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Caste Dynamics in a Transhumant Society

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ABSTRACT The present study report caste dynamics in a Gaddi population of Bharmour Tehsil, Chamba District, Himachal Pradesh, who travel from one ecological zone to another. This transhumant way of life nurtured by ecological factor has given a caste system that is very different from that of the plains in intercaste relational pattern. The caste structure in Bharmour appears to be the result of a combination of historico-ecological factors. The economic reality, on the other hand, does not permit the maintenance of the kind of complex stratification found in the plains. Families, were and still are, autonomous economically, socially and ritually (except for *rites de passage*). They are self sufficient, but at the same time, due to land and labour limitations, they are unable to rise much above the avarage economic level of the region. The socio-cultural system of the Gaddis is influcenced by their dispersal in winter and concentration in summer. This alternating pattern of concentration and dispersal makes for a certain fludity in social organisation. Constant interdependence can hardly be conducive to the maintenance of a rigid caste ideology.

This study presents caste dynamics in a Gaddi population of Bharmour Tehsil, Chamba District, Himachal Pradesh, who travel from one ecological zone to another. This transhumant way of life nurtured by ecological factor has given a caste system that is very different from that of the plains in intercaste relational pattern. The population in the Bharmour Tehsil, Chamba District, has been stable in the area for quite a long time. It has not been dominated or strongly influenced by the Muslims, Gorkhas, Tibetan or British. There have been no recent change in the technology of economy great enough to bring about rapid changes in social organisation. The area remained compari-tively isolated till the 7th century. Although the physical environment is discouraging, Bharmour saw a large influx of the Gaddis around the 7th and 8th centuries. The Gaddis caste is result of the union of Rajputs, Khatris and Thakurs over several hurdred years. Historical events suggest that they came from Lahore and Delhi. Whatever may be the origin of these groups they now form a single caste. Immigrants in to Bharmour area adopted the local customs, caste, kinship, marriage and religion thus indicating that ecological adaptations moulds the social relations to adopt to the local conditions. The local inhabitants draw a distinction between the three castes: the Brahmans, the Gaddi Rajputs (formed by the union of Rajputs Khatris, Thakurs or Ranas over several handred years); and the Scheduled Castes. The term 'Gaddi' is a caste term in Bharmour, but there is some confusion now-a-days as Brahmans and Scheduled Castes are also calling themselves Gaddis, because the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are entitled to financial benefits. Gaddis have become a tribe by circumstances and not due to any particular natural characterstics, Anthropologically Gaddis can hardly be called a tribe, they have been declared as a tribe mainly for the purpose of their social and economic development in view their backwardness. The Gaddis are Hindus and worship Lord Shiva, Devi Durga and other minor gods.

Ecological conditions in the area have resulted in a mixed-agro-pastoral economy. Although agriculture provides the bulk of the staple food, Gaddis give importance to sheep and goat rearing. From this source they obtain additional food in the form of meat and milk and wool for clothing. Due to heavy snowfall for about three to four months during winter, the Gaddis generally migrate to lower hills and plains alongwith their flocks of sheep and goats. During this period the

main source of livelihood is sale of wool and employment of there children and women as domestic servants. A small precentage pf populations is left behind to look after the cattle and fields and spinning and weaving of woollens. The migration is necessitated because the pastures and grazing lands are covered with snow, and it is difficult to maintain the large number of sheep and goats, and secondly, for the selling of raw wool which is avaliable in large quantities without market facilities. Other secondary traditional pursuits in the area are collecting minor forest produce, various kinds of household industries such as spinning and weaving, tailoring and beekeeping, and specialised occupations such as carpentry, iron-smithery, medicine, religious and para-religious activities. More recently the increase in mercentile and government activity has created new sources of income in transport, road building, construction, wholesaling and retailing. Horticulure, while not yet significant, may become a major source of income in the coming years.

Although agriculture is the mainstay of the Gaddis, yet the food produced is not enough for the whole year. The climate (temperature and precipitation), short working season, absence of irrigation in the area, fragmentation of the land resulting in small fields preventing the mechanisation of agricultural practices, absence of surplus labour in the area has affected the agricultural production in Bharmour. The short working season and absence of irrigation eliminates rice (most productive per land unit) as a food crop. Agriculture technology is extremely simple and time consuming. The Gaddis have a pre-wheel culture in which human back lifts and moves every thing. The only non-human power so far utilised is that of animals in plouging and thrashing, and of water-mills (*Gharats*) for grinding.

These feature serve to restrict the agricultural production. Upper range of these mountains are noteworthy for their, lush meadows and other good summer grazing and are thus rich in the natural resources which Gaddis are able to exploit. However, these pastures are only seasonal, Gaddis cannot rely on them for year round sustenance. Consequently pattern of transhumance is developed to utilise the productive mountain area in its productive season, while relaying on the other areas the rest of the year. Thus the Gaddis of Bharmour are able to support a human and animal population of suffcient size by means of agriculture and herding. For herding they utilise summer pasture surrounding mountain and winter pasture of the lower mountain of in and around Kangra.

It cannot however be said, that environment alone drive them out of Bharmour during winter, but the economic reality is also responsible for the same. There are families in Bharmour who do not have enough land or do not rear enough sheep and goats to fulfill their economic needs throughout the year. They have to look for odd jobs in lower hills, where they migrate. They work on daily wages as road labourers, wood cutters etc., and their women and children work as domestic help, thus earning their livelihood for winter months. Apart from this, wool and woollen products needs some way of disposal which is not possible if they are stagnant locally. As all the local people have sheep and goats (even if they have few) they cannot sell or exchange wool and woollen products, except by way of their own consumption. Inadequate transport plays a significant role in arresting the developmental activities. Thus the ecologic and economic factors necessitate transhumance among Gaddis. They have a mixed economy because of ecological imperatives.

In spite of the difficulties and problems created by the location, climate and physical features, the Gaddis by their ingenunity and hard work have formed a well balanced society whose activities are organised on the basis of gender. The Gaddi women are concerned with crop growing and Gaddi men with herding of their sheep and goats.

Caste system in Indian society has been defined as "a hierarchy of groups in a society, membership in which it is determined by birth" (*c. f.* DeVos and Wagatsuma, 1966: 279). There are many people who insist that caste must be defined in terms of exogamy and therefore all those who intermarry must be members of the same caste. This is not a tenable position as will become apparent in the course of our description of castes in Bharmour Tehsil. For the present, we only maintain that caste membership is ascribed by birth in culturally institutionalised ways so that it is predictable. Furthermore, the fact of intercaste marriage does not necessarily result in an unstable caste system, or one that is breaking down, so long as there are regularly followed rules for determining caste affiliations.

