

CONSTRUCTION OF SHILPKAR IDENTITY IN COLONIAL UTTARAKHAND

THESIS

Submitted to
Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University
(A Central University)
Lucknow

BABASAHEB
BHIMRAO
AMBEDKAR
UNIVERSITY



प्रज्ञा शील करुणा
ESTABLISHED 1996

For the Award of Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

HISTORY

Submitted By:

Isha Tamta

ENROLLMENT NO – 1159/16

Under the supervision of

Prof. S. Victor Babu

Head

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
SCHOOL OF AMBEDKAR STUDIES
BABASAHEB BHIMRAO AMBEDKAR UNIVERSITY
(A CENTRAL UNIVERSITY)

VIDYA VIHAR, RAEBARELI ROAD, LUCKNOW-226 025 (U.P.), INDIA

2020

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled, "**CONSTRUCTION OF SHILPKAR IDENTITY IN COLONIAL UTTARAKHAND**", submitted by **ISHA TAMTA** is an original research work and has not been previously submitted in part or full for the award of any other degree or diploma to this or any other University.

The thesis submitted to Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University Lucknow satisfies all the requirements as stipulated in the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) regulations - 1999 as amended in 2008/2010/2013/2016 and it is fit for submission and evaluation for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University.

Supervisor

Date:

Head of the Department

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work embodied in this thesis entitled, "**CONSTRUCTION OF SHILPKAR IDENTITY IN COLONIAL UTTARAKHAND**" carried out by me under the supervision of **Prof. S. Victor Babu, Department** of History Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow, is an original work and it has not been previously submitted in part or full for any other degree or diploma in this or any other University. I undertake the thesis is essentially free of all kinds of plagiarism.

Place: Lucknow

Date:

ISHA TAMTA

Enrollment no. 1159/16
Ph.D Research Scholar)

Urkund Analysis Result

Analysed Document: construction of shilpkar thesis for plagiarism.docx (D78590697)
Submitted: 9/4/2020 9:27:00 AM
Submitted By: gbl.bbau@gmail.com
Significance: 4 %

Sources included in the report:

trasfomration of shilpakar identity.docx (D61996111)
shilpakar caste in uttarakand. history times.docx (D61996112)
<https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/society-the-arts/books/story/19760715-book-review-social-stratification-in-rural-kumaon-by-r.d.-sanwal-819575-2015-04-09>
https://www.csirs.org.in/uploads/paper_pdf/social-mobility-of-shilpkars-in-uttarakhand-1815-1947.pdf
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333667283_Struggle_for_equality_in_British_Kumaun_and_Arya_Samaj
<https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/220235/2/04.%20chapter%201.docx>
<https://scientificresearchjournal.com/wp-content/plugins/download-attachments/includes/download.php?id=4408>

Instances where selected sources appear:

94

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|---------|
| Acknowledgements | i |
| Glossary | ii |
| Abbreviations | iii |
| List of Maps | iv |
| Chapter 1: Introduction | 1-14 |
| Chapter 2: Historical Background of Doms in Uttarakhand | 15-49 |
| Chapter 3: Identity, Domination and Exclusion | 50-92 |
| Chapter 4: Impact of Gurkha and Colonial Rule on Kumaon Society | 93-146 |
| Chapter 5: Construction of Shilpkar Identity | 147-195 |
| Chapter 6: Conclusion | 196-211 |
| Bibliography | 212-224 |
| Appendices | 225-232 |

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am highly obliged to my supervisor **Prof. S. Victor Babu, Head** of the Department of History, BBAU, Lucknow. He nurtured me with my rudimentary ideas of social history. His profound critical comments helped me to develop and shape the present work with a critical perspective. I am also thankful to other faculty members in the Department of History, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University for their valuable suggestions and constant motivation.

I am also grateful to my grandmother Mrs. Kanta Devi Midha, father, Mr. Bhagwan Prasad Tamta, and my mother, Mrs. Suman Tamta, and sisters Mrs. Khyati Goel and my brother in law Mr. Vikalp Goel and Ms. Prashansa Tamta for their constant love, support and encouragement in my life. I always remain grateful to all of them. I would also thank my seniors Becha lal, Ayushi and Pragya Kishore and Shivangi and my batch mate Pretty Pushkar.

Finally I am deeply grateful to the staff at Gautam Buddha central library, BBAU, State archives, Lucknow, Dehradun, regional archives at Nanital, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, National Archives, New Delhi. Last but not the least, descendents of Mr. Hari Prasad Tamta and Mr. Kushi Ram for making their private papers available to me.

Date:

Isha Tamta

Place: Lucknow

GLOSSARY

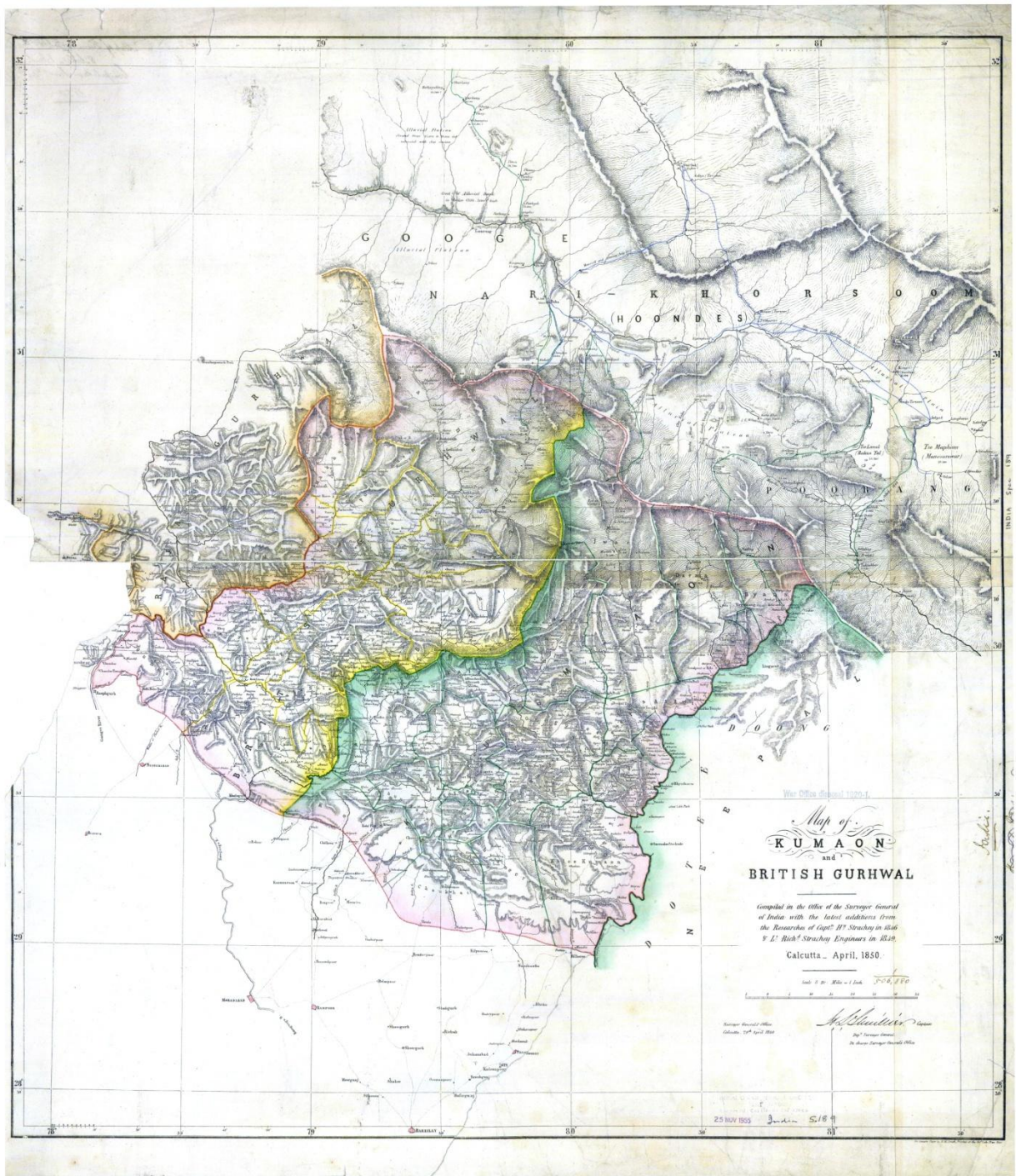
| | |
|--------------|---|
| Asal-Baman | True Brahmin |
| Baharjati- | Out Caste |
| Bhaiya-bhant | Land tenure |
| Bith | Clean |
| Bithan | Bith residential section |
| Chhyara | Household Slaves |
| Chhut | Divorce |
| Gunth | Lands assigned to the temples |
| Hissadar | where proprietors are coparcenaries body |
| Haliyas | Ploughmen |
| Kaini | Servile Cultivators |
| Mandalia | Terrestrial division |
| That | Land held in proprietary right |
| Thatwan | Proprietor |
| Tallijat | Low Caste |
| Sir | Land under direct control |
| Sirtan | A tenant who pays the sirit or government Revenue |

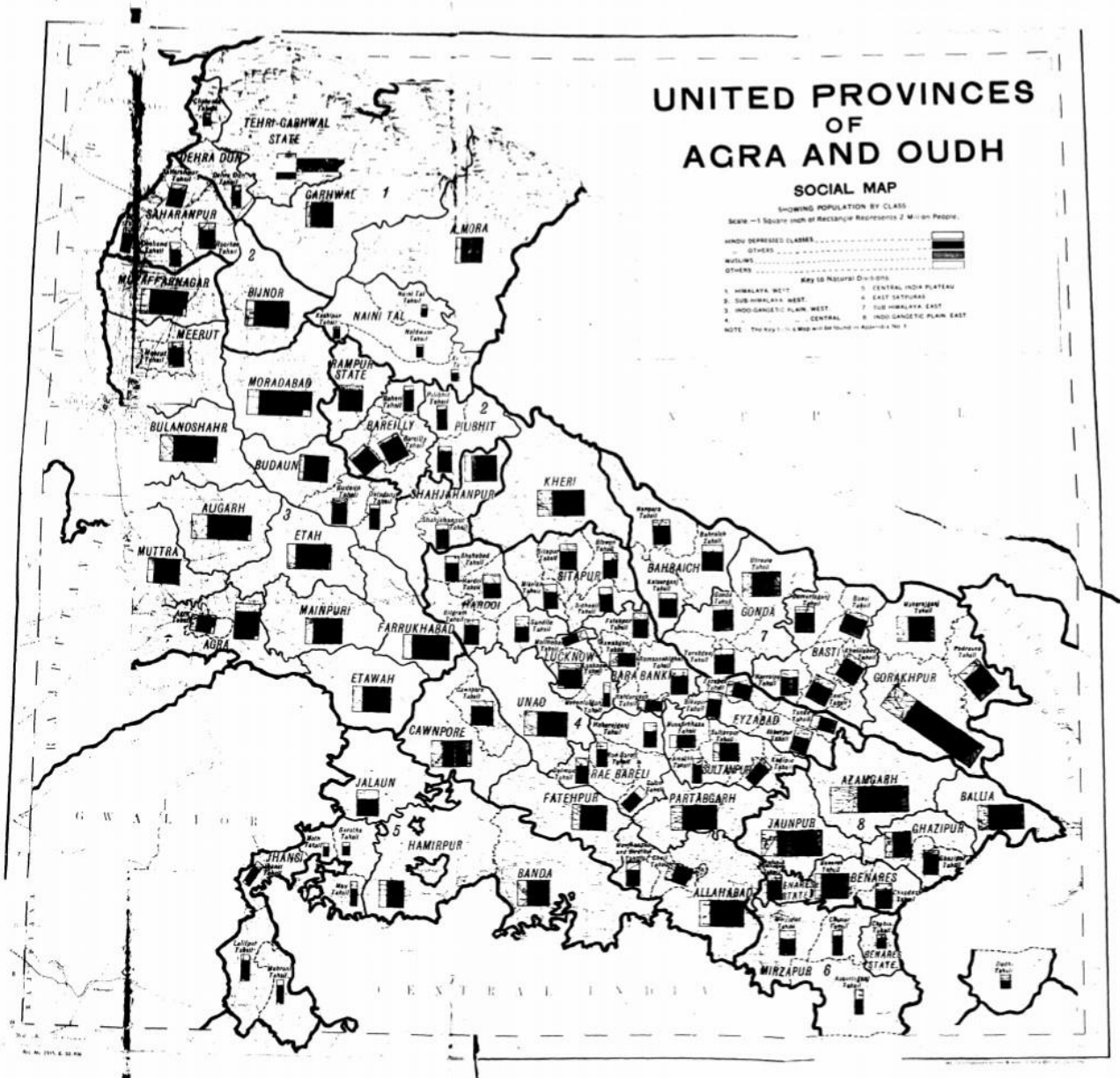
ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|---|
| AVI | Anglo- vernacular Instruction |
| CCF | Chief Conservator of Forest |
| DPI | Director Public Instructor |
| DCS | Depressed Class Student |
| ICHR | Indian Council of Historical Research |
| IHC | Indian History Congress |
| LPTCE | Lower Primary Teacher Certificate Examination |
| MLC | Member of Legislative Council |
| NMML | Nehru Memorial Museum &s Library |
| SC | Scheduled Cates |
| SCC | Scheduled Cates Conference |
| UP | United Provinces |
| VFE | Vernacular Final Examination |
| VTC | Vernacular Teacher Certificate |

LIST OF MAPS

| S.No. | Title | Page No. |
|--------------|---|-----------------|
| 1. | Map of Kumaon and British Garhwal 1850 | v |
| 2. | Social map of United Provinces Agra And Oudh 1921 | vi |
| 3. | Map of Kumaon Division | vii |







Chapter-1
Introduction

Chapter-1

INTRODUCTION

An identity is what “I am” or “we are”, “he is” or “they are” in general sense of the term. But it is widely stated that the terms “I” and “we” similarly “he” and “they” is neither independent/autonomous social product nor remain fixed forever. In the same way one’s identity is constructed through the processes of interaction, and daily engagement both with local and global society. These processes of construction get widely influenced by the social and cultural institutional arrangements of the society like caste, religion and ethnicity, class, political party, state and the like. Hence, the process of identity construction gets negotiated both with the localized conditions, historical experiences and inter connections with wider society. It is a complex and dynamic process through which individual collective self gets constructed, reformed and rejuvenated. Therefore, the summations of identity represent the collective self. Generally speaking, human beings are born in society and societal conditions widely shape the identity.

In the *symbolic-interactionist* theories the issues of ‘self’ and ‘identity’ are frequently used. To them ‘self reflects society’, i.e., ‘society shapes self which shapes social behaviours.’¹ Society however is not a homogeneous undifferentiated identity. It also has eclectic dimension. Hence the *structural symbolic-interactionist* visualizes societies as ‘highly differentiated yet organized systems of interactions and relationships encompassing a wide variety of crosscutting lines based on social class, age, gender, ethnicity, religion and more’. Here ‘self’ must be seen as ‘multifaceted, as comprised of a variety of parts that are sometimes interdependent and sometimes

¹ Blumer, H, *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and Method*, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1996,

independent of other parts, sometimes mutually reinforcing and sometimes conflicting and that are organized in multiple ways. Self is conceptualized as sets of discrete identities or internalized role designations. It is also argued that identity varies in their salience. That a given identity can be invoked in a variety of situations or it 'can be defined as differential probability'. Thus, choice between or among behaviours expressive of particular roles will reflect the relative location of the identities associated with those roles.

Hall argues that there is no automatic connection between various discourses of identity, namely, class, gender, race, age, etc. as they can be articulated in different ways.²In this connection, the issue of multiple identities as propagated by several social scientists is highly relevant. To Barker and Galasinski 'we may reflect on the multiple identities of the contemporary subject, which is the weaving of the patterns of identity from the discourses of race, gender, etc.'³ We can thus conceive of people as operating across and within multiple subject positions constituted by the intersections of discourses of race, gender, age, nation, class, etc. Thus there is an element of plasticity in the formation of identity. For Hall, it is the very plasticity of identity that makes its cultural and political significance, for the shifting and changing character of identities chronicles the way that get transformed over time and as a result, they tend to be subjective construction of mainly their objectively fixed phenomena.

In India there has been a long tradition of intellectual reconstruction of Dalit identity. Phule, Periyar and Ambedkar contributed in their own way for this process.

² Hall, who needs identity? In Hall and P. DU Gay (ed.) in Questions of Cultural Identity, Sage, London, 1996.

³ Barker, C and D. Galasinski, Cultural Studies and Discourse Analysis: A Dialogue and Language and Identity, Sage, 2001.

During medieval time, Bhakti movement questioned caste hierarchy, restrictions in places of worship. This is the reason why Bhakti movement became popular among Shudra and lower castes. Identity construction among Dalits got evolved historically over the period. Bhakti saints opposed caste distinctions and asserted equality before God. Many lower castes and Dalits constructed an identity which was against the Brahmanical one. After Bhakti movement, 'Adi' movements played an important role in the formation of Dalit identity. In 1920s and 1930s mobilization of lower castes took place under varying leadership with different ideologies. Adi movement's objective was to bring the original inhabitant's argument to the fore as Adi means original inhabitant. Adi dharma in Punjab, Adi Hindu in Uttar Pradesh and Hyderabad, Adi Dravida, Adi-Andhra and Adi-Karnataka in South India are case in point.

In the same way Shilpkars in Uttarakhand tried to construct their own positive identity. Before we understand the need and necessity of constructing identity by Shilpkars, we need to understand the composition of society in Uttarakhand. Theoretical division of caste which prevailed in India did not exist in Uttarakhand. Khsatriya caste was absent in south as well as in eastern India. Kumaun Province is situated between the north latitudes of $28^{\circ}-14'-45''$ and $30^{\circ}-5'$. and the east longitudes of $76^{\circ}-6'-30''$ and $80^{\circ}-58'-15''$. To its east lies Nepal in the west, lies the District of Garhwal; in the north, lies Tibet; and in the south, lie the plains of Pilibhit, Bareilly and Moradabad. Uttarakhand which is a part of the central Himalayan region is divided into two regions; one is Kumaun region and another one is Gharwal region. Two regions have their own rich traditional culture. Caste system in the Hills of Uttar Pradesh is different from the four-fold caste system model. The social structure of

kumaun and Garhwal roughly divided into three broad classes: Brahmins, Khasiyas (Rajputs), and Doms (Shilpkars).

In the same way caste system in Uttarakhand is different in the sense that the society was not divided into four-fold Varna system as was thought earlier but it was only three-fold stratification. Doms in Uttarakhand were numerically the largest group of different castes. There are no similarities between Doms in Hills and the Doms of plains of Uttar Pradesh. But most of the time, it was assumed that Doms in Hills and Plains are the same. Besides, some artisan communities among Doms emerged powerful economically and wanted to differentiate themselves from the Doms.

Objectives of the Study

1. To know why Shilpkars wanted to construct new identity
2. To understand various methods and means through which this identity was constructed.
3. To study impact of Shilpkar identity on the people
4. To examine whether Shilpkars were included from the areas where they were excluded earlier
5. To understand the efforts of Shilpkars to gain social mobility

Assumptions of the study

1. All sub-castes who were providing professional and menial services were clubbed together under Dom category.
2. Uttarakhand society underwent remarkable changes after the Colonial Government was established.

3. After getting western education some of the Dom sub-castes got the wind of changes of equality, honour and respect.

4. Some of the sub-castes of the Doms wanted to change Dom identity which connotes negativity, humility, poverty, illiteracy and shame to something positive like Shilpkar which is filled with positivity, self-respect and equality.

4. Artisanal castes among Doms used census as a means to construct this new identity along with increasing their educational, professional, Governmental and political opportunities and cultural symbols in the society.

Scope of the Study

There have been numerous studies on construction of identity by lower castes across India. The present study is concerned about the construction of identity by the Doms who spread across Uttarkhand and Uttar Pradesh. However, there is a whale of difference between Doms of plains and Doms of Hills. Therefore, the present study is confined to the efforts for the construction of positive identity by the Doms of Uttarakhand.

Review of Literature

There exists plenty of literature on the Dalit communities of India. While Dalit communities of India have been the subjects of research and study for pretty long time, much of the studies on caste communities have been done from sociological, anthropological, cultural or historical perspective. While some scholars have tried to romanticize them, others have tried to look at them as curious anthropological type. Studies have also been conducted with regard to modernization, political socialization and socio-economic transformation of the caste communities.

Recently, a great deal has been written on the need for bringing the caste of this Country into the mainstream of national life. But, a review of the available literature reveals that Shilpkars of Uttarakhand made conscious efforts to construct a separate identity themselves.

Shantan Singh Negi 2014, in his article, the Dola Palki Movement: Dalit struggle for social justice in Uttarakhand in 20th century writes about the efforts of Shilpkars to lead marriage processions along with doala palki during colonial period. Before the advent of colonial power, dola palki was used only by the so-called upper castes and never by the Doms. There were lot of objections, hindrances and violence against the use of dola palki. In many instances, Shilpkar baratis were man-handled, beaten and their valuables were stolen. In many cases, they had to resort to court cases. But in spite of that Shilpkars continued to fight for their honour.

Vasudha Pande (2013), in her occasional paper, Stratification in Kumaun Circa 1815-1930 argues that social system of Uttarakhand is different from that of mainland India. She discussed all castes which exist in Uttrakhand and their status which changed over the period. Indigenous castes and migrant castes to Uttrakhand hills from ancient times to colonial period have been analyzed. How Brahman, Kshatriya, and Doms both local and migrant castes evolved over the period has been discussed. She opined that most Doms have been treated as unclean precisely because their professions in one way or the other involved the use of cow hides. But this is not borne by the fact some of the professions of Doms did not involve use of any cow skin.

Chaman lal Pradyot, Praveen Kumar Bhatt, Arun Kumar Kukshal (2012),in their workUttrakhand ke Shilpkar they divided their book in to three parts. first part

Shilp and Shilpkar. The work discusses about varnashram system. It argues that Shilpkars were the indigenous people of Uttarakhand they were influenced by Aryasamaj. In the second part *Shilpkaron ke Vividh Aayam* , they gave depiction of their Oral folklores, traditional occupation, their struggle for social equality, and historic struggle against *Dola- Palki*. In the last part, namely *Samsamayik Sandarbh* authors dealt with Shilpkar society, literature, social structure and the kind of benefits Shilpkar community were getting through government policies. Shilpkars involvement with politics was also discussed.

M.P.Joshi (ed), Suresh Chandra Tamta , V. Bahuguna, Piyush Bhatt(Asst. ed.) (2011) work on *Madhya Himalaya Ki Anusuchit Avam Pichhadai Jatiyan – Parampara Shilp Aur Udyam*-looks at the traditional occupation of Shilpkars and how they are struggling to pursue their traditional occupation in the time of industrialization. The author analyses the techniques and methods which are used for making copper and other type of utensils.

Suresh Chand Tamta , (2007) in his work entitled *Vartman Atit– Madhya Himalaya Ka Shilp, Shilpkar Avam Puratatva* gave vivid description about different occupation of Shilpkars. His work is based on survey methods, he talks about various means and methods which are used by Shilpkar community for livelihood. This work also talks about various indigenous medicinal practices, methods and instruments which Shilpkar community is following for health care.

Naval Viyogi , M. Anwar Ansari(2010) work *History of the later Harappans and Shilpkar movement, Vol II*, brings out the salient features of the Harappans civilization. It says that the inhabitants of Indus valley were prosperous. The existence of towns and buildings are evidence of the prosperity of the Indus valley. They tried

to argue that Shilpkars who emerged in Kumaon were basically the authors of Indus valley civilization. But the evidence does not support this kind of proposition. In addition, it also talks about the Katyuris of Uttarakhand, how Khasas and Kols of Uttarakhand, how Shilpkars were exploited economically, how Arya samaj tried to reform them, the policy of the British towards Shilpkars, the movement of Shilpkars for self-respect, congress efforts for eradication of untouchability have been discussed in this work.

Anil, K. Joshi(2001) in his article on *Dalit reform movement in British Kumaon* discusses the condition of Shilpkars before the advent of the British. Then it tries to explain conditions which prompted Show the consciousness for honour and equality emerged with the Shilpkars. He argues that introduction of education and some humiliating experiences of Shilpkars during world wars, emergence of vernacular newspapers brought consciousness to Shilpkars. It was a sort of social awakening for the Shilpkars. With new enlightenment, Shilpkars fought for equality and honour.

Ajay, S. Rawat in one of the occasional papers, History and growth of forestry in Central Himalaya (1815-1947) writes about various conditions existing in forest in Uttarakhand. Different classes of forests and forest acts brought by the British were discussed. People faced a lot of problems as a result of these forest laws for example getting grazing grounds, firewood, and access to minor forest produce. Forest panchayats also were also established to deal with these kinds of issues. Some reserved forests were de-reserved in order to allot land to the Shilpkars both for cultivation and for residential areas in Uttarakhand during colonial period. Amar Farooqui in the work, Colonial forest policy in Uttarakhand 1890-1928 also discussed

the forest policy which the British introduced and also the resistance by the people to these new regulations.

Mahesh C.Regmi, (1999) in his work, *Imperial Gurkha: An account of Gurkha rule in Kumaon (1791-1815)* talks about Gurkha rule in Kumaon until 1815. It consists of seven chapters on areas like political, military and economic history. It is a critique of Gurkha rule on Kumaon society. He argues that by and large Gurkha rule was exploitative and resented by Kumaonis. He points out that Dharmadhikari under Gurkhas played an important role in the polity and society. Various atrocities committed by Gurkhas including excessive revenue demands. He also describes land revenue system and administrative structure and the army.

John Leavitt, (1992) in his work, *Cultural Holism in the Anthropology of South Asia: The challenge of Regional Tradition* suggests Kumaon society cannot be reduced to the label of residual or to the variation of great tradition. Two examples that support his argument are patterning of time and patterning of divinity.

Maheshwar P. Joshi, Allen C.Fanger and Charles W.Brown (Ed,) (1990) work, *Himalaya: Past and Present*, consists of twenty chapters. First ten chapters talk about political and commercial interests of the British. The next ten chapters discuss the settlement of Khasas in ancient period, various myths associated with vansavalis of Kumaon, economic condition during colonial time, interpretation of caste system and land resources along with crops in Kumaon.

K.S. Valdiay (1988) in his edited work, *Kumaon: Land and People*, discussed various issues related to Kumaon society. The prevailing social structure in Kumaon in prehistoric period, various social groups which existed, process of migration, difference between indigenous groups and migrants, caste subdivisions among the

people and the role and status of women in Kumaon society were discussed in this work.

George Weston Briggs (1953) in his work, *The Doms And Their Near relations*, the author talks about various legends regarding the origin of the Doms, various groups among them, the social organization among them and their struggle for existence, Birth and marriage customs, Disposal of the dead and other domestic customs, folk magic, worship of Great and Lesser spirits, priests and celebration of various festivals were discussed. One important thing to notice in this work is that G.W. Briggs says that Doms of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand are different in various aspects.

James Kennedy (1885) *Life and Work in Benares and Kumaon, 1839-1877*, was basically a missionary. He travelled to Benares and to Kumaon hills and stayed. He observed people in Kumaon and their economy, culture and their language. He described the society of Kumaon at that point of time. How was society divided into different castes and how Doms lived in Kumaon society has been dealt very clearly by James. His was eye witness account of the society and different castes of Kumaon.

H. C. Upreti (1980) in his work, *social organization of a Migrant group: A sociological study of Hill Migrants from Kumaon region in the city of Jaipur*, describes the social organization of the hill migrants to the Jaipur city. But the authors describe about Shilpkars history, society, and economy. The factors back at home which propel migration to other cities have been analyzed in this work.

Allen C. Fanger's Ph. D thesis (1980) is divided into two sections. The first section discussed diachronic analysis of Kumaon society focusing on patterns of change in Kumaon social stratification. The second part tried to analyze Bargaon village in a synchronic way. He tried to analyze the organizational structure of village

society with dynamics and change perspective. He discussed on caste structure, caste interaction including food and economic exchange, and the process of Sanskritization. He also considered labour processes, property relations and the development of cash economy and employment migration.

R.D.Sanwal(1979) worked on *Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon* lead the way in that it concise field work insights with an assimilation of sociological processes. In selecting the field work areas he goes beyond the micro village level to compose intensive study of three carefully selected villages along with the fieldwork in rural market centres, the cantonment of Ranikhet and the town of Alomar. The selection of areas gives the study a greater dimension and also takes into account variants which might be dominant at the purely village level.

James M. Sebring (1972) in his article, *The Formation of New Castes: A Probable Case from North India*, argued that there is a possibility of a formation of a new caste within the caste system. He tried to demonstrate that emergence of Shilpkar Brahmins is a case in point. When upper caste Hindus refused to perform birth, death and other domestic ceremonies, Shilpkars themselves formed a priestly class as Shilpkar Brahmans in order to take care of priestly activities among Shilpkars.

Gerald D. Berreman (1963) wrote a book entitled *Hindu of the Himalayas* which is basically an anthropological work. Berreman's work is located in the tradition of village studies, social stratification, mainly kinship and caste, studies of social dynamics and change. This work attempts to broaden the topic on village studies with regional focus.

Methodology and Sources

In this research Historical method was followed. Primary data included census reports, archival records, Annual Administrative reports, Gazetteers, News Papers, Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, Secondary data was taken from reference books, Journals, Magazines and websites. Other available standard sources of data were also utilized for the study.

Organization of the work

The work has been organized into six chapters which are discussed below:

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

It basically introduces the subject of identity. Why people want to construct new identity. Once they decided to construct it, what are the way and means through which they construct this new identity? What identity people want? Is it personal or group identity? Why movements emerge around identity, objectives of the research, assumptions, methodology, sources and different works which are reviewed in the work are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 2 : HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF DOMS IN UTTARAKHAND

This chapter describes historical background of Uttarakhand society. Uttarakhand society did not have four-fold varna system which was prevalent in other parts of India. It basically consisted of three groups namely: Brahmin, Kshatriya and Doms. The first two are numerically small but occupied all positions of power and land was occupied mostly by these two groups. Doms were the largest numerically but were confined to menial services like cultivation, tending the cattle and other professions.

Chapter 3: IDENTITY, DOMINATION AND EXCLUSION

This chapter discusses the power structure in the society, exclusion of Doms from various spheres of life and deprivation of lower castes from natural resources. It also describes various ways and means which so called upper castes adopted just in order to keep the Doms who were in majority. Most Doms were service castes and have been referred to as the indigenous communities who were defeated by the invaders from the earliest times. Resentment of the depressed castes against their exclusion from social, political and economic areas.

Chapter 4: IMPACT OF GURKHA AND COLONIAL RULE ON KUMAON SOCIETY

This chapter discusses occupation of Kumaon region by the Gurkhas. Once the Gurkhas established their rule, they did not want to continue the caste privileges which earlier regimes followed. Preference of certain castes for royal, revenue and other positions was no longer followed. As a result, the castes which dominated in earlier regimes lost their importance gradually. Some changes gradually started taking place in the social structure. This is very important precisely because, the Doms who were treated as menial castes got little way to improve their position.

Chapter 5: CONSTRUCTION OF SHILPKAR IDENTITY

This chapter describes how colonial education was introduced in the Kumaon Hills. The western education brought a sort of renaissance to Kumaon in general and Doms in particular. Once Doms got educated, there was no turning back for them. They started thinking in terms of freedom, equality and fraternity from different oppressions. The British education policy which treated all castes as equal in terms of getting education came as a boon to the Doms. Some of the educated Doms,

particularly professional castes, wanted to construct a positive identity and also improve their social status. They set up their own schools including night schools, and demanded reservations in education and employment and tried to construct their identity of Shilpkar through census. As a result of their efforts, the word Dom for certain castes had been replaced with the word Shilpkar in the census.

Chapter 6: CONCLUSION

This chapter sums up research findings as conclusion chapter. The social structure in the Kumaon society namely three fold unlike other parts of India, the influx of different castes in to Kumaon and the contradictions between the indigenous and migrant castes, the domination of certain castes in the social, political and economic spheres, the position of Doms who were basically service castes and how they realized their status and measures they took in order to construct a positive identity for themselves have been summed up in the conclusion.

Chapter-2
Historical Background of Doms
in Uttarakhand

Chapter-2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF DOMS IN UTTARAKHAND

We do not have many indigenous sources which talk about Doms before the advent of the British. However, after the arrival of the Colonial power, systematic information was collected on different castes and tribes all over India. In Uttarakhand, W. Crooke had gathered a lot of information about different castes and their culture. Writing about Doms, he says that Doms of Kumaon have been thought to be akin to the aboriginal race but the latter repudiate the idea and profess the very greatest contempt for the Dom ; so that if one of that class enter dwelling of a raji, the place must be purified with water brought from twenty – two different sources.¹ James Kennedy, who was a missionary, visited to Kumaon in 1839 and remarked that ‘invaders killed lot of indigenous people or turned them into slaves. They are found in the class called Doms. They are the artisan population and engaged in agriculture’.² They are supposed to be the relics of actual indigenous people of the country,³. In the northern provinces of India Doms were considered as descendants of Dasyus. Doms are also believed to be the descendants of the Munda Group.⁴

Sub- castes among Doms

William Crooke describes about the sub-castes among Doms. The complete census returns show as the main sections of the Hill Doms the Auji, Badhai, bera,

¹ W. Crooke, the Tribes and Castes of North-Western Provinces and Oudh, Vol. 1, (Reprint, 2005), p. 331; Nainital: A Gazetteer, vol. XXXIV, 1904, p.105; H.G. Walton , British Garhwal: A gazetteer , vol .XXXVI, District ghazetteer of United Provinces of Agra and Oudh , 1910, P.62.

².James Kennedy, Life and Work in Benares and Kumaon, 1839-1877, New York, 1885, p. 72.

³ E.Sherman Oakley, Holy Himalaya: The Religion, Traditions, and Scenery of a Himalayan Province (Kumaon And Garhwal), London, 1905, p. 42.

⁴ Shekar Pathak, Kumauni society through the ages, in K.S.Valdiya (Ed.), Kumaun: Land and People, A volume in honour of N.D.Tiwari, Nainital, 1988, p. 99.

Baroda, Chamar , Chunara, Darzi, Das, Dakhi, Dhobi, ,Dholi, Dhunar, Kumar, Kol, Lohar, Mochi, Nath, Pahariya, Shaiya, Tamoli, Tamta, and Teli, most of which are occupational. In Garhwal according to Atkison, they are divided in popular estimations into four classes. To the first belong the Kolis, Tamtas, Lohar, lohars, Orhs, and Dharhis.⁵ The kolis weaves cloth, keep pigs and flocks, and are agricultural the Tamtas or Tamta represent the thantheras of the plains, and are workers in the brass cooper. The lohars are workers in iron the orhs comprise both masons and carpenters.⁶ Dharhis through socially ranked wisdoms do not belong to them, for they properly include only those khasiyas who have been put out of caste for some offence, and their offspring from new caste with the addition of the fresh avocation. To the second class belong the Bhuls, Chunyars, Ruriyas, Agaris, and Pahrirs. The bhuls represent the tails of plains but also to do file work. The chunyaras are turners, and make wooden vessels and the bottom of huqqas. The Ruriyas make various kinds of bamboo baskets and sieves. The Agaris are iron smelters, and must be carefully discriminated from the Dravidian Agariyas of mirzapur . They are doms attached to the service of the mines by the former Rajas, but are gradually exchanging a very ill – paid and dangerous avocation for that of road- making and other profitable work.⁷ The pahrirs are village messengers, and are the same as chmar village watchmen of plains. To third class belong the mullahs, Daryas and Chamars. The mullahs are also called Dhunars, and are for the most part engaged in agriculture. The Darym are village and conjure away hailstorms and the like, for which service they receive annual dues of gains. The Chamars call themselves Bairsawa, and will never acknowledge the Chamars. They saw leather and perform to all the usual services duties of the Doms.

⁵Shekar Pathak, Kumauni society through the ages, in K.S.Valdiya (Ed.), Kumaun: Land and People, A volume in honour of N.D.Tiwari, Nainital, 1988, p. 105.

⁶ Ibid. p. 332.

⁷ Nainital: A Gazetteer, vol. XXXIV, 1904, p.106.

The fourth class includes the professional beggars and vagrant musicians of the Hills – the Badi, Hurikya , Darzi, and Dholi.⁸ The Badi is the village musician; in the plains he is considered to be Nat. He plays on various instruments and sings at festivals. He goes from village to village begging from door to door, and belongs to the class of sturdy beggars who, if they do not get what they expect lampoon the people of the house and abuse them. For these reason they are, to some extent, feared, and able to maintain themselves at the expense of their neighbours. They also snare fowl and fish. The Hurkiyas are so called form the small double drum (Huruk, Huruka) shaped like an hourglass which he carries.⁹ This is an archaic musical instrument like the Damaru, which are one Siva’s emblems. They never take to agriculture, and wander about with their woman, who dance and sing. The Darzi also called Auji and Suji , lives by tailoring , through often solely by agriculture. To the Darzi class belongs the Dolhi so called from beating the Drum (dholak).¹⁰ This is done by the way of incantation to cause sprites and ghosts to enter or leave the person to give the money to the performer. The Daraya, Badi, Hurkiya and Dholi are all Doms, and “ are in the, the recognized priests of the malignant spirits of the hill and glen, whose aid is always sought after and before anything serious is undertaken or any difficult task is attempted. It is the Doms who preserve to the present day the pure demonism of the aborigines, while the Khasiyas temper it with the worship of the village deities, the named and localized divine entities, and furnish from their ranks the priests. The most of the barbais belong to the Orh division of the Doms, and the chunapaz or lime-burners belong to the Agari, and Lohar branches of the Doms. Finally there is a class known as Domjogi, who are beggars. The portions of the

⁸ . W. Crooke, *The Tribes and Castes of North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, Vol. 1, (Reprint,2005), p. 333; *Nainital: A Gazetteer*, vol. XXXIV, 1904, p.106.

⁹ . Shekar Pathak, *Kumauni society through the ages*, in K.S.Valdiya (Ed.), *Kumaun : Land and People*, A volume In honour of N.D.Tiwari, Nainital, 1988, p. 105.

¹⁰ . W. Crooke, *Op. cit.*, , p. 334.

village site assigned to Doms are in the hill known as Domaure or Domtola, like the Chamrauti where the Chamars of the plain congregate.”

Most of these divisions of the doms of hills are thus purely occupational, and as might have been expected, the enumeration varies. Thus Pandit Juala Dat Joshi writing of the Doms of Kumaun says that Doms usually do not use the term of Dom in speaking of themselves, but call themselves Bairaswa, or Tallijati or Baharjati, outcaste or they call themselves by their occupations Orh, Lohar, and so on. He enumerates the Kumaun Doms under the heads of Sarki Dotiwala, who work in Leather , Tamta works in brass ; Lohar work in iron ; Orh and Barele masons; Tirua who do tinning and making horse shoes; Bhul oilmen ; Mochi workers in leather ; Koli cloths weavers, Baruri makers of bamboo baskets, Dhuni Dom, and ordinary Doms who are said to be mixed race of men from the plains who work on the agricultural field. Description of Dhili, Kurkiya, Chamar, Badi and Baura are discussed separately in this chapter. ¹¹

E. Sherman Oakley, a missionary of the London Missionary Society, who visited Kumaon later part of Nineteenth century, remarked that Doms claimed that they were the drummers of Siva when he came to take up his residence in the Himalayas. They were kept in strict subjection. Their status was almost like slaves and they were not allowed to wear a garment reaching below the knee and punishment for touching the hukka or tobacco pipe of a Rajput or a Brahman was instant death. ¹²

¹¹ . W. Crooke, the Tribes and Castes of North-Western Provinces and Oudh, Vol. 1, (Reprint, 2005), p. 335.

¹² E.Sherman Oakley, Holy Himalaya: The Religion, Traditions, and Scenery of a Himalayan Province (Kumaon And Garhwal), London, 1905, p. 42.

Religious life of Doms

James Kennedy writes that Doms worshipped all Hindu Gods and Goddesses.¹³ And Atkinson believes that by the nature of worship of deities, it becomes clear that Doms had indigenous origin. They worshipped village deities like Masan who is thought to have emerged from funeral pray. He is also thought to be possessed by people from time.¹⁴ Like Masan Khabish is his malignant nature and fondness for charnel grounds. He also possesses people like Masan¹⁵ Goril, Goriya, Gwall or Gol is another deified mortal of whom the legend is given by Mr. Atkinson.¹⁶ Evil spirits or Bhoots are supposed to be the spirits of those who have during their earthly life been noted for their wickedness and have acquired demon character are believed to haunt the mountains and forests. People pay homage to them to secure their goodwill and avert their vengeance.¹⁷ People did not like travelling at night because they thought this was the season when Bhoots roam about and fall on their prey. If it is compulsory, then they break off the branches of the pine-tree and turn them into torches to frighten off both the wild beasts and the evil spirits. Kshetral was also worshipped in the Hills.¹⁸

James further writes that during ancient and medieval times caste rules were fully implemented. For the murder a Brahman was banished, and a Rajput was heavily fined while others were put to death. Capital offences included in the Kumaon society were killing a cow or Dom making use of a huqqa (the pipe for smoking) or a utensil belonging to a Brahman or a Rajput.¹⁹ William Crooke felt that there was commonality between Doms and Gypsies of the Europe.

¹³ . James Kennedy, *Life and Work in Benares and Kumaon, 1839-1877*, New York, 1885, p. 72.

¹⁴ . Ibid. p. 337.

¹⁵ . Ibid. p. 337.

¹⁶ . W. Crooke, *The Tribes and Castes of North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, Vol. 1, (Reprint, 2005), p. 338.

¹⁷ . James Kennedy, *Life and Work in Benares and Kumaon, 1839-1877*, New York, 1885, p. 73.

¹⁸ . Ibid. p. 338.

¹⁹ James Kennedy, *Life and Work in Benares and Kumaon, 1839-1877*, New York, 1885, p. 73.

Distribution of the Doms According to 1891 census

| Districts | Benbansi | Dhanuk | Others | Muhammadans | Total |
|---------------|----------|--------|--------|-------------|--------|
| Dehradun | ... | ... | 18,438 | 210 | 18,648 |
| Saharanpur | ... | ... | 59 | 2,482 | 2,541 |
| Muzaffarnagar | ... | ... | 254 | 2,299 | 2,553 |
| Meerut | ... | ... | ... | 4,257 | 4,257 |
| Bulandsahar | ... | ... | ... | 5,663 | 5,663 |
| Aligarh | ... | ... | 21 | 995 | 1,016 |
| Mathura | ... | ... | 8 | 873 | 881 |
| Agra | ... | ... | 15 | 869 | 884 |
| Farrukhabad | ... | ... | 03 | 117 | 120 |
| Mainpuri | ... | ... | ... | 152 | 152 |
| Etawah | 06 | ... | 20 | 143 | 169 |
| Etah | ... | ... | ... | 95 | 95 |
| Bareilly | | | | 538 | 538 |
| Bijnor | | | | 2929 | 2929 |
| Budaun | | | | 603 | 603 |
| Moradabad | | | 4 | 3488 | 3492 |
| Shahjahanpur | | | | 307 | 307 |
| Pilibhit | | | | 295 | 295 |
| Cawnpur | | | 26 | 96 | 122 |
| Fatehpur | | | | 58 | 58 |
| Banda | | | | 8 | 8 |
| Hamirpur | | | 20 | 27 | 47 |
| Allahabad | | | 205 | 108 | 313 |
| Jhansi | | | 8 | 4 | 12 |
| Jalaun | | | 18 | 20 | 38 |

| Districts | Benbansi | Dhanuk | Others | Muhammadans | Total |
|------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Lalitpur | | | 26 | ... | 26 |
| Benares | | | 1,078 | 76 | 1154 |
| Mirzapur | | | 8039 | 3 | 8,042 |
| Jaunpur | | | 3,157 | 135 | 3,292 |
| Ghazipur | 158 | 11 | 2,968 | 37 | 3,174 |
| Ballia | 36 | ... | 1,671 | ... | 1,707 |
| Gorakhpur | ... | ... | 7,817 | 72 | 7,889 |
| Basti | ... | ... | 82 | 101 | 183 |
| Azamgarh | 3 | ... | 1,234 | 135 | 1,372 |
| Kumaun | ... | ... | 137,760 | ... | 137,760 |
| Garhwal | ... | ... | 66,529 | ... | 66,529 |
| Tarai | ... | ... | 4,996 | 519 | 5,515 |
| Lucknow | ... | 751 | 908 | 12 | 1,671 |
| Unao | ... | 1,285 | 1,904 | 30 | 3,219 |
| Rae Bareli | ... | 1,411 | 4,084 | 51 | 5,546 |
| Sitapur | | | 12 | 21 | 33 |
| Hardoi | | | 3 | 24 | 27 |
| Gonda | ... | 129 | 1,790 | 27 | 1,946 |
| Bahraich | 8 | 17 | 327 | 109 | 461 |
| Sultanpur | ... | ... | ... | 102 | 102 |
| Partabgarh | ... | 16 | 24 | 1 | 41 |
| Barabanki | ... | 780 | 2,441 | 272 | 3,493 |
| Total | 211 | 4,400 | 265, 949 | 28,363 | 298,923 |

SHILPKARS AND THEIR SUB-CASTES

The word Shilpkar which was used for a group of castes of the Doms do not indicate one caste but a host of artisanal castes among the Doms.²⁰ Regarding their origin, Atkinson said that they 'claim an exalted origin and say that they are the descendents of a Brahman named Gorakhnath and turned out of caste for eating forbidden food'. The Dom/Dum of Kumaun-Garhwal was officially recognized as the Shilpkar in 1925. Earlier on, the national leader, Lala Lajpat Rai, who was also associated with the Arya Samaj, on his visit to Kumaun in 1911, was moved to see the condition of the Doms. He found them to be craftsmen (Shilpkar) of a high order and thought it was improper to call them Dom and unjust for the Savarna Hindus to exploit them. He called them the Shilpkar. They are distributed throughout the length and breadth of the Uttar Pradesh hills. Their total population, according to the 1981 census, is 514,872. The population figures of the subgroups are not available, according to the 1981 census. They speak the languages of their region-either Kumaoni or Garhwali at home; Jaunsari and Hindi are used while speaking with others and the Devanagari script is used. They are non-vegetarians but do not eat beef. Their staple feed comprises of wheat, rice, maize, different pulses, roots and tubers. On certain socio-religious occasions such as during death pollution, they abstain from taking meat, Fish, etc, and do not use turmeric. Alcoholic drinks, brewed at home or purchased from the market, are consumed by some of them.²¹

The Silpkars in 1931 numbered 333036 (males 172,208; females 160,828) and besides these some retuned themselves as Christians, Brahmani, Hindus or Aryas and

²⁰.Nainital: A Gazetteer, vol. XXXIV, 1904, p.105, Ajay Arora, Administrative History of Uttarakhand (Kumaon and Garhwal) During the rule of the East Indian Company, 1815-1857, Delhi, 1996, p.8. He believed that Shilpkars are the descendants of Koles who were indigenous tribes; Shekar Pathak, Kumauni society through the ages, in K.S.Valdiya (Ed.), Kumaun: Land and People, A volume in honour of N.D.Tiwari, Nainital, 1988, p. 105.

