Muslim Caste in Uttar Pradesh

Zarina Ahmad

Muslim social groups share many, though not all, of the attributes of the Hindu castes. Most of these attributes were acquired from the Hindus and, although contrary to the spirit of Islam, it has been possible to maintain a Muslim society of castelike ranking in India because both the communities, in spite of the differences of faith, have shared the same economic and political environment.

Orthodox Muslims resent the use of the word caste to describe Muslim social groups. It is disputable whether the term caste can be so used, but I believe that the concept of caste can be used with advantage to analyse social stratification among the Muslims.

Even ashraf Muslims (i.e., Muslims who claim foreign descent) resemble Hindu castes in many respects. Ashraf society is socially stratified; it includes endogamous groups, mobility between which is restricted; prohibition on eating and drinking exists; and the groups are organised on a hierarchical scale. In terms of stratification and social mobility the difference between Hindu castes and Muslim social groups is one of degree and not of kind.

Social groups among the non-Ashrafs (i.e., Muslims of Indian origin) approximate even more closely to Hindu castes. After conversion of Islam the Hindus only accepted a different faith but their mode of living did not change much, nor did the basic structure of caste society or the internal organisation of the castes. Even those Muslim social groups which are predominantly or entirely Muslim have incorporated Hindu customs and usages and, as such, have become an integral part of the Indian society.

The Muslim population of India represents the mixture of groups drawn from the indigenous races of India and foreign blood from successive bodies of invaders and immigrants from the regions beyond the north-western frontiers. (‘Her- sklot’s Islam’, (ed) Crooke: 1921: 7). Even in the case of earlier invaders their racial purity was lost by intermarriage and concubinage with the Hindus. At the same time the number of modern Muslim castes that are obviously composed of converts from Hinduism and the “number of Hindu castes, specially Rajputs, that possess Mohammedan branches, make it quite clear that there must have been many changes of religion. Intermarriage though not common, did occur. The invading Muslim armies did not always bring their wives with them and while settling in India must have taken wives from the original inhabitants. There is reason to believe that conversion very often took place in the shape of group conversion, that is, often a whole caste accepted Islam rather than just a few members of it. Although individual conversion also occurred it was less frequent in the earlier days of Muslim rule.

From the very beginning of Muslim rule in India until the Mughal period the Indian Muslims remained a partially Indianised heterogeneous community, centred round the foreign conquerors who were very diverse in their racial stock. Although this community maintained a certain amount of exclusiveness from Hindus, it was at the same time very different from the Muslims of other countries. “Islam in India tried to conform to a rigid uniformity in ideas and actions but conversion and the introduction of other communities into Islam moulded its nature no less than Islam moulded the character of its recruits”. (Yaseen : 1958).

Contacts Varied According to Status

The Muslim rulers, in order to keep in check hostile elements, always had to keep a large army. As a result the profession of soldierry was very popular and Muslims were employed in all capacities — from commanders to ordinary soldiers. Muslims being more or less absorbed in this profession, handicraft and agriculture were left to the Hindus and to the converted Muslims. This distribution of professions can still be traced among the present day Muslims. The contacts between Hindus and Muslims varied according to their class and profession. The upper classes suffered more from jealousy and rivalries, being dependent entirely upon the favours of the king. The middle classes, that is the artisans the intelligentia, and the men of the clerical professions were more in contact with the Hindus as their interests did not clash so much with theirs.

With the break-up of the Mughal Empire and the accession of British rule this pattern did not change basically since society retained feudal characteristics. The aristocracy which was centred round the king filled some of the high administrative posts and many of them, having Taluqas and Jagirs, maintained themselves, as before having both Hindus and Muslims of the agricultural and artisan classes under them as tenants or labourers. British rule indeed increased the number of landlords by introducing the revenue system. Under this system any one could own land by purchase and keep control of it as he paid a fixed revenue.

Islamic and Non-Islamic : Problem of Identification

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by the bulk of the Indian population. Thus the development of contacts between Hindu and Muslim cultures was very gradual. Indeed it is often difficult to identify what is Islamic and what is non-Islamic among Muslim practices. This is very much so in the pattern of social stratification among the Muslims, which has many attributes of Hindu caste system.

The structure of free Muslim society in India does not exhibit Islamic and what is non-Islamic lims, which has many attributes of social stratification among the Muslims, which has many attributes of Hindu caste system.