The other element in definition, namely hierarchy of groups, is present in most and perhaps all systems. Group stratification is not unique to caste system. It is to be found in class system also. Similar stratification is also to be seen in slavery as any political system that exists in a given social content. Stratification of groups may exist in other systems too, with the only difference that in a caste system the individual is unable to openly change his rank in the hierarchy apart from the rank of the group, although he may be able to change his class status within the given castes as well as in the society at large.

The caste system in Bharmour Tehsil is at considerable variance with the one found in the plains of India. The caste system in India has been studies by different authors (Bailey, 1960, 1961; Berreman, 1960b, 1962, 1966, 1967 a , b, 1968, 1972, 1973, 1978; Beteille, 1969; Srinivas, 1962; Kolenda, 1967; 1968; Freed and Freed, 1976). The characteristics of specific cates have been described and, to a considerably lesser extent, we also find description of the interactions of the different units which make up the whole system. In more analytical terms, the interaction between the different units can be viewed from three perspectives: the streucture of the interaction, the cultural idiom through which the structure is expressed and the ecological relationship that seem to be responsible for the interaction.

As elsewhere in India, so in Bharmour, rank is expressed primarily in commensal behaviour, that is, what a person can eat or drink, where and what he can give or take from whom. Of alamost equal importance are the rules governing marriage. Then there are the rule regarding smoking, sex and verbal deference although these are not as significant as the ones mentioned above.

The specific rules governing intercaste interaction vary considerably from one part to another, and often within a locality from one caste to another. Nevertheless these rules are always within the framework of a few general principles.

(1) Stratification and ranking are a function of the overall caste system, but some of the units (castes) within the system may be in state of temporary or permanent equality.

(2) When two castes publicly exchange-food, water and marriage partners, they are socially equal and regard each other as such.

(3) When one caste can give food and water to a second, but will not publicly take them in return, and/or will marry the daughter of the other caste but not its men, the first caste is socially superior.

(4) When two castes do not intermarry or refuse to exchange food and water, one or both is competing for equality or superiority, each probably considering itself superior to the other.

(5) It does not matter if there are many rules regarding intercaste interaction or only a few whether the rules are highly discriminating or not, except to reflect how far apart the castes, are in the hierarchy. The presence of even one mild rule symbolise hierarchy and ranking.

(6) Ranking is demonstrated first and fore-

most in public exchange of food, water and women. Private exchange that violates verbalised norms may be due to greater stress on caste-irrelevant factors in any given situation.

(7) The effectiveness of sanctions against violations of norms regarding intercaste interaction depends not only on the strength of the attitudes supporting those norms, but also on the availability of mechanisms to enforce with sanctions.

CASTE COMPOSITION IN BHARMOUR PATWAR CIRCLE

88.6 hectares of Bharmour Patwar Circle consists of six revenue villages (eleven hamlets) cultivated area, uncultivated area and forest. The land is fertile and productive and depends on rain. The natural water supply is plentiful and small snow-fed streams flow throughout the year. Composition of the population in Bharmour Patwar circle is roughly indicated in the table 1.

In the multicaste village usually the houses are mixed, but each caste has its own shrine. In Sachuien village where I worked, the village located on steep slope is divided into two parts : the upper and the lower. According to the tradition those who are of high castes live at higher level. Thus, the Rajput houses are clustured together at the higher level, and the lower portion or 'Sperka' of Sachuien has all the households of Sipis. Members of different castes and *Gotras* have separate cremation grounds along the side of the streams, river or spring. Since these castes are found not only in Bharmour Patwar Circle but throughout the Chamba District, it is necessary to put them into the larger geographical context, as well as in the local setting. There is no way of knowing how well the composition of the population in the Bharmour Patwar Circle compares with that of other Patwar Circles in Bharmour Tehsil. It probably does not represent any unusual

Table 1 : Composition of Bharmour Patwar Circle

S. No.	*Revenue village*	*Village name*	*Castes residing in the village*	*No. of families*
1.	Bharmour	(i) Bharmour	Bharmour and Rajput	78 Brahman and Rajput
		(ii) Patti (Sperka)	Sipi, Rehara	15 Sipi 5 Rehara
		(iii) Dhalkauta	Brahman	15 Brahman
		(iv) Khree	Sipi	2 Sipi
2.	Malkota	(v) Malkota	Rajput, Sipi	66 Rajput 3 Sipi
		(vi) Bari	Brahman	42 Brahman
3.	Sachuien	(vii) Sachuien	Rajput and Sipi	56 Rajput, 22 Sipi
		(viii) Gothru	Brahman	4 Brahman
4.	Seri	(ix) Seri	Brahman	26 Brahman
5.	Goshan	(x) Goshan	Rajput	26 Rajput
		(xi) Goa	Rehara	3 Rehara
6.	D.P.F. Bharmani			uninhabited

Source : Panchayat Register, Bharmour Tehsil

feature, except possibly the absence of Muslim Gujjars, Ranas, Rathis and Halis who are present in some other Patwar Circles of Bharmour Tehsil.

The castes residing in the Bharmour Patwar circle are Rajputs, Brahmans and Sipis. The Brahmans and Rajputs form the high castes and the Sipis and Reharas are lower to them in ritual status (Table 2). Brahmans are at the top of the ladder in caste hierarchy. The number of Brahmans also maintain them-

Table 2 : Caste composition in Bharmour Patwar Circle

Castes in Rank Order	*Total*
Clean or High Castes	
Brahman	679
Rajput	1915
Low and Unclean Castes	
Sipi	403
Rehara	24

selves by priestly work, is small. Many Brahmans are cultivators and living in a style hardly distinguishable from that of other cultivators. High status in caste hierarchy is by no means always correlated with a high eco-

nomic status and Brahmans are no wealthier than Rajputs or Sipis.

