CASTE, RITUALS AND STRATEGIES

by

RINA NAYAR (nee GHOSHAL)

School of Oriental and African Studies

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focusses attention on two institutions in a caste oriented society at variance with the established pattern of behaviour between members of different castes. These are Ritual Kinship and Spirit Possession among ritual specialists. The study was carried out in Dharnu, a village in Himachal Pradesh, India.

The first chapter outlines the accepted pattern of inter-caste behaviour and draws attention to the flexibility with which it operates in practice. Their appear to exist in all cases, regularized mechanisms for circumventing caste rules, which are ritually legitimised.

The second chapter provides a general background into the study and describes the peoples in that area and their customs.

The third chapter analyses the caste hierarchy in the village with special emphasis on commensal behaviour as the clearest index of ranking.

The fourth chapter begins with a discussion of the nature of ritual kinship and presents data on this institution in Dharnu. The data are analysed in terms of the strategic value for individuals and their integrative value for the community.

The fifth chapter deals with spirit possession among ritual specialists and examines the institution as a means of different kinds of status achievement by both high and low castes.

The concluding chapter contains a summary of the different ways in which individuals manipulate these two institutions and attempts to relate them to the social structure in which they obtain.

Probably all societies contain institutions at variance with their basic values. In this thesis I have examined two such institutions in a hierarchical society in order to show that other principles of organization

exist in addition to the dominant stress on hierarchy and to analyse the ways in which they are accommodated within the structured relationships which form the basis of the society.

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NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION

In transliterating the local terms into English, the system used is the same as in many scientific Oriental Journals and other publications. They appear in the text underlined but the glossary contains the complete form including the diacritical marks.

In general, the pronunciations of the vowels and consonants are as follows:-

Vowels:	a	as in	but
	ā	as in	far
	e	as in	bait
	i	as in	pin
	ī	as in	machine
	ai	as in	aisle
	o	as in	go
	u	as in	pull
	ū	as in	rule
	au	as in	how
Consonants:	c	as in	church
	ṛ	as in	river
	s	as in	case
	ś and ṣ	as in	rush
	g	as in	go

The consonants t, d and n are all pronounced with the tongue farther forward whereas ṭ, ḍ and ṇ with the tongue turned farther back and ṃ indicates nazalization of the preceding consonant. Aspirates are indicated by h following the consonant.

The rest of the consonants are pronounced like English consonants.

MAP OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

CHENAB R.

KYELANG
(Lahul And Spiti)

CHAMBA

RAVI R.

SUTLEJ R.

DHARAMSALA

PARBATI R.

KULU

KALPA
(Kinnaur)

BESPA R.

MANDI

BEAS R.

BEAS R.

UTTAR PRADESH

SOAN R.

SUTLEJ R.

PABER R.

BILASPUR

SIMLA

KASUMPTI

PUNJAB

KALKA

GIRI R.

NAHAN

BELA R.

HARYANA

DHARAMSALA

To Triund

Mall Road

FORSYTHE GUNG

MCLEOD GUNG

Church Road

KHARA

Joybora Rd.

KOTWALI → To Khanyara

To Chari

DHARNU

→ To Yol

REFERENCE

▬ MAIN ROAD
▬ OTHER ROAD
-- FOOT PATH
● OCTROI POST

To Pathankot

REFERENCE:

➤➤➤ STATE BORDER
······ DISTRICT BORDER
⌒⌒ RIVERS

PREFACE

I first became interested in aspects of ritual kinship and spirit possession while doing field-work in Dharnu during 1973-74 for my dissertation on "Inter-Caste Relations In A Hill Village" which was a part of the curriculum for the M.Sc. degree in Delhi University. At that time the focus of my interest was to study the hierarchical arrangement of castes in a multi-ethnic Hindu village and the nature and extent of interaction between them.

The village Dharnu had been chosen for a number of reasons: It was inhabited by several regional groups, each with its own regional caste hierarchy, which were all encompassed within a single local hierarchy, and also contained a wide range of castes from Brahmans to Untouchables. At the same time it was a relatively small village. It was thus very convenient since the time at my disposal was very limited. Nevertheless, I was able to cover almost the entire population of the village. The few who were not included, were mostly members of the Gadheran community some of whom still migrate seasonally to other areas of this region with their herds of sheep. Another major factor was that despite its location close to a developing town, Dharnu retains many more traits of the traditional system than other neighbouring villages some of which are farther away from Dharamsala.

During my investigation of inter-caste behaviour, I found that although caste-prescribed behaviour was the norm and that the inter-caste barriers in this rigidly stratified community were strictly maintained, a few of the individuals seemed to engage in activities which were distinctly opposed to the caste-rules. Further, their actions seemed to arouse no censure among the other members of the village community.

My first encounter with such a situation was during a conversation with the village Lohar who, while explaining the commensal habits of his family, mentioned that his wife's dharam-mama (ritual maternal uncle) was an Untouchable and that he and his family exchanged all kinds of food with this ritual kinsman and his immediate family. This revealation aroused my interest in this institution which apparently permitted the transgression of the ordinary rules of commensality.

Another area of interaction where the accepted rules of inter-caste behaviour was not observed was in the interactions with the ritual specialists or shamans as they are called. These specialists who become possessed by some god, deity or lesser spiritual being, were drawn from different strata of the hierarchy, but even if of an Untouchable caste, pollution barriers were not maintained by the high castes as long as the specialist was in a state of trance or possession.

On this occasion, time did not permit a more detailed investigation into these departures from the established code of behaviour. They opened, however, the prospect of research into a subject which might have interesting results and which I resume in this thesis.

I returned to Dharnu to collect material because the multi-caste composition of the village and my familiarity with the background provided a useful basis for further work. Field-work was conducted from September 1975 to December 1975, during which I was able to collect material on aspects of ritual kinship and on ritual specialists and their practices in that area, as well as to check on all changes which had occured in my absence. The final result is this thesis on "Caste, Rituals and Strategies" which I am submitting for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Social Anthropology.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis involves a detailed study of two institutions - Ritual Kinship and Spirit Possession among Ritual Specialists - in an orthodox Hindu society where social organization is still largely based on the principle of caste. Both these institutions are socially 'open' to all, irrespective of caste membership. Their organization is in theory, not only 'outside' caste but may involve in certain contexts the transgression of rules governing the accepted pattern of inter-caste behaviour. The aim of the thesis is to examine the implication of these 'extra-caste' institutions for the functioning of the caste system.

Although the caste system is readily recognisable, at least in the Hindu context[1], the exact nature of castes has always been an enigma. There have been numerous attempts at defining the term 'caste' but although much discussed and discoursed about, there has never been agreement on a satisfactory definition, one which is at the same time specific and also comprehensive enough to encompass not only all regional variations but also the many changes that have occured in the past and continue to occur. The reality of this phenomenon has always been so diverse that any attempt to isolate its defining criteria has proved difficult at the emperical level. I am not, however, concerned in this thesis with the problem of defining caste but only with two aspects of the system, namely, the hierarchical ordering of castes and the nature of restrictions governing caste interactions.

That caste is a hierarchical system, is recognised by all. Dumont[2] stresses the fact that "caste undoubtedly stands for inequality" and

that "castes teach us the fundamental social principle - hierarchy".

But social inequality is a universal phenomenon, only the "patterns of

inequality or stratification vary from one society to another"[3]. The

caste system, however, is often regarded as the most extreme and rigid

form of status hierarchy. Beteille[4] views it thus: "It is both a form

of social organization and a system of values. As a system of relations

it is marked by a division of society into groups which are ranked in an

elaborate hierarchy. As a system of values it is characterized by the

legitimacy it accords to social inequality and the importance it

assigns to the ideas of purity and pollution".

Stratification in the context of caste refers to ritual ranks.

Although the system divides its members into sections of unequal

economic, political and ritual statuses, Dumont[5] insists that it is

"neither fundamentally economic, nor political but a hierarchical

system built around the oppositon of purity and pollution". Both these

concepts have mystical connotations, although rooted in a psycho-

physical state.

Purity refers to an intrinsic "spiritual" quality, which is held

to be present in each caste to a greater or lesser extent, and according

to which they are ranked higher or lower. Pollution as a polar concept,

is inversely related to the hierarchy of purity. The state of purity

as acquired by virtue of one's caste, however, is not unchangeable.

Impure contacts result in ritual defilement or pollution of the pure.

It may thus be "caught" from less pure individuals, as well as from

various othersources, since this mystical element applies to a range

of phenomena such as sinful actions, involvement with biological

processes (or occurences) and so on. Contact too is culturally defined.

It is not confined to direct physical contact, but in the context of caste is extended to mere proximity. Pollution also occurs through genealogical or affinal connections[7]. According to the source from which it arises the nature and extent of pollution varies and also the remedial solution, if any, to restore the original or normal state of purity.

Since the caste hierarchy is a gradation of ritual purity determining by and large the access of each grade to social, economic and political privileges, the individual jealously guards his ritual position. The fear of pollution may thus be seen as an important sanction for the control of behaviour. An elaborate system of pollution barriers to prevent any indiscriminate contact, even accidentally, is therefore perpertuated. These serve to maintain and preserve the barriers of the ritual hierarchy.

This, however, does not mean that there is complete separation between different castes. The very nature of this system of division implies that castes are inter-dependent for the fulfilment of essential functions, since not only the people, but all aspects of their life - social, economic, political and ritual - are hierarchically graded. The scales of the different hierarchies do not coincide perfectly, nevertheless, there is a considerable degree of correspondence between them. In this situation, where co-operation between the different castes is imperative, no matter how disparate their ranks, the rules governing their interactions emerge in the form of highly ritualized behaviour[8]. Specific modes of action are prescribed for every occasion which provide protection from ritual contamination. Where pollution is unavoidable, the rules prescribe specific courses of action for its removal.

The association of this enormous body of rules governing caste behaviour with sacred sanctions lends it the necessary legitimacy in this society. The life of all orthodox Hindu is thus dominated by the injunctions of the sacred laws which become "a state of mind"[9] manifest in all his actions and interactions.

Yet, on the ground obsevations have shown that cetain irregularities co-exist along with the traditionally regularized behaviour, which appear to run counter to the basic fundamental values of the society. That is, in this society where the system of maintaining and preserving boundaries is highly elaborated, there appear to exist instituted channels by which individuals may circumvent, or even transcend the dictates of caste rules.

Emperical research by Historians and other social scientists has revealed many contradictions in the 'Idealistic' picture constructed by the earlier authors[10] more from the law books and other Brahmanical lieterature than from a study of the phenomena themselves. The system is no longer seen as one of unusual stability in which injunctions of divine origin are scrupulously observed by all the members of the society. Ghurye (1932) Srinivas (1952), Dube (1956), Berreman, Mayer (1967), Sinha (1967) Beteille (1969) and many others have expressed the view that the philosophy of the caste system was probably never really accepted by all, particularly by underprivileged groups occupying the lowest ranks. Variations in local and regional norms and values are also recognised as widespread, although all Hindu societies[11] follow a sufficiently uniform pattern to allow generalizations to be made. Temporal changes within the society have accelerated rapidly in the modern era. Under the impact of increasing mobility, caste revolts[12], secularization, modernization and social reform movements, caste in many urban areas has completely lost its hold.[13] But in the villages and still in

many urban communities where traditional values are still respected, the caste system persists. Although it operates very differently today from the ideal model, it is unlikely that the system on the ground ever corresponded to the injunctions of the sacred texts.

The behavioural pattern of a conservative Hindu, at any rate today, is not the result of an over-riding desire to be religiously correct in all his actions in the hope of a better life in the next birth or of ultimate salvation. His actions are based on his inbred concept of what "is done" or "is not done". The average Hindu is not knowledgeable about the teaching of the __sastras__ nor infused with the traditional philosophical basis of caste. His concept of the philosophy is based on the requirements of the social environment in which he has to live his life. But although the motives for conformance may have changed, the system continues to be distinctly recognisable in its fundamental characteristics.

Leach[14] gives from Hutton a list of seven cultural traits which, in Hutton's view, provide a minimal set of primary characteristics embodying the essence of caste. Although this approach may be unsatisfactory as a definition of caste, the traits have relevance to most orthodox communities and I adopt the list as a convenient prototype of orthodox caste practices. In all areas of Hindu India practices have been reported which, although at variance with these general norms, do not incur social disapproval. These are illustrated below.

(1) "A caste is endogamous".

Instances of inter-caste marriage occur in all areas but only a few of them are socially accepted. These few have social sanction

because they were conducted in a manner that avoids the breaking
of the sacred rules. Cases of acceptable unions have been reported
among Hindu Nepali communities in Nepal and North-Eastern regions of
India, as well as among Bengalis and many others. Usually a strategy
of ritual adoption is resorted to[15]. The bride is adopted by an elder
of the groom's caste. She thereby assumes the caste and _gotra_ of her
adopted father and her marriage to a man of her 'new' caste is made
possible. There is no breach of the rules of endogamy since that
problem has ceased to exist.

Antoher method used is that at a gathering of assenting elders
the girl is asked if she wants to belong to their caste. If she says
"yes", her tongue is pierced with a gold needle. She then serves _kacca_
food to all present. The acceptance of this from her hands implies
her acceptance into their own group and thus there are no bars to her
marriage within it[16].

The rule of _gotra_ exogamy is also sometimes broken, although this
too is rare. In this case, a friend of the parents or even a relative
of a suitable _gotra_ may 'give' the girl his _gotra_ in order to make
possible a socially desirable marriage.

(2) "There are restrictions on commensality between the members of
different castes".

The rule of commensality is conveniently overlooked under a
number of conditions. During a pilgrimage, all the pilgrims may eat
together whatever their caste without fear of pollution since their
mission is considered so holy that it sanctifies all their actions.

Ritual kinsmen may eat together, without observing the pollution

barriers even when their links cut across caste lines since their ties are considered to be as binding as real kinship ties and have religious sanction. This complete breakdown of caste interactional barriers between ritual kinsmen is extensively evidenced in most regions of Central and Northern India[17], such as the Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh, as well as in the North-Eastern regions among Hindu Nepali communities[18].

(3) "There is a hierarchical grading of castes, the best recognised position being that of the Brahman at the top".

The hierarchical gradation of castes is traditionally justified by the religious doctrine that the karma (deeds) and dharma (morality) of the previous life determine the caste status of the present birth. "To the Hindu, consequently social mobility is both impossible and immoral in this worldy life"[19]. But Srinivas[20] has pointed out that "if the system as it actually operates is taken into consideration, the position of several castes is far from clear. Mutual rank is ambiguous and, therefore, arguable. This leads to the fact that the caste system always permitted a certain amount of mobility". Numerous attempts, successful and otherwise, have been recorded in the past and in recent times[21] to substantiate this point. Usually the aspiring group first consolidates a stronger position in the economic and/or the political spheres and then tries to validate a higher position in the ritual hierarchy by the process of "Sanskritization" a term coined by Srinivas[22] to denote a process whereby lower caste men emulate the customs, rituals and way of life of the higher castes and claim a higher position than they are accorded traditionally.

Supporters of the theory of the dual hierarchy - one of the sacred and one of the secular spheres of activities - such as Detos, Passin,

Sinha, Mahar, etc., further claim that the position of Brahmans is not always at the top. Often it is the local dominant caste which occupies the highest ranks in the secular hierarchies but as Srinivas concedes that they may gain precedence over the Brahmans in all respects except perhaps in the ritual sphere. But even in this sphere their monopoly has been invaded at times. (cf. Dom Priests of Ranjana p.22). This sphere however is only one compartment of life, although in the Hindu context an important one. Where Brahmans do not also enjoy power and wealth, their position vis-a-vis the dominant caste is one of dependancy, if not subservience. The hierarchical grading of castes in terms of purity therefore does not always correspond to the situation on the ground.

(4) "In various kinds of contexts, especially those concerned with food, sex and ritual, a member of a "high" caste is liable to be "polluted" by direct or indirect contact with a member of a "low" caste".

The strict rules that prescribe the mode of contact between castes in order to prevent ritual pollution are, however, not always applicable, as between ritual kin of different castes, a low caste ritual specialist and his clients, or between members of a devotional sect recruited from different castes. In all these cases behavioural barriers according to caste rules are relaxed because of the particular quality of relationship between the individuals concerned.

There are also certain religious festivals which provide for a relaxation of pollution barriers, and numerous instances of privileged licence are observed on those occasions. One major event of this type is 'Holi', when men of even the lowest castes may put colour on the highest castes without the latter openly objecting. Thus the barriers against contact are relaxed.

Another example may be taken from the Charak festival in Bengal[23], the Muchis (cobber caste) who traditionally supply music, do so standing at the same place where the high castes sit. Little effort is made to avoid them at this time. Also during the earlier part of the festival they visit Brahman houses as members of the party collecting subscriptions.

The rules of pollution may also be broken at times of acute distress, such as when faced with starvation. In such situations the rules of apad-dharma[24] apply and the general norms may be ignored in order to survive.

(5) "Castes are commonly associated with traditional occupations".

This association was probably never fully justified. It may be said that certain occupations were associated with particular castes since only members of those castes were permitted to practise them, but for the majority of the members, the caste-occupation could not have offered sufficient employment. The demand for specialized jobs such as a barber's or potter's or even a priest's could hardly have been so great as to require more than one or two per village settlement. The remainder usually lived by caste-free occupations such as agriculture.

The sacred body of traditional rules made allowances under exceptional circumstances for a change of occupation, even to one usually associated with a lower caste group.

Finally, with the increasing rate of modernization, urbanization and technical advance, both the demand as well as the supply of traditional caste-bound services is falling, with the possible exception of a few who are socially indispensable, such as Brahman priests.

(6) "A man's caste status is finally determined by the circumstances
of his birth, unless he comes to be expelled from his caste for some
ritual offence".

As has been described earlier, an adopted child assumes the
caste and _gotra_ of the adopted parents and the 'new' caste carries with
it all its associated rights and duties. In cases of cross-caste
adoption, caste status ceases to be determined by birth.

There are many religious and devotional sects which recruit
members irrespective of caste[25], such as the Vaishnavas, Jains,
Sahajiyas and many others. The basis of membership is the sharing of
a common faith. A number of these sects have, however, crystallized
over time into caste-like bodies and although in the internal affairs
of the sect its members are all considered to be equal, their external
relationships are hierarchically oriented. It is possible therefore,
to change one's caste by the act of conversion and, as a consequence,
to change one's ritual status, although its acceptance by the other
members of the society may take time.

(7) "The caste system as a whole is always focussed around the prestige
accorded to Brahmans".

For many this is true since the religious texts were mostly
written by the Brahman literati but, in reality, the position of
Brahmans was in all probability far weaker. Brahmans were traditionally
dependent on the patronage of the secular authority - the king at the
regional level and the dominant caste at the local level. The dependence
naturally made their position more vulnerable. Brown[26] observes that
"Not all of Hindu society, even in Vedic times, acted as though it
accepted the Brahman's view of himself...a good deal has been written
on the subject of rivalry between priest and warrior in ancient India".

Many instances of slighting and high-handed treatment of Brahmans by Ksatriya kings are found in the Mahabarata and the Purans.

More recently the supremacy of the Brahmans has been questioned by Srinivas, Rowe and others. Rowe[27] reports that the Brahmans in his area of study were so overshadowed by the Ksatriyas that they did not attempt (or so it appeared to him) to uphold orthodoxy too stringently. In the area studied by Srinivas[28] in South India, the locally dominant caste, because of its economic and political influence, took precedence over the Brahman in all respects except perhaps in the ritual sphere. Chattopadhyay's study of the Dom priests of Ranjana in West Bengal[29] reveals that these people, though traditionally Untouchables, have through a Sanskritization consolidated such a high position for themselves that they serve as priests in the temple of 'Dharma' and even if a Brahman wants to offer prayers there, they have to do so through the Dom priests. Thus even in the ritual sphere others have taken precedence over the Brahman, even though such cases are rare.

It is apparent from these examples that there exist socially institutionalized channels for circumventing almost any aspect of caste behaviour. It is significant that these are always achieved through ritual means. This may be due to the close association between caste, religion and rituals. "A caste is essentially a religious group, membership of which entails certain ritual observances. The rules of caste behaviour are the rules of religion"[30]. Hence, all caste specific behaviour is of necessity ritualized, and all interactions between castes have to be carried out via a suitable set of rituals. Since rituals are religiously ordained, it follows that any course of action taken, provided it is mediated by an appropriate set of rituals,

is sanctified and hence becomes socially acceptable. Thus we may say that rituals provide the necessary legitimacy for a course of action, which otherwise, being contrary to the norms of society, would incur social censure.

The reasons for circumventing the prescribed norms of inter-caste behaviour are numerous and varied. For example, a daughter may be married into a lower caste to avoid the expenses of dowry. On the other hand, she may be beyond the approved age of marriage. In certain orthodox communities, a family having at home such a daughter beyond the age of puberty was socially avoided, and rather than suffer such a stigma, the girl might be married into a lower caste. Hypergamous unions may be arranged for power and privilege or even economic gain. The bond of ritual kinship cutting across caste boundaries may be formed out of simple affection and friendship or for reasons of political advantage or to avert calamities. The acceptance of _prasad_ from a low-caste ritual specialist is often resorted to by higher castes under the emotional stress of severe illness or misfortune in the family. On the other hand, members of the low castes may seek to circumvent the established patterns of behaviour because they are not contented with their peripheral position.

A caste system is a segmentary system[31] and such an orgainzation is essentially fragile. It requires rigid rules of restricted interaction to maintain the separate identity of its constituent units. Thus a "myth of stability" has to be maintained even when "mobility within and subversion of the system is rampant".[32] In such a situation, one can hardly expect social approval for the transgression of rules necessary to the structure of the society. Strategies have to be devised within the existing framework of social institutions. The manifest functions

of these strategies, which are clothed in elaborate rituals, are often
very different from their latent functions.

It is the aim of this thesis to make a detailed study in one
village of some of the strategies or mechanisms which are used to
overcome the rigidities of prescribed behaviour in a caste society and
to analyse the nature of their accomodation within the caste system as
a whole.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. I have deliberately avoided entering into the controversy of regarding caste as a "pan-Indian phenomenon" (Dumont 1970), since migrant Hindu communities outside the borders of India have definitely carried the system with them (Pocock 1957, Benedict 1961, Mayer 1961, 1963). Nor have I entered the debate about the application of the term 'caste' to similar stratificational systems in non-Hindu societies, though I do agree that defined in ritual terms it is unique to Hindus. This study has been carried out in a Hindu community in India and thus I do not consider it necessary to discuss the above mentioned issues in this paper.