²¹ .K.s.Singh, *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi, Oxford University Press,1999, p. 1183

gave no caste. They have increased by 30 per cent; in the last 30 years. The distribution of Shilpkars according to 1931 census is given below.

| District or State, and religion | Population of Silpkars, 1931. | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------|----------|
| | Persons | Males | Females. |
| Dehra Dun – Hindu | 23288 | 12922 | 10366 |
| Pilibhit | 57 | 45 | 12 |
| Etawah | 24 | 15 | 9 |
| Cawnpore | 1 | 1 | .. |
| Mirzapur | 6 | 3 | 3 |
| Ghazipur | 48 | 26 | 22 |
| Gorakhpur | 120 | 62 | 58 |
| Naini Tal - (Hindu) | 21011 | 12404 | 8607 |
| (Arya) | 15722 | 8545 | 7177 |
| Almora - (Hindu) | 118710 | 60,447 | 58263 |
| (Arya) | 3160 | 1588 | 1572 |
| Garhwal - (Hindu) | 88,319 | 43964 | 44355 |
| (Arya) | 417 | 200 | 217 |
| Rae Bareli - (Hindu) | 239 | 152 | 107 |
| Kheri - (Hindu) | 568 | 426 | 142 |
| Fyzabad - (Hindu) | 12 | 9 | 3 |
| Tehri-Garhwal State - (Hindu) | 61,292 | 31402 | 29,890 |
| Banaras State - (Hindu) | 42 | 17 | 25 |
| - (Hindu) | 313737 | 161875 | 151862 |
| Provincial Total - (Arya) | 19299 | 10333 | 8966 |
| - (All Religions) | 33303 | 172208 | 160828 |

As can be seen from the brief account given above the present sub-castes among Shilpkar are purely the result of the fact that they were kept by their conquerors the Khasiyas in a complete state of subjection and each man was allotted his work and kept to that profession, the sub- divisions hardening by reason of contact

with Hinduism into occupational sub- castes . Census gives a list of the sub- castes found at that point of time.

AGRI OR AGARI-

Ironsmiths or cultivators. (Probably connected with ag, fire cf. agyari, kindler of fire time of deviation.) These were formerly attached to the mines as serfs by the Rajas , but have exchanged that ill-paid and dangerous avocation for road- making and other more profitable work. Nowadays they do not extract iron from mines in kumaun – there were some at Ramgarh and Sanudiyar and other places- but they use imported iron brought Bombay.²²

ATHPAHANS -

Found in Garhwal district and Tehri Garhwal State . They used to beat drums at the places – gate of Hindu rajas of Garhwal at the end of the each pahar²³

AUJI

Aujis were one of the village communities who play an active role in social and religious Also referred to as Darji, they concentrated in the pithoragarh district of Kumaon. Their staple diet-rice and wheat- is supplemented with maize and barley. They are internally segmented into some exogamous patrilineages. Each patrilineage is further subdivided into das dinia (ten day agnate) and tin dinia (three day agnate). Members belonging to the former are close agnates and the latter are distant agnates and are so named because they share birth and death pollution for ten and three days, respectively. ²⁴Ram, Auji and Arya are their surnames. Among the low castes, who

²² . Census of India, 1931 Appendix C page no- 554-558

²³ . Ibid. p. 554-558.

²⁴ . K.S.Singh, *the Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1999, p.1189.

are collectively from the Dom category, they perceive their position as being equal to the Dholi and Damai, higher than the Hurkiya and lower than the Tamta, Lohar, Orh, etc. and are similarly perceived by others. Endogamy at the status category level is the important rule. The kanyadan system of marriage is gradually becoming popular. Inheritance follows the male line, i.e. the sons get an equal share of the father's property.²⁵ On the eleventh day the name-giving ceremony (namkaran) of the newborn child is held. Marriage involves two stages, namely betrothal (mangni) and the actual wedding. The dead are cremated. Death pollution is observed. Basically, their economy is based on occupations like drum-beating on socio-religious occasions, dancing and entertaining on social occasions like marriages, and tailoring. Some of them are small landholders. Their other occupations are agriculture, animal husbandry, labour and service. They have their own informal council (gharelu panchyat) formed by elderly persons of their own as well as other communities which settles petty disputes. They follow the local form of Hinduism along with some traditional beliefs. Some of their deities are Narsing, Kalua, Nangthara, Bhairav, and Gangnath. As musicians and dancers, they are important folk artists who carry on the rich folklore of the past. As a community they maintain socio-economic linkages with other communities. As traditional performing artists and tailors, they are linked with specific high-caste households whom they serve and from whom they receive a fixed quantity of grain after each harvest.²⁶ They accept food and water from all communities higher than them but do not take food and water from the Hurkiya who are considered lower in the social hierarchy. Beside they work as ploughmen (haliyas) and agricultural labourers under high-caste farmers. Though they suffer from a few socio-ritualistic disabilities, they are not barred from using public roads, school,

²⁵ . Ibid. p. 1189. Shekar Pathak, Kumauni society through the ages, in K.S.Valdiya (Ed.), Kumaun : Land and People, A volume in honour of N.D.Tiwari, Nainital, 1988, p. 105.

²⁶ . K.S.Singh, *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1999, p.1190.

panchayat houses, etc. they share drinking water source and crematoria with the other low castes.

BAKHRIYA

They work as menial servants in the villages. They gained popularity since the time they were employed in the cavalry of the erstwhile rulers of Garhwal.²⁷ The social divisions beyond the family are minimal and maximal partilineage which are not hierarchical. The members of a minimal partilineage exogamy and community endogamy are the marriage rules. The age at marriage for males is sixteen to thirty years and for females fourteen to twenty-two years. The major economic resource is agriculture and it is supplemented by labour, horticulture and service in different establishments. Wages are paid both in cash and kind. Through the jajmani system they interact with other communities and thus maintain intercommunity and patron-client linkages. They have separate water sources and burial/cremation grounds.²⁸

BEDAOR BADI

Found everywhere. They are professional dancers and singer; the comedians of the hills (from Sanskrit vadi , a speaker, talker disputant). In Tehri- Garhwal State at least one Beda in a family consecrates his hair to his chief god **Mahadev** and must perform **Bedawat** before he can get his head shaved. If they yearly diminishes continually for some year, if rats do abnormal damage to crops, if blood comes out of the cow's udder the place of milk, if the share of a plough strikes against or if an unusual number of snakes appear in fields such calamities are taken to be the manifestation of Mahadeva's displeasure. If *babla* a kind of local grass grows with in

²⁷ . K.S.Singh, *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1999, p.1192. Shekar Pathak, Kumauni society through the ages, in K.S.Valdiya (Ed.), Kumaun : Land and People, A volume in honour of N.D.Tiwari, Nainital, 1988, p. 105.

²⁸ . Ibid. p. 1192.

temple of mahadeva it is regarded as a sure sign of his wrath and the only remedy is for someone to perform *Bedwart*. The beda whose hair is consecrated to Mahadev is chief functionary in the ceremony. The whole thing is grand in preparation and thrilling in performance. Months before the actual ceremony takes place the whole villages in which *Bedwart* is take place beings to collect food, provision and money contributions to meet various expenses, such as food for the invited guests and ornaments , cloths etc. for the Beda who is to do *bedwart*. Besides those who are invited, a large number of spectators also come from far and near and make an imposing gathering. A small bazaar is established, *Charkis* are erected and all the paraphernalia of a regular mela.

The main part of the ceremony is that a huge- rope of *babla* grass is stretched across a valley along the slope of a hill by fastening one end of the rope on a strong tree or rock on the top of the hill and the other end of the rope on the other side or at the bottom of the hill as the case may be. A wooden saddle by the hanging a weight to his legs; a fall would mean instantaneous death. Thus balanced, the Beda is left to slide down the rope to the other end. As soon as the beda reaches the end of his journey, the villagers and spectators who are gathered in readiness at the lower end of the rope, fall upon him and snatch away the hairs of his head. His hairs are considered to be those of *Mahadev* in whose name they were preserved for so long, and no evil or trouble is said to visit a house which possesses these hairs. The rope on which a Beda is to slide is generally made or twisted by the members of his own family for two reasons. They make sure that rope is strong enough and they take grant care to watch it day and night, for it is believed that the movement a rope (or bart as it is called) is left unwatched, it turns into a huge snake and creeps off into the interior of the earth. Before a Beda is made slide he is worshipped as Mahadev, is bathed in milk, dressed new garments and ornaments, and is taken on the shoulder of the

padhan all around the village and the fields. He is also given some cash money as free after the ceremony is finished. In one or two instances accidents have happened and the Beda has fallen to his death. Latterly the state has prohibited any *bedwart* to be held without explicit permission. Such permission is given very sparingly. This practice used to be common in Kumaun but has long since been abandoned.

BAIRI

They are the basket weavers..²⁹ They are also known as Byadi, Baruri and Bare, they dwell in hamlets which are on the periphery of the villages inhabited by other communities. They are now concentrated in the northern parts of Almora and pithoragarh districts, where ringal (*Arundinaria falcata*), used as raw material for basketry, is available. They are divided into exogamous lineages (raths). The raths are further subdivided into maximal and death patrilineal kindred (das dinia and tin dinia) who observe the birth and death pollution period for ten days and three days, respectively. Marriage with other Sudra communities like the Tamta and Lohar is permitted. Adult marriage along with child marriages is prevalent in the community. Some of them own arable land. Their traditional occupation is basket-making. In course of time, some of them have taken to hudka (tabor) playing. Besides, they serve other agricultural communities either as agricultural labour or as artisans. Daily labour, government jobs, masonry, carpentry and smithy are the other occupations taken up by them in recent times. Gangnath and Kailpal are their community deities. The shaman (dhami), hailing from any community, deals with ailments, evil spirits and deity propitiation. Wood carving and engraving are their traditional art forms and basketry is their craft. Both males and females join in folk-songs and dances. Some of their musical instruments are the hudka, flute, damau tymbal and cymbal (jhanjh).

²⁹ Census of India, 1931; K.S. Singh, *the Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1999, p.1191.

Earlier, they were given small plots of land to make a hut and grow food when they worked for others. They get a quantity of harvest (khala) from their traditional masters (gusain/rithi) in exchange for their service as domestic workers and basket-suppliers. Such relationships have weakened since the advent of the British in Kumaon. However, many of them still work as agricultural labourers, especially as ploughmen, play music and retain the khala system.³⁰ Nowadays, they share water sources, crematoria and religious shrines with their neighbours. There are a few white-collar workers amongst them who forge modern intercommunity linkages. They send their children to school, but most of them, specially the girls, drop out after primary education. Poverty and child marriage are responsible for this. A few have started animal husbandry and agriculture and constructed houses with and remain dependent either on shopkeepers or on private moneylenders.³¹

BAURA OR BORA-

They usually made sack and rope from the fibre.

BHAT-

Found everywhere. Bards and genealogists as in the plains. They are similar to Hurikyas but their women do not dance as the Hurkiya women do.

BHUL , TELI, OR BARIA-

They were formerly oil- pressers and used to press oil seeds for the village. Imported oil is now so cheap that it does not pay the Bhuls to press it, so they have taken to field work.

³⁰ .Shekar Pathak, Kumauni society through the ages, in K.S.Valdiya (Ed.), Kumaun : Land and People, A Volume in honour of N.D.Tiwari, Nainital, 1988, p. 105.K.S.Singh, *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi , Oxford University Press, 1999, p.1192.

³¹ . Ibid. p. 1192.

CHAMAR –

Found everywhere . They skin dead and cure and tan the hides.

CHANEL-

They are believed to be the Shoemakers

CHUNERA-

Found everywhere. They are turners and make wooden vessels with a lathe driven by water power.

DALIYA-

Dali is hill word for a hailstorm or violent rainstorm. Daliyas profess to know the magic or mantras by means of which they can divert or stop a hailstorm and thus prevent injury to the standing crops. When hailstorm appears the Daliyas goes to the top of a house or some elevated place and throw rice in all directions meanwhile reciting certain words or chanting mantras. By the time he finishes his magic which he can no doubt prolong or shorten according to the duration of the storm, the storm must end and so he never fails to demonstrate successfully the efficacy of the magic which naturally preserves his job. As his services are not for one individual only but for the benefit of the whole village, the whole village contributes to pay him *dadwar*. In Tehri – Garhwal State Daliyas are chiefly found in the Narendranagar and Kirtinagar sub divisions, where hailstorm occurs more frequently than anywhere else state. They are also found in Garhwal district.

DAMAI

Their community name is derived from a musical instrument called damoo/damoa (large single membrane kettledrum) which is played by them on socio-

religious occasions.³² They are sporadically found in the middle and low altitude village of pithoragarh, Almora and Nainital districts of Kumaon hills. The community is divided into das dinia and tin dinia. The rath divisions regulate marriage and indicate descent and ancestry. They perceive a low status for themselves in the regional caste hierarchy and other also perceives them so. However, within the Dom category, they are equal to the Dholi and Auji with whom they marry but they are lower than the Tamta, Orh, Lohar and Tirwa and higher than the Hurkiya. They follow lineage exogamy and status category endogamy. The traditional occupation of the Damai is to play the damoo on socio-religious occasions for high-caste families. The other traditional occupations, which they pursue, are cultivation, animal husbandry and tailoring. Nowadays, a few have taken up service in government and private organizations and some work as labourers. They worship family deities (ghar ki devta) such as Danu, Kalua, etc., village deities (gaon devta) like Haru, Shem, etc. and regional deities like Malenath, Bhagaling, etc. They specialize in various folklores of local gods, spirits and heroes; these lores are referred to as jhora which they sing during socio-religious festivals. They accept food and water from all Kumaoni high-castes, and some low castes like the Tamta, Lohar, Orh, Dholi and Auji but not from the Hurkjiya. Under the traditional patron-client system, they offer their specialized service, e.g. drum-beating, to specific high-caste households and receive grain payment after each harvest.³³ Some work as ploughmen and also as sharecroppers to high-caste farmer families.

³² Shekar Pathak, Kumauni society through the ages, in K.S.Valdiya (Ed.), Kumaun : Land and People, A Volume in honour of N.D.Tiwari, Nainital, 1988, p. 105.; K.S.Singh, *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi , Oxford University Press, 1999, p.1195.

³³ . K.S.Singh, *the Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi, Oxford University Press,1999, p.1196; Shekar Pathak, Kumauni society through the ages, in K.S.Valdiya (Ed.), Kumaun : Land and People, A volume in honour of N.D.Tiwari, Nainital, 1988, p. 105.

DARJI OR DARZI-

They worked as tails in the Utrakhand Hills.

DHALOTI –

Smelters of bronze in Tehri- Garhwal State. The name is said to come from *dhalua*, to caste. They make *hukkas* by casting molten bronze in *hukka* moulds. Their chief goddess is *Bhagwati Jwaladebi*, the goddess of fire incarnate, the same as for Lohars, Tamtas and Agris, but are reckoned as lower than Lohars.

DHANIK-

Cultivations and basket- makers in Almora. The name possibly originated from *Dhanuk*, a bow. They may have made bows at some early period.

DHOBI –

Originally washer men. In almora most of the present-day Dhobis have come from the plains and the original sub- caste of the Doms are nearly all cultivators.

DHOLI

Also referred to as Das-Dholi or Das in different parts of Kumaon, as they played drum on different occasions they got the name Dhili.³⁴ They are internally divided into several patrilineages, locally termed as rath which, in turn, are subdivided into das dinia and tin dinia. The rath regulates marriage alliances and indicates descent and ancestry. Among the communities in the Dom category, they perceive themselves lower than the Tamta, Lohar, Orh and others, but higher than the Hurkiya,

³⁴ . K.S.Singh, *the Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi , Oxford University Press,1999, p.1197; Shekar Pathak, Kumauni society through the ages, in K.S.Valdiya (Ed.), Kumaun : Land and People, A volume in honour of N.D.Tiwari, Nainital, 1988, p. 105.

and are similarly ranked by other. They are considered to be socially equal to the Damai and Auji with whom they sometimes marry. The custom of bride price is prevalent but the amount varies in accordance with the economic status of the concerned parties. The name-giving ceremony is held on the eleventh day with a simple celebration and the baby is named by the 'acting priest'. The role of the priest is assumed by an affinal kin like the sister's husband, or the father's sister's husband. The marriage is solemnized at the bride's residence and both the parties host the marriage feast at their respective places. Their traditional occupation is drum-beating on socio-religious occasion. They are basically a non-agricultural community. However, many of them now own land and cattle and pursue agriculture and animal husbandry as well. The other occupations, pursued by them, are tailoring, labour and service. They worship three types of deities, namely family deities (ghar ka devta), village deities (gaon devta) and regional deities. The principal family deities are Bhaneria, Ban, Kailua, Chotiya, Devi, etc. The important regional deities are Malenath, Bhagaling, etc. They also propitiate spirits like Pari, Garhdevi, etc., either periodically or in an emergency.³⁵ Their sacred specialists (shaman) are called dangarias who may be chose from their own or from other communities. Being traditional drummers, they possess a rich storehouse of traditional Kumaoni folklore. They are specialists in reciting long traditional lores depicting the history, origin, life and activities of local Kumaoni gods, goddesses, culture heroes, etc. They have a particular lore referred to as jhora which is sung on religious occasions in the village along with drum-beating, leading to 'deity possession' by the shaman who enters into a state of trance. Putative kinship relations are maintained with other communities.

³⁵ . K.S.Singh, *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi , Oxford University Press,1999, p.1197; Shekar Pathak, Kumauni society through the ages, in K.S.Valdiya (Ed.), Kumaun : Land and People, A volume in honour of N.D.Tiwari, Nainital, 1988, p. 105.

DHONI-

Sandwasher in Tehri-Garhwal State, whose chief occupation is washing for gold. They are very few numbers nowadays.

DHUNIA

They are basically cotton cleaners.³⁶

DHUNIYAL

Fisherman and ferry-men. In Almora sometimes called *dhewar, Dhimar* or *jail*(from jal, a net).

DOM

In Tehri – Garhwal State there are still some Doms who have, unlike their other professional brethren, not yet taken to any special occupation and are content with the title of their old parental stock. A Dom is like a serf, either traditionally attached to some old *thokdari* family from generation to generation or bound to serve a money-lender in lieu of interest on the money which has been borrowed from the money – lender to get wife. Generally, the pay fixed is so low that it barely covers the interest and so the Dom becomes a life-long slave to the money – lender unless some other money- lender comes and makes a bargain with the former one, in which case the Dom only changes masters. Generally, the wife and children of the Dom also work along with him for his master. They all get cooked food from their master's house and also clothing once or twice a year. Male Doms often works as *haliyas*(ploughmen) and the women and children of the Dom also work for weeding, carrying manure to the fields, and bringing grass, fuel, etc., to the master's house. The greatest number of

³⁶ . Census of India, 1931.

these Doms is found in the Jaunpur sub-division and the next greatest number in Kirtinagar and sub- division. In Jaunpur sub- division there are 149 males and 119 females and in kirtinagar sub division 80 males and 70 females.

DONDI-

Similar to Hurkiyas in Tehri – Garhwal State. Their name is derived from small Drum (dondi) they play. Very few in numbers.

DONDIYA

Formerly this sub- caste found in Tehri- Garhwal State, were all beggars. They worship *Narsingh* and are sometimes called **Dondiya-Narsingh**. It is said that Dondiya was a great devotee of the god Narsingh .Synasu, a village in Bith-patti. His descendants call themselves Dondiyas and are also beggars in the name of Narsingh . Many of them have now given up begging and have taken to cultivation.

GODOI

There is a temple of goddess *Bhagwati* named Dewalgarh in pargana Dewalgarh of Tehri –Garhwal State, which derives its name from the temple of the same name in British Garhwal. The musician and drummer belonging to this temple called *Gadoi* and so all his descendants are called *Gadois* though they are no longer connected with the temple. This has become a caste name now.

HOBYARA

Trumpeters from Jaunpur in Tehri –Garhwal State.

HURIKYA

They were also drummers. Also called Mirasi, their community name is derived from the word hurka, a tiny hand-drum which is traditionally used by them.³⁷ Like the other low castes of Kumaon, they claim to be autochthones in the area. They are distributed in Almora, Nainital and Pithoragarh districts but their concentrations are relatively more in Pithoragarh district. The Hurkiya are divided into four major subgroups, namely Mirasi, Nat, Bhand and Badi. Each subgroup is further divided into exogamous patrilineage called rath. Of the four subgroups, the Mirasi claim superior status over the others, but they intermarry with other subgroups. In the local social hierarchy, they are clubbed with other low-castes to form the Dom category. However, within the Dom category, they occupy the lowest position. They are basically a non-agricultural community who depend on various occupations. Their traditional occupation is music and dance which is presently pursued by only a few families. Their woman dance while the Hurkiya males sing and play hurka music to entertain the public. Nowadays, most of them have resorted to multiple occupations, including labour, petty trade like peddling fancy items, e.g. bangles, combs, mirrors and toys, selling of firewood, service in defence and civil departments, etc. Some have taken to tailoring. They worship Garhdevi and Bhairav as their family deities and their regional deity is Malenath. Their scared specialist, called dangaria, is a shaman, who may be chosen from their own or from another community. Their important festivals are Ghee teohar and Pushoria teohar.³⁸ They seldom go on pilgrimage. They have a rich treasure of song, music and dance for which their fame

³⁷ . K.S.Singh, *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi , Oxford University Press,1999, p.1198; Shekar Pathak, Kumauni society through the ages, in K.S.Valdiya (Ed.), Kumaun : Land and People, A volume in honour of N.D.Tiwari, Nainital, 1988, p. 105.

³⁸ K.S.Singh, *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi , Oxford University Press,1999, p.1199. Shekar Pathak, Kumauni society through the ages, in K.S.Valdiya (Ed.), Kumaun : Land and People, A volume in honour of N.D.Tiwari, Nainital, 1988, p. 105.

is legendary in Kumaon. They accept food and water from other communities but others do not accept these from them. However, sidha food is accepted by others. Intercommunity marriages do not exist but putative kinship ties with other communities are forged and maintained. Patron-client relations are still maintained by some families who pursue their traditional profession of entertaining their high-caste patrons by singing and dancing on social occasions for which they are paid both in cash and kind.

JAGRI OR JAGARIA-

These are sorcerers or exorcists. If a person is in trouble the idea is that he or she possessed of or is being tormented by some malevolent spirit or enraged deity. The Jagaria causes the sufferer to be seated before him and then beat time with two sticks on a bronze plate meanwhile challenging the evil spirit or deity to proclaim himself and the cause of his anger. The sufferer usually proceeds to dance and weep and mutter incoherently from which the Jagaria alleges he can decide who the spirit or deity is and how to appease him. This ceremony is known *Jagar* or *Gharyala* . In Almora the spirit is supposed to enter the Jagaria himself. Another function they perform is to sing the praises of certain gods and invoke them to possess devotees. The name appears to come from *jigar*, the liver or vitals, of *jigar khur* , *jigar khar*, an enchanter, and sorcerer.

JAMARIA-

Cultivators, found in Almora. The name be a corruption of *zamindar*

KOLIS

One of the Doms castes in the Hills.³⁹ They weaved the clothes for the village community. In the census of 1872 kolis population was 11,040. There was division among them., namely is garikriya koli and second one is Dom Koli.⁴⁰

KUMHAR

Potters. In Tehri – Garhwal State there are *kumhar* also who are not Doms (known as Bith Kumhar). In Almora this sub-caste know as *Hankia* from *handi*, an earthen pot. The Hankias work chiefly in the Patiya valley near Almora , and Kali Kumaun.

LOHAR

In the census of 1872 population of Lohar community was 14,322.⁴¹ Name of the caste was derived from making implements of iron.. The social divisions beyond the family are minimal and maximal patrilineages(Khudana). The minimal partilineage (sora) is exogamous and the members of a sora are found to observe pollution and shaving of the head (mun-muneet) after the death of a minimal partilineage member. Within the Dom category, they perceive themselves as being equal to the Lapor, Tamta,Orh, Mour, etc.⁴²they are unaware of the Varna system. The marriage rule is minimal partilineage exogamy and Mistri group endogamy. The age at marriage of boys is between fourteen to twenty-five years and for girls between twelve to twenty-two years. The marriage is initiated by the groom's side, which visit

³⁹ . K.s.Singh, *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi, Oxford University Press,1999, p. 1200.

⁴⁰ Census of india,1931, 19; Shekar Pathak, Kumauni society through the ages, in K.S.Valdiya (Ed.), Kumaun : Land and People, A volume in honour of N.D.Tiwari, Nainital, 1988, p. 105.

⁴¹ . Nainital: A Gazetteer, vol. XXXIV, 1904, p.106.

⁴² . K.S.Singh, *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi , Oxford University Press,1999, p.1204; Shekar Pathak, Kumauni society through the ages, in K.S.Valdiya (Ed.), Kumaun : Land and People, A volume in honour of N.D.Tiwari, Nainital, 1988, p. 105.

the bride's place, give bride price and bring the bride back. Some brides, to give further legality to the marriage, circumambulate with the groom at the latter's place, where they stay overnight. Next morning the couple visits the bride's place where the groom greets and offers pithain to the mother-in-law to get clearance for the consummation of marriage at his place. The dead are either buried or cremated and pollution is observed for ten days during which the family members are not allowed to consume oil, chilies and turmeric. On the tenth day, all the kinsmen are feasted. On the thirteenth day, the final purificatory ceremony is held, in which a stone is placed in the name of the dead and the community is feasted. In addition to blacksmith, they also supplemented it with other works like agriculture and other related works. and odd jobs in different organizations. From among the regional deities like Jakh, Bhumai, Nag, Nirankar, Kali and Ghantakarn, the family deity is chosen. Their sacred centres are Hardwar, Gangotri, Jamnotri, Badrinath and Kedarnath. The community has sacred specialists of the exorcist category who are mendicants and performs oracles. The major festivals are observed on the new and full-moon days of each month. Intercommunity marriages are common. Putative kinship is prevalent. They own places of burial and water sources but share other public places with villages. Patron-client relations are maintained.

MIATRI-

Carpenters.

MOCHI OR BADI

Found everywhere. In some part of Uttar Kashi (Tehri- Garhwal State) he is a cobbler and shoemaker . In Almora he deals in hide but never tans them. He does not inter dine with Chamars. A Badi will sometimes take a Chamar bride but will not give

his daughter to Chamar. When Chamar girl is married to badi she is not allowed to dine with her Chamar relatives. If any Badi inter- dines with a Chamar he is out-casted by the Badi panchayat (Some Lohars whose caste is considered to be higher than that of Badis have began to marry daughters of Badis. But they also do not allow them to dine with their Badi relatives.) Their chief deity or goddess is *Jwaladebi*, whom they generally propitiate every third on many other occasions , by offering a sacrifice called *ashtabali*, which includes one he buffalo and one she buffalo, one goat , one pig , one fowl , one bhujela(a kind of white pumpkin), one *gendara*(a kind of tuber) , some cooked rice and curry . On such occasions a Brahman is employed to worship the deity and to perform the ceremony.

NAGARI

Drummers who beat the nagara , a one –sided drum . They are sometimes called *Nagarchis*. A few are found in Tehri- Garhwal State.

NAI

Barbers.

NATH OR JOGI

Beggars , found in Garhwal and Tehari –Garhwal. They call themselves followers of **Guru Gorakhnath**, pierce their ears and wear heavy glass or wooden ear-rings. Many of them have to take to cultivation as well for living.

OKHERA

A community of leather workers, they migrated to Kumaon from neighbouring southwest Nepal and are largely distributed in the eastern Kumaon region in

Pithoragarh district.⁴³ They are divided into several exogamous patrilineages called rath and each rath is subdivided into das dinia and tin dinia agnatic groups who observe pollution for ten and three days, respectively on the occasions of birth and death in any family of their lineage. The rath regulates marriage alliance and indicates descent and ancestry. In the regional Hindu hierarchy, they are classed with other low castes that together form the Dom category. But among the low castes, they perceive themselves lower than the Tamta, Orh, Lohar, Dholi, Damai and Auji and are equal to the Hukriya who occupy the lowermost position and are similarly perceived by others. They follow lineage exogamy and marry within their own group as well as with the Sarki, another leather-worker community is leather work which is still pursued along with cultivation and cattle-rearing. Other occupations are labour, service in government and private organizations, and selling of firewood occasionally to earn cash. Their family deities are Asur, Kedar and Masan, and their regional deity is Bhagwati. Spirits like Pichas and Bhutni are also worshipped on specific occasions. Although many of them have adopted Gurumukhi panthi, they have not yet given up their traditional religious practices and follow them simultaneously. They are experts in the craft of leather work. They make a variety of shoes, bags, etc. out of leather and the government's industry department has greatly helped in the resurgence of their traditional folklore, song and dance. They accept food and water from all communities except the Hukriya whose food and water are not accepted by any other community. However, sidha food is exchanged with others. Putative kinship relations exist. Many of them work as haliyas under high-caste landowning families and some are sharecroppers to the landowning castes. Although they are considered an

⁴³ . K.S.Singh, *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi , Oxford University Press,1999, p.1206.

untouchable low caste, they are not prevented from sharing the school, public road, panchayat house, etc. in the village.⁴⁴

ORH

Also referred to as Mistri or Raj, they are an artisan community of the Uttar Pradesh hills. Traditionally, they are stoneworkers and masons. They are also found in the neighbouring areas of Nepal and some of them are migrants from Nepal. They are found in both Kumaon and Garhwal divisions. They speak either Garhwali or Kumaoni, depending on their area of habitation.⁴⁵ Many of them are proficient in Hindi. Internally, the community is segmented into a number of exogamous patrilineages called rath which is further subdivided into das dinia and tin dinia, being close and distant agnates who observe birth and death pollution for ten and three days, respectively. In the regional Hindu hierarchy, they are grouped under the larger Dom category. However, amongst the Doms they occupy the topmost position along with the Tamta, Lohar, Tirwa and Agri, who together form a status-category. In matrimony, they observe partilineage(rath) exogamy and status –category endogamy. Land and forest constitute important economic resources for them. While land is held by individual families, the forest is controlled either by the forest panchayat or the government. Their traditional occupations are stonework, masonry, agriculture and animal husbandry.⁴⁶ Other vocations like agricultural labour, casual wage labour and service in civil and defence establishments are also pursued by them. Their gods and deities are mostly of local origin. Pan-Indian deities have very little influence in their religious matrix. Their presiding deity is Sheipal. His consort, Devi,

⁴⁴ . K.S.Singh, *Op.cit.*, p.1206.

⁴⁵ . *Ibid.*, p. 1207.

⁴⁶ . Shekar Pathak, Kumauni society through the ages, in K.S.Valdiya (Ed.), Kumaun : Land and People, A volume In honour of N.D.Tiwari, Nainital, 1988, p. 105.

is also worshipped by them. The other important deities are Gangnath and Garhdevi. All these deities are periodically worshipped by them. Except for Gangnath, other deities are propitiated by goat sacrifice either as a matter of routine offering or when specifically asked through a medium. The religious functionary is a shaman called dangaria who is either from their own community or chosen from some other community. Their important festivals are Bishpati Teohar (held during the first day of Baisak and Pushoria teohar (celebrated on the last day of the month of Posh), Diwali and Holi. Their important shrines are Bageshwar and Kedareshwar. They accept food and water from all communities including the Tamta, Lohar, Tirwa and Agri, who are of the same social status. They do not take food and water from the Dholi, Damai and Hukriya. Traditionally, every Orh family is linked with a high-caste household of the village to whom they offer their specialized traditional services and in exchange receive a specific quantum of grains during the harvest season.

PAURI

They are also referred to as the Paheri, Pahri and Prahari, their community name may be a corrupt derivative of the word Prahari, meaning a watchman, or else their name might have been derived from the word Pahari, meaning hill.⁴⁷ Their oral history points to their migration into eastern Kumaon from neighbouring Nepal during the feudal Chand regime when they were employed as royal watchmen and couriers. They are largely concentrated in Champawat but a few of their families are distributed in Shor valley and the Gumdesh area of Pithoragarh district. They are divided into several exogamous patrilineages called rath. Each lineage is further subdivided into das dinia and tin dinia who, being close and distant agnates, observe birth and death pollution for ten and three days, respectively. The lineage regulates

⁴⁷. K.S.Singh, *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1999, p.1209.

marriage alliances and indicates descent and ancestry. Earlier they were brought by and employed as watchmen and couriers by Champawat rulers. But they are no longer engaged in those pursuits and are wholly dependent on agriculture and animal husbandry, which were their subsidiary occupations in the past. Some families manufacture earthen smoking pipes which they also used to prepare in the past. The other vocations followed by them are labour, petty business, tailoring, service, etc. They worship family, village and regional deities such as Bhairav, Nagnath, Gurla, Bhagwati, etc. Their sacred specialists are the divine teller(puchhara) and shaman(dangaria) who are either from their own or from other communities. The important sacred centres visited on pilgrimage are Purnagiri, Pancheswar, Haridwar and Mathura. Their traditional craft is manufacturing earthen pipes for smoking but this is fast disappearing. They share the rich heritage of Kumaoni folk-songs, music and dance with other communities. Marriage relations with other communities exist. They accept food and water from Brahman, Rajput and Vaishya. They exchange food and water with the Tamta, Loahar, Orh and Tirwa but not with the Dholi, Damai and Kurkiya. Putative kinship with other communities exists. Some of them work as agricultural labourers under Kumaoni farmers and are paid both in cash and kind. A few of them are sharecroppers with Kumaoni landowners.⁴⁸

PARKI

Their community name is derived from their traditional profession of carrying palanquins (palki).⁴⁹ They are presently distributed in the Didihat and Munsiyari subdivisions of Pithoragarh district and a few are found in the Terai area of Nainital district. They are divided into a few patrilineages called rath. Each lineage is further

⁴⁸ . K.S.Singh, *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi , Oxford University Press,1999, p.1209; Shekar Pathak, Kumauni society through the ages, in K.S.Valdiya (Ed.), Kumaun : Land and People, A volume in honour of N.D.Tiwari, Nainital, 1988, p. 105.

⁴⁹ . K.S.Singh, *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi, Oxford University Press,1999, p.1208.

divided into das dinia and tin dinia depending on whether they observe birth and death pollution (natak-suatk) for ten or three days. The principal function of a lineage is to indicate ancestry and regulate marriages. In local caste hierarchy, they perceive themselves as belonging to the untouchable Dom category. They consider themselves higher to the Dholi, Damai, Auji, Hurkiya and others and equal to the Tamta, Lohar and Orh.⁵⁰ They follow exogamy at the lineage level and endogamy at the status-category level. Adult marriage is practiced. Land and forest are their major economic resources.⁵¹ Most of the families own land. They pursue their primary occupations like agriculture, animal husbandry and basketry, whereas their subsidiary occupations are labour, masonry, services, etc. Nowadays, the educated amongst them work as teachers and pharmacists or are in civil and defence services. Their family deities are Huin Shikar and Latadevta. They also worship other deities like Gangnath, Narsing and Kal Bhairav. Their scared specialists are called shaman dangaria and the divine-teller (puchhuara) who may be from their own community or from another community. They are expert in making bamboo baskets and mats. They accept food and water from communities like the Tamta, Lohar and Orh who enjoy an equivalent status as them but they do not accept food from communities like the Dholi, Dami and Hukriya. They continue the traditional jajmani links with other communities to whom they offer their services and receive payment in kind like grain during the harvest season or after every harvest.

PATAR-

Found in Almora . They supply leaves for use as plates at feasts on the occasion of marriages, births etc. The name derived from *patta* a leaf.

⁵⁰ . K.S.Singh, *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi , Oxford University Press,1999, p.1208.

⁵¹ .Ibid. p.1208.

PUMMI

Cotton carders, a few were found in Tehri – Garhwal State.

RAJ

Masons, found in Almora. The name is probably derived from *raj-mistri*, a master builder.

RAUNSAL

Cultivators, found in Almora.

RURIYA OR RINGALIYAS

Found everywhere. Makers of baskets, mats, boxes, sieves, and other articles from reeds and bamboos. The correct name is probably *Baruriya* possibly from *baru*, high jungle grass and reed.

SIRDALIA

Masons and cultivators found in Almora.

SONAR

Goldsmiths. In Tehri –Garhwal State there are also Bith- Sonars who claim to be Rajputs.

TAMTA

Tamtas were basically the copper smiths who gradually improved their social standing and provided leadership to the Shilpkars.⁵² Also referred to as Tamta or Tamtas, they derive their community name from *tamba*(copper) and their traditional

⁵² . Nainital: A Gazetteer, vol. XXXIV, 1904, p.106.

vocation is coppersmith. They are divided into several patrilineages, locally referred to as rath. Each lineage is further subdivided into das dinia and tin dinia, who being close and distant agnates, observe birth and death pollution for ten and three days, respectively. The lineages regulate marriage alliances and indicate descent and ancestry. In the regional Hindu social hierarchy, they are clubbed with other low castes that together form the Dom category, but within the Dom category, they perceive themselves as being equal to the Lohar, Orh, Tirwa, etc. but higher than the Dholi, Damai, Anuji and Hukriya.⁵³ They observe endogamy at the status category level, i.e. they marry the Lohar and Orh who are social equals and follow exogamy at the lineage level. The traditional occupations of the community are coppersmith which is still pursued. Besides, agriculture and animal husbandry are also practiced by them. Other occupations are service, business and occasional labour. Exchange is made either by barter or cash. Their family deities are Kalua, Veer Betal, Gairchari, etc. They worship Bhumiya as their village deity and Bhagwati as their regional deity. The shaman (dangaria) is their scared specialists who may be from their own or another community.⁵⁴ Their important festivals are Navratri, Atho and Holi. They do not have any traditional art but have a rich heritage of coppersmith. They manufacture various copper vessels and pitchers which form an integral part of the traditional material culture of the Uttar Pradesh hills. They accept food and water from all the high castes and some low castes such as the Lohar, Orh, Tirwa, Bairi and Rudia. But they do not take food and water from low castes like the Dholi, Damai and Kurkiya. However, sidha food is accepted from and exchanged with all. Intercommunity marriages are practiced with the Lohar, Orh and Tirwa who are socially equal to them.

⁵³ . K.S.Singh, *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi, Oxford University Press,1999, p.1211.

⁵⁴ . K.S.Singh, *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi, Oxford University Press,1999, p.1211; Shekar Pathak, Kumauni society through the ages, in K.S.Valdiya (Ed.), Kumaun : Land and People, A volume in honour of N.D.Tiwari, Nainital, 1988, p. 105.

Putative kinship exists with other communities. Patrons-client relations, under the traditional jajmani system, exist. Cultivator-labour and employer-worker ties exist amongst members of their own and other communities.

Tirwa

Sword and knife- sharpeners(from *tir* arrow). They are found in Almora and were probably arrow smith in olden times.

Turi

Originally trumpeters in Almora region of the hills.

Shilpkars' traditional informal council (gharelu panchayat) of elders deals with petty socio-economic disputes. Besides, the modern statutory panchayat system is also in existence, which, in addition to effecting social control, executes developmental programmes. They profess the local form of Hinduism. Some of their deities are Bhairon, Betal, Aan, Kalchhin, Kalua, Chhurmalla, Gangnath, etc. these deities are worshipped as family, village and regional deities.⁵⁵ As a ritually unclean community, they cannot secure the services of a Brahman, so their ceremonies are officiated over by an acting priest who is an affinal kin, such as the father's sister's husband or the sister's husband or some such relative. As a traditional artisan community, their various occupational groups specialize in different crafts and manufacture a large variety of articles. E.g. agricultural implements, baskets, household utensils, etc. which forms a part of the material culture of these hills.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ . K.S.Singh, *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi , Oxford University Press,1999, p.1185.

⁵⁶ . K.S.Singh, *The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi , Oxford University Press,1999, p.1185; Shekar Pathak, Kumauni society through the ages, in K.S.Valdiya (Ed.), Kumaun : Land and People, A volume in honour of N.D.Tiwari, Nainital, 1988, p. 105.

They have rich oral traditions and some of their groups such as the Dholi, Bajgi, Hurkiya, etc. possess a rich storehouse of traditional folklore.

The Shilpkar maintain social, economic and ritual linkages with other communities in the region. They accept food and water from all clean castes, but the latter accept only sidha food from them. Putative kinship with other communities is in existence. Under traditional patron-client relations, they offer specialized services to their high-caste patrons and are paid a fixed quantum of grain after each harvest. Landlord-tenant and cultivator-labour relations with other communities are maintained. Each of the thirty-one different Shilpkar communities maintain its distinct identity in more ways than one. So, all of them are individually described to the extent of exclusivity in relation to one another. The Bajgi are notified independently. So the Bajgi write-up appears separately.

Chapter-3
Identity, Domination and
Exclusion

Chapter-3

IDENTITY, DOMINATION AND EXCLUSION

There is regional variation in the caste system in Uttarakhand.¹ Power is important in each society at different periods. It kept changing in the past during different periods of history. Every society has its typical distribution of power. The distribution of power in the society we are studying constitutes an important aspect or element of its system of stratification. In Uttarakhand people can be graded in terms of the amount of power they enjoy, and this gradation is significantly associated with other types of social gradation, notably the gradation of castes. By and large, members of the upper castes enjoy greater power than those of the lower, and this association between caste and the distribution of power may be observed in every phase in the history of Uttarakhand society.²

Caste in Kumaon illustrates strikingly the crucial importance of political power in determining access to land, jobs in administration and command over human labour.³ We need to understand that the concept of power needs to be perceived in broad sense. We may speak of the existence of power whenever compliance is secured by some from others even against the latter's will. The ruled might comply because of the fear of coercion or because they feel that those who issue commands have a right to do so. The authority thinks that the power they exercise is legitimate not only from their point of view but also from whom it is exercised. There is always an effort to legitimize all inequalities in the distribution of power. The distribution of

¹ H.C.Upreti, *Social Organization of A Migrant Group: A Sociological Study of Hill Migrants from Kumaon Region in the City of Jaipur*, Mumbai, 1981, p. 65.

² R.D.Sanwal, *Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon*, O.U.P, 1976, p. 20.

³ H.C.Upreti, *Social Organization of A Migrant Group: A Sociological Study of Hill Migrants from Kumaon Region in the City of Jaipur*, Mumbai, 1981, p. 65.

power can of course be viewed as an aspect of the division of labour in a society. Just as the different roles in the economic system constitute an aspect of the division of labour, so do the different roles in the political system. But the political power may also be viewed as that system which maintains and regulates the division of labour in a society. The power structure is used not only to regulate and maintain the relations between groups but also to change these relations under different conditions. When we look at Uttarakhand society we observe that political structure and administrative structure played an important role in defining, regulating and modifying the relations among different castes in the society.⁴

This gives us a new opportunity to look at the caste structure as caste in Uttarakhand was viewed in terms of distribution of power apart from its ritual criteria. The distinctions in the society were basically those between the ruler and the ruled. This is the only society in the country where caste groups have emerged on the basis of political and legal distinctions. The political vicissitudes through which Kumaon has passed since very early times are especially significant for understanding its present social structure.⁵

It has been argued that earlier settlers were akin to the Kols and Gonds of central India who at present are represented by Doms.⁶ Tradition also agrees that the Doms were subdued and reduced to a state of slavery by the so-called Khasi or Khasa, after whom the area came to be called Khas-des (land or country of the Khasa).⁷ Joshi, summing up the available information, states that these hills were occupied by the Khasas long before the Christian era. The Khasa are mentioned time and again in

⁴ . Ibid. p. 21.

