The Jats of Northern India
Their Traditional Political System—II

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Social and political changes do not seem to have had much effect upon the traditional political system of the Jats of Northern India, based on the khap and sarv-khap Panchayat.

A person who comes to occupy a status position outside the traditional system strives to consolidate it by acquiring the status roles within the traditional system. To do this he has to live up to the social norms dictated by it. Thus he upholds adherence to the traditional system and reinforces its authority. The prestige and political ascendancy of such persons is used by the traditional Panchayats to command allegiance and exercise social control within the Jat community and, to some extent, in inter-caste relations.

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The functions of various political units of khap and the sarv-khap Panchayat fall into three categories, namely, adjudicative, legislative, and executive. The khap council and us various political units now, for the most part, do not have legislative functions because they have, no legal sanction or authority as they enjoyed earlier under their legal charter, then the khap Panchayat could frame rules and regulations to be obeyed not only by the Jats but also other castes and communities of the khap area, and their infringement was punished by the khap Panchayat which was supreme in internal matters. Several instances from the historical records of the khap Panchayat of Baliyan and from the minutes of the Panchayat meetings can be cited where certain rules of conduct for inter-personal, inter-group, and inter-caste relations, rules guiding land revenue collection, and general policies of social welfare for the people, were framed and executed by the khap Panchayat. However, the khap Panchayat and its units now function only as adjudicative bodies, and executive bodies in so far as the implementation of their decisions is concerned, by virtue of what may be called the traditional charter. The sarv-khap Panchayat still functions as a legislative body when it meets for its formal session every five years since its revival in 1950. (See the resolutions of the sarv-khap Panchayats below.)

An informal meeting of the sarv-khap Panchayat of neighbouring khaps may also function as adjudicative and executive bodies when they judge cases of infringement of resolutions adopted in the formal meetings of the sarv-khap Panchayat or decide to implement these resolutions in the various khaps of the area or when they decide cases and disputes between persons, groups or castes, and implement their decision on the parties concerned. Executive power, particularly in implementing the sanctions passed by a Panchayat, is generally used in extreme cases of default or flouting the social norms by a person or a group, and its success depends upon a strong public opinion behind the decisions of the Panchayat.

A council of higher political units may be summoned if a smaller unit is not successful in settling an issue. Among the territorially based councils, a khap, an inter-khap, or a sarv-khap Panchayat, is considered more effective than lineage, patti, village, ganwands, and thamba Panchayats. To make a council effective and successful important persons like the headmen, of maximal lineages and the leaders of villages, ganwands, thambas, khap leaders, and sometimes also of the neighbouring khaps, are invited to attend the meeting and to act as judges or mediators. With their judgement and experience and also because of their prestige and political influence, they are considered in a better position to put forward such proposals as may lead to the settlement of a dispute or to implement the decisions of a Panchayat.

Primary Functions

The primary functions of the councils of various lineage segments are to maintain unity and solidarity within turn respective groups, and to remove or at least to keep in check the forces of schism which are inevitable in the relations between their members. Thus the lineage Panchayats settle disputes between the members of various kinship groups and strive to keep peace and goodwill between them. Sometimes matters of common interest are also discussed in these council meetings and a common line of action adopted. The cases decided by a khandan or minimal lineage council generally deal with quarrels over the partition of joint family property, misuse of borrowed agricultural implements, the priority in use of irrigational resources and with cases of personal aggrandisement, intimidation by a member against another, breach of promise, theft, refusal to pay back a loan, and other kinds of misbehaviour. These disputes mostly arise between brothers, step-brothers, parallel cousins or members of joint families of a minimal lineage.

These conflicts may also be present at the sub-thok or major segment level, though with lesser frequency than at the minimal lineage level on account of the fact that the partition of property takes place mostly at the minimal lineage level thereby reducing the chances of jealousy or bad blood between the members of a sub-thok. A sub-thok Panchayat thus performs the same functions as the khandan Panchayat. But sometimes a sub-thok council may also take decisions on matters of common interest and adopt a particular line of action. One of the major segments of Shoron village, for example, decided to discontinue the service of the khap genealogist on the grounds that he gave false evidence against a member of that segment in a court case on account of which the member lost his claim to some property.

