

# INTER-CASTE RELATIONS IN A KULU VILLAGE

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The present study is based on field work<sup>1</sup> carried out in Va-shishta<sup>2</sup>—a Kulu Village nearly two miles and a half away from Manali which is regarded as the queen of Kulu Valley.

Kulu is the main town of the district and is also the seat of the district headquarters. It is 176 miles far from Pathankot—the nearest broad gauge rail head. The other railway station which is the nearest railway station is Joginder Nagar in Mandi district of the Himachal Pradesh. The approach to the district is mainly by motor-road both from Jogindernagar and Pathankot. One can reach Kulu from Chandigarh, the Capital of the Punjab, either by road, via Rupar-Bilaspur and Mandi or by Pathankot-Mandi. Recently, the Indian Air Lines Corporation has introduced regular bi-weekly flights between Delhi and Kulu (Bhunter Airport) via Chandigarh during the season from April 1 to June 30 and from September 1 to November 15.

Manali, the next important station in the district is 24 miles away from Kulu towards the North and is connected by a motor-road. It is being developed by the Punjab Govern-

ment as a tourist resort. Manali also happens to be a base for all trades with Lahaul, Spiti and Ladakh and the rest of India.

Vashishta, the village, in which the present study was conducted is two miles and a half away from Manali in its North-East direction and is situated on the left bank of the river Beas at an altitude of 6,500 feet. It may be termed as a semi-hermit village. A newly constructed jeepable road connects the village with Naggar-Kothi road, which runs along the course of the river Beas. The village is also approachable by the said road; while going up to Kanchanikoot—a distance of two miles from Manali, and by climbing nearly half a mile on the right.

The village is famous for its sulphur springs. A dip in sulphurated-water of the spring is supposed to possess curative qualities and as such the two sulphurated-water-reservoirs attract a large number of people every day including many tourists to Manali.

The history of the village is shrouded in myths and legends. The inhabitants very proudly narrate these and claim an antiquity for the village. It is said, that Vashishta,

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<sup>1</sup>Field work for the present study was carried out during a brief sojourn in the months of September and October of 1964.

<sup>2</sup>The village was declared as a notified area in September, 1962 by the Panjab Government which brought the village under the extensions of the committee of notified area at Manali. In his ex-officio capacity, the Deputy Commissioner is the Chairman of the committee. The committee works just like any other Municipal Committee. In this area the village Panchayat has been abolished. The members of the committee are nominated by the Deputy Commissioner.

who was a Brahma Rishi, was appointed tutor to Ram Chandra. Vishwamitra, who was equally intelligent, felt jealous of this. He avenged himself by killing all the one hundred sons of Vashishta Rishi.

Frustrated on account of this and in search of a peaceful resort, Vashishta Rishi came to the bank of the river Beas for meditation. One day as he was about to commit suicide by strangling his neck with his sacred thread he was thrown off by a powerful current of the river. The site of the village is claimed to be the place where the Rishi fell. The Rishi spent the rest of his life there at the present site of the village taking it as ordained for him by God.

In spite of the fact Vashishta Rishi suffered, to a great extent, but he did not even think of taking revenge from Vishwamitra. It is further stated that Vishwamitra pondered over the result of his doings and visited Vashishta Rishi at his abode in the village, repented and atoned for his acts.

The people also claim that at the time of installation ceremony of Ram Chandra,

Lakshman came to Vashishta Rishi in the village to request him to grace the occasion and bestow his blessings.

While staying with Vashishta, Lakshman found that the Rishi used to go to Beas Kund, near Rohtang Pass, for taking bath. Realising the difficulty of the Rishi, Lakshman shot an arrow and there sprang up a hot water spring. But the Rishi refused to bathe in the hot water. Lakshman shot another arrow and another spring came up—this time a cold-water one.

To commemorate the memory of Vashishta Rishi and Lakshman, the village was named after the Rishi and two temples were built—one after the Rishi and the other after Ramchandra as Raghunath.

*The Village Castes.*—There are three castes in the village, viz., Brahmins, Rajputs and Daxis. The total population of the village consists of 319 individuals. Of this 163 are males and 156 females. The caste-wise break up of the population is as follows:

**TABLE I**  
**CASTE-WISE AND SEX-WISE POPULATION ALONGWITH HOUSEHOLD BREAK UP OF VASHISHTA (1964).**

Sr. No.	Caste	Male	Female	Total	Percentage	No. of households
1.	Brahmins	18	11	29	9.09	6
2.	Rajputs	126	133	259	81.19	56
3.	Daxis	19	12	31	9.72	4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>66</b>

It is quite clear from the above table that the Rajputs as a caste are numerically in a majority as compared to the other caste groups combined, their total number being 259. The Daxis come next with 31 closely followed by Brahmins with 29. In terms of percentages, the Rajputs are 81.19% of the total population, the Daxis 9.72% and the Brahmins 9.09%. As is observed from Table 1, the village population comprises 66 households; Brahmins having six, Rajputs 56 and

Daxis four.