⁵ . R.D.Sanwal, *Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon*, O.U.P, 1976, p. 21.

⁶ . Shekar Pathak, *Kumauni society through the ages*, in K.S.Valdiya (Ed.), *Kumaun : Land and People*, A Volume in honour of N.D.Tiwari, Nainital, 1988, p. 100.

⁷ .R. D. Sanwal, *Op. cit.* p. 21.

the epic literature of the Hindus and invariably spoken of in derogatory terms as a casteless, heathen people who worship the demons and know nothing of either the Vedas or the Brahmins. Popular tradition as embodied in a fast disappearing oral literature also suggests that the Khasa were without caste or class distinctions and that they accepted the caste ethic only after coming in contact with the Brahmins and Rajputs who entered these hills from time to time, but by and large after the establishment of Muslim rule in the Indo Gangetic plains.⁸

The Katyuri kingdom was a tributary state in the fourth century A.D within the Gupta Empire. Local tradition, however, takes the Katyuris further back to the time when Buddhism was making considerable headway in north India. The early Katyuris seem to have introduced Buddhism into what is now Kumaon. Summarizing the relevant historical evidence, Atkinson has this to say, Buddhism was fairly established in Kumaon in the seventh century, but after seventh century Buddhism gradually decline in Kumaon.⁹

A number of political and administrative institutions which were alien to Khasi and Doms were introduced by Katyuri Rule. The Katyuri never seem to have been in sufficiently large numbers to retain hold over Khasdes without evolving some form of centralized government, though by this very fact, they also found it expedient not to press centralization of authority too far in the small kin-oriented tribal democracies of the Khasi.

Mandalas as territorial administrative units known as mandals which consisted of eleven thoks (clan territories) each and were administered by a mandlar or mandlik

⁸ H.C.Upreti, *Social Organization of A Migrant Group: A Sociological Study of Hill Migrants from Kumaon Region in the City of Jaipur, Mumbai, 1981, p. 65.*

⁹ . R.D.Sanwal, *Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon, O.U.P, 1976, p. 22.*

who was a nonKhasi were introduced by them.. Four mandals were put together to form a rajvati and it was administered by a rajbar of royal descent. Khasi thokdars (clan leaders) and padhans (heads of villages) were assigned military duties under the mandlars and also charged with the maintenance of law and order in their thoks (clan territory) and villages. Even during Chand rule the same system continued.¹⁰

The Katyuris encouraged learned Brahmins from the plains gradually to settle in Kumaon by giving those grants of land, and several of the present day Bhal-Baman clans of Kumaon trace their ancestors back to Katyuri times. The arrival of Brahmins from outside Kumaon added yet another principle of social differentiation—that of ritual status—to the already existing ethnic and political ones. The introduction of Hinduism into Kumaon had the effect of creating at least four broad hierarchically graded social categories, all of which are mentioned in Katyuri inscriptions; the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, the Khasa and the Chandala. In terms of varna the Khasa seem to have occupied Shudra status for their promotion to clean-caste Kshatriya status is ascribed to the Chands. The lowest status was occupied by the Doms in social hierarchy.¹¹

The inscriptions of Katyuri mention such occupational groups as priest, astrologer, teacher, trader, agriculturist, soldier and weaver, it is not clear whether or not the four categories of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Khasa and Chandala were further divided into castes and sub-castes. Such information, even if available, would not be of any particular significance. Because, the regional system of caste in Kumaon is

¹⁰ . R.D.Sanwal, Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon, O.U.P, 1976, p. 23.

¹¹ . Ibid.

believed to have acquired its special features from the political and economic conditions prevailed during Chands who succeeded the Katyuris...¹²

Regime of the Chand is of particular significance for the present analysis not only because it is relatively well known in all its aspects but also because of the fact that the Chands were directly responsible for creating and sustaining the hierarchical status structure in Kumaon which the British found at the time of its conquest. In the analysis which follows the term traditional has reference to social conditions immediately preceding the establishment of British rule.¹³

Early in their rule, the Chands evolved a system of government which had far-reaching consequences for the structure of caste in Kumaon. Indeed, it would not be an overstatement to say that the political-administrative measures, evolved by the Chands provided the very basis of the system of social stratification in Kumaon. However, the Dom does not seem to have undergone any status reorganization on account of the expansion of Chand power. If anything, the status-maintaining legal sanctions in regard to them became more rigid as political categories took on ritual attributes and functions and emerged as castes.

During chand rule the population of Kumaon seem to have been divided into three broad hierarchically-placed estate like categories; (i) the Asal-or Thul-jat, including the Asal- or Bhal-Baman caste consisting of the Chauthani and the Pachbiri sub-castes) and the Thakur-Rajput or Kshetri castes Khasi including the Pitali-, Hali- or Khasi-Baman Khasi-Jimdar (divided into naya and purana) castes; and (iii) the Dom. The first two of these were each made up of castes belonging to two varnas, the

¹² . Prabhat Upreti, Historical Perspective of Uttarakhand, in R.P.Dhasmana (ed.), Uttarakhand: Need for a Comparative Eco-strategy, New Delhi, 2008, pp.19-20.

¹³ . R.D.Sanwal, Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon, O.U.P, 1976, p. 24.

Brahmin and the Kshatriya, but the immigrants were deemed superior to the Khasi. We thus get a situation in which a caste (the immigrant Kshetri) inferior in term of varna to the Khasi- or Pitali-Baman actually ranked, on the ground, higher than the latter. In addition to ethnic differences, political factors also supported the three-fold division of Kumaoni society.¹⁴

As a result of various factors governing the evolution of a stratified status system in Kumaon, it becomes difficult to make the classification of castes and sub-castes in terms of the classical varna scheme difficult. The varna framework, however, has been of some significance in the assignment of individuals to specific caste categories and in setting the limits to upward status mobility. Every new immigrant, for instance, was accepted as a rule by a Kumaoni caste of the varna he belonged to in the plains. As to which of the several castes in the varna accepted him depended on the secular position he managed to secure in Kumaon. An immigrant Brahmin, for example, was assigned only to the Brahmin varna in Kumaon. Within this category he could be assigned to either of the two constituent castes depending on the vocation he adopted in Kumaon and on the status of the group with which he formed affinal connections, the latter depending very much on the former.

These three categories were maintained through various distinctions both formal and informal sanctions. The Thul-jat alone was entitled to use gold ornaments and the Bhal-Baman alone were entitled to wear a full length dhoti. The Khasi, both the Jimdar and the Baman, were allowed to use only silver and brass for personal ornamentation and wore a typical dress called gata and/or a broad G-string or loin-

¹⁴ . H.C.Upreti, *Social Organization of A Migrant Group: A Sociological Study of Hill Migrants from Kumaon Region in the City of Jaipur, Mumbai, 1981, p. 67.*

cloth. The Dom could use only khabari (a very base alloy) for personal ornamentation and in terms of dress, they imitated their fellow Khasi.¹⁵

The upper castes namely Bhal-Baman were exempted from land and other taxes. The heaviest punishment that could be inflicted on a Bhal Baman was exile and that too only for committing homicide. The Thul-jat were also exempt from carrying loads or performing manual services for others. A Khasi could be enslaved and a Dom could be sold with or without land like any other piece of property. Formal education was the sole prerogative of the immigrant Brahmins who kept the arts of reading and writing to themselves.¹⁶ Members of the immigrant Baman and the Thakur categories alone were entitled to dine in royal company. The immigrants alone were entitled to hold offices at court and the offices of sardar (high military officers), faujdar (territorial military commanders who as 'feudal' lords of a specified area under their jurisdiction also exercised important civil, judicial and revenue functions), and negi (subordinate officers concerned with revenue administration). The Doms were excluded from all administrative and political positions.

The occasions when the formal authority of the dharmadhikari was evoked were : a. when an individual or, more generally, a group of individuals traditionally assigned inferior status had to be assigned higher status in view of their changed functions in the polity; b) when non-Hindus or quasi-Hindus (those in contact with Hindus but following neither the Hindu system of socio-ritual stratification nor the socio-religious practices associated with Hinduism) had to be assigned a position in relation-to-casteHindus; and c) when a socially-ostracized or downgraded individual appealed for restoration to his original status which meant a review by the

¹⁵ . R.D. Sanwal, Op.cit, p. 28...

¹⁶ . Fisher, 1866, 27

dharmadhikari of the circumstances leading to the severance of ties and social relations with him by his kinsmen. In all cases the verdict of the dharmadhikari was final and enforceable by law.¹⁷ The usual and informal method of acquiring membership of a caste or sub-caste was through sambandh (relationship created by marriage) or bya-bari with that caste.¹⁸ None of the caste groups in Kumaon except the Dom were completely closed groups. It was only when the political structure which sustained this system of status classification and status assignment was broken down by the British conquest of Kumaon that the ritual and hereditary basis of caste gained dominance and primacy over the criteria of political patronage.¹⁹

All the machinery of justice, dominated entirely by the immigrant administrators, was geared to maintain the status superiority of the latter, particularly of the Brahmins. Traill, the British administrator of Kumaon for years made some important statements about the traditional judicial system:

‘In the interior, justice was administered in civil and petty criminal cases by faujdars, or governors, while cases of magnitude, and those originating in the capital or neighbourhood were determined in the Raja's court, under the superintendence of the Diwan.²⁰ Fanidars or military commanders who were responsible for the judicial as well as civil administration of a territorial unit was either from the Thakur-Rajput or the Chauthani category, and the diwan (prime minister) who presided over the court at the capital was from the latter category.’

Dharmadhikari who helped the rulers in the administrators of justice in cases involving questions of caste were usually from the hereditary Chauthani category. We

¹⁷ .Vasudha Pande, Stratification in Kumaun circa 1815-1930, NMML, occasional paper, history and society, New series, 37, p. 7.

¹⁸ . R.D.Sanwal, Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon, O.U.P, 1976, p. 29.

¹⁹ . Ibid. p. 32.

²⁰ . G.W. Traill, A statistical Sketch of Kumaon, 1828, p. 27.

also have Traill's evidence that offences against the status system were classed together with treason and punished capitally, particularly when committed by a low status individual.²¹ A Bhal-Baman male breaking a status norm such as consorting with a woman of the Dom category, was liable to be banished in addition to being socially ostracized and having his property confiscated. For the same misdemeanour, but in solving a Khasi woman excluding a Khasi chhyori (female bond), he was liable to be socially ostracized. For identical Lotions but involving a Bhal-Baman woman a Thakur-Rajput Kshetri was only fined. The guardian of such a woman, however, had the right to kill the offender if he wanted to or had the power to. In cases involving a woman of the Dom category, he was socially ostracized and in those involving a Khasi woman he merely lost social prestige. A Khasi could be killed for daring to cohabit with a Thul-jat woman. On the other hand, if a Khasi male was thus involved with a Dom woman he lost the membership of his own agnatic group and was relegated to Dom rank after having his property confiscated. But whereas a Thul-jat individual could not be readmitted to the membership of his agnatic group once social relations were broken with him, a Khasi could seek reinstatement to his natal status provided that the application for reinstatement was made soon after the incident with the concurrence of his agnates with a guarantee that such an offensive misdemeanour would not be repeated. It was left to the Chauthani Dharmadhikari to accept or reject the application. If the request was granted, the offender had to pay a fine and also to provide a communal feast to his kinsmen. For breaking other status norms, such as those relating to the wearing of gold or claiming Thul-jat status, a Khasi could be enslaved and put to work on royal land or as a domestic menial. The Dom, assigned Chandal status by the immigrants, was severely punished for all status offences.

²¹. Ibid. 28.

Polluting the utensils, water-hole, and temples, smoking pipe or food of the Upper caste, particularly of the Thul-jat; wearing gold or a garment extending below the knee or observing clean-caste ceremonies might mean death for a Dom. A Dom woman agreeing to sexual intercourse with an Upper caste man not only exposed herself to physical punishment and if the man is from Bhal-Baman she would be cursed with leprosy.²²

Panchayats, (council of elders) also existed in the villages. Most of the time these bodies are dominated by the more influential members of the Upper caste lineage which held the land in 'proprietary' or under-proprietary tenure. In the case of villages held in tenure, the 'proprietor' as Gusain (literally, master) had the right of arbiter in disputes of all kinds between their asamis (tenants). Though this right does not seem to have been used very frequently (for one thing many of the proprietors who were generally from the immigrant Thul-jat category preferred to be near the court, the centre of political intrigues, in order to guard their interests in the face of constant threats from others) it rendered the panchayats of the tenant villages subordinate to the immigrant proprietors. This legal sanction coupled with the power of eviction gave the proprietors unbounded power over the tenants who were invariably from inferior status categories. This factor assumes great relevance when we consider it in the context of the fact that members of the Thul-jat could not by definition be tenants.²³ In case a Thul-jat individual became an Asabi he lost his Thul-jat status.

The under privileged Doms, who could be neither proprietors nor tenants but were attached as serfs and slaves to villages of the Upper caste, did not have

²² . R.D.Sanwal, Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon, O.U.P, 1976, p. 33.

²³ . Ibid. 1976, p. 34.

panchayats of any kind. This was quite in tune with their servile status in view of which they had no freedom of action. All their disputes of any magnitude were settled by the Upper caste cultivators they were attached to. The elders of the Upper caste resolved the disputes among the Doms if it involved the Doms of two villages.²⁴ It is the political factors which were responsible for the emergence of three-fold hierarchical division of Kumaoni society; and the divisions themselves were politico-economic and to some extent 'ethnic', as in the case of the Dom status groups more akin to estates than to varna or castes. Although, differential association with political and economic power resources was not completely irrelevant for stratification at the level of jatis, the latter were differentiated from each other on the basis of ritually relevant criteria on some occasions.²⁵

As there is absence of consensus regarding the terms used to refer to caste and sub-caste and the different connotations borne by the term jat, it is proposed to use the English words caste and sub-caste in the present work, the former referring to the largest group within which marriage can take place without causing loss of status of either of the two families involved and the latter to the smallest group included in the former within which the great majority of marriages normally do take place. The different sub-castes constituting a caste are stratified in relation to one another but such stratification is not absolute and rigid as it is based more on secular than on ritual distinctions. Sometimes, a sub-caste ranked inferior may ritually be more orthodox than their superior castes.

Before the advent of the British the composition of the population is not clearly known, but it is possible to get some idea of the proportion in which different

²⁴ . R.D.Sanwal, Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon, O.U.P, 1976, p. 34,

²⁵ . Ibid., p. 35.

castes were represented in Kumaon from the early censuses taken under the sponsorship of the British administration.²⁶ The census of 1872, however, is more informative and a percentile proportion of the different castes in the population can be taken as an approximation to the situation during the closing phases of Chand rule. No major movements of population are known to have taken place after the eighteenth century when the terai (the swampy forest belt lying south of Kumaon) passed out of Chand control. The subsequent insularity of Kumaon was largely maintained to the very end of the nineteenth century by the early British Commissioners of Kumaon who are well known to have strongly discouraged non-Kumaonis, from settling down in Kumaon and also opposed the introduction of legislative measures enacted by the central and provincial governments into Kumaon. As a result Kumaon remained a 'non-regulation province' to the very end of the colonial rule.²⁷

Census of 1872 give us the percentages of the ethnic-political category different castes in the population were approximately as follow: 'Immigrant' Brahmin (Bhal-Baman): 3 per cent Khasi Brahmin: 22 per cent 'Immigrant' Rajput (Thakur-Rajput): 11 per cent Khasi-Rajput (Khasi-Jimdar): 29 per cent Dom: 23 per cent. The Chauthani (holders of the four important offices) consisted exclusively of Brahmins. They migrated to Kumaon from elsewhere in India between the eighth and eighteenth centuries and were patronized by the local kings with land grants and high administrative or religious positions.

Two Brahmin sub-castes; not even the highest, from two different regions in India do not have a method of establishing social precedence in relation to one another. This was the reason why the Chauthani, whose ancestors had come to

²⁶ . R.D.Sanwal, *Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon*, O.U.P, 1976, p. 37.

²⁷ . Barron, P. *Pilgrims's wanderings in Himalaya*, 1844, Agra, p. 151.

Kumaon from different parts of India at different times, could not have transferred their individual caste status to Kumaon. The original status position of a sub-caste in the regional social hierarchy is rendered meaningless by breaking away from the territorial base, especially when such breaking off by migration is sporadic and involves small numbers. Thus, in Kumaon such immigrants had to define their status rank afresh. The privileges they got politically and economically and came to occupy the highest socio-ritual status. They perpetuated this status by systematic intermarriage amongst themselves.²⁸

The administrative offices of minister (who also headed the highest judicial body in the kingdom), treasurer, court-writer and emissary which they virtually monopolized, along with such other influential occupations as teaching, medicine and astrology were the real sources of power. Offices like those of advisers, provincial governors, army commanders and revenue and police officers, though shared with the Thakur-Rajput, also contributed to the enhancement of Chauthani power and social status. The greatest stabilizing source of Chauthani status undoubtedly was the monopolistic, hereditary control which some of its constituent clans exercised over the office of dharmadhikari who in their capacity of officers-in-charge of public religion and morality were the final authority in all matters relating to caste and inter-caste relations including mobility from one to the other and reinstatement to, or expulsion from a caste. The Chauthani held dominant position in the overall structure as advisers and Dharmadhikari to the court all religious matters.

All the higher ritual and administrative offices of state have been monopolized by the Chauthani during Chand rule and the more important ones became hereditary. This tendency of particular clans gaining hereditary control of particular

²⁸ . R.D.Sanwal, Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon, O.U.P, 1976, p. 40.

administrative offices had the effect of preventing any competition for them. This explains why the Pachbiri, though immigrants like the Chauthani and culturally very close to them, came to occupy a lower status position.²⁹

The Khasi-Baman suffered the same legal disabilities as were imposed on the Khasi-Jimdar. Like the latter they were forbidden to wear gold and had to wear a brass bracelet as symbolic of their low status for everyone to see. They ploughed their-fields personally and performed all other agricultural chores. They accepted the legitimacy of unsacerdotal marriages, of divorce, widow remarriage and junior levirate to name only a few of the practices considered extremely odious by the BhalBaman. They did not observe the elaborate prescriptions relating to eating and, like the Khasi-Jimdar, they could eat raw (unleavened bread) anywhere except in the company of a Dom) and without taking their normal clothes off.

Important political or religious offices were out of bound for the Pitali. Like the Jimdar they followed a subsistence agricultural-herding economy. The Pitali, despite their Baman status, were not allowed to acquire formal classical education or to take up the functions of guru, acharya or purohit. In remote and peripheral areas alone, they seem to have been permitted to function as purohit (priests) to their less Hinduized ethnic brethren or to groups like the Shauk, if and when individuals from the latter group adopted Hindu socio-religious practices. If a Pitali served a Dom, hecould be declared outcaste and legally punished.³⁰

All learning formal or classical education Kumaon was monopolized by the Bhal-Baman caste only. There were no legal sanctions prohibiting the Pitali from discharging the functions of acharya and guru but in areas of immigrant dominance

²⁹ . R.D.Sanwal, Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon, O.U.P, 1976, p. 43.

³⁰ .Ibid. p. 46.

where alone these functionaries played a meaningful part, the Pitali could not compete with the readily available and qualified Bhal-Baman. Therefore, the Pitali functioned as recipients of dan-dakshina (gifts and fees) associated with the ritual washing off of pollution in regions where Bhal Baman was not available.

The majority of immigrant Kshatriya who came to Kumaon to serve as mercenaries in the Chand army and stayed back were relegated to Khasi status because they did not command any political power, adopted cultivation as a means of livelihood and Hypergamous marriage with the Khasi, though relevant, was not the crucial factor leading to relegation to Khasi status, since the offspring of such unions were, at least in the case of the politically power full Kshettri, assigned to their paternal status. The Raotela descendants of the junior members of the Chand house are an example.³¹The lack of control over political and/or economic resources and the necessity to adopt Khasi.Jimdar occupations with their attendant legal disabilities was one of the important conditions which led to Kshettri demotion in the status hierarchy was³²

The Kshettri group in Kumaon in the immediate colonial phase comprised a core consisting of the senior lineages of the several royal clans which exercised political control over parts or the whole of Kumaon at different times. Around this hard core were the junior lineages of the royal clans and other immigrants with whom the former intermarried and who in some instances shared with the former the control of the few administrative offices which had not already been acquired by the Chauthani. Important administrative offices, however, were conferred on members of the princely section. The immigrant Hindus brought with them to Kumaon the

³¹ . Atkinson, E.T, The Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces of India, 1886, Vol.III, Allahabad, p. 432.

³² . R.D.Sanwal, Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon, O.U.P, 1976, p. 48.

concept of the divine basis of kingship, according to which the king -was held to be an incarnation of Vishnu. Such an identification of the king with divinity provided the necessary sanction for acts like the assignment of the Khasi to higher positions in the caste hierarchy, and, in general, for legitimizing a status system.³³

Sardars and faujdars who were some important officials of state were given the titles of Bist and Adhikari, and junior officials were given the titles of Negi and Rawat. These became status symbols and were adopted as additional or secondary clan titles by the descendants of the person initially invested with it or in many cases these titles completely replaced the clan names with the result that what appeared like clans in fact included several lineages belonging not only to unrelated clans but also to different gotras. The practice of assigning individuals to status groups on the basis of the formal power they wielded and the economic resources they commanded had at least one very important consequence for the constitution of the Kshettri group. Since the opportunities for the immigrant Kshatriya to acquire administrative office were few and even these were usually monopolized by members of princely clans, the non-princely fringe of the Kshettri was really very thin and fluid. Continuity was provided to the group primarily by the royal Chand and Katyuri lineages and a few others who acquired the hereditary control of certain administrative offices and attendant economic and political privileges early during Chand rule. Others could not retain permanent membership of the status group because they were unable to retain permanent hereditary control over political power.

The Char-Burh exercised great power as heads of territorial divisions during the founding phase of Chand power.³⁴ They, however, began to lose their political

³³ . R.D.Sanwal, *Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon*, O.U.P, 1976, p. 48.

³⁴ . *Ibid.* p. 52.

significance with the expansion of Chand domains and the increasing pressure-on-the part of the Chauthani to gain administrative control and thereby de facto power in the kingdom. This process reached its climax when the Chand capital moved to Almora. The Char-Burh were left behind in eastern Kumaon as the traditional but nominal heads of small territorial units within which they continued to enjoy the privileges of receiving fixed dues and services from the peasants within their territorial jurisdiction. They became functionally redundant on account of the distance from the Court at which they were situated as advisers to the king in matters of government,

The term Jimdar literally means a small ownercultivator and originally did not have any caste connotation. It was used to refer to persons who made a living by the cultivation of the soil and practicing, associated occupations such as herding. But as cultivation of the soil and cattle herding in Kumaon was originally associated with the Khasi and avoided by the Thul-jat immigrants, it came to be applied to those sections of the indigenous Khasi and the immigrants who followed agricultural occupations alone and who lacked political power and were kept out of specialization in other occupations. People who, like the PitaliBaman, practiced agriculture as a subsidiary source of subsistence, or the Dom who engaged in supporting occupations, were also differentiated from those who actively and solely engaged in agricultural activities. Thus, an occupational title came to be used as a caste title.

The Khasi to whom the term Upper caste was originally applied, were, in terms of the varna hierarchy, in the category of Shudra, and knew nothing of the sacred thread or of the intricate rules relating to the essentially Brahmanical principle of gotra. Though the Khasi were admitted to the privileges of the sacred thread by the

Chand kings and their religious preceptors³⁵ and thus raised to twice-born status from that of Shudra, many even now do not wear the sacred thread-or observe the Brahmanical rituals associated with life crisis ceremonies.³⁶

Whether an individual's wearing no sacred thread, or not observing Brahmanical ritual did not debar him from marrying into the section which did, or impose other disabilities on this account. Such persons, however, were looked down upon a little and as soon as they came in sufficient contact with the immigrants they accepted the sacred thread as well as the superiority and the ritual services of the priestly class.

Traditionally Khasi Jimdars were divided into innumerable clans named after the village of origin or residence or occupation traditionally followed by the members. As a clan increased in size and the basic resources available in the area occupied by the members of a clan were rendered insufficient to support the increased population, some members from one of the constituent local lineages occupying a village had to move out and find a new village. If this new village was contiguous or close to the parental one, the paternal clan name was retained but, on the other hand, if the new village was more than fifteen or twenty miles distant, making social interaction with clan-mates difficult and infrequent, the usual practice was to take up a newclan name and the foundation for a new clan was laid. New clans also splintered from old ones in the event of the imposition of a new occupation on a lineage or a family belongingto a clan by the administration when the occupational title was taken up as a clan title by the splinter group.

³⁵.B.D.Pande, Kumaonki Itihas, Almora, pp545-547, English translation by C.M Agrawal, History of Kumaun, Vol.2, Almora, 1993.

³⁶ . R.D.Sanwal, Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon, O.U.P, 1976, p. 54.

Factors like lack of proper communication channels, abundance of forests, etc. were general and equally applicable to the Thul-jat. But their status as proprietary overlords, administrators, priests and keepers of slaves not only brought them control over a large number of individuals but also the sole right to use palanquins, sedan chairs, etc. With their Khasi-Jimdar tenants and Dom serfs, all of whom were legally required to render personal service to the Thul-jat overlord, it was possible for the latter to minimize the factor of spatial distance and adhere to the prescription set up in regard to marriage and kinship in Hindu law. The system of assigning land grants to some of the immigrants who also tended to be assigned administrative functions in the kingdom encouraged the servility of the agricultural castes. Not only was physical labour, particularly that concerned with agriculture and associated activities such as cattle-rearing, considered positively low and demeaning by the Thul-jat immigrants, but with their occupational-interests lying in such fields as administration, priestcraft, astrology, medicine and soldiering they never had the time to attend to agricultural chores. Lacking both the inclination and the time, they had to have others to cultivate their land for them and to perform menial domestic chores. The administrative power wielded by the Thul-jat and the control of basic economic resources put them in a position from where they could compel the Khasi-Jimdar and the artisan Doms to do the work which the former were themselves do not want to undertake.

Traill, who lived in Kumaon for a long time writes that the polity before colonial period was feudalistic structure of government in Kumaon comments that the country was allotted in separate divisions for the payment of troops, to the commanders of which was entrusted the civil administration of the lands assigned. The revenues of some districts were originally reserved for defraying the expenses of the court, but these had been nearly absorbed by grants to the junior members of the

royal family, to the civil officers of government, and to the attendants of the court, all of whom, from the highest to the lowest, were supported and remunerated in land. A further alienation of the royal domains had taken place, in the frequent donations to Brahmins and temples by successive Rajas. The sovereign had the undoubted prerogative of resuming all grants of land of every description, but this right could only be enforced by the concurrence of the prevailing party in the state.³⁷

Thul-jat people, being in the control of land and the basic subsistence resource, being vested entirely in the hands of the Thul-jat individuals, they were in a position from where they could apply direct as well as indirect pressure on the politically and economically subservient Khasi-Jimdar to engage as the former's tenants and servants and thereby foreclose all possibilities for the latter to effect status change. The chhyora could be sold freely and both he and the kaini were legally punished for not obeying the master. The kaini could be administered a severe beating, fined, imprisoned, or even enslaved for not rendering personal menial services to the proprietor, or for not paying certain periodic dues which symbolized his dependant servile status. So, if land is changed he was also changed as part of land.

It was not mandatory on the part of the land lord to give financial and other help to the Kaini. The Khasi chhyor, however, was completely dependent on the gusain not only for his subsistence, clothing and shelter but even for money to be able to pay the bride-price or to meet any other contingency. Even in matters of food which normally comes under ritual rather than political prescriptions, the Khasi-Jimdar were made to conform to certain practices depending on which of the two politico-economic statuses an individual was occupying. A chhyor, being a slave, not

³⁷ . G.W. Traill, A statistical Sketch of Kumaon, 1828, pp.26-. 27.

only accepted food from his 'master' irrespective of the latter's caste status but had to eat the juth (leavings) from his 'master's' kitchen. The kaini, on the other hand, did not accept the 'leavings' of his master but did accept both kachcha and pakka food from the latter. Other classes of tenants, also Khasi-Jimdar, were under no compulsion to accept anchwakh food from the landowner notwithstanding the latter's superior status. Apart from the status-relevant prescription imposed on the chhyor and the kaini in regard to the acceptance of food from the landlord, they observed with the Khasi-Jimdar a common set of prohibitions - regarding the acceptance of anchwakh food from non-clan members. So rigidly was this rule observed that anchwakh-food from wives as well as from mothers was not accepted. The basis for this prohibition was not ritual as in the case of the Kshetri, for instance, who observed restrictions regarding the acceptance of food from wives and mothers who belonged to inferior status groups and/or were not married sacramentally. The Khasi prohibition derived from the fact that wives and mothers were from other lineages and came under the general prohibition in regard, to the acceptance of food from members of lineages other than their own. In rare cases a wife was made to undergo the ceremony of chul-halan (literally entry into the hearth) after which food cooked by her became acceptable but only to her husband and adult children. Her husband's lineage mates continued to avoid eating the food cooked by her. Not all wives could undergo the ceremony of chul-halan. Only when a wife bore male children and thereby laid a firm basis for the stability of marriage and loyalty to her husband did she become entitled to undergo the ceremony. However, social pressure against the acceptance of food from a non-lineage member led to the actual privilege being conferred very sparingly and only in cases where it was extremely difficult for a male to cook at least one meal a day. Outside the caste the only persons from whom boiled and salted food was

accepted, were the lineage purohit, the acharya (if any) and the pujari of the village deity.

There was absence of cultural homogeneity at the caste or sub-caste level which is an important characteristic of a true caste system was lacking in the case of all the castes and sub-castes in Kumaon, but in no case does it seem to have been lacking to the degree it did in the case of the Khasi. There were several reasons for this situation. Their widespread distribution, lack of communication between different regions, inter-regional hostility and intense local loyalties, diverse ethnic and cultural antecedents and above all the political subordination of the Khasi which made it possible for the 'rulers' to force a variety of occupations on the foreigner, particularly in areas where they were under the active political domination of the Thul-jat, all contributed not only to the emergence and perpetuation of cultural diversity within the Khasi category but were also instrumental in multiplying incipient class-like sub-castes within the Khasi group. Thus, for instance, while over the greater part of Kumaon, the Khasi had become integrated into Hinduism with a clean-caste inferior Kshatriya status and the adoption of the many immigrant Hindu socio-ritual practices and functionaries, in the outlying areas they remained at best, on the fringe of Hinduism and of caste. In regions of active immigrant political domination the Khasi became ethnically mixed while in the peripheral areas they remained relatively pure. In the outlying regions of the kingdom such as Danpura and parts of the present district of Naini Tal, where the Thul-jat did not penetrate for one reason or another, the Khasi exercised virtually complete political autonomy with a kin-oriented democratic tribal organization, but elsewhere in Kumaon the traditional democratic tribal structure of Khasi society was broken down. The Thul-jat landlord was

supposed to be responsible for the physical welfare of the chliyor and took care to keep the kaini and other classes of tenants happy.

Doms a general category which was used by upper castes for all service and professional castes were considered the lowest in the social hierarchical status system in Kumaoni rural society. Dom as a social category has always been contrasted by the clean castes, the latter collectively called Upper caste or excellent. This is particularly significant because for the Upper caste, all Dom, whatever their sub-caste or occupational status, were equal, occupying the same politico-legal and ritual status.³⁸ Similarly, for the Dom the status distinctions between the different clean castes were meaningless, and members of the latter were addressed, saluted and treated identically, though politiceconomic circumstances contributed to their interacting more closely with the rural agricultural castes, that is, the Khasi. Indeed, it has been suggested by nearly all the writers on the non-Aryan origin of Dom who were conquered by the 'Aryan' Khasi and assigned to the status of serfs and hereditary slaves.³⁹ The factor of impurity to that of hereditary and universal servility in defining the status and rank of the Dom was added by the latter Hindu conquerors.

Numerically, Doms as a group have been second only to the Khasi. Being agrestic serfs they were distributed all over Kumaon and found wherever the agriculturist Khasi was found.⁴⁰ Traditionally the Dom was attached to Upper caste-villages as servile artisans and menials. Even Chand copper plate inscriptions and revenue records indicate the presence of Agaris, Tamtas, Lohars, Bhulas (oil pressers), Paharis (guards) Bakhariyas (in charge of stables) and Turis (entertainers).

³⁸. Vasudha Pande, Stratification in Kumaun circa 1815-1930, NMML, occasional paper, history and society, New series, 37, p.64.

³⁹. G.W. Traill, A statistical Sketch of Kumaon, 1828, pp. 19-20; Oakley, Op. Cit., p. 42.

⁴⁰. Vasudha Pande, Op.cit. p.64. She opined that early copper plates referred to Pandrah Vishi (fifteen Sudra Groups) who were divided into different occupational groups.

One author opined that Doms were the Kainis of Chandra revenue records.⁴¹ In earlier times they were kept in strict subjection and were passed from hand to hand like cattle, or were attached to the soil like serfs.⁴² Atkinson, however, maintains that it was only the Dom employed as hali (ploughmen) who along with his dependants could be sold. Others could not be sold though they were obliged to render menial and artisan services to the Upper caste.⁴³ Occupational specialization was very elementary and fluid for a Dom and he was jurally bound to perform any service he was called upon to by Upper caste masters and could not leave the village or change his occupation without the permission of the latter. The Dom, however, were not individually owned like other items of movable property. They were assets, in the same way as land, jointly and severally exploited by a corporate body of landowning co-residential kinsmen, usually the local patrilineage, and controlled through the village headman who usually also happened to be the head of the local lineage and its representative, spokesman and manager.

All political and civil rights were denied to the he Doms. They were not free even to regulate relations amongst themselves. Even quarrels involving father and son or husband and wife were, irrespective of the wishes of those actually involved, resolved by the Upper caste to which the former were attached.⁴⁴ Similarly, quarrels between the Doms of two different villages were taken up by the Upper caste of the villages concerned and resolved with no reference to the individuals with whom the quarrel originated. One very important social consequence of this was to curtail interaction between Doms of two different villages even if, as sometimes happened,

⁴¹ . M.P Joshi, *The Shilpkars of Central Himalaya: A Diachronic study*, in *Himalaya: Past and Present*, Vol. III, Almora, 1994, p. 301-333.

⁴² . Turner A.C, *Caste in the Kumaon division and Tehri-Garwhal state*, in *Census of India*, Simla, 1931, Vol. I, P. 17.

⁴³ . Atkinson, E.T, *The Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces of India*, 1886, Vol.III, Allahabad, p. 446.

⁴⁴ . R.D.Sanwal, *Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon*, O.U.P, 1976, p. 63.

they were related by ties of blood. The very small agnatic group living in a village or a couple of agnatically related villages was the meaningful kin universe of the Dom. Restrictions on social interaction and on physical movement were, perhaps, the two most important factors responsible for the failure of the Dom to evolve caste units even when occupational distinctions within the Dom category were very highly developed.

The upper castes treated the Dom in a very low manner and imposed lot of disabilities on them on various issues. These explicit socio-legal disabilities imposed by the Upper caste on the Dom made it impossible for the latter to improve their status position.⁴⁵ Many of the disabilities such as those concerned with dress and decoration made it extremely easy for a Dom to be identified so that any Dom violating a prescription was easily recognized and punished. This worked as a very effective deterrent on the Dom trying to escape or to take up the cultural practices meant for his social superiors.

The Dom had to depend entirely on their clean caste gusain for every material and many social necessities. Housing, clothing, food, money to meet life-crises ceremonies and other contingencies, and social control were all provided by the Upper caste. Intercession with the higher' deities on behalf of the Dom had to be done by the gusain as the former were forbidden to approach these directly and personally.⁴⁶ Even new-born children were named after consultation with the gusain.⁴⁷ Most of these servants were paid for the services they rendered by fixed quantities of

⁴⁵ . Vasudha Pande, Stratification in Kumaun circa 1815-1930, NMML, occasional paper, history and society, New series, 37, p.72.

⁴⁶ . R.D.Sanwal, Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon, O.U.P, 1976, p. 63.

⁴⁷ . Vasudha Pande, Stratification in Kumaun circa 1815-1930, NMML, occasional paper, history and society, New series, 37, p.72.

the agricultural produce at each harvest. Khal, a share of the harvest was usually just enough to maintain the Dom at a bare subsistence level.

It was only after the arrival of the colonial power to Utrakhand that Doms rights over land were recognized and legally sanctioned. A large number of Doms became Khaikars (occupancy tenants) and many of them even became proprietors. Doms who became Khaikars in 1867 was 9,119 constituting nearly 25 per cent. Again in the same year there were 4115 Doms were recorded as proprietors who constituted 4.3 per cent of total proprietors.⁴⁸ In nineteenth century, the extension of land under cultivation provided an opportunity to some of the Doms to become landowners who were mostly responsible for Nayabad grants. In the year 1867, the revenue records reveal that there were 4115 proprietors and 9119 permanent tenants among Doms.

Dom were assigned residential plots along the lowest periphery of the village, well removed from and preferably invisible from the upper caste (upper caste residential area) where they built grass huts only. In keeping with their low rank in the social structure, this residential section, called dumaura or dumtwal, was well removed from the Upper caste ward in order to save the latter from the defilement of hearing and seeing the former. It had its separate water-hole, separate approach and small rude stone structures which housed their gods and goddesses, who like their votaries, occupied the rank of servants of the higher gods and goddesses worshipped by the Upper caste.⁴⁹ The Dom was not allowed to use the water-holes, the cremation grounds or even the defecatory grounds used by the Upper caste. They were not allowed to come into the Upper caste residential area unless it was necessary to have them there, for instance, for repairing houses or bringing in fuel from the forests or

⁴⁸ . Vasudha Pande, Stratification in Kumaun circa 1815-1930, NMML, occasional paper, history and society, New series, 37, p.73.

⁴⁹ . R.D.Sanwal, Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon, O.U.P, 1976, p. 64.

food grain from the fields; but every time a Dom entered the Upper caste residential section, the paths over which he had moved. were purified by sprinkling cow's urine or water. Willfully touching the food and water, or befouling the utensils and hukka (smoking pipe) or entering the temples or other places of worship or daring to have physical relationships with the women of the Upper caste, all meant certain death for the Dom.⁵⁰ The Dom were not permitted to wear anything except G-strings on the lower part of the body and in no case could they wear a garment reaching below the knee.⁵¹ They were not permitted to wear footwear of any kind, nor could they use an umbrella, sit on a bedstead or any other raised seat in the presence of the Upper caste. No Dom could ride a pony or use any other conveyance which required mechanical, human or animal traction.

It was the Doms who build houses for the upper castes but they themselves could not live in these and had to be content with grass huts. They could wear ornaments made only from a base alloy known askhabari which were a symbol of low status and, besides the Dom, were worn only by those Khasi who occupied the status of chhyor or kaini, comparable in its legal aspects to that of the Dom. The Dom could not follow the scriptural ritual in lifecrisis ceremonies for the simple reason that no Baman, the only caste entitled to conduct and supervise such ritual, would, unless he wanted to become an outcaste and be physically punished, stoop to this ignominy. They were permitted to wear neither the sacred thread nor the sikha (tuft of long hair worn by males on their heads). The Dom was not allowed to go for marriage or bring in a bride in a procession or in a sedan chair or sling. Nor were they permitted any other fanfare or ostentation. A bride 'bought was stealthily smuggled in under cover

⁵⁰. G.W. Traill, A statistical Sketch of Kumaon, 1828, p. 28.

⁵¹. E.Sherman Oakley, Holy Himalaya: The Religion, Traditions, and Scenery of a Himalayan Province Kumaon And Garhwal), London, 1905, p. 42.

of darkness when the Upper caste slept, riding piggy-back on her maternal uncle so as not to offend the Upper caste. The attitude of the Upper caste in this matter is captured in popular saying which rendered in English means 'Seeing the marriage of a Dom is like a sand particle in the eye.'⁵²

The Dom were associated with a whole range of activities which were considered intensely polluting and hence extremely dangerous for the Upper caste to engage in apart from performing a whole variety of agricultural and other services for their Upper caste master, . These included burying dead cattle, handling implements which were constructed wholly or partly of animal skins.⁵³ Manufacturing utensils and implements of iron, copper or wood, carrying away and using articles of apparel, etc. worn by a Upper caste on his or her death-bed, carrying the Upper caste in sedan chairs, particularly at the time of their marriage, carrying banners and other articles and being in the barat (marriage procession) as well as the funeral procession. Acting as scapegoats to catch whatever pollution might be floating around. Carrying fire and fuel for crematory purposes. Wearing clothes worn by the Upper caste during the festival of holi which are considered saturated with ritual contamination and evil. Playing musical instruments for the Upper caste on all important socio-religious occasions, carrying away impure sacrificed animals like the buffalo, lizards, chicken and swine, propitiating the dregs of the spirit world for the Upper caste, and submitting themselves as vehicles for spirits considered so low and evil that no Upper caste would even dream of acting as a vehicle for them during the innumerable spirit-propitiatory ceremonies engaged in by the Jimdar and the Pitali in regard to the large number of indigenous culture-hero cults actively subscribed to by the Khasi-Jimdar and the cognate Khasi-Baman.

⁵². R.D.Sanwal, *Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon*, O.U.P, 1976, p. 65.

⁵³. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

The agricultural Doms collected leavings of food from the houses of the Upper caste they served, and, as an expression of their servile status, made symbolic annual gifts of articles of their craftsmanship or vegetables to their gusain. They also collected *basik* (presents given to servants) from their gusain on all occasions of joy, like birth, marriage, or success in litigation etc. in the latter's family. These traditionally prescribed menial services combined with the fact that the Dom, compelled by necessity arising from their servile status, ate leavings of food from the Upper caste kitchens and also carrion, rendered them all, from the Upper caste point of view, equally and completely impure and capable of transmitting excessively harmful pollution.⁵⁴

Both the upper castes and the Doms shared the idea of dangerous differences between both of them. Intimate physical contact, particularly sexual contact, with them was believed to bring the specially dangerous pollution called *dumtao* to a Upper caste or *bamantao* to the .Dom. Collecting such pollution was considered a violation of divine law and the punishment in this very life was believed to range from (apart from the physical punishment meted out to the offender by the community) early violent death to a lingering and painful one from such abhorred diseases as leprosy or serious septic infection. Then there was the punishment believed to be held in abeyance for the after-life, of having to live in one or more of the various hells. Despite these gruesome penalties, the prohibitions against Upper caste-Dom sexual relations were most certainly violated and required. coercive social and physical sanctions for their protection. These sanctions were governed by status, being corporeal for the lowstatus Dom, but social for the Upper caste A Upper caste male was declared outcaste, but only if he persisted in having sexual relationships

⁵⁴. R.D.Sanwal, *Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon*, O.U.P, 1976, p. 66.

with a Dom woman and his kinsmen found that he could not be made to make amends. If the offender expressed a desire to make amends and promised never to deviate again, he was made to undergo a purificatory ceremony in order to wash off the dumtao. But in the case of a Dom male cohabiting with an Upper caste female, the former was killed in view of the Upper caste's absolute power over him, and the latter was irrevocably and finally made an outcaste but it was usual to prompt and help such a woman to commit suicide before the liaison became public when alone the individual was formally declared outcaste. A Dom woman, on the other hand, was permitted to go unpunished for having sexual relations with an Upper caste. The upper caste- she collected remained with her and if she was a willing partner to the violation of the prohibitions, she was believed to receive divine punishment. An Upper caste male, even after being declared outcaste could seek restoration to his original socio-ritual status by making an application to the dharmadhikari. The latter, if he thought fit, allowed a reinstatement, but only after the kinsmen of the applicant gave a guarantee of good behaviour in regard to the latter and paid a heavy fine. For a Dom male there was no reprieve, nor for an Upper caste female who willingly or unwillingly chose to consort sexually with a Dom. In all cases of Upper caste-Dom sexual relationship, the offspring, if any, were assigned to the Dom-category, irrespective of the caste of the genitor.⁵⁵

Some infusion of alien blood undoubtedly must have occurred from time to time into the Dom category, it remained, on account of its politico-legal status as 'serf' and 'slave' of the Upper caste and the attendant disabilities imposed on its members, relatively homogeneous as an ethnic entity. Elaborate physical, social and religious-sanctions prevented the Upper caste from having sexual relationships with the Dom

⁵⁵. R.D.Sanwal, Op. Cit. 67.

on any extensive scale, and this also contributed to the maintenance and continuity of the latter's ethnic identity and purity. The fear of relegation to Dom status and suffering the attendant legal, economic and political disabilities ensured the observance by the Upper caste of other prohibitions regarding the eating of certain type of food, acceptance of any kind of foodstuff handled by a Dom except vegetables and raw foodgrains, or adoption of the social, occupational and religious practices associated with the Dom. The fear of getting physical and in many circumstances capital punishment ensured that the Dom did not try to violate traditional system.