Dr Ashraf, a historian describes the composition of the social classes during the early Muslim period in India. "The Emperor stood at the head of the State, the nobles and the privileged classes were under him both Hindu and Muslim lower classes were below the nobility and were separated from them". (Ashraf : 1932)

The nobility was a heterogeneous body and its composition varied with the ruling dynasty. In the beginning all of the nobles were Turkish. Afghans were included during Mohammad Tughlaq's rule and the Mughal rulers included men of Mughal origin.

The lower class Muslims were hardly distinguishable from their Hindu counterparts. They were in most parts converts, and had not altered their position much materially. Unfortunately neither Dr Ashraf nor any other historian gives much information on the social condition of the lower class Muslims. One can infer from what little information is available that conversion did not change much an ordinary Hindu's environment.

Foreign Ancestry : Invented

Greater honour and respect was paid to the foreign ruling and privileged classes than to those of Indian extraction. People used to invent foreign ancestry for themselves in order to improve their social status. Mohammad Yaseen, another historian, confirms this notion of foreign supremacy found during the Mughal period. The foreign ruling and privileged classes of non-Indian extraction received more than their due share of honour and respect and were allowed the highest claims of social distinction. (Yaseen : 1957 : 20-21) Yaseen quotes Bernier saying that "nearly every individual when first admitted to the court of the great Mughal, selected wives from and concubines from Kashmir so that his children may pass for foreign Mughals". (Yaseen : 1957 : 21). This sense of superiority of foreign blood is still present among the Indian Muslims.

At present Muslim society in India is divided into two major sections, the ashraf and the non-ashraf. The ashraf who are themselves divided into four sections claim foreign descent while the non-ashraf Muslims are all regarded to be of local descent and include numerous menial and artisti castes.

The ashraf are divided into four classes, Sayyad, Sheikh, Mughal, and Pathan. All ashraf claim foreign descent and not not interdine or intermarry with the non-ashraf.

Sayyads

They claim the highest social status. They say they are the descendants of Ali, son-in-law of the prophet and the fourth Caliph. The Sayyads are sub-divided into groups which tend towards endogamy but are not endogamous groups in a strict jural sense. Four of these groups take their names from the original homes from where they came. They are the Baghdadi Sayyads (Baghdad), Roxhari Sayyads (Bokhara), Sahzwar Sayyads (Sahzwar in Khorasan) and Tirmizi Sayyads (Tirmiz in Persia). Apart from these four groups, there are many other sections who claim descent from early Caliphs and Imams. The most important of them are Hussaini, descendants of Husain, the grand son of the Prophet; Alavu descendants of Ali, and eleven sections who call themselves after the names of eleven Imams (Abidi, Jafri and Naqui and so forth).

In the regions of Delhi and in such principal seats of Muslim authority as Lucknow there are families of Sayyads who hold their status by inheritance from ancestors who rendered services to the Mughal rulers either in the army or the administration. (Blunt : 1931).

According to the District Gazetteers of Uttar Pradesh, the Sayyads numbered 17,414 at the Census of 1901, or over 10 per cent of the Muslim population in the Province. They are more numerous in the districts of Lucknow than any other part of the province and about 92 per cent of them are found in Lucknow Tahsil. Their presence in Lucknow is directly due to the influence of the Oudh court which was the centre of Shia culture, and a great majority of Sayyads are Shias.

It is interesting to note that Sheikh and Sayyads in Uttar Pradesh taken together exceed the number of Pathans and Mughals by 50 per cent. There has been a tendency to claim a higher title than one's own.

Sayyads intermarry with Sheiks and there is a tendency towards hypergamy. But a Sayyad never marries a Mughal or a Pathan. The same applies to Sheikh who do not marry Mughals or Pathans either. Mughals and Pathans inter-marry with each other.

Sheikh

Sheikh means chief. It is an Arabic term and those who call themselves Sheiks claim Arab descent. The title of Sheikh is widely spread over India and except in the Punjab and Kashmir, predominates over other designations. (Baines: 1912) In the Punjab, Rajput weavers call themselves Sheiks and many of the lower agricultural groups also claim Arabic origin and give themselves this title. (Ibbetson : 1916).

Sheikhs are subdivided into sections, like Sayyads. Most of them take their names from Caliphs and religious leaders. The most numerous sub-divisions are: Farooqui, Qidwai, Quraishi and Faridi. Inter-marriage takes place freely between the different sub-divisions.

