86	0.14
Darjeeling	287	0.46
Hooghly	4,651	7.50
Howrah	100	0.16
Jalpaiguri	5,563	8.98
Malda	2,478	3.99
Midnapore	11,449	18.46
Murshidabad	694	1.13
Nadia	13	0.00
Purulia	7,501	12.09
24-Parganas	773	1.25
West Dinajpur	2,822	4.55
Total	62,029	100.00

Out of this total figure of 62,029, 61,149 has been recorded as rural and the rest (880) as urban. Moreover, since 1872, the Kora population in this state has increased by 395.4% in about 90 years. But an increase of 42.7% could be marked in Kora population during the last decade i.e. from 1951-1961 (Das : 1964). This increase in population is mainly due to migration into this state from southern Bihar. The reason for such inter-state migration is mainly economical.

In Barabhum Pargana : After the re-organisation of the states in 1956, the former estate of Barabhum in South Manbhum, as already pointed out, has been merged with Purulia (2/3 portion

of it) district of West Bengal and the rest 1/3 portion with the Singhbhum district of Bihar. A brief statistics of Pargana Barabhum and the distribution pattern of the Kora therein has been given below (Ref. Sinha *et al* : 1966 (1964))

Total population of Barabhum—244,733

Total area of Barabhum —4,07,174.44 acres or
634 sq. miles.

Total No. of ethnic groups—64

Total No. of territorial
segments or *taraf* —9

Total No. of villages —596 including 20
depopulated vill.

Population per acre —0.60.

Population per sq. mile —386.50

TABLE 3

Territorial segments of Barabhum	No. of villages	Total population		Kora population		
		Families	Persons	Families	Persons	Distributed in villages
1. Sarberia	48	4,124	21,250	66	314	4
2. Satrakhani	97	7,741	37,281	64	265	8
3. Dubraji	10	1,025	5,206	19	80	2
4. Bangurda	17	1,554	8,313	12	62	1
5. Gartoli	120	10,137	53,459	187	879	23
6. Dhadka	79	5,708	28,507	121	528	15
7. Panchasardari	80	7,482	37,063	46	279	6
8. Tinsaya	35	3,065	15,324	14	62	2
9. Kumaripar	110	7,863	38,325	41	208	4
Total	596	48,699	2,44,733	570	2,677	65

The total number of 570 Kora families with a population of 2,677 constituting about 1.09% of the total population of the Pargana are found to be distributed in 65 villages of 9 *tarafs* or territorial segments. Their highest concentration is observed in the central Gartoli *taraf* and the three villages of Ragma, Sankhari and Karmabera intensively studied by us are situated in this *taraf* about 2 miles north-west of Barabazar, the headquarters of Barabhum *Raja*. The density of population of Gartoli *taraf* is highest being 1.00 per acre amongst 9 *tarafs* of Barabhum.

Traditional Occupation

In Barabhum, the Kora, as mentioned earlier, are specialists in earthworking and are regarded as experts in the digging tanks, embankments etc. They themselves claim it to be their caste *britti* or traditional occupation. The observation made by Risley may be quoted here 'the caste (Kora) believes tank digging, road making and earthwork generally to be their characteristic profession and it may be surmised that their adoption of a comparatively degraded occupation, necessarily involving a more or less wandering manner of life may have been the cause which led to their separation from the Mundas, who are above all things settled agriculturists, conspicuous for their attachment to their original villages.' (Risley : 1891 ; 506-507).

Day-labour and Wage-system :

In Barabhum, we find that the Kora make their living mainly as day-labourers. They are considered as the experts in digging tanks, erecting embankments, making road etc. They themselves think earthworkings as their traditional calling (*britti*). Some of the Kora made this remark, 'We had absolute monopoly in the past in the matter of earthwork. Previously we did not have to starve. But now the Santal, Bauri Orang-Mudi are trying to encroach upon our traditional occupation of earthwork. This has actually put us into difficulty. We do not get day-labour every day'. But it is felt that the Kora enjoy some amount of preference over earthworkers of other castes. The

local people cherish favourable opinion regarding the working habits of the Kora day-labourers. There is a general notion in this area that whatever obstruction may come in the way of digging up tank, the Kora will not leave it and they will not stop their pick and hoe until they can trace out some perennial source like a natural spring underneath the tank. The Kora are never found to abandon any kind of earthwork midway, which is often the case with labourers of other castes. In addition to this, a specific ritual role i.e., *bundh-biha* has been assigned to them by upper Hindu castes in the area which is beyond the reach of the day-labourers of the other castes. It has actually prompted me to search out, how and when such a social group, with very low status and with a very poor numerical strength and obvious origin from a tribal stock, actually began to play such a specific ritual role.