The upper castes were able to keep the former subservient, even when the Dom formed a relatively large percentage of the population by withholding all political and economic power from the Dom. The Doms were originally a self-sufficient and self-contained ethnic category. The Khasi, by reducing the Dom to serfdom, added a politico-legal dimension to their ethnic identity and destroyed their economic and political independence.⁵⁶ Imposition of the hierarchical philosophy of social structure on the casteless and ritually little differentiated Khasi-Dom society (which, however, was politically and economically differentiated) by the immigrant Hindus added the all important dimension of differential ritual purity and impurity to the already existing ones, and gave to the Dom a caste-like identity and the lowest status in relation to the immigrants and the Khasi. The status of unclean Chandala, constructed for the Doms was only a negative and meaningful only for the upper castes.

The political and economic subservience of the Doms to the upper castes inhibited the formation of hierarchical strata within the Dom category, notwithstanding the existence of occupational distinctions. This was the functional consequence of their-political and economic subservience to the Upper caste. Being

⁵⁶. R.D.Sanwal, *Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon*, O.U.P, 1976, p. 68.

serfs and slaves, the different occupational groups within the Dom category could not develop the guild-like unity which has always been typical of the artisan castes elsewhere in the north Indian plains. The internal cleavages thus remained fluid and ill-defined throughout the Hindu period. Occupational categories were recognized, but these were not closed groups, and there was considerable movement of personnel from one to another.⁵⁷ This fluid and open quality of the Dom occupational groups was reflected in the absence of any rules regarding occupational endogamy. It must, however, be pointed out that the movement from one occupation to another was controlled by the upper castes in view of the latter's ownership rights in the productive capacities of the subservient Doms.

Doms in pre colonial times did not have any status other than the one which was given to them by the upper castes. The occupational categories did not crystallize into full-fledged castes even when the social environment was ripe for it in many ways, because of the non-availability of a scale to establish the precedence of the different occupations. The method of measuring social precedence in terms of the criteria of political and economic power and ritual attributes, used by the Upper caste to evolve a system of ranked strata, could not be utilized by the Dom because they lacked all political and economic power.⁵⁸ And in the view of the Upper caste were ritually un-differentiable since all the occupations followed by the Dom involved the use, in some way or another, of cow's hide, and all the Dom, irrespective of their principal occupation, were required to perform menial and highly polluting services.

⁵⁷. Ibid.

⁵⁸. Sanwal and Vasudha Pande opined that all doms were considered polluting because all occupations of doms involved direct or indirect handling of cattle hide. However, according to available evidence, all occupations did not involve handling of cattle hide. It is a moot point Dalits were considered polluting because they used cattle hides or upper castes constructed dalit identity as polluting for preventing access to Dalits to social, economic and political power and resources. See Vasudha Pande, Stratification in Kumaun circa 1815-1930, NMML, occasional paper, history and society, new series, 37, p.68.

The Doms part in the marriage and death ceremonies of their upper caste masters also contributed to making them impure and potentially dangerous.⁵⁹

Dom of any occupational category was not organized. This attribute was shared by them with the Khasi. Formal organization, however rudimentary, was a characteristic of only the Bhal-Baman and the Thakur who between them shared control of all political and economic power. In view of their servile status, -the Dom of one village were not permitted to interact with their occupational peers even in the adjacent village if the latter did not happen to be occupied by their master's agnates. This also inhibited the solidification of Dom occupational categories into castes. The general servile status of the Dom made it difficult for any occupational group to practice strict endogamy, the most essential attribute of a caste. Valid marriage required the transference of the rights of usufruct in a female from her father or a surrogate to her husband in consideration of a 'price' which did not necessarily have to be paid in cash or in a readily convertible item of property. Indeed, in view of the restrictions imposed on the Dom in regard to holding property or wealth apart from what the gusain provided, it was difficult for a Dom who did not have kind masters to secure control over the sexual, procreative, productive and domestic service potential of a female by paying cash. Other procedures were, therefore, used to secure a wife whenever the necessary money to pay cash as bride-price was not forthcoming. The most common device was to secure a wife through sant-badav (exchange) by which a daughter was given in exchange for a daughter-in-law.⁶⁰

These exchanges had to be made within a narrow area where the parties to the contract were well known to each other and where public opinion and also the

⁵⁹. R.D.Sanwal, Op. cit., p. 69.

⁶⁰. R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. p. 70.

authority of the masters could be mobilized to compel the parties to fulfill their respective obligations, particularly where deferred exchanges were involved. The territorial unit within which these advantages 'could be had at their best was the area occupied by a group of agnatic ally related Upper caste. Within this area the authority of the masters was absolute and the bride's as well as the groom's families could be coerced into upholding the contract. This was rendered difficult if, for instance, two individuals or families from two agnatic ally unrelated Upper caste villages were involved, for in such cases the dispute (if either of the contracting Dom failed to uphold the terms of the agreement in regard to the exchange of women), traditionally taken up by the Upper caste of the two villages, could not be easily resolved for in such a case the essential kinship basis for influencing each other and arriving at a satisfactory solution was lacking.

Doms suffered a lot of restrictions on physical movement because of low status. Normally, a Dom was not permitted to go out of his village or group of villages depending upon whether he was attached to a village or to a group of villages. These restrictions on physical movement tended to keep the range of marriage very narrow and this militated against occupational group endogamy for suitable mates from the same occupational group were not always available in the small area within which an attached Dom was permitted to move freely.⁶¹

The consequences of these incidental circumstances for the development of status differentiation and stratification among the Dom were crucial. The need to intermarry within a small area brought together a number of occupational classes occupying comparable status positions in relation to the Upper caste. Both these facts, i.e. their differential relationship with the Upper caste and marriage outside the

⁶¹. R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit., p. 70.

occupational group provided criteria for social differentiation within the Dom category. In its general economic aspects this differentiation was recognized by the Upper caste. Legally and ritually, however, all Dom were, in Upper caste estimation, one and of equal status.⁶²

On the basis of their roles and relationships with the Upper caste, the rural Dom in pre-British Kumaon was grouped into two broad levels: 1) the Khalait and 2) the Mangkhani or HurkiBadi. Neither the Khalait nor the Mangkhani were castes in the sense the Chauthani or the Khasi-Jimdar were. These two terms summarize the 'on the ground' relationships which the Dom had with the Upper caste. The former and numerically larger of these two categories consisted of those occupational groups of the Dom who were attached to the Upper caste agriculturists either as agricultural labourers or as artisans and played an important role in the productive process. In this category were included the Koi (weaver), Tamta (coppersmith), Lwar (blacksmith), Agari (smelter), Orh (mason), Bare (caretaker of sacrificial animals), Bhul (oil seed-presser), Bairi, Baruri or Ruri (basket-maker), Sani (bellows-man), Pauri (watchman), Chimari or Chunyar . (turner), Hanki (potter), Chanyal (yokestrap maker), Hali (ploughman), Bakhari (groom) and the Das (musician) who were sometimes further divided into the Dholi (small-drum player) and the Damai (kettle-drum player).

The upper castes maintained the Khalait Dom in the villages where they resided. Though they were collectively 'owned' by the Upper caste of that village, they were attached to specific households and were, in addition to khal (a portion of the harvest), given a piece of land by one of the gusain to build a hut upon, polluted and cast off clothes, a length of cloth every two or three years, and food when they

⁶² . Ibid. p. 71.

worked for a gusain.⁶³ On all important joyful occasions in the household they received *basik* (tips) in the form of small cash or articles of household use such as: metal utensils or, rarely, a calf. Fanger opined that this system is almost similar to Jajmani system and called it as *Khaukiya Gusain* relationship.⁶⁴ The Pauri and the Hali, who were widely represented in the Upper caste villages, were usually also given small plots of cultivable land which were called *khandyal*, the recipients being known as *khandelu*. The Pauri, as village watchman and general village *factotum*, was given a plot from the *gaon-sanjait* (undivided land jointly held by the Upper caste cultivators and managed by the village headman) while the Hali received a plot from the gusain he was attached to. But in both cases proprietary rights were not transferred to the Dom and they held usufruct in the land at the pleasure of the headman and the gusain respectively.⁶⁵ Other Dom were normally not given plots of cultivatable land though there was no restriction against it if an individual gusain wanted to give a plot from his own holdings to one of his *khali* tenant.

Apart from the representatives of the Pauri and the Hali occupational groups who were found in nearly all villages (except in the secondary or attached villages called *lagga*), the other *khalait* were irregularly distributed. Some like the Agari and the Sani, who mined and smelted iron and copper, were found only in villages where these metals existed. Mines were the personal property of the sovereign and exploited through officers by the former. Sometimes, however, the mines were leased out, usually to members of the *Thul-jat*. The Agari and Sani were the serfs attached to mines and changed hands along with the mines. Others like the Bare and the Bakhari

⁶³. Vasudha Pande, *Stratification in Kumaun circa 1815-1930*, NMML, occasional paper, history and society, New series, 37, p.71.

⁶⁴. A.C.Fanger, *Marriage Exchange among the Jimadars of the Central Himalayas*, in Brown Fanger and Joshi (ed.) *Himalaya: Past and Present*, Vol. 3, Almora, 1993, pp. 271-290.

⁶⁵. R.D.Sanwal, *Op.cit.* p. 72.

were attached as serfs to khalsa (personal) villages retained by the sovereign for his personal use. In such villages they looked after the sacrificial animals and horses respectively. Kshetri groups also sometimes kept serfs of these two classes.⁶⁶

The Baruri or Bairi were restricted to areas where ringal (a kind of dwarf bamboo which grows plentifully in northern and eastern Kumaon) was available to provide them with the raw material for making baskets and mats. The remaining khalaith Dom, that is, the Koi, the Tamata, the Lwar, the Orh, the Bhul, the Chunyar, the Hanki, the Chanyal, and the Das-Dholi were distributed at random throughout the kingdom. Except for the Das-Dholi, who was drummers, these Dom were artisans who did not directly help the Upper caste in the cultivation of the soil. Since these artisan groups were not required traditionally to work regularly as field-labourers, their members were not found in every village. However, the specialized services of some, such as the Lwar and the Koi were in greater and more regular demand in comparison with for instance, the Bhul, the Chanyal, the Hanki or the Chunyar. Consequently, the Lwar and the Koi served a smaller number of Upper caste within a smaller area, whereas others such as the Hanki and Chunyar, the products of whose labour were in casual and irregular demand, served a larger number of Upper caste within a larger area. The services of still others such as the Bhul or the Chanyal were in great though periodic demand during certain parts of the year (those of the Bhul after the-oil-seeds had been gathered and those of the Chanyal immediately preceding and during the sowing operations when every cultivator used up several yoke straps). The area served by these was approximately in between that served by the Lwar and the Koi and that served by the Hanki and the Chunyar.⁶⁷

⁶⁶. Ibid.

⁶⁷. R.D.Sanwal, Op.citi.p. 73.

The Doms were traditionally attached in serfdom to a body of Upper caste cultivators and proprietors of land. In the case of such Dom as the hali or the pauri the question of legal ownership over the Dom was simple enough. Each village was owned collectively by a group of closely related Upper caste amongst whom the village land was divided." headman of the village who was also the local lineage head managed on behalf of the coparcenary corporation all the land which was not already under someone's control. The pauri who was the general village factotum and watchman was owned collectively, and, like the undivided land of the village, was managed by the village headman. The holi, on the other hand, though owned collectively, was, like individual holdings of land, attached to specific families who had preferential rights on his services. But the other coparceners had rights of pre-emption in regard to the hali's services and in no case could he be transferred (either by gift or by sale) without the consent of the proprietary body.⁶⁸The Doms used the honorific term, gusain (master), all upper caste shareholder of the village, whether or not he was attached to him.

Artisan Doms control by the upper castes was more complex. Such Dom served the Upper caste of several villages in an area depending upon the demand for the product of their specialization. Traditionally the villages to which the artisan Dom rendered specialized services were occupied by members of the same clan. Ownership rights in the artisan Dom were nominally vested in the Upper caste clan but were exercised by the cultivators of the village in which such Dom resided. The other agnatic villages, in view of their relationship with the village in which such Dom resided and of the former's economic interests in the latter, had rights of reversion and pre-emption on the Dom. The artisan Dom was not given the same treatment as the

⁶⁸ . R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. 73.

village Dom. Though they were given patches of land to cultivate by individual Upper caste, they did not get these as a matter of right. As artisan Dom, they were entitled to the regulation four to six pounds of food grain at each harvest from every household they served, though in actual practice an artisan Dom who actively helped an Upper caste cultivator in the form of agricultural labour was made the same payment as a hali Dom by the gusain.⁶⁹

In spite of occupational and other differences which existed between the artisans Dom on the one hand and the agrarian and village menial Dom on the other, these two categories of Dom occupied the same status because of their comparable relationship with the Upper caste who on account of their politico-legal position were the regulators of the social status system. Status identity to the two classes of Dom was provided by the fact that the artisan Dom as residents in particular Upper caste villages had to perform in addition to his specialized services the usual menial services for the Upper caste coparceners normally performed by the non-artisan village Dom. These included the carrying of banners on ceremonial occasions, bearing the bridal doli (a kind of sedan chair), carrying loads, collecting fire-wood and leaves for making platters to be used on ceremonial occasions, carrying the bride's box of personal belongings, accompanying a deceased gusain's corpse to the cremation ground, and removing the dead cattle of the Upper caste masters. On the death of a gusain in the village where they resided, they were required, like the village Dom, to observe ritual mourning and when they came to work for a Upper caste coparcener they were fed anchwakh (ritually unclean) food such as rice and dal cooked in water outside the gusain's house in the same way as the non-artisan village Dom. The most important factor in the ascription of identical status to these Dom,

⁶⁹. Ibid. p. 74.

however, was the fact that all of them were khalait and could, in theory at least, substitute each other occupationally. In practice, however, it was more usual for the artisan Dom to take up the general menial occupations of the agrarian village a Dom, for the lack of opportunities to acquire the skills necessary, for artisan occupations created hurdles in the way of the agrarian Dom taking up artisan occupations.⁷⁰

Even the penetration of Thul-jat and other immigrants into rural Kumaon and the subsequent destruction of the association between a territory and a clan did not materially affect the status-situation of the Dom. In the great majority of cases the Khasi villages received in grant by the Thul-jat immigrants were seldom physically occupied by the latter because of the extremely low esteem in which cultivation of the soil was held. Though legal ownership over village lands, and, along with it, over the resident Dom passed into the hands of the newcomers, actual physical possession of land as well as the Dom remained in the hands of the cultivators who now became tenants of the Thul-jat grantees.

Sometimes there were some cases where immigrant group took up cultivation of the soil even though it meant demotion from Thul-jat to Khasi status. The great majority of such recruits to Khasi status was localized in the neighbourhood of one of the various seats of political power and could procure a great many of the articles they required from the rural markets which inevitably arose around such seats of power. A few Dom, however, had to be bought to perform the various menial services which only a Dom could perform. In the outlying regions, markets were lacking and the immigrant cultivators had, particularly if they had replaced the original settlers in a village, to contract with the cultivators of the neighbouring villages to allow the latter's khalait artisans to extend their services to the former. The immigrant

⁷⁰. R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit 1976, p. 75.

antecedents of these cultivators, and, in many cases their affinal links with the indigenous cultivators, rendered this task easy. However, village menial Dom had to be bought.⁷¹

Though the Upper caste ascribed identical status to all the khalait Dom, the latter recognized a sort of loose differentiation, again based primarily on the relative indispensability of the different occupational groups for the upper caste cultivators. Occupations like mining, weaving, house-building, copper-and-iron smithy were crucially important in the agrarian economy and the people following these occupations were indispensable to the Upper caste. Others like basket-makers, wood-turners, potters, oil-seed pressers, manufacturers of leather accessories were neither indispensable association with the highest status groups in the land gave a greater aura of prestige to the artisan Dom in comparison to the Das-Dholi.⁷²

The khalait did not have service relationships between their constituent occupational groups. If the Dom of a particular occupational group required a product of someone else's occupational specialization, he could get it only through one of his gusain. The products of the specialized labour of the khalait belonged upper caste 'masters'. One consequence of the khalait's legal status as agrestic serfs and servile artisans was that they failed to evolve inter-service relationships between the different occupational groups. As servile menials and artisans, none of the khalait occupational groups was entitled to serve anyone who did not belong to the former. Indeed, their total subservience to and dependence on the Upper caste made inter-service relationships between the different occupational groups meaningless.

⁷¹. Ibid.

⁷². R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit.78.

Ranking inferior to the khalait was the mangkhani category of the Dom which included the Hurki-Badi, the Mirasi and the Nat. The Hurki-Badi derived their name from the fact that members of this group used a musical instrument called huruk. (An hour-glass shaped double membranophone) as an accompaniment while dancing and singing. The Mirasi (a non Kumaoni word) were so-called because they provided instrumental accompaniment to their singing and dancing womenfolk. The Nat specialized in enacting farces and narrating jokes and stories. They were the common entertainers and moved from village to village within an area, particularly after the harvest, entertaining the peasantry and collecting small amounts of foodgrain and clothing from every Upper caste household. The khei was the area within which a group of mangkhani operated. This area traditionally was a valley and was not uniform in area or population. It ranged in extent from six to ten miles in radius smaller in regions of population concentration and larger in others.⁷³

The mangkhani were not attached in serfdom to the upper castes in the same way as were the khalait. But like the latter they were not permitted to hold any property except what the Upper caste gave to them. The Upper caste was not normatively bound to give them, anything though they generally did. As their designation reflects they made a living by 'begging' though the fact of begging was attenuated by the circumstances that begging followed singing, dancing or acting in front of the house from which foodgrains, clothing, etc. were solicited. It was the lack of normative obligation to give on the part of the Upper caste and the practice adopted by a mangkhani of 'begging' in the name of each and every member of his family individually, which earned the latter his title. Like the khalait Dom, the mangkhani lacked political power and were completely subservient to the Upper caste of the

⁷³. R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. p. 78.

village where they lived. Also, in such villages the mangkhani performed general field labour for the Upper caste coparceners. But they were not bound like the khalait to stay put in the village. Nor did the Upper caste hold property rights in them.⁷⁴ The low status ascribed to the mangkhani in comparison to the khalait and recognized by the Upper caste and the Dom alike was primarily on account of two explicit circumstances. They lived on the dole of the Upper caste which the latter could refuse without breaking any normative rule.

⁷⁴. R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. p. 79.

Chapter-4

Impact of Gurkha and Colonial Rule on Kumaon Society

Chapter-4

IMPACT OF GURKHA AND COLONIAL RULE ON KUMAON SOCIETY

In the previous chapter, we have examined different caste rules and regulations and how different castes in Uttarakhand had privileges; access of different castes to the land and natural resources and disabilities of lower castes in the society. In this chapter, we shall examine how caste privileges and domination gradually declined for some castes and how certain castes moved up on the social ladder. In pre-British Uttarakhand, the pattern of social stratification was very simple. The population was grouped into three hierarchically ranked estate-like divisions based primarily on political and ethnic factors. Of these the numerically smallest but politically - dominant immigrant group was internally differentiated into two castes, the Bhal-Baman and the Kshetri (or Thakur-Rajput), primarily on the basis of the varna antecedents of individual immigrants. The Khasi were also divided like the immigrants into a Baman and a Jimdar section, each consisting of a single-caste. Like the immigrants, the two Khasi castes were ranked. But unlike the immigrants the Khasi caste did not come into being in religious ideology but in the course of political and economic interaction with Hindu immigrants and were based on occupational distinctions supported by formal legal and economic sanctions. The Khasi castes were not closed social entities. Movements from one to the other, particularly from the Jimdar to the Baman caste were not unknown. Unlike the Newar of Nepal, the Khasi did not form a separate hierarchical system coexisting with the more orthodox system obtaining amongst the immigrant. That the Khasi castes formed an integral part of the hierarchical system was expressed among other things in the allocation of immigrants

who lacked power to one of the Khasi castes on the basis of the Varna antecedents of the former. Also relegated to the Khasi castes were illegitimate children of Bhal-Baman-Kshettri, Bhal-Baman-Khasi or Kshettri-Khasi casual unions as well as those of intra-caste casual unions, depending on the caste of the genitor. The Dom provide an excellent example of an essentially estate-like entity on which a religious context was imposed by the politically dominant immigrants who were responsible for introducing the ideology of ritual pollution and purity to Kumaon. Their status and rank in the hierarchy were largely a matter of legal definition. They had been slaves and serfs of the Khasi before the arrival of Hindu immigrants and they continued to be slaves after the immigrants assumed political power. Since the Dom derived their status from their relationship with upper castes, internal distinctions within the Dom group were fluid.¹ Whatever distinctions did exist was based on broad occupational differences between those who rendered agricultural and associated artisan services and those who rendered non-agricultural services. The specialized nature of these services tended to make each hereditary in specific families, but this was no barrier against mobility from one occupation to another if the proprietary-bodysodesired. Of course there were greater barriers against the occupational mobility between the agricultural and the artisanal sections of the Dom.

The first blow to the structure of caste in Kumaon was struck by its conquest by the Gurkhas of neighbouring Nepal in A.D. 1790.² The Gurkha remained in political control of Kumaon for approximately twenty-five years and they were succeeded by colonial government East India Company which conquered it from the Gurkhas in A.D. 1815. The assumption of political control by colonial government set

¹ . R.D.Sanwal, *Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon*, O.U.P, 1976, p. 135.

² . Shekar Pathak, *Kumauni society through the ages*, in K.S.Valdiya (Ed.), *Kumaun : Land and People*, A volume in honour of N.D.Tiwari, Nainital, 1988, p. 103; James Kennedy, *Life and Work in Benares and Kumaon, 1839-1877*, New York, 1885, p. 72.

afoot a whole series of cataclysmic changes in the structure of caste in Kumaon and not only provided continuity to the changes heralded by the Gurkha conquest but also gave form and consistency to these and many other changes which the Gurkha, because of their short rule or as Hindus, could not have initiated. It seems logical, therefore, to briefly discuss the nature and extent of changes in the structure of caste which were brought about by the Gurkha rule of Kumaon before analyzing the impact which the establishment of British rule, had on the structure of caste in Kumaon.³

The Gurkhas were perhaps the first migrant people who did not become integrated into the traditional Kumaoni caste structure despite their control over political power which entitled them to the highest status within the Varna framework in accordance with the existing basis of status ascription.⁴ There were several circumstances which militated against their assumption of the highest status in Kumaon. The Gurkhas were Hindus and the civil and military administrators who came to Kumaon already held positions in Nepali society in terms of caste.⁵ By itself this fact did not interfere with the assumption of a new socio-ritual rank by the Nepali in Kumaon. The earlier immigrants had done exactly that. But unlike the latter, the Nepali administrators or soldiers in Kumaon did not break off their connection with their native society and this inhibited their assuming a ritual status which in many instances would not have been in line with the one they occupied in their native society. Also relevant was the fact that the Nepali administrators and soldiers were so frequently transferred that they could not take root in one particular area. In native

³ . R.D.Sanwal, *Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon*, O.U.P, 1976, p. 121.

⁴ . *Ibid.* p. 121.

⁵ . Shekar Pathak, *Kumauni society through the ages*, in K.S.Valdiya (Ed.), *Kumaun : Land and People*, A volume in honour of N.D.Tiwari, Nainital, 1988, p. 103.

Kumaoni eyes they remained aliens and this image was further strengthened by the oppressive and high-handed rule of the Gurkhas.⁶

Many Kshettris and Bhal-Bamans were driven away by the Gurkha conquest of Kumaon and their oppressive rule drove away particularly those who enjoyed hereditary privileges in the Chand administration.⁷ Gurkha conquest also brought to an end the formal political power so long commanded by the Thul-jat, particularly the Chauthani-Baman, and destroyed the formal administrative machinery dominated by the Chauthani which regulated all matters pertaining to the assignment of socio-ritual status to individuals and groups. Being themselves Hindus, the Gurkha, however, upheld in its general principles, the system of caste stratification. Violation of caste prohibitions and prescriptions, especially on the part of the Dom, were, as in the past, generally punished capitally. Killing a cow or polluting the utensils, food, drinking water or persons of upper castes led to capital punishment.⁸ Dom serfs and menials and Khasi slaves and tenants continued to suffer the status disabilities imposed on them during Chand times in regard to property, occupation and style of life.⁹ Similarly, the Khasi do not seem to have undergone any changes in ritual, occupational or legal status. They continued to occupy the middle ranges in the stratificational structure and to provide temple-menials and caretakers, petty landholder cultivators, tenants, domestic servants and slaves for the Thul-jat from their ranks.¹⁰ Slave trade generally involved Doms.

The political necessity of keeping a check on any possible subversion led the early Gurkha administration of Kumaon to adopt an extremely oppressive policy

⁶ . R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit., p. 122.

⁷ . Ibid. p. 122.

⁸ B.D.Pande, Kumaonki Itihas, Almora, p. 403, English translation by C.M Agrawal, History of Kumaun, Vol.2, Almora, 1993.

⁹ .R.D.Sanwal, Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon, O.U.P, 1976, p. 122.

¹⁰ . Atkinson, Himalayan Gazetteer, 1886, p. 573.

towards the Kumaoni, particularly the Bhal-Baman. Some of these measures, such as exaction of corvée, even from the Bhal-Baman, and the imposition of a tax on the Brahmins who were till then exempt from it were calculated to curb the power and influence traditionally wielded by the Bhal-Baman in Kumaon. Brahmins, however, were also in a fashion revered.¹¹ The attitude of the Gurkha towards the Bhal-Baman is admirably summed up in a maxim ascribed to the former. 'It's the feet and not the head of the Brahmin which deserve to be worshipped. (This meant that in the Gurkha view a Brahmin could be beheaded or made to carry loads on his head without endangering his ritual exclusiveness.) The maxim evidently aimed at discrediting the sacrosanctity which the Bhal-Baman enjoyed during Chand rule.¹²

Some of the occupations which had hitherto remained untaxed were also taxed. The most important of these were a tax on looms, that is, on weaving, an occupation followed by the Koi and another on skinning dead cattle, an occupation which could be forced on any of the khalait Dom. But, as these occupations were followed as traditional services to upper castes, the actual burden of the taxes was borne by the already over-burdened landholders and peasants.¹³

Though the Gurkha replaced the Thul-jat in position formal political and economic power in Kumaon, they did not challenge the latter's ritual status in the total hierarchy. This had the effect of dissociating political and economic from ritual status, a process which received further impetus under British administration. For the structure of caste in Kumaon the consequences of such dissociation between the three major bases of status -- were far reaching. The most important consequence was that

¹¹ . B.D.Pande, *Kumaonki Itihas*, Almora, pp.396-398, English translation by C.M Agrawal, *History of Kumaun*, Vol.2, Almora, 1993.

¹² , R.D.Sanwal, *Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon*, O.U.P, 1976, p. 123.

¹³ . Prabhat Upreti, *Historical Perspective of Uttarakhand*, in R.P.Dhasmana (ed.), *Uttarakhand: Need for a Comparative Eco-strategy*, New Delhi, 2008, pp.19-20: R.D.Sanwal, *op.cit.* p. 123.

of weakening social integration by striking at the involutes character of caste stratification.

Whatever the degree of freedom from state control over allocation of individuals and groups to specific socio-ritual status categories, it had one very important consequence for the structure of caste in Kumaon. In Chand times an individual breaking an important caste norm was expelled from his own caste group and assigned, with appropriate adjustments in regard to occupation, rituals and status symbols, to an inferior one in keeping with the severity of his misdemeanour. The recipient 'caste' did not have the option of refusing such a person. The destruction of the formal machinery for status allocation by the Gurkhas must have created a situation where each caste could expel an individual member who broke a caste norm, but could not assign him to another caste.

The Gurkhas by doing away with the political regulation of many caste matters, not only made castes autonomous but created a situation which was favourable for the emergence within castes of smaller groups which exhibited such caste attributes as a tendency towards endogamy, occupational limitations and ranking, though the last does not seem to have commanded general consensus. Lack of consensus in regard to the rank position of a group in the total hierarchy carried in it elements of hostility which under more favourable circumstances, i.e. greater autonomy from formal control by the highest caste, developed into open conflict for status.¹⁴

Though the Gurkha occupation destroyed the overall political authority of the Thul-jat by taking away from them the formal control over political and economic resources which sustained such authority at the regional level, they did nothing to

¹⁴ . R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. p. 124.

destroy the informal power which the Thul-jat enjoyed as principal landholders, in which position they could control subordinate tenants and servants. The Gurkhas continued the 'feudal system of government which had developed in Kumaon during the Chand rule. Tracts of land were assigned to arm commanders for the maintenance of the soldiers under their command. Though these assignments were made against existing grants, the new grantees do not seem generally to have taken physical possession of the field.¹⁵ Indeed, the frequency with which officers were transferred and the nature of duties of the military commanders left them little time or opportunity to personally undertake the management of the assignment which was left to one of their 'principal landholders whom they made responsible for the amount of the rents.¹⁶ The 'principal landholders', who were as a rule from the Thul-jat category, thus retained their influence over the mass of common peasantry and menials. As these deputies were relatively permanent they generally came to acquire an under-grantee status. The excessive rent imposed on agricultural land was also responsible for perpetuating the status-inferiority of the Khasi who as actual cultivators of the soil had ultimately to bear the brunt of taxation and consequent economic impoverishment. The assignees were responsible under the Gurkha administration, as they were under the Chand, for the maintenance of law and order within their assignments. Part of this formal political authority was also delegated to the deputies who contributed to the maintenance of the political superiority of the latter vis-à-vis the Khasi cultivator of the soil and the Dom castes.¹⁷

Although the loss of political and economic power suffered by the Thul-jat did not bring about overall changes in the ritual status or in the ranking of castes and sub-castes comprising the Thul-jat category, it did have status-relevant effects for

¹⁵ .Ibid.

¹⁶ . G.W. Traill, A statistical Sketch of Kumaon, 1828, p. 30.

¹⁷ . R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. p. 125.

individuals within the Thul-jat category. The great majority of the Chauthani and the Kshettri, particularly the former, who held administrative and associated economic power on a hereditary tenure, were either imprisoned by the Gurkha or went into exile¹⁸ and thus removed themselves physically from the social scene. Some of the few who remained behind in Kumaon and were lucky enough not to lose the land grants bestowed on them or their ancestors by the Chands, turned to cultivation of the soil through serfs and slaves and retained their high ritual status.¹⁹ Others, however, were not so lucky and had to fall back upon ritually less edifying occupations, such as those of domestic priest in the case of the Chauthani and active agriculture in the case of the Kshettri. Such an occupational stepping down did not bring about the same results for the Chauthani and the Kshettri. The Chauthani in fact suffered no loss of formal status, for some of them had traditionally performed common priestly functions, though only for the royalty and others holding high office. But individual Kshettri who took actively to agriculture, which involved handling the plough and the performance of physical labour in the fields, seem to have suffered a loss of status on account of the impurity believed to inhere in handling the plough.

The establishment of Gurkha rule and the consequent withdrawal of formal political power from the monopolistic and hereditary control of the Chauthani had the effect of opening up opportunities for many of the hitherto politically neutral Pachbiri to secure offices under the Gurkha which brought them, on the one hand, into sharp competition with the Chauthani for socio-ritual status and power after the latter's rehabilitation under British auspices, and, on the other, led in many instances to their acceptance as status equals by the Chauthani as expressed through the establishment

¹⁸ . B.D.Pande, *Kumaonki Itihas*, Almora, p. 397, English translation by C.M Agrawal, *History of Kumaun*, Vol.2, Almora, 1993.

¹⁹ . R.D.Sanwal, *Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon*, O.U.P, 1976, p. 125.

of connubial relations between the administrators of Pachbiri antecedents and the politically conscious Chauthani who had remained behind in Kumaon.

The competitive struggle for status which was set off as a result of the destruction at the hands of the Gurkhas of the traditional pattern-maintaining mechanisms for status ascription and mobility found fuller expression during British rule, which was longer, more stable, and, being non-Hindu, sentimentally and ideologically less involved. The rudimentary changes appearing in the structure of caste during Gurkha rule are only suggestive of those to appear as a consequence of the imposition of British rule in Kumaon in which a socio-moral philosophy radically different from that underlying the Chand as well as Gurkha - government was imposed in Kumaon.²⁰

IMPACT OF BRITISH RULE IN KUMAON

When the colonial power entered the kumaon in 1815, lasting changes of significance in the structure of caste in Kumaon started. Colonial government did not generally take specific anti-caste measures but the great majority of the administrative measures introduced by them in -Kumaon had some effect on the structure of caste on account of the latter's all-pervading quality. Measures aimed at increasing the revenue receipts from the land led, for example, to a situation where members of the Dom group, traditionally denied the right to hold land, were given a proprietary interest in land and this had serious consequences for their traditional relationships with upper castes. The refusal to use governmental authority to coerce people to follow specific occupations or rituals affected the occupational and ritual aspects of caste and also changed the occupational interrelationships between different castes. The formal abolition of slavery and serfdom early during British rule and a land revenue policy

²⁰ . R.D.Op.cit. p. 126.

biased heavily in favour of the actual cultivator irrespective of the latter's caste brought significant changes in the formal legal status of the Dom and sections of the Khasi.²¹

The process of dissociating socio-religious status from its political and economic base begun in Kumaon under the Gurkhas was completed by colonial government. Like the Gurkhas colonial government remained outside the traditional socio-religious status structure of Kumaoni society notwithstanding their long rule. The English rulers were aliens in whose moral philosophy secular social status was not a function of religious status or vice versa. This was in direct contradiction of and opposition to the bases of social stratification in traditional Kumaon. Also, colonial government administrators of Kumaon (though they governed the Kumaoni and till the beginning of the present century enjoyed a great deal of power and autonomy) ruled in the name of and were responsible to an authority outside Kumaon.²² As a unit within a large empire, Kumaon remained a political entity but not an isolate as it was in Chand times. The geographical and political insularity of Kumaon in Chand times were conditions in which a person who was not physically present ceased to be relevant for the native status structure. Similarly, anyone who took up residence in Kumaon was, on account of the impossibility of maintaining interactive relations with his native society, absorbed into the Kumaoni status structure.²³

As the colonial government started building of roads through the marshy and animal-infested belt of land, it became easy and safe to travel to and from Kumaon. The introduction at a later date of mechanized means of transport such as the railway and the motor vehicle rendered such travel easier. The introduction of postal services at a still later date made it even easier for an individual to remain in contact with his

²¹ . Ibid. p. 127.

²² . R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. p. 127.

²³ . Ibid.

native society, to retain his position in it and to influence the native status structure in many ways without being physically present on the social scene.

CHANGES IN THE TRADITIONAL CHARACTER OF CASTE

By and large, the economic, legal and administrative measures adopted by colonial government in Kumaon the more significant ones for analyzing the changes in the nature of caste are: the formal legal sanctions supporting the status structure were withdrawn and caste offences were refused formal legal cognizance. Colonial government replaced the exalted and very powerful dharmadhikari by an official (known as sadaramin) who occupied a very low rank in the administrative hierarchy, wielded no formal power and functioned merely as an advisor to the administration, particularly in matters relating to inheritance of property. He did not decree as the dharmadhikari did. He merely explained to the administration what the canon law said about a specific issue, and, though he was given jurisdiction over petty civil disputes, he had no authority except as an expert on canon law. But even the office of sadaramin was abolished after some time. The pre-British dharmadhikari, on the other hand, had held a key position in the formal status-maintaining machinery.²⁴ He was the infallible interpreter of the dharma-shastra. His interpretation had the same sanctity and validity as the scriptures he interpreted and his decrees were as sacred and binding as divine law. As the ultimate authority on matters pertaining to morally correct living, the dharmadhikari determined the entitlement of individuals and groups to rank positions in the social hierarchy and formally regulated all status movements within the stratificational structure by legitimizing or punishing such mobility. By dispensing with the services of the dharmadhikari colonial government authority in

²⁴ . R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. p. 128.

Kumaon destroyed the institutionalized a method for allocating individuals to castes, legitimizing status shifts and punishing illegal attempts at mobility.²⁵

Khasi practice of selling children was banned by the Colonial Government.²⁶This made it impossible for members of the Thuljat to procure domestic or agricultural bond-servants and modified the image of the Khasi as a category from which servants could be bought to maintain the status superiority of the Thuljat.Slavery was also abolished though Dom serfs and artisans could be transferred legally with the land for quite a long time.²⁷ The practice of enslaving certain categories of criminals from the Khasi group for working on royal land was also given up. In pre-British times a serf or slave was liable to be killed for trying to escape and a freeman liable to prosecution for abetting-such escape. By refusing to entertain petitions for the restoration of existing slaves or prosecution of abettors the courts of law established by colonial government contributed directly to changing the legal status of Khasi and the Dom.²⁸

The colonial rulers opened administrative offices to everyone irrespective of caste. In fact some of the early British administrators are known to have tried to break the traditional influence and power of the Thul-jat by appointing 'men of low-birth' to important administrative offices. The more important administrative offices such as those of diwan (minister), bakshi (army chief), sardar (army commanders), faujdar (regional commanders and administrators), dharnadhikari (canonist), and raj-guru (royal religious preceptor) became redundant: under the new administration and for the inferior administrative positions the Thul-jat had to compete with the Khasi and

²⁵ . Ibid. p.128.

²⁶ . Atkinson, E.T, The Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces of India, 1886, Vol.III, Allahabad, p. 573.

²⁷ . Atkinson, E.T, The Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces of India, 1886, Vol.III, Allahabad, p. 573.

²⁸ . R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. p. 129.

even with the Dom. Within their own ranks the Thul-jat castes experienced important modifications with regard to sub-caste differentiation which was almost entirely based on occupational differences.²⁹

The colonial government resumed the rent-free land grants and assignments which were held in lieu of cash payment held by members of the Chauthani and Kshetri castes as advisers or administrators were generally resumed by colonial government, and the important status distinction between the Gurkha and the thatwan destroyed. The Gurkha was reduced to the position of ordinary landowners assessed for revenue and other services like landowners of any other caste. The practice of farming out revenues to members of the Thul-jat castes was also abolished and each cultivator, except certain categories of tenants, was made-responsible for paying the state assessment on the land of which he was a co-sharer and in which he was given rights of pre-emption.

All almost all tenants except the Sirtan (tenants-at-will) were given a more or less permanent interest in the land they held as tenants and even the proprietary dues from them were collected and paid to the proprietor by the administration.³⁰ The great majority of the non-Thul-jat whose behaviour could be controlled through informal economic sanctions was thus freed from the domination of the Thul-jat landowners.³¹ A policy of giving proprietary rights to the actual cultivator, irrespective of his caste, was adopted as a result of which even members of the Dom category became landowners. A person who cleared the jungle from a piece of land and brought it under cultivation was given proprietary rights in it. This also freed persons who were

²⁹ . Ibid.

³⁰ . R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. p. 130.

³¹ . Walton, H.G, Almora: A Gazetteer, Allahabad, 1911, p. 113-115.

traditionally prohibited to own land from their dependence on high-caste landlords. So, this resulted among other things a scarcity of agricultural labour.³²

All people who held land as proprietors or under proprietors, irrespective of their caste, were legally compelled to provide provisions and coolie services to touring government officials and travellers. This linkage between landownership and certain types of menial services, helped to break down to some extent the exclusiveness of the Thul-jat who traditionally disdained menial work which was a symbol of status inferiority and was performed by the Khasi and the Dom.³³ Many Thul-jat individuals, particularly from the Kshetri caste who did not have any other occupation except agriculture to fall back upon after colonial government conquest of Kumaon and could not afford to hire Khasi or Dom individuals for performing coolie-bardaish (compulsory labour) for them, were forced to perform it themselves and suffer a loss of prestige and rank. The highly centralized administrative and judicial system established by colonial government in Kumaon was the total opposite of the traditional decentralized system of judicial and civil administration which gave the Thol-jat army commanders and administrator's great prestige and power to control the behaviour of the people under their jurisdiction and maintain their status superiority.

Colonial government administration guaranteed equality before law to all and abolished the dual standards of justice and of punishment--one for persons of higher caste and another for those of the lower. The refusal of the new rulers to enforce restrictions traditionally imposed on the use of symbols of status such as gold, special apparel, sandalwood paste, the thread ceremony, the sacramental form of marriage ceremony and the like, which helped in the easy status placement of individuals, freed

³² . R.D.Op.cit. p. 130.

³³ . Ibid.

members of the deprived castes to assume these with the result that the symbols lost their status association. Abolition of trial through ordeals and of such punishment as enslavement or death; or the cutting off of the limbs or the nose of a non-Thul-jat offender, tended not only to make the latter stand up to their social superiors, but also to violate the norms which traditionally helped maintain status exclusiveness.³⁴

Efficient and wide communications network helped in the centralization of administrative authority for its success. Improved means of communication broke the isolation of different parts of Kumaon and the establishment of peace and the destruction of ferocious animals which infested the forests of Kumaon made it possible for members of a caste in one area to establish intensive contacts-with-their fellows in others. In the political and economic circumstances created by the imposition of British rule this fact was instrumental in giving rise to politically oriented associations such as the Kumaon Rajput Parishad or the Kumaon Shilpkar Sabha and newspapers serving political and economic ends, such as the Kumaon Rajput and Samta.³⁵ Significantly, the Thul-jat castes, particularly the Bhal-Baman, were never organized into formal associations or published caste journals. The linking of Kumaon with the rest of India by road and, later, rail made it possible for the Kumaonis to work outside Kumaon and yet retain not only the membership of their respective castes in Kumaon but also influence the status structure without being permanently present on the social scene. Emigrants were not necessarily lost to the parental caste in Kumaon. Similarly, immigrants to Kumaon were freed from the necessity to choose between risking their lives while crossing the terai in order to secure spouses from their native castes or be absorbed in the Kumaoni status structure

³⁴ . R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. p. 131.

³⁵ . R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. p. 131.

through intermarriage.³⁶ The ease with which contacts could be maintained with their caste fellows through occasional visits and letters, and the possibility of confining connubial relations within their native regional castes made the absorption of immigrant Hindus into the Kumaoni status structure irrelevant.

Colonial government abolished the large number of taxes collected by the Hindu kings. The real burden of these taxes was borne by the already impoverished class of tenants or owner-cultivators who came from the Khasi category. These cultivators were also forced to pay a whole variety of other dues to the landlords and regional administrators and their agents. British administration imposed a uniform tax on land and commuted the customary dues payable by the tenants to the landlord to a small percentage of the state demand. Uniformity of taxation and new tenures destroyed the old status distinctions between the different types of tenures. This found expression in the disappearance of virtually all pre-British 'proprietary' tenures in favour of a new one created by colonial government. One very important status-relevant effect of this was to eliminate the status distinctions between high caste immigrant Gurrkha and the indigenous Khasi thatwan and to put all the castes, including the Dom, at par in terms of landownership.³⁷

Hissedari, a new tenure (coparcenary proprietorship), was created primarily to ensure that the administration did not lose the revenue accruing from specific landholdings by making all proprietors in a village individually and jointly responsible for the payment of the revenue assessed on the village. Though in the great majority of cases the co-partners in any one village were agnatic kinsmen, they're not being kinsmen or members of the same caste did not debar their being

³⁶ . Ibid. p. 132.

³⁷ . R.D.Sanwal, op.cti. p. 132.

made hissedar in regard to a village.³⁸ The imposition of the hissedari tenure on all proprietors of land without any consideration of the latter's caste status had the effect of destroying the positive association which existed between specific types of tenure and the status position of a caste of the old forms of tenancy, the one with the lowest status content—the kaini tenure—disappeared on account of the abolition of slavery and the sale of agricultural servants. Colonial government gave the great majority of the kaini who came from Khasi-Jimdar ranks, khaikari (permanent tenancy) interest in the land which in the past they cultivated for their Thul-jat masters. One effect of this was that Thul-jat hissedars who could not engage personally in many agricultural activities without suffering loss of status, had now to offer competitive terms to the agricultural and service castes for their specialized services which in the past were commanded as a matter of legal right (under the Hindu kings a kaini, chhyor, hali or khandelu had to work at their Thul-jat master's bidding on the latter's terms). The element of legal compulsion which was basic to the relationship disappeared as a result of British policy. By bringing the Bhal-Baman who enjoyed the privilege of holding rent-free land grants under the Hindu kings on the rent roll and put them at par with the inferior peasant castes.³⁹

The colonial civil administrators, army officers, teaplanter and missionaries could, on account of their religion and food habits (such as eating beef, eggs, mushrooms), secure personal and domestic servants only from the Dom group. Such an association with the rulers brought economic advantages without reflecting itself in the status structure which was significantly responsible for creating dissatisfaction amongst such Dom with their traditional status in the social hierarchy.⁴⁰ The

³⁸ . Ibid.