Mughal

Mughal is used interchangeably for Mongol. Baines suggests that the Mughal element in the North is better defined and those who hold this title are not probably genuine Mughals. They claim to be the representatives of the families brought to northern India by the semi-independent viceroys of Delhi. (Baines: 1912 : 141). Mughals are for this reason more numerous in the neighbourhood of Delhi. (Blunt : 1931). According to Blunt, most Mughals
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in Uttar Pradesh settled there after Baber's conquest in 1625. (Blunt: 131; 170). But their number is quite small, less than a million. The most prominent of them are Chagtais, Uzbecks, Tajeks, Turkomans and Qizilbash. Chagtais is the Turkish branch to which Timur family belonged. Uzbecks represent another Turkish tribe who supplied troops to the Mughal emperors. Qizilbash are supposed to be the Tartar horsemen from the Caucasus. (Blunt: 1931).

The word Pathan is a Hindi corruption of the word *Pakhtu*, meaning those who speak Pakhtu language. It applies to tribes whose original home is on or near the northwest boundaries of India. Pathans are found in all parts of Uttar Pradesh, except in the hill districts. They are most numerous in Rohilkhand, Allahabad and Oudh districts. About half of all Pathans belong to four tribes of Yusuf Zai, Lodis, Ghori and Kakars.

Yusuf Zais consider themselves to be descended from the Indo-Aryan Kandharis who served Babers army. The Lodis are the descendents of Tajeks. Ghoris are probably a hybrid race, a mixture of Arab and Kandharis. (Blunt : 1931). Kakars belong to a small group of tribes from Ismail.

**Muslim Caste-Ranking**

Orthodox Muslims resent the word caste being used for the Muslim social groups. It can be disputed whether the term caste can be so used, but I believe that the concept of caste can be used with advantage to analyze social stratification among the Muslims. A comparison of Hindu caste usages and practices with the practices among the Muslim social groups may throw some light on the character of these groups. Muslim social groups share many of the attributes of the Hindu caste system although not all. Most of these attributes, were acquired from the Hindus, and, although contrary to the spirit of Islam, it has been possible to maintain a Muslim society of caste-like ranking in India because, in spite of the differences of faith, both the communities share the same economic and political environment.

Let us consider a few definitions of caste. Senart defines caste as a "Corporate group exclusively and in theory at least rigorously hereditary". (Senart : 1930; 20). Risely defines caste in more detail "A caste may be defined as a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, claiming common descent from a mythological ancestor, human or divine: professing to follow the same hereditary calling; and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogeneous community. The name generally denotes or is associated with a specific occupation. A caste is almost always invariably endogamous in the sense that a number of the larger circle denoted by the common name may not marry outside of the circle but within that circle there are usually a number of smaller circles each of which is also endogamous". (Risley: 1908; 6).

Kroeber gives yet another definition of caste. According to him, "A caste may be defined as an endogamous and hereditary subdivision of an ethnic unit occupying a position of superior or inferior rank of social esteem in comparison with other such sub-divisions" (Kroeber: 1951; 235).

According to the above definitions, (a) caste is endogamous, (b) castes follow a certain profession, (c) caste membership is hereditary, and (d) castes are arranged in a hierarchy.

**Mobility Not Totally Restricted**

It is a popular belief that caste is rigid and unchanging, and that the caste system is completely devoid of social mobility. Recent researches in this field have shown that although social mobility is restricted and slower than it is in other socially stratified societies, the Hindu caste system is not completely without mobility. Both individuals and groups can move although not very frequently.

Instances of individuals rising into higher castes either by their own efforts or alongside others are known and so are cases of falling into lower castes. "Under Hindu rulers persons were sometimes promoted by the Rajah from one caste to another. This power was exercised by the Rajah of Cochin, who often raised men from lower castes to the rank of Nayars. A former Rajah of Talcher in Orissa compelled his Chasa subjects to admit certain goolars to their community" (Ghurye: 1932; 41).

An important attribute of the caste system is its hierarchy. According to Prof Srinivas the notions of *dharma* and *karma* have greatly strengthened the idea of hierarchy which is so important in the caste system. (Srinivas: 1953: 23). *Dharma* may be defined as propriety, socially approved conduct in relation to one's fellow being and to worlds in general and the supernatural powers. Each caste has its own specific *dharma*, rules of conduct to which each member of the caste should conform. He must not try to follow the rules and conduct of the *dharma* of another caste. If one follows his own *dharma* he will be born into a higher caste. The fulfillment of one's caste *dharma* enables a person to be reborn into a higher caste in his next life until he is born a Brahman and then unites with the God. The chain of rebirth is called the *karma*.