The thok or maximal lineage Panchayat is the most powerful and effective of all lineage councils. On account of kinship factors and local contiguity an individual is largely dependent upon his thok for economic, social, and political support. It is not easy for an individual to acquire prestige and political influence without the support of the members of his maximal lineage. The thok Panchayat functions to maintain unity and solidarity among its constituent segments and decides cases and disputes among them. It has power to use certain positive and negative sanctions (to be described later), which are not the prerogatives of other lineage councils. For example, in cases of ostracism or "dropping the huqqah" of an individual by a Panchayat, the assent of his
marriages, in giving dowry, etc., and persuading the people to save the money and spend it on education of children, on improvement of agriculture, and on religious rites. Certain functions of the khap Panchayat which it had during the medieval period, e.g., collecting land revenue, keeping an army and police force for the purpose of defence and internal administration, etc., have now fallen into disuse. But it has at the same time taken on certain new functions as mentioned above.

A serious dispute within a khap, between khaps or their members, may be decided either by a council of neighbouring khaps or by the sarv-khap Panchayat. The procedure for calling such a meeting is the same as in the case of a khap council. The Wazir of a khap is approached and he, judging the seriousness of the dispute or the difficulties involved in its settlement, invites the respected and influential persons from the neighbouring khaps or from all the khaps of Meerut Division, intimating to them the date and the venue of the proposed meeting. The meeting is generally called at the house of the party which is at fault or has infringed a rule. Persons selected to act as judges or mediators at the council meeting are known for their honesty, neutrality, fair play, tact and sense of justice. The reputation of an individual for these qualities is built up gradually over a period of years, and by his behaviour in council meetings, by his opinions and by his ability to settle a dispute, he gets the opportunity for being invited from one important Panchayat to another of increasing significance.

Cases decided by a council of neighbouring khaps, or an informal sarv-khap Panchayat may fall into any of the following categories: Marriage disputes arising out of divorcing a girl or maltreatment of her by her husband or parent-in-law; cases of cheating in marriages, e.g., showing one girl 10 the bridegroom's parents and then marrying another with a defect, asking a heavy dowry and demanding a continuous flow of presents from the girl's parents after marriage under the threat of maltreating her if such a flow stops; and cases of breach of other social norms. Now breach of the sarv-khap Panchayat resolutions adopted in 1950, 1956, and 1963, which will be discussed later, are also discussed at such meetings. Most of these cases may also be decided by a khap Panchayat. Serious disputes between maximal lineages, clans or castes, villages of two different khaps, or between khaps, are also decided either by a council of neighbouring khaps or by an informal meeting of the sarv-khap Panchayat.

The Sarv-Khap Council

The sarv-khap council is a representative body of all the Jat clans and of the khaps of other castes of the Meerut Division. It does not have a hereditary headman or Wazir or secretary. The president of the council is elected at each meeting. The Wazir of khaps Balivan acts as the secretary at the Panchayat meetings, and records its minutes and decisions. The membership of this council is now voluntary, but during the medieval period, it seems, all the khaps were under the jurisdiction of this council. Now only those khaps or castes which attend the meetings of the sarv-khap Panchayat and agree with the decisions and resolutions passed by it are bound by them. The sarv-khap council does not have any administrative power over the other khaps. Its executive powers are also limited in that they can only be exercised with the consent of those khaps which have agreed to implement its decisions within their clan areas. In its informal meetings, the sarv-khap Panchayat mostly functions as an adjudicative body, and the implementation of the decisions is either left to the khaps concerned or to a committee of influential persons constituted with the consent of the khaps to see to their implementation. The legislative functions of the sarv-khap Panchayat are confined to its formal, quinquennial meetings. But during the medieval period when faced with extraordinary circumstances like a foreign invasion or political or economic turmoil, a formal meeting of the sarv-khap Panchayat could also be called which could formulate certain rules or regulations for the people of the area. This is borne out by the minutes of the sarv-khap council meetings of that period. The authority under which the sarv-khap council has been functioning for centuries is mainly traditional and it has not had any legal charter such as was granted to various khaps. This traditional authority is based on its role in defence of the sarv-khap area in the past. Now it has become a moral force which is hard to flout even for a khap.