My interest is intensified when I find that the Kora living in different parts of West Bengal and Bihar, outside Barabhum Pargana are just settled agriculturists. Of course, they subsidize their agricultural income by working as manual labourers in different kinds of vocations. The Kora of Mudi-dih (P. S. Jhalda, Purulia district, West Bengal), Chandi-dih (P. S. Sili, Ranchi district, Bihar), and Khezurdanga (P. S. Bolpur, Birbhum district, West Bengal) possess a fair amount of cultivable land in comparison to the Kora of Barabhum. Of course, the Kora of Jhargram (Midnapore district, West Bengal) stand on the same economic footing as their brethren in Barabhum. Moreover, in these places they do not cherish the notion that they are experts in earthwork and that earthworking is their traditional calling (*britti*). Similarly, the local people do not consider the Kora as expert earthworkers. It is more significant to us that the Kora living in these area outside Barabhum do not have the right of performing the ritual act of *bundh-biha* (or consecration ceremony) which is performed at all newly excavated tanks. In pursuing this matter in Barabhum, we get the following facts.

In the above-mentioned places outside Barabhum, where the Kora are more or less permanent cultivators, they try to live compactly in a few adjacent villages. They form the numerically dominant group in the village they live. In a village of average

size near Chandi-dih (Ranchi), out of 40-45 families 38-40 belong to the Kora while the rest belong to the blacksmith and some other castes. The same is the case with adjacent villages and thereby they try to form compact area dominated primarily by them. In Bolpur and Jhalda also, the Kora (numerically) dominate in those villages where they live. A few families of other castes live along with them. In Jhargram the Kora occupy second or third place in numerical dominance in the villages they live. But in Barabhum, we find that the Kora constitute only a minor fraction of the village population. In a village of average size they form only 1/10th or 1/12th of its population and on an average we find maximum 6-10 families living in a village (mostly multi-ethnic) of Barabhum Pargana. If we consider the overall population figure of Barabhum, we can have the following statistics :—

The total number of 570 Kora families with a total population of 2,677 constituting about 1.09% of the total population of Barabhum Pargana are found to be scatteredly distributed in 65 villages. It can be represented more clearly under the following points :—

- (a) The Kora live in 65 villages out of 596 villages of the Pargana i.e. in every 9th village we can meet the Kora.
- (b) In those 65 Kora inhabited villages, the average number of Kora families and their population per village comes to 8 and 41 respectively ; and in the context of entire Pargana it will come slightly below than 1 family and 4 persons per village.
- (c) The Kora constitute about 1.09% of the total population of Barabhum in contrast to the Mahato, the Santal and the Bhumij who are having 29.38%, 16.44% and 15.51% respectively. [Sinha *et al op cit* : 1966 (1964)]
- (d) Density of Kora population in Barabhum per square mile is 4.2 as against the real density of general population of 386 per square mile.

It might be due to the fact that agricultural economy encourages a large population to live together in a somewhat compact manner (which is the case with the Kora of Chandi-dih, Jhalda, Bolpur). But the wage-earners like the Kora of

Barabhum who are constantly in search of manual job cannot live in a compact fashion. Probably for that reason they are found to be dispersed in different villages.

If we consider the overall population figures of the different tribal groups of the states of West Bengal and Bihar, the scattered distribution of the Kora population will be apparent to us. In contrast to the Kora, the other major tribal groups like the Santal, Oraon, Munda, and the Bhumij live in more or less compact blocks in different regions of these states.