The two castes Brahmins and Rajputs are the clean castes while Daxis are thought and treated as unclean. The main profession of the Brahmins is of Priests and 'purohits'. All the Brahmins do not practise the said occupation, but due to the caste strictures many "don'ts" always hang over their 'heads; they are not allowed to take up professions of 'unclean' and low castes. Some of them work as teachers in Government Schools.

The Rajputs, who are now the principal cultivators, were previously known as *Kanets* (the word having been derived from the word 'kuniti' meaning a bad union). They were regarded as a low-caste cultivating group, and Ibbetson while quoting Mr. Lyall goes to the extent of calling them as "children of women of the hills by Rajputs who came up from the plains" (Ibbetson, 1916: 198). But now the conditions are not the same as portrayed by Ibbetson. Whenever they are asked about their caste, they reply as 'Rajput' and always hesitate to state that they were once known as *Kanets*. Now these people are recognised as Rajputs by one and all. Side by side with the change of name has gone a deliberate process of adopting the rituals of the Brahmins in the village—a process often referred to as Sanskritization (this has been dealt with in detail in another work under preparation).

Dagis (derived from 'DAG' meaning cattle), are a low caste people and are also known as Harijans. They are so named because they remove dead cattle. They often perform subservient jobs to the higher castes and work as *Khoridards* to Rajputs.

The hierarchy of these castes in the village is quite clear and no body challenges the hierarchical order, for every one in the village is well conscious of his status and is satisfied with his lot. The Brahmins who lie on top of the social scale and Rajputs are regarded as 'Dvija' or 'twice born'. The Dagis are treated as low as untouchables and are not even allowed to enter the houses of Brahmins and Rajputs.

In the present work, two more castes

which are outside the village, for example Lohars<sup>3</sup> and Naths<sup>4</sup> have also been included for they play an important role in the day-to-day life of the castes in the village and a discussion of the inter-caste relations of the village castes and their dependence upon them, without mentioning them, would not give a true picture. This fact of dependence of 'in-village-caste' on 'out-village-castes' falsifies the notion of many protagonists of 'village self-sufficiency' and 'village-an isolated whole'.

*Inter-Caste Relations.*—Though the factors of endogamy, hierarchy and occupation keep a caste group distinct and different from one another, yet the fact remains that caste is an inter-dependent unit. Leach while levelling a criticism against Kroeber for his definition on caste<sup>5</sup> rightly states, "It is wrong because it puts the emphasis in the wrong place upon endogamy and rank and because it slurs the really crucial fact that caste is a system of inter-relationships and that every caste in a caste system has its special privileges" (Leach, 1960: 10). He further states, "A caste can only be recognised in contrast to other castes with which its members are closely involved in a network of economic, political and ritual relationships. . . . It is precisely with these inter-caste relationships that we are concerned when we discuss caste as a social phenomenon. The caste society as a whole is in Durkheim's sense, an organic system with each particular caste and sub-caste filling a distinctive functional role" (Leach, 1960: 5). Thus the structural basis of caste, viz., endogamy, hierarchy and occupation

<sup>3</sup>Lohars are also treated as 'unclean' caste. Their main profession is to prepare the utensils and iron implements for agriculture.

<sup>4</sup>Naths ('unclean')—the split-ear yogi mendicants practise Nath Yoga and wear huge ear-rings often called 'Mundras' or 'Kundias'. They profess to be priests in Siva temples. They serve in these temples and till the land attached to them. The temple and the land attached to it is their source of income.

<sup>5</sup>"A caste may be defined as an endogamous and hereditary sub-division of an ethnic unit occupying a position of superior or inferior rank or social esteem in comparison with other such sub-divisions" (Kroeber, 1931).

govern in a general way the inter-caste relations and these relations are regulated in the rural social living without erasing the deep lines of caste distinctions and show themselves off at the time of the crises in the individual's life in the village, *viz.*, the birth of a child, marriage and death which form the life cycle of an individual, the festivals, the village disputes and the structure and functioning of the village Panchayat and at its meetings.

In village Vashishta the two castes *viz.*, Brahmins and Daxis are economically dependent upon Rajputs. Their traditional economic relations in the village with other castes in return to their services to them are known what Wiser (1936) called Jajmani system. In the village they are the cynosure of attention. They depend for some services on the Brahmins and for others on the Daxis and for still others on the castes like Lohars and Naths who live outside in other villages.

Rajputs in the village are the dominant caste for not only are they in a numerical majority in the village but they are also economically quite well off and not dependent (economically) upon other castes in the village, but the other two castes, no doubt, they are also to some extent quite well off, are dependent (not wholly) upon them to satisfy their needs or to supplement their income.

The Rajputs in the village attract the

whole of attention. In the very first instance, attention is focused on how the various castes behave and react towards the Rajputs on particular occasions of birth, marriage and death of a Rajput. It may also be added that on the observance of the 'rites de passage' of an individual among Brahmins and Daxis, Rajputs may or may not come. If they come they do not perform any important function, but if they are on good relations they may assist them in their work or give some money.