2. Dumont, L.   1970:

3. Beteille, A.   1972:3

4. Beteille, A.   1970:263

5. Dumont, L.   1970:

6. Orenstein, H.   1968:115

7. Ibid:116

8. Srinivas, M. N.   1970:

9. Dumont, L.   1970:34

10. Dubois, Abbe   1906

    Senart, E.   1930

10. Hutton, J. H.   1946

11. Refer to Notation 1.

12. Silvertsen, D.   1963
    Beteille, A.   1970:362-360

13. Srinivas, M. N.   1970:

14. Leach, E.   1960:2-3

15. Barnouw, V.   1955:15-30

16. Ibid

17. Rose, H. A.   1910
    Mayer, A. C.   1960
    Freed, S. A.   1963

18. Adam, L.   1936:533-547
    Barnouw, V.   1955:15-30
    Okada, J. E.   1957:212-222

19. Berber, B.   1957:342

20. Srinivas, M. N.   1962:

21. Rowe,   1968:69-75
    Srinivas, M. N.   1962:

22. Srinivas, M. N.   1962:

23. Chattopadhyay, G. 1961

24. Kane, P. V.   1941:118, 129-130
     Mathur, K. S.   1964:

25. Blunt, E. A. H.   1931:
     Weber, Max   1958:7

26. Brown, W. N.   1959:35-39

27. Rowe   1963:69-75

28. Srinivas, M. N.   1955:

29. Chattopadhyay, G. 1966:

30. Srinivas, M. N.   1952:viii

31. The term "segmentary system" is here used to imply that castes
     cannot be seen as independant bodies but rather as parts of a system
     where each part may be referred to in relation to the others with
     which it co-exists.

32. Berreman, G.   1967 a:

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND: THE VILLAGE AND ITS PEOPLE

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Dharnu, where this study was carried out, is a small village close to the town Dharamsala in the Kangra Tehsil of Himachal Pradesh. The Kangra Valley lies at the foot of the Dhaula Dhar ranges as a longitudinal trough. The valley extends in one continuous slope from Shahpur to Baijnath, from the base of the hills to the river Beas. From near the town of Kangra, a series of low tertiary hills encroaches upon its limits reducing the limits further still in the northern direction where it is at last terminated by a low lateral range covered with dwarf oaks and offset from the upper hills.

THE GENERAL BACKGROUND

Until the British occupation, this area consisted of a number of small petty chiefdoms[1] but was, for the most, waste-land roamed by the nomadic Gaddis and their herds of sheep. In 1846, after occupying the Kangra Fort, which had been in the hands of the Katoch Rajas till won by Ranjit Singh and his Sikh army, and annexing the Kangra district to their empire, the English officers selected this area as a base for some of their civil and military requirements. In 1855, the District headquarters were transferred from the town Kangra to Dharamsala, which had till then been largely a wasteland with only a derelect building serving as a dharamsala.[2]

In independent India, the major section of the Kangra Valley was included among the Hill states of Punjab till the 1st of November, 1966. It was then transferred to the Himachal Pradesh, the 18th state of India, as a consequence of the Punjab Reorganisation Act to become one of its new Tehsils or Districts. The District Head-quarters of Kangra are still

located in Dharamsala in spite of all the changes in the administrative
bodies occupying it since its foundation.

Dharamsala is a small town lying on the spur of the Dhauladhar ranges,
located in 32°-13'-00" latitude North and longitude 76°-19'-20" East, at
the height of 4500' - 6000' above sea-level[3]. Its total inhabited area is
449 sq. miles not including the 6 km. stretch of steep raod through densely
wooded slopes linking the upper part of the town to the rest. According to
the official census of 1961 it harboured a population of 10,255 but the
number has risen steeply in the last few years with the arrival of the
refugee Tibetians who have since established their own settlement there.
Dharamsala is connected by road to the large industrial towns, Pathankot
and Hoshiarpur which are 56 and 76 miles away respectively. Both these
places, besides providing a regular bus service to Dharamsala, are also
the terminii of broad-guage railway. Pathankot also has an air service
connecting it to Delhi.

In the past few years this town has been making rapid progress
towards growth and modernization. In addition to the usual public
services available to most urban centres, it now has a new large and
well-equipped hospital where specialized treatment is also available.
There are an increasing number of educational institutes, viz. secondary
and higher-secondary schools, degree college for arts, as well as science
students and now, also a teacher's training college - all these drawing
students not only from all the nearby villages and towns but also from
the other parts of the state and outside. The two cinema halls draw
large regular crowds from the nearby areas too. Work has recently begun
on the constuction of a sports stadium, possibly the largest in Himachal
Pradesh. There is also a regular bus service now, linking almost all the
nearby villages which come under the direct jurisdiction of this town.
In the last two years many of these villages have been provided with
electricity.

In recent years there has been a great influx of tourists to this little hill-station which is still not as expensive as some of the more popular commercialized resorts. Since the Dalai Lama took political asylum in India and had his Swarg Ashram built here, together with a golden Buddhist temple, monastry, school and Ayurvedic hospital, a whole Tibetian settlement has sprung up here complete with its carpet industry and other arts and crafts. These have drawn a large number of visitors not only from all over India but from abroad too. But in spite of being open to all these external influences as well as the progressive schemes sponsored by the government, this area retains many traditional aspects. Gaddi women in their elaborate dresses and ornaments mingle in the streets with the tourists in their fashionable western clothes. Medicine-men with their paraphernalia of animal skins, horns and bones, charms and amulets are seen sitting side by side with others peddling mass-produced mechanised plastic toys. Seance sessions draw as regular crowds as the temples or the hospitals. Outside schools and offices, clothes once more serve to distinguish between the provincial and ethnic groups, and the co-workers during working hours who may have sipped many a cup of tea together, once more resume their caste and cultural differences as they return to their homes, many to their villages.

The ecology of this area is typically cis-Himalayan, with mild and pleasant weather in the spring, summer and early winter. Snow falls occasionally on the upper slopes during the last weeks of December or early January. The monsoon begins from the third week of June and continues till September. Rainfall is very heavy, varying from 116" to 160" per annum. The slopes all around this area are covered with dense forests of flora, typical of this environment. The mountains, dense

forests and large areas of unhabited and completely inaccessable country
provide abundant food and shelter for many kinds of wild life. As a
result of climatic conditions which vary from modified tropical to cold
temperate, depending on the altitude, a variety of tropical and temperate
fauna are found.

THE VILLAGE

As one proceeds east of Dharamsala, one is struck by the sudden
change of scenery. The slopes on this side for the next few miles are,
unlike the other green, pine-covered side, brown and almost bare, craggy
masses of granite and slate. Some of the middle slopes are dotted with
green where the forestry department have planted saplings of conifers in
an attempt to restore the denuded forests and to preserve the remaining
soil from erosion. The lower slopes are covered with miles of terraced
fields among which nestle small villages and hamlets.

The main road is partially metalled and is still under construction
in a number of places, though buses ply regularly along this route, from
Dharamsala to Khanyara - a village which is rapidly growing into a town.
Just beyond the outskirts of Dharamsala the road passes across the bridge
over Churan Khad. Next to this boulder strewn stream, on the Dharamsala
side, is the crematorium or the burning ghat where the funeral pyres are
lit. In a little house behind this lives the officiating 'Maha-Brahmin'
whose exact caste is unknown due to his doubtful origin.

Passing by the Churan Khad, about $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Dharamsala, a little
white board marks the bus stop of "Dharnu". A steep, narrow, uneven path
made of big blocks of stones, runs down the hill-side, first obliquely
from the main road and then straight down. This path winds through the
entire village, linking most of the clusters of houses by its branches.
A narrow but fast-flowing stream originating from a fall above the Churan

Settlement Pattern At Dharnu

NOT DRAWN TO SCALE

To Dharamsala

CHURAN KHAD

Fields
Fields
Fields
Fields
Fields
Fields
Fields
Fields

To Next Village

KHAD

To Khanyara

N S E W

REFERENCE:

	Main Road
	Stone Path
	Mud Track
S	Shop
	Cemented Pool
	Nag Temple
	Gurdwara
	Shrine
	Burning Ghat
Br	Brahman
RR	Rajput of Royal Extraction
Kk	Khanka Khatri
R	Rajput & Khatri
G	Gaddi
M	Mahajan
C	Chowdhry
Gu	Gurung
L	Lohar
B	Baddi
S	Sippi
Ch	Chamar
H	Halli
	House/Houses

Khad has been diverted into this village. It runs alongside almost the whole length of the path, giving out a few streamlets to supply water to some of the houses cut off from the main path.

The village is non-nucleated. The houses lie scattered amongst the terraced fields - some in close clusters and some solitary. The exact physical boundary of a village such as this is difficult to define since some of the houses quite far away may be included, whereas some quite near to the core area may not. There are two zones of overlap with the neighbouring villages where the houses and fields were included or excluded in accordance with their recognised village alliance.

The village has been divided into two sections by a deep khad or boulder strewn rivulet. The first section one encounters when approaching Dharnu from the direction of the Churan Khad is known as the Uparli Baraul, which is the larger of the two, and contains the majority of the houses spread out in a broad horizontal belt with every bit of cultivable land used for growing grains and vegetables. The other section, the Parli Dhar, lies beyond the khad which contains more boulders than water. This side is linked to the other by an inter-connecting stone path and to the main road above by a stone path of its own. There are comparatively fewer houses here and most of the residents are amongst the affluent people of the village with large land holdings.

Caste has been used by a number of authors as a base for explaining the distribution of population in a rural settlement. In general the higher and "cleaner" castes occupy the areas higher up on the slopes, the lower castes inhabit the areas lower on the gradient while the untouchables live in the lowest and the peripheral areas of the village.

Closely associated with the placement of the houses is their
source of water supply. Different clusters of houses have their own
chashmas or little pools by the stream from where they collect water.
From the map of the settlement, as also the setting of the village on
the hill slope, it is evident that the houses situated higher on the
slope get the cleanest water, since they have first access to the
stream. Then the central area gets the water and last of all those
who are lowest on the slope or farthest from the source. The water
that reaches them has been 'touched' by all above. Because of the
association of 'touch' or 'contact' with ritual defilement, this pattern
of distribution of the residents of the village assumes greater significance.
The cleaner castes having first access to the water avoid the possibility
of pollution through the stream water.

Dharnu does not have a proper temple of its own where all the
residents of the village may gather and pray but shares one with the
village directly below it; the temple stands between the two. There
is, however, a Gurdwara of the Guru Baba. This is located near the
house of the Lohar in Uparli Dhar. There are also several shrines which
are located in and around houses of members of different castes which
are usually open to the members of their own kin or caste group.

There are single, as well as double storied houses. They are usually
rectangular in shape with sloping, gabled slated-covered roofs and walls
of sun dried bricks or dry stone masonary, plastered with mud. Thick,
horizontal wooden beams support the upper storey and the roof. These
often jut out from the sides. The doorways are low. The windows are
extremely small consisting of just the wooden frames with seldom any
mechanism for shutting them. Consequently the ventilation is very poor.

Every house has either a covered verandah or an elevated, narrow platform-like structure along the front wall of the house, where visitors may sit and gossip. There is also a courtyard in front which is plastered with mud. On one side of this, adjacent to the house, is the cattle-shed, a part of which may also be used as a godown. At the further most corner of the courtyard is built the small shrine which houses the gods and deities worshipped by the family occupying the house. The courtyards are enclosed by low stone walls, beyond which may be the courtyard of another house or the terraced fields owned by the family.

The size of the house and courtyard and the materials used for its construction reflect to some extent the socio-economic status of the occupants. Some sources have colour-washed walls, corrugated iron sheets instead of slates to cover the roof, a larger number of rooms for specific purposes such as separate kitchens for vegetarian and non-vegetarian foods, a separate storeroom, bedrooms and also a drawing room. Some even have a covered verandah. But such dwellings are restricted to only a few rich men, the others have few, if any, of these additions to the basic structure.

In overall appearance, Dharnu appears to be less prosperous than some of its neighbouring villages which have a larger proportion of houses made of brick and cement with proper water and electricity supply. Electricity has only recently been made available to Dharnu, although the lines were set up two years ago. There are no facilities for piped water supply, nor tube-wells in this village and the villagers have to depend almost entirely on the vagaries of the stream which fortunately flows almost all the year round. Nothing has been done to effect sanitation and drainage.

THE PEOPLE

The people of Dharnu are a mixed population, who represent three different areas or regions of the country and many caste categories.

The original inhabitants of Dharnu were the people of Gadheran, which consists of the area from Lahul and Spiti to the plains of the Chamba Valley.[7] These people had once been semi-pastoral shepherds who roamed all over these regions with their herds of sheep some of whom had their permanent winter lodgings here. Later came the others, separately, at different times, who bought land or were rewarded with land by the British rulers of those times for their military and other achievements. Over time, these latecomers were absorbed into the mainstream of the village community. Although they retained their own identities, interaction with the original and other inhabitants has resulted in a broad similarity between all the residents of the village. The stratificational scheme of the village comprehends all the castes in a single hieriarchy, the statuses assigned to each depending on the position of the particular caste in its own regional hierarchy, as well as on the region to which it belonged. This is discussed in detail in the forthcoming chapter.

As a result of their different origins, the language and dress of the different groups vary. The people who come from the Gadheran area are distinct in their way of dress, which is well adapted to the severe cold of their homeland. The women wear long full-sleeved dresses, the gathering at the waist often consisting of several metres of thick, woollen material. Around the waist they bind a thick woollen rope which varies in length from about 12 ft. to even 40 ft. at times. The dress is called <u>chola</u> and the rope <u>dora</u>. Young girls and older women alike wear a lot of ornaments including bangles, necklaces and anklets. All have their ear-lobes and nose pierced which they decorate with ear-rings <u>bali</u> and nose-pins <u>phulli</u> or <u>long</u> of a typical local design. Married women can be recognised by the

enormous size of the nose-pin worn. On their head they wear a conical silver
ornament called chak over which they drape an elongated piece of material
called orni. Men wear a similar but shorter and less elaborate dress
called chola which has been described by Newell[4] as being somewhat similar
to a Scottish kilt. They may wear narrow pyjamas or remain bare-legged,
especially when working. These people usually speak only their native
language Gaadhi, though some of them have picked up some Punjabi from
their neighbours and others in Dharamsala. The younger generation of these
people, however, many of whom have acquired some basic education, prefer
to dress like the other people in and around this area. The men wear
shirts and loose pyjamas with a waist-coat or coat on top, while the
women wear either salwar-kameez or a ghagra which is a long skirt-like
dress worn with a short shirt on top. Only the Nepali women wear saris
but their men dress like the other local men. All women, however,
irrespective of their regional identities cover their heads with an
orni or the end of their saris. The ordinary jewellery worn is very
similar though their traditional jewellery varies. Many of the men wear
Kulu caps which have a bright band of colour in front. The common languages
spoken are Pahari which means 'language of the mountains' and Punjabi. The
people of Nepal speak Nepalese.

Most of the domestic units of this village consist of joint or extended
families, and a shift in residence occurs only in event of extreme overcrowding
or serious family dispute. Although the family shares the same roof, cooking
hearths are often separate for each nuclear unit and resources are not always
pooled. There are also a few nuclear households. Some of these are said to
be first generation settlers in Dharnu with unmarried children. In other
cases, they are actually incomplete joint families which become nuclearized
due to death or migration of certain members of the larger family. There
are several incomplete nuclear families too, which resulted from similar
causes.

The families centre around the father, through whom lineage is traced. Patrilocality and patriarchy are the generally accepted organizing principles.

The recognition of kinship and affinity varies only slightly for the different peoples. They all recognise kinship ties with both the father's and the mother's kin groups. Greater emphasis is, however, laid on kinship relations on the father's side, although the maternal uncle is a very important relation.

The arrangement of marriage is subject to caste endogamy and gotra exogamy. Prohibitions regarding marriage into the gotra of the mother's brother also exist. Marriage is permitted into the gotra of the father's married sisters and also the mother's married sisters, provided of course, those do not coincide with those already in the prohibited category. Marriage is forbidden within the recognised kin group. For most people the distance of recognition is seven generations on the paternal side and five on the maternal, although in practice one is seldom able to recall connections that far back. Among the Nepalis however, marriage is permitted with their paternal grandfather's sister's grand-children or paternal grandmother's brother's grand-children, but in such cases marriages should be within one's own generation.

The basic rites of Hindu marriage according to the Sanatan-Dharma are observed by all groups, although there are minor differences in periferal customs according to caste and regional identity. Dowry, although illegal now, is an essential feature of all marriages and involves payment in both cash and kind.

THE ECONOMY

Land being the chief source of food, is the most important source
of wealth in Dharnu, although in recent years more and more people have
been attracted to other occupations in the town or outside. But
"agriculture is the mainstay of the rural economy.............. The
crafts and occupation of the countryside are generally integrated to it.
The people are free to do subsidiary work to supplement their income but
land is the most important source of wealth".[5]

Most of the families own at least a few terraced fields to produce
some of the essential crops. There are two main harvests. The Spring
harvest is Rabi or Hari and consists chiefly of wheat, barley grain and
mustard. Kharif is the autumn harvest of maize, rice, pulses and potatoes
and to this is apportioned the major portion of cultivated area. The time
for sowing and harvesting varies with altitude. The Spring crops are
generally sown from the middle of September to the middle of December. In
the lower regions they ripen by the middle of April or even earlier but
in the higher regions they take longer, up to May or even June. The sowing
of the autumn crops extends from March to the middle of July and the harvest
lasts from September to November. The social life of the villagers is
closely linked to these cycles, for example the months which are regarded
as inauspicious for marriages are also those that are the busiest for
the farmers and harvest is the time when all members of the family gather
together to help in reaping.

Wheat, maize and rice are the major crops of the district. The important
cash crops are potatoes and maize with minor crops of sesame, cotton, pulses
and millets of Kharif and barley, gram, linseed and sarson of Rabi. Few of
these are grown as cash crops in Dharnu, and the yield being low, very little
is marketed. On the contrary, the villagers often have to resort to buying
from the markets in Dharamsala or Yol, a cantonment town nearby.

Both men and women work in the fields but there is sexual division of labour. Men plough, sow grains, and maintain the boundaries, while it is the task of the women to break the clods, spread manure and to do the weeding. Those with larger land holdings or who belong to castes ritually prohibited from tilling the soil, often employ labourers who are paid in cash or kind, or at times both. Another system is practised in this area. Land is given to a tenant to cultivate and the produce is divided between the landlord and the tenant. This system is, however, gradually dying out since the Government of India framed rules giving certain rights to certain rights to cultivating tenants. Where it does exist, the tenants are changed every two years or so.

Associated with agriculture are some subsidiary occupations, such as keeping poultry, a few heads of cattle or even goats and sheep. In addition to these, many people such as the Lohar, Chamar, etc. practice their traditional caste occupations, while many others have taken over non-traditional caste-free jobs outside the village to supplement their income. Many have sought work as labourers in the town of Dharamsala or in the slate mines nearby. A number of young men have been recruited into the army, while a few with education have even got posts in offices or schools in the nearby areas.

POLITICAL ORGANISATION

Dharnu comes under the jurisdiction of the local Pancayat which is directly under the Government of India. The total area under this Panchayat, which consists of Dharnu, together with a number of neighbouring villages, is divided into 8 tikas for the collection of land revenue and into 15 wards for political representation. One Panc is elected from each ward by vote. In addition, one woman and two Harijans are nominated to complete the Pancayat group.

The village Dharnu consists of 2 tikas which are the Uparli Baraul and Parli Dhar, and into 3 wards - Uparli Baraul, Neechli Baraul and Parli Dhar. Only the last is complete, the other two are incomplete and form wholes only in conjunction with sections of their neighbouring village areas.

The Pancs of two of the wards are residents of this village, both of whom are Gaddis. One of the nominated Harijans, a Chamar by caste as well as by profession, belongs to Dharnu.

The Sarpanc or the head of the Pancayat, and the other members live in the other nearby villages which also come under the jurisdiction of this Pancayat. Meetings are generally held once a month, except under exceptional conditions. The location is not fixed but is chosen at the convenience of the members. The Pancayat is invested with the power to impose fines up to Rs. 250. If the cases are not settled by the Pancayat, they may be referred to the courts, as are the more serious disputes or legal offences.

The villagers, however, usually prefer to find a solution to their problems without external interference. They have their own community councils or associations, e.g. the Nepalese have the Gurkha Association, Gaddis have an informal council of elders, as do the others who have their own caste or group councils. These councils are composed of some of the elders who are considered to be wise and their decisions are usually respected. Minor disputes, infringment of social norms, etc. are settled by these councils. They may, on occasions, even impose a nominal fine or demand a feast which may vary from distribution of gur or molasses to a proper meal. Previously they punished certain serious social crimes by which is known locally as hukka-pani bandh

implying a social boycott when nobody would eat, drink or smoke in the offender's company. In extreme cases the offender was even beaten out of the village. These punishments are, however, practised no more and physical sanctions are seldom employed.

Frequent recourse is made to the traditional councils which carry much greater authority than the Pancs in the area. In cases of legal disputes most of the people prefer to go to the police or the District courts rather than to the Pancayat since their faith in the elected and nominated members is almost non-existent. According to the people of Dharnu, few care to participate in the Pancayat since hardly any of the permanent residents of the village are educated, unlike the well-educated Pancs of the other associated villages. Thus, most of what goes on at the meetings, as well as the decisions that are taken, are beyond the understanding of their representative whose role is limited to merely being present to sign the documents. There are also a number of corrupt practices associated with this position. So anyone who is willing is elected Panc.

RELIGION

The inhabitants of Dharnu, in spite of being a heterogeneous people in terms of their differing origins and castes, are all Hindus following the Sanatan-Dharma. They worship numerous Gods, Goddesses, godlings and deities and they observe all their religious ceremonies faithfully.

Every house contains some place of worship, where the photographs and images of the Gods are kept. Among these, the most common are Shiv, Laxmi, Bhagvati and Hanuman. In addition to these there is usually a photograph or some symbolic representation of their family god, "kul-devta". In a far corner of the front courtyard there is usually a small shrine sheltering a

trishul or trident of the Devi-Mata or Mother Goddess. This trishul
is never taken indoors for fear of possible profanity or pollution
which would incur the wrath of the goddess with devastating consequences.
Some have a Deot-sidh in the courtyard which is a mound-like structure
with the imprint of two feet of the Baba,a local saint.

All the people of this area have a strong belief and faith in the
Snake-God Nag devta. Many shrines have been erected on the stone in bas-
relief and smeared with ochre. The Nag is worshipped to repel evil spirits
and propitiate fortune. Associated with this deity are a variety of non-
poisonous snakes. These are never harmed, and if seen near a house or a
temple are offered milk.

Many of their deities are those commonly worshipped in many other
parts of Northern India to avert disasters or diseases, such as Seetala-
devi, Gale-wali Devi, Khardesah-mata, Asht-bhuja, etc. Among the local
deities are the Banaski of the forests, Guga Pir, Rati, and many others.
Some of these are benevolent while others are malevolent. Care has to be
taken to pay regard to all, especially when passing through the territory
associated with any of the deities. There are numerous folk tales about
them.