Below the Brahmans in the caste hierarchy, but far ahead of them in the political order, ranks, the Rajput caste. Newell is of opinion that these groups which now constitute the Gaddi Rajput caste, were originally separate endogamous castes, as they still are in Punjab. When they migrated to thte mountains of Chamba in search of refuge from political oppression in the plains during Mughal rule, they came with an insufficient number of women and married among local population. They thus became fused into one caste (Newell, 1955: 105). Below the Rajput caste come Sipi and Reharas in caste hierarchy. An interesting aspect of life in Bharmour Patwar Circle may be mentioned here. There are no washermen, cobblers or barbers as such. As a result the high caste people have to undertake activities which would create caste problems in the more traditional and orthodox plains, and which would be considered as 'infra-dig' for many twice-born. A traditional occupation in not associated with any caste in Bharmour Patwar Circle, except Brahmans priests (but all Brahmans are not priests)

Occupationally, the people of Bharmour Patwar Circle depend for their livelihood on an array of activities. While agricultrue is a subsistence base for most of the families, sheep and goat rearing also plays a vital part in their lives. Along with these two primary activities, there are also certain subsidiary activities such as spinning and weaving, carpentary, tailoring, flour grinding (running *Gharats* or water mills), shopkeeping and government services. Thus, we have families who are predominantly agriculturists with marginal dependence on sheep rearing and other subsidiary activities; and families that are predominantly engaged in sheep rearing with partial dependence on agriculture and other subsidiary activities. Even a family that depends primarily on flour grinding or spinning or carpentary, engages in agriculture and sheep rearing to some extent. Table 3 shows caste-wise occupation of people in Sachuien village in Bharmour Patwar Circle.

In a community where agriculture is one of the main stays of the economy, land, which is the basic asset, determines the nature of socio-political relations among its constituents on the basis of land ownership. The social structure of any such village rest on the "critical relations" (Firth, 1951: 31) which pertain to land and its ownerships. Changes in the land ownership might result in changes in social structure. The position of the various caste groups in the social hierarchy is not solely based on ritual hierarchy, but is determined and influenced by their economic status. Economic status in agricultural communities is primarily determined by the possession of the cultivable land. The dominant position of a caste is not determined by its numerical strength or by ritual status, but by combination of the two accompanied by its economic status. The situation however, is different in Bharmour villages, as there are no big landowners and cultivable land is little in proportion to the number of people residing in the village. In the case under study all landholders have small holdings. Historically speaking, the situation was more or less the same in the days of the *Rajah* (king) who gave only as much land to a family as it could cultivate. This meant an equitable distribution of land-holdings. In the post-inde-

Table 3 : Caste-wise occupation of people in Sachuien revenue village

S. No.	Name of the Category	Caste			Total Households
		Brahmans	Rajputs	Sipis	
1.	Agriculture	3	30	8	41
2.	Agriculture Cum Sheep and Goat Rearing	-	35	6	41
3.	Spinning and Weaving of Wool	2	50	15	67
4.	Carpentary	-	-	3	3
5.	Tailoring	2	-	2	4
6.	Flour Grinding	1	5	1	7
7.	Others	2	23	10	35

pendence period too land holdings continued to be small because of two factors *viz.*:

(a) The size of population increased while the amount of available cultivable land remained the same, and

(b) The nature of the terrian does not permit large-holdings.

Thus, though largely an agricultural community the social group under study does not bear out Firth's hypothesis as far as social dominance and interrelationships are concerned.

In the traditional caste system, *Varna* order, was taken into consideration for caste ranking. But in the course of time regional caste system took its own shape though still based on ritual and economic status. In Bharmour, Rajput caste was the dominant model for emulation. The historical factors paved the way for such a ranking. In Bharmour caste system which dated back to historical era has got the Indian scenario within feudalistic system in hierarchical order with socio-economic dominance of Rajputs. In Bharmour, status ranking is the result of the combination of numerical strength and ritual status accompanied by its economic status perceived by caste members themselves and about them by others. So the Gaddis of Bharmour are categorised into high and low castes. The Brahmans and Rajputs form the high castes and Sipis and Reharas form the low castes.

The details of the fragmentary and turbulent history of Bharmour are not necessary to the discussion except with regard to the origin and arrival of the different segments of the population, when they settled and their impact on those who preceeded them.

The general opinion is that the majority of the present low castes in the *Pahari* culture area represent the pre-Aryan aboriginals. The population consisted of two segments, the Kolis and the Kanets. The Kolis are believed to form the several low castes in Chamba District today; the Kolis, Halis, Sipis, Batwals, Dagis, Meghs etc. (Goetz, 1955: 45). Kanets are not found in Chamba District today, though they may have been there in the distant past.

The low castes which constitute 14 per cent of the population in Bharmour Circle, are collectively termed *Chanal, Asuchit* (Impure or Unclean), *Bita* (Low-Born) or Scheduled Castes. The terms 'untouchable' and '*Sudra*' are not heard.

The first Aryans to enter Chamba were those who are now called Ranas, Rathis and Thakurs. Today they form the majority of the population throughout this district.

"They claim to be Kshatriyas, but nothing certain is known of their history, except that every where they are mentioned as the earliest landlords and local chieftains, like the medieval knights of Europe, pettyh rulers over estates of a few villages at the utmost, involved in endless feuds with each other, submitting to Rajput princes whenever forced to do so and then serving in their armies, but reasserting their independence at the first opportunity. Most of them were introduced as late as the 17th century..... The dividing line between these groups is difficult to draw. The Ranas are evidently identical with the old *Rajannakas*, the court aristocracy of Pre-Rajput times. Inscriptions mention them as early as the 7th and oftener, after the 10th-11th century.....The name Thakur means 'Lord' and may have originally applied to any petty chieftain or his descendants, whether he had been a successful interloper from the lower classes or an immigrant from outside....The Rathis, do not belong to the aristocracy, but are agriculturists. As their name *Rashtriya i.e.*, people of the kingdom, implies, they too belonged to the ruling class, though only in its inferior ranks. In other words, the Ranas and Rathis, and a good portion of Thakurs are the remanants of the ruling class which preceded the Rajputs and Brahmans, but superceded the older primitive Koli and Khasa Tribes" (Goetz, 1955: 45-46).

According to the Chamba Royal *Vansavali*, (genealogy) the first capital of the state was

founded in 550 A.D. at present-day Bharmour, then Brahmapura in the upper Ravi valley, after the area had been conquered from the Ranas by Maru, the first ruler of the State (Vogel and Hutchinson, 1933 : 278).

Control over Bharmour was apparently not firmly established until 650-700 A.D., when Meru Verman, the eighth ruler, erected many temples, shrines, images and inscriptions in the immediate area (Vogel and Hutchinson, 1933: 280). The population composition of Bharmour remained the same since the times when the Ranas and Rathis first entered with the addition of a few Brahmans.