Though a fragmentary section of the Kora own small plots of cultivable lands and a still smaller number of them are substantial cultivators, the majority of them are landless labourers in Barabhum (it might be true if we consider the entire Kora population of West Bengal and Bihar). Under this circumstance, they are forced to live in different villages, interspersed among the other wealthier groups, as a subservient caste. Constant source of securing job is absolutely vital for this labouring class who lead a more or less hand-to-mouth existence mainly as wage-earners. It holds probably true for those who live partially on agriculture.

From the earlier reports on Barabhum and from the local situation, we can easily surmise that the major earning of this estate of Barabhum used to come from agriculture. A substantial portion of the best quality of cultivable lands was under the *khas* possession of the Raja (chief). Even now, a large portion of the best quality land is under the direct possession of the lineage of of the former chief. It was customary for the cultivators of this Pargana to give one day's free labour in the *khas* land of the chief with their own plough. Thus in order to raise the income of the estate, the chief of Barabhum was largely bent upon successful outturn from the agricultural fields. As this success, in its turn, was dependant upon successful irrigation, a large number of tanks of this area, some of which are still there, provide us with the definite proof of it. In making a village-to-village survey in all 49 villages within the radius 3 miles from Ragma (the village under intensive study) we gained the following idea about the inter-relationship between the artificial irrigation system and agriculture.

In those 49 villages (covering an area of 28.2 square miles) surveyed by me, I have found a total number of 308 artificial irrigation tanks of various size. which include 117 *bundh* (water reservoirs with dam on one side), 124 *sayer* (water reservoirs with raised dam on all four sides) and 167 *goira* (small *sayer*). The number of 15 *bundh*, 10 *sayer* and 5 *goira* of Barabazar town itself have also been included in it. We are told that a large irrigation tank may be extended to a total area of 20-25 *bighas** of land. Amongst these only 57 are 'very old' origin and were constructed not earlier to 150 years (traced through the genealogy of the owners), 132 tanks may be levelled in the category of 'old' i.e., constructed within 80-100 years from now. The rest fall in the 'recent' category i.e., within 50 years from now. From these figures, the average comes to about 2 *bundh*, 2 *sayer* and 3 *goira* per village and 3 *bundh*, 4 *sayer* and 5 *goira* per square mile. From these, we can have an idea about the immense importance the local cultivators attached to the artificial irrigation dams in order to stabilize their agricultural income.

By pursuing it in 10 out of 49 villages surveyed by me, I could not gather correct information regarding the castes of the labourers employed in digging all these irrigation tanks. Yet I got some interesting information. In Ragma, Ranchi, Rampur and Shankhari, the Brahmin *bundh*-owners told us that it was at the time of Raja Ramkanai Singh Deo Bahadur, the Kora got the monopoly over *bundh*-excavating service. The kind-hearted *Raja* made an announcement before a festive gathering at Barabazar probably on the eve of *Indh Parab* that the people of Barabhum should employ Kora Mudi exclusively in excavating new irrigation tanks and in other kinds of earthworks from then onwards. It was on the advice of the Brahmin, the Raja assigned the ritual act of *bundh-biha* to the Kora. It could be gathered from them that in excavating 9 very old *bundhs* in four villages around Ragma, the Kora man-power was exclusively utilized. Even now, it is customary on the part of the cultivators of this Pargana to call at least three Kora labourers to offer the ceremonial opening strokes with a new pick and hoe in digging up any tank. Each of them

*1 Acre = 3.3 *bigha*

gets a new set of pick and hoe, a piece of cloth, and a basket for the ceremonial opening of the excavation of a tank. If they continue the digging work they get the usual daily wages. We have already referred to the preferential treatment given to Kora earthworkers by the local cultivators.

It was also learnt from a few caste leaders like Kalipada Mudi of Krishnanagore, Ratan Mudi of Sankhari, Manik Mudi of Ragma that it was at the time of Raja Ramkanai Singh Deo Bahadur, the father of the present Raja (about 80-100 years from now) the Kora got a *tamar-pat* (copper-plate inscription carrying the order of the Chief) from the Chief, on the strength of which they had almost monopolized in earthworkings specially in digging *bundh*, (tanks). Moreover, from then onwards they are entitled to the ritual act of *bundh-biha*, the consecration ceremony of a newly excavated tank. The above-mentioned *tamar pat* was handed over to late Dolu Mudi of Sankhari village by the *Raja* himself who had gone there to attend a special caste-meeting of the Kora Mudi Samaj. In addition, the kind-hearted Raja offered small plots of land to these Kora families, who did not have any land under their possession and asked them to settle in Gortoli *taraf*. When I interviewed Hikim Saheb (youngest brother of the Raja), he told me that he had heard of *tamar pat* offered to the Kora by his father. He was not sure about the other details with regard to the provisions and privileges offered to the Kora.