No deity is worshipped exclusively by any single community but each
has its preferences. Certain gods are, however, usually associated with a
particular section of the people, as are certain religious practices. The
Nepalese people chiefly worship Kali. They observe Sarasvati Puja too, as
do many others of the higher castes. Raste ka Puja is performed only by
married women of the clean castes; until its performance the Brahman will
not accept any dan from them. Similarly Bhoomi-devta is worshipped at the
time of harvest exclusively by the men of the village. Strangers and
women are strictly prohibited from going near the shrine. The Gaddis observe

the ritual of sacrificing a morsel of the food cooked first each day
to the fire of the hearth on which it was cooked.

The gods and goddesses are propitiated with offerings of flowers,
fruits, grains or items of ritual paraphernalia made of silver. Fasts
are an important part of religious behaviour. Sacrifices are usually
performed in thanksgiving for benefits received or to avert calamities.
Usually a black goat is offered. It may be a <u>zinda bali</u> which is
released after the ceremony with a <u>tika</u> on its forehead, or its head may
be struck off at the altar and the meat distributed to those present as
<u>prasad</u>.

TRADITION AND CHANGE

Dharnu is a small village close to a town. Many of its inhabitants
are in constant interaction with town-dwellers and other outsiders and
are exposed to numerous ideas of innovation and change. Yet Dharnu
continues as a traditionally oriented society, preserving the old values
and sentiments of the community. It is true that social changes which
have swept Indian society in recent years have penetrated to the village.
Social reforms have made an impact on the existent culture and deritualization
and secularization are common among the younger generation. The rigidity
of caste is less strictly maintained and the range of permissible actions
has increased. But these are peripheral changes, limited to elements
regarded as dispensible. The core has changed little and all those aspects
which are deemed important for the conservation of their traditional life
styles have remained untouched.

The caste system, though legally abolished in Independent India, shows
little change. There is a definite feeling of hierarchy, of superiority of
some over others. This awareness is present and manifest, at least within

the confines of the village. Even the few who say they no longer

subscribe to caste values continue to observe caste restrictions and

the majority continue in their traditional ways. In this thesis, I

am not principally concerned with social change but with the traditional

pattern of inter-caste interactions which still obtains in Dharnu.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. Hutchinson J. and 8. E. J. Ph. Vogel 1933 : 99

2. Punjab District Gazetteer 1904 : 24-47, 250

3. Ibid p.250

4. Newell W. H. 1960 : 56-67

5. Dube S. C. 1971 : 57

CHAPTER III

CASTE HIERARCHY IN DHARNU

CHAPTER III

CASTE HIERARCHY IN DHARNU

The inhabitants of Dharnu form a multi-ethnic and multi-caste community, but all being Hindus following the Sanatan-Dharama, they are organised according to the rules governing Hindu social organisation. These are the rules of the caste system. The caste hierarchy is most clearly seen in relation to the rules governing food transactions and it is in the interest of each caste group stringently to enforce proper observance of these rules. Yet, it is chiefly in this field that change is affected by certain ritual kinship relations and ritual specialists leading to modification of the established pattern of inter-caste behaviour. In this chapter which gives an outline of the caste hierarchy in Dharnu, particular emphasis has been placed on commensal behaviour, both because they are the clearest index of caste ranking ~~and because they are the clearest index of caste ranking~~ and because the effect of ritual kinship and ritual specialists on inter-caste behaviour is chiefly evident in their transgression.

The inhabitants originally belonged to three different regions of the sub-continent and although they have blended into a single village community, they retain many aspects of their original cultural identities, mainly in respect of dress, language and certain details of life-style.

The three regional groups consist of:-

A. The People of Gadheran:

The majority of the residents of the area belong to this group. The predominant sub-section of these people consists of Rajputs, Khatris

TABLE 1

CASTE REPRESENTATION IN DHARNU

REGIONAL GROUP	CASTE	ASSOCIATED OCCUPATION
A. PEOPLE OF GADHERAN:	GADDI – (THAKUR, RAJPUT, KHATRI, KAPOOR KHATRI)	Semi-Nomadic Shepherds (Traditionally Warriors)
	BADDI	Carpenters
	SIPPI	Weavers
	HALLI	Tanners
B. NEPALI GURKHAS:	KHANKA KHATRI	(Traditionally Warriors)
	GURUNG	
C. DESI PEOPLE:	BRAHMAN	Priests
	RAJPUTS OF ROYAL EXTRACTION	(Traditionally Warriors)
	RAJPUT	(Traditionally Warriors)
	KHATRI	(Traditionally Warriors)
	BATIADE – (RAJPUT, KHATRI)	Stone Masons
	MAHAJAN	Traders
	CHOWDHRY	Tillers
	LOHAR	Blacksmiths
	CHAMAR	Tanners

and Kapoor Khatris, who are all ranked as equal and may inter-marry. If
the distinguishing marks of a caste are inter-dining and inter-marriage,
then for all apparent purposes, they function as a 'caste' group.
Although all the people of Gadheran are, strictly speaking 'Gaddis', the
term is only used for members of this sub-section. The Brahmans and the
Bhatt Brahmans of this region sometimes use it as a prefix to their
caste names to specify their exact identity, while the Baddis, Sippis and
Hallis, who represent the other end of the hierarchy, seldom need to
refer to it, since their caste names are distinctive of their region.

B. Nepali Gurkhas:

They trace their origins to Nepal. Only two castes of these people
are represented in this village, Khanka Khatri and Gurung. Traditionally
the Hindu Nepalis have the entire range of functional castes but none of
these are present in the village. This, however, does not pose any
problem as they freely utilize the services of castes from other regions.

C. Desi Population:

The rest of the people of Dharnu are best grouped into one general
category, as is done by the local people, who refer to all those who are
neither Gadheran people nor Gurkhas, as Desi implying 'local'. This
group includes most of the castes in the local hierarchy, from the Desi
Brahmans at the upper end to the untouchable Chamars at the other.

Table 1 shows the caste representations of each regional group in
the village Dharnu.

In the village, the different regional groups all live as part of a

TABLE 2

CASTES' BLOCS REPRESENTING STATES OF RITUAL
PURITY OR POLLUTION

CLEAN CASTES...............WITH SACRED THREAD (I)........BRAHMAN

RAJPUT OF ROYAL
EXTRACTION

RAJPUT

KHATRI

GADDI

KHANKAKHATRI

BATTADE

WITHOUT SACRED THREAD (II)....MAHAJAN

CHOWDRY

GURUNG

UNCLEAN CASTES (III)....................................LOHAR

UNTOUCHABLE CASTES (IV)................................BADDI

SIPPI

CHAMAR

HALLI

community encompassed within one general framework. This is

characteristic of any multi-ethnic Indian village where ideas of caste

prevail, since inter-action between the different people must be

preceeded by an exact knowledge of their mutual positions in the hierarchy.

The ranking of castes is usually discussed in the village by reference to

the Varna system[2]. But the problems of this method are numerous. There

are too many castes linked to each Varna to make possible their mutual

ranking on the basis of this division alone so that the relative ranking

of castes, particularly in the middle range, is often disputed. Besides

this, Varna linkage is often changed by social mobility. But in any part

of the country castes may all be arranged within a framework of caste

blocs which indicate their socially accepted states of purity or pollution

within that area. The arrangement in Dharnu is given below.

a.   Clean Castes:

This includes all the upper castes, viz. Brahmans, Rajputs,

Mahajans, all the Gaddis, Batiades, Chowdhrys as well as both the Nepali

castes represented in the village. These are all considered to be acchi

(good) and ucci (high) castes.

The members of clean castes are further divided into two sub-categories

- those who are entitled by the sacred law-books to wear the sacred thread

and those who are not. First the Brahmans, then the Rajputs of Royal

Extraction then the Khanka Khatris and then all Rajputs, Khatris and the

Batiade come within the former higher sub-group of twice-born[3]. The

Mahajan, Chowdhry and the non-'kala-dhari' Gurkha caste, the Gurung, make

up the latter sub-division of the pure castes.

b. Unclean Castes:

This is an intermediate status category whose members are accepted by most of the clean castes in their wider interactional sphere but not by the highest nor the very orthodox. Yet they are not treated as untouchable. Only the Lohars of Dharnu come within this category.

c. Untouchable Castes:

Within this last category come all the castes which are considered halki (light) or nic (low) by the local people. This includes the Baddis, then the Sippis, and finally the Hallis and Chamars.

The ranking of the castes into major divisions in terms of traditional ritual purity is easily deduced from the general consensus, as well as evidenced in ordinary interactional patterns among the people of the different castes. The reason for this is that orthodox high caste Hindus have an ever-present preoccupation with possible defilement due to impure contact and thus they have a highly developed ritualised behavioural pattern, based on the belief that the higher the caste the greater it's purity and so also it's pollutability. This preoccupation governs not only their interactions with people of other castes or those who are temporarily in a polluted state[4], but also their relations within the caste as well as their personal behaviour since pollution can emanate from any quarter, even from one's own self. These patterns of behaviour are a combination of preventive, precautionary or purificatory rituals. There are several different sets of rites, with elaborate explanations of their efficacy, for all important occasions, such as a birth or death in the family, or each stage of life-crises or even for some anticipated event. These vary in degree of intricacy depending on the social

importance of the occasion, as well as on the status and orthodoxy of the participating caste. Ritualization even penetrates such common day-to-day activities as cooking, eating, working or visiting. Thus, these too are conducted along definite codified patterns of behaviour with elaborate prescriptive and proscriptive rules specifying how each may be done, under what conditions, in whose company and so on. Different castes tend to observe these rules more or less strictly since divergence may possibly lead to defilement, and certainly to a loss of ritual status.

As a result, although there exists a certain amount of terminological overlap of caste categories between the regional groups, this overlap is not necessarily supported by a corresponding equality of rank. A clear example of this is the comparative inferiority in the position of the Brahmans of Gadheran with respect to the Desi Brahmans is this area. For reference they are all called Brahmans but when it comes to a question of interaction between the two or of a presiding over some ritual ceremony, the element of differentiation becomes manifest. In general, the Desi castes are usually ranked higher than the similarly named castes of either of the other two regions in terms of acknowledged ritual status. This stems mainly from the fact that in general, the Desi people are much more conservative regarding adherence to the details of ritualized behaviour than are the others.

From the above it is evident that the inherent attribute of purity or pollution by virtue of caste membership is, in practice, subject to some degree of change or variation as determined by the attitude of the group to the prescribed complex of rites and rituals. This implies a

form of relational ranking of castes according to certain attributes which are dependent on the behavioural pattern observed by each caste. It is, therefore, as Stevenson[5] put it, a question of having "the right to perform certain rites", as well as "the observance of certain standards of behaviour". Some of the attributes most explicitly related to ranking are the wearing of the sacred thread, the practice of manual or menial occupation by men, whether women are permitted work outside the house and dietary and drinking habits. It is true that the attributional theory as propounded by many earlier authors has been found to be deficient when attempting a precise ranking of all the castes in a locality. Marriot states, "attributional theory seems incomplete at best."[6] Recent studies of the caste system[7] have put forward a more satisfactory method of determining the precise ranks of all the constituent castes in a local hierarchy. This may be done by analysing the structure of interaction among them and ranking them accordingly. The logic in use here is that their interactions are viewed as manifestations of their ranks and the attributional evaluation is used as a rationalisation of the deduced positions. But in this situation, elements of the attributional theory seem pertinent and therefore it cannot be completely dismissed. This will become clear later on.

One area of social interaction where caste rank becomes manifest is commensality. Another sphere of meaningful interaction is the giving and receiving of traditional ritual services. But the increasing number of caste-free occupations as well as other factors such as commercialization of services or even disassociation of caste from certain occupations hinder a conclusive ranking on this basis. In all cases, however, the commensal habits, particularly the pattern of ritualized food transactions prove a conclusive guide.

According to Mayer[8], the commensal hierarchy is based on the theory that each caste has a certain quality of ritual purity which is polluted by certain commensal contacts with castes having an inferior quality. The basis of this view is the belief that pollution is transmitted indirectly, i.e. through indirect contact with less pure individuals via objects polluted by their touch, or even by their mere presence.

Commensal rules usually apply to each caste as a whole although some sub-sections may observe slightly different regulations. On the other hand, two or more castes may be seen to have the same or very similar regulations because of a similar status in the hierarchy. The rules pertaining mainly to food and water are summed up by the Hindu Food Taboos[9] as follows:-

1. The Cooking Taboo - which lays down rules regarding who may cook the food a man eats.

2. The Commensal Taboo - which lays down rules regarding in whose company a man may eat.

3. The Food Taboo - which lays down rules regarding from whom a man may accept different categories of food.

4. The Eating Taboo - which lays down rules regarding observance of proper rituals at a meal.

5. The Smoking Taboo - which lays down rules regarding in whose company a man may smoke.

The details of these rules indicate the prescriptive, the preferential, as well as the prohibited categories of commensal behaviour and interaction. Those who are more particular about maintaining these taboos and thus their purity rank higher than those who are less so.

This is because pollution as a permanent attribute, is an inherent character of the relationships between groups, and it is the degree of permanent purity or pollution which fixes a group's ritual status, as well as governs inter-group behaviour and attitudes. The relation between commensal rules and social interaction, however, is not always simple and uncomplicated. Mayer[10] warns that hierarchy of a system is reflected in actual behaviour and "since commensality is an activity, it is influenced by factors which are not necessarily connected with rules governing hierarchy. The formal ranking may therefore be distorted in practice, though maintaining its essential outlines and major divisions. There may be no active disobeyal of rules but for various reasons these may be difficult to carry out and so become imprecise."

But there are certain aspects of commensal behaviour which are deemed too important to admit divergence. One of these is the observance of the chowka system, i.e. the entry to the kitchen is restricted to freshly bathed men and married women in a pure state[11] whilst the food is being cooked by the latter and until the former have finished eating. Traditionally this was restricted to the twice-born castes only but this is practised by almost all the people now in a modified form. No one except one of their own biradari or a member of a high caste is allowed to enter the chowka or kitchen at any time. Another important factor in eating habits is the category of food which may be accepted from another. This is based on the belief that apart from the touch of the giver, the manner of preparation also affects the degree to which food can carry contamination. Since pollution comes only from those who are ritually inferior, the greatest restrictions apply to the upward passage of food. Thus green fruits and vegetables with peelable skins are regarded as least pollutable[12]. Other forms of raw

foods too, such as grains, ground or whole, sugar, _ghi_ (clarified butter) are considered to be unpollutable. The value of these items as gifts are further enhanced because these may be stored for later use or even exchanged for other commodities.

Cooked food is perishable and hence less valued as a gift but food cooked in _ghi_ is nevertheless rated high since _ghi_ being a product of the cow renders any food pure. This form of food which is called _Pucca_ or _Succa_ is therefore acceptable from all who are within one's own caste bloc. In the absence of any purifying component, food is directly affected by the touch of the giver and hence is regarded as most pollutable. This lowest category of food is that cooked in salt and water. The exchange of this _Kacca_ or _Jhutha_ food, is thus very restricted and is acceptable only from people of equivalent status, i.e. from one's regional caste group, or sub-caste should these be ranked differently.

In the village Dharnu, the following pattern of food transaction is observed.

The Brahmans, who occupy the top-most position on the ritual scale, have the greatest number of prescriptive and proscriptive rules governing their commensal behaviour. They may accept _jhutha_ food only from their own caste members since there are none above them and those below are in the ritually prohibited category. The stricter and more traditionally oriented Brahmans reject _jhutha_ food from all except their own _biradari_. _Succa_ food is acceptable from a wider range of people and is freely exchanged between members of clean castes. There are no restrictions

regarding exchange of raw food-stuffs. A Brahman may be given these by the lowest of the untouchables without fear of rejection, such as in giving of <u>dan</u> or ceremonial offering to the priest after the performance of some religious ceremony. This is however, taken indirectly, as taking directly from the hands would involve contact and be polluting. The superior position of the Brahmans is further strengthened by the fact that any kind of food, even <u>jhutha</u> food, if offered by them will be accepted by members of all other castes.

Next on the commensal hierarchy are the Nepali 'Khanka' Khatri and the Rajputs who are of royal extraction - the Ranas and the Gulerias. In spite of their different places of origin, their superior position within their respective regional groups, as well as strict adherance to their traditional ritual codes of conduct which incidentally are fairly similar, has resulted in the castes being accorded a very similar status. Exchange of any but <u>jhutha</u> food may be freely carried on between the three, since the latter is only acceptable within the <u>biradari</u>. Apart from this the usual restrictions hold. Raw food is acceptable from all irrespective of caste, <u>succa</u> food from fellow members of the clean caste bloc, and <u>jhutha</u> food from no other caste except the Brahmans.

Rajputs, Khatris, all the Gaddis and all the Batiade constitute the next group. This group, although fairly similar to the previous one by the fact of being entitled to the sacred thread and therefore to the performance of certain rites is nonetheless ranked slightly lower. This is due to a number of reasons. First of all, they are all of common descent and cannot trace their ancestry to any of the illustrous <u>vamsas</u> of Rajputs. Further, their comparative looseness in attitude towards the maintenance of ritual norms, such as donning of the sacred thread at an age much later than is traditionally approved, not doing <u>gandush</u> before

meals and other similar practices, all contribute to their position, as
also the fact that they all till the soil, an occupation traditionally
forbidden to twice-born castes except as <u>apadharma</u>[13]. Compared to the
other two, the Batiades are much more particular about each detail of the
prescribed rituals but the fact that they are commoners by origin, and
even more important in this case is the fact that they are the most
recent additions to the village society and their claims to a high
position in the hierarchy has been finally acknowledged over the past
two or three years, accounts for their inclusion in this group. They
may all accept <u>jhutha</u> food from Brahmans and others who are ritually
purer but exchange of it within their own group is restricted to members
of their own regional caste group; the Batiades in this case being
treated as a separate group even though they are generally included
among the Desi people.

Mahajans constitute the next strata. They are highest among the
three who are included among the clean castes but are not twice-born.
They may accept all kinds of food from the twice-born and only <u>succa</u>
food from the other two who are directly below them. Only raw food may
be taken from the untouchables.

The lowest strata within the clean castes bloc comprise the
Chowdhrys and the Gurungs. Chowdhrys accept all kinds of food from
higher castes, barring the Gaddis, while the Gurungs accept it from all,
but between themselves exchange is restricted to <u>succa</u> food only.

The Lohar of this village is treated as unclean but not untouchable.
Since there is only one representative of this category, the expected
commensal rules are clearly defined. In practice, however, there is a
certain amount of non-conformance due to individual disposition. All

members of this family (incidentally nuclear) freely accept food from the Baddis, although they are an untouchable caste, and consider them to be similar to themselves. The Lohar family also maintains commensal relations with one Chamar household, the Mochis, since the head of this household is the Lohar's wife's Dharam-mama[14], i.e. ritual maternal uncle. The ritual kinship relation extends to the other members of the family too. None of the other Chamars, nor Hallis, nor Sippis, who are positionally between the Baddi and Halli-Chamar group, are included within the Lohar's commensal group, so only raw food is accpetable from them. These departures from the normal expectations have not, surprisingly enough, had any ill-effect on the status of the Lohar, which has, in fact, risen slightly in recent years.

Among the untouchables, the Baddis are ranked highest. Although the Lohars treat them almost as equals and exchange with them all kinds of food, they are not treated thus by high-castes. Baddis accept all food from castes higher than their own, as well as from their own caste members, but only raw food is taken from Sippis, Chamars and Hallis.

The Sippis are second in the hierarchy of the untouchables so far as the members of the other castes are concerned. Their commensal behaviour does not tally with the generally accepted rule that the lower the caste, the lesser the restrictions on their acceptance of food from others. According to this rule, Sippis should accept all food from members of any caste which is ritually purer or higher in the hierarchy. In fact they do not accept any jhutha food, but only succa and raw food from the Baddis. However, this action is not accompanied by any claim to superior or even equal status, at any rate not so far. From Hallis and Chamars they accept only raw foodstuffs.

The lowest rung of the ritual hierarchy is occupied jointly by the Chamars and the Hallis. Besides their ritual and social status, their economic condition is such that they have absolutely no inhibitions about the acceptance of any edible product from anyone.

This then, is the general pattern of food transactions between the members of the various castes in Dharnu. These commensal relationships between the different ritual categories can be clearly represented diagramatically in the method used by Schwarz[15]. A number of additions have been made to the local hierarchy in these diagrams. This is because village communities, even conservative ones like Dharnu, have long ceased to be "little republics having nearly everything they want within themselves" as observed by Sir Charles Metcalf in 1852. Even so far as caste representation is concerned, a number of castes essential for the proper functioning of village society because of their traditional occupations, are not found in the village, such as the Nai (Barber) or the Brahman priests. These have to be called from neighbouring villages to render their services whenever required, for it is not merely the service which has to be performed but the proper functionaries of appropriate status are equally improtant since all ritual practices are based on the principles of the occupational rigidity of the traditional system. Even the Brahman priests have to be called in from outside, since none of the Brahmans of Dharnu follow their traditional occupation. These castes have been included in the diagrams even though they do not live in the village.