There is no clear evidence as to when the Brahmans and Rajputs entered Chamba, other than the tradition of Brahmans and Chauhan Rajputs entering Bharmour about 760 A.D., and that of the Kanwan Brahmans who held the land on which the present capital was built. The highest concentration of both Brahmans and Rajputs is found in and around the capital and in Bhattiyat Tehsil. Most of them undoubtedly came from Kangra and the plains adjacent to Chamba in the beginning of 8th and 9th centuries. This is about the time when there is the first historical evidence of Rajputs of India. Today Kangra has one of the highest concentration of Brahmans in North India (Ibbetson, 1916: 215). Many who are called Rajputs, including the royal family, probably are the descendents of the martial groups of the Indian middle ages whose pedigrees were eventually accepted.

The earliest evidences of Hinduism in the state are the *Shaivite* temples erected in Bharmour by Meru Verman in the 16th century. *Surya* the vedic Sun-Gold and *Kartikeya*, the god of war were worshipped in the 6th and 8th centuries (Goetz, 1955: 49). Orthodox *Vaishnavism* was introduced by the royal family between the 8th and 10th centuries but has never become popular with the villagers. The temples erected in Bharmour and Chamba by the founders of the two capitals had Brahman priests associated with them. Following are the four historically important temples that deserved mention here:
Lakshna Devi Temple, Mani Mahesh Temple, Ganesh Temple, Narsingh Ji Temple.

CASTE SYSTEM IN BHARMOUR PATWAR CIRCLE

While describing the interaction patterns in the caste system of Bharmour Patwar Circle it is necessary to distinguish norms from actual behaviour. By norms we imply verbalised and idealised rule of behaviour. The distinction is not calculated to show the extent of deviation from norms, but only to damonstrate the dynamic processes that are responsible for maintaining a hierarchical system in relative stability, as well as to look at the ways in which the ecology has inhibited the effectiveness of social sanctions.

In most parts of India there generally are certain cultural differences between the different castes that make up a local hierarchy. These differences may relate to religious practices, choice of gods, eating habits, dress styles, occupations, division of labour, marriage practices, and kinship organisation (DeVos and Wagatsuma, 1966: 303-304). In contrast with this there are remarkably few cultural differences among the several castes in Bharmour Patwar Circle. All castes display a certain flexibility in the absence of social and religious customs and conventions. This, however, does not mean that people here are unaware of the social and religious orthodoxy of the plains; they simply do not feel any need to observe what they consider strict customs. Immigrants to the area have adopted most local customs, and even an increased contact with the outside has brought almost no change in the attitude towards such matters. In Bharmour Patwar Circle no caste is vegetarian though no one eats beef or buffalo. High castes drink more than the low castes. All the castes practice marriage by sister exchange, polygamy (in cases where it

is considered necessary), divorce and widow remarriage. Dress, style, food habits, religious practices, family organisation, occupation and division of labour appear to be the same among all the castes. Even the Sipis wear the twice born thread. The Sipis wear this thread as a mark of their caste affiliation. On the other hand, Rajputs and other higher castes, although they are entitled to wear the thread, never bother. It may be obtained from a special Brahman from plains at Mani-Mahest pilgrimage, who will invest anyone on payment of fee. Only Sipis bother to obtain it. According to the Gazetteer, formerly Sipis were not allowed to wear the thread, but in exchange for certain services done to the *Rajah* they were granted the right to wear it. Some Rajputs wear it and some to do not, but all the Sipis wear it, may be they are wearing it as a mark of honour. Although Sipis try to pose as Gaddis to outsiders, yet in their own traditional set up, together with their formal and informal barriers and sanctions against the learning or expression of inappropriate status characteristics, these individuals are well known, family ties are not concealable, dissimulation is a virtual impossibility and physical mobility to a new setting is almost as unlikely as social mobility. The rigid caste stratification is difficult to maintain when the indicators of identity are learned, for learned characters can be unlearned, suppressed, or learned by those to whom they are inappropriate. To manipulate these indicators is often difficult because the identifying characteristics may be learned very early (language, gesture), and may be enforced from without as well as from within (dress difference, occupation) as reported by DeVos and Wagatsuma (1966: 245, 248) Isaacs (1965: 143-149). There are differences in attitudes and values but these appear to be a function of the position hierarchy. High caste individuals tend to be slightly more assertive and enterprising, low caste individuals more obsequious. However, in this respect there is probably as much variation within a given caste as there is between the different castes. As a consequence there are very few attributional criteria for the ranking of the castes and in Marriott's term this represent perhaps the closest approximation to a completely internal ranking system (Marriott, 1939). Despite the absence of significant cultural differences among the different castes they are ranked as given in table 4.

Table 4 : Ranking of Castes in Bharmour Patwar Circle

Clean Castes	Brahman
	Rajput/Khatri
Unclean Castes	Sipi
	Rehara

The caste structure in Bharmour Circle clearly fits the patterns described the Berreman (!960) for the '*Pahari*' culture area, that is

(1) A major division into high castes and low castes, with only minor hierarchical distictions within each level;

(2) Conspicuously fewer castes in any given area than is true of the plains; and

(3) Greater flexibility in intercaste relations, and freer intercaste interaction than on the plains, permitting more informal contact.

In Bharmour the high or clean (*Suchit*) caste Brahmans and Rajputs freely exchange food and water. In this respect they are socially equal. They sit on each others cooking platform, eat the same food and even eat from the same dishes. Norms and actual behaviour regarding their interaction are identical.

The above mentioned pattern of equality contrasts sharply with the norms for commensal behaviour, between high caste and low castes. The low castes can and do take water and any kind of food from all the high castes, but they can give only uncooked food, milk and *Ghee* (clarified butter) to the high castes. Low castes cannot sit or go near the cooking platform (*Chauka*) in high caste home, nor can they touch cooking utensils, water or

cooked food in the high caste homes. Of course, the last mentioned rule does not hold true if the food or water has been served directly to them. When they have finished eating they are expected to take their dirty dishes outside, rinse them and return them to the women of the household who wash them again. At the time of marriages high caste people attend the weddings of low castes, but they cook their own food, from the raw material which is provided by the low caste host. They do not however sit together to eat.

Norms and actual behaviour are not as congruent with the high caste-low caste interaction as they are in respect of interaction among the high castes only. For example, in a drinking party that includes both high caste and low caste participants, norms of interaction are generally observed in earlier stages but in the latter stages it is not unusual to see everyone taking food from the same dish. On such occasions, if a high caste participant takes offence at this violation of the norm it might lead to considerable tension and even to a fight. Also, in such an enventuality some of the high caste participant may take sides with low caste participants.