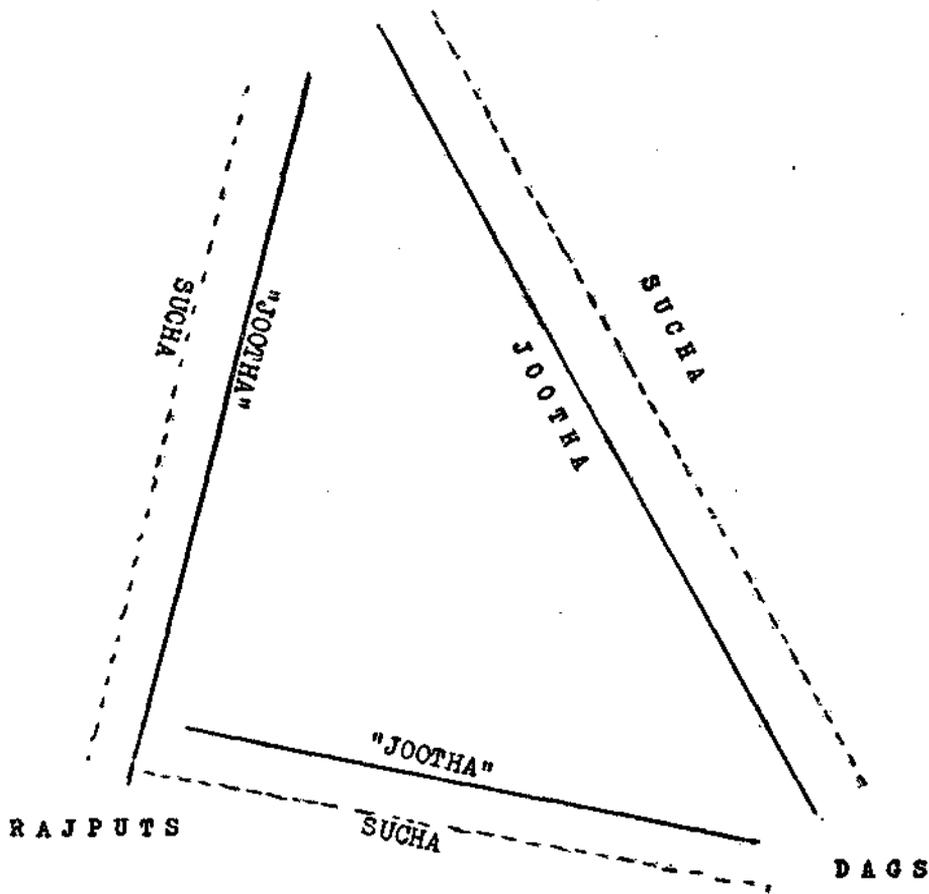
*Birth of a Child.*—On the birth of a Rajput child, the Brahmins are called to note the time of birth. After 5 or 7 days he is again called to perform the *Nam Karan* ceremony and prepares the *Janampatri* or horoscope. On the thirteenth day of birth of a child he again comes and performs the rites of *Shudi Kama* (Purification) of the mother of the child in which water is shown to the Sun and he recites some Sanskrit verses.

Dollu Ram told me that on the birth of his son in 1963 Pt. Bala Ram was called for. "He is the 'purohit' of our family; for performing the ceremonies in connection with the birth of our son, he was given grains (rice, wheat and maize, one seer each) along with a 'Pattu' (a hand woven woollen cloth)", he explained to me.