Figure 1 shows the association[15] existing in the commensal relationships in _pucca_ food between the different groups in the order of social hierarchical ranking. Letters 'a' to 'l_1' denote the different caste groups while the figures I, II, III, and IV indicate the caste

FIGURE I

ASSOCIATION DIAGRAM SHOWING COMMENSALITY RELATIONSHIP IN SUCCA FOOD

AMONG THE DIFFERENT CASTES OF DHARNU
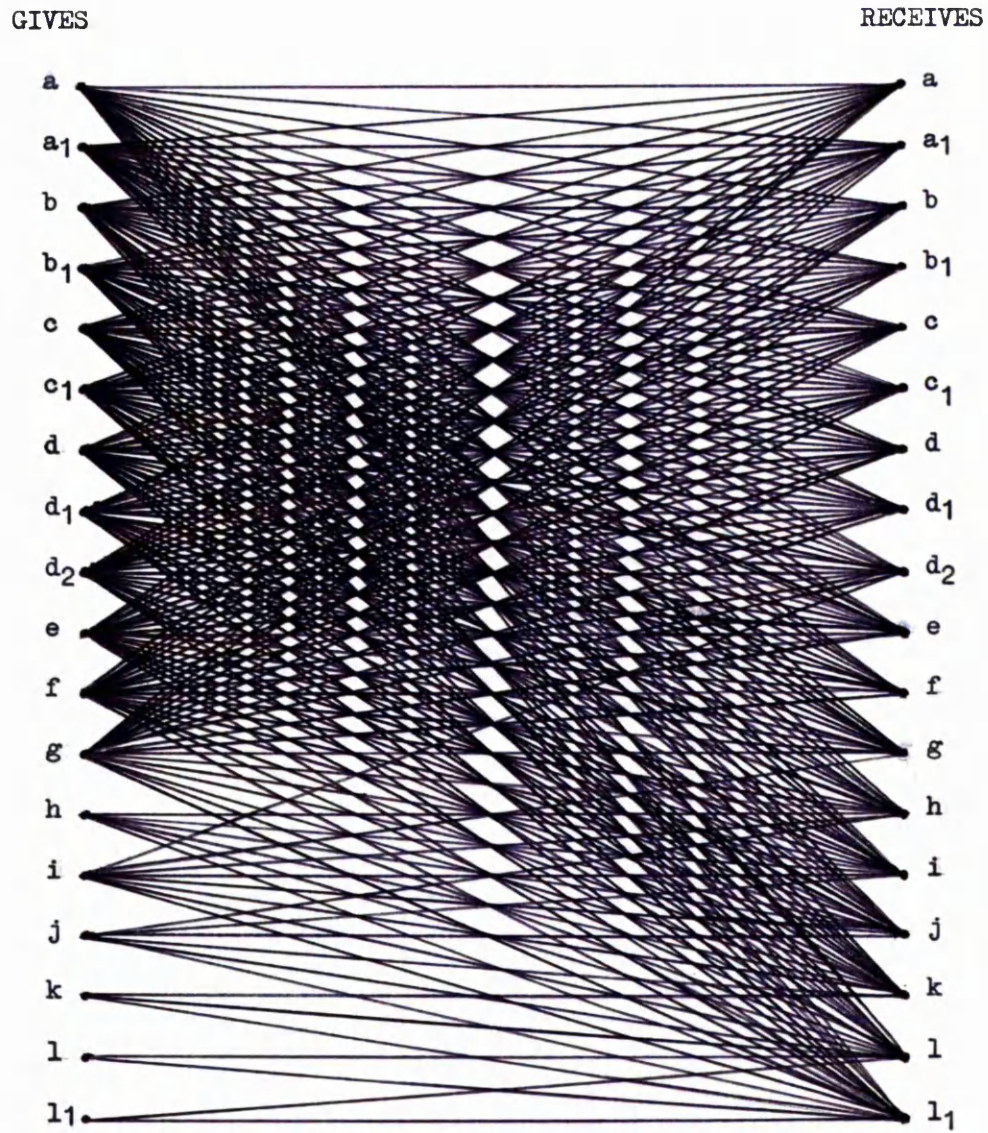
GIVES   RECEIVES

blocs as represented in Table 3. These are shown on two vertical lines denoting "giver" and "receiver" groups. To give an example, symbol 'a' represents the Desi Brahman who gives succa food to all the others but receives it only from those who are included among the clean castes, i.e. up to 'g'. This factual position has been shown by drawing a line joining the giver to each of the receivers and vice-versa. On the contrary 'l_1' denotes the Hallis who may give succa food only to the Chamars and members of their own caste and hence, only two lines have been drawn from 'l_1' as giver, but they receive succa food from all higher castes which is indicated by the many lines drawn towards 'l_1' as a receiver.

It is quite clear that group I (a - d_2) and group II (e - g) castes show a sharp contrast in the density of lines drawn from givers to receivers, as against group III (h - i) and group IV (j - l_1) castes that show fewer lines going towards the receiver castes. This is linked with the hierarchical ranking of different castes in groups I and II as against those of III and IV, the former comprising the clean castes, with or without the sacred thread and considered higher than the latter groups, comprising the unclean castes and the untouchables.

In so far as the vertical showing the receiver castes is concerned, there is more or less uniform distribution of lines, with the density/number of lines increasing slightly towards the lower castes. This slight difference between the patterns shown by the giver and receiver castes may be attributed to the fact that traditionally succa food is considered to be less pollutable or more 'sat' (lit.pure) and hence a greater number of castes accept succa food from castes other than their own.

Figure 2 shows jhutha food transactions among the different castes.

FIGURE 2

ASSOCIATION DIAGRAM SHOWING COMMENSALITY RELATIONSHIP IN JHUTHA FOOD AMONG THE DIFFERENT CASTS OF DHARNU
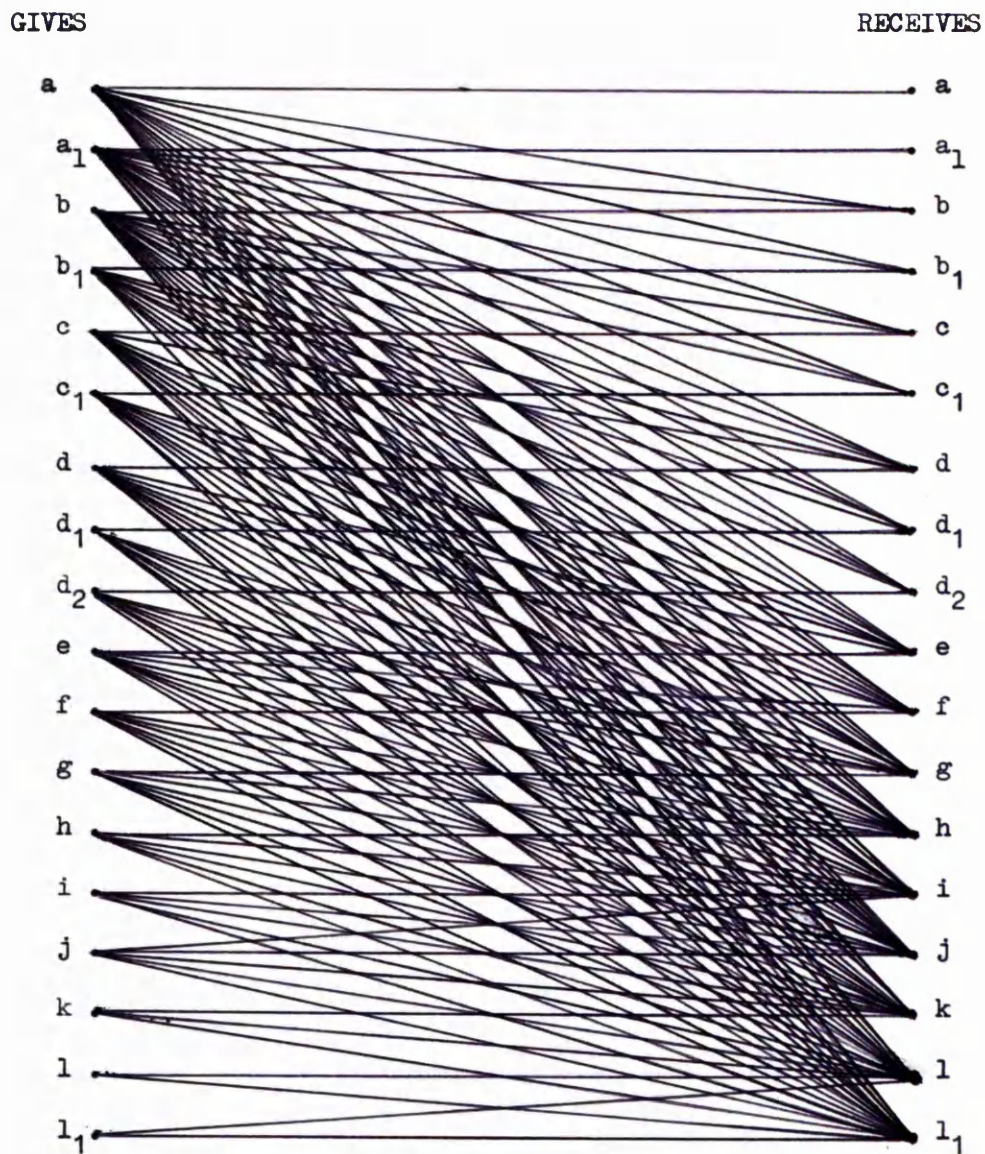
The diagramatic representation clearly shows that there is a thinning of lines in groups III and IV as against groups I and II on the vertical denoting giver castes, i.e. there is a clear-cut difference between the higher and lower order of caste groups in "giving" transactions. This contrast becomes clear when the number of lines emanating from the giver castes in groups I and II are compared to those of any caste in group III and IV. However, the reverse phenomenon is to be seen in case of the vertical showing the receiving castes where the density/number of lines increases as one moves from the higher to the lower castes. The contrast in this pattern between castes of groups I and II as against those of III and IV is evident and indicative of the fact that higher castes give jhutha food to a number of castes but receive it only from those akin to themselves in rank, with the exception of 'i' and 'j' castes. The food is received from members of their own caste and almost all others higher than their own. Quantitative representations of selected sections of the association diagrams are presented in Figures 3 and 4. They clearly demonstrate the differences in the densities of the lines showing the associations in the succa and jhutha food transactions among the four major groupings. The castes representing groups I, II, III and IV are 'a', 'e', 'i' and 'l'. The diameters of the different circles on the two verticals on each of the two figures, are made to scale in accordance with the number of lines radiating from or converging at each caste position. Thus the sizes of the circles show the magnitude of the transactions at each point. The purpose of these two figures is merely to simplify the data presented in the two previous figures.

But the concept of "commensality" extends beyond this to specify in whose company one may eat. Inter-dining in the village is usually restricted to wedding feasts and cermonial occasions. It is on these occasions that the hierarchy can be seen in action.

FIGURE 3

A QUANTITATIVE REPRESENTATION OF COMMENSALITY RELATIONSHIPS

IN 'SUCCHA' FOOD BETWEEN "RECEIVING" AND "GIVING" TRANSACTIONS

AMONG FOUR MAJOR CASTE GROUPINGS I II III & IV

GIVER CASTES   RECEIVER CASTES
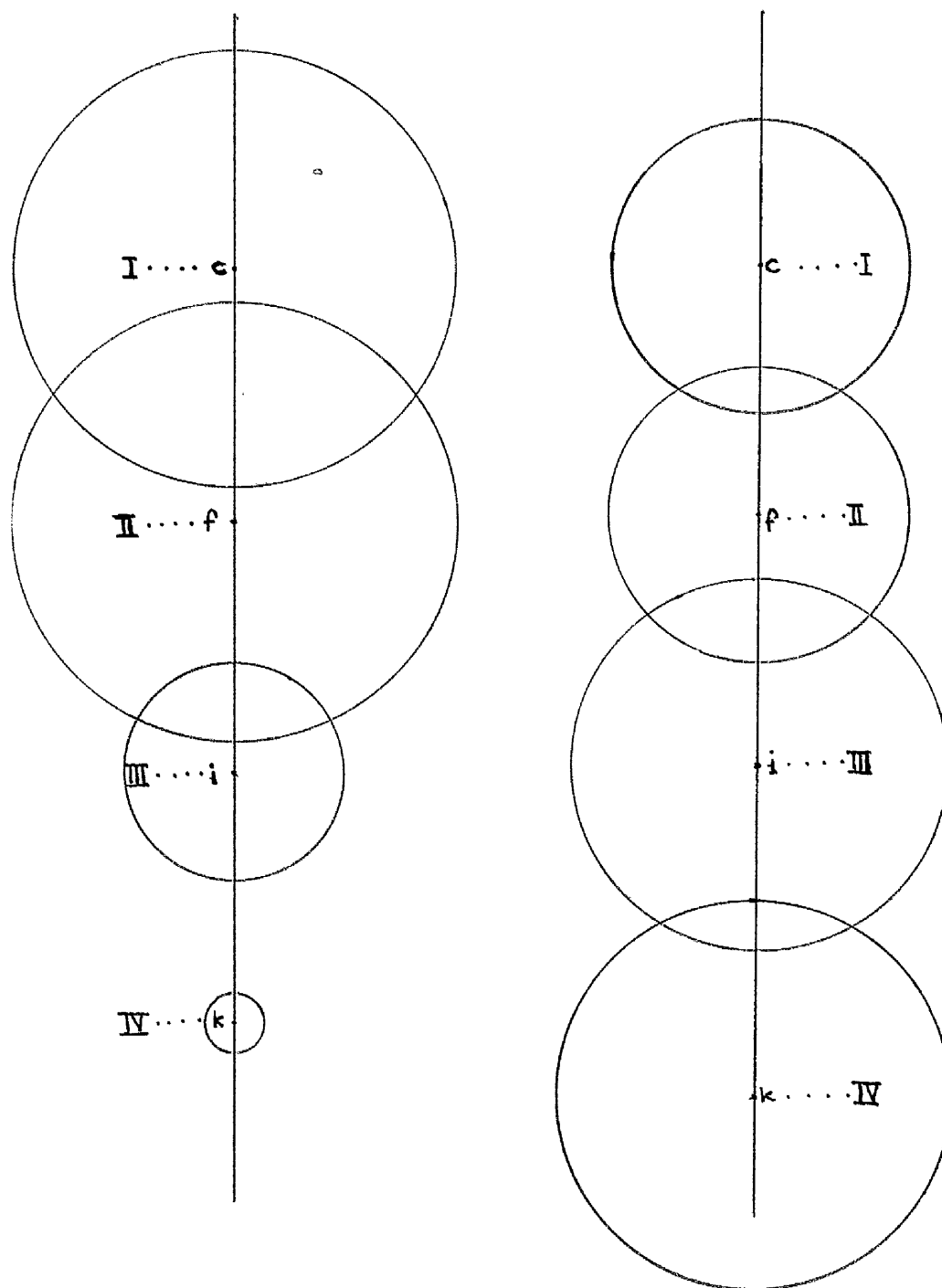
FIGURE 4

A QUANTITATIVE REPRESENTATION OF COMMENSALITY RELATIONSHIPS
IN 'JHUTHA' FOOD BETWEEN "RECEIVING" AND "GIVING" TRANSACTIONS
AMONG FOUR MAJOR CASTE GROUPINGS I II III & IV

GIVER CASTES   RECEIVER CASTES
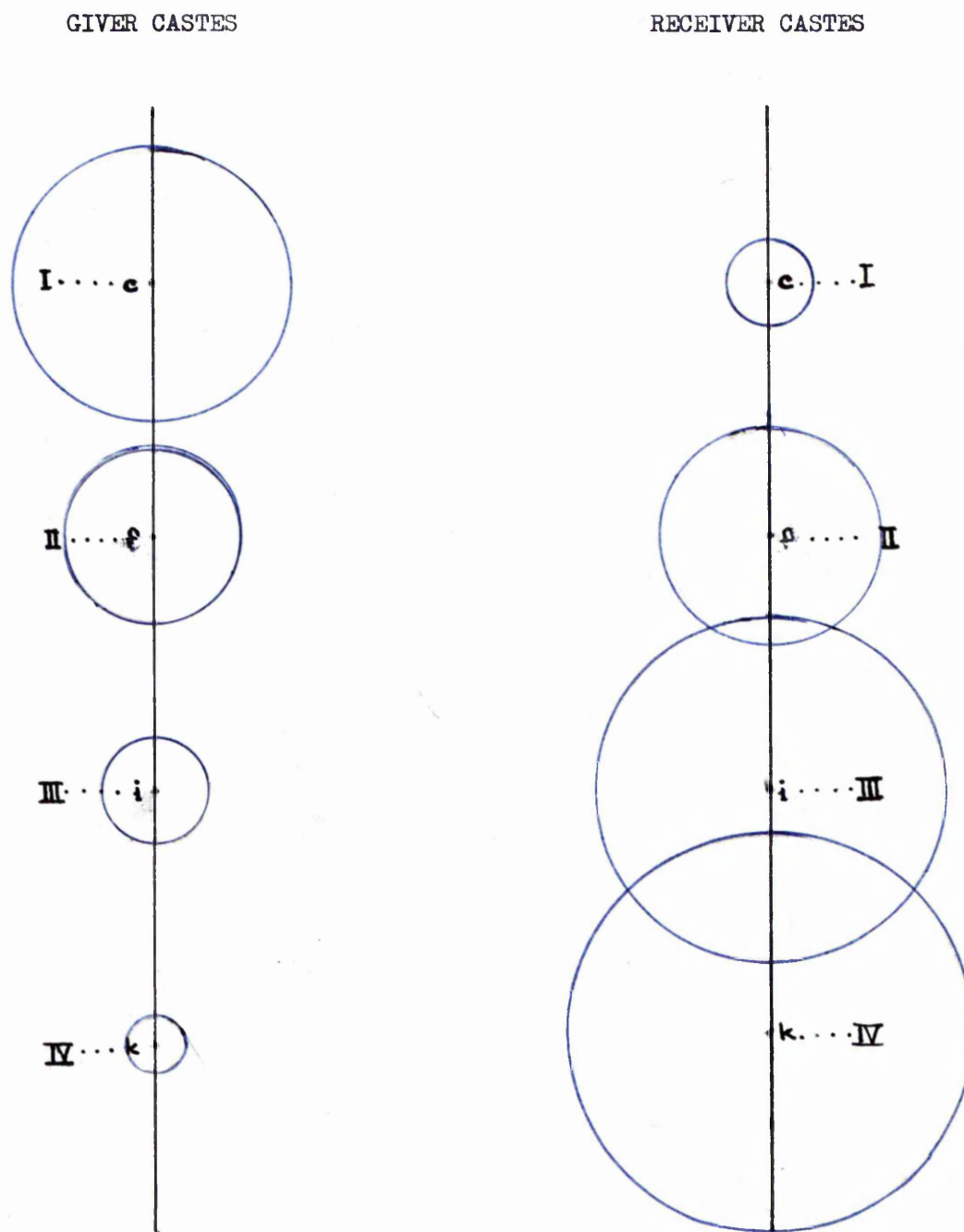
Barring those representing the extreme poles of the social scale, any feast given by a member of the intermediate castes is attended by a fair representation of all the castes. On these occasions, from the inviting of the guests to the actual eating, the rating of different castes can be seen by the priorities and importance given to each in consideration of its acknowledged ritual and social status.

On such occasions a Pundit, usually the Kul Pandit (lit. family priest) is invited, who after having decided on an auspicious date for the event is give a list of guests. This list only contains the names of those whose castes are higher than that of the host. It is their privilege to be invited by the Pandit. Guests of equivalent status and lower castes, provided they come within the clean caste bloc, are invited by the host. The untouchables are never invited unless the host happens to be one himself. The position of the Lohar here is rather ambiguous. He may or may not be invited to feasts given by members of clean castes, depending on the will of the host and his family. The highest castes seldom invite him. It is the others, members of Rajput, Khatri and Gaddi castes who do.

The food for the feast is cooked by a Bhatt Brahman. Bhatt Brahmans are a lower category of Brahmans who are professional cooks but succa food cooked by them is accepted by all, even the priestly members of the caste, by virtue of their inclusion in the highest group of clean castes. Here too, however, we find differentiation. If the food is cooked by a Gaddi Bhatt Brahman, the Desi guests of the highest categories will not accept the food, nor will the Nepali Khanka Khatris. But if it is a Desi Bhatt, then all will accept it, irrespective of their regional or caste category.

The food is cooked on a separate hearth temporarily constructed for the purpose, usually in the courtyard. If however, the host is of low

caste, separate arrangements have to be made at the house of a neighbour whose caste is suitable for the entertaining of high castes.

Finally, as the guests sit down to eat, their relative positions become most evident. The Brahmans have the privilege of occupying the mats closet to the chowka and being the first to be served. Next come the Ranas and Guleria and the Khanka Khatris. They have no pre-determined order of seating within the group, all being considered equal in status. After them sit the others, that is, the Rajputs, Khatris, the Batiades and the Gaddis, followed by the Mahajans and then the Chowdhrys, with the Gurungs usually at the end of the row. There are gaps left in between each of these groups indicating their recognition as separate "commensal groups". The Lohar, if invited, is made to sit a a slight distance from the clean castes. The Gaddi Bhatts may agree to serve him but not the Desi Bhatt. In that case the host serves him.

Untouchables are not invited at all by the high castes but they usually attend in the event of a feast. There are no arrangements for seating these people who are not permitted anywhere near the place where the high castes eat for fear of pollution and in accordance with the commensal rules. They either bring their own utensils or are given pattals (leaf-plates) into which food is dropped by the host to be carried home and eaten.

Table 3 represents the composite schematic diagram of the commensal group arranged in a hierarchy. Each caste have been given a symbol ranging from 'a' to 'l', shown alongside in the brackets. These are for use in all the tables and figures. In some cases two or more castes have the same basic symbol but have a different number as suffix. This indicates that they are all equated and may sit in the same unbroken pankti or row at the feasts and that there is no distance nor touch

TABLE 3

A SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF THE COMPOSITE CASTE HIERARCHY IN DHARNU

	DESI CASTES	NEPALI CASTES	GADHERAN CASTES
I **"TWICE-BORN" CLEAN CASTES**	Brahman Pandits a		
	Bhatt Brahmans b		
	Rajputs of Royal Extraction c	Kanka Khatris c_1	Brahman Pandits a_1
	Rajputs & Khatris d Batiade d_1		Bhatt Brahmans b_1
			Gaddis-Thakurs, Rajputs, Khatris & Kapaers d_2
II **CLEAN CASTES**	Mahajan e		
	Chowdhry f		
		Gurung g	
III **UNCLEAN CASTES**	Nai h		
	Lohar i		Baddi j
			Sippi k
IV **UNTOUCHABLE CASTES**	Chamar l		Halli l_1

pollution observed between them. The figures I, II, III, and IV denote
the blocs of castes of differing purity.

A closer examination of the association diagrams however, reveals
certain aspects of the hierarchy which are not observable in the seating
pattern of the different castes as occur at feasts, which is shown in the
composite schematic representation in Table 3, two or more castes may be
seen to be of equivalent rank but this equivalence is not necessarily
corroborated by the pattern of food transactions. The striking feature
which emerges when comparing these is that within the commensal groups
the ritual status of certain castes are deemed equal in the sense that
there is no pollution by touch or proximity but in matters of food
transactions they remain separate.

In an attempt to show the extent of this discrepancy and its
effects on the ranking, Marriot's method of caste ranking by the pattern
of food transactions[16] was attempted. He describes it as "A suitable,
more complex means of representation, already widely used and understood
in the field of Sociometry... This is a mathematical matrix of binary
numbers. Such a matrix permits a concise, orderly and exhaustive
statement of all data on dichotomous transactions among many
participants. The use of binary numbers facilitates rigourous analysis
of simple propositions and makes explicit provisions for such
mathematical manipulations of groups as may later be required....

'In these matrices, the rows represent the castes as givers and the
columns represent the same as receivers. The sequence of listing the
castes' code number along the main/diagonal is the approximate order of
ranking as subsequently determined from results of   analysis....

'The occurences and non-occurences of transactions represented by

digits and zeros in these matrices are actual behaviour for the most part and expectations of actual behaviour for the rest.