It is indeed unique for the Kora of Barabhum. In other places we visited, even in the neighbouring police-station of Jhalda in the same district of Purulia, the Kora do not have such economic facilities and ritual act like their brethren at Barabhum. In addition, they get the privilege of performing the ritual act of *bundh-biha*, as noted earlier, owing to the active support of the local chief.

Discussion

The small size of Kora settlement in Barabhum may be due to the fact that while agricultural economy encourages a larger population to live together in a somewhat compact manner (which is the case with the Kora of Ranchi and Birbhum), the

wage-earners like the Kora of Barabhum, who are constantly in search of manual jobs, cannot live in a compact fashion. They are widely dispersed in different villages. The distribution pattern of the Kora in Pargana Barabhum actively supports this statement. The scattered and interspersed population of the Kora in the states of West Bengal and Bihar may largely be due to this reason.

In the areas, like Barabhum where the rural economy centres around agriculture and the major population are agriculturists, similar situations as discussed above, can be expected. In order to stabilize their income, the cultivators naturally attach great importance to artificial irrigation. In order to get the expert manual work in their own fields, the chief and the local cultivators of Barabhum tried their best to attract such a wandering landless labouring class like the Kora and made them settled by offering certain economic incentives in the form of occupational monopoly and a social status in the regional Hindu caste hierarchy.

We have already referred to the preferential treatment which the Kora earthworkers get from local cultivators. Moreover, it is at the initiative of the Hindu Raja of Barabhum that the landless Kora labourers got somewhat economic security and thereby they found a place in the Hindu productive and social system.

This process of integration has thus been stabilized by the act of assigning them a specific ritual role (*bundh-biha*) by the Hindu castes and by the provisions of the services of Hindu ritual specialists. Thus, we find that our data on Hindu-Kora interactions actively support the model of Bose (Bose : 1941).

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BOOK REVIEWS

Renaissance in Bengal/Quests and Confrontations/1800-1860 : By Arabinda Poddar/Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Rastrapati Nivas, Simla-5/1970/Pp. vi + 254/Rs. 24.00. £ 2, \$ 7.00

In this book, Mr. Arabinda Poddar has tried to present a picture of the renaissance in Bengal by a critical portrayal of the life and works of a number of representative men. The first chapter contains a historical background, and this is followed by studies of men like Ram Mohan, Radha Kanta Dev, some of the Derozians, Akshay Kumar Dutt, Vidyasagar and Madhusudan. The fourth chapter is devoted to a study of education and mobility, the ninth to an account of the growth of scientific studies and the tenth to a critical appraisal of the renaissance itself and the growth of an urban elite.

With commendable skill Mr. Poddar has traced how the writings of British (and sometimes continental) authors influenced the minds of the new educated class in Bengal, and how the course of their lives was altered as a consequence. The confrontation was between a rationalistic, 'hedonistic', secular approach to life with what the author has characterised as an 'introvert-masochistic outlook fostered by the social structure, want of education for the many, and only a debasing sort of primary education for a few, non-cultivation of moral values, etc' (p 15). The intellectual class responded in a healthy manner and it led to the 'break up of the social structure and the consequent introduction of the element of mobility in organisation, the birth of individuality' and so on (p. 10).

The author has quoted abundantly from the writings of those involved in the movement, and also from certain contemporary European observers in order to substantiate his thesis that Indian civilization of those days had completely run into decay, and how a new life began to stir in the souls of receptive individuals as a result of the western impact described above. The receptivity was sometimes due to selfish desires, like the securing of economic or political advantages, and sometimes due to a higher call of idealism among those who suffered intensely from the decadence and immorality of contemporary life.