And here lies an important point of difference between Hindu castes and the Muslim social groups. The concepts of *dharma* and *karma* are not found among Muslims. Since every Muslim is born equal in the eyes of God, a Muslim can find no refuge in religion to justify the practice of social inequality. It is possible that the lack of the concept of *dharma* makes Muslim social groups slightly more fluid than the Hindu castes.

* Sanskritisation*, Too

One of the effective means of raising one's social status among the Muslims is the imitation of higher class practices. It works some, what like "Sanskritisation" in the sense Prof Srinivas uses it. (Srinivas: 1953: 23). But it must be accompanied by the economic betterment of the family concerned. As soon as a lower class Muslim makes money, he puts his women in purdah (a practice observed only by the ashrafs), starts going to the communal prayers in the mosque and goes to Mecca for pilgrimage. A Haji (one who has visited Mecca) is respected whatever caste he may belong to. But an ashraf will not give a daughter in marriage to a Haji of lower caste, however respectable he may have become.

Another characteristic of the Hindu caste system is the concept of ritual purity and impurity of the castes. These notions have both a
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physical and a religious connotations. Each caste has a certain quality of ritual purity but both individuals and groups can lose this purity in a number of ways. One of the ways in which ritual status can be lowered is by eating food cooked by certain castes. A distinction is made between food cooked with water called kachcha and food cooked with ghee (clarified butter) called pakka.

Death is polluting. Thus associations associated with death are also polluting, and physical contact with one belonging to such an occupation can pollute the individual. Human emissions are polluting and professions associated with them are similarly polluting. Thus a bhangi (sweeper) is impure because he deals with human refuse. A dhobi (washer-man) is impure since he washes clothes stained with blood.

Caste Taboos

Among the Muslims there is no permanent or group pollution. But individual pollution is observed. One becomes impure in certain physical conditions, and by touching certain objects, but pollution cannot be transferred from one person to another. Women are polluted during their monthly periods and for 40 days after child-birth. The place the child is born in is also polluted for 40 days. Both men and women are polluted when they have been with each other. To get rid of the pollution one has to take bath. While in the state of pollution one must not touch anything sacred. One must not offer prayers or read the Quran. One must not enter the mosque or any shrine, one must not eat any food which has been to the mosque or a shrine or on which fatahe (verses of Quran) have been recited. (Beven-Jones: 1941).

Certain animals are also polluting. A dog can pollute an individual. If a dog touches any vessel that vessel is polluted, and must be washed thoroughly seven times before it is considered fit for use. If an animal falls into the well or pot of water or food, it becomes polluted.

Caste status among the Hindus is expressed through regulations on eating and drinking. In northern India Brahmans and Rajputs do not take pakka food from those below the Jate and the Gujar. They in turn do not take food from the minial castes, the Brahmans refuse kachcha food from the Rajputs, thus demonstrating their superiority over all.

Mayer has made a detailed study of the hierarchical aspect of caste in Ramkheri village of Malwa. Here the Khatis do not take kachcha from the Bhilalas, and the Bhilalas do not eat from the Khatis. But many castes take pakka food from the Khatis and drink from their water pots, but do not do so from the Bhilalas. Bhilalas claim to be equal to Khatis and so Tefuse kachcha food from them. (Mayer: 1956). In Bisipara village of Orrisa studied by Bailey a rising caste of distillers refuses to take food from the higher warrior caste of the village. (Bailey: 1957).

Among the ashraf Muslims ideally speaking there are no restrictions on taking food from each other although social mobility is so restricted between sheikhs and sayyads on the one hand and the mughals and pathans on the other that hardly any communal eating and drinking takes place between them. The ashraf and non-ashraf castes do not eat or drink together at all. There are no ritual sanctions against it but the social distance is so great that it does not happen. The non-ashraf serving castes, while eating during their hours of service at the ashraf house, have to eat in a separate place not seen by their ashraf masters. Within the non-ashraf castes themselves rules operate approximating to those followed by their Hindu counterparts.