' The total number of encounters in which a caste dominates or "wins" over the other castes is the total number of digits in its row. The total number of encounters in which a caste is dominated or "loses" is the total number of digits in its column. The net rank position of each caste in each matrix is computed to the right of each matrix by subtracting each castes' total of losses from its total of wins.

'The matrix of each type of food thus yields.series of scores by which every caste may be ranked in relation to every other caste.

'The net effect of the types of food transactions upon the ranking of all the castes may be compared by inspecting their respective series of scores."

Tables 4, 5 and 6 represent the matrices of the transactions of raw food, succa food and jhutha food respectively. Table 7 shows the distribution of caste rank as contributed by the transactions in the three kinds of food. Figure 5 is a graphic representation of the caste ranks arrived at in Table 7.

Thus emerges the final picture of the hierarchy of castes, the details of which can only be seen in this 'Analyst's Model'. The results yielded by this method expose a much finer ranking of the castes, the difference in the value of each indicating its relative superiority or inferiority in the ritual hierarchy. Thus we find that with the exception of Chamars and the Hallis, whose case may be explained on economic grounds, no two castes are exactly equal in the final summing up. Even the Rajputs of Royal Extraction and the Khanka Khatris who

TABLE 4

MATRIX OF THE RAW FOOD TRANSACTIONS AMONG THE DIFFERENT CASTES OF DHARNU

		GIVERS																		Given	Received	Net
		a	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	18	18	0
		1	a_1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	18	18	0
		1	1	b	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	18	18	0
		1	1	1	b_1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	18	18	0
		1	1	1	1	c	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	18	18	0
I		1	1	1	1	1	c_1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	18	18	0
		1	1	1	1	1	1	d	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	18	18	0
		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	d_1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	18	18	0
.....		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	d_2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	18	18	0
		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	e	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	18	18	0
II		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	f	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	18	18	0
.....		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	g	1	1	1	1	1	1	18	18	0
III		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	h	1	1	1	1	1	18	18	0
.....		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	i	1	1	1	1	18	18	0
		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	j	1	1	1	18	18	0
		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	k	1	1	18	18	0
IV		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	l_1	1	18	18	0
		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	L_1	18	18	0

RECEIVERS

TABLE 5

MATRIX OF SUC̄CA FOOD TRANSACTIONS AMONG THE DIFFERENT CASTES OF DHARNU

		GIVERS		Given	Received	Net
		a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1		17	11	6
		1 a₁ 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1		17	11	6
		1 1 b 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1		17	11	6
		1 1 1 b₁ 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1		17	11	6
		1 1 1 1 c 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1		17	11	6
I		1 1 1 1 1 c₁ 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1		17	11	6
		1 1 1 1 1 1 d 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1		17	11	6
		1 1 1 1 1 1 1 d₁ 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1		17	11	6
.....		1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 d₂ 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1		17	12	5
		1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 e 1 1 1 1 1 1 1		17	11	6
II		1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 f 1 1 1 1 1 1		17	11	6
.....		1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 g 1 1 1 1 1		17	12	5
		0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 h 1 1 1 1		5	12	-7
III		0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1 0 0 1 1 i 1 1 1 1		7	14	-7
.....		0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 ? 1 j 1 1 1		4	15	-11
		0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 k 1 1		2	15	-13
IV		0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 L 1		1	17	-16
		0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1 L₁		1	17	-16

RECEIVERS

TABLE 6

MATRIX OF JHŪTHA FOOD TRANSACTIONS AMONG THE DIFFERENT CASTES OF DHARNU

	GIVERS	Given	Received	Net
	a 0 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	16	0	16
	0 a₁ 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	16	0	14
	0 0 b 0 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	14	2	12
	0 0 0 b₁ 0 0 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	12	2	10
I	0 0 0 0 c 0 1 0 0 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	10	3	7
	0 0 0 0 0 c₁ 0 0 0 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	9	3	6
	0 0 0 0 0 0 d 0 0 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	9	5	4
	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 d₁ 0 0 0 1 1 1 1 1	7	4	2
	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 d₂ 0 0 1 1 1 1 1	7	4	3
II	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 e 1 1 1 1 1 1	8	7	1
	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 f 0 1 1 1 1 1	6	8	-2
.....	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 g 1 1 1 1 1	6	10	-4
III	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 h 1 1 1 1	5	12	-7
.....	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 i 1 1 1	4	13	-9
	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1 j 1 1 1	4	14	-10
	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 k 1 1	2	15	-13
IV..	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 L 1	1	17	-16
	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1 L₁	1	17	-16

RECEIVERS

TABLE 7

DISTINCTION OF CASTE RANK CONTRIBUTED BY TRANSACTIONS IN THREE TYPES OF FOOD

(NET SCORES BY CASTE)

CASTE	RAW FOOD	SUCCA FOOD	JHUTHA FOOD	TOTAL
a	0	6	16	22
a_1	0	6	14	20
b	0	6	12	18
b_1	0	6	10	16
c	0	6	7	13
c_1	0	6	6	12
d	0	6	4	10
d_1	0	6	3	9
d_2	0	5	3	8
e	0	6	1	7
f	0	6	-2	4
g	0	5	-4	1
h	0	-7	-7	-14
i	0	-7	-9	-16
j	0	-11	-10	-21
k	0	-13	-13	-26
l	0	-16	-16	-32
l_1	0	-16	-16	-32

FIGURE 5

GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION

OF

CASTE RANKS

CONTRIBUTED BY TRANSACTIONS IN 3 TYPES

OF FOOD S

SCALE:
1:0·3cm.
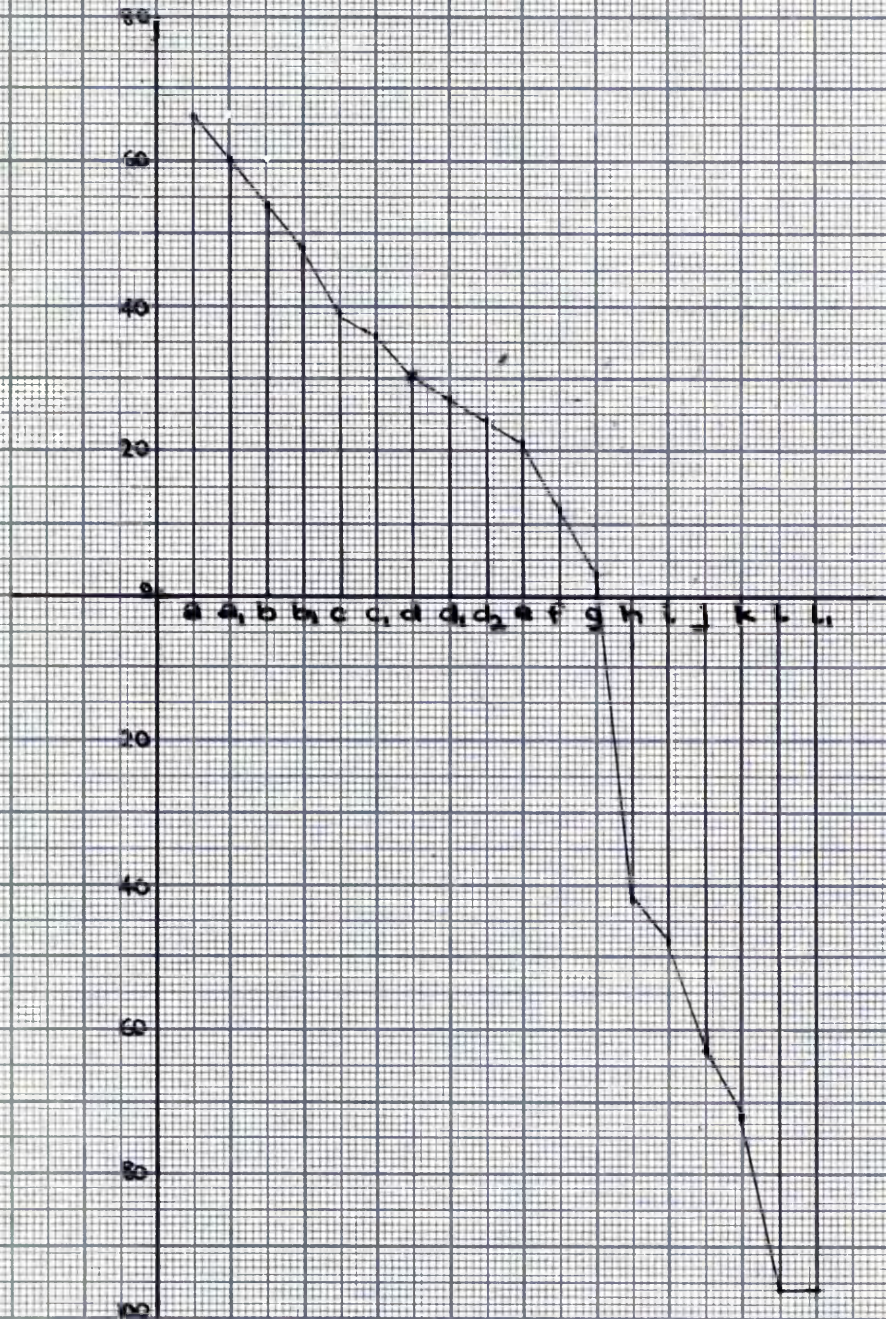
are almost identical in their ritual purity and orthodoxy, are not found
to be equal, indicating a difference in their statuses due to the
difference in their origins. The same applies to the difference between
the Desi Rajputs and Khatris, and also the Batiades and the Gaddis, both
of whom are basically Rajputs and Khatris. In the case of the Gaddis,
however, another factor comes into play. A part of this group accepts
succa food from a member of a lower caste bloc, i.e. the unclean Lohars.
Although not all the members do so, this laxity on the part of a few has
a direct bearing on the whole group's ritual status. These slight
variations which do not manifest themselves in the general ranking of the
castes, become explicit only when the entire situation is analysed. The
main attributes affecting the transactions are here identified as, place
of origin, strictness in the observance of rules governing inter-caste
transactions and manual labour on the part of the men (since except for
three highest strata, all women work in the fields).

Ritual kinship and the activities of the ritual specialists also
affect the rules governing commensal behaviour leading to modification
of the established pattern between the different castes but the
relaxations extend to the untouchable groups only during certain
ceremonial occasions. These have been discussed in greater detail in
the next chapter.

NOTATIONS OF CHAPTER III

1. There are no Gaddi Brahmans residing in Dharnu but they have been included in the discussion because of their functional relation to the village community. For details, see page .

2. The *Varna* system is the four-fold division of Hindu society with the Brahmans. The priestly *Varna* at the top, then the Kshatriyas or warriors, followed by the Vaishyas or merchants and traders and last of all by the Shudras or servants and labourers. The fifth category of people consisted of all those who were outside this system and were grouped together as Untouchables.

3. 'Twice-born' castes are those "who are entitled to undergo the *upanayana* ceremony which constitutes spiritual rebirth. Only they are entitled to study the Vedas and to the performance of Vedic rituals on certain occasions." M. N. Srinivas 1969. 'The caste system in India', *Social Inequality*, (Ed.) Andre Beteille. p.265.

4. Temporary state of pollution refers to the period of time between one's ritual defilement and to any form of "act pollution" (Orenstein 1970:116) or "relational pollution" (Ibid:116) and his return to his ordinary ritual status by virtue of the performance of certain purificatory rites or penance or the passage of a stipulated period of time.

5. Stevenson, H. N. C. 1953:45-65

6. Marriot, McKim. 1959:96

7. Ibid. pg. 92-107

    Marriot, McKim. 1968:133-172

    Mayer, Adrian C. 1956:117-144

    Mayer, Adrian C. 1960: 33-60

    Mahar, Pauline. 1959: 127-147

    and others.

8. Mayer, Adrian. C. 1960:33

9. Blunt, E.A.H   1931: 88-103
    Stevenson, H.N.C 1954 :45 - 56

10. Mayer, Adrian. C. 1960:41

11.

12. Ghurye, G.S.   1932

    Mayer, Adrian C. 1960

    Marriot, McKim   1968

13. Kane, P. V.   1941:129-130

14. For details see Ch. V pg. 83-109

15. Schwarz, A.   1945:Fig. 44-46

16. Marriot, McKim.   1968:133-172

CHAPTER IV

ASPECTS OF RITUAL KINSHIP

CHAPTER IV

ASPECTS OF RITUAL KINSHIP

Ritual kinship is an area of study which has attracted an increasing amount of attention over the last few decades. According to Ishino, "The interest in ritual kinship has probably been prompted by the change in the type of societies studied by the contemporary Anthropolgists. So long as isolated, aboriginal societies were the object of research, "biological" kinship constructs were probably adequate to describe the central aspects of their social orgainzations. But with attention being turned to more complex, yet non-industrial societies.....Anthropologists are finding that kinship is not overly significant in describing the fabric of social relationships in the societies. The manifold relationships....also include relationships that bring together strangers and other unrelated persons into close co-operative and purposive action".[1] Nevertheless, it remains true of these societies that "often the purposive action is institutionalized in a form which clearly imitates kinship relations".[2]

The use of kinship terms among members of a community does not usually indicate the existence of kinship ties with their associated rights and obligations. The term of address selected depends on sex, age and relative rank but its use is recognised as largely conventional and it is seldom translated into behaviour. This usage has been recognised by Anthropologists as Fictive kinship. On the other hand, Ritual kinship or fictive kinship with a ritual basis as the term implies, involves the conversion of non-kin relations into quasi-kinship ties. The means of establishing this tie vary but they all involve a ritual element and often a priest is asked to officiate

at the ceremony. The rituals conducted cement the relationship into a
sacramental bond.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The study of ritual kinship in rlation to caste is an area of
investigation which has so far been largely neglected. Work on this
subject in India has been mainly among tribes, detailed accounts of
which have been given by Adams (1936), Dube (1949), Bandhopadhyay (1955),
Srivastava (1960) and others. Among writers studying caste Hindus such
as Dube (1949), Marriot (1955), Cohn (1955), Lewis (1958), Freed (1963),
Mathur (1964), Bawa (1967), there have been only passing references to
this institution, for they have all focussed their attention on the
fictive usage of kinship terms. Apart from Okada's study of ritual
kinship in Nepalese society in 1957, following V. Barnouw's article in
1955, which attempted systematically to examine the details and implications
of this institution in a caste dominated environment, there has been
little detailed work in this field. The work of Rose (1910) as one of
the very early researches into this topic is laudable but it is mainly
a description of the rites involved. Of more recent attempts, Bhowmick's
study (1961) comes close to the problem but he too restricts himself to
a few aspects analogous to real kinship behaviour and, although he gives
some information on the individuals involved, he stops short of describing
its implications for inter-caste behaviour. So far, Mayer's[3] study of
ritual kinship in a village in Central India and Jay's essay[4] are
probably the most complete on this subject.

Material on ritual kinship in other societies however, is not
lacking. But in spite of the vast literature on this subject, most of
the material is so disparate that it does not lend itself easily to
generalization, and in many cases has little bearing on the Indian
material. Nevertheless, these studies carried out under different

social conditions, varying from an industrial setting in Japan[5] to rural communities in Latin America[6] do provide an understanding of the working of this complex institution in its diverse forms.

In what follows, I examine some of the comparative data on ritual kinship from three selected aspects which appear to have a particular bearing on the Indian case. The three aspects are:

(a)   The means by which the tie is established.

(b)   The comparison of ritual kinship with actual or social kinship.

(c)   The functional value of ritual kinship.

(a)   The establishment of ritual kinship:

Ritual kinship everywhere is established by a ceremony. This ceremony although varying in form, always consists of a complex of rituals highly symbolic in enactment, which closely resemble those of the rites of passage for birth and marriage. The commonest types of ritual bonds established are either ritual parenthood or ritual brotherhood and sisterhood.

In establishing the Compadrazgo relationship or ritual coparenthood in Latin America, there are many variations in the minor rituals but they all involve the participation of the principals - in this case the child, the parents and the godparents - in the ritual of Catholic Baptism, the three central elements of which were pointed out by Mintz and Wolf as being "The notion of spiritual rebirth, of sponsorship and a spiritual affinity established between the participants."[7]   The Oyabun-kobun relations consist of forming ties "patterned on the Japanese family

system: the leader becomes the ritual parent and his followers symbolic children. These children in turn, are brothers and sisters to each other."[8] The ceremony has been described by Ishino as "involving many of the expressive symbols of birth and marriage."[9] Similarly the rites of brotherhood in India and Nepal involve rituals which have been described as "reminiscent of wedding ceremonies" by Srivastava[10] in a comparative study of the different patterns of ritual friendship in Tribal India. Certain other forms of relationships are also symbolic of spiritual rebirth, such as the guru-bhai relationship where the guru or religious instructor assumes the role of the spiritual father and all his followers the ritual sibs.

These examples have a clear resemblance in their underlying principle, which is a symbolic sharing of a common 'spiritual' substance by two or more formerly unrelated persons. The models of these ceremonies are usually based on the facts of reproduction - the child being the physical product of its parents - and on the identity held to be created by intercourse and marriage (cf. the 'one flesh' principle). In the Hindu case, the model is commensal and the identity is established by the act of taking food from the hand of the ritual partner. The ceremony is usually followed by an exchange of gifts which is also associated with the other rites of passage.[11] Thereafter, the participants in the ceremonies assume the "quasi-kinship" ties whcih are said to be as real as true kinship bonds.

(b) Ritual kinship and social kinship:

Ritual kinship involves the conversion of non-kinship relations into quasi-kinship ties. It operates, therefore, on the

analogy of real kinship. Between ritual kin, as between real

kin, marriage is forbidden and sexual relations are considered

incestuous. The relationship is usually extended to the other

members of the family and appropriate kinship terms are used for

reference and address. A ritual kinsman is not addressed by name

but by a kinship term or by the local term for the ritual

relationship. In some cases these ties may be extended over

successive generations as in the _Ingzong_[12] relationships among

the Lepchas of Sikkim, the _oyabunkobun_ system and co-parenthood

in Balkan communities.[13] Usually, however, they involve a re-

establishing ceremony with each successive generation.

Because of its religious basis ritual kinship has often

been described as the most sacred of all ties[14] and even more

binding than blood relationships. The bond is considered

indissoluble. The partners are often expressly forbidden to

quarrel and are under an obligation to assist each other in every

way. Okada[15] states "Ritual brothers are very definitely obligated

to help each other voluntarily and in every way they can, particular-

ly in times of crisis, danger or financial stress." This help

usually takes the form of financial assistance and support in

disputes.

In practice, however, the significance attached to the

bond varies greatly. In cases where a ritual kinsman is required

in order to fulfil some office at a ceremony, as in Hindu

weddings, the tie may lapse almost as soon as it is made and

even the name of the ritual partner is forgotten. But where the

relationship continues to bring positive advantages to one or

both partners, there is a strong motive for keeping it in being

and scrupulously honouring its observances. In this respect it

contrasts with kinship obligations which cannot ordinarily be evaded and its fictive nature becomes apparent.

The nature and obligation of ritual ties are moral rather than jural. Ritual kinship involves no legal change of status and thus ritual kinsmen contract only the obligations of real kinsmen without the legal rights. Thus a man may be under an obligation to look after the family of his deceased ritual brother or compadre or even ritual son as well as to observe mourning for him, but he will not be ritually polluted by his death nor will he have claim to the inheritance. In rare cases, a ritual parent may claim a share in the property of the dead parent as a financial aid for bearing the child's expenses but this land has to be made over to the child once it comes of age.[16]

(c)   The function of ritual kinship:

The institution of ritual kinship operates at two distinct levels: one is the "individual" level, which contains both manifest and latent functions, and the other is the "social" level, where the institution operates to produce cohesion within the society by forming a network of quasi-kihship relationships.

Ostensively, the forms of ritual kinship vary in different societies. This has been attributed to the extreme flexibility of the institution which can mould itself to any social condition. In the compadrazgo system a ritual kin is established to ensure the ritual well-being of the child, while in the ritual brotherhood or sisterhood of Nepal and India, warm interpersonal ties are formulised into closer relationships. In Japan the oyabun-kobun system bring unrelated individuals into a ritual family which operates as a group for purposive action. But this alone does

not present the totality of the phenomenon. Okada observes that ritual brotherhood or sisterhood "sanctioned by religion"[17] functions as a social mechanism for exchanging mutual aid at times of stress of any kind, since one of the main obligations contracted by the ceremony is to provide assistance at all times. Dube notes that "the tradition of friendship established by parents has to be carried further by the children and besides kinsmen and affines, a new category of relationship is also established from whom help at occasions of need can be depended upon."[18] This feature appears to be common to all types of ritual kinship. Thus the institution serves as a mechanism for providing security on an individual level.

On the wider social level, it has been observed that by bringing different unrelated individuals and families into close relationships ritual kinship functions to promote cohesion in the community. This may be done irrespective of social barriers because the religious nature of the institution enables it to transcend customary norms. Thus in many homogeneous undifferentiated communities these ties serve to create cohesion, co-operation and solidarity between kin groups, while in a stratified society, in addition to horizontal solidarity it may also function to produce vertical solidarity by cross-cutting alliances. Thus Okada[19] observes that ritual brotherhood in Nepal "serves as an important cohesive factor in a society marked by ethnic and linguistic diversity." Similarly, Dube[20] studying the Indian material notes that "Both primities as well as the Hindu castes recognise and enter into various types of ritual friendships. In the social life of the local groups and village communities these friendships have a special significance, for they bring together not only unrelated families within the same tribes and castes, but through

them, close inter-tribal and inter-caste contacts are made possible."

Paul[21] discussing ritual co-parenthood makes this point most clearly.

He states, "Unlike the involuntary ties of kinship those of ritual

sponsorship are formed on the basis of choice. This enables god-

parenthood to serve as the social link connecting divergent income

groups, disparate social strata, and separate localities. Affinity too

may cut across class and locality through the practice of hypergamy

and intermarriage. But the frequency with which such irregular forms

of marriage occur throughout the world is sharply limited by strong

social pressures operating to keep the unions within the class or

community. This is understandable in view of the fact that marriage is

the means by which the in-group perpetuates itself. Because no such

considerations of social recruitment impede the formation of god-parent

bonds between persons of different social strata, god-parenthood more

readily serves as a mechanism for intergroup integration." At the

social level this appears to be the chief function of this institution.

Paradoxically, the utility of the bond derives largely from its fictive

nature. It can be used freely because it does not involve the binding

obligations and commitments associated with kinship and affinity.

In addition to these two aspects, there is yet another aspect of

ritual kinship which may be manifest or heavily disguised by the

ostensive rituals. This is the "manipulative" aspect. Manipulation

implies that the institution is used for serving ends other than those

which are expressed ritually or socially.

In theory, the choice of partner is determined by warm interpersonal

ties which are formalised by the ceremony into a closer relationship.