The study has been done with care and insight and with a certain measure of objectivity. Mr. Poddar eventually comes to the conclusion that the educated 'elite', who drank deeply from the sources of western civilisation, became a class which lost contact with the masses, and failed to liberate the latter from their social and mental bondage. Among practically all the representative characters dealt with, it was Vidyasagar alone who broke through the exclusiveness which the 'elite' had spun like a cocoon round themselves; and this was because he translated his ideas immediately into action, as hardly any one else did.

To the reviewer it appears that the author has placed an inordinately high value upon ideas which the 'artificially manufactured intelligentsia' (to use Toynbee's phrase, quoted in p. 69) tried to introduce into their home surroundings. Mr. Poddar is impatient with the conservative resistance to 'hedonism' and secularism; and by implication, he ascribes this to the morbid character of local scholasticism and its complete unconcern with the cruelty and sufferings which were present all around. But do ideas alone matter, unless they are incorporated in newly-built institutions? And it is at this point that Mr. Poddar has undervalued the fact that the economic life of the masses still largely continued to be ruled by the productive organization underlying caste. If the latter persisted, and the western-educated sought a ready refuge by alignment with the commercial and political system introduced by the British, this perhaps explains why the latter classes became ineffective and alienated from the rest of their countrymen.

Mr. Poddar does not seem to have paid sufficient attention to the failure of the new economic system to dissolve substantially the ties of the old. Ideas which sparkled at the top, in the minds of the educated dwellers of an intellectual ivory-tower, have been given more value than is their due. And we have also to remember that most of those ideas had hardly grown out of the soil of native life, but were like imported garden-flowers reared in a hot-house.

In other words, the criticism is that Mr. Poddar has underrated the Marxian way of interpreting history more than he should have. Perhaps he has done so intentionally. As a result, he has had to search more for the hero and the villain than for the conditions

and circumstances which shaped the course of events in nineteenth-century Bengal. But in spite of his 'idealistic' or very nearly idealistic approach, one should admire the quality and excellence of the picture that he has presented about the intellectual and social ferment which acted upon the life of Bengal's urban classes in the first half of the nineteenth century. And he is also right when he says that the alienation still continues in an unresolved state.

N. K. Bose

Origin and Growth of Caste in India, Volume I : By Nripendra Kumar Dutt/2nd edition/Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 6/1A Banchharam Akur Lane, Calcutta-12/1968 Pp. xiv + 278/Rs. 25.00.

The author was formerly Principal of the Sanskrit College, Calcutta, and a keen student of Sanskrit literature. This book was originally published in 1931, and has been reprinted after a long number of years during which it was not available. The second volume is in the market, and has apparently become popular, which has led to a re-issue of the first volume.

Principal Dutt has traced in this volume the origin and growth of the caste system on the basis of evidence available in various forms of Brahminical, Buddhist and Greek literature. He has tried to show how caste became a peculiarly Indian institution on account of a number of historical reasons ; although many of its distinctive elements were already present in other countries where anything so rigid as the caste system of India failed to develop.

In an introductory chapter he examines the classical theories of the origin of caste proposed in the *Manusmriti* and other *Smiritis*.

Then he deals with the theories of modern writers like Risley, Senart, Nesfield and others. He finds all of them insufficient and then states that the exclusiveness, isolationism and disintegrative tendencies of caste are the 'reminiscent of the savage mind', in regard to the sanctity and privileged position which it accords to the priesthood, it bears an analogy to conditions in ancient Egypt, Persia and mediaeval Europe ; in its occupational character and proud exclusiveness of the ruling class it contains the spirit of mediaeval guild system and feudalism', and so on (p. 30).

The continuity of the caste system is ascribed to the desires and power of the ruling class, the weak political system present in the

country, and belief in fatalism fostered by the theory of Karma. These are all causes which have been suggested from time to time by other authors. Many of them divided the people of India into two classes, one formed by a small band of villains, and the rest by fools. It however ignores very much the conditions and circumstances objective and material, which made the fools to be led by the nose by the villains for centuries on end and made infructuous the rebellions led against caste from the days of Buddha down to Rammohon. It is here that the essential weakness of Principal Dutta's thesis, and that of many other Idealistic historians, lies. Perhaps a re-examination is needed as to why rebellions failed and the Brahminical social system was constantly reborn like the Phoenix, always in a new shape. Impatience is not the hallmark of a historian.