The primary functions of the sarv-khap council are the same as those of a council of neighbouring khaps. The functions it came to acquire during the medieval period, e.g., keeping an army for defence and maintaining internal autonomy of the area, demanding political recognition for the khaps from rulers at Delhi, etc., have now disappeared. But it has now taken on certain other functions such as working for schemes of social and economic welfare of the people. These new functions have strengthened the traditional belief of the people in the khap and the sarv-khap councils.

To convene a formal meeting of the sarv-khap, a council of five or six khaps is held to decide the date and the venue for the meeting. A khap may offer to play host. Then a working committee consisting of important leaders from various khaps is set up to raise subscriptions from the sarv-khap area and to invitation of headmen and leaders of the khaps and also of various castes to participate in the meeting and, finally, to make necessary arrangements for food accommodation and other conveniences for the delegates and for holding the council meeting. A steering committee is also instituted to decide the agenda of the meeting and to finalise a list of topics which is put before the general meeting for discussion and passing of resolutions. But the delegates are also free to put forward any resolution they wish to before the council meeting. Speeches are delivered elucidating the aims and purposes of the resolutions and the desirability of adopting them. Then those who do not agree with this or that resolution deliver their speeches. Finally, the resolutions are put to vote one by one. Voting takes place by casting of hands. If a resolution is passed by an overwhelming majority, it is considered as adopted, and the one which cannot muster enough support or which do not have an overwhelming majority, fall through. A resolution may not be binding upon those khaps or castes which were not in favour of it. After the resolutions have been adopted, the leaders of those khaps and castes who were in favour of them come to the dias one by one and take an oath to implement the resolutions in their respective khaps or castes.

A working committee is set up consisting of the leaders of various khaps and castes to canvas and enlist support for the resolutions by touring the villages of the sarv-khap area, and to persuade the people to accept and implement the resolutions. After the meeting of the sarv-khaps in December 18, 1965
GROWING BIGGER EVERY DAY
That's us. Always trying to do a little better than yesterday. Always doing it. Textiles, jute, dyes and chemicals. These are the interests we have today. Tomorrow? The possibilities are endless. The future is wide open.
over, the leaders of various *khaps* and castes may also hold meetings of their respective political units in which the *sarv-khap* council resolutions are again adopted with a view to emphasise their importance and to persuade the constituent political units such as *thoks*, *ganwands*, and *thambus*, etc., to accept and implement the resolutions.

If the resolutions have been accentuated by a *khor* or a caste council it may punish any infringement of them in its Panchayat. In more serious cases of default, the matter may be referred to the *sarv-khap* secretary who then summons a Panchayat meeting of four or five *khaps*, and the defaulters are lined, warned or admonished for flouting the resolutions. Other sanctions may also be passed against the defaulting persons or groups, but the implementation of these sanctions is again left to the *khor* or the caste concerned, and only on its suggestion a committee of influential persons may be set up to see the sanctions implemented. The secretary of the *sarv-khap* Panchayat keeps himself in touch with the efforts of the committee and after it has successfully carried out its task the secretary makes a note of it in the *sarv-khap* Panchayat register of records. If the sanctions passed by a Panchayat is not successful because of the intransigence of the defaulter, a bigger Panchayat of more influential persons and leaders of a larger number of *khaps* is called at the doors of the culprit. They refuse to eat or drink (by the tradition it is the duty of the person at whose house the Panchayat is assembled to provide food and other hospitality) till he has accepted the decision of the council and has carried out the sanctions to the satisfaction of the council members.

It becomes very difficult for a person or a group to ignore such an assembly of persons. Moreover, if the Panchayat goes away from the house of the defaulter without accepting food and water from his hands the prestige of such a person is mortally affected and other persons, groups and even his service castes may discontinue social and other relations with him till he complies to the sanctions passed by a Panchayat and expiates himself by giving a community feast in which the same, council members must be invited. If, however, the Panchayat has failed to bring a person to book it may ostracise him, his whole *thok*, village, and even the whole *ganwand*. (If it is found that these units are siding him or are helping him in other ways) till such time as when the defaulter has carried out the directions of the Panchayat and the leaders of other units have apologized and asked to be forgiven for their conduct. During ostracism, which is almost always temporary among the Jats, eating, smoking, marriage, and other kinds of interaction are prohibited with the person concerned and also with such units as may have helped him. Over a period of years these restrictions become unbearable and then the defaulters and those who have been helping him try to reach a settlement with the Panchayat.