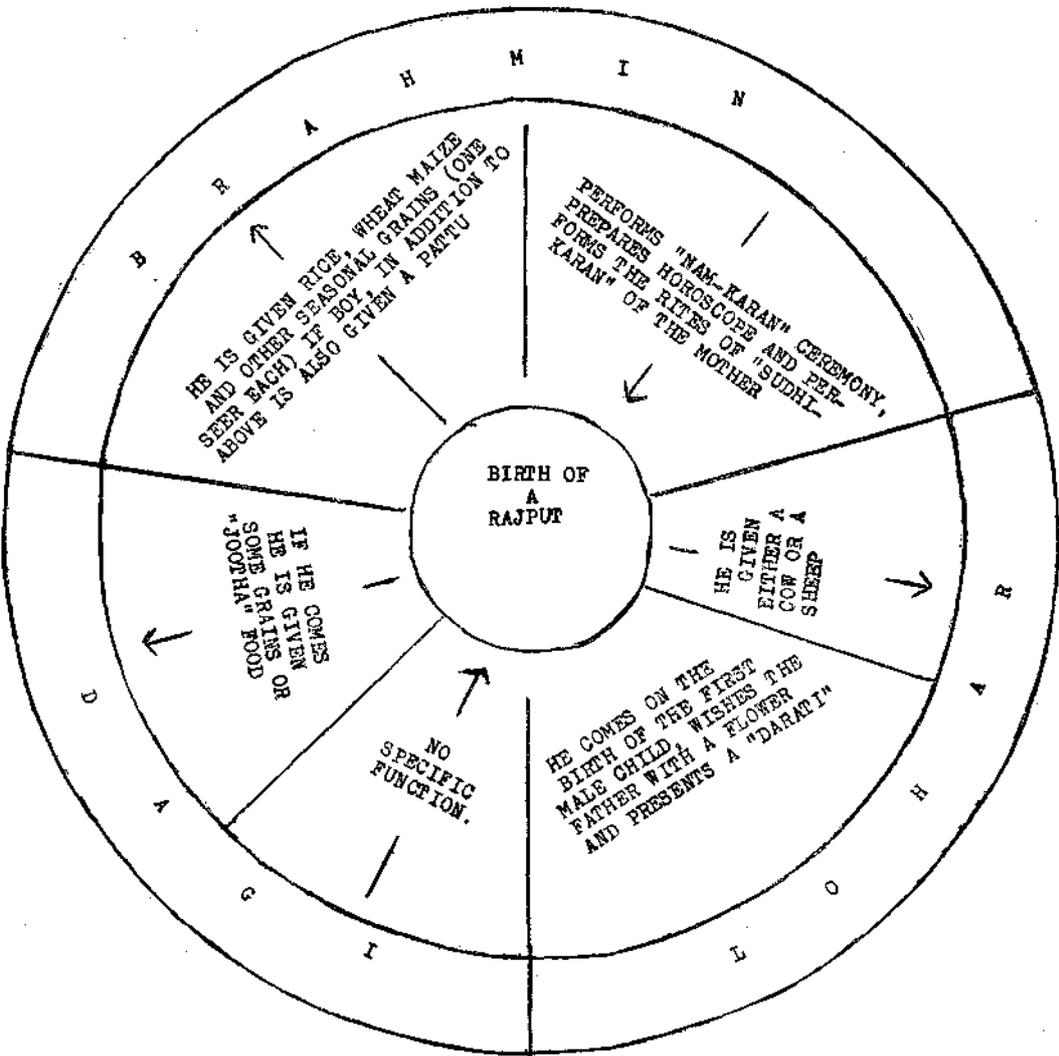
Usually on the birth of a child the 'purohit' is given 'sucha' food,<sup>6</sup> the amount

<sup>6</sup>One of the most important and hitherto unknown facts that my study in Vashishta brought to light is that food in the village is divided into two categories, (a) *Sucha* (clean or uncontaminated) and (b) *Jootha* (contaminated) (Ahluwalia, 1965: 42-43). Various other writers have reported the division of food into *Kacha* and *Pucca* in their respective fields of studies (Blunt, 1931; Ghurye, 1957; Mayer, 1960; Lewis, 1958; Hutton, 1963; Mathur, 1964). The food prepared in ghee is said to be *Pucca* (ripe) and is accepted by the higher castes from the lower castes, while there are lot of restrictions on the acceptance of *Kacha* food by the higher castes. Whereas in the village *Jootha* food is never accepted by any caste lower than itself. *Sucha* food comprises grains, vegetables (un-cooked) and fruits etc. While *Jootha* food includes preparations which are cooked and in which water is mixed. Commensal relations include the preparing of food and its consumption. Brahmins and Rajputs do not accept *Jootha* food from the Daxis. Brahmins on the other hand also do not accept *Jootha* food from the Rajputs because the castes follow the principle of accepting no *Jootha* food from any caste that stands lower than itself in the social scale. Again as a rule the lower castes have no scruples in accepting *Jootha* food from any higher caste. The 'golden rule' thus comes out that the higher caste members do not accept food cooked by the lower ones. The movement of food in the village is well illustrated in Sociogram No. 1.

BRAHMINS



Sociogram No. 1 indicating the movement of food



Sociogram No. 2 showing Pattern of Inter-Caste Relations on the Birth of a Rajput Child

of which is much more dependent upon the economic position of the giver, but in any case, he must not be given less than a day's meal for the whole of his family. In case a male child is born, in addition to the said grains, he is also given a 'pattu'. Lohar (Blacksmith, who is always hereditarily attached to a Rajput family and whose main calling is to make and mend all the iron implements of agriculture of his *Jajman* and for which he gets a share of the product from the fields), comes on the occasion of the birth of a first male child; he congratulates the father of the child with a flower and gives him a *Darati* (a long hook-shaped agricultural implement with a long handle). The iron implement is thought to be auspicious as it is said that it keeps all the dangers away from the child. In return for the above presents the father of the child gives the Lohar one of his cattle. If he is quite well-to-do, he may give a cow otherwise a sheep.

A number of Rajput families, 10 to 15 have one Lohar attached to them. In order to cater to the needs of all the 56 families of Rajputs there are seven Lohars but none of them resides in the village.

Dollu Ram recalled that on the birth of his child (1963), Bhikhu (Lohar) who lives in Goshal (a nearby village) came and after receiving from him a flower and a *Darati* he gave a sheep in return.

Dagis in the village do not perform any specific function on the birth of a Rajput child, but if they come to the Rajput family, where a child is born, they are benevolently given grain.