N. K. Bose

Rajbadidanga : 1962 / (Chiruti, Jadupur) / An interim report on excavations at Rajbadidanga/and/Terracotta seals and sealings / By Sudhir Ranjan Das / 1968/Asiatic Society, / Park Street, Calcutta-16 / Pp. viii + 84/20 plates + 6 figures + 7 plates/Rs. 32.00.

One of the knotty problems of Indian archaeology has been to fix the location of Sasanka's capital, Karnasubarna. The Archaeology Department of the University of Calcutta conducted an excavation in Jadupur near Berhampur (Murshidabad district, West Bengal), and was lucky enough to discover a large number of seals which gave the name of the place as *Raktamrittika Mahavihara*, the celebrated Buddhist monastery which was situated in the suburbs of Karnasubarna. The problem is now settled.

Dr. S. R. Das who conducted the excavation has been able to prove, even by the preliminary excavation of 1961-62 that the site was in continuous occupation from the 2nd/3rd Century A.D. to the 12th/13th. Three distinct culture-periods have been identified, and the results described elaborately in the present publication. One interesting question arises out of the finds. Sasanka has been described as being intensely hostile to Buddhism and to its religious establishment. What is found in these excavations is that, even in the suburbs of his capital, Buddhist monastic establishments continued to exist for several centuries without interruption.

We hope future work will furnish the answer to many of the knotty problems of Bengal's cultural history, and set at rest a few of the current unfounded rumours.

N. K. Bose

Aboriginal Economic Systems of the Olympic Peninsula Indians, Western Washington: By Ram Raj Prasad Singh/Sacraments Anthropological Society/Sacraments State College/6000 Jay Street, Sacraments, California, 95819/1966/Pp. 139, four figures, one map/\$ 3.00.

It is refreshing to read a book of this kind. In 1954/55, Dr R. R. P. Singh worked among six American Indian tribes living in the Olympic Peninsula in Western Washington. He shows that in spite of the fact that they live in the same geographical area, yet substantial differences mark them off from one another because they depended upon various elements, or specific riches in their marine, riverine or terrestrial environment. He describes in some detail their concept of property, trade, slavery and the part which conspicuous expenditure or exchange of gifts plays in their economic life. In the end he makes the following observations :

'There was no institution (among them) of a purely economic character. The native was often induced to comply with his economic responsibilities because of other societal commitments which he was unwilling to break. Social motives formed a great spur to economic action.....Economic structure here was an integral part of the social structure, and taboos and ceremonial and social relationship entered into its operation (pp. 124-25).

This acute study by an Indian scholar carried out in the U. S. should serve as a stimulus to others here to examine the interpretation and mutual support which social value-systems and economic forces give to one another in our rural society.

N. K. Bose

Caste and Social Change/An Anthropological Study of Three Orissa Villages: By N. Patnaik/National Institute of Community Development, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad-30, A. P./1969/Pp. VI + 77.

What we need in India is a large number of intensive studies in villages or other small regions of how the old productive organization, and its supporting social system, is being affected or progressively replaced by the new order. It is thus that we can

measure the effects of Community Development plans ; see what comes in the way of quick change, and also devise means of speeding it up where it is possible to do so.

The National Institute of Community Development of Hyderabad has been conducting excellent work in this respect, and the present little book is a product of that endeavour. Through a detailed empirical study of three Orissan villages, Dr. Patnaik has shown how changes are taking place in three villages, which are marked off from one another by differences in caste composition, in the distribution or concentration of wealth in some sectors, and so on. The samples have been chosen with care, and observations made with skill and objectivity. One of the results obtained is that where progress is quick, it has led to sharper polarization of classes and increased tensions. Where it has been slow, things have remained more or less unpolarized ; co-operation between castes has continued as of old, and so on. This is indeed an important observation, based completely on direct, empirical study.

We hope the National Institute of Community Development will continue to produce more studies of this kind from various parts of India, where change has not been the same as in Orissa.