After they have either paid a fine or tendered an apology or given an undertaking (with a straw under the teeth signifying humility) not to go against the wishes of the Panchayat, they are pardoned and are allowed to enjoy the usual privileges of the caste. There are a few cases in which such extreme decisions were taken to ostracise a *ganwand* and one, the whole of the *khor*, in recent years. The normal relations of commensality and marriage were established after several years and then only when the defaulters in the *ganwands* case had apologized and paid the fine, and in the *inter-khap* dispute between Baltiy and Desh when a rapprochement had been reached between the two.

**First Formal Meeting**

The following case will make the procedure and the functions of the *sarv-khap* Panchayat explicit. It relates to the first formal meeting of the Panchayat held in 1950 after a period of one hundred years. It will also show the influence this council has had upon the Jats as well as other castes of Meerut Division since its revival:

The meeting of the *sare-khap* Panchayat was held in Shoron village, *khap* Baliyan, and was attended by hereditary leaders of all the 18 *khaps* of Meerut Division and also by the leaders of other castes and communities. The headman of *khap* Kalas lain (of Gujar caste) was elected as president of the meeting, which lasted three days. Speeches were given by several leaders from various *khaps* eulogizing the past history of the *sare-khap* Panchayat, the aims behind its revival, and its importance for the welfare of the people. Then followed discussions and speeches on the 14 resolutions put up before the general meeting. These resolutions had been framed earlier by the working committee of the Panchayat. They were:

(1) People should not incur heavy expenditure on daughters’ marriages, particularly on extending hospitality to the grooms’ parties.

(2) Display of ornaments by groom’s father at the time of the ceremony of welcome held at the bride’s house should stop.

(3) Not more than five persons should accompany a marriage party.

(4) No relations should be invited by a bride’s father at the time of the ceremony of welcome held at the bride’s house.

(5) The feast of mandha (final feast before the departure of the marriage party) should be discontinued.

(6) The engagement ceremony should be performed only with one rupee and the old custom of incurring heavy expenditure or this ceremony should be discontinued.

(7) The groom’s father should not present more than 3 tolas (weight measurement for precious metals) of gold and 50 tolas of silver ornaments to the bride. The bride’s father should not give more than one tola of gold and 25 tolas of silver ornaments.

(8) Only 5 items of clothes and 5 of kitchen ware should be given in dowry.

(9) The boy and the girl should be fully satisfied with each other before the marriage takes place. After the marriage, the husband should not leave his wife.

(10) The marriageable age for a boy should be 25 years, and for a girl 16 years. Child marriages should be stopped.

(11) In the bhat ceremony (when presents are given by the bride’s mother’s brother to the parents of the bride) not more than 50 rupees should be given in cash and presents of cloth and kitchen utensils should be discontinued.

(12) The custom of sending presents to daughter’s husband’s place on every festival after marriage should be discontinued.

(13) In the ceremony of gauna (when the bride goes to her husband’s place for the second time after marriage) only five items of doth and one set of bedding should be given by the girl’s father. All other presents in cash or kind should be discontinued.

(14) Other malpractices now prevalent in marriage ceremonies

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1859
Millions of hearts beating as one. Small rivulets flowing into a mighty river.

Such is our free society of many communities living together in peace and harmony. This society is worth preserving, worth fighting for. Remember, your neighbour is as important to this society as you.