Sociogram No. 2 shows at a glance which castes in the village and outside the village too, are affected and in what way, by the birth of a child in a Rajput family. In each case the relation reflects mutuality, each caste performing its role and getting the

reward depending upon the nature of work performed. It may be seen that on the birth of a Rajput child, Brahmins in the village who are from the top tier of the social hierarchy have important and direct roles to perform.

*Chuda Karma*.—The Brahmin decides the auspicious day for *Chuda Karma* (the ceremonial first hair shaving of a child) of a Rajput child. He decides the hour for the ceremony. The ceremony is held when the child attains the age of one year or of three years. The child is taken to the temple of *Jogni Mata* which is situated outside the village on its North-Eastern direction. The *Chela* {disciple} of *Jogni Mata* presently Chet Ram (Rajput) first of all cuts a tuft of hair. The Brahmin recites Sanskrit *Slokas* invoking the gods to bless the child with a happy long life. The Brahmin is given Rs. 1.25 and the *Chela* 50 paise to 75 paise. In addition to the above, the Brahmin also gets *Sucha* food.

*Marriage*.—Rajputs in the village have two types of marriages :

- i. 'Vedi' or a big marriage,
- ii. 'Sada' or a simple marriage.

In the 'Vedi' type of marriage all the procedures as prescribed in Hindu scriptures are followed, whereas in the 'Sada' or simple marriages, the procedure is summarised and only essential rites and rituals are performed. In the 'Vedi' or big marriages, 'Jag' or (free feast) is also held. All the persons in the village are invited.

The Brahmin plays an important role at the marriage of a Rajput. First of all he advises about the suitability of the spouses; whether the persons are fit to be married and do not come within the prohibited degrees of relationships amounting to incestuous marriage. After having gone through the suitability of the marriage he advises the proper time for the marriage

ceremony. He informs all the relatives of his *Jajman* about the marriage and extends them an invitation on behalf of his *Jajman*.

In case of a girl's marriage he performs the 'Lagan' ceremony; while in case of boy's marriage he accompanies the party and aids the Brahmin from the bride's side to perform the religious ceremonies. On this occasion the Dagis who work as *Khoridars* to the Rajputs, collect wool for fire and clean the utensils.

The Brahmin Purohit or his assignee works as *Boti*. He cooks the food and serves it to the Rajputs in the *Jag*.

The Brahmin is given Rs. 5 to 10, a 'Pattu', 5 seers of rice and wheat in addition to what he eats at the *Jag*.

The *Khoridar* is also given for his services some food, both *Sucha* and *Jootha* and some money at the will of the Rajput depending upon his economic status.

Sociogram No. 3 shows the participation of the Brahmins and the Dagis on the marriage of a Rajput.

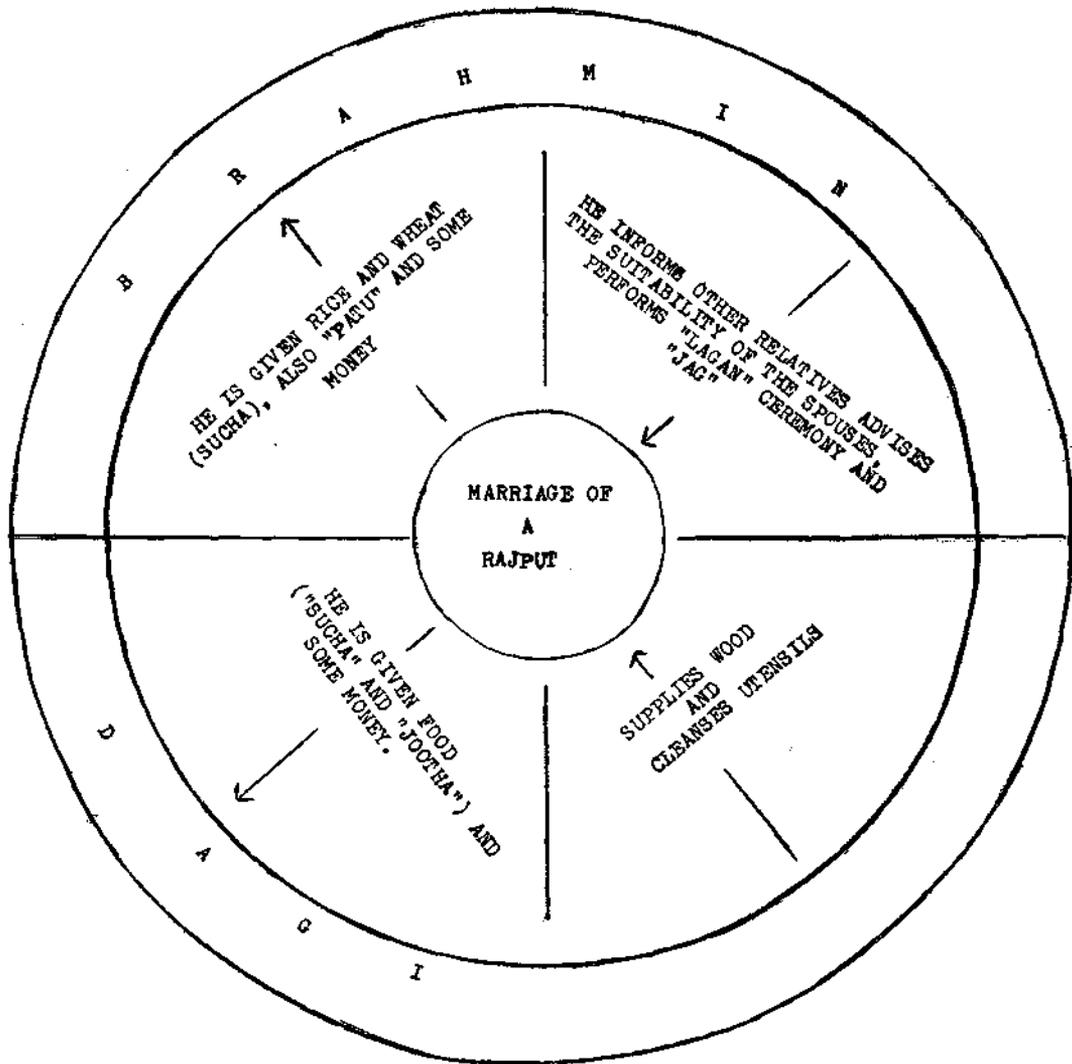
It may also be added here, that the Rajputs on all the occasions and particularly on the occasion of a marriage of Rajput girl note each and every thing that is given to the girl by the relatives or by the members of other castes. Rajputs invariably do not accept anything from the Dagis, as a gift to the girl. Previously they did not use to accept anything from the Brahmins except for their services, for they say that they always receive the *Dan*. But how the Brahmins do give something or the other on the marriage of a Rajput and the Rajputs also reciprocate. While going through the list of persons who gave money or other things on the marriage of Sebti Devi daughter of Lot Ram (Rajput) which took place in April, 1962, it was noticed that almost all the Brahmin families in the village gave something or the other. Jeet Ram Pujari (Sarawat) gave one rupee; Bala Ram