Among the low castes there is a third pattern of interaction or non-interaction as the case may be. When a Rehara (which is one of the low castes) was asked to rank the castes, his response was that the clean castes were all of a higher rank, although personally he did not like the situation. He was not concerned at all about the specific ranking among the clean castes as he considered it irrelevant to this behaviour towards them. When asked to rank the low castes relative to himself he refused to do so, only response being that each low caste considers itself superior to all the other low castes. He went on to say that if the other low castes would accept food from his caste he would accept food from them. This perhaps implies that what he really wanted was not an assumption or acknowledgement of superiority of one low caste or the other, but rather an emulation of the high caste pattern of equality and reciprocity. The Rehara attitude notwithstanding, no one seemed to be willing to publicly change the status quo. The researcher did not get any opportunity to observe the actual behaviour of low castes with one another, but one can say that norms and actual behaviour were probably not always identical. The lack of opportunity was because of the fact that there were only Sipi households in Sachuien and the Reharas were present in Goshan and Bharmour.

The patterns of interaction regarding marriage are comparable to those described above relating to food and water transactions. Within the upper groups there are two main castes; Brahman and Rajputs which are nearly always endogamous. There is no village other than Kugti and Bharmour which has both Brahman and Rajput population. Kugti is about 26 kilometres ahead of Bharmour and twenty and thirty years ago when there was no means of communication between Kugti and other places of Bhramour Tehsil, intercaste marriages were common. Brahmans and Rajputs in Kugti Patwar Circle intermarry freely. Children born of high intercaste marriages take the caste of the father. It is not that such marriages are preferred, but given a Brahman village in an area where the nearest village has only Rajput population, it is not surprising that they have a high rate of inter-caste marriage. Since in the caste hierarchy Brahman enjoys a higher status, this may be regarded as Brahman acceptance of the practice of intermarriage. However, there is a gradual change now in the communications, since girls from Kugti are now marrying in other parts of Bharmour Tehsil also (Newell, 1963).

There is a taboo on inter-caste marriage involving high and low castes. Any violation of this norms is said to entail severe social sanctions. The enforcement of caste rules generally rests in the hands of caste Panchayat of the village concerned. This informal caste Panchayat consists of the male leaders of the different *Gotras* (clans) residing in the village. However, the official Patwar Circle Panchayat has no

authority to enforce rules of caste behaviour unless it has a support of all the villagers. It is feared that if the rules are broken once, it will create social disorder.

In the case of marriage as in the case of commensal behaviour there are very few ways of enforcing sanctions. Most families are nuclear, they are occupationally not specialised and are economically independent because they possess their own land. As a result families as well as individuals tend to be socially and economically autonomous. Moreover, if a high caste person eats with a low caste person, they are unlikely to be seen, and even if they are seen there is little that can be done about it, short of starting a fight. For exanple, during migration, a Sipi *Puhal* (shepherd) may eat, smoke or drink with the Rajput he is accompanying. On such occassions when objections are raised the chances are fairly good that the high caste objecter is a kinsmen of the high caste violator of the norm. Moreover, nothing is gained by fighting with a kinsman over this kind is issue; and also every one has a skeleton in his own cupboard and is aware of it.

The result of all this is that there is a high degree of tolerance of behaviour involving intercaste interaction that deviates from the norms, so long as there is no effort to legitimise it publicly. If such behaviour is legitimised as in marriage, then the only social sanction that can be imposed is to shun the high caste violator. As stated earlier, this sanction is imposed by the caste Panchayat and is never completely effective. Deviant behaviour may cause only raised eye-brows and murmurs of disapproval, but hardly ever creates a grave situation. However, when deviant behaviour becomes flagrant and is flaunted before the public eye, intercaste tension is likely to be generated. For example, a low caste man may have an affair with a high caste woman on the sly and no serious consequence may be feared, but if he starts living with her openly, it provokes disapproval and may even cause intercaste tension.

Caste divisions as they exist in the Bharmour Patwar Circle do imply a certain amount of discrimination against the low castes particularly in the matters of commensal behaviour. This engenders emotional responses. Some people resented the caste system, their position in it or specific concomitants of their caste status. However, in this respect a new trend may be seen particularly among the educated high caste individuals who do not like the idea of discriminating against the low castes. These people prefer to select their friends on the basis of personality factors rather than on the basis of caste identity. Sometimes, the aggressive low caste individuals try to become friendly with high caste individuals in an efforts to break down the barrier between the castes. Their aim seems to be to create a sort of equality, although a very limited and temporary one. In case where the two types meet, that is the high caste person who does not discriminate and the aggressive low caste individual, equality exists but in an atmosphere of conspiracy and discretion. In case of friendship between high caste individual and low caste individual the friendship and equality becomes manifested openly only when the low caste friend is insulted by a third party, in that case the high caste individual may come to his defence.

The lack of commensal and marital exchange between the high castes and the low castes, means to represent a sort of covert or suspended competition for maintaining equality or superiority. What is implied by this statement is that while the high castes do not encourage marital exchange in order to maintain their superiority, the low castes are motivated by a desire to match or equal the high castes by being equally unwilling to enter any intercaste marital relationships. The situation remains largely unresolved because structural change require a long time and general consensus, all else remaining equal. Moreover, there is also the nagging fear that any structural change may result in lowering one's status, or in the high castes enforcing stricter norms should they feel threatened by

changes within the low caste patterns. Consequently, the low castes prefer to maintain the status quo, and are content with whatever individual relaxation of the norms may occur from time to time.

Another area of caste interaction is the ceremonial life of the village. Some ceremonies consists of individual rites involving only the family members. Other ceremonies include people outside the family, *Al* (sub-caste), *Gotra* and caste. Few ceremonies include processions or other public spectacles and involve feasts and other entertainments that can be attended by people of all castes. Intercaste participation include activities like joining a procession, giving a gift, accepting food, listening to a story, playing games, participating in an evening of songs and dances or simply acting as spectators.

All the castes participate in the religious ceremonies. In Sachuien, there are two levels at which gods enter the village life: through family worship and caste worship. These village gods are propitiated by *Purohits* (priests), *Pujaris* (worshippers) and *Chelas (disciple, a person through whom a diety is supposed to speak)* . *Purohits* are Brahmans by birth, and are residing in Gothru hamlet. They visit their patrons on days of *Patraru Sankrant, Sero Sankrant, Lohri Sankrant* and *Baisakhi Sankrant*. The patron has the responsibility of providing a fixed amount of grain to the *Purohit* each year in exchange of services provided by *Purohit* at the ceremonies of birth, marriage and death. Part of payment is made at the time when services are rendered, part is paid in grain at the harvest and part in the form of gifts at ceremonies. The client family usually has a monopoly in providing services to its patrons: a patron cannot discharge its clients and hire another family of the same caste within the village; he may, however, break off relations and do the work himself.