ONE GREAT COUNTRY
ONE GREAT PEOPLE
Resolutions Taken Seriously

The second meeting of the sarv-khap council was held in 1956, again in Shoron village of the khp Balivan. I attended the meeting. The same resolutions of 1950 were put up before the general meeting for discussion with a view to finding out their impact upon the people. It was established from the speeches of leaders from different khaps and castes that these resolutions had done quite a lot of good in removing malpractices of too high dowry, unnecessary expenditure in marriages, leaving the wife after marriage and extortion of money and presents from the wife’s father or maltreatment of the wife. One Jat leader in his speech assessed the amount saved by the Jats and such other castes as Rajputs, Gujars, Ahirs, Tiyagi Brahmins, Blacksmiths, Carpenters, Goldsmiths, Muslim Jats, and Weavers of the sarv-khap area at Rs 750,000,000 during the five years between 1950 and 1956 through economizing in marriage ceremonies and related expenses. And this, according to him, was due to the resolutions of the first formal sarv-khap Panchayat. This showed the effectiveness of the council as an institution of social control and its popularity with the masses. However, it was felt that in some areas of Meerut Division the resolutions were not being followed strictly. Therefore, it was decided that these resolutions should again be passed and adopted by the second Panchayat meeting, and fresh pledges for their implementation should be taken from the leaders of the khaps and castes. This was done and the 1950 resolutions were adopted again and fresh pledges taken. The second sarv-khap council also passed some other resolutions of minor importance, but its main task was to infuse of fresh sense of dedication to the resolutions of the first formal Panchayat and to propagate for their acceptance by certain khaps or castes which had not yet seriously taken up their implementation within the areas of their jurisdiction. In this the second sarv-khap Panchayat succeeded to a great extent.

The third quinquennial meeting of this body was held on March 2, 1963 in Baraut (a town in khp Salaklain of the Jats of Tomar clan, in Meerut district). The president in his speech before the general meeting eulogized the role of the sarv-khap council in maintaining and propagating the cultural tradition of the country and its devotion to the cause of social welfare of the masses and to defending the freedom of the country as was borne out by its past history. He said that in the difficult period of national emergency created by the Chinese attack on their country the eyes of the nation were fixed on the farmers who had to produce more food so that the country could be strong enough to defend itself; and in this task the sarv-khap council and its leaders could render valuable service by persuading the farmers to make the country self-sufficient in food. He also expressed the hope that in its present meeting the Panchayat would be able to put forward before the public a constructive programme of economic and social development and would be able to implement it with the dedication which had characterized its functioning from ancient times.

The resolutions put up for discussion and adoption before the general meeting are of topical interest because they indicate the present trends in the sarv-khap council, the thinking of its leaders, the effect of the Panchayat resolutions upon the masses and their relevance for the political processes of today within the various khaps and castes of Meerut Division. The resolutions finally adopted by the Panchayat are:

1. The Panchayat should contribute its mite towards the defence of the country in the wake of the Chinese aggression by persuading the people to donate to the national defence fund, helping the government in building a village volunteer force and in army recruitment and persuading the farmers to grow more food.

2. The Panchayat should continue to work towards the implementation of the resolutions of the two earlier Panchayats of 1950 and 1956. These resolutions have done quite a lot of good in removing malpractices in marriage ceremonies and customs prevalent among the castes and the communities of the sarv-khap area.

3. The Panchayat should strive to remove caste distinctions and barriers.
December 18, 1965

(4) The Panchayat should promote better educational facilities and better management of educational institutions. It should also raise funds towards building a girls' college. But co-education in schools and colleges should not be encouraged.

(5) Cows should be protected (from slaughter) and production of milk and ghee (clarified butter) should be increased in villages.

(6) People should be made conversant with the history of the sarv-khap Panchayat so that they may know the importance and the role of this organization in the life of the people from old times to the present day and follow its resolutions.

(7) Two military colleges should be opened, one in Baraut and the other in Bulandshahr district. The Panchayat should persuade the government to undertake this task and should also raise contributions from various khaps towards the financing of these colleges.

(8) A working committee should be set up to implement these resolutions.

I have not been able to visit the field recently in assess the impact of these resolutions on the people of the various khaps of Meerut Division. Nor has it been possible to know how far the working committee has been able to implement the new resolutions adopted at this Panchayat meeting. But it was bigger and more important than the two earlier meetings of the sarv-khap council held in 1950 and 1956, both with regard to the number of delegates and the topics on the agenda of the meeting. The resolutions indicate that since its revival the Panchayat has taken upon itself the responsibility of tackling with social and economic problems facing the people of the sarv-khap area, and to sonic extent the nation as well and is thus trying to widen its influence among the masses. Moreover, the resolutions on national defence passed by the Panchayat indicate that its leaders still consider it as their duty to defend the country against foreign invasion which was one of the important functions of the sarv-khap Panchayat: in mediaeval times. The Panchayat's contribution to defending the country could not, of course, take the same form as in earlier times, like raising an army from different khaps and lighting the invader directly.