(Kanyakubja) gave two rupees; Dasaundi Ram (Sarawat) gave fifty paise, and Dombu Ram (Kanyakubja) gave one thali and one glass; Sharwan Kumar Sharma (Pushkarna) gave one dupata and twenty-five paise. On the occasion of the marriage of a Brahmin boy, a Rajput gives him eight kilos of rice and one rupee for *Tikka*. On the marriage of a Brahmin girl, Rajputs give money and other things (depending upon their economic status), which are not obligatory on their part. However, as already mentioned, if any Brahmin has given anything on the marriage of a Rajput, the same is returned in any case, in one shape or the other.

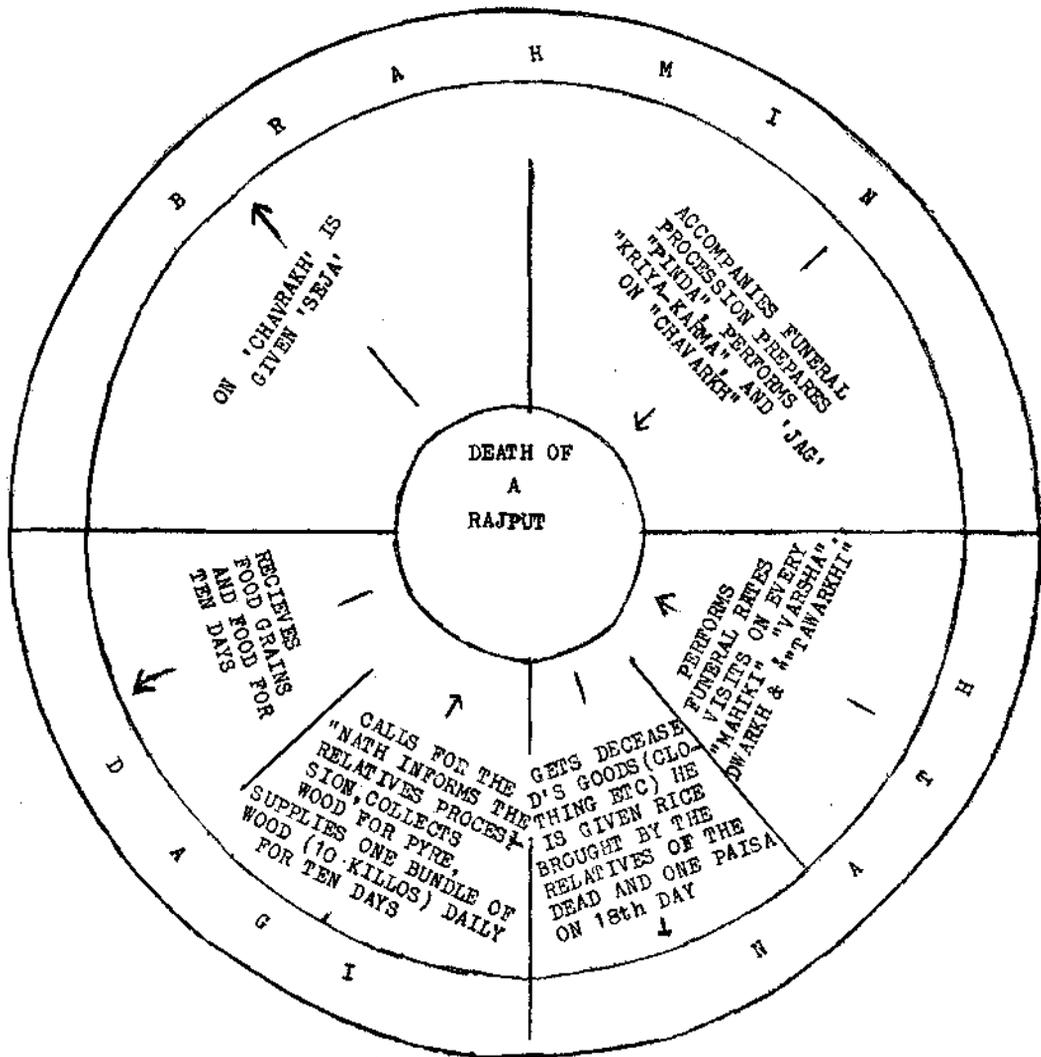
*Death*.—On the death of a Rajput, besides the Brahmins and the Dagis, Naths (who do not live in the village) perform some of the very important functions. A Nath is called for by the *Khoridar*. He reads some *mantras* and performs the death ceremony. *Khoridar* collects wood for the pyre and afterwards he supplies ten seers of wood daily for ten days. In winter this wood is burnt in the centre of the room in which the people gather to mourn the death. The wood is used to combat the biting cold.