³⁹ . Ibid. P. 133.

⁴⁰ . R.D.Sanwal, *Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon*, O.U.P, 1976, p. 133.

establishment of cantonments for colonial government army of occupation, the development of 'hill-stations to which officers and civilians flocked to escape the hot summers of the Indian plains, and the establishment of tea plantations in different parts of Kumaon, provided ready markets for whatever the peasants wanted to sell. This went a long way towards the improvement of the ordinary peasants' economic condition. Labour requirements for the construction and maintenance of roads, bridges etc. and for the exploitation of the forests gave to the traditionally deprived cultivators and servants new opportunities to enhance their economic standing.⁴¹

The increase in the political and economic scale brought about by integrating Kumaon into colonial government Indian empire did not leave the Kumaoni status structure untouched. Having been made a part of a larger politico-economic entity, Kumaon could not be kept insulated against reformist or reactionary currents emanating elsewhere in India. The best example of this is the penetration into Kumaon of the reformist ideology concerned with the destruction of untouchability. It also led to the growth of nationalism is another.⁴² Opportunities to acquire formal education in government schools were made available to everyone who had the means or the inclination to acquire it. The economic advantages which the Thul-jat traditionally enjoyed over the Khasi and the Dom coupled with the traditional lead of the former over the latter two in the field of learning, did not bring the latter immediate benefits but it removed the formal restrictions which prevented them from competing with the Thul-jat.

The colonial government by destroying the formal prescriptions and sanctions which maintained the differential distribution of political, economic and intellectual

⁴¹ . Ibid.

⁴² . Ibid. p. 134. R.D.Sanwal, Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon, O.U.P, 1976, p. 134.

resources and symbols amongst the various status categories, it made it possible for anyone (even a member of the lowest Dom category) to acquire control over power resources and status symbols (the prerequisite for attaining high ritual status) without fear of punishment. Opportunities to acquire secular symbols of high status stimulated the desire of socially deprived groups to seek mobility in the social hierarchy to match the acquisition of secular status symbols. But the destruction of the institutionalized administrative machinery traditionally responsible for making and legitimizing adjustments in ritual status to match the changed politico-economic circumstances of an individual made it extremely difficult, if not entirely impossible, for a shift in ritual status to follow the acquisition of secular symbols of status.⁴³ Secular status symbols became irrelevant for caste status and the status structure froze at the surviving religious/ideological level which had been left untouched. Disturbed on account of colonial government policy of non-interference with the religious beliefs and practices of the conquered Kumaonis. The establishment of British rule, thus, contributed to the greater ritualization of the Kumaoni system of social stratification which became more rigid than it, perhaps, ever was under the Chands. The dissipation of secular bases of status strengthened its religious/ideological basis and made it more caste-like. This had extremely important consequences for the structure of caste in Kumaon. The hardening of the system stabilized the hierarchical aspects of the system and made the different castes within the hierarchy closed units. The destruction of the formal machinery for the allocation of individuals to specific castes made each caste autonomous in matters relating to the recruitment and expulsion of members and in determining the nature of its relationship with other castes. While a caste acquired the right to expel a member it had no complementary right to compel another caste to

⁴³ . R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. p. 135.

accept such an individual. In Chand times the state exercised, through the dharmadhikari, the authority to allocate individuals to particular castes in all cases where the normal rules of patrilineal affiliation were not applicable or to legitimize shifts in ritual status in line with changes in the control of political and economic resources. The state enforced the conformity to the hierarchical norms.⁴⁴

As the colonial government administration refused to continue this governmental function and the greater ritualization of the status structure resulted in bringing about three important consequences. Firstly, Kumaoni society closed its doors to outsiders. The dissolution of the formal authority which was responsible for the integration of immigrants into the indigenous status structure made it extremely difficult for immigrants who came to Kumaon after the establishment of British rule to secure incorporation into the Kumaoni status structure. Such immigrants retained their native caste identity and coexisted with the indigenous system without being relevant to the latter. The loss of this source of recruitment meant that Kumaoni society had to depend on its own resources for renewing itself and this contributed significantly to the hardening of the stratificational structure.

Secondly, by destroying the legal machinery which maintained the formal division of Kumaoni society into three estate-like entities, (i) the immigrant Thul-jat administrators, and landowners, and priests; (ii) the largely indigenous Khasi peasants and servants; and (iii) the servile Dom] and by consolidating all political power in its own hands, colonial government administration struck a mortal blow at the very basis of these estate-like divisions. The dissolution of the politico-legal stratificational distinctions, particularly within upper castes category between the Thul-jat and the Khasi is seen at present in the rise of new groups (such as the Kshetri or the recent

⁴⁴ . R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. p. 136.

immigrant groups) which cannot be fitted... into the three-fold hierarchy and in the emphasis given to the varna unity of the Baman (comprising the immigrant BhalBaman and the indigenous and inferior Pitali or Khasi-Baman) and of the Rajput (comprising the Kshetri or Thakur-Rajput and the Jimdar or Khasi-Rajput). In pre-British times, on the other hand, Varna status distinctions were subordinated to legal status distinctions and permitted play only within the politico-legal status categories. Thirdly, the breakdown of secular bases of-status ascription, the destruction of the old administrative machinery and associated sanctions for the regulation of status matters and the unintended bolstering up of the ritual elements in status stratification, were directly responsible on the one hand for making closed units of hitherto open castes and on the other for the emergence of new castes especially within the hitherto largely undifferentiated Dom group and also for the rise of satellite caste-like entities attached to the Thul-jat castes. Except in the case of the Dom group, these castes and satellite groups are made up of individuals who on account of the circumstances of their birth are considered ritually unclean and rejected not only by their paternal castes but, in the absence of compulsive legal and economic pressures, also by the upper castes groups to which they were traditionally allocated.⁴⁵

Colonial government's destruction of the traditional administrative authority tended to give each caste the freedom to manage its own affairs, especially those relating to the admission of outsiders to caste membership or expulsion of members.⁴⁶ But Kumaoni castes had no tradition of autonomy and this slowed the growth of formal organizations dealing with the internal affairs of a caste. Caste panchayats or comparable organizations were not only superfluous in but also antagonistic to the system whereby the state discharged the functions elsewhere fulfilled by caste

⁴⁵ . R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. p. 137.

⁴⁶ . Ibid..

panchayats. Colonial government administration's refusal to continue state management of status affairs had the effect of creating opportunities.⁴⁷

Some individuals tried to enhance their influence and increase their following but except in the case of the Dom, these efforts have generally resulted in failure.⁴⁸ Such elementary functions as expulsion of a member or administering a minor punishment for breaking a caste 'norm are fulfilled by a constituent descent group of a caste rather than by the caste itself and are generally effective within a small region rather than within the entire area over which the members of a caste are dispersed. Offences against caste norms, unless serious, are played down in the interest of consanguinal kin unity and solidarity. It is only when an offence is believed or seen to be arousing the critical comments of other descent groups, whether of one's own or other castes, that action is generally taken. Though a descent group does not in principle face any difficulty in expelling or otherwise punishing a member, difficulties arise when an outsider is sought to be admitted to the membership of a caste. In the strictly agnatic Kumaoni society the only means of acquiring membership of a descent group are by birth or by adoption. Caste norms prohibit the adoption of a person belonging to a caste different from the adopter's. In pre-British times these caste norms could be circumvented by the dharmadhikari, the secularly constituted religious and moral authority charged with the function of interpreting the scriptures and issuing modificationary injunctions, where he thought fit. The abolition of the office of dharmadhikari by colonial government destroyed the only means of legitimizing status movements from one caste to another. Such status movements have consequently become extremely rare. Status movement, especially from a

⁴⁷ . R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. p. 138.

⁴⁸ .Ibid.

superior to an inferior caste can now be made, if at all, through sustained bya-bari (intermarriage) over several consecutive generations.

The elements underlying the emergence of new social strata within the Dom group were not ritual considerations which lay at the basis of the new castes amongst the upper castes. These stratified units within the Dom category initially emerged from economic factors, each consisting of occupational groups having comparable economic background. Sometimes the different occupational groups constituting a stratum are also ranked in terms of such factors as the capacity to influence others through wealth, office, education, but this is more or less confined to occupational groups in the highest stratum and even there it is not uniformly met with everywhere. In some regions such distinctions can be made, in others not and this destroys their value as criteria of group social superiority. I have, in the diagram which follows, enumerated the different occupational groups in the highest stratum in an order which would conform to the ranking assigned to each in an area where these secondary status criteria exist.⁴⁹ It is therefore, relevant now to discuss briefly the circumstances which were responsible for the emergence of new castes, and to examine the nature and position of each of these. For purposes of comparison and analytical clarity it is proposed to present the contemporary structure of castes in Kumaon 'in the same form in which it was presented for the pre-British period.

By destroying the formal and informal political and economic sanctions controlled by the Bhal-Baman, colonial government freed the khasi from the necessity of accepting as peers the illegitimate, and on that account ritually defiled offspring of the former who belonged to a different Varna. Rejected on ritual grounds by both their parental groups, such illegitimate offspring of the Bhal-Baman were forced to

⁴⁹ . R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. p. 139.

form separate groups. In the pre-British period no distinction was made between illegitimate children on the basis of their maternal caste status. The disentanglement of the ritual elements in caste differentiation from political and economic ones as a result of the assumption of power by colonial government was responsible for bolstering up the hitherto secondary ritual elements as the basis of caste. In view of this general ritualization of the status structure, a distinction in ritual terms has come to be made between illegitimate offspring born in illegitimate sexual unions across varna lines of cleavage, in which one of the parties is ritually inferior to the other, and those born of illegitimate sexual unions within the same varna, in which the individuals are ritually closer to one another. This distinction is reflected in the group affiliation of both and in the rank position assigned to each in the hierarchy. The Kshetri, having their roots in inter-varna sexual unions which directly contravene the philosophy of the ritual exclusiveness and differential purity of each Varna, ranked lowest in upper castes division of the social hierarchy. Arising in violation not of the Varna norms of socio-ritual exclusiveness, but of those of caste, more particularly of those relating to proper (sacramental) sexual unions. The various Kathu groups remained on the periphery of their paternal caste group. They are to be found only in the case of castes amongst whom a marriage is legitimate and valid only if it is sacramental,

Neither the Kshetri nor the various Kathu groups exhibit the strong sentiment in favour of connubial exclusiveness which is an important characteristic of a true caste. The Kathu are constantly trying to marry into the caste group they are attached to the Kathu Chauthani are constantly trying to identify themselves with the Chauthani; and to strengthen this claim they are constantly seeking to marry into the paternal caste. As the Kathu - bear the same clan names as, are borne by full members

of the 'true Thul-jat castes and since both as a rule share the same villages, it becomes relatively easy for the former to secure spouses from the latter. If the descendants of a Kathu succeed over four or five generations in securing spouses from the 'true' caste they are attached to, their ritual impurity is believed to become progressively diluted, and they become absorbed into the latter group. The integration of Kumaon into the wider political-economic entity under British auspices and the establishment of communication channels linking Kumaon with the rest of India have also helped in the transition of individuals from the peripheral Kathu groups to the core caste. Many Thul-jat individuals, deprived of their monopoly over the highly regarded positions of political and economic power by colonial government assumption of political power and the introduction of a highly centralized administration, immigrated to other parts of colonial government Indian empire. It was not always easy to verify from a long distance the socio-ritual status antecedents of a person with whom one entered into affinal relationships, and the Kathu took full advantage of this fact to effect a rise in social ladder.

Not all Kathu, however, are fortunate enough to have sufficient means to carry on the deception successively over several generations or to go far and wide to form status-enhancing unions. A small number of people, living in the outlying areas where they cannot get spouses from their own ranks or a superior group or are too poor to maintain a level of life-style. In instances where two Varna are involved the offspring are lost to the parental groups and relegated to the Kshettri category. The great majority, however, marries within their own ranks and provides a measure of continuity to the groups, for the offspring of Kathu groups are also deemed Kathu. This continuity and endogamy, however unwilling, along with the differential ranking of the different Kathu groups and their genesis in ritual considerations gives to the

Kathu their caste-like identity. But the sentiment against endogamy and against being considered separate from their host castes and the recognition given by regular castes to the possibility of individual Kathu being absorbed by their host castes by improving their sambandh (affinal relationships) are all un-caste-like factors. As compared to the Kathu, the Kshetri group is more caste-like in certain respects. It bears a caste title all its own, and its rank position in the total hierarchy is not defined by reference to other castes. In terms of the possibility of status movement, the Kshetri have access only to the Khasi caste, which they can enter through intermarriage over two or three generations.

Even though the Kathu castes retain their paternal caste names, their rank position in the total hierarchy is not the same as that of the paternal castes. In Kumaon the two Kathu castes, as becomes clear from the diagram given earlier, are ranked inferior to both the Chauthani and the Pachbiri castes. There is, however, some conflict of opinion regarding their rank position vis-à-vis the Pitali. The literate non-agricultural sections of the Pitali consider the Kathu inferior and avoid bya-bari with them. But the agriculturist section of the Pitali does not always share the opinion of their better-off caste peers, and do not prohibit bya-barz with the Kathu. This lack of consensus becomes explicable to a certain extent in view of the fact that the agriculturist Pitali are restricted to the peripheral regions of Kumaon where the old prestige and influence of the Bhal-Baman has not completely gone and the Pitali still deem it an honour to form sambandh with the illegitimate offspring of the Bhal-Baman. The Kathu identify themselves with their paternal caste, but this claim is not reciprocated by the Bhal-Baman, nor does it find support in appropriate action on the part of the latter.

Kathu or the Khattri did not have a universal distribution in Kumaon region. The Kathu are found only in regions where members of the immigrant Bhal-Baman are living; and the Khattri in a small region comprising the central parganas of the present Almora district. Elsewhere they are, as in the past, generally absorbed by the Khasi group. This absorption is rendered comparatively easy on account of the general occupational and cultural similarities of the Khattri and the Khasi. Besides the appearance of the two Kathu groups as satellites of the Bhal-Baman castes and of the Khattri caste as a result of the breakdown of the traditional system of status assignment and the intensification of the ritual basis of caste, traditional castes in Kumaon have also undergone changes of different magnitude and intensity. These changes, though they do not affect the hierarchical aspects of the system, are yet relevant for explaining the disintegration of the secular bases of caste in Kumaon.

As a result, the titles, Pitali, Hali, or Khasi, all referring to the same; Brahmin caste, are avoided by members of the caste they are intended for because of the social stigma associated with each. The establishment of British rule completely changed the conditions under which the Pitali had acquired their caste titles. The new rulers discontinued the formal enforcement of such rules, as the wearing of a brass bracelet, a symbol of lowly servile status. Opportunities to secure non-agricultural occupations freed many of them from the necessity to use the plough to subsist. Many others, given independent control over land, could hire a Dom or Jimdar to do this polluting job for them. The stigma of being politically subjugated and economically exploited was greatly weakened when once the ruling Thul-jat were themselves reduced to the status of the ruled, first by the Gurkha and subsequently by colonial government. When, after being released by, colonial government from the fear of punitive sanctions for emulating their ex-socio-political superiors in matters of socio-ritual

usages and occupations, the Pitali began to adopt Bhal-Baman status symbols and occupations; the traditional caste titles were amongst the first to be disclaimed. At present it would be extremely difficult to find any Pitali in Kumaon, except, perhaps, a few in the outlying and relatively isolated parts of Danpur, Askot, or Kali Kumaon, who in answer to a direct query regarding his caste affiliation will say that he belongs to the Pitali- or KhasiBaman caste. In a few cases, where the Pitali still use the plough themselves and follow unorthodox socio-ritual practices in such matters as marriage, inheritance, eating etiquette, kin behaviour and daily ritual, individuals might, if pressed hard, say that they are Hal-Bani (one who uses the plough) or Bhainsi (buffaloherd) Brahmin, or even that they are Nan-Baman (literally little Brahmin). But in the great majority of cases, where the Pitali have given up unorthodox socio-ritual practices in favour of those traditionally associated with the Bhal-Baman, they claim to belong to the latter caste. Members of other castes, however, continue using the traditional caste titles to refer to such individuals, at least behind their backs. Also in multi-caste villages in quarrels between two members of two castes it is usual for those directly involved to try to shame each other by raking up local traditions and anecdotes concerning each other's status antecedents.

The educated, wealthy and militant urban-dwelling elite of Pitali antecedents started a sort of movement, which is slowly spreading to the rural segments, which tried to unify the Pitali of different economic, occupational and orthodoxy levels under the title of Nandhoti (in opposition to the Lamdhoti, as the Bhal-Baman are sometimes called), with the avowed object of competing with the Lamdhoti for positions of power and prestige, and thus forcing the latter to accept the former as a caste of equal, if not higher status. Though it does not any longer carry the legal status

connotations associated with it, the Kumaonis do not have any doubts regarding the caste group implied.

The consequences of the establishment of British rule for the Pitali- or Khasi-Baman were manifold and far-reaching as far as status is concerned. The most important of these, perhaps, was to harden the Pitali caste by modifying their basic political and economic status, and, in general, creating conditions which made the Pitali self-contained and self-sufficient. The Khasi-Baman belonged to the estate-like Khasi political/ethnic category, which also included a caste of Kshatriya Varna (the Khasi-Jimdar) and a non-Hindu tribal segment, the last internally undifferentiated. None of these segments was a closed group, though the Hinduized segments were stratified on the basis of the nature and the extent of their association with the power-wielding Thul-jat. Social differentiation into caste-like units within the Khasi category followed that within the Thul-jat, though only superficially; but unlike the castes making up the Thul-jat category, the Khasi castes were open, and considerable mobility existed not only from one Khasi caste to another, but from the non-Khasi to the Khasi castes also under the authority of the dharmadhikari. The basic unity of the Khasi category was expressed in the relative ease with which a Khasi-Jimdar could move into the Khasi-Baman group and vice versa, even though in terms of the Varna scheme of stratification the former had Kshatriya and the latter Brahmin status, which made such movement theoretically illegitimate. Though the Pitali caste, ranked superior to the Khasi-Jimdar because of the occupational similarity which the former bore to the priestly section of the Bhal-Baman caste, it was subjected to similar, though not the same, general legal disabilities as the Jimdar section of the Khasi. One important respect in which the Pitali differed from the Jimdar was that members of the former were not enslaved like those of the latter. Nonetheless, the

Pitali were fully subservient to the Asal- or Thul-jat, as can be seen from the fact that the latter could, for instance, force the Pitali to accept non-Pitali as members, or even revert them to Jimdar status.

As the colonial government's administration refused to continue the complex of formal politico-legal and economic institutions and norms which prevailed in the past led to the disintegration of the estate like identity of the three basic social categories. The immediate consequences of this for the Pitali caste were to free it from its formal legal association with the Khasi-Jimdar, as also from the restrictions on status movement within the social hierarchy, which such limiting legal norms entailed. In view of this the Pitali could now take their due place immediately below the Bhal-Baman instead of below the Kshetri, as in the past. Such a change in the rank position of the Pitali caste was a logical corollary deriving from the greater ritualization of the status structure after its political and economic bases had been destroyed by colonial government. The dissociation of the Pitali caste from its ethnic/political linkage with the Khasi-Jimdar is also reflected in the rare use made of the prefix Khasi for referring to the Pitali- or Hali-Baman group, except in such remote regions as upper Danpur or parts of Askot, which remained, on account of their physical isolation, relatively untouched by the statusmodifying influences of colonial rule.

With the introduction of various agrarian, judicial and administrative measures by colonial government, there was no relationship, as they had in old times, with the maintenance of the formal status structure of Kumaoni society. British policy in these spheres was egalitarian and did not support the existing status distinctions within native Kumaoni society. This struck directly at the involuteness of the status structure. More specifically, the consequence of these policy measures introduced by colonial

government administration was to provide the Pitali with opportunities to acquire material symbols of socio-ritual status, and to compete with their traditional status superiors for high positions in the new administrative organization. The breakdown of the formal system of status allocation and the disablement of the Thul-jat castes capacity to apply political pressure on and offer economic advantage to others in order to secure compliance with their wishes made it possible for the Pitali to refuse to accept as a status peer any individual who did not already have title to membership of the caste by birth.

As a result of this, the Pitali caste closed its doors not only to the illegitimate offspring of Bhal-Baman males and to individuals expelled from the latter group, but also to members of the Khasi Jimdar caste or of the undifferentiated Khasi group who take up ritual occupations, either as priests who perform low and polluting ritual chores for a Bhal-Baman domestic priest, or who act as temple-priests and caretakers. Traditionally such individuals automatically moved up into the rank of the Pitali or Khasi Baman and were absorbed in these groupings through intermarriage, provided the new entrants broke all relations with their paternal kinsmen and caste-fellows. By doing this the Pitali caste was not only able to retain the prestige and economic advantages deriving from their closer occupational association with the Pachbiri, but was able also to maintain its status superiority as a group over the Khasi- Jimdar, from which the Pitali caste was differentiated solely on occupational grounds.

During medieval times, the formal and informal restrictions placed on the members of any particular caste in regard to the acquisition of wealth and education, or the adoption of occupations and manifest symbols of status traditionally associated with other castes, particularly with superior castes, tended to maintain the status quo. The withdrawal of these restrictive sanctions under British rule gave to individuals,

irrespective of their caste, the freedom to choose any secular occupation they liked or were qualified to adopt. They were able to acquire and hold all the wealth and education they desired, to go wherever they liked, and to adopt the style of life and symbols of status which they had the means to acquire. In the absence of a mechanism to absorb these variations in the life-chances of individuals, irrespective of their caste, into the traditional status system, there have come into being within each caste, class-like units based primarily on factors of wealth, occupation, and education. The economic security and independence provided by regular paid employment in a government department in contrast with the poverty and economic dependence on others of people engaged in agriculture are universally recognized in Kumaon as factors which divide each caste into at least two classes. These classes are not specifically named but the distinction is expressed in such descriptive and contrastive phrases as *khan-pi-nee* (well-off or prosperous) and *garib-gurub* (poor); *aghil-barhi* (got on in-the world) and *gauni-mauni* (backward, unprogressive); *sabhya* (cultured) and *hussa* (uncultured rustic); or *parhi-lekhi* (educated) and *aparh* (uneducated). The distinctions between these class-like entities within any caste traverse the entire field of socio-cultural behaviour, but are very sharply reflected in the persistent tendency towards connubial and commensally exclusiveness.

Therefore, the *Pitali*, who were rather more affected by change than the others, not only split to form new class-like status groups, but are the only sub-caste in which the splinter group is perhaps larger than the parental group. This splinter group, sometimes referred to as *Nandhoti* (literally, shorter dhoti, that is, those who were not entitled to wear a long dhoti like 'the *Chauthani* and *Pachbiri*'), is also sometimes described by the more inclusive title of *Nangotri* (those with a 'lesser' gotra) or *Nan-Baman* (inferior Brahmin). As the latter titles cover all the Brahmins of indigenous

origin, as well as those others in the category of Kathu, I have used the term Nandhoti to refer to this splinter Pitali group. Though it commands fewer consensuses, it has in recent years acquired greater meaning on account of the political opposition it has been offering to the Lamdhoti in local, state, and national elections since independence. This group consists of those Brahmins who claim to be ritually equal to the Lamdhoti group, but who cannot provide genealogical evidence in support of their claim. Nor can they provide concrete and specific evidence of association with the administration in pre-British times. Though many of them still live in villages, they do not exhibit the emotional attachment to the land and its cultivation which traditionally differentiated the Pitali from the priestly Pachbiri or the administrative Chauthani.

The members of the Nandhoti group like the latter castes abstain from touching the plough and prefer paid employment to cultivation of the soil. They are nivriti (those not following priestly occupation), and unlike the Pitali have the higher Bamah for purohit and acharya. The more educated and wealthier members of this group, in perfect emulation of the Chauthani, have gurus from their own agnatic kin unit; but the great majority seeks to have Chauthani gurus, for it brings them the tacit recognition of the latter. In pre-British times a Pitali or anyone else with Khasi affinities was not provided with the preceptorial services of a Chauthani. A Chauthani who made such services available to a Pitali lost the prestige of his high status. It was only when the political supremacy of the Chauthani and its attendant economic advantages were brought to an end by the fall of the Chands that they stooped to rendering not only preceptorial, but even priestly services to the Pitali and the Khasi.

In addition, the Nandhoti have started competing with the Bhal-Baman for social status by abandoning the social, economic and religious practices associated with the Pitali in-favour of those followed by the 'higher' Baman. The usual method is

for an individual, who has been able to acquire more than the usual run of wealth or who is forced out of the village for a livelihood, to identify him with one of the 'higher' Baman sub-castes by inventing an ancestor who came from the plains. He takes up a clan name traditionally associated with the higher' Baman, and breaks off all social relations with those of his kinsmen, who, because of poverty lack social ambition or the realization that mere claims are futile, persist in clinging to the old pattern. With education, wealth and a relatively anonymous base from which to operate, these aspirants and their descendants are sometimes able to carry off their claims to a higher status by marrying into the poorer sections of the Pachbiri group, and may even become recognized members of it by well planned marriages. But more often a Pachbiri group which gives its daughters time and again to members of the inferior group is itself relegated to the rank of the latter. This actually made the mobility into the higher caste more of a tantalizing possibility than a matter of fact.

Apart from lacking consensus regarding its existence independently of the Pitali caste, there are several other factors which make it appear' more like a class within the Pitali caste. The basis of its membership is wealth, education and life-style much more than heredity. A poor, uneducated and unsophisticated Nandhoti is as likely to revert to the parental Pitali ways of life and Pitali status as a wealthy, educated and sophisticated one is to move out of the Nandhoti group into the lower ranks of the Lamdhoti. But most essential of all, the Nandhoti group lacks the ritual attributes which differentiate a caste from others. Notwithstanding the attempts made by its members to abandon ritually degrading practices like touching the plough, unsacerdotal bride-price marriages, widow remarriage, levirate and others not sanctioned by the scriptures, it is regarded by other people as of identical ritual status with the Pitali. The fact that it continually strengthens itself numerically by accepting

Pitali individuals who adopt orthodox practices in emulation of the Lamdhoti acts as a constant reminder to every one of the antecedents of the Nandhoti group. Important, too, is the fact that the Nandhoti have not been able in any significant degree to dissociate themselves from the propitiation of culturehero deities historically associated with the Khasi political-ethnic group. Lack of legal sanctions, which in pre-British times sharply curbed the tendency on the part of social inferiors to emulate and claim equal status with their socio-ritual superiors, made it impossible for the Lamdhoti to check the rise and growth of the Nandhoti group. The same lack of sanctions has deprived the Nandhoti group of the opportunity to seek higher status by the traditionally established means, that is, by securing for itself the recognition of the governing authority and the religious preceptors who held responsibility for settling all issues relating to socio-ritual status.

Although the Kshettri traditionally enjoyed economic and political privileges identical to those enjoyed by the Chauthani, the administrative and economic measures introduced by colonial government into Kumaon had different status consequences for the Kshettri. Having been divested of their political and economic power as administrators, landlords, and slave-owners by the legal, administrative and agrarian policies of colonial government, the rural segments of the Kshettri were compelled in ever increasing numbers to take up agriculture as their primary occupation, and came to be treated as status equals of those who traditionally practiced agriculture. They also came to be distinguished from the ever-decreasing number of Kshettri who had the means not to adopt cultivation of the soil as an occupation. This process of loss of status through the adoption of a ritually unclean occupation seems to have continued throughout the better part of British rule, and rendered the status of the Kshettri somewhat fluid.

This group had always been a very ill-defined and fluid group which was constantly losing members to the Khasi-Jimdar (the naee-Khasi) group and admitting even non-Kshatriya immigrants to its membership (e.g., the Taragi). It had a hard and relatively permanent core consisting of the senior ruling Chand lineage and the senior lineages of the Askot and Pali branches of the Katyuri house, which enjoyed vassal status as chieftains. Around this hard and permanent core was a fringe of non-Brahmin administrators and military commanders. This outer fringe included the collateral lineages of the Chand and Katyuri houses, and also other non-princely lineages. The primary basis of membership of the Kshetri group was occupational specialization, and the adoption of an occupation which was the specialty of another caste group led to its relegation. The occupational base of the Kshetri was very narrow, being confined to the interrelated fields of administration, landowning and soldiering. None of these occupational resources was indefinitely expandable to accommodate the ever-increasing population. Whatever surplus was there it was absorbed by the Khasi group.

The Chauthani in sharp distinction to the Kshetri, had access to several occupational alternatives, all with comparable ritual content; so that when colonial government relieved them of their secular administrative occupations they fell back upon the remaining religious, curative and intellectual ones to retain their status position in the social hierarchy. This was the basic difference between them. The prestige of these occupations, deriving from Hindu socio-religious philosophy played an important role in maintaining the status superiority of the Bhal-Baman. The Kshetri had no occupational alternatives of equivalent ritual content to the ones of which they were divested by colonial government. Also relevant was the fact that the Kshetri, though entitled to acquire formal learning and follow intellectual pursuits, do

not seem to have taken advantage of the right. Consequently they were not equipped like the Bhal-Baman, particularly the Chauthani, to take any immediate advantage of the administrative and other ritually clean occupational opportunities provided by colonial government in and outside Kumaon. The Kshettri also lacked the advantages enjoyed by the Bhal-Baman, who as priests, medical specialists and religious interpreters, could enlist the services of their Khasi clients to perform ritually defiling chores for them after colonial government had taken away the coercive political and economic sanctions which were used in pre-British times by the ruling Thul-jat to compel the Khasi and the Dom to perform polluting services for the former. The Kshettri, however, were left no such Occupational influence over the service castes after colonial government refused to uphold the traditional legal and economic sanctions ensuring the performance of such services by the service castes. The traditional master-slave and landlord-tenant relationship⁵⁰ between the Kshettri, on the one hand, and the Khasi and the Dom, on the other, had to be replaced under changed political circumstances by the employer-employee relationship, which not only was tenuous, but was also highly competitive, and from the point of view of the Kshettri could be entered into only by rich individuals. The only means by which a Kshettri could now secure the services of a Khasi or a Dom (who alone could perform such polluting tasks as ploughing, harrowing, or levelling) was by hiring one, either for specific pieces of work or on a more regular basis. In the former case payment had to be made for each piece of work. In the latter case a pre-emption was taken out on the services of the Khasi or Dom by appointing him as a tenant in addition to the token payment made for the specific piece of work. Having neither large landholdings from which to rent out a portion, nor subsidiary sources of income to pay for hired

⁵⁰. R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. p. 156

labour, the great majority of the Kshetri were forced to perform even polluting agricultural tasks, especially ploughing and other tasks requiring bullocks to be yoked, and were refused status–equality-by-those who did not perform these polluting 'agricultural tasks themselves. This refusal to concede status equality was expressed by the latter refusing to marry the former. In the absence of a formal agency, such as a caste panchayat or the traditional administrative machinery, the former could not be formally declared outcaste or relegated, as they were in pre-British times, to the Khasi category. They were, however, considered the status equals of the Khasi, whose occupational specialty they followed, and with whom they intermarried: Indeed, they not only intermarried with the Khasi-Jimdar of comparable economic standing⁵¹ but as a consequence they also adopted many Khasi practices, particularly those relating to forms of marriage, inheritance, the propitiation of culture-heroes, and agriculture. Of these, those relating to agriculture were a functional adjustment to changed economic and political circumstances created by colonial government. The others derived from or were adjustments to this basic fact of occupational shift on the part of the Kshetri. Thus a former Kshetri peasant tended to depend greatly on the productive labour potential of his wife, and if one died or became disabled he had for sheer survival to acquire another. It was difficult for a man to acquire a virgin for a second wife, especially if he was more than thirty years of age. He had to take a widow, a divorcee, or a separated woman as a wife. Such a woman could only be married contractually, for orthodox Hindu law, as embodied in the Mitakshara (followed by the Thul-jat), does not recognize: divorce or remarriage of women. In many cases such a wife was available only from the Khasi group. The offspring born to her were given an interest in their paternal property. Also, in the case of a Khasi

⁵¹ . Atkinson, E.T, *The Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces of India*, 1886, Vol.III, Allahabad, pp. 431-438.

wife her patrilineal deities had to be propitiated, particularly by her offspring, to avert possible supernatural displeasure. Many culture-heroes, believed to control agriculture, had also to be propitiated by the peasant, irrespective of his ritual status antecedents, in order to secure a good harvest. All these widened the gulf between the progressively decreasing number of Kshetri who continued to follow ritually clean occupations, and the progressively increasing number of 'Kshetri who were coming closer to the Jimdar, in terms of socio-ritual status. That the latter were not completely and formally merged into the Khasi-Jimdar caste was simply on account of the absence of any institutionalized authority charged with this responsibility. Intermarriage and the affiliation of the offspring of such mixed marriages to the paters' kin-group tended, however, to destroy the manifest status distinctions between the two, thus giving them status identity in the eyes of other castes.

During medieval times the Kshetri maintained sexual relations with Khasi women. These did not lower the status positions of the former because the children born in such liaisons were not incorporated into their genitor's caste and the Khasi were also formally debarred from having any sexual relations with Kshetri women. Khasi women could be very easily procured from the kaini or the chhyon group. Indeed, in regard to the latter, the politically dominant Kshetri enjoyed special rights as ownermasters. The abolition of slavery and the economic and legal freedom of the kaini under British rule made it impossible for the Kshetri to exploit the sexual and economic services of Khasi females as a matter of legal right. Khasi women had now to be negotiated for with their guardians and properly married. But why should the ex-Kshetri agriculturists want to marry Khasifemales and risk irreparable loss of prestige? No single and specific answer to this question can be given. Khasi women are hardworking and with their traditional role in agricultural production they were

valuable assets for those who were traditionally non-agriculturists. Also in some circumstances, such as when an ex-Kshetri peasant urgently needed a second wife in order to carry on subsistence activities, he had to choose one 'from the Khasi group simply because a suitable woman was available only from the latter group. The most significant reason, however, seems to lie in the way the vast majority of the Kshetri lost status to become equals of the Khasi. This status transition from the former to the latter was gradual, and involved only a few individuals at any one time: As a Kshetri became impoverished on account of continued fragmentation of ancestral landholdings, he was compelled to take over polluting tasks, for the performance of which he could no longer afford to hire a Khasi or a Dom (even if one was available). Performance of polluting tasks, however, led to the discontinuation of social relations between him and those of the Kshetri who could still afford to secure the services of individuals of appropriate status affiliations to perform those polluting tasks. Discontinuation of social relations was affected by refusing to enter into bya-bari relations with the defaulter and his descendants, who were thus compelled to turn to the larger and more uniformly distributed Khasi for entering into bya-bari relationships. In some cases it was possible for the ex-Kshetri to form affinal alliances with others of identical status antecedents, but this seems to have been the exception rather than the rule. As only a few individual Kshetri were faced at any one time with the necessity of performing polluting jobs and the consequent loss of status, it was not usually possible for them to restrict bya-bari relationships among themselves. For one thing, suitable spouses could not always be found within an extremely small group. Though on individual's occupational misfortunes and subsequent status shifts did not affect the status -position of his kinsmen beyond his immediate family, his sank-swar (close agnates) were nonetheless concerned with

what happened to him, and short of assuming his occupational and financial burdens entirely, they Tried to help him as much as they could without jeopardizing their own position. But when, in spite of such help, an individual could not avoid ritually defiling tasks, it became impossible under normal circumstances to keep the fact hidden. The wives of the co-residing agnates saw to it that their patri-lineages did not provide spouses to members of a family which had taken up ritually polluting jobs. As the circle within which affinal relations are actually formed is very narrow--consisting of a few lineages living within a radius of approximately ten to fifteen miles such a ban became quickly and easily effective. In the face of such a ban from his own caste, the members of the family which took to polluting activities were left with no option but to marry into the group which traditionally followed occupations involving such polluting activities, and the offspring were completely and finally lost to the ritually superior paternal caste group. The relevant sections of Atkinson's description of the castes of Kumaon pertaining to the second half of the last century are clearly indicative of this process of loss of status faced by sections of the Kshetri who lacked the material means to maintain the ritually correct style of life.⁵² Atkinson opined that in Kumaon 'ninety per cent of the Rajputs are Khasiyas (Khasi)...! 'Amongst those who claim descent from immigrants from the plains are:- (a) the descendants of the Suryavanshi Katyuris represented by the Rajbars of Ashkot and Jaspur, the Manurals and others;-and (b) the Chandrabanshi descendants of the Chands, represented by the Raotelas scattered all over the district'.⁵³ In discussing the different clans of Katyuri and Chand ancestry individually, he points out that the poorer sections of these engage in cultivation of the soil, or even in daily labour, for a living, and intermarry

⁵² . Atkinson, E.T, *The Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces of India*, 1886, Vol.III, Allahabad, p. 431-438.

⁵³ . *Ibid.* pp. 431-432.

with the better class of Khasiya'.⁵⁴ The same seems to have been true to a greater degree within the non-princely section of the Rajput who did not command the same control over economic power resources as was generally exercised by the ruling class.

As a result of increasing governmental and natural restrictions on the spatial extension of agriculture into virgin land and the paucity of alternative occupational openings to accommodate the progressively increasing population led each new generation to a further fragmentation of the existing holdings till it became uneconomical to exploit them through tenants, or labour. Consequently with each new generation a larger percentage of the Kshetri found themselves compelled for sheer survival to turn to the direct cultivation of the soil, at the risk of losing ritual prestige and rank in the status hierarchy. The cumulative effect of this gradual process over the first ten decades of British rule was to strip the old Kshetri caste of its members till by the early decades of the present century the Kshetri had not only ceased to be important as a caste in Kumaon, but had virtually disappeared from the rural scene except in a few regional pockets. Panna Lall, appointed in 1919 by the Government to enquire into and codify the customary law⁵⁵ of Kumaon vis-à-vis the Hindu law as embodied in the Mitakshara and to demarcate the social field within which each had applicability, mentions three⁵⁶ related kin-groups as belonging to the Kshatriya category as distinct from the agriculturist Rajput.⁵⁷

Panna Lall does not, however, include in his list the descendants of the royal Katyuri house, some of whom are considered, at least in the regions of their concentration, Asal- or ThakurRajput. The Rajbar of Askot, the titular 'ruler of the

⁵⁴ . Atkinson, E.T, The Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces of India, 1886, Vol.III, Allahabad, pp.432-433.

⁵⁵ . I.D.Joshi, The Khasi family law in the Himalayan districts of the united provinces of India, Allahabad, 1929.

⁵⁶ . Lall, P. Hindu customary law in Kumon, 1942, Allahabad, p. 11.

⁵⁷ . Ibid.

estate of Askot in north-eastern Kumaon, and his immediate agnates are regarded as true Rajputs. Others in the lineage are deemed inferior because they not only engage in agriculture but also intermarry with the ordinary peasant, the Jimdar. In contrast, the 'ruling' section maintains its purity of blood by intermarrying with Rajputs of unquestionable antecedents, mostly from neighbouring western Nepal and by abstaining from ritually polluting activities like agriculture and other unorthodox practices, particularly those relating to food, marriage and ritual. Of the other descendants of the Katyuri kings, only two (the Rajbars and the Manrals of Pali, in south-western Kumaon) seem to have been able, under the Chands, to retain control over large tracts of land as overpropriators and enjoyed special privileges.⁵⁸ Whatever the reasons behind the economic and political privileges granted by the Chands to the descendants of the Pali Katyuris, these privileges were instrumental in keeping the latter in their traditional position in the social hierarchy when their less fortunate kinsmen in other parts of Kumaon were reduced, in the absence of political and economic privileges, to the status of lowly peasants. The imposition of British rule affected the great majority of the Rajbar and Manral in the same manner as the nonprincely sections of the Kshetri. Though colonial government gave nominal recognition to the leading families of the Rajbar, Manral and Rawat by letting them retain the office of sayana,⁵⁹ colonial government policy of administrative and judicial centralization and of creating small but independent landholders was generally inimical to the status superiority and prestige of these princely Kshetri. Nonetheless, the old sayana families continued to command some of their traditional privileges by the sheer force of tradition. One of these traditional privileges was the right to receive

⁵⁸. B.D.Pande, *Kumaonki Itihas*, Almora, pp. 221, 288 English translation by C.M Agrawal, *History of Kumaun*, Vol.2, Almora, 1993.

⁵⁹. *Ibid.* P. 254, 288—289, Batten, J.H. *Official reports on the province of Kumaon*, Agra, 1851, p. 130-131.

menial services from the cultivators within their sayanachari and the sayana families were thus saved from the necessity. Of engaging in ritually defiling and status-destroying agricultural activities. The numerically small size of the sayana group, however, made it necessary for its members to secure spouses from ritually inferior groups and the physical continuity of the group required the offspring to be affiliated to the paternal group.

During medieval times an immigrant Kshettri who adopted agriculture as an occupation was formally relegated to the status of Khasi-Jimdar and, in token of such a demotion, had to remove three strands from his six-stranded janyo (sacred thread). The institutionalized authority controlling all status matters has now made the formal confirmation of such status emotions impossible with the result that the Kshettri who ended themselves by taking to agriculture continue claiming their old status and retaining such symbols of it as a six-stranded thread and other prescriptions in regard to religious ritual. On the face of it, these would appear to be of value as features providing a degree of distinction between the agriculturists of Kshettri and those of Khasi status antecedents. But several factors make this difficult. Firstly, taking advantage of the disintegration and punitive sanctions against unrestricted emulation of the Kshettri, many Khasi have adopted status symbols, which were traditionally the monopoly of the Thul-jat.⁶⁰ Secondly, the ex-Kshettri have not only married across caste lines with the Khasi-Jimdar of comparable economic standing but, as a logical consequence of this, also adopted many Khasi practices, particularly those relating to agriculture, marriage, inheritance, and the propitiation of culture-heroes, the last introduced through Khasi wives. Thirdly, in the absence of legal pressures in favour of the use of the title Khasi-Jimdar, such ritually degraded Kshettri have continued to

⁶⁰ .Atkinson, E.T, The Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces of India, 1886, Vol.III, Allahabad, Pp.431-438.

use the latter title or more often the less specific title of Rajput. The Bhal-Baman and the 'true' Kshetri, however, draw a distinction by qualifying the title Rajput with Asal or Bhal for those who do not engage in polluting agricultural activities like ploughing and Dhatur Nan- for those who do and are hence equal to the Khasi-Jimdar. These very factors were relevant to the Khasi-Jimdar dropping the qualifying Khasi and referring to themselves merely as Jimdar or Rajput. In some peripheral regions, such as Askot, which remained in comparative socio-economic and geographic isolation in spite of the establishment of British rule and its proximity to Nepal, where alien socio-cultural influences were very slow to penetrate, the ritually degraded Rajput or Kshetri are referred to as Thakur or, if they are of Nepali origin, Thakur-Rajput. In other regions of Kumaon the term Thakur has no caste connotation and is used flatteringly to refer to or address any Rajput, irrespective of his caste antecedents.

The Khasi-Jimdar caste was, with the exception of Doms perhaps, the most fundamentally affected in regard to its traditional politico-legal status by the administrative, judicial and economic policies of colonial government in Kumaon. Yet it remained, without exception, the least affected in such important socially relevant matters as occupational specialization, fluid boundaries, loose cohesion, and unorthodox social usages. Especially those concerning marriage, inheritance, affiliation and adoption, and religious unorthodoxy.

Colonial administrative measures were to a considerable extent responsible for inhibiting changes in the status-relevant socio-ritual usages traditionally associated with the Khasi-Jimdar. The Khasi-Jimdar traditionally derived its identity and unity as a caste from the fact that its members cultivated the soil as agriculturists and in cases where the cultivated land was held in tenancy, they were also required to perform menial services for the Thul-jat overlords. They could also be enslaved. The servility

of the Khasi-Jimdar and the menial nature of the occupations followed by them gave the Jimdar caste its inferior position in the social hierarchy and the fact that it received, under formal and informal pressures, individuals outcast from the Kshetri fold and also such non-Hindus as the Dotiyal, Shauk or the Raji gave it its specific position in upper castes hierarchy.

However, in spite of many changes in their position, the Jimdar did not become a completely closed unit. They had always been lax in matters of marriage and would give daughters to and take wives from any Bith caste without losing or gaining status, though for practical reasons a distinct preference was shown for taking wives from families which followed agriculture as a primary occupation. A wife coming from an agriculturist household is, an economic asset, for such a woman can with ease carry them. Burden of agricultural work which in Jimdar society is predominantly left to women. The status relevant consequences of such laxity in regard to marriage was to keep the doors of the Jimdar caste open to any non-Khasi kin group which followed agriculture as an occupation and had no objection to taking wives from and giving daughters to the established Jimdar.