But in fact, the choice is often made on a different basis and used for

different ends. This is most clear in the oyabun-kobun relations where

ties of ritual kinship are generally established between people engaged in a common activity as an "expressive organization ..... (which) seems to be designed to take care of the so-called 'human-side' of occupational or purposive relationships"[22] In practice, however, the relationships tend to be "used" by "'labour bosses' ..... as a means of exploitation of the workers"[23] in terms of underpayment, etc. The workers are not free to complain because of their relationship as ritual sons of the 'boss'. In situations where the relationships are established on the basis of natural affinity between the partners, there too one finds different forms of manipulation. The most common is the attempt to establish links with the members of a higher socio-economic status, which brings not only material advantages but also the prestige of an influential connection. On the other hand, one may choose a partner from a lower stratum for political advantage or, as has been observed by Okada[24], for avoiding the effects of a bad horoscope. In these cases the initiator of the relationship is usually the manipulator. the instituion, therefore, is capable of serving a wide variety of ends according to the social context.

RITUAL KINSHIP IN DHARNU

Ritual kinship in Dharnu falls into two main categories. The terms employed for each are different and have different social connotations. the two categories are as follows:

1) Godh-lena or Ritual Adoption:

Godh-lena, which literally means taking into the lap, is independent of legal adoption but is considered as binding by the villagers. Even when a child is legally adopted (of which there are no cases in this village), a priest is called to perform this rite, which resembles the rites of marriage and birth. Agni, the fire god, is the chief witness to the ceremonial 'taking into the lap' of the child by the parents with

the priest as the ritual mediator. This is done to give ritual
sanction to the new kinship bond and to sanctify it. The adopted child
thus becomes a succesor to the family name, caste and property.

This form of kinship, though essentially a ritual relationship, is
not viewed thus by the people. The rite is considered to effect a
substantive change in the adopted child so that he becomes as truly
a member of his adoptive family as if born into it. In such a situation,
all barriers are dropped since the child is now accepted as a full
caste-member and may participate in all the activities of his new caste
and family.

In Dharnu there are only two cases of adoption. One concerned a
child adopted by a Maha-Brahman. He had arrived there as a lost child
and had been taken in by the Brahman as a son, even though nothing about
his background was known. He was readily accepted by the villagers and
on the death of his adopted parent he took over his occupation of
performing the last rites in the cremation grounds which is the work
traditionally associated with this caste.

The only other recorded case of godh-lena in this village is that
of a childless Chowdhry couple who adopted their niece. This girl has been
recently married and it is interesting to note that the gotras of both
her real, as well as adopted parents, were avoided in the selection of
her groom.

Ritual adoption is also practised in another form, which may be
seen as symbolic adoption, rather than ritual adoption. Mothers who
have had a number of miscarriages or whose previous babies have not
survived infancy, symbolically throw away their new-born baby by placing

it in a basket in which rubbish is carried. A low caste woman who has
had better luck with her children, usually of Chamar caste, picks it up
and claims it as her own, thus passing to it her own good luck. The real
mother then buys this baby, which is now considered the child of the
Chamar woman, for a previously agreed sum of money. Since it is no
longer 'one of her own', it is now believed to be immune to her misfortune.
Often the baby is also weighed against old shoes or rubbish to symbolize
to the supernatural powers, or to Yama, the god of death, that the child
is worth nothingand therefore not worth taking, or it may be made
imperfect by piercing its ear-lobes. Sometimes anklets made from
prisoners' shackles are also tied to the baby to imprison it on earth.

Since the child comes back to its real mother, its caste does not
change. In fact, at no point of this ritualized enactment does any
alteration in caste identity or status take place. Neither does
any pollution attach to the individuals who take part in the ceremony,
despite contact with an Untouchable, except that the child is bathed
afterwards.

The presence of a priest is not required for this and no religious
rites are performed. Thus, even though the generic term godh-lena is
employed here, it can only be seen as ritualistic in so far as a definite
procedure of symbolic actions are followed to remove or avert an evil
fate. The services of an Untouchable are used, less because of her caste
than because only the poorest will agree to sell services of this nature
involving the picking up of apparent garbage and association with bad luck.

2) Dharam-Lagana or Ritual Kinship:-

This is the recognised pattern of forming ritual kinship. The
main element of this rite consists of sipping three handfuls of water

from the palm of the ritual partner and accepting three mouthfuls of sweets from his hand. This is done by each in turn. It symbolises the acceptance of the partner, at least in principle, into one's own intimate commensal group within which even water is not polluted by touch. Then a tika, an auspicious mark, is applied on the forehead of the new kin and a few gifts are exchanged, their value depending on the occasion on which the relationship is formed, as well as the social and economic status of the individuals concerned. The presence of a priest is not considered essential for cementing this bond: the fact that it is carried out in the name of dharam renders it sufficiently sanctified.

The choice of partner is generally determined by personal preference. The tie varies from what may be seen as ritualised friendship to the simulation of real kinship behaviour. In all the cases, however, the ritual kin has no legal rights as no change of social status is effected, but only the social and moral obligations contracted at the ceremony. These usually involve reciprocal obligations and rights, especially at the time of any crisis, economic or otherwise. The extent of rights naturally depends on the closeness of the relationship, so the motive for maintaining these ties is not always entirely disinterested. Although in theory pollution barriers between ritual kinsmen of different castes no longer have any significance and ritual restrictions on inter-caste behaviour such as those on commensality, direct or indirect contact, and so on, become invalid or greatly modified, in fact, factors such as caste, social status, etc., are still considered significant, especially when the distance between the two is great. Moreover, even when caste barriers are dropped between the ritual partners, they continue to apply in relationships with other members of the caste. Thus at feasts and other ritualised ceremonies, although the lower caste partner may be acceptable to his ritual kin, he will still be polluting to the other members of the higher caste. As a result, interaction between ritual

kin is usually restricted to certain festivals, family celebrations and occasional visits.

Ritual kinship is always established on an auspicious day or occasion. These are certain ceremonies which require the offices of a ritual kinsman who is initiated for the purpose. The main occasions of Dharam-lagana in Dharnu are at the kangan removing ceremony (observed by all groups except the Nepalis) which is initiated by a newly-wed couple and at the mundan of a child by its mother. Ritual kinship is also established between fellow pilgrims on reaching their destination, of the festivals of Diwali and Auria or on any auspicious day for those who are desirous of establishing such a relationship. A mother whose child cuts its upper teeth first may also resort to ritual kinship in order to avert the evil consequences associated with this event. The qualitative nature of the ties established on these different occasions tends to vary. A more detailed discussion of each is therefore given below.

Kangan - Kinship:

At the kangan removing ceremony, the kangans or pieces of red handspun cotton threads on the wrists of the bridal couple have to be opened when the bride crosses the threshold of her father-in-law's house. These kangans are tied onto the wrists before the actual marriage rites by the respective family priests, as a mark of the temporarily sacred status of the couple taking part in the sacred rituals. Two persons, who may be of either sex, are chosen from among the circle of close friends of the family beforehand, to take part in the ceremony. The choice is traditionally made by older relatives of the groom and sometimes nowadays by the couple themselves, but a spontaneous, on the spot, choice is not unknown. The chosen two untie the knots of the kangans from the

wrists of the newly-wed couple and lay them on an _anar_ branch which
is placed in an earthen pot full of water. Then the bride with her
partner and the groom with his, circumambulate this pot thrice. This
is followed by the ritual exchange of water, sweetmeats and _tika_. Gifts
are usually exchanged later, which on this occasion are three pieces of
cloth or clothing - usually a _salwar_, _kameez_ and _orni_ for a woman or a
pajama, shirt and _pagri_ for a man, some money, usually the auspicious
sum of _sawa rupaiya_ (Rs. 1.25), and some sweets. On this occasion the
priest is usually present but he does not perform any specific office.

The _kangan_ _bhais_ or _bahins_ thus formed are, in principle, considered
to be very close. In reality, few of these relationships last unless
contracted between close friends. Often the bride cannot even remember
her _kangan_ kin except as another new face at the wedding, and sometimes
not even that because of the heavy veil she wears. _Kangan_ kin resident
outside the village are remembered only on very special occasions, such
as marriages in the family, provided they live within inviting distance.
The relationship is usually confined to the bride and groom and does not
extend to the other members of the family.

Although ritual kin are invited to family celebrations whenever
situations allow, their acceptance, as well as their participation, is
dependent on their ritual and social status. The main reason for this
is that in cases of inter-caste ritual kinship, while the host may and
often does realize his kinship ties and obligations, the other members of
his caste will not receive his ritual kin into their ritual or commensal
group. Inter-caste kinship alliances are not uncommon and some of the
older people maintained that they were preferable because they established
a good relationship between people ordinarily separated. That is, it
was a conscious form of promoting vertical solidarity. Amongst the

the younger people, it is usually simply a question of chosing a
friend, irrespective of caste.

The kangan relations in Dharnu are shown in Table 8 in the form
of a matrix. The columns represent the castes as 'initiators' and
the rows as the 'acceptors'. Each number denotes the number of relations
established. There are only a few links established between very high
and very low castes. These are usually initiated by the latter in order
to form high connections and such cases are rare. Although there is
no ritual bar to such connections, people usually prefer not to venture too
far from their own status and this attitude is clearly evidenced in the
table. The majority confine their relations to their own or adjacent
strata. The regional groupings do not usually play an important role but
the barriers between castes' blocs are seldom broken by the clean castes.
It is improper to refuse an offer of ritual kinship, even from a low
caste, but in such cases all the rituals are not performed. The more
conservative among the high castes often refuse the exchange of water and
sweets even though theoretically this is not polluting being in the name
of dharam. Even when the whole ritual is enacted at the ceremony, in none
of the inter-caste bloc relationships did the higher castes accept jhuta
food from his ritual partner but most of them extended the relationship
to accepting succa food.

Dharam-lagana at Mundan:

It is the custom among the women of Gadheran community to establish
ties of ritual kinship at the time of mundan, the first hair cutting
ceremony of a child. The mother asks a man or woman of her choice to cut
the hair of her child, which is later taken to a temple. This person
is then accepted as a dharam bhai or bahin by the exchange of water, sweets

MATRIX SHOWING KANGAN KINSHIP TIES ESTABLISHED BETWEEN DIFFERENT CASTES IN DHARNU

TABLE 8

		a	a₁	b	b₁	c	c₁	d	d₁	d₂	(w)	e	f	g	(x)	h	i	(y)	j	k	l	l₁	(z)	D.R.
	a	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	b	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	0	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—
	b₁	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	0	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—
I	c	0	x	x	x	2	—	—	—	—	0	x	—	—	x	—	—	x	—	x	x	—	—	2
	c₁	0	x	x	x	x	2	—	—	—	0	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	d	0	x	x	x	x	x	2	1	—	0	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	0
	d₁	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	7	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
	d₂	3	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	15	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	1(2)	6
II	e	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	f	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	g	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
III	h	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	i	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	j	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	0
IV	k	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2(1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	24	1
	l	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	l₁	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1

and _tika_. The pattern is similar to the _kangan_ kinship but the gifts
exchanged are often less elaborate.

The choice of kin is once again unrestricted and, although it is
not a custom of other peoples in the village, they usually agree to
participate if invited. Table 10 following the same manner of representation
as for _kangan_ kinship, shows that the choice of the partner in this case
is much more flexible compared to the choice of _kangan_ kin. It is
usually however more a matter of choosing someone who is a friend, or
an easily available neighbour rather than a systematic bridging of the
gap. This ceremony is not as formal as the previous ceremony, nor as
socially restricted in its representation of guests. Low castes in
consequence thus often do make a deliberate attempt at bridging social
divisions by exploiting the fact that it is considered improper to
refuse a proposal of ritual kinship. From this they gain status and
they also profit from the exchange of gifts as higher castes are expected
to give articles of greater value. Unwilling high castes may thwart such
schemes by feigning last minute indisposition. I witnessed the case of
a young daughter of a Nepali Khanka Khatri who was torn between the
embarrassment of refusing a very determined Sippi woman and her family's
indignant displeasure at the very idea. She finally solved the dilemma by
following the advice of another high caste friend and sending a message to
plead indisposition on the appointed day. In general, however, the people
of Gadheran, some of whom still lead a semi-nomadic existence, tend to be
flexible in their ritual observances and the higher caste members do
not seem to object to extablishing kinship ties with their neighbours
irrespective of caste, since no pollution is contacted at the ceremony
itself and their associations later seldom involve very close commensal
relations.

Except on these two occasions, few relationships of ritual kinships are established. The people of Dharnu are not very prosperous and seldom go to any distant places except for work. Pilgrimages are rare. There are only three cases of _Tirath_ kin, that is ritual kin made at the place of pilgrimage by sipping holy water together. One of these cuts the caste bloc barrier but the choice was restricted to the only other person who happened to be present. In the second case kinship was established at a sacred lake between two women, neither of whom had any close kin living nearby. It is quite acceptable for a man or woman to make a _dharam_ _bhai_ or _bahin_ when they have none of their own. Another reason for establishing a _dharam ka rista_ or ritual relation is when a woman whose sister, real or ritual, lives far away and she needs a partner of equivalent status to exchange ritual offer_ings of auspicious gifts of _suhag_ (_parandi_ or tassels for the hair, vermilion for the _tika_, glass bangles, etc.) on Diwali and Auria, a festival celebrated on the third day after Karwa Chowth by all married women, who are forbidden to break their fast until they have exchanged _prasad_ of _succa_ food with someone in the evening. These are represented in Table 10.

In all the situations discussed, ritual kinship is usually established between partners of similar status. People say it is no use having kin if it involves too many restraints, an observation that indicates the general attitude towards ritual kinsmen. The kinship ceremony may be carried out between any two like-minded people without incurring pollution since the rituals are performed in the name of _dharam_, but it does not mean that their relationship is free from restraints thereafter. If one of the partners is of lower caste, some of the ritual barriers may be lowered but the more important ones which pertain to maintaining ritual status, mainly acceptance of _jhutha_ food, remain.

MATRIX SHOWING RITUAL KINSHIP TIES ESTABLISHED AT __MUNDAN__ BETWEEN DIFFERENT CASTES IN DHARNU

__TABLE 9__

	a	a₁	b	b₁	c	c₁	d	d₁	d₂ (w)	e	f	g (x)	h	i (y)	j	k	l	l₁ (z)	D.R.S
a₁	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
b₁	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
I d₂	60	0	0	0	0	0	21	5	3	0	1	1	2	0	0	6	5	1	5
.... j	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3(1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	3
k	0	0	0	0	0	?	0	1(2)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
l₁	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3

TABLE 10

MATRIX SHOWING RITUAL KINSHIP TIES ESTABLISHED BETWEEN DIFFERENT CASTES IN DHARNU

		a	a_1	b	b_1	c	c_1	d	d_1	d_2	(w)	e	f	g	(x)	h	i	(y)	j	k	l	l_1
Tirath	d_1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	d_2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Diwali &	c	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Auria	d_1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No Special Occasion	d_2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

In this village, _dharam lagana_, or establishing a ritual relationship, operates chiefly as a mechanism for reinforcing or creating ties of affection and friendship, rather than for entering into kinship-type bonds with their associated obligations and duties. The relationship has the ephemeral nature of friendship rather than the stability of a kinship link and tends to lapse with distance and time. If a ritual partner goes to live elsewhere, another may be taken in his place, new ties replacing the old; on the death of a ritual kinsman all connection with his kindred is severed.

There is, however, one form of ritual relationship which is comparable to kinship ties rather than to ritualized friendship expressed in kinship terms. This occurs when a child cuts his upper teeth before his lower, an event considered to portend some calamity for the child's maternal uncle. In this crisis which is considered a matter of life and death, the only available solution is to transfer the bad luck since it is believed that luck, like curses, though irretractable, is transferable by magico-religious means onto a substitute of equivalent status. The mother of the child adopts a man of untouchable caste as her brother in the conventional mode of establishing ritual kinship and reinforces his relation with the child by dressing it in blue clothes provided by the adopted brother and by handing the child over to him. This man takes the child on his lap and with a _mool_, a short iron rod used by cobblers, or with an iron pestle used for husking grain, taps the offending teeth seven times, thus symbolically destroying them and also their curse.

This relationship is considered very important as it is believed that there is no time limit to the curse, the evil effects of which are transferred to the adopted brother only as long as the relationship is maintained. Thus the family maintains close ties with the ritual maternal uncle and attempts to duplicate with him as far as possible their

transactions with the real maternal uncle of the child. They invite

him to all family celebrations at which he is served food to eat in the

house instead of taking it to his own home. He sits, however, separately

from the other quests who consider contact with him as polluting. The

low caste brother in this case does not invite his high caste kin to his

house nor offer him food, although he maintains the tie by visiting and

bringing gifts for his ritual nephew occasionally.

The ritual maternal uncle is taken from the lowest of the untouchables -

the Chamars. It would be impossible for the family to approach an

acquaintance at their own level to undertake such a dangerous role

without incurring a social rebuff. But the Chamars, especially those

resident in this village, are in no position, socially or economically,

to offend the high castes. During the 'black month' or _kala mahina,_

when the torrential monsoon rains prevent their going out to seek labour

and the grain of their previous harvest is exhausted, it is the contributions

of food from the better-off high castes that keep them alive. They are

therefore obliged to assume this role if requested and usually do so

readily. It brings material benefit, especially as the other party is in

a weak bargaining position and cannot afford to offend them. In addition

to this they say they do not really believe that the curse is transferred

as they have seldom noticed any change in their luck following the rite.

This statement is corraborated by the fact that they willingly undertake

this office for one of their own group where the material gains are

negligible. They apparently believe that the evil is destroyed with

the symbolic destruction of the teeth and that the ritual tie is

merely a gesture of good will. Nevertheless, the practice persists

as a kind of insurance for the upper castes unwilling to gamble with fate.

From the data it is clear that ritual kinship is manipulated by

by both higher and lower castes but the motives for their actions are quite different. This difference may be correlated with their social "need" which, in turn, is reflected in their economic and ritual status. The lower castes usually attempt to form advantageous connections with higher castes or agree to any proposals from above for reasons of material gain. The higher castes, on the other hand, who are economically, as well as socially more secure, require low caste connections to avert the calamities of fate which cannot be resolved from within their own stratum.

In so far as ritual kinship provides an institutionalized mechanism for crossing caste barriers, it might appear that it operates chiefly to the advantage of the lower castes. This is not the case. In general inter-caste barriers are stringently enforced by the higher castes for it is in their interest to do so. Ritual kinship is one means of relaxing these barriers. But the degree of relaxation is limited by the higher castes, for a rigidly stratified society can remain so as long as the barriers can be seen to be maintained.

It is not considered proper to refuse an offer of ritual kinship. When, therefore, a man of low caste attempts to form a link with a high caste man, the latter is bound to accept. He often, however, refuses to perform all the commensal rites that are part of the ceremony of establishment and thus continues to maintain the pollution barrier between them. Even when the whole ritual is enacted, commensal barriers may be waived only at the time of the ceremony and later resumed. On the other hand, when the man of high caste initiates the relationship and wishes to maintain it for his own ends (as in the case of a woman transferring the bad luck of her child to an Untouchable), not only is the entire ritual carried out in detail but commensal barriers are permanently relaxed.

This point is clearly evidenced in three tables which show the
occasion on which the caste bloc barriers have been crossed, (shown in the tables in brackets) the
nature of the rituals undergone and the extent to which the ideal pattern
is maintained. The tendency on the whole, is to form linkages within
the bloc as far as possible. Exact equivalents in terms of ethnic
identity and caste are not considered necessary. But widely disparate
alliances, which indeed are very few, invariable have some special aspect,
either in terms of incomplete ritual establishment or of their special
advantages for the upper caste.

The upper castes thus appear to be the chief manipulators of this
institution for it is they who usually control the movements of the
system, although the lower castes, who have a bargaining power if the
approach comes from above, manage to claim a few fringe benefits.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1. Ishino, I.   1953:695

2. Ibid.

3. Mayer, A. C.   1960: 139-146

4. Jay, E.   1973

5. Ishino, I.   1953

6. Mintz, S. W. & E. R.
        Wolf   1950

    Foster, G. M.   1953

    Goddy, E. N.   1970

    Davila, M.   1971

7. Mintz, S. W. & E. R.
        Wolf   1950

8. Ishino, I.   1953:696

9. Ibid:

10. Srivastava,   1960:241

11. Gennep Van   1960:3

12. Okada, F. E.   1957:221

13. Hammel, E. A.   (1968) quoted by E.N. Goody 1970:344

14. Dube, S. C.   1949

    Mintz, S. W. & E.R.
      Wolf   1950

    Ishino, I.   1953

    Okada, F.   1957

    Davila, M.   1971

15. Okada, F.   1957:217

16. Wisdom   (1940) quoted by S.W. Mintz and E.R. Wolf
                        1950:357

17. Okada, F. E.   1957:212

18. Dube, S. C.   1949:102

19. Okada, F. E.   1957:212

20. Dube, S. C.   1949:98

21. Mintz, S. W. & E. R.
      Wolf   1950:357-358

22. Ishino, I.   1957:704

23. Ibid p. 699

24. Okada, F. E.   1957:214

CHAPTER V

SPIRIT POSSESSION AMONG RITUAL SPECIALISTS

CHAPTER V

SPIRIT POSSESSION AMONG RITUAL SPECIALISTS

"Spirit possession" is a common occurence in all the areas surrounding Dharnu. It is recognised in a person when his own identity is suddenly replaced by a completely alien identity for a temporary period during which he behaves in a manner at variance with his normal conscious behaviour. This "altered state of consciousness on the part of an individual as a result of what is perceived or believed to be the incorporation of an alien form with vital and spiritual attributes, e.g. the spirit of a super-human form such as a witch, sorcerer, god, goddess or other religious divinity" has been defined as spirit possession.

Three types of spirit possession can be identified in Dharnu. Borrowing the terms put forward by R. Jones[2] these are as follows:

a) Peripheral possession

b) Oracular possession

c) Tulelary possession

Peripheral possession is probably better described as spirit intrusion. it afflicts people who are believed to have been bewitched by some evil spirit or an unpropitiated god. Possession in these cases may occur at any time or place and is completely uncontrolled. This phenomenon has been extensively studied by anthropologists and others and its social implications have been described by Lewis[3] as "oblique aggressive strategy". According to him, spirit possession provides a means by which individuals suffering from some form of social deprivation may gain access to goods or rewards which are ordinarily denied to them. He maintains[4]: "Those men and women who experience these afflictions do so regularly in situations of stress and conflict with their superiors, and, in the attention and respect which they temporarily attract, influence their masters. Thus adversity is turned into advantage."

This aptly describes each of the cases listed below, which have been directly recorded from the patients who were taken to certain ritual specialists for cure.