The following incident took place in a village in Lucknow district. A manihar (Bangle seller) woman came back to the village after a long absence. While away her husband had established a flourishing business. On her return to the village, she went to an ashraf wedding and, avoiding the host's attention, sat on a table where ashraf ladies were sitting to have their meal. Being dressed in expensive clothes she was first not recognised as a manihar woman. But in the middle of the meal one of the ashraf ladies recognised her and all the ashraf ladies at once stood up and refused to sit at the same table with the manihar woman. It caused a lot of embarrassment, but the manihar lady had to sit and eat on the floor. There is another example of a dhoban (washer-woman) married as second wife to an ashraf landlord. She was a Muslim, but her origin as a dhoban was never forgotten. Being a mild and well manneed lady she was after some years admitted to the ashraf gathering but only as an observer. She was never allowed to take part in any rituals and always had to retire before meal time.

Social Elevation by Matrimony

Among the Muslims marriage outside one's social group is restricted, in the same way as eating and drinking. To get an ashraf wife is one of the ways of raising one's social status. A very recent example comes to my mind. In a village in eastern Uttar Pradesh, which was inhabited mostly by Muslim landlords, a new family came to settle down. They were soon known to have been julahas (weaver) in another village. They built a big house and had a big business in brick manufacturing. Their sons were sent to town for education and women were put in strict purdah. Their ciders used to go to the village mosque, for their prayers. (Many people are casual about attending the mosque. The point here is that the julahas made it a point of attending the mosque so that they could take advantage of the convention of fraternity and equality which has to be observed by all those present, whatever their status).

For quite a while they were isolated. Ashraf families did not want to meet them on account of their julaha origin and they themselves did not like to establish any relations with the village julahas as they were anxious to get accepted into the ashraf society on account of their wealth. And they railed themselves Sheikh. The stories of their wealth were around the village and a couple of liberal ashrafs accepted their constant invitations. After getting a little encouragement they took a very daring step, and sent a proposal for their son's marriage to an ashraf girl. This caused great resentment among the ashraf families. After long arguments and much persuasion the girl's parents showed some willingness as the boy himself was well educated and promising. The negotiations went on for a year and in the end the match
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was settled. The wedding took place with such pomp and show as the village had not seen for years. The wedding was performed in accordance with ashrāf rituals and invita-
tions and sweetmeats from the boy's side, sent to all those who belonged to that village, no matter where in India they lived. The purpose was to
announce the fact that they had married an ashrāf girl. The ashrāfs were very annoyed and the social pressure put upon the new pair was so great that they decided to live in town permanently. But within a generation or two, these facts will be forgotten and they will become
genuine Sheikhs.

Differences—Only of Degree
I have tried to show from this discussion that groups among ashrāf Muslims resemble Hindu castes in many respects, Muslim ashrāf society is socially stratified; it includes endogamous groups, mobility be-
tween which is restricted; prohibition on eating and drinking is applied; and these groups are organised on a hierarchical scale. The main difference between the Hindu castes and these Muslim 'castes' is that Muslim castes have no ritual signifi-
cance. It is precisely this notion of ritual purity and impurity, and the doctrine of karma and dharma which differentiates Hindu castes from the Muslim social groups. But in terms of stratification and social mobility the difference is one of degree and not of kind.
The Muslim castes of Indian origin (the non-ashrafs) approximate even more closely to their Hindu counterparts than the ashrāf. Alter conversion to Islam these castes only accepted a different faith but their mode of living did not change much. The majority of them being ignorant and illiterate did not realise the significance of islam and to them change of religion meant substitut-
ing allah for paramatma and celebrating a few Muslim festivals to-
gether with some Hindu ones. Ibbelson tells Us about Muslim con-
verts in Punjab, which is also true of Uttar Pradesh. He says "As a fact in east Punjab conversion had absolutely no effect on the caste of the convert. The Mohammanad Raj-
put, Gujar or Jat is for all social, political, tribal and administrative purposes exactly as much a Rajput. Gujar or Jat as his Hindu brother. His social customs are unaltered, his

rules of marriage and inheritance are unchanged, and almost the only difference is that he (Muslim) shaves his scalp lock and the upper part of his moustache repeats tile Moham-
madan creed in the mosque and adds Mussalman to the Hindu wedding ceremonies." (Ibbetson: 1916: 14).

Politico-Economic Hierarchy
In the Hindu caste system there are two types of hierarchy, one ritual (discussed above) and the other politico-economic expressed in the notion of 'dominant caste'. Accord-
ing to Prof Srinivas. "A caste may be said to be dominant when it pre-
dominates numerically over the other castes and when it also wields pre-
ponderant economic and political power." (Ibbetson: 1957).