The British government created conditions which forced an ever increasing number of non-Jimdar to turn to agriculture as the sole source of subsistence. By taking over all political power in their own hands in a highly centralized system of administration and by redistributing the land grants and fiefs held by the Thul-jat, colonial government compelled the non-agricultural Kshetri to take up the cultivation of their sir (land under direct control). The sir was traditionally cultivated through slaves. But the abolition of slavery made it necessary for the traditional non-agriculturists to hire labour from the open market sometimes at highly competitive prices or to take in share-croppers. As the sir was seldom large it was not always

possible to make it pay for the hired labour or make share-cropping economically advantageous. Consequently, many of the Kshetri with small sin plots were compelled to perform all the agricultural chores themselves and suffer loss of status. This process was gradually extended to cover even those Kshetri who initially controlled enough sir land to be able to pay for hired labour from the produce of this land. Fragmentation of these large holdings with each successive generation forced the holder to take up cultivation in its entirety and suffer status loss.

Now, the category of people about whom the present work is concerned is the Doms. Atkinson classifies the Dom into four strata. To the highest belong the 'Kolis, Tamotas, Lohars, Orhs, etc. The second stratum consists of the Ruriyas, Chimariyas, Agaris, Pahrís, and Bhuls. To the third belong the 'Chamars, Mochis, Bukhuriyas, and perhaps, Dhunas and Handkiyas', and the fourth and lowest stratum consists of 'the vagrant tribes of musicians, dancers, jugglers, acrobats, etc. and include the Badi, Hurkiya, Darzi, Dholi, Dumjogi and Bhand. Atkinson's classification differs from the one given in the present study on several points, but the most significant ones are: (1) Atkinson divides the Dom into four strata instead of the three of the present study. The first two strata of Atkinson's classification not only freely intermarry but occupational mobility from one to the other is neither unusual nor formally prohibited. Furthermore, both these strata belong to the same broad occupational category of artisans. In view of these facts, their separation into two strata is not justified. The groups involved consider themselves as belonging to one stratum though ranking within the stratum is recognized. (2) The ranking of the Hanki which Atkinson includes in the third stratum and of the 'Dholi' and 'Darzi' which are put by Atkinson in the fourth stratum do not agree with the ranking assigned to them in the

present study.⁶¹ The Hanki have an extremely limited distribution in Kumaon, being found mostly in the neighbourhood of urban centres where alone there is a market for clay pottery. As a group, the Hanki are poor in comparison to the members of the Tamta, Lwar and Orh occupational groups found in and around urban centres, and on this account the latter consider the Hanki slightly inferior, though intermarriage between the two is not prohibited. Within the first stratum, however, the Hanki enjoy the least prestige. The lumping of the 'Dholi' and 'Darzi'⁶² (the Auji of my classification) with the 'Hurkiya', 'Badi' or 'Bhand' by Atkinson is not supported by contemporary ethnographic facts. The Das-Dholi comprises one of the most exclusive groups within the Dom category. Their occupational specialty as temple and ceremonial drummers puts them in a class by themselves. The Hurki-Badi, whom Atkinson lumps with the Dholi, is musicians who entertain and beg, and cannot in any circumstances provide ceremonial music for others. The Dholi are much respected on account of their ritual occupation and knowledge of culture-hero lore while the Hurki-Badi or Mirasi are universally looked down upon. (3) Atkinson's classification contains some groups such as the 'Chamars', 'Mochis', 'Bukhuriyas' and 'Dhunas' of the third and the 'Dumjogi' and 'Bhand' of the fourth strata which are not mentioned in my classification. On the other hand, Atkinson's classification does not include the Sani and the Chanyal. The 'Chamars', 'Mochis', 'Dhunas' and 'Bhand' came to Kumaon during British rule and live in urban centres.⁶³ The 'Bukhuriyas' of Atkinson were the grooms attached to royal stables in the pre-British period and were very few in number.⁶⁴ Presumably they were confined to the capital. At present they are not known to exist as an independent occupational group in Kumaon. The 'Dumjogi'

⁶¹ . R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. p. 169.

⁶² . R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit .p. 169.

⁶³ . Ibid. p. 170.

⁶⁴ . Atkinson, E.T, The Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces of India, 1886, Vol.III, Allahabad, pp.445.

(literally, Dom ascetics) are not well-known in Kumaon. Since as slaves the Dom were traditionally not free to become ascetics, the Dumjogi must have emerged only during British rule. However, I have no information regarding them as no Dumjogi lived in the villages and neighbourhood of villages I worked in and cannot with conviction say anything about their rank position.

These traditional distinctions have, however, provided a ready-made prestige alignment for the emergence of a relatively rigid stratification and this gives to the present stratificational structure a degree of resemblance to the system of prestige differentiation traditionally obtaining within the Dom category. The post-Chand stratificational structure of the Dom was based, as will be described shortly, on criteria other than that of differential economic relationships with upper castes. The traditional legal status identity and unity of the Dom as slaves inhibited the crystallization of hereditary occupational specialization or absolute connubial exclusiveness. .

When the colonial government abolished slavery, it provided the necessary condition for the transformation of this legally defined estate like entity into one defined basically in terms of the concept of ritual pollution. The Dom thus came to occupy the lowest position in the social hierarchy not primarily because of their legal status as slaves and serfs but because they were outside the varna system, and associated with activities which were absolutely polluting. Destruction of the legal status identity of the Dom was also responsible for the emergence of distinct strata within the ritually defined Dom category. These strata were initially defined in terms of differences in the control of wealth, economic independence, educational attainments and lifestyle resulting from the refusal of colonial government

administration to regulate the acquisition of economic, intellectual and other resources in such a way as to maintain the status hierarchy.

British administrative legal measures, though uniform in content, were not uniform in the results they produced for the simple reason that they had to operate in a pre-existing structure of differential roles played by different groups. Appreciation of this condition is important for understanding and explaining the emergence of the present-day Dom castes. Therefore, at that point of time each one of the Dom castes is a named and freely intermarrying cluster of occupational groups. None of the occupational groups comprising a caste is a kin-group and hence occupational group exogamy is not enjoined. Within each caste occupational mobility is tolerated but such a change of occupation does not, as it did in the past, necessitate the adoption-of-appropriate occupational titles. Taking up an occupation belonging to another caste, however, leads to appropriate changes in the hereditary title.

Occupational groups within each caste are also ranked, rather fluidly, on the basis of such factors as differential wealth, purity of hereditary occupation, contacts with urban centres and size of the group. It must be pointed out here that unrestricted commensality is not an attribute of either the caste or the occupational group but of the patrilineage. Outside the patrilineage anchwakh food is acceptable from upper castes but only if such food is served inside the house directly from the kitchen by an initiated or married adult who is not under ritual pollution. The Bhal-jat Dom also accepts anchwakh food from the family purohit. However, not every Bhal-jat Dom household utilizes the specialized services of the newly emerging Dom priesthood.

Traditionally, the Dom occupational groups were classified into three prestige-levels: (1) Artisan groups which also performed polluting chores for upper castes.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ . R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. p. 171.

They were thus crucial not only for furthering agricultural production but also for preserving the ritual excellence of upper castes and this importance increased in proportion to the status superiority of the specific caste served.(2) Ceremonial musicians who though sometimes asked to help in agricultural operations were neither crucial for agricultural production nor for the ritual purity of upper castes. (3) Itinerant public entertainers who were not at all important for agricultural production

The colonial government administration by banning slavery opened the way for the Dom to acquire land and property and adopt Bith occupations and usages without fear of punishment. Freedom from servitude enabled the Dom to bargain for competitive payments for their services. However, not all Dom were qualified to do any or all of these things. Of the three Dom strata only the artisan were ideally placed to take immediate advantage of the legal freedom given to them by colonial government. Their occupational services were indispensable to upper castes and the latter had no other means than to offer competitive payments and privileges to the former in order to secure their services. Under the land resettlement and land reclamation policies of colonial government, many Dom from the artisan and agricultural servant group became landowners in direct violation of traditional norms concerning land-ownership.⁶⁶ Many of such artisan Dom are not only economically independent and well off but have, in some cases, engaged Bith tenants, thus completely reversing the traditional caste roles relating to land and tenancy. The demand for the artisan Dom's services was not confined to upper castes cultivators alone. Even non-cultivators, especially in the administration, required the services of such Dom to build roads and government buildings, and to exploit the forest wealth of Kumaon. Upper castes had thus not only to compete amongst themselves but also

⁶⁶ . R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. p. 172.

with the administration for the artisan Dom's services. The ability to put their services on the market brought economic advantages to the artisan Dom. The wealth thus earned was used by them to buy and use such symbols of status as land, ornaments and clothes, secure formal education, and invest it in such profitable business transactions as building contracts. Wealth makes it possible for such artisan Dom not to engage in their traditional ritually polluting occupations. Though not all the artisan Dom are equally rich or completely independent of upper castes, yet as a group the artisan Dom are richer and Bith control over them is little.

They started calling themselves Bhal-jat Dom, or just Bhal-Dom (literally, 'good' Dom). They not only enjoy greater economic security and prosperity than the non-artisan Dom but have used their improved economic means to acquire, in violation of doctrinal norms, such symbols of socio-ritual excellence as the sacred thread, social and ritual usages and life-styles traditionally associated with upper castes, particularly the Jimdar, formal education, and ritually clean occupations. Opportunities to hold land under proprietary tenure or enter the professions or business were no doubt also available to the non-artisan Dom. But the latter were neither occupationally equipped nor interested in the ownership or cultivation of land. They also lacked artisan skills to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the administration to take up paid employment except as unskilled and poorly paid labourers. The DasDholi and the Hurki-Badi strata are still very dependent on upper castes.⁶⁷ They have never been occupationally indispensable for agricultural production. Consequently, they were never given the same economic concessions which upper castes had to offer to the Bhal-jat Dom artisans and agricultural servants. Nor was the occupational specialty of the Das-Dholi or Hurki-

⁶⁷ . R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. p. 173.

Badi marketable. A Dholi, for instance, could not have placed his services on the market like a Koi agricultural labourer simply because no regular demand for such services existed. Also relevant was the fact that the Das-Dholi and Hurki-Badi did not produce commodities which could be sold like those produced, for instance, by the Lwar. The advantages of the commercial economy which arose in Kumaon as-a-result of the dissociation between social status and control over political/economic power following the assumption of power by colonial Government, were not available in an equal degree to the Das-Dholi or the Hurki-Badi as they were to the Bhal-jat Dom. But the Das-Dholi enjoys greater economic security and influence as ceremonial drummers than the Hurki-Badi who make a living by begging.⁶⁸ Indeed, in their base-villages the Das-Dholi invariably hold some land as occupancy tenants or even as under-proprietors and proprietors. This status privilege is very rarely commanded by the HurkiBadi. It is in view of their better economic position and ceremonial-ritual role of providing music in Bith temples and domestic ceremonies that the Das-Dholi considered their rank superior to the Hurki Badi.

The rank position of the Dom in the total hierarchy was defined primarily in terms of ritual pollution but the initial differentiation of the Dom into caste-like units was free from considerations of ritual pollution and dependence on a common priesthood. The Dom did not have a common set of gods and goddesses or priesthood. Nor did political or economic relationships of any kind bind them to each other. They were not allowed to worship the orthodox Hindu gods and goddesses, and were refused the formal sacraments of naming, initiation, marriage and death.⁶⁹ The belief in and propitiation of ancestral spirits made each kin group basically self-sufficient in religious matters.

⁶⁸ . Ibid.

⁶⁹ . R.D.Sanwal, Op.cit. p. 174.

Under the Colonial rule the Doms became free to adopt orthodox Hindu socio-ritual practices in as much as colonial government administration withdrew the negative sanctions which traditionally secured the Dom's conformity to rules of socio-religious behaviour set by upper castes. But in view of the absence of a priesthood of their own, equipped with the necessary knowledge to conduct orthodox Hindu rituals and the refusal of the orthodox Bith priesthood to serve the Dom, such freedom was of no immediate status advantage to the Dom, and most of them, particularly in the intermediate Das-Dholi and lowest Hurki-Badi strata, even today have akarmak ceremonies conducted by the sister's or daughter's husband or son. But the Bhal-Dom evolved their own priesthood.⁷⁰ It may be recalled that being artisans these Doms were indispensable to upper castes for agricultural production. Their emancipation not only freed them from the legal control of upper castes but also brought them economic prosperity. In many cases such Doms were raised to the status of independent land owners by colonial government administration.⁷¹ In others they were occupancy control over pieces of land in addition to the traditional *khal* payments from upper castes peasants they served. In yet others, artisan Doms were able to secure jobs in construction projects undertaken on an unprecedented scale by the administration in Kumaon. At present the rural Doms consider themselves divided into three broad strata. The highest comprises the traditional artisan and menial occupational groups, the lowest is made up of the old non-artisan groups which provided entertainment to upper castes and the intermediate stratum consists of the traditional drummers.⁷²

⁷⁰ . Ibid.

⁷¹ . Ibid.

⁷² . Ibid. p. 168.

Chapter-5
Construction of Shilpkar
Identity

Chapter-5

CONSTRUCTION OF SHILPKAR IDENTITY

The Doms, whom we discussed in the previous chapter, were able to earn a good deal of money. Increased wealth and education triggered a desire to aspire for equal status along with Bith. They also started imitating social, cultural and ritualistic methods. It also became possible because of the availability of printed books in open markets which contain rituals and methods. They included worship of Brahmanical Gods and Goddesses, wearing of sacred thread (janeo) and rachhya (a red and yellow coloured thread used in all important ceremonies), sandalwood, vermilion powder, conch-shell, bells and other pots and pans.¹

Local industries declined during colonial period and rendered some artisanal groups redundant. But some of them moved to new locations in urban areas. Doms formed a large section of the village community in mining villages. In this kind of villages they enjoyed a reasonable amount of autonomy. Miners are not necessarily tied to the upper castes in the villages where upper castes also lived.² During colonial period, some of the Doms found very remunerative occupation in road making and some of them became wealthy and cultivators.

In the nineteenth century, the work of mining, smelting and production of iron and copper suffered and indigenous metals were replaced by iron and copper sheets from England. However, the making of agricultural implements from these sheets continued. Therefore, Tamtas were not displaced but their occupation continued

¹ . R.D.Sanwal, Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon, O.U.P, 1976, p. 175.

² . Vasudha Pande, Stratification in Kumaun circa 1815-1930, NMML, occasional paper, history and society, New series, 37, p.69.

without interruption. In addition, they could diversify into trade and other related activities and by the early years of twentieth century, Tamtas of Almora not only became rich but also influential. During nineteenth century, monetization of the economy and the demand for labour services improved the position of artisanal groups and of agricultural labour. Construction of public works, roads and government buildings required skilled labour. This provided very lucrative positions to artisanal sections of the Doms.³

Doms therefore, got economic advantage which was not commensurate with their social standing. With increase of wealth, it was natural that some of the Dom sub-castes wanted to improve social status. Therefore, there was conscious movement by some sub-castes of Doms for equality with other upper castes. This could be seen mostly in urban centres like Almora, Ranikhet and Nainital where members of the Tamta, Lwar and Orh-Raj-Mistri occupational groups had come to be concentrated in large numbers. It happened in these urban centres only because of the great demand for their specialized services. Some Doms joined Arya-Samaj and started following the doctrine of it. Doms who joined Arya Samaj started calling themselves as Arya⁴. However, the dream of Doms to gain respect through Arya Samaj did not yield much fruit as Arya Samaj itself could not overcome caste perceptions in everyday practice.

Doms and Aryasamaj

After the establishment of Colonial State, Christian Missionaries also became active in the region. Some of the lower castes were turning to Christianity although in small number. Arya Samaj opposed conversion of locals. Therefore, Arya Samaj

³. Vasudha Pande, Stratification in Kumaun circa 1815-1930, NMML, occasional paper, history and society, ew series, 37, p, 74.

⁴. James, M. Sebring, The Formation of new castes: A probable case from north India, P.588, R.D. Sanwal, Op. cited, 1976, p. 175.

started working in the Hills of Himalayas as part of its reforms in Hindu society throughout the country. It introduced the concept of Purification in order to elevate a caste from level to higher level.

The Agaris of Ramgarh and Kharahi were the first to respond to the call for Shudhi by Arya Samaj. They welcomed Arya samaj with great hope like Tamtas. Gradually, Arya samaj increased its influence even in small town and villages. It also prevented people of Sunakia village from converting to Christianity. In this connection purificatory ceremony was conducted by the Arya Samaj 1913 in Sunki village. This was done under the supervision of Lala Lajpat Rai, an Arya-Samajist and a well known nationalist leader from the Punjab. Those who underwent Shudhi ceremony started calling themselves as Aryas.⁵

Many urban dwelling Doms took advantage of this ceremony. All Doms who underwent purification ceremony were also invested with the sacred thread and they also started celebrating weddings with Dola-Palki. This symbol of superiority was reserved only for upper castes until then. Although it resembled like a Sanskritization process, yet it differed in many way in Kumaon.⁶ Doms did not lay claim to high status based on such kind of previous history as other sanskritizing groups had done.

Struggle for Honour

During pre-colonial period, Doms were not allowed to have permanent houses. They were also not permitted to enter temples, Ghats and use public wells. Nor were they allowed to wear sacred thread, use dola palki for marriage processions. Usually upper castes had been using dola palki during wedding processions and this continued

⁵ . Vasudha Pande, Stratification in Kumaun circa 1815-1930, NMML, occasional paper, history and society, New series, 37, p.76.

⁶ . James, M. Sebring, The Formation of new castes: A probable case from north India, P. 588.

during colonial period also. Muslims and converted Christians also used dola pali for their wedding ceremonies. However, Shilpkars (earlier doms) were not allowed to use this practice. But when Shilpkars wanted to celebrate their weddings with Dola Palki after their purification by Arya Samaj, the Bith did not like it.

In 1923, when Shilpkars were going in marriage procession with doal palki from Kandi to Sendhikhal, the upper castes obstructed them and beat up all baratis. Again on their return, all Shilpkars were beaten and looted. Again in 1924, wedding party of Bidalgaon was going to Korikhalgaon was prevented and were beaten up. In the same way, another marriage party from Godi village was going to Baisokhi was attacked on Feb. 2, 1929. In this incident, the marriage party was not only attacked and their dola palki, musical instruments were broken, but they had to spend nearly 16 days on the bank of a nearby river. It is estimated that nearly 300 wedding parties were attacked by the upper castes and some cases were also registered in the local courts. Some leaders in the region also brought this to the notice of national leaders like Mahtma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. In 1938 Mr. Hari Prasad Tamta asked a question in legislative assembly as to what kind of action government took for the incidence of Ukhrial, Lower Garhwal. In this case, Mr. Khamer Ram Shilpkar was celebrating his marriage with doing Dola –Palaki precession. But the Bith attacked Barat party.⁷In one case, on Feb.27, 1939, Allahabad High court upheld the right of Shilpkars to the dola palki. But the attacks by the upper castes against Shilpkars did not come to an end. This kind of incidents continued even after independence for some time.

⁷. Proceeding of the legislative Assembly of U.P. , 3rd august 1938 vol. VII, No,3 Page no -144)

Created their own Priesthood

When caste Hindus refused to perform birth, death and other ceremonies for Shilpkars, they created their own priesthood. Thus emerged the system of Shilpkar Brahmins among Shilpkars. They are referred to as 'Brahmins' by the fellow Shilpkars whom they serve and they are frequently addressed by the term 'panditji' an honorific that is used for the real Brahmins by the higher castes and that is also widely used in India for Brahmins. No other Shilpkars are distinguished terminologically in this fashion or addressed by a special honorific. Shilpkar Brahmins perform religious rites for other Shilpkars. These rites are the same ones as those which high caste Brahmins perform for the other high castes, namely, birth, naming, sacred thread investiture, marriage and death. The texts used by the Shilpkar Brahmins during ceremonies differ from those used by the high caste Brahmins in their greater brevity, simplicity, and greater use of Hindustani instead of Sanskrit.⁸ Artisan Brahmins do not pursue their traditional occupation, which is mainly carpentry, to the extent that they did before becoming religious specialists. They obtain most of their living now by performing ceremonies for fellow Shilpkars, for which they are paid mainly in cash.

Even in 2013 the situation in the hills of Uttarkhand does not change. Shunned by upper caste Brahmins, who reportedly do not want to perform rituals for them, the Shilpkars decided to have priests from their own community. Referred to as Vritte, these priests, also called Panditji by the community, perform all rituals – whether birth, marriage or last rites rituals. And much like the Brahmins, they offer *diksha* or

⁸ James M. Sebring, The formation of new castes: A Probable case from North India, in American Anthropologist New Series, Vol. 74.No.3, June,1972, pp. 587-600

initiation to people from their community, and ensure that their sons continue their procession after their departure.⁹

Thus caste discrimination, prejudice by the so called upper castes towards lower castes in general and Shilpkars in particular gave rise to the emergence of priestly class among Shilpkars. Even after Independence and introduction of affirmative action by Government of India, situation at ground level did not change much. But this is not to say that Shilpkars did not achieve social mobility in terms of education, employment, business and all other spheres. Caste prejudice still prevails in spite of change in the socio economic status of Shilpkars and other lower castes in India in general and Uttrakhand in particular.

Colonial Education and Modernity

With the arrival of the British, education also entered the hills. A number of schools were established in Kumaon province. Shilpkars took advantage of education. The British also encouraged the poor and depressed students in the form of scholarships. Rs. 5000 had been allocated in Provincial Budget for the education of depressed classes.¹⁰The letter of a Deputy Secretary to the Government of United Provinces tells us about the policy of the Government towards depressed classes.¹¹

Hari Prashad Tamta, was an envisioned leader to educate Shilpkar community. Therefore, first of all, Krishna Day School for children, Krishna Night School for adult education was opened in Rajpura Almora. After 1932, the number of schools

⁹ For complete story, please see Indian Express, 2013. Pratap Ram Arya from Runibata Tok village under Kapkot Assembly constituency of Bageshwar district and Joga Ram's sons, Bhopal Ram and Mohan Ram, are also priests like their father.

¹⁰.Kumaon Kumud, 22nd September, 1930.

¹¹. Mr. R.O. Weir, Deputy Secretary to the Government of United Provinces, in a letter dated , December 15, 1937, Allahabad.

being run by the Shilpkar Sabha, were grew very fast. The department of Depressed Class Education', which was opened by the government, was giving help in the work of Shilpkar Sabha. But unfortunately, Shilpkars did not evince interest in sending their children to the schools.In

Order to encourage students, in 1932, government announced scholarships for the Shilpkar students studying in English schools. The rates for these scholarships were Rupees seven per month for a period of 5 years, for vernacular middle schools, Rupees five per month for a period of 3 years and for the student of training schools Rupees seven per month.¹² Again in 1932, with the object of safeguarding of interest of Shilpkars, two scholarships were granted, by the government. These scholarships were of two kinds :1. Ordinary scholarship for help Rs. 3- to Rs. 15- per month; 2. Scholarship for training of artisanship, Rs. 7 to Rs 25 per month. These two schools of training were government carpentry school Nainital and District Board carpentry school Almora.

There were discussions on the issue of education in the state assembly. In the Budget Session of Assembly 1937-38 Ram Prashad Tamta drew the attention of house regarding progress in education and its expansion and scholarships for Shilpkar boys and girls.¹³ He argued that, 'there is a great hindrance in spreading up of education even upto the secondary and high school standard among the boys of untouchables. I simply want to tell that no sincere efforts have been made by the government upto this time. But I hope fully that in the duration of this government much stress will be laid down on this issue. Scholarships which are sanctioned by the government are insufficient. In every district there are only two scholarships for the untouchable

¹².Government Order issued in 1932, No. 1215-1092.

¹³. Naval Viyogi and M.Anwar Ansari, History of the Later Harappans and Shilpkar Movement, Pt.II, Delhi, 2010, p. 530.

students. These scholarships are being granted only to those students who take at admission in high school after passing middle. In addition to these 8 scholarships of Rs. 2 to 5 are being given in each circle. Table given below gives the details of scholarships granted for depressed class students for the year 1938-39:

Scholarship Sanctioned for depressed class students for 1938-1939 ¹⁴

| Name of District Board | No of Sanctioned Scholarships | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|----------------------------------|
| | Vernacular Middle Scholarship Rupees 5 /- menses | Vernacular Middle Scholarship Rupees 2 /- menses | Primary Scholarship Aana 8 /- menses | Training Scholarship Rupees 7/- menses | High school Rupees 7/- menses |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Nanital | 3 | 9 | 80 | 1 | 10 |
| Almora | 3 | 9 | 100 | 1 | 10 |
| Grahwal | 3 | 9 | 80 | 1 | 10 |
| Total Kumaun Division | 9 | 27 | 260 | 3 | 30 |

¹⁴Proceedings of Legislative Assembly of the United Provinces Friday 24th March 1939 vol.XV, No.3 Appendix A , Page No- 285

Government sanctioned grants for finical help to depressed class institutions¹⁵

| Districts | Name of the Organization and Place | Grant Per Annum |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Dehradoon | Day school of Girls Harijan Girls Schools, Dehradoon | 207/- |
| Alomra | Day Schools of Boys (1) Krishna Depressed class day school Rajpur (In Almora 13 days schools are going on all these schools are organized by Kumaon Shilpkar Sabha (2) Lakhi (3) Lamgonga (4) Chacherori (5) Lodhiya (6) Chakar Gawan (7) Bhumakiya (8) Ayarpani (9) Chilas (10) Baluakoti Night Schools Chami Didhi Siroli Pawadhar Krishna Depressed class night School Rajpur Almora Krishna Depressed class library | 252/- 1,248 300/- 229/- |
| Lohaghat & Pithoragher | Two night schools for Depressed class | 160/- |

¹⁵. Legislative Assembly proceedings, 12th July 1939 see Appendix E , page no – 85,88,89, 1938- 9140.

The Question Regarding Admission of Dalit Students

In the assembly of Sanyukt Prant, Ram Prashad Tamta in 1936-37, drew the attention of government in Assembly, regarding ban imposed on the admission of Shilpkar student's boys and girls in Boarding houses and schools. The question of not admitting a lower caste girl student in the Boarding-house by the principal of one of the government girls' school of Almora, was very serious one. Similarly he informed that in Almora three students of Shilpkar Community had to drop their studies as they were not admitted in the school.¹⁶ As a result, in 1939, the Government of Sanyukta Prant announced enhancement in the scholarships of Dalit students which is as under: a) Class 1 and 2; 12 Annas per month; b) Class 3 and 4; Rs. 1- per month.¹⁷ In 1941 fees of Shilpkar boys and girls were exempted.

Shilpkar Sabha was also concerned about the education among Shilpkars. In 1939, it prepared a manifesto for promotion of education which is as under:

1. School buildings may be constructed in rural area.
2. Middle passed Shilpkar youths may be provided employment.
3. Government should sanction grant to eight libraries, which have been established by the Shilpkar –Sabha at different places.
4. Government should sanction grants to those 60 adult schools and twenty day schools which have been opened by the Kumaon Shilpkar-Sabha.
5. The fees of Shilpkar students of schools of Zila Parisads may be exempted.

¹⁶..Deputy Secretary, 27th Feb. 1940, no.810-15-2067-39.

¹⁷..Deputy Secretary, 7th Feb. 1940, no.816-15-2067-39.

6. This year the Zila Parisad has received 1300 applications of poor Shilpkar students for scholarship, they all would be granted scholarship immediately.
7. One Shilpkar should be appointed as Dy-sub-inspector in each district.

Establishment of Special Schools for the depressed Classes

In order to encourage education among the depressed classes, the British started special schools for them. Experiments were always taking place in the field of primary education in the united provinces. Though there was very little demand among the lower caste Hindus for the kind of education given in vernacular schools, the primary schools for the depressed class in many districts were started in 1910. In the beginning, certain difficulties that of providing teachers for such schools non-cooperation on the part of the higher classes and want of interest and the part of the depressed class parents were faced. In Gorakhpur, for example the Domes were said to be much opposed in the higher education for their children, but the schools were started as an experimental measure.¹⁸ However in the Agra district the depressed class showed little enthusiasm for education of their children. The reason was that there children could earn something by working in day time but if they joined the schools, they were not in a position to earn at all. Gradually it was experienced that the prejudice against the depressed class was disappearing. In 1912 in Dehradun the schools were run by the Arysamaj. There were about 150boys in 3 schools.¹⁹

On the recommendations of the Board of education in 1919-1920, the experiment of appointing supervisors of schools of depressed classes was made in the districts of Meerut, Banaras, and Jaunpur. The financial aid to cover the cost of

¹⁸. General Report, 1912, P. 62, Kashi Prasad Srivastava, Documents Relating to Primary Education preserved in U.P. State Archives, (1843-1947), U.P. State Archives, Lucknow, 1979, PP.31-33.

¹⁹. General Report, 1919, P. 12.

education was given by the Provincial Government. The results of this experiment were so encouraging that all Districts Boards were invited to continue it.

A scheme of opening special schools for depressed classes was outlined in the government Resolution No 1231/ XV, Dated May 23, 1921. In that year grants amounting to Rs. 78,920 recurring and Rs. 7,350 no- recurring were sanctioned to the District Boards for this purpose. A scheme of further expansion was undertaken in 1922-23, when additional grant of Rs. 15,000 recurring and Rs. 2,970 non – recurring were given.

In 1932-33 there were 757 special schools for depressed classes with an enrolment of 18,443 depressed class boys.²⁰The Hartog Committee examined, in detail, the problems of depressed class education. It was of opinion that these special schools had proved very expensive and these should be abolished and replaced by mixed Primary schools which were economical. Mr. Weir also concurred with the views of the Hartog Committee and recommended the establishment of ordinary Boards schools rather than the creation of schools ignominiously called “Depressed class schools”. He further suggested the amalgamation of budget under the head “Depressed class Education” to the head of “Ordinary Primary Schools” and the saving arising from this could be spent on awarding scholarships to the Depressed class boys.²¹

Education for the depressed classes was definitely in progress but the pace of progress was slow. But economic condition of the parents was responsible for this slow progress. During 1937-38, all the district of the united Provinces had a supervisor, thirty under District Board Services and 18 in non pensionable

²⁰ . Hartog Committee., pp. 226-228.

²¹ . General Report, 1938, P. 55.

Government services. All the latter and twenty-three of the former belonged to the scheduled castes themselves, two to the backward classes and the remaining five to other castes.

The Provincial Depressed Class Educational Committee constituted in 1941 was instrumental in stimulating the demand of education among the depressed class community. With the object of increasing the proportion of teachers belonging to the depressed classes, it was obligatory on every district to depute one such candidate to a Normal School. Districts had to depute two teachers to a central Training School or Training Class every year. A few candidates to receive training were also deputed by the district and Municipal Boards. The result was the percentage of trained teachers in District Board schools increased from one percent to two percent during 1941-42.²² Three stipends were also devised for students of these classes in each of the government Training Colleges. Reservations were also made for depressed class candidates in the appointment to the education Department of the Governments. During 1942-43, depressed class students were helped with their examinations fees to the extent of Rs.800/-. In 1943, the number of scholarships for scheduled castes showed considerable increase. The scholarships were given at the monthly rates of Rs. 16/- in Intermediate classes , Rs 7/- in High School stage , Rs.5/- in class VII and VIII, Rs 4/- in V and VI and Rs.3/- in III and IV , in all Anglo Vernacular Instruction and Rs 3/- in the vernacular middle schools.

In 1941, Powell Price, Director of Public instruction wrote to the Deputy secretary to the Government of United Provinces that approval may be granted to the Municipal Boards to award vacant depressed classes stipend to class 1 and 2 if necessary. Because some of the Municipal Boards have no full primary schools with

²² . General Report, 1942 P. 53.

class III and IV and were compelled to leave the stipends for the want of students of depressed classes. Director of the public instruction felt it was reasonable and requested the government to accept this proposal from July, 1, 1941.²³ A.M Sapru, secretary wrote to the Deputy commissioner in charge of Kumaon division that a recurring grant of Rs. 650 was sanctioned towards half of the cost of remitting tuition fees for depressed class students in the district board schools in the district.²⁴

Again, the Director of Public institutions, United Provinces wrote to the Secretary, on 29th January, 1945 that the Depressed Class students both boys and girls reading in the Government Anglo Vernacular institutions, who are exempted from the payment of tuition fees shall also be exempted from the payment of games and medical fees.²⁵ In May, 10, 1944, the director proposed that Government should bear recreation and medical fees. If Government has to bear this, it will come to Rs. 1298/- and 414/- p.a respectively. He therefore, recommended that Government may kindly make a provision of Rs.1820 to meet this expenditure.²⁶

Setting up of Night Schools

With the object of providing opportunities of elementary education to the adults the United Provinces Government, in May 1921, offered funds to the Municipal Boards of Lucknow, Kanpur, Agra, Meerut, Banaras and Bareilly for the development of Night Schools. Local Boards were expected to establish such free schools in places where a minimum attendance of 20 students could be assured. Night Schools were held in the buildings of the day schools. They maintained proper register for

²³ File, 328/ August, 1941. Permission to Municipal boards to award vacant depressed class Stipend of classes III to IV of primary schools to stipend of classes I or II.

²⁴ File No. 330, A.M Sapru, Secretary to the Deputy commissioner Kumaon division, 1942.

²⁵ File no. 313, 1944 and No. D/7005 January, 29, 1945.

²⁶ Director of Public Instruction to the Secretary, Government of United Provinces, No.D.403/XXXIII-13 dated 10th May, 1944.

attendance and accounts which were open for inspection. No boy under the age of 12 was permitted to attend the Night School. Besides, only those boys were admitted in such schools who were not in attendance at the day school. The instruction was confined to reading, writing and arithmetic.²⁷

The basic consideration for opening Night Schools was that since the occupation of villagers was agriculture, they were disinclined to send their children to the day schools but they had no objection in taking advantage of night schools, provided it was not very far from their houses. Night schools mostly run by board schools teachers. For teaching in night schools, these teachers were given additional remuneration of Rs. 5 per month and continent allowance of Rs. 2/- per month of oil, etc.

The United Provinces Government sanctioned grants to the night schools run by different bodies. In 1935-36, it sanctioned a recurring grant of Rs. 272/- to Kumaon Shilpkar Sabha Night school, Rajpur and Rs. 196/- to Kumaon Shilpkar Sabha, Depressed class Library, Rajpur.²⁸ In the year 1935-36, Rs. 1200/- were sanctioned to the local bodies and associations from Rs. 75000/- allotted budget.

Mr. Panna Lal, advisor to the Government of United provinces held a conference on April, 15, 1944, with the representative of scheduled castes and certain officers of the education department. The main agenda of the meeting was to consider how the difficulties faced by depressed class students to get admission in the Government Anglo vernacular educational institutions in the provinces. Nearly 9 representatives both from depressed class communities and officers attended including Rai Bahadur Munshi Hari Prasad Tamta from Almora.

²⁷. General Report, 1927, P. 8081; Kichlu Report, P.36-37.

²⁸ File No. 1209/1933, Budget provision for the education of depressed classes in U.P.

While discussing the Government's determination to remove handicaps of the students of the depressed classes for their education, the conference after a long deliberation, made the following recommendations²⁹ to the Government:

1. Admission of the students in Anglo Vernacular Schools:

A. Government Schools: In every class in which now admission are made seats should be reserved for depressed classes as below:

For every 6 new admission made, 1 seat should be reserved for the Depressed Classes provided that a minimum of 1 seat is always reserved and fraction of half and more should be treated as one and fraction less than half as nil.

These vacancies should be kept open for one week after the beginning of the annual session and if the number of applications from the depressed classes is insufficient to fill these vacancies, they may be thrown open to others after the expiry of the period of one week.

B. Aided Schools: Aided schools should be asked to follow the practice and to encourage such schools, Government should pay to them all fees including extra fee in respect of all the students of depressed class actually join the course.

If any student of the Depressed Class unfortunately fails to secure admission, their cases should be brought immediately to the notice of the Inspector of schools who may be instructed to pass orders regarding the admission.

Admission to the Hostels

It is pointed out that difficulties are felt in certain places because the menials ordinarily are employed in the hostel, kitchens etc are reluctant to serve students

²⁹ .File No. 313, Information Department, United Provinces, April, 17, 1944.

belonging to Depressed Class. In such cases, it is recommended that all government hostels one extra menial servant for serving depressed class students may be employed.³⁰

No difficulty has been felt among students of depressed classes for securing admission to hostels attached to schools. But in order to remove any possible misunderstanding it was thought desirable that 1/6th vacancies in government hostel be reserved for student of the Depressed class similar to as in the case of new admission to classes in the schools.

There are three hostels one each in Meerut, Allahabad and Agra for Depressed class students. The entire expenses of the hostel are borne by the government. It was urged that the grants to these hostels under the present conditions are inadequate. The special officers for depressed classes will examine the matter and if necessary recommend that the grants be increased.

Free ship and Stipends

All students of the depressed communities in government institutions are exempted from paying tuition fees. The conference recommended that fee for such students should be paid by government. It also recommended that in all cases where free ship and stipends are given to students of the Depressed classes such free ships and stipends should not be forfeited for failure in terminal examinations as these are not given on merit but for membership of a certain community. The question of withdrawal of such concessions may be considered on the result of the annual examinations and in cases of failure in the annual examination such concessions should ordinarily be forfeited unless there are genuine reasons to show that the failure

³⁰..File No. 313, Information Department, United Provinces, April, 17, 1944.

was for causes beyond the student's control. In view of these recommendations, the conference did not think that there was any need for special schools for the depressed classes.

Girl Students

Similar reservations regarding admission to Government educational institutions and Government aided educational institutions for girls education should be exempted from the payment of charges in Government institutions.³¹

Education Supervisors in District and Municipal boards³²

| District / Kumaon Division | Name of The Education Supervisor | Cates | Salary | Date of Joining | District/ Municipal Board |
|---|---|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Nanital | Mr. Bachiya Ram | Shilpkar | 62/- | 9 th June 1924 | District Board |
| Almora | Mr. Lallulal | Bhur-Chamar | 58rs 8 Aanas | 18 th July 1932 | District Board |
| Grahwal | Mr. Gundilal | Koli- Shilpkar | 42/- | 15 th December 1938 | District Board |
| | Mr. Vajji Lal | Lohar | 42/- | 15 th December 1938 | District Board |
| Almora | Mr .Joga Ram | Shilpkar | 35/- | 1 June 1935 | Municipal Board |

³¹.File No. 313, Information Department, United Provinces, April, 17, 1944.

³² Proceedings of Legislative Assembly of the United Provinces , Vol. XV, No.3 Dated 24th March 1939 Appendix B, Page No- 290-291.

Encouragement of Training of Skilled Artisans

The colonial Government also encouraged training of skilled artisans in order to promote skills among Shilpkar. N.C Mehat, I.C, Secretary of Government of United Provinces, in a circular dated October, 21, 1940, directed all district officers in the following. Words:

‘I am directed to forward herewith a copy each of (1) the scheme for the training of skilled artisans , (2) the notice to students in technical instruction and (3) the form of application for enrolment in special training course for war technicians issued by the central government in co – operation with the provincial government . I am to request that the scheme may be given wide publicity in your district and brought to the notice of all concerned.

2.Applications on the prescribed form should be addressed to the chairman , National Services Tribunal , United Provinces, Nawabganj , Cawnpore , so as to reach him on or before November 20,1940.³³

Emergence of Hari Prasad Tamta and Rise of Shilpkar Sabha

As Doms were not able to get the recognition which they aspired under Arya Samaj, they gradually wanted to achieve it under their own leadership. Their main idea was to fight for equality and honour and compete with the upper castes.³⁴ Tamtas took the leadership in transforming artisanal castes. Hari Parasad Tamta provided what Weber called charismatic leadership of Doms. Tamtas efforts at acquiring political and ritual leadership of the Dom and giving them political identity and unity also go back to the beginning of the present century. The emergence of a formal

³³ . N.C. Mehta, Secretary to the Government of United Provinces, in a letter dated October, 21, 1940

³⁴ . R.D.Sanwal, Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon, O.U.P, 1976, p. 176.

political leadership as well as a priesthood was crucial in giving Shilpkar both identity and social and economic power during colonial period.

In Garhwal, after the formation of Gerola Sabha, there was formation of 'Garhwal Union' and later 'Garhwal Matramandal', which were later on absorbed by Garhwal Sabha. But all these associations were related to upper castes. Shilpkar of Garhwal was not allowed entry in them. However, there was no institutionalized system of status enhancement among Doms as per their economic improvement. Doms were still referred to as Doms during early part of colonial period also. It was argued that the biggest obstacle to status improvement was the absence of any kind of social organization.³⁵ Therefore, Tamtas have set up a society of coppersmiths called Tamta Sudhar Sabha in 1905. The same gradually developed into *Shilpkar Sabha*. Doms faced discrimination even after education entered the Hills. As early as in 1911 in Almora, there was a function to celebrate the coronation of Goerge V. In this function Doms were not allowed to participate.³⁶

Hari Prasad Tamta understood the value of education. That is why he wanted Shilpkars to achieve education as a means of empowerment. In an address which he delivered at the meeting of artisans of Kumaon at Bageshwar fair on 13th January, 1936, he said 'I am happy to know that you guys have understood the importance of education. It is the result of your efforts that currently 3500 boys and about 100 girls are getting education in your district Almora. 20 craftsmen teachers are working in schools, the District Board is giving stipend to 20 boys and I am giving stipend to 6

³⁵ Vasudha Pande, Stratification in Kumaun circa 1815-1930, NMML, occasional paper, history and society, New series, 37, p.74.

³⁶ . Hari Prasad Tamta wrote in 1935 regarding this incident saying, in 1911, in the ceremony commemorating the coronation of George V, myself and my brothers were not allowed to participate. I am extremely grateful to them because their action awakened me from slumber. Precisely due to such talks, I took it to my heart that I should elevate my brethren to such a height that others may not look down upon them, but rather treat them at par'.

boys. 40 girls have passed the entrance and a supervisor of craftsman caste has been appointed. But this is not enough; you still have a lot to do in the field of education. Not a single child belonging to an artisan caste should remain a person who is deprived of education. Education is the only means which can take us to the pinnacle of progress.³⁷

Kanridoot, paper talked about the efforts of Shilpkar Sabha to promote education among Shilpkars. The paper wrote, ‘Through Kumaon Shilpkar Sabha, 150 primary schools were set up in various areas and night schools were opened in many places for the promotion of education among artisans and laborers. Many poor students were encouraged to study by giving scholarships on their own behalf and at their own expense, many students were taught and encouraged to pursue higher education. He made the government appoint supervisors to look after the schools of Kumaon Craftsmen Sabha. After independence, these schools were transferred to Zilla Parishad and Supervisors were also transferred to Harijan and Social Welfare Department. Bechi Ram Ji Supervisor (Nainital) is said to have passed high school in 1902 and was the first high school pass person in the craftsman society. To spread education, he set up primary schools in Tilakpur, Rajpur, Narsingbadi neighbourhood of Almora Nagar, which are currently running.³⁸ The British also nominated seven lower castes people as members on district depressed class education committee of Dehradun in 1942.³⁹

In the same way, when Shri Krishna Tamta was nominated as member of the Almora Municipality, high caste Hindus did not like it and even talked of boycotting

³⁷.Dalit Sumanjali, 1934.

³⁸ Kranti Doot, Samta prakashan Almora, p. 9.

³⁹.Letter No:D/32/XXXIII-1(64), dated September 11, 1942, addressed to the District Magistrates, United Provinces.

the meetings of the Municipality. *Almora Akhbar* strongly reacted to this and lambasted the upper castes.⁴⁰ With the advent of education in the region, a host of vernacular newspapers cropped up, like the *Almora Akhbar*, *Garhwali*, *Shakti*, *Kumaon* and *Kumud*, *Karmabhumi*. Although edited/owned by high caste persons, they condemned discriminatory practices and stood for social justice.⁴¹

On 27th August 1925, a convention of Shilpkar Sabha was held under the president ship of Shri Khushi Ram in the Mohalla of Narsinghadi at Almora. Nearly 900 Shilpkars attended this meeting. Hari Prashad Tamta, in his madden speech said, “We are facing unlimited troubles that is why we are in agony. God has sent English people to put down the pride of these proud people” he further, while addressing Shilpkar, added, “Brothers! you are hardy and labouring people, you have sufficient courage to break up your chains of slavery. Our population is 2 lac and if the population of Garhwal is also included it becomes 2^{1/2} lac. If you manage to pay an amount of half rupee, per crop, per head the total amount so collected will become rupees fiftyfive thousand and in two crops it will become one lac, and from that amount we can purchase land for Shilpkar and will serve many other purposes.”

The Great Convention of Shilpkar of Kumaon 1925

The Almora meeting of 27th August 1925, became the basis of Great Conference of Kumaon. This was for the first time in the history that a Great Conference of Shilpkar was held in the forest of Deyolidada, situated at a distance of four kilometres from Almora city between 22 and 24 September. But upper castes who did not like this conference started mobilising under the leadership of Bheem

⁴⁰. Anil,k.Joshi, Dalit Reform movement in British Kumaon, IHC, Vol. 61, Pt.1, 2000-2001, P.977.

⁴¹. Anil, k.Joshi, Dalit Reform movement in British Kumaon, IHC, Vol. 61, Pt.1, 2000-2001, p.976.