1.   Raji 22 years Caste Gaddi

She had been married at the age of 16 years. From the start her mother-in-law made her do all the house-work and constantly found fault with her. This went on for three years without any protest from Raji even though the harsh treatment of her mother-in-law progressively grew worse. Suddenly she become quite 'insane'. She cut off her hair and began smoking and drinking. At times she had strange fits when she would laugh 'madly'. One day she suddenly flung off all her clothes and lay down in the middle of the road. At this point Cela was consulted.

His diagnosis was that someone quite close (could imply vicinity or a relation) had out of jealousy had her bewitched in order to wreck her home. A very stubborn spirit had been employed which required a long process of exorcism.

Since then her position in her husband's home improved considerably. No accusations had been made but most people had known of her previous problems and viewed the mother-in-law with suspicion.

2.   Radha 52 years Khatri

She came to settle in this village only after the retirement of her husband from the army. As an outsider who had always lived in cities she found the life here very strange. Suddenly and unaccountably she fell ill. She could not eat, drink or move and began to dry up like a stick. Medical treatment brought no relief, in fact it seemed to worsen her condition. At this stage one of the hospital attendants of Dharamsala suggested the name of a powerful Cela practising nearby.

After a long treatment which lasted almost a week, he found that she had been 'fed' a bone of a corpse which was causing her to dry up by someone close to her (<u>pas</u> <u>ka</u> <u>koi</u>) for it is usually one's own relative who burn (<u>jalte</u>, with envy) at one's good fortune.

Since then she has avoided associating with her neighbours as well as with her husband's relatives who live in a nearby village in spite of all the attention they gave her during her illness.

3.   Mira 13 years Rajput

She lives in a large joint family which includes her aged parents, five brothers and three sisters-in-law, as well as some nephews and nieces.   As the youngest she is always being made to fetch and carry and her sisters-in-law do not treat her well.

Of late she suddenly became prone to fits of possession when she would say nothing but make strange noises.   Her mother became very worried and took her to a ritual specialist for treatment.

Within a very short time the spirit spoke.   It had been sent by one of the victim's own people (<u>apna</u> <u>koi</u>) due to reasons undisclosed. It finally agreed to release its victim but on condition that some special rituals were performed at a distant place and certain offerings made in exchange for the victim's freedom.

These are only a few of the numerous cases that are regularly brought for treatment.   All three of these involve women and although men are also subject to possession of this kind the incidence among women is much greater. This fact may be explained according to Harper's suggestion based on similar observations in a south Indian community, that these possessions may be seen as "individual problem solving possessions"[5] by means of which stresses resulting from uncomfortable familial conditions may be reduced.   A person in such a

situation is not held responsible for her actions, instead it is considered to be symbolic of her defenceless position. In this way she not only gains preferential treatment even though temporarily, but both she as well as the others are given another change "to attempt adaptation to the situation"[6].

This form of spirit-possession, although it provides for the expression of personal conflict along culturally approved channels, does not significantly affect relations with the wider society. It leads neither to a change of status nor material gain, both of which may be affected by the other two categories of possession.

Oracular possession and Tutelary possession are both controlled forms of possession and usually occur in people who eventually become ritual specialists. The former occurs in individuals whom "a divinity has chosen as an embodiment. He goes into a trance at certain times and the worshippers may directly question the god who speaks through his mouth"[7]. While the latter occurs in those who by specialized knowledge gain control over a spirit whom they may summon to possess them. In Dharnu, the specalists of the former category are called Bhaktas and those of the latter are called Celas.

BHAKTAS

The Bhaktas are people who at some stage of life have been 'approached' by a Devi[8] (Devi ne darshan di), who let it be known to them that she requires their services to help the people. By speaking through their lips and acting through their hands, she will ease the people's problems and lessen their sorrows. While this message is conveyed to the 'chosen' person, he is possessed by the Devi. This state is recognised by the convulsive trembling and shaking of the body and rolling of the head and the unnatural tone of voice, in which the Devi speaks through his lips revealing her identity and

giving her message. When a man is repeatedly subject to possession or
Khel chadna he becomes recognised as a chosen medium of expression by the
Devi.

According to the local people, the Devi is almost always one of the
forms or rupa of the Goddess Durga or Kali, although occasionally a Devta
such as Shiva or one of the Nag gods is also known to possess a person.
Once the identity of the divinity becomes established, the person blessed
with this gift becomes the Bhakta of that Devi or Devta. He then proceeds
to erect a special prayer chamber, complete with an altar and an image of
his 'possessor' or Ist, and begins to devote a substantial amount of time
to prayers and holy rituals, in order to make himself worthy of such an
honour.

Once he is ready, the 'possessions' become more frequent and people
begin to approach the new Bhakta, first to satisfy their own curiosity
and then to bring their queries and problems. Thus begin the seance or
puchhan sessions.

The Devi is first invoked by the Bhakta to take possession of his body
as he sits on a special seat next to the Devi's altar. His dress may consist
of ordinary clean clothes or a special suit of garments which are worn only
for this purpose. The congregation of devotees help to induce the presence
of the Devi by singing bhajans dedicated to her. Her gradual descent into
her medium is marked by falling into trance and contortions of the body.
At first the medium begins to trembe and yawn repeatedly. Then faint sounds
of the Devi approaching from a distance, the roar of her lion and her voice
urging it on, are all heard from his lips. The convulsions of his body
increase and then assume a regular pattern as the Devi finally makes her
presence known. The tempo and rhythm of the bhajans which rise with each

stage of her arrival to a final cresendo, culminate at this point.
When everyone has bowed to her she indicates that she is ready to
commence with the puchhan. People from the audience of devotees then
come forward, make some ritual offering of sawa-rupaiya, flowers and
fruit and then put their questions directly to her. She in turn replies
directly to them. At times, an answer is given even before the question
has been put to her. If the question concerns an absent person, a piece
of his clothing is sufficient to convey the cause of his problem, or in
the case of an immobile object, a sample of the material of which it is
constituted. The duration of the Devi's stay varies, depending on how
long she is willing to stay away from her other divine occupations. At
times she may not give any puchhan at all but may promise to return at
a later time. After the departure of the Devi the Bhakta regains
consciousness but remembers nothing of what happened while the Devi was
inhabiting his mind and body.

Khel (possession) may occur at any time or place to a Bhakta but
puchhan sessions are conducted only on appointed days and in his own
special chamber which is also called mandir or temple. Tuesdays, Thursdays
and Sundays are usually chosen by the Devi as they are believed to be
auspicious. In case of an emergency on any other day, the Bhakta may
agree to try but it is ultimately at the discretion of the Devi whether
she gives puchhan or not. Being all-merciful, she provides an answer in
most cases, even if it is only a temporary solution to last until the next
appointed day when she has more time.

The approach of the Bhaktas is always Sanskritic in character. This
is due to the superior category of supernatural beings with whom he is
associated. Thus the rites and rituals conducted by him in propitiating
the Devi or Devta are not unlike those of the priests at the temples who
serve the same plane of Gods and Goddesses. Even though the former is
seldom knowledgable about the details of Vedic rites, he is nevertheless

able to conduct all the necessary puja in the correct order.

Despite this element of similarity between the priest and the Bhakta, the functions served by the two are entirely distinct. The difference lies in the fact that while priesthood is a hereditary occupation, the knowledge of the detailed practices of which are handed down from father to son or from a Guru to his pupils all of whom are Brahmans, 'possession' by a Devi cannot be learnt or acquired. The Devi chooses a person on whom to bestow her blessing of the special gift of acting as her medium. His caste or identity is immaterial. Of the five Bhaktas who are most frequented by the people of Dharnu, none are Brahmans or, indeed, even of a twice-born caste, although they are all of clean castes. Only these people are able to conduct a puchhan with the Devi's consent, at almost any time. Priests too are able to seek divine help but they require far more elaborate rituals, and the outcome of these efforts are seldom as satisfactory as the answer one may hear for oneself directly from the Devi, if one attends the puchhan session of a Bhakta. Also, some priests hesitate to appeal for special attention to the highest powers for small secular problems when these can easily be resolved by going to a Bhakta or Cela. Thus, priests attend to the temples and the numerous Gods and Goddesses they house, as well as to all the religious functions of the people which specifically demand the offices of a Brahman. Bhaktas, on the other hand, usually concentrate on their 1st God or Goddess and attend to the problems of the people which are related to their secular and emotional needs. Their domains thus are never confused.

Apart from tending to their Devis, Bhaktas seldom have any full-time outside occupation for they never know when she may want to use their services. They usually live on the dan and daksina which the devotees of the Devi leave after attending a seance. Many of them have some land under cultivation but they do not till the soil themselves because of the impure nature of the task. The reason given for this is that anyone in the service

of the Devi, no matter what his caste or previous occupation may be,

should lead a pure life and refrain from any activity that may be

ritually polluting to the goddess who has chosen to inhabit his body.

Thus, a Bhakta has to Sanskritize his way of life in a manner similar

to a Brahman priest. In interactions with other castes the behaviour

prescribed for a man of his caste ceases to apply because of his elevated

ritual status.

Particulars of the Bhaktas within the vicinity of Dharnu can be seen

in Table 11 . It is interesting to note that none of them belong to the

extreme poles of the hierarchy. All of them belong to clean castes but

none are twice-born. The large representation of Dheemans may be explained

by the fact that they are all related. The man was the first to be chosen

by the Devi, followed by his wife four years later. His sister was blessed

by Ses nag only after she had gone all the way to Vaisno Devi in Jummu and

begged this boon of her. The man's wife and sister, although visited from

time to time by their Ist (familiar spirit),⁹ seldom give puchhan since the man

takes the main part in rites at the family temple and is also said to be the

best medium. The other two occasionally act as his assistants especially

during exorcism of an evil spirit. The Gosain is a sadhu, an ascetic who

suddenly realised the power of the vibhuti which he distributed in the name

of his Ist Shankar Bhagwan. He occasionally practices exorcism but this

is conducted behind closed doors and the exact pattern is not known. The

Chowdhry is a young woman who began to be possessed from a very young age.

At first it had been wrongly diagnosed and she was taken to many Celas until

one day a mysterious wandering ascetic appeared at their door and told them

that they had been defiling a Devi by taking her to Celas and that they should

begin to take corrective measures immediately. Shortly after that the Devi

identified herself and thus began the women's life as a Bhakta.

TABLE 11

PARTICULARS OF THE BHAKTAS OF DHARNU REGION

CASTE	IST DEVI OR DEVTA	CASTE AND PREVIOUS OCCUPATION	MAIN OCCUPATION	DIETARY HABIT	DRINKING HABIT
Dheeman (clean caste)	Devi Mata (Durga)	Army service	Tending to the temple of his Ist Devi and acting as a medium	Consumes non-vegetarian food only outside the boundary of the building housing the Devi. Ritual bath before re-entering the building	Consumes alcohal rarely, only outside the premises of the sacred building
Dheeman (clean caste)	Devi Mata (Durga)	House-wife	Housewife Tending to the temple of her Ist Devi. Occasionally acts as medium	Same as above	Teetotal
Gosain (clean caste)	Shankar Bhagwan (Shiva)	-	Ascetism Prayers and Meditation	Vegetarian	Consumes alcohal
Chowdhry (clean caste)	Kumari (young unmarried form of Durga)	Agriculture	Tending to the temple of her Ist Devi. Acting as medium	Vegetarian	Teetotal
Dheeman (clean caste)	Shesh nag	Housewife	Housewife Rarely acts as medium	Vegetarian	Teetotal

Except for the <u>sadhu</u>, all the others are married. The Chowdhry is, however, an <u>ardh-kumari</u> or 'married-virgin'. She had been married very young but once it was realised that the <u>Devi</u> came to her, her husband was not allowed to claim her. But in none of the other cases does this factor affect marital status.

Detailed research into the backgrounds of these people further revealed that excepting the Deeman who had requested and received her divine association, all the others were visited by their <u>Ist</u> when they had been going through times of acute distress. It was emphasized that the gods look after all men but especially those who need them the most. Thus the tormented and unhappy receive their special attention (<u>dukhion pe zyada dhyan dete hain</u>). The visit of the goddess completely changes their lives as was evidenced by everyone of these people themselves and also by their neighbours.

CELAS

<u>Celas</u>, like <u>Bhaktas</u>, become possessed but their possession is of a different kind. These people, through long processes of rigorous training in the art of <u>Celangi</u>, are able to gain control over spirits and ghosts called <u>bhut</u> and <u>pret</u> or over some lesser forms of deities like the <u>dayinis</u> or <u>yoginis</u> who are believed to prey on humans. They can summon these beings to possess them whenever they desire and they may also order them to perform tasks at their bidding.

The state of 'possession' or <u>khel</u> resembles that of the <u>Bhaktas</u> in convulsive movements, rolling of the head and the different intonations of voice but the familiar spirit of the <u>Cela</u> never identifies itself in public. An aura of secrecy surrounds all <u>Celas</u>. They never reveal the identity of their familiar spirit or that of their <u>Guru</u> or instructor. In this region, this art is very often passed on from father to son but a persistent candidate may be able to persuade a practicing <u>Cela</u> to instruct and initiate

him into this art.

The art of Celangi is associated with the Tantric Vidya or the knowledge of the Tantras, because of its involvement with the lower beings of the spiritual world. The rites undergone to attain this knowledge and used in its practice are thus very different from the Sanskritic approach of the Priest and Bhaktas. To become a Cela one has to undergo many rites which are considered to be highly polluting such as doing anusthan sitting on a corpse, and doing siddhi with impure objects. The Cela is also required, at least while under training, to frequent polluted places such as the burial and cremation grounds which are believed to be haunts of the lower spiritual beings. Some of the technical apparatus too is considered polluting under ordinary circumstances, although credited with magical powers. It is probably because of these polluting associations that, while it is theoretically possible for almost anyone to become a Cela, it is very seldom that a high-caste person will enter this profession.

Throughout the period of training the Cela observes a vow of secrecy although people may guess his intention when he begins to frequent a practising Cela regularly without any apparent cause. Once the training is complete, however, he acknowledges his new status as a Cela and is ready to set up his own practice.

The chief motive for acquiring this knowledge is said to be mercenary. In a society where most undesirable events are attributed to black magic, the evil eye or wrathful gods and malevolent spirits, there is considerable scope for an intermediary between the people and the spiritual world. During periods of continuing crises or whenever any unforetold unpleasant incident occurs, a Cela is consulted to detect the cause and provide a cure, either by counter-magic against sorcery or by propitiation of an offended deity. Celas are

also credited with powers of casting evil spells that bring illness or disaster to an enemy or rival. No *Cela* admits to doing this himself, although he says other *Celas* may do so. *Celas* claim to use their magical knowledge only for beneficient purposes but their clients insist that almost all of them are willing to sell their services whether for good or evil to anyone who is willing to pay.

The remuneration of the *Cela* depends on the nature of the service. For making a small protective amulet from a secret combination of herbs or a simple curative potion the charge may be only about 25 paise or a measure of corn, while the complex task of identifying a supernatural cause and removing it by counter-magic may cost anything up to Rs. 100 if the case is difficult and requires detailed skill.

Celas usually visit the houses of their clients, although a few of the better known work in their own establishments, unlike the *Bhaktas* who are bound to a permanent altar of a *Devi*. If the power of a *Cela* is strong enough, he may be able to diagnose the problem or bewitch a victim if given a piece of clothing or a sample of the constituent material in the case of some immobile object such as land or a house.

Unlike the audience of devotees who visit the *Bhaktas*, *Celas* seldom have a large audience, for most people regard them with fear and awe. A case of exorcism, however, often draws a crowd.

The Cela begins by marking out an area within which he acts. He sets out his paraphernalia of magical apparatus. Then he sits and meditates, chanting *mantras* and making offerings of flowers at a temporary altar until his familar spirit possesses him or, in some cases, possess an object such as a *lota*, or brass water pot which he keeps for this purpose. If the

spirit possesses the Cela, he conducts a seance comparable to a puchhan, but if the spirit is induced to possess an inanimate object, then this object begins to move around in circles and gives symbolic answers by moving in certain directions. This latter type of khel (possession) is not unlike planchette but it is not restricted to a board. The possessed object, like a possessed Cela, is believed to be capable of detecting an alien being and wielding a spiritual battle against it which the audience cannot see but can hear quite clearly. Different voices emerge from the Cela and the afflicted person and a long verbal combat ensues in which the alien spirit is forced to identify itself and reveal why it has bewitched its victim, at whose instigation and to what end. The spirit is exorcised by various magical rites such as beating the body of the victim with peacock feathers or blowing on to him the smoke of a special fire to which have been added many ingredients believed to be harmful to spirits. An offended deity is usually pacified with promises of full propitiation and is requested to have mercy on the victims of her wrath. The spirit is then offered a bali (sacrifice) of a goat or sheep if she is of a higher category, or a cock if one of the lesser deities, as a further gesture of subservience designed to ensure that she does not claim a human life as a sacrifice.

It is important to note here that Celas always offer blood and never perform zinda bali. Usually a black cock is sacrificed, very occasionally a goat. The rite is limited to striking off the head of the cock and sprinkling some of its blood over the area where the khel has been performed. The meat of the sacrificed animal is never distributed as prasad but is taken away by the Cela, together with the other objects which have been provided by the client for the rites.

Celas too have appointed days for performing major cures which usually coincide with those of the Bhaktas but the times are adjusted to fit in with their other work. Of the four Celas of this vicinity only one practised Celangi as a full-time profession.

Table 12 presents a detailed picture of the practising Celas of this area. The presence of a Brahman in this list may seem surprising but he is a degrated member of his caste with whom other Brahmans do not associate. He cohabits with an untouchable woman, a Sippi, by whom he has a number of children. He is also accused of nic kam (lowly acts) and generally excluded from the life of the village. Another member of this list is a Gaddi which is also a high caste. He resides within the village and practises agriculture as his main occupation. His knowledge was taught to him by his father's brother who had no sons of his own. His grandfather had acquired this vidya from a good Cela and since then it has been passed down in the vale line. He does not keep an image in his house except for his Kul-Devta for the presence of a higher being would drive away the powers of his Ist . The other two Celas are both of the lowest untouchable caste, Chamars (Churas are a sub-division of this caste). The Chura is a mochi or cobbler by profession and practises Celangi outside working hours. Like the Brahman, he too is a first generation Cela. The other Chamar is the 14th in his vamsa. He is the only one who practises full-time but his is a very large and flourishing business. He has so many clients that he has employed a number of subsidiaries through whom he acts. These assistants are not Celas but are merely mediums of his power. He sits in an open space in his courtyard and becomes possessed by his familiar spirit who directs the work of the assistants.

There are no female Celas although women are very susceptible to possession by evil spirits, as well as by Devis and Devtas. In Celangi, women are treated as polluting due to their intimate association with life processes such as birth, menstruation and pregnancy. Thus, they are not only barred from this vidya in this area, but they are not allowed to enter the chamber of the Ist nor touch a Cela who is about to be possessed.

TABLE 12

PARTICULARS OF THE CELAS OF DHARNU REGION

CASTE	1ST DEVI OR DEVTA	CASTE AND PREVIOUS OCCUPATION	MAIN OCCUPATION	DIETARY HABIT	DRINKING HABIT
Brahman (degraded)	Secret	Labourer at slate mines	Labourer at slate mines	Consumes non-vegetarian food in the house	Consumes alcohal even in the prayer chamber
Gaddi	Secret	Agriculture	Agriculture	Consumes non-vegetarian food in the house	Consumes alcohal at home
Chamar	Secret	Cellangi	Cellangi	Consumes non-vegetarian food in the house	Consumes alcohal at home
Chamar (Mochi)	Secret	Cobbler	Cobbler	Consumes non-vegetarian food in the house	Consumes alcohal in the prayer chamber

The people of this region tend to use the word <u>Cela</u> as a generic
term to denote all specialists who perate in a state of altered
consciousness but the specialists themselves, particularly the <u>Bhaktas</u>,
prefer to be distinguished as <u>Cela</u> or <u>Bhakta</u>. Although both are consulted
interchangably and perform similar functions, they are very conscious
of their differences. These derive mainly from differences in the
status of the spiritual beings by whom they are possessed. The main points
of difference between them are listed below.

<u>Bhakta</u>	<u>Cela</u>
1. He is 'chosen' by a Devi and is controlled by her.	1. He learns the art of gaining control over a familar spirit.
2. The Devi is one of the higher gods or goddesses.	2. The spirit is a lesser deity or a lower form of spiritual being.
3. His practices are Sanskritic and therefore ritually pure.	3. His practices are regulated by Tantric rules and thus defiling.
4. The <u>Devi</u> is invoked but possesses at her own will.	4. The spirit is summoned to possess.
5. The possessing <u>Devi</u> is considered beneficient.	5. The possessing spirit is that of a restless ghost, or a being of the underworld, or an offended deity.
6. The <u>Bhakta</u> is viewed by the people with awe.	6. The <u>Cela</u> is regarded by the people with fear.
7. The <u>Devi</u> gives <u>puchhan</u> at a seance by directly answering questions put to her.	7. He may employ the spirit to give <u>puchhan</u> but only he may question it. He also employs other magico-religious rites to trace the cause of problems.

8. Prasad or vibhuti are distributed to all who attend a seance with divine blessing.
Special medicine may be given to afflicted persons but these are always 'pure' herbal preparation. Amulets or charms contain the power of divine protection.

8. Only the afflicted are given any form of potion to consume or apply to the affected part of the body. Charms and amulets are considered efficacious by virtue of the magico-religious rites which attend their preparation.

9. A daksina is always given to a Devi. There is no fixed amount but usually it is the auspicious sum of sawa-rupaiya (Rs.1.25). Those who have no questions may offer some flowers or fruit.

9. The fees demanded are paid in cash. Sometimes additional payments in kind such as a cock or even a bottle of alcoholic drink may be demanded.

10. People may attend a seance even without a specific cause.

10. He is seldom visited without specific reason.

11. He is generally regarded as a holy person.

11. He is usually thought of as money-minded unscrupulous and dangerous.

12. He is not associated with any particular caste. Often people do not even know his caste.

12. He is associated with low castes or degraded individuals, although higher castes are also known to be Celas.

13. His ability is seen as a divine blessing or gift which cannot be learnt or acquired.

13. His ability is seen as a profession which anybody may learn, provided he can find an instructor.

14. His life is dedicated to the service of the Devi and the people. The daksinas are usually sufficient for his

14. Celangi as a full time occupation is restricted to very few due to the large number of practising Celas as well as Bhaktas, who serve the

needs although he may also own land.	same purposes. It is usually practised as a subsidiary occupation even though the earnings may be substantial.
15. _Bhaktas_ may be of either sex.	15. Only men can attain the power of _Celangi_. Women are believed to be polluting and thus incapable of learning this art.