N. K. Bose

Socio-Economic Change and the Religious Factor in India. *Edited by C. P. Loomis and Z. K. Loomis/East West Press / Van Nostrand Reinhold/Pp. 140/No price.*

In 1966 a seminar took place in Hyderabad under the auspices of the National Institute of Community Development in order to evaluate Max Weber's views on India and Protestantism. It is good that this symposium of opinions, both Indian and Western, should be available in book form for no name is bandied about more freely, and often uncritically, by sociologists than the name of Max Webber. A key paper by the editors presenting Weber's analysis is given section-wise, each section being the subject of a chapter on some aspect of culture. Critical comments by symposiasts, followed by editorial summing up, are included in each chapter.

The editorial introduction occasions early misgivings : 'One set of questions in the minds of the planners of the seminar consisted of the following : What are the specific beliefs -pervasive

in the Indian society which are consistent with an actively changing society, and once identified, how can they be emphasized', (p.xvii). The proceedings do not throw much light on how one sets about identifying beliefs. If anything they show, obliquely, that overconcern with beliefs may lead the sociologist to overlook economic factors, the sort of situations where an Indian cannot be expected to behave very differently from an American or a German. Secondly the phrase 'actively changing society' begs many questions. Socio-economic change cannot be referred to *per se*. What is important is the nature and the direction of any particular change. At the risk of raising a hornet's nest of further questions it could even be said that some socio-economic changes may be, in Marxist jargon, 'unprogressive'. Thirdly, what do the editors mean by 'emphasizing' beliefs? Reinforcing them, strengthening them? Another loosely-structured sentence follows soon after: 'Now in any society it is difficult to scrutinize its national myths and its religious beliefs without risking a trespass upon what is considered sacred'. Are we to assume from this that 'any society' is tied up with the idea of nationality? This would surely be incorrect.

Whatever the influence of Calvinism may have been on capital-formation in the early stages of the industrial revolution is a matter for the social and economic historian to assess. The ethics of individual entrepreneurship are not the ethics of the joint-stock company. Anyone who associated economic trends in the affluent west today in the post-industrial era (and, as it is often called, the post-Christian era) with the Protestant ethic would be rash indeed. No less rash would be the person who tried to tie up our present difficulties in transforming our social and physical environment with alleged belief in the *karma* doctrine on the part of the masses. The post-Keynesian concept of welfare is as foreign to the ancient system of Hindu values as it is to Calvinism. Historical questions and analysis of our present discontents have not always been sufficiently differentiated by the participants.

The Indian reader, remembering the link between the growth of capitalism, colonial exploitation and wars between nation-states, may be inclined to take with a grain of salt the Weberian view that ascetic Protestantism helped to break joint family solidarity and so foster the brotherhood of man. The Indian contributors to the volume have been quick to point out where Weber was unfair, e.g.

in his interpreting the *karma* doctrine as retributive *per se*. The reincarnation idea involves the possibility of either moving up or down the scale, just as the Christian faced the possibility of either heaven or hell. This orientation towards a mythical future is something which contemporary man has lost, one of the substitutes being, at least as far as western man is concerned, the search for fantasy satisfactions in the present, in this life.

The seminar seems to have dwelt on a rather abstract level. Much more nose-to-ground investigation (in other words field work) is needed if the effect of urbanization on the joint family, say, is to be estimated, or if one is to understand why a people should accumulate their wealth in the form of gold ornaments (surely a form of thrift) and at the same time indulge in periodic conspicuous expenditure. We often too easily diagnose conservatism or sinister belief patterns, forgetting, thanks to an unhistorical approach, that the caste system had certain saving graces in periods of political turmoil, or forgetting, say, that there was no readily available alternative to some practice which we may now dub as 'backward'. Modernization is not an unmixed blessing and that it is accompanied by new forms of stratification has now become a commonplace.

The Weberian seems to think that the only alternative to family and caste ties (not as rigid as some may think) is to be found in large-scale organizations of a bureaucratic type. That small-scale organizations composed on a variety of patterns, vocational, cross-sectional and so on, can be no less 'rational' (in a sense which, of course, needs to be spelled out) is foreign to Weber's thesis. But it may well be that Indians concerned with their own actual situation, and free of ideological spectacles, may find this to be the best safeguard against the dehumanizing influence which Weber himself saw to be an inevitable concomitant of bureaucracy.