Singh Mehra of Chhakana (Nainital)⁴² and various rumours were spread in order to fail this conference. But Shri Hari Prashad Tamta deftly handled this by giving a statement through the Shakti weekly and called upon Shilpkars to attend this conference in great numbers. He said, "Dear, brothers! I have come to know that you are being prevented to join your own conference. But there is nothing to fear for you since there is regime of English people where no one can check up you by force."⁴³

Actually this convention was planned to be held at Narayan Tiwari Debal in Almora, but due to opposition of upper caste it was held at Deyolidada. It was presided over by Munshi Hari Prashad Tamta; Hari Ram was secretary and Bachhi Ram assistant secretary. A high number of Shilpkar reached from the circle area of Garhwal and Kumaon for the success of this conference. According to Shakti dated 6th October 1925, "about two to three thousand Shilpkar with great pomp and show attended this conference from three districts of Almora, Nainital and Garhwal." But definitely, the number of Shilpkar, who attended this conference, was higher than described in this paper. That is why Babu Ram Prashad Tamta wrote an objectionletter to the editor of Shakti, with the remark "that an attendance of 7400 was already registered on papers before procession began."⁴⁴

In the convention some resolutions were passed which are given below:

1. This convention prays in strong words to Indian government, districts and Municipal Boards that primary education should be made compulsory and free in Kumaon immediately.

⁴². Shakti, Sept. 22, 1925.

⁴³. Shakti, Sept. 15, 1925.

⁴⁴. Shakti, Oct.13, 1925.

2. This convention prays to government that for the progress of Shilpkar, their representatives should be taken in to Panchayats, districts, and municipal boards and council etc., in the ratio of their population, in the entire Kumaon region like Muslim community.
3. This convention prays to government that for assuring hold of Shilpkar on military services, a permanent Shilpkar platoon should be established on the pattern of First World War.
4. This convention prays to government, that keeping in view our poverty and miseries, liberal view should be shown in allotment of some pieces of land on the pattern of Panjab.
5. This convention draws the attention of district boards of Kumaon, that according to sub-para 77 of state education law, necessary arrangement should be made to open more and more schools for the education of Shilpkar.
6. This convention thinks, that for the upliftment of Shilpkar community, an association of all the Shilpkar of Kumaon should be formed immediately, whose branches should be opened in every village and efforts should be made for the achievement of following object:
 - a) Prohibition of social evils, just like child marriage, and use of intoxicating substance and promotion of widow marriage and maintenance of health and good moral character, should be adopted.
 - b) Efforts should be made to spread up education for promotion of house hold handicrafts, arts, and crafts among men and women.

- c) Every Shilpkar should pay a minimum amount of half rupee after the end of each harvest or after 6 months to this association so that a Shilpkar bank could be established, from which the needy Shilpkar would get loans and some amount could be spent on education and social reformation activities.
7. This convention prays earnestly to the government that the word 'Dom' is used by the upper castes for showing sense of hatred and enmity against us. This word is a great obstacle in our progress and honour, therefore government should oblige us by wiping out this word from the government records immediately and in lieu of the word. 'Shilpkar' should be used.
8. This convention prays to government that more and more grant should be sanctioned for the education of Shilpkar and it is also requested that for promoting secondary education and education of art and craft government should grant special scholarship for Shilpkar.
9. This convention draws the attention of Shilpkar towards this important issue that a Shilpkar Seva Dal (a force for the defence and services of Shilpkar) may be organized in every village and city.⁴⁵

Again in the month of November 1925, a Shilpkar Convention was held under the leadership of Hari Prashad Tamta, Khushi Ram and Bachhi Ram at the place named Narayan Tewari Dewal. The purpose of this conference was to show resentment against the atrocities of upper castes on the Shilpkar and finding out measures to stop them and creating a sense of brotherhood among the Shilpkar and to

⁴⁵.Naval Viyogi and M.Anwar Ansari, History of the Later Harappans and Shilpkar Movement, Pt.II, Delhi, 2010, p. 521.

think about the problems regarding land.⁴⁶ It is to be noted that now Shilpkar had started thinking about landlessness and poor economic conditions.

This is well captured by an article 'awakening of Shilpkar' which Shakti published on 20th July 1926. It says that Shilpkars have awakened now after a long struggle for the last 14 years. There is need to create livelihood opportunities. It is a matter of great satisfaction that some people from the community came forward to achieve this object. It was decided to set up a Shilpkar Udyogi Sanstha (Shilpkar institution of industry). Contractors like Bachhi Ram and Sundur Lal, have pledged to pay Rs. 100- each and Narayan Ram another contractor Rs. 500. Here, it was planned to train children in spinning, weaving, carpentry and black smithy.

Again, in 1928, on 23rd August 1928, one convention of Shilpkar Sabha was held at Devidhura Bhat under the president ship of Khushi Ram. In this convention, Shilpkars requested the Colonial Government for allotment land in the forests and some minor contract of works may be given to them in the public sector.

The Garhwal convention of Shilpkar 1931

The Shilpkars in Garhwal also felt the need to change the status. Because they say what was going on in Kumaon. A Shilpkar conference was held in 1931 at Dogadda in Garhwal under the leadership of Khushi Ram and following resolutions were unanimously adopted:

1. The Garhwal Shilpkar Sabha decided to associate itself with the Shilpkar Sudharni Sabha of Kumaon.

⁴⁶. Ibid. p. 521.

2. They requested the British to give opportunities for the depressed classes in councils, assemblies, district boards, and Municipalities according to their population like others.
3. Shilpkar members and supervisors should be appointed in the district boards of Garhwal.
4. Cultivable land from reserve forests may be allotted to the poor Shilpkar.
5. Efforts may be made to form an independent Battalion of Shilpkar in the Army,
6. In civil cases, particularly on they may be heard sympathetically on the issue of wearing of sacred thread and use of Dola-Palki. Because often Shilpkar face violent attacks during marriage ceremonies.

Again, in 26 January Mr.Hari Parasd attended a conference in Gorakhpur.

Following resolutions were adopted:

- 1- This conference is ready to help to government during war time, and requesting the government to appoint depressed class people into Army and Police department.
- 2- This Sabha demands new elections in Local boards.
- 3- This Sabha extends support to the Provincial depressed class committee which would be held on 14-15 February at Allahabad.⁴⁷

⁴⁷.Samta weekly 11 February 1942

The Great Convention in Bageshwar Fare

On 14 January, 1946 on the occasion of *Uttarayani* fare, a conference of Shilpkar Sabha was held under the president ship of **Mr. Prem Lal Tamta**.

Proposals of this convention are:

1. Poona pact is not useful for the Dalit community because of this pact dalit have to fight two elections. Therefore, this may be cancelled.
2. After the disforestation, land may be allotted to Shilpkar for cultivation.
3. All Schemes which Mr. Hari Prasad Tamta submitted to the Governor for the progress of Shilpkar, should be accepted immediately. A Shilpkar may be appointed as a member in the district board.
4. 25% reservation should be given in government services to Shilpkar.
5. Final sanction may be given by the government for construction a path in Behargon and a sub –canal (gul) in Hari Nagar.⁴⁸

Demand for Allocation of Landfor Agriculture and Residential Colonies

Most of the Shilpkars in the hills were landless. As we have seen in second chapter in land tenures, most of the time in pre-British period, one or another dominant caste controlled all cultivable land. In the past Shudra and lower castes were not allowed to own a piece of land. Caste was used not only for social purpose but also to exclude certain communities economically and also consequently from political power. Therefore, under these circumstances, Munshi Hari Prashad Tamta,

⁴⁸. Samta weekly 30 January 1946

Khushi Ram, and Babu Bodha Singh, drew the attention of British government towards this poor condition and landlessness of Shilpkar. As a result of relentless efforts of Hari Prasad, the colonial government decided to allot land to Shilpkars.⁴⁹ As per a letter of Dy. Commissioner of Almora, a plan was prepared for distribution of land to Shilpkar on a lease of for seven years at a place named Kula. The total area of this land was 165 acres, out of which 130 acres was agriculture land. There was sufficient water to drink.⁵⁰ Again, Shri Hari Prashad Tamta requested the colonial Government to set up a model village.⁵¹ At this stage British government could not decide that what should be the basis of mode of distribution of land among the Shilpkar i.e., either this should be in the form of new habitation or Khayakar.⁵² But, as a result of favourable behaviour of the Shilpkar, the government decided to allot land at Kalau in Katyur.⁵³

Afterwards the Government agreed for the establishment of Shilpkar colony in an area of 95 acres of land in Papoli block of Lohaghat region.⁵⁴ In spite of various local problems, government established a colony in an area of 165 acres of land in the south of Almora city⁵⁵ and two other colonies were established at two different places one in an area of 18 acres of land in the reserved forest of Dhuraphat⁵⁶ and other in 58 acres in the reserved forest of Sabalekh in Pithoragarh.⁵⁷ This work of these Shilpkar colonies was completed within a short period of 4 years in a total area of 250 acres of land. Agricultural land was also attached with them. Hari Prasad Tamta also put before the Government another proposal that Dunagiri estate should be purchased for

⁴⁹ . File No. 501/1938, Annual report of forest Administration for 1937-38.

⁵⁰ . Deputy commissioner's letter dated January, 6th, 1932, no.3748/6

⁵¹ . Hari Prasad's letter dated 19th October, 1932.

⁵² . Commissioner of Kumaon, in a letter dated October, 6, 1932, No. 76-1.

⁵³ . Deputy Commissioner, Almora, letter no. 1165, 17th March, 1933.

⁵⁴ . Deputy Commissioner, Almora, letter no. 1165, 13th August, 1934.

⁵⁵ . Government Order dated Feb.21, 1934, no. 883.

⁵⁶ . Government Order dated March, 27, 1935, no. 127.

⁵⁷ . Government Order dated June, 27, 1935, no. 485.

the welfare of Shilpkar, but government did not accede to his demand.⁵⁸ Again, an investigation in to the villagers rights in the reserved forests of Kumaon recommendations and in pursuance of the G.O.No. 347/312-XIV-1925 dated 16th November, 1939, settlement of Shilpkar in the forest area among other things.⁵⁹

In 1934, a Shilpkar village was formed in the Kaluan reserve consisting of an area of 165 acres in the east Almora division. Again in 1935 two more Shilpkar colonies comprising of 18 acres and 19 nalis respectively were formed. In 1938, Congress Government allotted land measuring 1792 and 1250 acres in the districts of Almora, Nainital and Garhwal were leased to Shilpkars.⁶⁰

In 1938, the colonial Government allotted 400 acres of land to form Shilpkar colony from the compartment 8 and 9 of the Narsing Danda, a reserve of the forest division. It also left to the colonists to name this colony as they want.⁶¹ In Kumaon circle, Almora out of total 165 acres allotted, Shilpkars took over all, in Sarurlekh out of 89.5, they took over 18 acres and Narsing Danda out of 400 acres, they took all. In Garhwal, out of 1155 acres allotted, Shilpkars took 511 acres, in Nainital, out of 1792 allotted acres, they took 940 acres.⁶² Thus in three districts namely Almora, Nainital and Garhwal a total of 3599.5 acres were allotted to Shilpkars, out of which 1744.5 acres were taken possession by Shilpkars and 1855 acres were still to be possessed by them.

⁵⁸ . Deputy Commissioner, Almora, letter no. 1328-136 dated, 22 April, 1937.

⁵⁹ . Ajay S.Rawat, History and Growth of Forestry in Central Himalaya, 1815-1947, Occasional papers on perspectives in Indian Development, NMML, Delhi, p. 65; for protests against British forest Policies, please see, Amar Farooqui, Colonial forest policy in Uttarakhand, 1890-1928, New Delhi, p. 1997.

⁶⁰ File no. 253/1947, Allotment of land to Shilpkars of Kumaon.

⁶¹ . Wahjahat Hussain, Secretary to the Government of United Provinces to the Deputy Commissioner, Kumaon Division, No. 501/XIV, Oct. 4, 1939.

⁶² .Ibid.

Mr. E.W, Raymor, Conservator of forests of Kumaon division wrote to the Secretary to the Government of United Provinces, Forest Department, through deputy commissioner of Kumaon, saying that a Nayabad grant of about 39 acres in village Mardal Patti Bisad, in Almora district was allotted to Rai Sahib Munshi Hari Prasad Tamta of Almora in recognition of his service to the Government. But Hari Prasad Tamta could not cultivate this land as it was far away from his resident and secondly it was unfertile. He therefore, requested the Government to exchange this land with a plot of land equal in the area in Bilari compartment 4 of Airadeo old reserve in Almora district. Then Government agreed to exchange the land with 39.7 acres in Marpatari class 1 reserve forest of the Nainital forest division in Almora district.

United Provinces Government leased land measuring 1791 acres in the Nainital district for the formation of Shilpkar village and permitted the lessee to sell the trees or timber in the leased area for building or agricultural purpose.⁶³ In Garhwal district, the Government leased 1215 acres of forest land for the formation of Shilpkar colony.⁶⁴

Struggle for Political Power

British government, through a confidential letter written to Hari Prasad Tamta, wanted to know what should be the basis of eligibility of Shilpkar voter as until then the right of vote was limited only to revenue payers (lagandata) and Khayakaras. Government was in a distress if above eligibility or any educational qualification is decided as final then only a very handsome number of Shilpkar would get the right to vote.⁶⁵ It was quite clear from this letter that at this moment

⁶³ G.O No. 1284 I XIV, 425-1937, forest department.

⁶⁴ .G.O. No.1333/XIV, 425, 1937, forest department to deputy commissioner, dated 21st Jan, 1941.

⁶⁵ . Deputy Commissioner, Almora, letter, 14th August, 1934.

government was in favour of deciding some better eligibility suitable to Shilpkar community that is why government wanted to get advice from Shri Hari Prasad Tamta. In the long run government decided to give right to vote to each head of Shilpkar family. But Mr. Tamta had to work very hard in getting this bill passed by the British Parliament. In this there was provision for making separate arrangement for 5-6 lacs of Shilpkar. Thus Shilpkar community of Garhwal also became eligible for right to vote.

Refusal to render forced labour

Again, Shilpkars refused to provide free labour as they had in the past. Hari Prasad Tamta gave an address in a meeting in 1936 at Lucknow. He said, 'Begaar Pratha is a curse on humanity and is a reflection of narrow vision. While pointing out against this worldly problem, he said that begar pratha should not be used under any circumstances. No matter how many atrocities are committed against us, forced labour is a crime and the time has come when one person will not be able to take any action against his will from another. It requires persistence and self-power within ourselves and we must create it. In the villages, wherever Cooke Begaar continues, all brothers should fight against it persistently. You should remember that as torturing others is a sin similarly, it is a sin to bear the injustice and oppression of others.'⁶⁶As a result of these struggles, the Government abolished forced labour. Special budgetary provision has been made to address this issue financially. A sum of Rs. 22,600/- was sanctioned by the Government. In the next two years this grant would be reduced because of financial constraints. For the year 1938-39, Rs. 15,000/- and for the year 1939-40, Rs.

⁶⁶. Hari Prasad Tamta, in an address given to Jaiswar Rajvanshi Sabha at Lucknow, 1936; Amar Farooqui, Colonial forest policy in Uttarakhand, 1890-1928, New Delhi, 1997, p. 77.

10,000/- were sanctioned. It was further contemplated to distribute the grant of 15,000 in the following manner:

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Naini Tal | Rs. 1,000 |
| 2. Almora | Rs. 500 |
| 3. Lohaghat | Rs. 3,500 |
| 4. Garhwal | Rs. 10,000 |

It was also decided not to engage permanent coolies but only reservist coolies who can be engaged when there were required. It was decided to supplement them by Khush Khaarid coolies.⁶⁷

As the attitude of upper castes did not change much, Shilpkars had to continue their struggle or self respect. In 1930 conference, the following were prioritized:

- 1) We request Viceroy to send a representative of 3 lac of Shilpkar of Kumaon in Round Table Conference.
- 2) We thank government for acting upon on the new act of rehabilitation and further requests that forest land should be allotted to them.
- 3) This conference requests the government of Sanyukta Prant that a battalion of Shilpkar may be formed in army on the pattern of First World War, and Shilpkar should be recruited in military and para military forces and police.
- 4) Government is requested to bring an act in favour of Sirtan.
- 5) For educating Shilpkar, Shilpkar supervisors should be appointed.⁶⁸

In the same way in 1931 another Shilpkar conference was held at Dogadda in Garhwal which was presided over by Khushi Ram. In this conference, they demanded

⁶⁷ File No. 3828/III,557 (A), dated 26.2.1938.

⁶⁸. Naval Viyogi and M.Anwar Ansari, History of the Later Harappans and Shilpkar Movement, Pt.II, Delhi, 2010, p. 524.

certain things from the Government; Shilpkar should be given representation in councils, assemblies, district boards, and Municipalities according to their population like the Muslims and the Sikhs; in the district boards of Garhwal Shilpkar members and supervisors should be appointed; Shilpkar may be allotted such land which is suitable for agriculture from the reserve or civil forests; an independent Battalion of Shilpkar may be formed in Indian army. In 1937, General elections were held under the new act in 1937, leader of Shilpkar community, Babu Ram Prashad Tamta was announced elected from the Assembly seat of Almora and he represented this seat up to 1939.

On 18,19 January 1939, a conference of Shilpkar Sudharni Sabha was held at Kota Patailiya under the leadership of Khushi Ram. It was resolved to bring to the notice of the Government that since in Garhwal and Kumaon there were small hereditary houses of Shilpkar at some places, if new land is allotted to them at some different places, they would not be in a position to rebuild their new houses there, hence now new land will be allotted to them near their old or hereditary houses.⁶⁹ In addition to this the land, which was already under their occupation particularly at Rampura, Chupra and Lete villages, that should be allotted to the same Shilpkar. In this conference this was also earnestly requested to the Depressed Class Education Committee that Shilpkar students, who were learning English may also be given facilities of exemption from fees.⁷⁰ Members of the depressed classes should be appointed as organisers of rural development, members of village panchayat and seats may be reserved for them in Municipal and District Boards. The Government should reduce to half the rates of canes, bamboo and of those trees which are used for making

⁶⁹ .Petition by Tula Rama and Bhawani Ram Arya, secretaries of Shilpkar Sudhar Sabha to the premier, Government of United Provinces, Jan, 1939.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

wooden wares. The trees of Khair for manufacturing Kattha may be auctioned at half the rates. Assistant Secretary in a letter to the Chief conservator of forest informed that the Government approved the supply of cane and other timber at reduced rates to Shilpkars for making wooden wares.⁷¹

Construction of Shilpkar identity from Dom through Census

Dalits have tried on their own both individually and collectively to achieve identity or identities of their choice through various channels during various periods of history. Ambedkar has stated that the Chamars of north India call themselves as Ravidas or Jatavas, the Chakkiliyars as Arundhatiyars, the Mahars as Chokhamela or Somavamshi and the Bhangis as Balmikis. In south, most of the dalit communities tried to construct the identity of *Adi* (sons of the soil concept).

The perception of the upper castes towards Doms had been discussed in the previous chapters. How social, economical and political structures tried to suppress Doms has also been explained. With the enlightenment which came through education, some of the artisanal communities from Dom wanted to change their identity. Previous identity which was constructed by the upper castes, which was of low, contempt, negative and impure, need to be changed. Efforts towards this started during the first half of 20th century.

In a representation, dated 27.07.1920, the secretary of Shilpkar Sudharak Sabha of Kumaon mentioned that:

- (1) That the Shilpkar sudharak Sabha has been established since 1913 in village Sunkia, patti Agra, District Nanital with the object of ameliorating and elevating

⁷¹.File No. 425/XIV.

the social condition of the depressed classes of kumaun and to make proper arrangements for their education . The Sabha has since made a great progress and has enlisted more than a thousand men belonging to the depressed classes as its members. It is to be said with a sense of gratitude to the benign government that they have helped the Sabha in a great way to remove the obstacles thrown in the way of the Sabha by the conservative sects of the Hindu community. The members have given up their old bad habits and now being awakened to the sense of their status / realize with regret their low position in the society and the estimation in which they are held by the higher Hindu castes. The English translation of the general rules of the Sabha is attached herewith.

- (2) That the depressed classes of the hills have been called 'Doms' for the last few decades and have been so recorded in the government papers . The term is now understood in the light of extreme hatred and the people so called are hated and not allowed to touch higher classes who have assumed an unsympathetic attitude towards them. The Sabha has now found out that the said term has not been used for depressed classes in Mr. Backet's settlement papers or in other Government records prior to this time. They were only designated in accordance with the vocation which they pursued as 'Lohar' , Mistri and so forth. It is only in Pt. Dharma Nand's settlements papers that the term is found.
- (3) That since census operations have been started the Sabha deems it necessary to pray to the Government that the depressed classes of the Hills be not designated with the term 'Dom 'as has hitherto been done but according to the nature of the work which they do, as 'Lohar', 'Mastri', 'Kshtkar ' and so forth or preferably, they should be designated with the general term Shilpkar (artisan) with which they are now generally called and referred to in the Hindi papers.

(4) That the Sabha therefore humbly prays that their position be duly considered they be not designated as 'Dom' in the Census paper and also in the government papers. Considering that the 'Souns', 'Nayaks' and 'Sunars' hitherto considered as belonging to low castes have now been designated as 'Kshatrees' only meet to Brahmans, it is most humbly submitted that the ideas associated with the term 'Dom' will be likewise removed if the term 'Shilpkar' be used in connection with the depressed classes.⁷²

H.K. Gracey, Commissioner Order, dated 26.7.1920, forwarded the petition to the superintendent of census operations. He also opined that it was clear the term 'Dom' as applied in the hills is a different word to the 'Dom' used in places like Gorkhpur. The question distinguishing the above to whom it applies here elsewhere deserves consideration. Office of superintendent, census operations, U.P, dated 20th July, Naini Tal, wrote to Mr. B. Khusi Ram, Secretary, Shilpkar Sudharak Sabha, Sunika, Ramnagar, Nainital, saying that he was glad to receive the letter and requested either Khusi Ram or any member of his organization who was well acquainted with the subdivision of the community and who would be able to assist him in the classification of that community the census report. As a result of these efforts by the community, Shilpkar category was introduced in 1931 census. Not only were that Shilpkars categorized into different groups depending on the profession they were following.

As a consequence, E.H.H. Edey, during enumeration for the 1920 census, noted that he had been advised not to use the term Dom in census. Because Doms were divided into a number of sub castes and Dom was only a general name given to all of

⁷². Kushi Ram, Secretary, Shilpkar Sudharak Sabha, Sunika, Nainital, in a petition to the Government, dated, 27.7.1920.

them.⁷³ Although he came across 204 sub castes, he listed 30 authenticates sub-castes among them.⁷⁴ Edey opined that Doms sub castes are not true sub castes but he thought only occupational sub castes are real sub castes of a caste. This is not a correct formulation of a sub caste in Indian society. In 1921 census, there were 31 sub castes which grew to 51 sub castes by 1931 census.

Shilpkar Mahasabha arranged craftsman teacher conference. This first conference of artisan teachers of district Almora was held in Narasimhbari Almora under the chairmanship of Shri Bal Krishna Patwari ji on 9th January. Artisan teachers of adult night schools from all around the district were present on the occasion. The following proposals were unanimously passed.(1) This Convention of craftsmen teachers requests the higher officials of the Education Department that the schools which are open on behalf of the Kumaon Craftsmen Assembly, have to suffer a lot due to lack of buildings, so at least five hundred rupees per school should be provided for building and adequate furniture should be given. (2) This conference of teachers heartily welcomes the Kumaon Craftsman's Circular in which we have made some demands regarding the organization of Volunteers. This conference is ready to extend its full support to this organization.

This convention urges the Education Committee to pay the teachers of Dharma, Sanskrit according to grade. Teachers residing in Lohaghat should be appointed into the schools of Lohaghat and there is no depressed school in the Salt Kalkas area so a school should be opened.4) This convention pleads with the Education Department to waive off the education fees of the children for saving

⁷³ . Vasudha Pande, Stratification in Kumaun circa 1815-1930, NMML, occasional paper, history and society, New series, 37, p.66.

⁷⁴ . E.H.H.Edey , The Depressed Classes of the Kumaun Hills, Census of India 1921 Vol.16, part.1, Appendix, C, Allahabad press 1923, PP. 21-22.

thousands of poor children from being illiterate. (5) This convention is dedicated to our heart emperor Rai Sahib Hari Prasad Tamta and Shri Ram Prasad Tamta and pays heartfelt tribute to the MLAs for their tireless hard work and leadership.(6) It was decided that copies of these proposals should be sent to the concerned officials.⁷⁵

Hari Prasad continued his efforts to improve the conditions of Shilpkars. In an address to U.P Depressed League he exhorted them, ‘The education conference which was held in Bareilly, its key points should be implemented soon. I would request my brothers to raise their voices and remind the government that it just began to perform the respective duties towards us and there is a long way to go. Government jobs should be offered to us. Our brothers should be employed in all the civil, military and public attractions. Education should be promoted within us and there should be a lot of stipends for the training of our promising youth. Such masters should be appointed who can go to our colonies and operate night schools to propagate education within us. Patrol librarians and patrol schools should be arranged for the training of our people.’⁷⁶

Petition to keep them under depressed classes

However, when there are attempts to delete them from depressed category, the community resisted and requested the Government to keep them under depressed class so that community could get educational and employment opportunities. In a representation, in November, 1934, to His Excellency, the Governor United provinces, Shilpkars in Kumaon Davison categorically expressed their apprehension that there were efforts by some vested groups to deprive them of the benefits they were

⁷⁵ . Samata news paper, 15th January, 1941.

⁷⁶ . The address given by Mr. Hari Prasad Tamta ji in the meeting of U.P. Depressed League As Chairman in Lucknow on January 7, 1934.

receiving as depressed classes by including them among higher castes. The petition reads:

“We the humble servants of your Excellency bring to your kind notice the grievance of the Shilpkar in kumaun regarding our classification in future elections.

We understand that there is a move by some interested parties to classify us as Aryasamajists and not as depressed classes in kumaun have begun to put on the sacred thread they have become touchable and therefore not depressed classed. This, your Excellency is misleading and at deliberate move to cause us harm. We have by putting on the sacred thread begun to call ourselves Arya Shilpkar (artisans), but all the same we remain a depressed class and entitled to be classification as such. We are given to understand that government will treat us as ordinary Hindus- Arya Samajists and consequently no number of this community will ever derive the privileges which the benign Government has extended or is going to extend for depressed classes.

We the humble servant of your Excellency most respectfully submit that we put on the sacred thread in order to induce sanitary habits amongst the depressed classed and to improve the general conditions. On the other hand our humble petitioners are hated and considered as untouchable and there has been a great social conflict and Ill feeling with higher classes. Besides being regarded as Untouchables in the Kumaun Division, Most of your humble

petitioners have no property of their own and depend upon their manual labour and are in very poor condition. As regards Social status, poverty and all other things, there is absolutely no difference between us and other depressed classes, whether of the plains or of the hills.

Your humble petitioners were known as Doms only a decade ago and are still called as such by the higher classes. It was the result of some agitation by us that we were afterwards entered in the census as “Arya Shilpkar” and “Shilpkar”. To consider us as Arya Samajists and among the higher classes is a mistake and a great hardship on your humble petitioners, who will thus lose their rights to be represented in the local bodies and to derive the benefit of any grant of land or scholarships etc. reserved for the depressed classes.

We may also bring to your notice that it has wrongly been represented to you that the member of depressed classes (Shilpkar), who put on sacred thread is a few thousands. But the truth is that we are about half the total depressed class population of Kumaun and this clean habit, which the benign Government means to encourage, is spreading by leaps and bounds. If the sacred thread wearing depressed classes is excluded from the beneficial measure of the Government then the social uplift of the depressed classes will be seriously set back.

We may further mention that we sacred thread wearing depressed people have nothing whatsoever to do with the Arya Samajists or their institutions.

Your humble petitioners, therefore, most humbly pray that the right of your humble Petitioners to be represented in the legislative and local bodies of the country as depressed classes be not thrown out because we wear the sacred thread.”⁷⁷

Entry of Shilpkars into Government Services

Throughout pre-British period Shilpkar were kept away from the government services. The post of Diwan in royal court and Faujdar court was reserved for the migrated Brahmans. Chasesand Doms were considered to be unworthy for the government services.⁷⁸ In the beginning period of British rule, Brahmans were given preference in the government services. An Almora paper of 1917 informs that in 1916 the Commissioner of Kumaon came to know that there was monopoly of Brahmans in his office. Upper castes occupied mostly while collar jobs like Doctors, Lawyers and also in high government services and low caste people in compulsory services and other services to help other high services. Bith were also first to get education and consequently get jobs under the colonial government. While some artisans, servile class and landless labourer of low caste remained became washerman, barber, house hold servant, peon, basket maker, oil crusher, potter and vegetable, fruit and milk vendor.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Petition signed by Kushi Ram Shilpkar, Khem Ram Shilpkar, Bhawani Ram Shilpkar, Tula Ram Shilpkar, usain Ram Shilpakr, Kishrolal Shilpkar, in November, 1934.

⁷⁸ . Naval Viyogi and M.Anwar Ansari, History of the Later Harappans and Shilpkar Movement, Pt.II, Delhi, 2010, p. 498.

⁷⁹ . Ibid., p. 498

Colonial Government also changed its policy after 1857 sepoy mutiny. The British started encouraging more and more Raj puts and now and then Shilpkars. One author mentions that a lot of educated and well qualified Rajput youths were selected as Naib Tehsildars, Dy. Collectors and high military officers. Shilpkar people were recruited more after 1930 as their education levels were low before this period. Therefore, a number of Shilpkar youths were recruited in police in 1935.⁸⁰ Mr. Ram Prasad Tamta Asked a question on the floor of the house that 'will the government be pleased to state the total no of constable who have been appointed by the police department in year 1935,1936,1937 and how many of them belong to the SC? To this question, the Honble the primer made a statement that a total 87 constables belonged to Scheduled castes. Out of them 3 constables were from Shilpkar community:⁸¹ Again in 1938 two more Shilpkar were appointed in Police department.⁸² After getting education, **Shilpkar** youth also appeared for civil services examination. In 1948 U.P. Police Service Examination was held and three posts reserved for scheduled castes in this examination in which Mr. Jagdish Prasad Tamta got 64 rank.⁸³

Ram Prashad Tamta also drew the attention of house in the Assembly of Sanyukta Prant in his appeal to the house. As a result nearly thirty posts of clerks and other senior posts and peons were given to the educated Shilpkar people. In 1936 Mr. Benxi lal who belongs to Shilpkar community was appointed as a clerk in Settlement Office, and worked up to two years.⁸⁴ Shilpkar were appointed in Air force also. Mr. Botha Singh was appointed in Royal Air Force Station, Kanchrapara as Upper

⁸⁰ . Samata Weekly, 1935, July, 30.

⁸¹ . Legislative Assembly Proceedings vol. VII ,No.7 9th August 1938 Page No677,680

⁸² . Legislative Assembly Proceedings Vol. VII, No .7 Date 9th August 1938 Page no- 677, 680

⁸³ . File no88 (1) /1946.

⁸⁴ . Reference – file no- 502(52)/1942 C.P.F recruitment civil pioneer force.

Division Civilian clerk.⁸⁵ Apart from government services Shilpkar community also engaged with Public works department. They acquired some tenders from PWD. In 1937 Mr. Laxmi Prasad Tamta got the tender for 24 miles corner- cutting for Almora –Ranikhet Road.⁸⁶ Again in 1938 Mr. Lalta Prasad Tamta acquired 111 miles contract of Conner- cutting.⁸⁷

Political empowerment came through general elections of State Legislative Assembly in 1936. It gave an opportunity to a lot of Shilpkars to contest the election from different reserved constituencies. In the same election Mr. Hari Prashad Tamta was elected as Member of Legislative Assembly quite unopposed. At the same time Babu Ram Prasad Tamta won the election of M.L.A. from Kumaon and represented Shilpkar from this constituency up to 1939.⁸⁸ Hari Prashad Tamta, who was famous for his services to the people, was elected in 1945 for the first time, as the chairman of the Municipal Committee Almora, Almost at the same time; Ram Prasad Tamta was nominated as the member of state legislative council, in 1946. In the same way many Shilpkar leaders such as Bachhi Ram Arya, Baldev Singh Arya, Babu Bodha Singh, Keshav Lal Tamta etc were also elected to different District Boards and Municipalities.

Admission of Shilpkar into the Military Services

According to the list of martial races and Shri Ganga Prasad Upreti, and as per the list compiled by Sir Abbot the Shilpkar were considered to be unfit for army from

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ . Reference- Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of the United Provinces 2nd august 1938, Vol. VII, No 2 page no. 96).

⁸⁷Reference- Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of the United Provinces 26th April 1938, Vol. IX, page no.1175-1176.)

⁸⁸ . Naval Viyogi and M.Anwar Ansari, History of the Later Harappans and Shilpkar Movement, Pt.II, Delhi, 2010, p. 499.

1880 onward.⁸⁹ In the early time, British administration, declared Shilpkar as a non-martial community and their recruitment in the army was banned. As per Bengal Army Rule No. 31 Part II Sub Part 6 of December 1834 and 1853, it has been decided that on the basis of long experience there was general order to recruit upper castes and attentively ignore all the low caste people. There is a list of these castes, which were banned for recruitment in the military services. These castes are: Bania, Kayastha, Nai (Barber), Teli (oil crushers), Tabali, Gararia (Shepherd), Kahar, (Water Carrier), Mali (Gardener), Kachhi (Fruit and vegetable vendor) and other low castes. Birch the British Major General remarked that we could use lower caste people in other areas of public service but not in national security forces.⁹⁰

After 1857 rebellion was successfully suppressed, the British came to the view that in the army mostly upper caste people were there who were responsible for the mutiny. As Brahman soldiers were considered to be the main cause of rebellion of 1857, it was decided that henceforth none of the Brahmins should be recruited and instead low caste people should be recruited in a big number. General R.H. Somersett, the Chief of Army of Bombay Division, said that Brahmans should be recruited neither in military services nor in public services. Therefore, the British opened doors of military service to other castes and lower castes. The commission of Lord Peel, opined that Indian native army should be consisted of all different castes, but under a general rule, all should be mixed up without any merit.⁹¹

The First World War which took place during 1914-18 Great Britain, France, Russia, Germany and United States of America were involved. England was in great need of soldiers on foreign fronts. Although, soldiers from upper castes were recruited

⁸⁹. Abott, J.J, Memorandum on Garhwalis, Simla, 1894.

⁹⁰. Naval Viyogi and M.Anwar Ansari, op.cit. p.499.

⁹¹. Report of the Peel Committee on organization of Indian Army, 1859, p. 14.

in a very high number from Kumaon, yet, the necessity of soldiers was still there in a very high demand. In 1917, a depot of labour core was established for recruitment of Shilpkar at Bheemtal, Nainital.⁹² A double company of Shilpkar was also established there.⁹³ In addition to this three labour companies were also established in the area of Lucknow. The first company was consisted of half of the Kumaon labour and rests half from the castes like Ahir, Kurmi, Gadoria, Lodha etc.⁹⁴ Second Company was for recruitment of Shilpkar only. In third company there were half Shilpkar and in rest of the half were Passis and Chamars from the plains.⁹⁵ At this moment Hari Prashad Tamta gave a spirited speech to Shilpkar, in response of which about ten thousand Shilpkars offered their services. From them six hundred Shilpkar were recruited in labour company who were paid. Rs. 1442 per month as pay and food and uniform were also given in addition to this.⁹⁶ Again, Superman Company was also set up for Shilpkar in Bheemtal in 1918. During this period, hundreds and thousands of Shilpkar youths were sent to foreign countries as part of army.⁹⁷ This was to have a great impact on the economic condition of Shilpkar in the years to come.

Heroic fight of Shilpkars in 2nd World War

After 1938, cloud of world war again appeared in the sky. This world war pushed the human race in a very critical condition and it was more fatal, fearful and wide spread than the First World War. Obviously, the colonial government was worried at this time. Mr. Tamta presented a proposal before the government that his Shilpkar community will be available to face the fury of war up to the last moment.

⁹² . The Samata weekly, 29th Jan, 1941.

⁹³ The Samata weekly, 29th Jan, 1941.

⁹⁴ The Samata weekly, 29th Jan, 1941.

⁹⁵ . Samata, January, 29, 1941.

⁹⁶ . Samata, 5th March, 1941.

⁹⁷ . Samata, 24th Feb. 1941.

The congress leaders of Kumaon also opposed recruitment of soldiers for war. Under these circumstances, the Shilpkar community got the opportunity to serve in the army. Shilpkars got two birds at one shot. On one hand, the visit to foreign lands as part of the army and they could get economic benefits on the other. Therefore, Hari Prasad Tamta got the Shilpkar recruited in the form of carpenters as well as blacksmiths. Thus Tamta provided 300 technician youths also to the army.⁹⁸ At this moment, Vishnu Prashad Tamta H.A.R.O.Ranikhet, was ordered to make available a high number of Shilpkar youths in the form of coolies at the time of inspection of Colonel Kien on 25 September 1941.⁹⁹

During this period, not only Shilpkar but upper caste people were also recruited in a very high number. Hari Prasad Tamta motivated many Shilpkars to join the army and fight on behalf of the British. Therefore, the then Commander-in-chief of India highly praised his activities. In the month of August, 1941 Rai Bahadur Sir Hari Prashad Tamta was honoured with the Guard of honour by the third Battalion of Pioneer Regiment in the capacity of honourable citizen of India at Lucknow.¹⁰⁰ After the war was over, victory celebrations were done in every village of Kumaon.¹⁰¹

Again on the eve of Independence, on 19-20 May 1947, a conference of Shilpkar leaders was held in the Rink-Hall of Nainital under the leadership of Shri Khushi Ram. Other people who attended the meeting were: 14 M.L.As and M.L.Cs. of Sanyukt Prant, leaders of Kumaon like Pt. Hargovind Pant MLA, Rai Sahib Jagan Nath Pandeya, chairman District Board Nainital and famous Shilpkar leader Sh Jayanand Bhartiya, present in this convention. Some of the important resolutions

⁹⁸. Letter no. 191/76, Sept. 18, 1941, Technical Recruitment office, Eastern Area, Lucknow.

⁹⁹. Assistant Recruiting officer, Memorandum, 3/4825, September, 1, 1941, Almora.

¹⁰⁰. Daily Leader, Lucknow, 6th August, 1941.

¹⁰¹. Pataka News paper, May, 21, 1945.

passed in this conference are: This convention supports the manifesto of Shilpkar Sammelon of Haldwani.

1. In view of the exemplary bravery shown by Shilpkar in the World Wars of 1914-1917 and 1939-1945, it is requested that that a Battalion of Shilpkar Rifles of Kumaon Commissionery should be formed as this would help Shilpkar Community.
2. At present no Shilpkar has been appointed as Dy. Collector, Dy. Superintendent of police etc. Therefore, we appeal to the Government of Sanyukta Prant that to make measures for the employment of Shilpkars a higher positions.
3. Local labour may be used in construction works like roads and bridges instead of getting labourers from outside.
4. We request Nainital Municipality to allocate land for poor Shilpkar.
5. Qualifications prescribed for recruitment in the government services may be relaxed in case of Shilpkars.

Thus, some artisanal groups within Doms, after getting education, got enlightened and strived to achieve self-respect and equality. The presence of colonial Government which did not go by the traditions but by rule of law also helped in the process. It was not cake walk for Shilpkars to get this status. They had to struggle hard to achieve this status. Arya Samaj in the beginning wanted social mobility of Doms. But their efforts seem to have been generated more by their fears of Doms getting converted to Christianity than by genuine efforts to really change the status of Doms. Even after purifications ceremonies and wearing Janeo, they were not allowed

to use Dola Palki in marriage processions of Shilpkar. This seems to have prompted leaders like Munshi Hari Prasad Tamta to raise the economic status by way of education, employment and demand for grant of land both for cultivation and for residences.

Chapter-6
Conclusion

Chapter-6

CONCLUSION

In the previous chapters, we have seen that Uttarakhand society comprised so called upper castes known as Bith and Doms who were supposed to be lower castes. Actually Dom does not signify a single caste. It was a generic name which was given to different menial and artisanal castes. There a number of sub castes among Doms. Both William Crooke and Census of India 1921 talk about the existence of sub castes among Doms. Census divided Doms into four groups putting different castes under one group.

To the first belong the Kolis, Tamotas, Lohar, lohars, Orhs, and Dharhis. The kolis weaves cloth, keep pigs and flows, and are agricultural the Tamotas or Tamta represent the thantheras of the plains, and are workers in the brass cooper. The lohars are workers in iron the orhs comprise both masons and carpenters. Dharhis through socially ranked wisdoms do not belong to them, for they properly include only those khasiyas who have been put out of caste for some offence, and their offspring from new caste with the addition of the fresh avocation. To the second class belong the Bhuls, Chunyars, Ruriyas, Agaris, and Pahrirs. The bhuls represent the tails of plains but also to do filed work. They are also called Baryas. The chunyaras are turners, and make wooden vessels and the bottom of huqqas. The Ruriyas make various kinds of bamboo baskets and sieves. The Agaris are irons smelters, and must be carefully discriminated from the Dravidian Agariyas of mirzapur they are doms attached to the service of the mines by the former Rajas, but are gradually exchanging a very ill – paid and dangerous avocation for that of road- making and other profitable work. The

pahris are village messengers, and are the same as chamar village watchmen of plains. To third class belong the mullahs, Daryas and Chamars. The mullahs are also called Dhunars, and are for the most part engaged in agriculture. The Darym are village and conjure away hailstorms and the like, for which service they receive annual dues of gains. The Chamars call themselves Bairsawa , and will never acknowledge the Chamars. They saw leather and perform to all the usual services duties of the Doms.

The fourth class includes the professional beggars and vagrant musicians of the Hills – the Badi, Hurikya , Darzi, and Dholi. The Badi is the village musician; in the plains he is considered to be Nat. He plays on various instruments and sings at festivals. He goes from village to village begging from door to door, and belongs to the class of sturdy beggars who, if they do not get what they expect lampoon the people of the house and abuse them. For these reasons they are, to some extent, feared, and able to maintain themselves at the expense of their neighbours. They also snare fowl and fish. The Hurkiyas are so called from the small double drum (Huruk, Huruka) shaped like an hourglass which he carries. This is an archaic musical instrument like the Damaru, which is one Siva's emblems. They never take to agriculture, and wander about with their woman, who dance and sing. The Darzi also called Auji and Suji , lives by tailoring, through often solely by agriculture. To the Darzi class belongs the Dolhi so called from beating the Drum (dholak). This is done by the way of incantation to cause sprites and ghosts to enter or leave the person to give the money to the performer. The Daraya, Badi, Hurkiya and Dholi are all Doms, and “ are in the, the recognized priests of the malignant spirits of the hill and glen, whose aid is always sought after and before anything serious is undertaken or any difficult task is attempted. It is the Doms who preserve to the present day the pure demonism of the aborigines, while the Khasiyas temper it with the worship of the

village deities, the named and localized divine entities, and furnish from their ranks the priests. The most of the barbais belong to the Orh division of the Doms, and the chunapaz or lime-burners belong to the Agari, and Lohar branches of the Doms. Finally there is a class known as Domjogi, who are beggars. The portions of the village site assigned to Doms are in the hill known as Domaura or Domtola, like the Chamrauti where the chamars of the plain congregate.

Caste in Kumaon illustrates strikingly the crucial importance of political power in determining access to land, jobs in administration and command over human labour. We need to understand that the concept of power needs to be perceived in broad sense. We may speak of the existence of power whenever compliance is secured by some from others even against the latter's will. The ruled might comply because of the fear of coercion or because they feel that those who issue commands have a right to do so. The authority thinks that the power they exercise is legitimate not only from their point of view but also from whom it is exercised. There is always an effort to legitimize all inequalities in the distribution of power. The distribution of power can of course be viewed as an aspect of the division of labour in a society. Just as the different roles in the economic system constitute an aspect of the division of labour, so do the different roles in the political system. But the political power may also be viewed as that system which maintains and regulates the division of labour in a society. The power structure is used not only to regulate and maintain the relations between groups but also to change these relations under different conditions. When we look at Uttarakhand society we observe that political structure and administrative structure played an important role in defining, regulating and modifying the relations among different castes in the society.

This gave us a new opportunity to look at the caste structure as caste in Uttarakhand was viewed in terms of distribution of power apart from its ritual criteria. The distinctions in the society were basically those between the ruler and the ruled. This is the only society in the country where caste groups have emerged on the basis of political and legal distinctions. The political vicissitudes through which Kumaon has passed since very early times are especially significant for understanding its present social structure.