The Brahmin ('purohit') visits the house of the Rajput in which death has occurred for 13 days and prepares *pinda* of rice or barley. No other man except the Nath, the *Khoridar* and some of the relatives of the deceased take food from that house. On the thirteenth day a Brahmin performs the *Kirya Karma*. All the relatives both agnatic and cognatic, bring 1/4 kilo of rice on the said day and the *Kirya Karma* ceremony is performed. The rice thus collected is given to the Nath along with one paisa.

During the first year the Nath visits the house every month ('Mahiki') from the date on which death occurs. This is done perhaps to remind the relatives of the dead about



No. 3 showing Pattern of Inter-Caste Relations on the Marriage



Sociogram No. 4 showing Pattern of Inter-Caste Relations of the Death of a Rajput

his or her death. He is given full one day's meal for the whole of his family or two Kilos of rice. He accepts both *Sucha* and *Jootha* food. He is given food in his own utensils which he brings with him.

After one year of death, *Varsha* (first death anniversary) is celebrated, in which also Nath plays the major role and takes all the *dan*. During the second and third year after death, Nath comes only once in a year as compared to the first year in which he comes once every month. He is given one day's meal for the whole of his family on such days.

After four years of death, *Chavarkh* (4th death anniversary) is celebrated. Now the Nath has no function to perform. Here comes to light the Brahmin. A big *Jag* is performed, where again Brahmin serves as 'Boti' and he is given the 'Seja' comprising the following articles :—

1. Two 'Pateelas' (pots) full of rice or 'dal' (only 'Sucha').
2. One 'Karchhi' (ladle).
3. One Thali' (plate).
4. One 'Glass' (tumbler).
5. One 'Parat' (big plate), full of wheat ('Sucha').
6. One 'Darati'
7. One Umbrella.
8. One cot with bed.
9. One coat.
10. One shirt.
11. One cap.
12. One pyjama.
13. One bucket full of water.

Rattan Chand (Rajput) told me that even the 'Jag' might not be performed but the above mentioned things must be given to the Brahmin in the presence of some invited relatives to witness the 'Seja' (or things to be given to the Brahmin). Rulda Ram (Rajput) told me that few days

back Tikku and Chetu (Rajputs) celebrated 'Chavarkh' for their father. He attended the 'Chavarkh'. He told me that he along with others ate rice. Dagens were not allowed to sit in one line with the Rajputs. He further told me that the rice were prepared by Mohan Lal (Brahmin). Asked about the 'Seja' given to Mohan Lal, he said that he did not care to see.

'Khoridar' (Dagens) on the death of a Rajput is given food for the first ten days for which he supplies wood. On 'Jag' all the Dagens come and take the food.

The death rites of the Brahmins are performed by the *Maha Brahmins* or *Acharj* who live in Jagat Sukh (a village). On the death of a Brahmin in the village, all the castes join the funeral procession. The Rajputs and the Dagens have no specific functions allotted to them on such an occasion.

Similarly on the death of a Dagi in the village, Brahmins and Rajputs join the funeral procession but do not play any significant role.

The pattern of inter-caste relations on the death of a Rajput is shown in Sociogram No. 4.

The foregoing account shows how the various castes spring into action on the occasion of birth, '*Chuda Karma* ceremony, marriage and death of a Rajput in the village. As already mentioned the inter-caste relations in the village are governed mainly by the caste rules and strictures and every body is conscious enough of his or her status. No body does any act transgressing the caste rules or the prescribed rules in order to create any tension among the three castes.