Pujaris are caretakeres of caste shrines of the village. They can be of any caste. *Chela* is receptive to the entrance of deity into his body. This may be done by means of trance or other forms of possession. *Chela* can be of any caste, but usually a Sipi. At the village shrines rituals are performed by the whole village under the leadership of caste *Pujari* and *Chela* attached to the shrines. Neighbours are dependent on one another for the efficacy of the rituals that personally affect them in life's crises. As the Gaddis are dispersed in winter, all their festivals are distributed in the summer months, and the village is frequently assembling as a corporate group for purposive activity. It includes not only the ritual performance itself, but involves also the commensal feast from the slaughtered animal[1].

Ceremonies related to the life cycle, birth, marriage and death provide many occasions for the intercaste participation. All the castes who have *Barton* (obligatory assistance) in the village, participate in these ceremonies. These are occasions for singing, dancing and feasts. Although high-caste people do not eat food cooked by low-castes, but they do attend their ceremonies and cook their own food from the raw material provided by low-castes. The basic factors for such multicaste interaction are geographical proximity, affection, curiosity and the entertainment provided by such activities. Caste hierarchy is not a major consideration in such matters.

In Bharmour, Patwar Circle apart from Brahman priests of Bharmour village there are group of *Sadhus*[2] (celibate priests), who are incharge of the main temples at the Chaurasi area in Bharmour.

The Bharmour Patwar Circle, as a region,

1. In 1976, Bharmour Yatra and Manimahesh Yatra fell on 14th and 28th of September. Approximate gathering on Bharmour Yatra was 7,000 which comprised local people but Manimahesh Yatra attracts people from other States as well.
2. These *Sadhus* are non-Gaddis and belong to the Sadhu federation with headquarters in Benaras. The traditional Brahman families of Bharmour village who have inherited the right to look after the temples present the God daily with obligatory-food items.

is caste-incomeplete. On the hamlet level this incompleteness is more pronounced. The process is largely circular. As a family migrates to a new location it is forced to rely on its own labour for most endeavours, performing many jobs that, on the plains, would be the province of different artisans and menial castes. The lack of any surplus prevents the family from hiring specialised labour, and its own range of skills renders it unnecessary. Artisan castes have not proliferated simply because they are not needed. On the other hand unskilled labour is needed at harvest time but is not available.

This caste structure appears to be the result of a combination of historico-ecological factors. Until the 16th century, and very possibly, even till the 17th century, the population of Bharmour Patwar Circle consisted chiefly of Brahmans, Rajputs and Sipis, with a sprinkling of other low castes. The King (*Rajah*) controlled all the land but the people were allowed to own whatever land they needed for cultivation. The high castes needed people to work in their fields and, as such, they dared not antagonise the lower castes by putting restrictions on their holdings. The line between the Brahmans and Rajput was rather fluid since the Brahmans took Rajput wives.

Whatever interaction took place among these three groups at that time, would not have been so much economic as social. The population density at that time must have been much less than what it is today, since maize was probably not introduced until after 1853; and maize supports a much larger population base than wheat or barley can ever do in this climate and at this altitude.

The relative equality among the high castes and why no caste has been able to assert dominance to any significant degree can be explained by the position of Brahmans in Bharmour circle. Brahmans, although they act as '*Purohits*', do not have any special position, this is because of the fact that village and caste deities are propitiated by respective caste '*Pujaris*'. Lyall, writing about the Brahmans of the entire hilly zone, has pointed out that there are two distinct classes of Brahmans: those who are willing to handle plough (known in Chamba as '*Halwaha*' or Ploughing Brahmans) are the descendants of the first Brahmans to enter the hills, and because of their immigrant status they were "forced to submit to various degrees of compromise and to mix with surrounding population" (Barnes, 1883: 121) and those who are descendants of the later migrants who mostly flocked the courts of the petty local rulers. In neither case did the Brahmans gain hold in the hills as popular priests. The public ministration of the temples has always continued in the hands of original natives of the country—a class quite distinct from the Brahman class.

This is what seems to have happened to Bharmourie Brahmans. From historical accounts it is clear that the Hindu State in Bharmour was founded around 7th century. Brahmans came from the plains to serve Rajputs and Khatris as '*Pujaris* and '*Purohits*'. Sipis and Reharas are considered to be the original inhabitants of the area, though they were later on dominated by the Rajputs. Brahmans when they came, could not alter the situation. Badly outnumbered and lacking economic and political standing, the Brahmans had little claim to social superiority and local hierarchy. Brahmans appeared to have made compromise as regards social customs and in return people of Bharmour Tehsil, have made compromises as regards religious belief. The pantheon of gods, festivals and cosmology continue to be, largely in the great tradition. The original inhabitants of the area were animists. They had an elaborate pantheon of gods and goddesses. They believed in deities, worshipped them and sacrificed sheep and goats. They have all along been trying to preserve their traditional practices and customs, even though they accepted Hinduism. The old way of worshipping the

deities is still preserved in various festivals and in every family inspite of their being Hindu, earlier names and rituals are still remained. Brahman priests have the right to perform ceremonies that, probably, had never been conducted prior to their arrival. Though Sipis accepted the Brahmans as ritually higher, they never let slip their own position as '*Chelas*' rather the achievement of the '*Chelaship*' was considered a ladder to superior position. The Sipis as '*Chelas*' are attached to the caste shrine of others along with '*Pujaris*'. Brahmans, who came in small numbers, had to resort to the techniques of '*Chelas*', particularly trance, possession and divination, and adopted local customs. Most probably the religious beliefs and rituals in the Bharmour Tehsil, were originally, in essence demonolatry, ancestor worship and nature worship. This original form with the passage of time and with the entry of Brahmans into the area, was retouched to form Hinduism. This transformation was achieved by the process of absorption rather than by that of eradication, with the result that, even today, the pantheon and the theology bears the marks of demonolatry and nature worship.

The Brahmans have had almost no impact on the social organisation of Gaddis. They have only succeeded in introducing some All-India Calandrical Festivals and Pantheon of gods worshipped elsewhere in Chamba. Most worship is still in household or in caste-shrines. The other castes to not attach much importance to Hindu ceremonialism and consequently to Brahmans as a high status groups. The right to perform priestly rituals confers no particular prestige for the Brahmans but a knowledge of writing does and is extended to a person of any caste who is learned in this respect. This is an achieved status, and it is generally assumed that a person who can read sacred texts is knowledgeable about other matters as well.