By and large the leadership of the sarv-khap council still functions within the traditional thought pattern as can be seen from the resolutions mentioned above. Rather than accepting a political ideology and programme of social and economic development from the 'rightist' or 'leftist' political parties functioning in the country, the Panchayat is grappling with these problems in the traditional manner with a 'peasant-outlook' as it were. This is born out by resolutions 2, 4, 5, and 6 mentioned above. On the one hand, the sarv-khap Panchayat stands for schemes of social welfare and change (resolutions 2, 3, 4, mentioned above); on the other, it also acts as a check on certain other social changes like co-education in schools and colleges and urbanization and westernization and the ideas that go with them.

Sanctions, Negative and Positive

This sophisticated and largely intended meeting of the sarv-khap Panchayat fits proceedings were broadcast by the All India Radio, and were also covered by the Nav Bharat Times of March 2nd and 5th, 1963, and by other newspapers, passing bold resolutions on problems having an all-India bearing. But this was against the resolutions of the Sarv-khap Panchayat for schemes of social welfare and change (resolutions 2, 3, 4, mentioned above); on the other, it also acts as a check on certain other social changes like co-education in schools and colleges and urbanization and westernization and the ideas that go with them. They are negative in the sense that they can be applied only to penalize or punish but not to reward. (R T La Pierre, "A Theory of Social Control", McGraw Hill, London, 1954).

Positive sanctions are used not by the Panchayats but by the society of ritual groups and their use is closely related to an individual's actions and behaviour in relation to the lineage groups to which he belongs and to those with whom he comes in contact in face-to-face relationships. But sanctions like total extermination of an individual, economic intimidation, wilful harm to a person's property or, conversely, economic reward are unknown among the Jats and are not used by the Panchayats. Formerly such physical sanctions as beating or whippings of a defaulter were common but now they are rarely used by the councils. Permanent expulsion or ostracism of an individual was rarely practised if at all, and is now totally absent. But temporary expulsion signifies by 'dropping the ḫuqqah' (withdrawing the right of a person to eat or smoke with other members of his caste) is common, though resorted to by the Panchayats only in extreme cases of default. And then, to be effective it must have the active support of the ḥok or maximal lineage of the offender. Thus the exercise of this sanction is the privilege only of the ḥok or the khap Panchayat. Fines and economic restitution of an aggrieved party are common and can be used by any unit of the Jat political system.

A curse is considered one of the most effective sanctions. The faith in a curse, particularly when uttered by Panchayat members, is very strong and a curse is considered infallible. Several cases could be cited where a curse uttered by a Panchayat against the persons who have flouted its decisions has come true. A typical case is that of a person in Shoron village in khap Balian who, on the advice of his elder brother, got married in khap Salaklai. But this was against the resolutions of his own khap which had banned marriages between Balian and Salaklai on account of some dispute, between the two khaps. The khap council tried to persuade the two brothers not to break the ban, but it failed to persuade them in spite of two or three meetings of the khap Panchayat. The elder brother of the person concerned was the headman of a ḥok of Shoron village. On account of party politics within the khap, with the backing of his maximal lineage, the headman succeeded in marrying his brother against...
the ban. After the marriage, a meet­ing of the khap Panchayat was held and a curse was uttered by the council members that there will be no male issue from this marriage to carry on the family name. This incident happened more than twenty years back but there has been no male child born till now. The person concerned is now about seventy years did (this was his second marriage); the only son from the first marriage had died at the age of eighteen before the second marriage took place. According to the villagers there is now not much hope of a son. The curse of the Panchayat had had effect.

A curse may be uttered by any political unit from a minimal lineage to a sarv-khap Panchayat when all other means of social control have failed. It is the last, but not the least, of the effective sanctions at the disposal of the Panchayats. The belief in the efficacy of the curse and the strong fear of it strengthens the moral element in social relationships and checks unethical or anti-social conduct. The process of edu­cation and urbanization, it seems, has not affected this belief and it is fairly common among educated and urbanized fats serving in the Indian army, government or civil service and also among college students.