Margaret Chatterjee

Caste in Overseas Indian Communities: Edited by Barton m. Schwartz. Chandler Publishing Co., 124 Spear Street, San Francisco, California 94105. 1967. 350 pp. \$ 8.00 clothbound. \$ 4.95 paperback.

The book brings together a number of essays on caste as it operates as an organizing principle among selected Indian

communities in Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad, Surinam, Fiji, South Africa and East Africa.

In an excellent introduction, Professor Adrian Mayer presents the different levels at which caste can be studied. Most of the contributors have described caste-like interactions within the Indian communities, and examined whether such behaviour is extended to relations with non-Indians. But a comparison with caste as it exists in the home country has received scanty attention.

Many of the studies lead to a number of common generalizations and substantive conclusions. When indentured labourers were recruited from India for the areas in question, there was a marked inequality in the number of men and women who went there. It was not possible to follow the rules of caste endogamy under the circumstances. In course of time, ethnic groups from various parts of India seem to have developed a kind of group-endogamy. Notions about caste became further weakened through western education, rising income and formation of classes on the basis of wealth, reform movements associated with the spread of the Arya Samaj, and so on. Consequently, castes do not significantly function in the manner in which they do in India. They only provide categories of thought and represent a persisting ideology affecting limited areas of interpersonal relations.

A few critical ideas may be offered. Some pertain to this collection, others to the general problem of studying overseas Indian communities. Firstly, the perception of a phenomenon (here, caste) is dependent on its definition, and in turn affects the conclusions. The key criteria of caste have perforce been chosen on an *ad hoc* basis, adequate to the field situation. In the circumstances it appears a little pointless to make pronouncements on whether caste 'exists' or has 'broken down', with shades of qualification—'almost disappeared', 'greatly impaired etc. Secondly, the Indian situation, as a base-line, is itself unclear. It is desirable to have methodologically similar and comparable studies of communities abroad and of chosen regions in India. Thirdly, one may ask oneself as to what should be the relative weight given to 'objective' factors (for example, percentages of endogamous and exogamous marriage), and 'subjective' ones such as caste-consciousness, or opinions on the significance of caste.

Culture Change in an Intertribal Market : *By D. P. Sinha. Asia Publishing House, Calicut St., Ballard Estate, Bombay 1, 1968. P.p XVI + 117 ; glossary, bibliography, index, illustrations and twenty four plates. Rs. 25.00.*

Banari is an inter-tribal weekly market of Chotanagpur, India, with a command area of 494 square miles that includes 68 villages occupied by various tribes and castes. Specific dialects spoken by these groups belong to either of the three major linguistic families of India, i.e. Dravidian, Indo-Aryan, and Mundari. The approximate population served by the market is 20,000.

The author divides the whole area into two ecological categories ; the valley, what he calls the ecological centre, and the hills and plateaus that have been referred to as the ecological margins. Each such category is characterized by its distinct landscape, people, mode of exploitation of resources, and community organization. The author makes similar divisions of the market place into the market centre and the market margins, each of which is characterized by distinct types of economic transactions between specific groups of people.

There are altogether ten chapters in the volume ; important among them deal with ecological setting, ethnic components, general description and economic and social roles of the market, and the study of the market and its contributions to concepts and theories of culture change. The chapters are brief and analyses are pin-pointed. Throughout the book the lucidity and straightforwardness have been well maintained.

As the author claims, this is a study of continuity and change. The continuity of culture has been well represented, particularly through tracing the relationships of various communities and demonstrating the maintenance of balance of the region. In comparison to this the analyses on various aspects of change are weak, particularly the trends of impact of change on different spheres of life of the people has received little attention.

To even a casual reader of the book, it will become explicit that the author takes the position of substantivists among economic

anthropologists. There was also definite scope for making comments on the formalist-substantivist controversy ; but the author restrains himself, though such comments would have considerably enhanced the theoretical contribution of the study.

The scholarly foreword by Prof. Laura Thompson and the incisive introduction by Prof. Conrad Arensberg have increased the weight of the volume. The price of the book, however, seems to be a bit too high.

Ajit K. Danda

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