A dominant, caste at a village level may or may not be Brahman. The facts demonstrate the important po-
sition of caste who have political and economic power in their hands. In Kishan Garhi. a village in Uttar Pradesh studied by Mekim Marriott; Brahman and Jats owned all the land. Now Brahmans are becoming wealthy and challenging the political power of the Jats. In another village of Ram khera. in Uttar Pradesh Jats held nearly all the land in the villag-
es and held the political power. In another village of Modhopur in L'ttar Pradesh the Jats held 70 per cent of the village land and controlled both village and district panchayats. The situation i. very similar in other regions. In the Orrisa village of Bisipara the warrior caste and Boad distillers hold most of the land. The warrior caste has been holding the political power in the village but is now acquiring new wealth, (Bailey: 1957).

In these villages the dominant caste dispenses justice and acts as the final court of justice both in inter-caste and intra-caste disputes, which were often not settled in the caste panchayat. They have more or less complete control of the eco-

nomic destinies of the village, be-
cause they hold most of the land. By the fact that the dominant caste holds most of the land it also con-
trols the food supply of the village and thus receives the services of the menial castes of the village.

Feudal Structure Allowed to Persist
This feudal structure of Indian society has persisted over many years and was not interfered with by the

Muslim rulers of India. They replaced some of the dominant castes by Muslim nobles by awarding them Taluqs (fiefs') and laud. As a result of this, the status relationship of different castes at the village level remained the same both for the Hindus and the Muslims. Dr Hardy sums it up most accurately. "both (Turks and Mughals) substituted one group of revenue collectors and military chiefs for another, changing the men at the top of the social pyramid without dislodging the pyramid itself. (Hardy: 1958)

Blunt divided the Muslim occupa-
tional castes (these castes include menial and artisan castes) of U P into three broad categories; firstly, those which are entirely Muslims; secondly, those which are predomin-
antly Muslim and thirdly, those which are predominantly Hindu with only a few Muslim branches.

Under the first category (wholly Muslim) Blunt includes these castes: Atashbaz, Badigard, Bhand, Bhati-
yata, Bhishi, Biloch, Bisati, Dafali, Dogar, Caddi Gandhi, Gara Ghoga, Ghosi, Hurkiya Iqta. Jhoja Julia-
ha, Kammie, Khazada Khumara, kingariva, Lalkhana. Mirasi. Nau-

In the second category (predom-

inantly Muslim) Blunt includes: Churihar. Darzi Dhuniya kunjra, Manihar. Men or Mewati. Kangr,
Saigalgar and Tawai.


Neither Blunt nor the Census Re-
ports give any details about the customs and status of these Muslim castes. Crooked account of 'Caste and Tribes in North Western Pro-
vinces of Agra and Oudh’ is more comprehensive but his information does not always agree with that of Blunt. Some of the castes listed by Crooke are missing in Blunt’s account, and others listed by Blunt are missing in Crooke’s account. Blunt has deliberately omitted a number of castes like. Hijra, kungra, Lakherra, Kabariya, Nal-
band, Nanba, Qaligar, Raingsaz, and Habshi on account of their be-
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There is some discrepancy in Blunt's accounts. On the one hand he discards a few Muslim castes listed above, because they are occupational and on the other hand he includes a few castes which are purely occupational. He does not seem to follow any uniform criterion for determining 'purely occupational' castes.

No Regular Pattern of Assimilation

Blunt has put the Muslim castes in three categories. And this immediately suggests the following question. Do the castes in these categories differ in their use of Hindu or Muslim customs? Are those categories differ in their use of Hindu or Muslim? Do those castes which are composed of entirely Muslim branches nearer to the Quranic pattern or even nearer to the pattern set by the ashraf Muslims? Do those castes which have predominantly Hindu branches have more Hindu customs than Muslim?

For this purpose I shall take one or two castes from each category and compare their religious beliefs and marriage customs. Of the castes which are entirely Muslim I take the Iraqi first. Crooke says that the Iraqis are a caste of Mohammadan Kalwars and profess to take their name from the country of Iraq. They sometimes call themselves Ranki. It is popularly said that they have nothing to do with Iraq and that they are called Iraqi because they deal with araq (spirituous liquor) and Iraqi is said to be really the corruption of araqi. The Mizzapur Iraqis have a panehayat, but other Iraqis do not have a panehayat. They are divided into sections but these sections do not regulate the choice of a spouse. Widow marriage is avowed only with the permission of the council. Levirate is permitted but restricted. Only the younger brother of the late husband may marry his widow. A daughter never inherits from her father unless he has made a provision in his life-time.