Even among the Brahmans themselves there seems to be little feeling of superiority over other clean castes, although this is changing through increased contacts with outsiders, who consider all Brahmans superior. The Brahmans know that Hindu scriptures ascribe to them the premier position, but they do not really understand why. They do not view their current status as a fall from a previously higher position, but simply as the way it has always been. In Bharmour, Brahmans complain that they have been occupying the villages at the top of the valley where the soil is poorer, while the more fertile lower portions of the valley have been occupied by the Gaddis and Sipis. As a result of greatest exposure to religious knowledge, the Brahmans are somewhat more observant of household ritual, but this is not a basis of social differentiation.

All the Brahman '*Purohits*' in Bharmour Patwar Circle, who are associated with patrons, perform funeral rituals. This activity would lower their status in other parts of Chamba and on north Indian plains. In other parts of Chamba, Brahmans who perfrom funeral rituals are known as '*Acharaj*' Brahmans and are considered on a par with low castes. Proper Brahmans do not accept food or water from them nor intermarry with them. These '*Acharaj*' Brahmans are not called upon to perform rituals of birth and marriage.

Badly outnumbered and lacking any political and economic standing, intermarriage with the Rajputs was a natural consequene of this state of affairs. Willingness of the Brahmans to exchange women also must have been necessary for social acceptance and acknowledgement of permanent residence. Such social acceptance usually takes two or more generations to become stable.

In the meantime the Ranas has lost their social and political dominance. They continued to take Rathi wives and were also willing to accept Brahman wives, but would give their own women only to the Ranas or the Rajputs who had replaced the Ranas as the dominant caste in the state. However, in the

Bharmour Patwar Circle there are no Ranas and Rathis now.

This can also be explained on ecological ground and economic adaptations. On ecological grounds, one has to look at the relationship between terrian, settlement pattern, absence of surplus and labour patterns to understand why this type of caste-structure has emerged.

Because of the fact that all castes, regardless of the rank in the hierarchy, have their own land, the family can usually provide sufficient income for economic independence. This acts as a natural deterrent to any inclination that the artisans and menial castes might have to practise a specialised trade or to hire themselves out as agricultural labourers. The high castes are unable to hire such labourer even if they can afford it, this factor further promotes intercaste and intra-family occupational generalisation.

It is interesting to note that 14 per cent of the people in this circle belong to low unclean castes, a far higher proportion than is normal for north Indian plains. Historically speaking, perhaps it was also because of their large number that the high castes could not coerce them into occupational servitude.

Since there is no significant differentiation occupationally or at the income level, and rarely any hiring of a day labourer on a caste basis, one of the traditional basis and motivations for hierarchical differentiation is lacking. A caste that employs members of other castes is usually ranked higher than those it hires, simply as a result of economic power. In the absence of economic power a caste has no leverage to suppress, exploit or otherwise assume a superior position.

The economic reality in Bharmour Patwar Circle does not permit the maintenance of the kind of complex stratification found in the plains. Until very recently there was no land pressure in the sence that every household owned as much land as it could use. Those families that are short of land now are almost equally distributed among the several castes, and so far they have been able to maintain their income level by road labour and other work that does not involve working for other local families. Families were, and still are, autonomous economically, socially and ritually. They are self sufficient, but at the same time, due to land and labour limitations, they are unable to rise much above the average economic level of the region. Both land and labour are required for significant surplus. Amassing land is pointless if there is not sufficient labour available to make it productive either for agriculture or for grazing. Horticulture does present an option now but it has yet not brought about any significant change in the land holding patterns.

The nature of terrain has prevented the development of markets because transportation of goods was inhibited. And with family self-sufficiency there generally was little or no need to buy local products. A proverb in the district says "If the harvest is plenty, there is no one to buy; if the harvest is scanty, we must lie down and die" (Hutchinson, 1970: 223). When a family harvests a good crop, other families do so too. This has generally been the case for the entire district, and there has traditionally been little export market. The result has been a subsistance economy with insignificant variation in the economic level from one family to another. Specialisation of labour never came about and nor did an elaborate social system involving sharp hierarchial differences. Even at present the population is not large enough to make up or to support the socio-economic complexity of the plains.

An important factor responsible for the mildness of restrictions on intercaste interaction is the need for social interaction coupled with low population density, problems of physical mobility and relative numerical balance between high and low castes. Social interaction tends to breakdown barriers and leads to more caste interaction. In Sachuien, which has both Rajputs and Sipis, caste dif-

ferentiation is completely ignored by children when they play. High caste adults constantly turn to low caste adults for conversation. There is also evidence to suggest that commensal and smoking restrictions are frequently ignored in this village, although they emerge on the surface whenever people from other villages are present. The high caste residents of Sachuien are likely to defend low caste individuals of their own village whenever there is a dispute. This is parallel to the individual friendship pattern. In some cases high caste/low caste proximity leads to greater social interaction, and there is likely to be less observance of the norms for intercaste interaction on the part of the high caste individuals, than if they resided in a purely high caste village. It has been how the comparitive isolation and smallness of settlements has altered the normative caste relationships as they obtain in the plains.

Under the circumstances it is surprising that restrictions on intercaste interaction exist to the extent they do, and that caste are ranked. The reason for this would appear to be historical and external. The Gaddis migrate in the winter and through contact with outside people become conscious of the caste system. As the contact with outside world increases awareness of caste and hierarchy also increases.

Economic adaptations that Gaddis have made, reveal that the Gaddis tend to share a basic pattern of economic activities during most part of the year. Although the people are caste conscious, they have significantly modified the caste system in accordance with their social and economic needs. Ecological conditions have resulted in an operational modification in the caste system and caste idiom. As an illustration, one may cite the example of *Puhals* or Shepherds (who are invaribly Sipis). When these *Puhals* accompany Rajputs on migration, they eat, drink and smoke with the Rajputs. This is the reverse of ordinary circumstances in which a Rajput would never offer '*Hukka*' (water pipe, Hubble Bubble) to a Sipi, nor accept one offered by a Sipi, nor would he share his food with a Sipi. Another instance of the coexistence of caste consciousness and dilution of caste division is case of the Sipi, traditionally a low caste. However, a Sipi is universally respected and revered when he appears in the role of a *Chela* and one might find a high caste Rajput or Brahman going to him and touching his feet.