Dagens are quite conscious of their status. Dagens and women of all castes in the village are treated as unclean. Dagens are not allowed to enter the two temples, they may

however, enter the premises of the temples. There are two water-reservoirs attached to Vashishta temple. One reservoir is meant for the male members of the 'clean' castes and the other for women. In the reservoir meant for women, Dagis are allowed to take bath and that too only at night. Rattan Chand (Rajput) recalled that few years back an Arya Samajist brought two weavers from outside the village and wanted them to bathe in the reservoir meant for the male members of the 'clean' castes. In spite of all the warnings with which he was served (for the weavers were 'unclean' caste), he did not stop and he along with his weaver friends was severely beaten by the Rajputs. Since then none has tried to violate the purity of the reservoir.

In the village, it may also be stated, there never in the past has arisen any inter-caste dispute, for Brahmins and Dagitis form a very small number of the total population of the village and as also they are to some extent economically dependent upon the Rajputs, who form the bulk of the total population of Vashishta. The dominant position of the Rajputs is the major factor in keeping the other castes at a particular distance. Disputes can only arise when there is any transgression or infringement on the rights of any caste. There is only one case of inter-caste marriage, that of Jeet Ram (Brahmin—who married thrice—two times with Rajput women), and that too has been tolerated with a grain of salt by the Rajputs, even though the Rajput women were married in a higher caste i.e., the Brahmin and who even belonged to some other villages. The consequences of these marriages have been dire. Jeet Ram lost almost all his *Jajmani* except in four families. There has been no

other case of any inter-caste marriage in the village.

Another field from which inter-caste relations can be gathered is the village's traditional Panchayat which has no 'locus standi' in the eyes of law. (It has already been stated that the village was declared a notified area in the year 1962 and as such Panchayat constituted under the Panchayat Raj Act was dissolved). The villagers have now their traditional Panchayat in operation. All the families in the village are given a chance (by routine) to send its representative to the Panchayat Committee. Dagitis have already their terms. Presently there are four Rajputs who are members of the Panchayat and one Chowkidar who is also Rajput. The members of the Panchayat hold office for one year only. The Chowkidar and none else is paid; he is paid Rs. 5/- for his term.

The function of the Panchayat is to settle disputes and organise fairs and festivals in the village. The Chowkidar informs all the villagers about the meetings of the Panchayat. He also announces the 'Khul' (open) for the 'Bund' and 'Faat'.<sup>7</sup> A perusal of the records of the Panchayat shows that cases of dispute which generally come to the Panchayat are not between different castes, but are always between the individuals of the same caste or for cutting the grass from 'Faat' before the declaration of the 'Khul'. During the year 1963-64, nearly 20 persons (only one was Dagi and the rest were all Rajputs), were charged by the Panchayat for cutting the grass before the 'Khul'. All of them were fined Rs. two each. Similarly two persons (Rajputs) were also fined Rs. five each by the Panchayat for trespassing the fields belonging to their Rajputs.

<sup>7</sup>'Bund means piece of land enclosed by barbed wired by the Forest Department and 'Faat' is the steep place where sheep and cattle cannot go for grazing. No body is allowed to cut the grass before a 'Khul' is declared.

The decisions of the Panchayat are always honoured and if anybody does not abide by the decisions taken by the Panchayat, a meeting of the villagers is called; the whole case is referred to the public which usually ratifies the decisions taken by the Panchayat and the person concerned has to act accordingly for fear of public opinion. However, it may also be stated that in a dispute between two Rajput families, the *Purohits* and the *Khoridars* in the village always take side of their respective *Jajmans*.

*Personal Relations.*—Personal relations between the members of different castes often cut across all the restrictions and strictures of castes. During the course of the field study it was observed that children of all the castes, viz., Brahmins, Rajputs, Daxis do play together but still they keep at a distance. They observe the rules of pollution and commensalism. Some of the Rajput boys were very close friends of Daxis. The boys in the age group of 15-18 years tend to form their own social circle crossing the barrier of caste distinction. During the course of their friendship they often exchange 'Biris' or cigarettes, which an elderly Rajput or Dagi

will not do at any cost. Friendship is thus recognised as a personal relation as distinguished from an institutionalized relation which is very often sacrificed for the sake of the former one; both the relations may also be maintained while both parties observe their caste rules, observance of which is a bit difficult as also impossible.

In general, women are expected to be more stringent about keeping ritual distances than are men. Men may move with a person of lower caste but women would never. Women and children in Vashishta as in many villages seem to be more under the control of caste norms and traditions which aim at the maintenance of caste distinctions. The circle of friendship of girls in the village is limited within the caste group and rarely would a Brahmin girl go to see a Rajput girl. In the same manner, women of different castes meet one another rarely. Their visits to each other are very formal and those too on occasions of marriage and death. Except on these occasions, women of different castes do not meet one another but by chance. Women thus, are the most resisting factor to inter-caste familiarities.

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