Their marriage rituals resemble those of Hindus. They perform a ceremony called matmangar which is also performed by the low caste Hindus. Blunt says that Iraqis follow the rules of hypergamy and forbid cousin marriage. It is not known that the caste status of the Iraqis is, and, if they follow hypergamy, to which caste they give their women. They profess to be Sunni Muslims. They do not inter-marry with the Shiias. Iraqis worship the Goddess Bhawani, a Hindu deity and offer blood sacrifice a at the graves of their saints, a practice quite contrary to Quranic ideals.

The Caste of Bhishitis is composed entirely of Muslims. They follow a mixture of Hindu and Muslim customs. The Bhishitis are a purely occupational caste of water carriers, and include members of other caste sub-divisions. They have a large number of exogamous groups. They have a tribal council. They do not take food from the menial castes. They allow widow marriage and divorce only with Council's permission. They worship their mashak (leather water bap) in which they carry water from house to house and burn incense in front of it on Fridays.

Similur Marriage Rituals

Dhuniyas are a caste who have predominantly Muslim branches. Dhuniyas are the caste of cotton carders. The Hindu dhuniyas claim to have Rajput origin. But Muslim dhuniyas take their names from a saint named Khwaja Matisur, who is believed to have bought the dhuniyas with him from Constantinople. They collect sacred earth at weddings and carry out whole night's watch and there is a distinct survival of marriage by capture, in the observance by which the bride, when bridegroom arrives at the house for the marriage, is furnished with a small stick with which she gives him two or three slight blows on his head as he enters the doors" (Crooke: 1886: 297) This recalls an ashrاف custom. Among them this ritual of hitting the bridegroom is performed with a slight difference that it is not the bride herself but her voimeer sister who makes the 'attack'. (Whether this custom is a survival of marriage by capture, as Crooke says, is, of course, debatable.)

I now come to the last category of Muslim castes which have larger Hindu sections and small number of Muslim sections. Gujars are one example. They are a caste of cow-herds. Blunt reports that Gujars "were apparently converts to Islam at various times." Some of them still maintain their Hindu sections and regulate their marriages by them as their Hindu brethren do. Three hundred and eighty gotras of the Muslim branch of Gujars are reported by the Census of 1891. Muslim Gujars are mostly Sunnis and do not inter-marry with the Shiias.

Betrothal is celebrated on a lucky day fixed by a Brahman and fathers of the betrothed exchange cups of spirits. When the wedding procession arrives at the bride's house a Hindu rite duar ka char is performed and then the mehr is fixed and the Qazi (priest) performs the nikah. When the bride arrives at the house of her husband her mother-in-law performs a Hindu ceremony of paraclian. She waves a hand over her head to scare the evil spirits, and then takes her into the household chapel (deoghari) where she worships the guardian deities of the family.

It appears form the above account that all castes, whether entirely Muslim, predominantly Muslim or predominantly Hindu share more or less the same mixture of Hindu and Muslim sections. At least there does not emerge any regular pattern of assimilating Hindu and Islamic cultures. Conversion to Islam did not change either the basic structure of the caste society or the internal organisation of the castes themselves. Even those castes which are predominantly or entirely Muslim have incorporated Hindu customs and usages and as such have become an integral part of the Indian society.

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important beginnings

In December 1911, Bihar acquired the status of a separate province. This marked the dawn of a new phase in the history of this ancient state.

The birth of the new province synchronised with another epoch-making event. In December 1911, shattering the silence of the jungle hamlet of Sakchi, as Jamshedpur was then called, the newly-built Tata Iron and Steel Works roared into life and produced the first cast of pig iron. The commissioning of India's first iron and steel works helped to put Bihar on the industrial map of India and to set the country on the path to economic maturity.

In the course of fifty years, with the steel works as its nucleus, Jamshedpur has grown into a major industrial centre in India and the second largest city in the fast-developing State of Bihar...a city where industry is not merely a source of livelihood but a way of life.

JAMSHEDPUR THE STEEL CITY

A view of the Tata Steel Works in 1911

The Tata Iron and Steel Company Limited

THE ECONOMIC WEEKLY