Almost all the people of Dharnu have at some time or other felt the need to consult a ritual specialist of either type, since no one high or low is considered immune from the effects of the evil-eye, attacks by malignant spirits or the sorcery of a rival. But in spite of the difference with which the _Bhaktas_ and _Celas_ are regarded, there is no difference in the clientele of the two in terms of caste. Just as the highest go to _Celas_ for protective amulets or to have the cause of some undesirable incident divined, so do untouchables attend _puchhan_ sessions of _Devis_. In fact the clientele of the two frequently overlap, for the choice of either depends on the problem. In small matters the nearest and most easily available specialist is consulted, while for more difficult problems it is usual to consult a specialist who was of assistance on some previous occasion. But while the removal of evil power may be effected by both _Bhaktas_ and _Celas_, only _Celas_ are believed to practise sorcery and may be secretly approached for evil ends.

Although _Bhaktas_ are in general regarded with awe as the 'chosen' of the goddess and have a higher social position then the _Celas_, they too are sometimes believed to be capable of using their spiritual powers for revenging a personal grudge.

Also, in these times of _Kali-yuga_, some _Bhaktas_ are suspected of not being 'true' (_sacce nahin hain_) and of misusing the power entrusted to them by the _Devi_. It is thus not uncommon to hear whispered remarks about the unethical practices of _Bhaktas_, who due to their attachment to worldly matters cease to be good mediums. In this respect _Bhaktas_ and _Celas_ are sometimes classed together as mercenary and unscrupulous.

Despite many explicit differences between the two, there is in fact a great deal of implicit similarity. The type of possession is different - _Bhaktas_ are mediums controlled by their familiar spirits while _Celas_ wield control over their spirits - yet the pattern of their behaviour while in trance is almost identical. There is no difference in the actions or body movements - which are at first uncontrolled, gradually assuming a controlled rhythmic pattern. This is clearly culturally conditioned. Even their clients or patients behave in the same manner although the element of control is missing in their case. Both _Bhaktas_ and _Celas_ perform their rites at an altar. Although the _Cela_, unlike the _Bhakta_, is not bound to a permanent altar, he always constructs a temprorary one for his work. His familiar spirit, although under his control, must nevertheless be propitiated just like the higher gods of the _Bhaktas_. _Bhaktas_ do not charge for their help since it is considered the _Devi's_ will to help the sufferers, yet it is an established mode of conduct that one may not approach a _Devi_ empty-handed. Worshippers always bring offerings of money, fruits, grains or even expensive items such as jewellery for her image. Thus at the end of each _puchhan_ the earnings of the _Bhakta_ are usually substantial.

None of the specialists are ever suspected of feigning possession or of fraudulent practices. Mistakes are always attributed to obstruction by other strong spirits or certain stars (_grh_) which are

believed to be capable of "stopping the medium's tongue" from speaking out the words of the _Devi_. Lack of success may be attributed to human failing on the part of the worshipper to understand the real meaning of the _Devi's_ words, or on the part of the Bhakta or _Cela_ to conduct the ceremony properly. It is never, however, suggested that possession may not have occured at all or that deities do not really speak through their mediums. Thus both these specialists are believed to be in close communication with supernatural beings. This generates about them an aura of mystical power, dangerous if unleashed, so that they are treated with respect and their wishes are deferred to, even when in an ordinary state of consciousness. This preferential treatment is expoloited by the ritual specialists in numerous ways. A few of the examples have been recorded below:-

1. The Brahman _Cela_ who due to his polluting association with a low caste woman has been excluded from social functions of Dharnu suddenly appeared univited at the _Kangan_ removing ceremony of a Gaddi couple and demanded to be made the _Kangan-bhai_ of the bride. Since none of the people present were willing to risk offending him, his demand was met. Since then he has maintained a close relationship with the family of his ritual kin involving a complete breakdown of commensal barriers between them. The Gaddi family involved, despite their claimed distaste for this situation, dare not offend this powerful man: they accept his presence in their '_chowka_' (kitchen) and visit his house when invited where they accept even _kacca_ food from him, as well as from his low caste mistress.

Thus he has been able to affect a re-entry into the social and ritual life of the village, from which he had been debarred.

2. The Chowdhry _Bhakta_ demanded a specific piece of land to be put at

her disposal and although the price she offered was much below the

market price, she gained possession of it since the owner could not

refuse a _Bhakta_ or a _Devi_.

3. In a state of possession while divining the cause of certain problems

of a Rajput family, the Chura _Cela_ walked into the inner chambers of his

client's house where the images of the _kul-devtas_ are kept. This act

would be forbidden to him in his ordinary state.

Thus oracular possession and tutelary possession both function as

strategies of permanent status achievement, unlide the temporary

attention gained by the "oblique strategy" of peripheral possession.

This manipulation is not just to gain secular privileges but also to

gain admittance into the ritually prohibited areas of actions and

interactions. _Bhaktas_ may be seen directly to manipulate the institution

to gain the highest forms of social prestige and ritual status which

enables their entry into spheres traditionally restricted only to Brahmans,

while _Celas_, although still restricted by their comparatively lower

ritual status are also able to transcend certain ritual barriers by means

of the fear that they inspire, as well as the power of their offices.

The view of spirit possession as a strategie manipulation of a

"sociologically 'open'....frequently instituted means of status

achievement"[10] is not new. But an examination of the different forms

of spirit possession in relation to the social context and an analysis

of the varying degrees to which these different forms admit of strategic

manipulation by individuals opens a new dimension in the subject.

Studies carried out in different parts of Nepal have shown that

oracular possession and tutelary possession usually occur in different

social contexts. Jones[11] sums it up thus, "Tutelary possession is

functionally related to situations where institutions <u>other</u> than the
family or extended kin group are absent. It provides a means for
status achievement in the absence of complex institutions like the
monastry or temple ..... It is specially adaptive to isolated village
settings ..... In such areas the shaman plays a primary role in the
religion of the community and the social position of the shaman is
secondary to none." On the other hand, "Oracular possession is
particularly adapted to societies such as those of Brahmanical Hinduism.....
it finds itself in sharp competition ..... but it by no means takes
second place ..... socially and economically deprived individuals can
achieve status..... within a caste society that is hieriarchically
arranged. Oracular possession is adapted to complex societies where the
status positions are hereditary and rigidly defined." But this correlation,
while it may be true of Nepal, is difficult to extend to Dharnu where
both the forms co-exist within the common framework of a traditional caste
oriented society.

This co-existence of the two forms of spirit possession is not
coincidental. They relate to the dominant values of the caste system,
namely the oppositions of purity and pollution, which are far more
rigidly observed in India than in Nepal.

In Hindu society where the notion of hierarchy permeates almost every
aspect of social action, not only are the people and their actions graded
but their pantheon of deities and spiritual beings are conceived on the
same model. Thus the higher gods require higher forms of propitiation
which may only be done by 'higher' individuals who are ritually pure,
while the lower forms of spiritual beings are propitiated in ways befitting
their lower status and this may only be done by those who can perform

such activities without violating the rules of pollution. Not only is this idea borne out by the fact that all over India until recently there were different temples for members of the different strata and different ritual functionaries are still associated with each, but also by the fact that even now orthodox Hindu temples only employ Brahman priests and Brahman priests do not normally preside over the religious ceremonies of the low castes. The same principle underlies the division of ritual specialists and their activities in this area. The Bhaktas, who are associated with the higher gods, observe Sanskritic practices not just in the religious sphere but also in their daily life, while the Celas, who are propitiators of the lower spiritual forms, indulge in polluting practices both in their religious and secular activities. The data from this area further supports this theory in that all five Bhaktas were members of clean castes, while except for the Gaddi Cela who is carrying on a hereditary practice of doubtful history, all the others are ritually polluted or untouchables by caste.

It can be concluded that although spirit possession provides "a culturally approved means for the resolution of inner conflict (between personal desires and cultural norms)[12], these means are accomodated within the existing framework of society in such a manner that they do not violate its basic principles. In theory both forms of possession are open to all castes, but in Dharmu the higher castes in keeping with their high ritual status make use of oracular possession to gain access to privileges circumstantially denied to them, while low castes by means of tutelary possession gain access to similar privileges without encroaching on the ritual domain of the high castes. Spirit possession acts as an institutionalized mechanism for crossing caste barriers, but it is itself constrained and limited in its application by the principles of caste.

NOTATIONS FOR CHAPTER V

1. R. Jones   1976:1

2. Ibid. p.p. 4-6

3. Ibid. p.p. 117

5. Harper 19:116

6. Ibid. p. 176

7. Gaborieau , Marc   1976:6

8. Except in one case, all the Bhaktas are visited by a Devi. The
people too, when asked about ritual specialists always mention
possession by a Devi. Thus, I have used 'she' when referring to the
'possessor' although the term 'he' may be equally relevant.

9. The term 'familiar spirit' is used after E. B. Harper 1963 to refer
to the particular spirit associated with any shaman or ritual specialist.

10. R. Jones   1976:8

11. Ibid. p.10

12. Spiro   1966:

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In this Thesis I have analysed the institutions of Ritual Kinship and Spirit possession by Ritual Specialists in a village in Himachal Pradesh with specific reference to their implication for the caste system. One essential feature of the caste system is the hierarchical arrangement of castes. Groups may be ranked in different scales of evaluation, the most prominent of which are those of ritual purity, political power, economic power and social prestige. Although, these scales are not always congruous, in a traditional caste society there is a large measure of correspondence between them so that those occupying the lowest social and ritual strata tend also to be economically and politically under-privileged. This form of differentiation tends to push the inferior members of society into a peripheral position, since rank in a caste society is expressed in terms of relative purity or pollution and any interaction between castes is strictly regulated by this. Nevertheless, certain institutionalized channels exist which function to integrate the members of the lowest strata into the ritual affairs of the high castes in a manner quite in contrast to their accepted role of removing pollution by performing all the polluting tasks and thus transmitting purity up the ritual ladder. On certain occasions castes which are ordinarily considered to be low or inferior, are given particular importance, and at times, may even be accorded temporary superiority over higher castes.

Ghurye[1] provides a number of examples to illustrate this point: "... the Dom at the burning 'Ghat' in Benares is an important personage...

the first five logs of wood for arranging the pyre must be give by a
Dom, who has also to lay the foundation of the pyre and to hand a whisp
of burning straw to the chief mourner for lighting the wood. In the
Central Provinces, as a part of the marriage ceremony the bridegroom's
party takes the bride to the house of the Kumbhar (potter) for making
the marriage propitious. The wife of the potter presents her with seven
new pots which are to be used at the wedding. In return for this veiled
blessing the woman gets a present of clothes[2]. Both the barber and
washerman are prominent in a Kunbi wedding. At a particular stage in
the ceremony the barber and washerman take the bride and bridegroom on
their shoulders and dance in the marriage booth, for which services they
receive presents[3]. In Berar, "at the holi festival the fire of the
Mahars is kindled first and that of the Kunbis is set alight from it."
Some Telis (oilpressers), Lohars (blacksmiths), Kunbis and other castes
employ a Mahar (one of the untouchables), to fix the date of their
weddings. The Mahar also officiates at the slaughter of a buffalo at
the Dasahra festival[4]. The barber acts as the Brahman's assistant at
marriage, and to the lower castes he is even the matrimonial priest[5].
The officiating priest at the famous temple of Jagannath is a barber,
food cooked by him for the deity being acceptable to all but the most
orthodox among Brahmans..... "Some of the most celebrated and exclusive
temples are thrown open to the Paraiyan (the Tamil unapproachable) on
certain days of the year and for the time he lords it over the Brahman."...
These and other occasions, on which some of the groups which are
considered to be low castes could feel their importance, relieved
the monotonous depression of these groups and gave zest to their life
even in their degraded condition."

Such occasions, however, provide only brief and temporary respite and do not bring about any significant change in their general status. But it has been observed that "no group of people is content to be low in a caste hierarchy - to live a life of inherited deprivation and subjection regardless of the rationalization offered them by their superiors or constructed by themselves."[6] Further, "that people remain in an inferior position....does not mean that they do so willingly.... that they would not do anything in their power to change it."[7] In such a situation there are only two alternatives - either to reject the system altogether, or somehow to attain a higher rank in the existent stratificational scheme.

In a caste society it is not equality that the inferiors want but rather a superior position with all its associated privileges. Thus the socio-religious and sectarian movements which claimed to transcend caste by preaching "social and religious equality of all men, the anti-thesis of caste system"[8] have all become encompassed by the caste system: they exist now as devotional and sectarian castes, or they have admitted caste principles into their organization to a greater or lesser degree. Many tend to practise equality within the group irrespective of their original differences but in their external relationships they present all the characteristics of a caste group. Investigations by some anthropologists show no evidence of recruitment in the sects in recent times either by conversion or by marriage and all their interactions outside the group are regulated by caste values. Thus the principle of equality is not extended to the whole society. Examining the material available on some of the recent expressions of such movements, Parry[9] has observed that, "On the one hand, the inequality of man is explicitly denied, while on the other hand cult members are explicitly

urged to adopt a style of life and a set of customs calculated to enhance their standing in the eyes of the orthodox society." Thus, however the relation of these organisations may be viewed, it is evident that despite their original rejection of caste values, they have all been obliged to come to terms with caste to some extent, often in their internal organization and certainly in their external relations.

There have been many studies of attempts at upward mobility in the caste system. Since ranks are attached to groups rather than to individuals, mobility within the system depends not so much on the aspirations of an individual as on the movement of the group of which he is a member. The preconditions of mobility are usually a rise in the economic and/or political power, but naked power or wealth cannot buy status evaluation. It must be changed into the coinage of the system, in this case into ritual currency, by adoption of the customs, ritual, ideology and way of life of the higher castes, usually followed by claims to a higher position in the hierarchy. This process has been termed by Srinivas "Sanskritization".[10] But the most important part of this movement is the validation of the changed status which is effected by actually gaining admittance into the interactional sphere of the ranks within which a position is sought, for caste rank is chiefly expressed via symbolic interaction.

The most relevant areas of interaction have been recognised as marriage and commensality, for it is by restricting these that each caste prevents encroachment into its boundaries of purity. In a traditional society marriage into another caste is extremely difficult for there is complete separation in this matter. In the area of commensal behaviour, however, there is usually some amount of commensal relationship already established except with the untouchables, such as

exchange of _succa_ food which, as we have seen, is acceptable from a wide range of castes and thus increased association may be contrived.

In Dharnu, however, there are at present few new economic opportunities and the lower castes are numerically not strong enough to successfully carry out a group movement against the higher castes. There exist, however, a number of channels open to the individual by which he can circumvent the disabilities of low caste status. The two main channels in this village permitting manipulation for status ends are ritual kinship and spirit possession. Both of these are 'open' to all members of the society and further, they are both acknowledged to be socially legitimate institutions.

Ritual kinship is basically a mechanism for forming close quasi-kinship ties between individuals who are not related either by blood nor usually by affinity. Since it is a _dharam ka rista_, that is, a sacred relationship, there are no restrictions on the choice of partners. Even pollution barriers may be transcended. Thus ritual ties may be extended vertically, as well as horizontally. A member of a low caste desirous of forming high caste connections may utilize this institution for by doing so, not only does he gain a prestigious connection but also stands to gain materially. But this prestige does not raise his ritual status in the society. Data from Dharnu show quite clearly that any change in ritual status affected is only with respect to the ritual kin and his immediate family. In the society at large, his position remains unaltered.

Ritual specialists practising with the aid of spirit possession, on the other hand, achieve a far more permanent change in social status,

although the predominant values of the society tend to limit the degree of change. Thus members of each caste bloc are seen to be able to elevate their ritual status only as high as the highest stratum within their bloc. _Bhaktas_, who are clean caste specialists attain ritual status almost equal to the Brahmans though their domains remain separate, whilst the untouchables _Celas_ remain ritually confined but because of the fear that their powers inspire they often manage to manipulate entry into certain ritual zones ordinarily closed to them without actually affecting a change of status.

Now one way of looking at these institutions is from the vantage point of the low castes who utilize them as strategies to cross established caste boundaries. But the higher castes, who are already invested with the advantages of a superior position, are known to utilize the system too, and viewed from their position, quite a different picture emerges.

In general, the data recorded in the previous chapters show that the high castes have little to gain under ordinary circumstances from cross-caste alliances but they have nothing much to lose either, since in both cases ritual sanctions permit close interaction without loss of ritual status. They, the high castes are, however, seldom seen willingly to form ritual alliances cutting across the caste bloc boundaries, and even within, they tend to form connections with an equivalent or an adjacent ranking caste. But if a request for a ritual tie comes from even the lowest ranks of the hierarchy, it is considered improper to refuse and usually they agree to the request. In such cases, even though the ceremony is conducted in the name of _dharam_, the high caste partner often does not go through the full set of rituals, thus restricting both the relationship and its associated obligations.

But, under certain conditions, they stringently observe every ritual and continue to maintain the relationship for as long as possible. This occurs when the child of a high caste mother cuts its upper teeth first and she seeks to transfer the threat of bad luck to her brother onto a low caste man by adopting him as a brother and maintaining close relations with him afterwards. In these cases the high castes are actually seen to exploit the institution to their benefit.

Low caste ritual specialists or Celas also serve an important function for the high castes. The lower form of deities and spiritual beings with whom these people are associated require forms of worship and propitiation which are considered to be polluting. These religious acts are nevertheless essential to prevent these beings from becoming wrathful and malevolent. Celas are able to perform this service on behalf of the high caste without the latter suffering the consequences of the polluting acts since the Cela absorbs it all. Also when a high caste has to interact closely with an officiating Cela or Bhakta of a lower caste, he may do so freely, for at that moment the ritual specialist acts in the capacity of a supernatural agent and his own ritual status has no relevance. At other times, when the specialist is in an ordinary state of conciousness, the high castes maintain all ritual observances as befits any interaction between their respective castes.

Thus, the crossing of caste barriers is often partial and in general subject to regulation by the high castes. In so far as they are utilised as strategies, the low castes tend to manipulate them chiefly to gain status or material advantage, while the higher castes enter into cross-caste alliances to avert bad luck or avoid pollution.

Both ritual kinship and spirit possession involve principles which either neglect caste or are to some extent at variance with it. This raises the problem of their accomodation within a caste-oriented society. It can be argued that both of these institutions which, in theory, permit transgression of inter-caste barriers and thus appear to conflict with the basic values of the system, operate in practice as mechanisms by which the stability of the system is maintained. In a society where differentiation and separation are emphasised in every aspect of social life, ther are numerous sources of stress, ranging from feelings of peripherality and frustrated ambitions for power and privilege to the fear of unforseen disasters common to all strata. These two institutions assist to ameliorate some of these conditions.

Ritual kinship thus, overtly stresses equality between ordinarily unequal partners by its very mode of establishment and so produces close ties of reciprocal obligations. These serve to unite members of the different sections of society and to create social cohesion. Further, manipulation by either partner may be interpretted as the channelized reduction of individual stress. Spirit possession too provides outlets for individual stress, both as an expression against and as an actual respite from current difficulties or degraded status. But it also functions as a "group problem-solving mechanism"[11] when a ritual specialist in a state of possession acts in supernatural capacity and thus is able to help the othermembers of the community to "resolve or become reconciled to their problems".[12]

And finally, it may be said socially instituted, they regulate the transgression of norms by placing them in a special context so that they are not regarded as acts of indiscriminate violation. This feature of the two institutions may be seen as crucial - that in spite of their apparent conflict with the accepted pattern of behaviour between castes,

they are themselves limited by and integrated into this pattern so that
they operate to support the structured relationships which form the
basis of the society.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER VI

1. G.S. Ghurye   1932:25-26

2. R.V. Russell   1916   The Tribes And Castes Of Central

Provinces.   London.   pp. 6, 10.   Quoted by G.S. Ghurye   1932 :25-26.

3. Ibid. pp. 20.

4. Ibid pp. 18, 131.

5. Ibid. pp. 265.

6. G.D. Berreman   1967 : 125

7. Ibid.

8. K.S. Mathur   1964 :

9. J. Parry   1974 : 117

10. M.N. Srinivas   1952 : 30-31

11. E.B. Harper   1963 : 116

12. Ibid.

GLOSSARY

GLOSSARY

accī – good

anār – scientific name ' Punica Granatum'

bahin – sister

bhāī – brother

bhajan – devotional song, hymn

bhakta – follower, term used locally to designate one category of
ritual specialists who get possessed by a god or goddess

bhūt – spirit., ghost

birādarī – regional sub-caste group

celā – one category of ritual specialist who get possessed by lower
forms of spiritual beings

celangī – the profession of celas

chasma – little pools by the stream

dān – ritual offering or charitable donation

daksinā – reward given to a priest on completion of a ritual

dāyīnī – witch

dete hain – give

devī – goddess

devtā – god

dharam – religion, religious duty

dharam lagānā – establishing a ritual tie

dharamsālā – hospice for Hindu pilgrim

dharma – (Skt.) religion, religious duty

dhyān – attention

dukhion – saddened, tormented

dwijā   — twice-born

ghāt   — bank

ghī   — clarified butter

godh   — lap

gotra   — clan

gṛh

gur   — jaggery

gurdwārā   — temple of a guru

gūrū   — teacher, religious instructor

halkī   — light, without weight

hukkā pānī bandh   — a form of social boycott by severing all commensal
          relations

iṣt   — familiar god or spirit

jhūthā   — polluted by saliva, also used in this region for 'kacca' food

kaccā   — food cooked in salt and water

kameez   — a long shirt

kālā   — black

kangan   — pieces of red, cotton hand-spun thread used for tying on the
          wrist at ritual ceremonies

karma   — (Skt.) deeds

khad   — boulder strewn stream

khel chad jānā   — to get possessed by a god or a spiritual being

lenā   — to take

mahīnā — month

māmā — maternal uncle

mantra — holy inchantations

mochī — cobbler

mool — short iron rod used by cobblers

mūndan — first hair cutting ceremony

nahīn hain — is/are not

nīc — lowly

ornī — long piece of cloth used for covering the head by women

pagṛī — turban

pakkā — food cooked in ghi

panc — member of council

pancāyat — local administrative council

paṇktī — row or line

parāndī — tassels for the hair

pattal — leaf plate

pe — on

pherā — circumambulation, rite at the Hindu wedding

prasād — offerings made to god and later distributed among devotees

pret — female spirit or ghost

pūcchan — question-answer session

pūn — diffuse spiritual merit

riśtā — relation

rūpa — form

rupaīyā — rupee (unit of Indian currency)

sacce   – true

sadhū   – ascetic

salwār   – a loose kind of pajama worn with a kameez

sarpanc   – head of pancayat council

sat   – pure

sawā   – one and a quarter

sūccā   – clean, also used in this region for 'pacca ' food

suhāg   –

tīkā   – mark made with sandalwood paste or vermilion on the forehead

uccī   – high

vibhūtī   – holy ash left from the sacred fire

vidyā   – knowledge

zyādā   – more

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