In an area where labour is scarce, people have to depend on one another and, in doing so, the inter caste relational pattern is diluted. Constant interdependence can hardly be conducive to the maintenance of a rigid caste ideology. Moreover, in Sachuien where Rajputs and Sipis live in the same village, daily contact, interaction and interdependence have led to a certain degree of intercaste intimacy which, however, is studiously covered up in the presence of outsiders.

The socio-cultural system of the Gaddis is influenced by the total ecological situation (1) The Gaddis have to be dispersed in winter and concentrated in summer (2) This alternating pattern of concentration and dispersal makes for a certain fluidity in social organisation. A group that lives together in a unit requires a different sort of organisation from one that is a unit requires a different sort of organisation from one that is fragmented into smaller units. The fragmentation of the community is a logical outcome of the ecological circumstances within which the community lives. The migratory mode of production and fragmentation of the community has given a certain kind of fludity to the intercaste interactional pattern at different times.

A review of the calender of economic activities, reveal that fluctutions of the intercaste relations at different periods of time. In the month of April, after the snow, people return home. Communal tasks such as getting new cross beams for houses, repairing water mills, clearing water channels for *Gharats*

(flour mills), repair of retaining walls broken down by snow during winter etc. are performed. In these activities, all the people who have *Barton* (Obligatory assistance) in the village, irrespective of the caste, work jointly and some sort of communal harmony is created.

The following months of May, June, July, August, September and October constitute the main agricultural season. During agricultural season, each family manages its own affairs and caste restrictions and distances are maintained to some extent. With the advent of winters, migration to lower hills starts. Gaddis travel in groups (may be of different castes) but once they reach the place of migration, they resume their distinct identity as Rajputs and Sipis. At the place of migration, all precautions are taken for showing caste distance. Here, a Rajput would not share his food or drink or offer a *Hukka* to a Sipi. But at this very moment, Sipi may be sharing a food, drink or *Hukka* with a Rajput at the *Dhars* (Pastures). All their inter-caste relations depend on the time and place of the activities in which they are engaged. These activities are, in turn, governed by the ecological conditions of the area which have modified their economy accordingly. The main thrust of the paper, thus, has been to demonstrate the impact of ecological conditions on caste system, as well as to show that operational modifications in the caste system have taken place as a result of social and economic interdependence, through fragmentation of a community as ecological adaptation, giving us a caste system that is very different from that of the plains in intercaste relational pattern.

Authority and power in the circle is an elusive thing, seldom sought and only grudgingly delegated. Given the self-sufficiency of the nuclear family and the lack of economic differentiation, there are few ways in which a man can develop a base of power or authority. There is hardly any interest in community operation or community activities, hence no group leader is necessary. Government officials do exist in the circle. It would seem that people seek power and authority as a means of increasing personal wealth, although the reverse may not be ture. However, wealth and regional power do go hand in hand to a large extent, partly because wealth enables a person to court government officials.

It must be realised that villages around Block Headquarter are transition villages, standing as they do between the outside world and all the other villages in the circle in terms of progressiveness, adaptiveness and educational level. Comparatively most Rajputs and Sipis in Sachuien are economically better off than the other Gaddis of Patwar Circle. There are households that are currently engaged in mercantile activities, shopkeeping and other non-agricultural persuits. A young man of Sachuien Shri Thakur Singh was a *Pradhan* (Head of the village) of *Panchayta Samiti* (an elected village body) and owns a chemist shop in Bharmour and has became a M.L.A. (Member of Legislative Assembly of the State). As such he has influential contacts with District Administrative Officers. Literacy in Sachuien and Gothru is 29 per cent. People in this area prefer allopathic treatment because the Primary Health Centre is situated in Bharmour Block Headquarter. However, they do believe in supernatural treatment by *Chelas*.

The extent of modernisation in Bharmour Patwar Circle is far behind that of Chamba town, but it is more advanced than other part of Bharmour Tehsil. The people in the properous families, are viewed as highly sophisticated by local standards, and are sought out by people of other villages as sources of information, services and assistance not otherwise available.

Authority in the community and region does not devolve on the eldest male. In Sachuien, it is the eldest brother of the household who has been most successful in all respects, but the mantle is being taken over by

his youngest brother, who is acknowledged to be the most qualified of his generation in the family and village. He is active in politics and has married a girl from Pathankot. Wealth and authority tend to go to those who seek it.

There seem to be ample opportunities in Bharmour Tehsil to deversify economic resources and increase household income provided a family is enterprising and hardworking. Most villagers are hardworking but are unwilling to do more than is necessary. They lack initiatives and the willingness to take risks or try new ideas. One young man did try several different jobs and continually announced new ideas for making money. Several of these ideas would probably have been successful had he pursued them. However, his inability to follow through on any task, including weeding and protecting his maize fields, was so great that he rarely harvested enough food to three years because he could not be bothered to cultivate it. Those who have prospered have found non-agricultural sources of income, increased their holdings, learned new skills and worked at improving their contracts with government officials and others who may be of value to them.

As individuals their conformity to the norms is no better and perhaps worse than the rest of the population. They are not respected for being upstanding characters. But real power and authority lie with government officials, outsiders who have no permanent ties with the area and who usually reside not in the circle but in Chamba town. Such authority is not trusted, it is simply a force to be contended with and one that is usually repressive in the eyes of the villagers.

In long range terms, it seems unlikely that the people of Bharmour Patwar Circle will emulate more sanskritic Indian tradition as they increase their contact with the outside world. They are already aware of orthodoxy but see no advantage in it. Instead it is probably that they will bypass Sanskritisation and emphasise modernisation (Srinivas, 1962 : 42-62). The Brahman has never been a social model locally, and it is the Brahmans who have chosen to conform to the cutoms they found when they arrived in order to gain social accpetance. They have remained at the top of the caste because of the powerful influence of Hinduism which demands that birth, marriage and funeral rites must be performed by Brahmans by birth. Although income derived from these duties is small but Brahmans are still called for performing certain rituals and their place in social order is reinforced.

At present there is no way to evaluate whether caste differences and restrictions on interaction will increase or decrease. There are forces working in both directions, and much will depend on which set of forces become dominant. The rapidity of the spread of education, the people who receive education, the caste affiliation of government workers posted in the Bharmour Block Headquarters, the type and extent of contact with outsiders, and factors that could increase or decrease economic differentiation—these are all potential influences, and it is too early to predict the direction of social change with respect to caste.

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