A Panchayat may also ask an individual to take an oath of good conduct in figure. This practice is supported by the common belief that if an individual breaks his words of honour or a promise given before a Panchayat, he loses his respect in the eyes of others.

For certain religious and moral lapses an individual may be asked by a Panchayat to undergo expiatory religious rites such as going on a pilgrimage, taking a purificatory bath in the river Ganges or giving a communal feast. Others may be forbidden to eat or smoke with him until he has performed these rites. In some cases he may also be asked by a khap or sarv-khan Panchayat to tour the villages of his khap and ask to be forgiven by the leaders of those villages. In such cases the Panchayat appoints a committee of two or three respectable persons who are asked to accompany the defaulter on his tour to the villages and to see that he carries out the decision of the council. Generally, this sanction is accompanied by temporary expulsion of the person from the caste. The caste councils and the khap Panchayats of other castes also use these sanctions.

**Impact of Economic and Political Changes.**

The Jat community as well as other castes of Meerut Division have experienced certain economic changes brought about by the introduction of irrigation facilities and of sugar-cane as a cash crop, by the growth of the competitive market economy and the growth of industry and towns. These factors have produced economic inequality among the Jats. Those who have gained wealth now aspire for leadership or office within the traditional political system, as headmen of uncage groups and as judges or council members in Panchayat meetings and also for office in the new government instituted political set-up of Gram and Adalat Panchayats (village committee and justice committee respectively).

**Traditional System Not Weakened.**

Those who are more well-to-do than others may even stand for the state legislature or the parliament. For such status roles as are outside the traditional ones, an individual need not follow the traditional values demanded by the society. Such persons, if they are unable to achieve a position of leadership or office within the traditional political system, may turn against it; and then it becomes difficult for a Panchayat to control their behaviour. Those who come to hold office as president of a Gram Panchayat, a judge on the Adalat Panchayat, a member of the Zila Pire­shad (district committee), or member of the state legislature by virtue of their economic or political influence, may also be elected as the heads of thoks and sub-thoks or to such other status roles within the traditional system as are not strictly hereditary. This is because the belief in the traditional authority and value system of the Jats, as moulded by their kinship and political structure, has not changed much in spite of education and urbanization. Education among the Jats is increasing fast on account of the keen interest to rationalise and to reinforce the traditional value system based upon the kinship and the political system of the society. This happens because the Jats are still tied to the land which cannot be alienated outside the thok, a factor which maintains the corporate group Structure of the society. Moreover, because of the introduction of the cash crop of sugar-cane and the increase in land prices on account of irrigation, facilities resulting in substantial increase in agricultural output and its market value, an individual has high economic stakes in his ancestral property. And those fats who are serving outside their villages in army, civil service and other jobs like to return to the villages after retirement to settle down there. I did not come across even one case where a Jat had sold his property in his native village and had settled down in a city. On the other hand, many cases could be cited of senior army officers, government servants, etc, who have come back to their villages after retirement and now lead wealthy agriculturists’ lives. These values and interests uphold the kinship and the political system of the Jat society under the conditions of change.

A person who has come to occupy a status position outside the traditional system strives to consolidate it by trying to achieve the status roles within the old system. To do so he has to live up to certain social norms dictated by kinship and the political ideology of the certain social norms dictated by the community: and in doing so he upholds the belief in the traditional system and thus reinforces its authority. The prestige and political ascendency of such persons is used by the traditional Panchayats to command allegiance and exercise social control within the community and, to some extent, in inter-caste relations as well.

Social and economic changes do not seem to have much effect upon the traditional political system: nor is the system showing any signs of disorganization. The fats, as well as other castes, still believe that “five punches (council members) sitting in a Panchayat are like five gods.” This epitomises the ethos of the Jat community. The council members entrusted with the task of setting a dispute or making a decision are considered sacred. This belief not only protects them against any harm from the litigants for the decisions they may give, decisions which are morally binding upon the parties concerned and could only be broken at the pain of incurring a curse by the Panchayat which is considered infallible, but also compels the punches to conduct the affairs of the Panchayat with justice, equity and good conscience.

Such structural and organizational principles as khap bhaihara (brotherhood), khap exogamy, kinship organisation and sentiment, corporate group structure of the society and the sole­ment pattern of the lineages and the
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