Doms as a group, numerically, have been second only to the Khasi. Being agrestic serfs, they were distributed all over Kumaon and found wherever the agriculturist Khasi was found. Traditionally the Dom was attached to Bith-villages as servile artisans and menials. Even Chand copper plate inscriptions and revenue records indicate the presence of Agaris, Tamtas, Lohars, Bhulas (oil pressers), Paharis(guards) Bakhariyas (in charge of stables) and Turis (entertainers). One author opined that Doms were the Kainis of Chandra revenue records. In earlier times they were kept in strict subjection and were passed from hand to hand like cattle, or were attached to the soil like serfs. Atkinson, however, maintains that it was only the Dom employed as hali (ploughmen) who along with his dependants could be sold. Others could not be sold though they were obliged to render menial and artisan services to the Bith. Occupational specialization was very elementary and fluid for a Dom and he was jurally bound to perform any service he was called upon to by Bith masters and could not leave the village or change his occupation without the permission of the latter. The Dom, however, were not individually owned like other items of movable property. They were assets, in the same way as land, jointly and severally exploited by a corporate body of landowning co-residential kinsmen, usually the local patrilineage,

and controlled through the village headman who usually also happened to be the head of the local lineage and its representative, spokesman and manager.

The Dom lacked all formal political power and had no civil right except that of receiving adequate sustenance from their Bith masters. They were not free even to regulate relations amongst themselves. Even quarrels involving father and son or husband and wife were, irrespective of the wishes of those actually involved, resolved by the Bith to whom the former were attached. Similarly, quarrels between the Doms of two different villages were taken up by the Bith of the villages concerned and resolved with no reference to the individuals with whom the quarrel originated. One very important social consequence of this was to curtail interaction between Doms of two different villages even if, as sometimes happened, they were related by ties of blood. The very small agnatic group living in a village or a couple of agnatically related villages was the meaningful kin universe of the Dom. Restrictions on social interaction and on physical movement were, perhaps, the two most important factors responsible for the failure of the Dom to evolve caste units even when occupational distinctions within the Dom category were very highly developed.

The Dom as a category owed their units to the treatment meted out to its members by the Bith, particularly by the uniformity and persistence of the disabilities imposed by the latter on the former. These explicit socio-legal disabilities imposed by the Bith on the Dom made it impossible for the latter to improve their status position. Many of the disabilities such as those concerned with dress and decoration made it extremely easy for a Dom to be identified so that any Dom violating a prescription was easily recognized and punished. This worked as a very effective

deterrent on the Dom trying to escape or to take up the cultural practices meant for his social superiors.

The Doms were wholly dependent on their clean caste gusain for every material and many social necessities. Housing, clothing, food, money to meet life-crises ceremonies and other contingencies, and social control were all provided by the Bith. Intercession with the higher' deities on behalf of the Dom had to be done by the gusain as the former were forbidden to approach these directly and personally. Even new-born children were named after consultation with the gusain. Most of these servants were paid for the services they rendered by fixed quantities of the agricultural produce at each harvest. This share, known as khal, was usually just enough to maintain the Dom at a bare subsistence level.

Though the Gurkha occupation destroyed the overall political authority of the Thul-jat by taking away from them the formal control over political and economic resources which sustained such authority at the regional level, they did nothing to destroy the informal power which the Thul-jat enjoyed as principal landholders, in which position they could control subordinate tenants and servants. The Gurkhas continued the feudal system of government which had developed in Kumaon during the Chand rule. Tracts of land were assigned to army commanders for the maintenance of the soldiers under their command. Though these assignments were made against existing grants, (made by the Chand rulers), the new grantees do not seem generally to have taken physical possession of the field. Indeed, the frequency with which officers were transferred and the nature of duties of the military commanders left them little time or opportunity to personally undertake the management of the assignment which was left to one of their 'principal landholders

whom they made responsible for the amount of the rents. The 'principal landholders', who were as a rule from the Thul-jat category, thus retained their influence over the mass of common peasantry and menials. As these deputies were relatively permanent (because they were also landholders) they generally came to acquire an under-grantee status. The excessive rent imposed on agricultural land was also responsible for perpetuating the status-inferiority of the Khasi who as actual cultivators of the soil had ultimately to bear the brunt of taxation and consequent economic impoverishment. The assignees were responsible under the Gurkha administration, as they were under the Chand, for the maintenance of law and order within their assignments. Part of this formal political authority was also delegated to the deputies who contributed to the maintenance of the political superiority of the latter vis-à-vis the Khasi cultivator of the soil and the Dom menials. The rudimentary changes appearing in the structure of caste during Gurkha rule are only suggestive of those to appear as a consequence of the imposition of British rule in Kumaon in which a socio-rural philosophy radically different from that underlying the Chand as well as Gurkha - government was imposed in Kumaon.

The British did not generally take specific anti-caste measures but the great majority of the administrative measures introduced by them in Kumaon had some effect on the structure of caste on account of the latter's all-pervading quality. Measures aimed at increasing the revenue receipts from the land led, for example, to a situation where members of the Dom group, traditionally denied the right to hold land, were given a proprietary interest in land and this had serious consequences for their traditional relationships with the Bith. The refusal to use governmental authority to coerce people to follow specific occupations or rituals affected the occupational and ritual aspects of caste and also changed the occupational interrelationships

between different castes. The formal abolition of slavery and serfdom early during British rule and a land revenue policy biased heavily in favour of the actual cultivator irrespective of the latter's caste brought significant changes in the formal legal status of the Dom and sections of the Khasi.

The process of dissociating socio-religious status from its political and economic base begun in Kumaon under the Gurkhas was completed by the British. Like the Gurkhas the British remained outside the traditional socio-religious status structure of Kumaoni society notwithstanding their long rule. The English rulers were aliens in whose moral philosophy secular social status was not a function of religious status or vice versa. This was in direct contradiction of and opposition to the bases of social stratification in traditional Kumaon. Also, the British administrators of Kumaon (though they governed the Kumaoni and till the beginning of the present century enjoyed a great deal of power and autonomy) ruled in the name of and were responsible to an authority outside Kumaon. As a unit within a large empire, Kumaon remained a political entity but not an isolate as it was in Chand times. The geographical and political insularity of Kumaon in Chand times were conditions in which a person who was not physically present ceased to be relevant for the native status structure. Similarly, anyone who took up residence in Kumaon was, on account of the impossibility of maintaining interactive relations with his native society, absorbed into the Kumaoni status structure.

Various economic, legal and administrative measures were adopted by the British in Kumaon. Some of them deeply impacted the nature of caste in Kumaon. Some of them are:

Formal legal sanctions supporting the status structure were withdrawn and caste offences were refused formal legal cognizance; The British replaced the exalted and very powerful dharmadhikari by an official (known as sadaramin) who occupied a very low rank in the administrative hierarchy, wielded no formal power and functioned merely as an advisor to the administration, particularly in matters relating to inheritance of property. He did not decree as the dharmadhikari did. He merely explained to the administration what the canon law said about a specific issue, and, though he was given jurisdiction over petty civil disputes, he had no authority except as an expert on canon law. But even the office of sadaramin was abolished after some time. The pre-British dharmadhikari, on the other hand, had held a key position in the formal status-maintaining machinery. He was the infallible interpreter of the dharmashastra. His interpretation had the same sanctity and validity as the scriptures he interpreted and his decrees were as sacred and binding as divine law. As the ultimate authority on matters pertaining to morally correct living, the dharmadhikari determined the entitlement of individuals and groups to rank positions in the social hierarchy and formally regulated all status movements within the stratificational structure by legitimizing or punishing such mobility. The British authority in Kumaon by dispensing with the services of the dharmadhikari destroyed the institutionalized method for allocating individuals to castes, legitimizing status V shifts and punishing illegal attempts at mobility.

The sale of dependants (generally of children) widely. Practiced by the Khasi was abolished by the British. This made it impossible for members of the Thuljat to procure domestic or agricultural bond-servants and modified the image of the Khasi as a category from which servants could be bought to maintain the status superiority of the Thuljat.

Slavery was also abolished though Dom serfs and artisans could be transferred legally with the land for quite a long time. The practice of enslaving certain categories of criminals from the Khasi group for working on royal land was also given up. In pre-British times a serf or slave was liable to be killed for trying to escape and a freeman liable to prosecution for abetting-such escape. By refusing to entertain petitions for the restoration of existing slaves or prosecution of abettors, the courts of law established by the British contributed: directly to changing the legal status of the Dom and of sections of the Khasi.

The new rulers opened administrative offices to everyone irrespective of caste. In fact some of the early British administrators are known to have tried to break the traditional influence and power of the Thul-jat by appointing 'men of low-birth' to important administrative offices. The more important administrative offices such as those of diwan (minister), bakshi (army chief), sardar (army commanders), faujdar (regional commanders and administrators), dharnadhikari (canonist), and raj-guru (royal religious preceptor) became redundant: under the new administration and for the inferior administrative positions the Thul-jat had to compete with the Khasi and even with the Dom. Within their own ranks the Thul-jat castes underwent important modifications in regard to sub-caste differentiation which was almost entirely based on occupational differences.

The rent-free land grants and assignments in lieu of cash payment held by members of the Chauthani and Kshetri castes as advisers or administrators were generally resumed by the British, and the important status distinction between the garkha and the thatwan destroyed. The garkha were reduced to the position of ordinary landowners assessed for revenue and other services like landowners of any

other caste. The practice of farming out revenues to members of the Thul-jat castes was also abolished and each cultivator, except certain categories of tenants, was made-responsible for paying the state assessment on the land of which he was a co-sharer and in which he was given rights of pre-emption.

A policy of giving proprietary rights to the actual cultivator, irrespective of his caste, was adopted as a result of which even members of the Dom category became landowners. A person who cleared the jungle from a piece of land and brought it under cultivation was given proprietary rights in it. This also freed persons who were traditionally prohibited to own land from their dependence on high-caste landlords. This affected among other things a scarcity of agricultural labour. |

All persons who held land as proprietors or under proprietors, irrespective of their caste, were legally compelled to provide provisions and coolie services to touring government officials and travellers. This linkage between landownership and certain types of menial services (though the latter were abolished after political agitation in 1921), helped to break down to some extent the exclusiveness of the Thul-jat who traditionally disdained menial work which was a symbol of status inferiority and was performed by the Khasi and the Dom. Many Thul-jat individuals, particularly from the Kshetri caste who did not have any other occupation except agriculture to fall back upon after the British conquest of Kumaon and could not afford to hire Khasi or Dom individuals for performing coolie-bardaish (compulsory labour) for them, were forced to perform it themselves and suffer a loss of prestige and rank.

The highly centralized administrative and judicial system established by the British in Kumaon was the total opposite of the traditional decentralized system of judicial and civil administration which gave the Thol-jat army commanders and

administrator's great prestige and power to control the behaviour of the people under their jurisdiction and maintain their status superiority.

The British administration guaranteed equality before law to all and abolished the dual standards of justice and of punishment--one for persons of higher caste and another for those of the lower. The refusal of the new rulers to enforce restrictions traditionally imposed on the use of symbols of status such as gold, special apparel, sandalwood paste, the thread ceremony, the sacramental form of marriage ceremony and the like, which helped in the easy status placement of individuals, freed members of the deprived castes to assume these with the result that the symbols lost their status association. Abolition of trial through ordeals and of such punishment as enslavement or death; or the cutting off of the limbs or the nose of a non-Thul-jat offender, tended not only to make the latter stand up to their social superiors, but also to violate the norms which traditionally helped maintain status exclusiveness.

Centralization of administrative authority required a wide and efficient communications network for its success. Improved means of communication broke the isolation of different parts of Kumaon and the establishment of peace and the destruction of ferocious animals which infested the forests of Kumaon made it possible for members of a caste in one area to establish intensive contacts-with-their fellows in others. In the political and economic circumstances created by the imposition of British rule this fact was instrumental in giving rise to politically oriented associations such as the Kumaon Rajput Parishad or the Kumaon Shilpkar Sabha and newspapers serving political and economic ends, such as the Kumaon Rajput and Samta (the latter the organ of the Dom association and the former, of the Rajput). Significantly, the Thul-jat castes, particularly the Bhal-Baman, were never

organized into formal associations or published caste journals. The linking of Kumaon with the rest of India by road and, later, rail made it possible for the Kumaonis to work outside Kumaon and yet retain not only the membership of their respective castes in Kumaon but also influence the status structure without being permanently present on the social scene. Emigrants were not necessarily lost to the parental caste in Kumaon. Similarly, immigrants to Kumaon were freed from the necessity to choose between risking their lives while crossing the terai in order to secure spouses from their native castes or be absorbed in the Kumaoni status structure through intermarriage. The ease with which contacts could be maintained with their caste fellows through occasional visits and letters, and the possibility of confining connubial relations within their native regional castes made the absorption of immigrant Hindus - into the Kumaoni status structure unnecessary.

The British abolished the large number of taxes collected by the Hindu kings. The real burden of these taxes was borne by the already impoverished class of tenants or owner-cultivators who came from the Khasi category. These cultivators were also forced to pay a whole variety of other dues to the landlords and regional administrators and their agents. British administration imposed a uniform tax on land and commuted the customary dues payable by the tenants to the landlord to a small percentage of the state demand. Uniformity of taxation and new tenures destroyed the old status distinctions between the different types of tenures. This found expression in the disappearance of virtually all pre-British 'proprietary' tenures in favour of a new one created by the British. One very important status-relevant effect of this was to eliminate the status distinctions between high caste immigrant garkha and the indigenous Khasi thatwan and to put all the castes, including the Dom, at par as far as landownership was concerned.

The English civil administrators, army officers, teaplanter and missionaries could, on account of their religion and food habits (such as eating beef, eggs, mushrooms), secure personal and domestic servants only from the Dom-group. Such an association with the rulers brought economic advantages without reflecting itself in the status structure which was significantly responsible for creating dissatisfaction amongst such Dom with their traditional status in the social hierarchy.

The establishment of cantonments for the British army of occupation, the development of 'hill-stations' to which officers and civilians flocked to escape the hot summers of the Indian plains, and the establishment of tea plantations in different parts of Kumaon, provided ready markets for whatever the peasants wanted to sell. This went a long way towards the improvement of the ordinary peasants' economic condition. Labour requirements for the construction and maintenance of roads, bridges etc. and for the exploitation of the forests gave to the traditionally deprived cultivators and servants new opportunities to improve their economic condition.

The increase in the political and economic scale brought about by integrating Kumaon into the British-Indian Empire did not leave the Kumaoni status structure untouched. Having been made a part of a larger politico-economic entity, Kumaon could not be kept insulated against reformist or reactionary currents emanating elsewhere in India. The best example of this is the penetration into Kumaon of the reformist ideology concerned with the destruction of untouchability.

As we have seen the existing political and legal system bound Doms to the Bith castes. They were excluded from all administrative positions. They were also excluded from owing natural resources like land both for agricultural and residential purposes. They were discriminated from all areas of life. They were denied

educational facilities. The same system continued from ancient time till the coming of the British.

Things started changing only after the arrival of the British and modernity to the Hills of Uttarakhand. During pre-colonial period, Doms were treated as lower castes. First of all, Shilpkars began their movement to achieve social and religious liberty who were helped very much by the Arya Samaj movement.

Education was opened up for all by the colonial state. Schools and colleges were set up. Spreading up education among their people, was one of the important steps taken by their leaders who made efforts to get financial help from government, like exemption of fees, getting more and more scholarship for lower and higher education and opening of more and more schools near, habitation of Shilpkars.

The Dom identity with which lower castes were identified by the caste society was not constructed by Doms. It was constructed and reinforced from time to time by the people who got benefits of this identity. Caste society could keep a large number of people under this identity out of power, denied natural resources and got free labour for productive activities. Not only that, this identity was also of low, contempt and humiliation. Same identity was also used to deny them educational opportunities, government service, denied land ownership. They saw to it that large number of communities did not access to power and status in the society.

Thus, Shilpkars in Uttarakhand tried to construct their own positive identity. Some artisanal castes separated themselves from the rest of the Doms of Uttarakhand and created their identity. Arya Samaj also tried to raise the status of Shilpkars by way of introducing Janeo (sacred thread) and *uapanayana* ceremonies to the Shilpkars. But

there was stiff resistance from the conservative sections of the society. This can be seen from the beating of baratis of Shilpkars during wedding ceremonies with Dola palki. In opposing this, they not only destroyed dola palki, beat baratis but also tore Janeo which Shilpkars were wearing. However, in spite of that Shilpkar identity could be achieved over the period of time.

An identity is neither independent social product nor remains fixed forever. In the same way Shilpkar identity is constructed through the processes of interaction, and daily engagement with both local and international society. These processes of construction got widely influenced by the social and cultural institutional arrangements of the Uttarakhand society. Hence, the process of identity construction got negotiated both with the localised conditions, historical experiences and inter connections with wider society. It is a complex and dynamic process through which Shilpkar identity got constructed, reformed and rejuvenated. Therefore, the summations of identity represent the collective self. Generally speaking human beings are born in society and societal conditions widely shape the identity.

Bibliography

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Administrative Reports/ Official/ Government Reports

1. Kumaonis, Hand book for Indian Army 1933.
2. Official Report on the Administration of Provinces of Kumaun 1878.
3. Report on the Peel committee on organization of Indian Army 1859.
4. Report on the Administration of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh 1919-20.
5. Report on the Administration of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh 1921-22.
6. Report on the Administration of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh 1923-24.
7. Report on the Administration of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh 1931-32.
8. Report on the Administration of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh 1932-33.
9. Report on the Administration of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh 1934-35.
10. Report on the Administration of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh 1935-36.
11. Report on the Administration of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh 1937-38.
12. Report on the Administration of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh 1940.
13. Report on the Administration of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh 1941.
14. Report on the Administration of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh 1942.
15. Report on the Administration of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh 1943.
16. Report on the Administration of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh 1944.
17. Report on the Administration of United Provinces 1947.

Census Reports

1. Census of India 1911, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Volume I.
2. Census of India 1921, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, VolumeXIV.
3. Census of India 1931, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, VolumeXIII, XVIII.

Gazetteers

1. Gazetteer of Garhwal Himalaya (British Garhwal) A Gazetteer being Volume XXXVI of the District Gazetteer of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh By H.G. Walton, Allahabad by F. Lucker, Superintendent, Government press 1910.
2. Gazetteer of Dehradun by H.G. Walton, foreword Rakesh Bahadur, Natraj Publishers Dehradun, 1911.
3. Nainital A Gazetteer, being volume XXXIV of the district Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh by H. R. Nevill, Lucknow, Printed at the government Branch Press 1922.
4. Almora A Gazetteer, being volume XXXV District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra Oudh, edited and compiled by H.G. Walton, Allahabad, 1911, Printed by office Superintendent, Government Press United Provinces.
5. The Himalayan Districts o the North Western Provinces, 3 Volumes, compiled by E.T. Atkinson, Allahabad, 1884-86.
6. Imperial Gazetteer of Kumaon Division United Provinces, Allahabad: Printed at the Government Press, United Provinces 1905.

Newspapers / Magazines

1. Almora Akhabar
2. Daily Leader
3. Dalit Sumanjali
4. Garhwali
5. Kumaon Kumud
6. Krantidoot
7. Pataka

8. The Samata (Monthly & Weekly)
9. The National Herald
10. Shakti(Monthly & Weekly)

Proceedings of Legislative Assembly of United Provinces

1. Proceedings of legislative Assembly 12th July 1936
2. Proceedings of legislative Assembly vol VII no7 9th August1938
3. Proceedings of legislative Assembly vol. VII, no 7, 2nd august 1938
4. Proceedings of legislative Assembly vol.VII, no,7, 9 august 1938
5. Proceedings of legislative Assembly vol. VII, 3rd august 1938
6. Proceedings of legislative Assembly 28th December 1938
7. Proceedings of legislative Assembly 15th December 1938
8. Proceedings of legislative Assembly vol. IX, 26th April 1938
9. Proceedings of legislative Assembly vol.XV 24th march 1939
10. Proceedings of legislative Assembly vol. .XXVI ,13th January 1947

Government Records and Office Orders of Various Departments

(A) Appointment Department-

| File no | Subject |
|----------------|--|
| (a) 36/11 | Appointment to the legislative Council United Provinces. |
| (b) 104/ 35 | Appointment to the legislative Council United Provinces. |
| (c) 131 /36 | Appointment to the legislative Council United Provinces. |
| (d) 97/38 | Appointment to the legislative Council United Provinces. |
| (e) 308/1966 | Appointment of non-official members to the council of the G.G for the purpose law and regulations. |
| (f) 79/1948 | Recruitment to railways Services of Scheduled Castes. |
| (g) 159/1952 | Representation of Scheduled Castes in Public Services. |

(B) Education Department 21A (1927- 1934) Part II

| File no | Subject |
|----------------|---|
| 870/19 | Revision of Para 364(1)of educational code regnant of Artisan |

| | |
|-----------|---|
| | Scholarship. |
| 1240/1928 | Scheme for the training of teachers for night school in connection with Educational co-operative. |
| 286/1932 | Th. Sahj Ram Singh Parwar scholarship educational Trust – Garhwal. |
| 1195/1932 | Award of depressed class scholarship to depressed class students at District Board. |
| 1209/1933 | Budget Provision for the education of depressed classes in United Provinces. |
| 1050/1934 | Appointment of an officer on special duty for depressed class education. |

Education Department A21 (1935- 1947) Part III

| File no | Subject |
|----------------|--|
| 302/1935 | Reconstruction of the Provincial Schedule Castes education Provinces committee United Provinces Revision of Stipends Awarded at the training classes attached to Saint. Diocesan College, Nanital. |
| 924/ 1935 | Adoption of G.P. fund Scheme in Vernacular Middle School Kapkot (Almora). |
| 1042/1936 | Permission to the district boards Nanital and Almora to decrease the value of Scholarships grant for depressed class and to increase the number accordingly. |
| 1293/ 1937 | Establishment of District Depressed classes Education committee. |
| 1491/1937 | Scholarships and Stipends for girls belonging to the depressed classes in the United Provinces. |
| 1003/ 1937 | Establishment of District Schedule Caste Education Committee. |
| 917/1944 | Garhwal soldiers sons scholarship fund – Endowment for post war scheme No .10. |
| 918/1944 | Garhwal soldiers female education fund- Endowment for post war scheme No.11. |
| 844/1945 | Post war Schemes no. 44 establishment one A.V Middle school for girls in Almora in 1946-1947. |

344/1946 Allotment for the award of scholarship to Sons and daughters of servicing Soldiers of Almora in 1946-1947

Education Department 21 B

252/1940 Grants to Municipal Board for free supply text book etc. to Depressed class student fee 1939-1940.

302/1941 Appointment of supervisor of Depressed class Schools.

328/1941 Permission to Municipal boards to award vacant depressed class Stipend of classes III to IV of primary schools to stipend of classes I or II.

476(34)1941 Payment of Educational grant for 1941-19 to District board Nanital.

476(35) 1941 Payment of Educational grant for 1941-1942 to District Board Almora.

476(36)1941 Payment of Educational grant for 1941-42 to district Board Garhwal.

663/1941 Payment grant to Municipal Boards for Night schools.

310/1942 Interpretation of Schedule caste.

330/1942 Grant to District Board Almora towards remission of tuition fee for Scheduled Cates students.

476/(34) 1942 Payment of Educational grant for 1942-1943to District board Nanital.

476/(35)1942 Payment of Educational grant for 1942-1943 to District board Almora.

476/(36) 1942 Payment of Educational grant for 1941-1942to District board Garhwal.

587/1942 Payment grant to Municipal Board to the Maintenanceof Night Schools for Adults.

332/1943 Proposal to increase the number of Stipends to Schedule Caste Schools and colleges (Schedule of new demands for1943-1945).

326/1943 Resolution of the provincial Schedule Cates education

| | |
|--------------|--|
| | Committee 1943 Resolution No.19 compulsory Primary education for Scheduled Children. |
| 476(1)/1943 | Payment of Educational grant for 1943-1944 to District board Dehradun. |
| 476(34)/1943 | Payment of Educational grant for 1941-1942 To District board Nanital. |
| 476(35)/1943 | Payment of Educational grant for 1941-1942 To District board Almora. |
| 476(36)/1943 | Payment of Educational grant for 1941-1942 to District board Garhwal. |
| 550(29)/1943 | Grant for comp. primary education for boys 1943- 44 to municipal Board Nanital. |
| 313/1944 | Resolution no.3 passed in the S.C. conference held at LKO On 15/4/1944 reg. Free ship and Stipends to depressed class Student In government Instruction. |
| 302/1935 | Reconstruction of the Provincial Schedule Castes education Provinces committee United Provinces. |
| 316/1945 | Grant to District Board Almora towards remission of Tuition fees for SC Students during 1944-45 and 1945-1946. |

Forest Department

| File No | Subject |
|----------------|--|
| 223/1884 | Revenue forest Annual progress report of forest. Administration, in the North western provinces and Oudh year 31 st March 1884. |
| 160/1925 | Budget of the Forest department year 1925. |

List - 64

| File No | Subject |
|----------------|---|
| 64/1916 | Forest Gazetteers. |
| 163/1916 | Forest Settlement grievance in the kumaon Division. |
| 164/1916 | ion rights of villagers under the Kumaon forest Settlement. |
| 30/1911 | Forest Manual. |

List – 65

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 292/1927 | Disforestation of land in Almora. |
| 128/1929 | Lease of land in Nanital forest division. |
| 317/1931 | Disforestation of land in Garhwal district for new village. |
| 123/1931 | Disforestation of land in Nanital Distt- cultivation of on village. |
| 425/1937 | Disforestation of suitable are in Kumaun for cultivation for depressed class in Kumaun hills. |
| 501/1938 | Annual report of forest administration in Kumaon circle for 1937-1938. |
| 507/1938 | Representation from the cultivators of certain villagers. |
| 13/1940 | Annual progress report of forest administration in Kumaun Circle for the year 1939-1940. |
| 25/1940 | Disforestation of land in Almora District. |
| 85A.F/19 | Disforestation of an area of 156 acres of Dharchula reserved forest in east Almora. |
| 11A.F/1941 | Disforestation of 6 acres of Deogadeti reserve class II forest of Garhwal. |
| 37FB/1942 | Interpretation of Scheduled Caste. |
| 62F.B./1942 | Representation of Depressed classes in the services. |
| 235/1947 | Allotment of land to Shilpkars of Kumaun. |

General Administration Department

| File No | Subject |
|----------------|---|
| 398/1913 | Begar system in Kumaun Division. |
| 739/1920 | Question abolishing the war or impressed coolie transport system In Kumaun. |
| 237/1921 | Supply of civilian clerks to Military department. |
| 532/1921 | Abolishing of coolie Uttar in Jansur Bahabar in Dehradun. |
| 557A/125 | Budget estimate abolition of coolie Uttar in Kumaun 1937-1938 |
| 88/1933 | Recruitment to Indian Police. |
| 88/1935 | Annual Recruitment for the Indian Police 1936. |
| 45(1)A/1939 | Appointment of Mr. Mulki Ram for direct appointment as Deputy Collector (SC). |
| 42/1942 | Representation of Schedule Castes. |
| 502(44)/1942 | Representation of Schedule Caste in Civil Pioneer force. |

502(52)/1942 C.P.F recruitment for civil Pioneer U.P.

79/1948 Recruitment to Railways Services of Schedule castes.

State Archives Dheradun

Post Mutiny Records 1932-38

| FileNo | SUBJECT |
|---------------|----------------|
|---------------|----------------|

| | |
|----|---------------------------------------|
| 32 | Depressed class education committees. |
|----|---------------------------------------|

Post Mutiny Records 1938-41

| File no | Subject |
|---------|---------|
|---------|---------|

| | |
|-----|------------------------------|
| 122 | Training of skilled artisan. |
|-----|------------------------------|

| | |
|----|--|
| 17 | Education amongst the depressed classes. |
|----|--|

| | |
|---|--|
| 9 | Right of the members of the SC to a full and free use Of public wells. |
|---|--|

Post Mutiny Records 1944-48

| File no | Subject |
|---------|---------|
|---------|---------|

| | |
|-----|-------------------------------|
| 234 | Social Services for Harijans. |
|-----|-------------------------------|

Regional Archives Nanital

Commissionerate Records of Almora &Nainital

| File | Subject |
|-------------|----------------|
|-------------|----------------|

| | |
|----|-----------------------------|
| 46 | Kumaun Soldiers settlement. |
|----|-----------------------------|

| | |
|----|--|
| 40 | List of different war works (1918-19). |
|----|--|

| | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 2 | Report on the working land records. |
|---|-------------------------------------|

| | |
|----|------------------------------------|
| 19 | Grants of land to SC in religious. |
|----|------------------------------------|

| | |
|---|--|
| 3 | Revenue administration report (1932-35). |
|---|--|

| | |
|----|--|
| 23 | The deputy director of land records Lucknow to deputy commissioner Almora. |
|----|--|

| | |
|-----|---|
| 119 | Lease in favour of Mr. Kushi Ram, Nanital 129-1932. |
|-----|---|

| | |
|----|-----------------------------------|
| 27 | Notes of Almora division schemes. |
|----|-----------------------------------|

Secondary Sources

1. Ahuja, Ram .(1999). *Indian Social System*, Rawat Publication, Delhi.
2. Andre, Beteille. (1992). *Society and Politics in India, Essays in a Comparative Perspective, London School of Economics, Monograph on social Anthropology*. New Delhi : Oxford University Press.
3. Bayly, Susan (1990). *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*. London: Cambridge University Press.
4. Berremen, Gerald. D. (1963). *Hindu Of The Himalaya*. London: Cambridge University Press.
5. Bisht, D .S. (2006). *Poverty planning and development. A case study of Uttaranchal state (submitted to Planning Commission)*. Dehradun: Central Himalayan Institute.
6. Bhatt, Sharad. (2014). Development of Tenancy Rights In Chhakhata Bhabar Region of Kumaon Himalaya Under British Rule. *Indian History Congress vol.75*. 603-614.
7. Bora, R.S. (1996). *Himalayan Migration: A Study of the Hill Region of Uttar Pradesh*. Walnut Creek: Alta Mira Press.
8. Briggs, George. Weston.() . *The Doms and Their Near Relations (Unpublished Thesis)*. New Jessersy: Drew University.
9. Castrellon, Elizabeth. (2010). *An Exploration of The social Construction of Race and Racial Identity*. Northampton: Smith college for Social Work.
10. Choudhary, S.N. (1988). *The changing status of a depressed class in Contemporary India* : East India Book Co.
11. Choudhary, N., K. (2013). *Study Habits and Attitude of General Category and Scheduled Caste Students In Relation To Their Academic Achievement*, Vol. 2, No.1.
12. Dabral, Shiv. Prasad. (1965). *Kumaoun ka itthas*. Dogada: Viragatha Prakasana.

13. Doddasiddaiah, N. & Hiremath, S.L. (2013). Socio Economic Profile of Scheduled Caste Students in Secondary Education-A Sociological Study. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, Vol.2(11), 36-39.
14. Galasinski, D., Barker, C. (2001). *Cultural Studies and Discourse Analysis: A Dialogue and Language and Identity*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
15. Ghurye, G. S. (1969). *Caste and Race in New Delhi. India*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.
16. Guha, Ramachandra, (1990). *The unquiet woods: Ecological change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya*. University of California press.
17. Gurupada, Charkravarty. (2000). *Development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes: The Success so far in 'Social Change'*, a Quarterly Journal, Vol.3.
18. Hardiman, David . (2007). Purifying the Nation: The Arya Samaj in Gujarat 1895-1930.*The Indian Economic & Social History Review*, Vol. 44(No.1),41-65.
19. Hall , Stuart., Pauldugay. (1996). *Questions of Identity*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
20. Joshi , Maheshwar.P. (1970). *Uttranchal (Kumaon- Garhwal) Himalaya An Essay In Histrocial Anthropology* . Almora: Almora book depot.
21. Kennedy, James. (1885). *Life and Work in Benares and Kumaun, 1839-1877*, T Fisher Unwin, Landon.
22. Kumar, Vivek. (2001). Untouchability In Uttaranchal. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 36(49). 4536-4537.
23. Lal, Panna. (1942). *Hindu customary law in Kumaun*. Allahabad: Superintendent, print & stationary.
24. Lal, Chaman. Pradyot. , Bhatt. Praveen, Kumar. & Kukshal. (2012). *Uttarakhand ke Shilpkar*. Dehradun: Winsar Publishing Co.

25. Majumdar, D.N. (1961). *Races and Culture of India* . Bombay : Asia Publishing House.
26. Michael, S.M. (2007). *Dalits in Modern India, Vision and Values*. New Delhi : Sage Publication.
27. Mittal, A., K.(1986) . *British Administration in Kumaon Himalayas: A Historical Study-1815-1947*. New Delhi : Mittal Publications.
28. Negi,S.S. (2011). The Dola Palki Movement: Dalit Struggle for Social Justice in Uttarakhand during 20th Century, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, Vol.72,(1)*, 781-792.
29. Nesfield, J. C.,(1885). Brief review of the caste system of the north- western provinces and Oudh , together with an examination of the name and figures shown in the census report of 1882, Allahabad press.
30. Ostor, A., Fruzzetti, L., and. Barnett, S. (1982). *Concept of person: Kinship, caste, and marriage in India* , Cambridge : Mass: Harvard University Press.
31. Oakley, E. Sherman. (1905). *The Holy Himalayas* . Landon: Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier.
32. Panicker, K. M. (1995). *Hindu Society and the Cross Roads*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House.
33. Pant, G., B. (1985). *The forest problems in Kumaon : Forest Problems and National Uprising in Himalaya Region*. Nanital: Gyanodaya Prakashan.
34. Pant, S., D. (1988). *The Social Economy of the Himalaya*. New Delhi: Mittal Publication.
35. Pande, Vasudha. (2013). Stratification in Kumaun circa 1815-1930. *Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, new series, 37*, 1-92
36. Pande, B.D. (1937). *Kumaon ka Itihas*. Almora: Shakti Office.
37. Prakash, Nirupama. (1989). *Scheduled Castes: Socio-Economic Changes*. Allahabad: Chugh Publication.

38. Powell price, J. C. (1930). Some notes on the early history of kumaun .
JUPHS, Vol IV(II). 5-14.
39. Randhawa, M. S. (1970). *The Kumaon Himalaya*. New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing House.
40. Sanwal, R. D. (1976). *Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon*. NewDelhi : oxford University Press.
41. Seksena, B.P. (1956). *Historical Papers Relating to Kumaon 1809-1842*. Allahabad : Government Central Record Office.
42. Sebring, James. M. ,(1972). The Formation of New Castes: A Probable case from North India. *American Anthropologist, New Series, Vol.74*.
43. Schuyler, Cammann.(1970). *Trade throughout the Himalayas: The early British attempts to open Tibet*. California: Greenwood press.
44. Singh, K., S. (1994). *People of India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
45. Sharma, Ram. Sharan. (1980). *Shudras in Ancient India: A social history of the lower order down to circa A.D.600*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas.
46. Shah, Manish., Joshi. J. C. (2010). Social Indicators of Scheduled Castes: A Socially Excluded group of Utrakhhand. *International Journal of Advanced Research, Vol 4(12)*, 2411-2418.
47. Shah , A. M. (2017) . Mirage of caste-less society in India. *Economic and political Weekly, Vol LII (9)*, 61-66.
48. Srivastava, K., P. (1979). *Document relating to primary education Preserved in u.p. states archives (1893-1947)*. Lucknow.
49. Stowell. V.A, (1966). *A maumal of the land tenurs of the Kumaun Division (Hill Tracts)*.U.P. : Superintendent print and Stationery.
50. Tamta , Suresh. Chand.(2007). *Vartman Atit-Madhya Himalaya ka Shilp,Shipkar avam Puratatva*. Almora: Almora book Depot.

51. Trail, G.W.(1851). *Statistical Sketsch of Kumaun* . John Murray Albemarele Street London.
52. Upreti, H. C. (1981). *Social Organization of A Migrant Group: A Sociological Study of Hill Migrants from Kumaon Region in the City of Jaipur*. Mumbai: Himalayan Publishing house .
53. Valdiya, K.S. (1988). *Kumaun Land and People*. Nainital: Gyandodaya Prakashan.
54. Viyogi, Naval, Ansari, A. (2010). *History of the later Harappans and Shilpkar Movement*. New Delhi: Cosmo Publication.

Appendices

Appendix - I

Letter of the Deputy Commissioner for land allotment to Shilpkars in Nainital reg.

**Copy of forest department G.O. No. 12841XIV-425- 1937
Deputy Commissioner- In- Charge Kumaon Division**

Subject: - Grant of forest land to Shilpkar in the Nainital District

With reference to the corresponding with your endorsement No. 266/XXIV-6FA, dated October 26, 1940 on the subject noted above. I am directed to say that the Governor is pleased to approve four proposal to lease the marginally noted land measuring 1, 792 acres in the Nainital district for the formation of Shilpkar village in accordance with the role prescribed in G.O. No. 159XIV-90/ 1933 dated march 27, 1935 for management of the Kumaun Shilpkar village, and permit the lessee to sell the trees or keep the timber in the leased area for building or other agricultural purpose.

| Range | Block | Compartment | Acres |
|---------|-------------|-------------|-------|
| | Jangalia | 2 | 158 |
| | Sarna | 6 | 158 |
| Bhowali | Akrara | 6 and 7 | 136 |
| | Thuwa | 11 and 12 | 136 |
| | Khalar | 20 | 60 |
| China | Sukha | 8 | 2 |
| | Badan Dhura | 7 and 8 | 222 |
| North | Hartola | 8,9,32,33 | 529 |
| Gaula | Thali west | 1 | 154 |
| Manora | Chanda Devi | 12 | 237 |

Appendix - II

Letter of the Deputy Commissioner for land allotment to Shilpkars in Garhwal District reg.

Copy of Forest Department G.No. 1333/XIV-425-1937, Dated Jan 21, 1941 to the Deputy commissioner in-charge Kumaun Division

Subject:- Grant of Forest areas to Shilpkar in the Garhwal District.

With the reference to your letter No. 386/XXVI-67A dated Nov 6, 1940, on the subject noted above I am directed to say that the governor is pleased to sanction your proposal to lease 1215 acres of forest land in Garhwal District as detailed in the accompanying statement for the formation of Shilpkar colonies in accordance with rules for management of the KumaunShilpkarvillage which were sanctioned in G.No. 159/XVI-90/1933 dated March 27, 1935.

| S.No. | Block | Name of reserve | Area estimated in acres |
|-------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Dabrad | Dabrad | 100 |
| 2 | Dudhatoli IV | Dudhatoli | 405 |
| 3 | RAnigarh I | Ranigarh | 180 |
| 4 | Mohankhal | Mohankhal | 60 |
| 5 | Sirgur | Baniala | 80 |
| 6 | Pindarpar II | Pindarpar | 275 |
| 7 | Sirgur | Baniala | 60 |

No. 501/XIV- 1938

Lucknow

Oct-4-1939

Appendix – III

Letter of the Deputy Commissioner for land allotment to Shilpkars Colony reg.

From:-

Wahjahat Hussein, Esq. ICS

Secretary of Government.

United Provinces.

To,

The Deputy Commissioner In-charge

Kumaun division.

Sir,

With reference to your letter no. 3703 dated, July 19,1939, I am directed to convey the sanction of the Governor to the formation of Shilpkar colony consisting of 400 acres of land compartment 8,9 of the NursingDander a a reserve of the forest division

2 the Choice of the name for this colony may be left to the colonists.

3 The rules sanctioned in G.O. Non 159/XIV 90 dated March 27, 1925 as amended will apply mutates mutandis

I have the honour to be sir

Yours most Obedient

Servant

Letter of the Deputy Commissioner for the grant Sanction for Coolie abolishing reg.

To,

The Deputy Commissioner In-charge
Kumaun Division,
Nainital.

Sir,

With reference to para 2 of G.O. No. B. 1697/X, dated July 22, 1937, i am directed to place at your disposal a sum of Rs 22,600/- which has been provided in the current year's budget under the head, "57- miscall. Charges. Other miscellaneous charges- Abolition of coolie Uttar in Kumaun' and which has been voted by the legislative Assembly.

2. in this connexion i am to invite your attention to para 8 of G.O. No. 3110/111-557 (A) dated January 30, 1936, and to say that in the present financial position of the province, Government have decided to reduce the grant during the next two financial yrs.

| As under: - | Rs. |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1938-39..... | Rs. 15,000/- |
| 1939-40..... | Rs. 10,000/- |

It is contemplated that the grant of Rs. 15,000/- for the next year will be distributed as under:

| | |
|----------|--------------|
| Nainital | Rs. 1,000/- |
| Almora | Rs. 500/- |
| Lohaghat | Rs. 3,500/- |
| Garhwal | Rs. 10,000/- |

Government are of opinion that permanent coolies are not necessary and should be replaced by reservist' collies, who can be engaged for the days on which their services are actually required and paid wages for those days only and for one day before and after if they reside at a distance from the place where their services are needed. They can be supplemented by KhushKharidcoolies.

3. No official or semi-official agencies will be maintained for this purpose/ from the year 1939-40. Serious efforts should, therefore, be made to establish non-official agencies in their place from as early a date as possible. If suitable non-officials are forthcoming, government will be prepared to give them subsidies until the enterprise is financially well-established.

**Letter of the Governor United Provinces October 1938 recruitment
of Shilpkar Army reg.**

1835-G.S2/2

GOVERNOR'S CAMP

UNITED PROVINCES

October 7, 1938

My dear Rai Sahib,

I am desired by His Excellency to thank you very much for your letter of 27th September, which arrived here on 4th October. He thanks you for the loyal offer of your services and those of the Shilpkars of Kumaon in the event of war. Although the danger of war seems to have been averted, he is glad to know that he can rely on your and their services in case of need.

Yours Sincerely

Rai Sahib

Hari Prasad Tamta Sahib, M.L.A.

Almora.

Letter of the Deputy Secretary regarding stipend for Depressed Class Girls

No. 4150/IV- 1491-1907

From,

R.O. Weir Esq., M.A. B.Sc

Deputy Secretary to Government,

United provinces.

To,

The Director of public Instruction,

United provinces Allahabad

Education Department.

Dated December 15, 1937

Sir,

I am directed to say that is Excellency the Governor of the united provinces has been pleased to sanction the following scheme for the award of stipends of recognized depressed class girls – in primary and middle classes of recognized vernacular and Englishschools in united provinces. The stipends will be awarded annually by the inspectors of girls Schools of the circle concerned and will be tenable for 12 month (I.e. from july1) or subsequent date to June 30 of the second year), In awarding the stipends the circle inspectors should take into consideration the recommendations of the District Depressed class Education committees in her circle. The list of scheduled castes given in the schedule to the government of India (scheduled castes) order 1936, should be followed. An extract from the schedule is enclosed

Scheme Cost in 1937-38 Cost in subsequent

Years

Vernacular Primary stipends- Two hundred 800/- 1200/-

Stipends, twenty for each circle, at annas -8/-P.M.

Each tenable for one years, to be awarded annually

By the Inspectresses of girls' Schools, to poor and Deservingdepressed class girls is reading in Classes III and IV in recognized vernacular Primary schools in her circle.

Vernacular Middle stipends -Thirty 240/- 360/-

Stipends, three for each circle, at Rs. 1/-

P.M. each tenable for one year, to be

A awarded annually by the Inspectress of

Girls Schools to poor and deserving

Depressed class Girls reading in vernacular

Middle schools in her circle.

English Primary Stipends- Twenty 160/- 240/-+

Stipends, three for each circle, at Rs. 1/-

P.M. each tenable for one year, to be

A awarded annually by the Inspectress of

Girls Schools to poor and deserving

Depressed class Girls reading in Primary

Classes of English schools in her circle.

English Middle stipends- Ten stipends 120/- 180/-

one for each circle, at Rs. 1/-P.M. each

Tenable for one year, to be A awarded

Annually by the Inspectress of

Girls Schools to poor and deserving

Depressed class Girls reading in Middle

Classes of English schools in her circle.

Total Rs. 1,320/- 1,980/-

The circle Inspectresses of Girls schools should take earliest to award the stipends from July 1, 1937, or subsequent date.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most Obedient Servant,

Sd. R.S. Weir

Deputy Secretary.

NoG/1688-1721

Date. 3.1. 1938.



ISSN : 2394-1405

Volume 5 Issue 8

August, 2018

UGC Approved Journal

(Monthly Journal)

International Journal of Applied Social Science

(An International Peer Reviewed Research Journal of Social Science)

SHIV SHIKSHA SADAN SAMITI (REGD.)

MUZAFFARNAGAR-251 001 (U.P.) INDIA

Website : www.scientificresearchjournal.com

Email : editor.journal99@gmail.com

Caste and Hegemony in Ancient Kumaon

ISHA TAMTA

Department of History

B.B. Ambedkar University, Lucknow (U.P.) India

ABSTRACT

Caste in Kumaon, (present Uttarakhand) was not exactly as it is in the plain areas of India. Four fold Varna system which is widely present in the subcontinent is absent in the Hill regions. But so called upper castes enjoyed their privileges and hegemony various areas of social life. The distinction in Kumaon is not only between upper and lower orders but also between the indigenous and later immigrants. The social status between Khasa Rajputs and immigrant Rajputs is a case in point. First and foremost the, the authority and power was held in ownership of both arable and forest lands. Land was held mostly by both castes and they got it cultivated with the help of Doms. But Doms were not allowed to own a piece of land, although they performed all agricultural operations. Secondly, in administration, only upper castes monopolized all positions in the court of kings. Both castes competed with each other for getting plum posts in the court of kings. If one sub-caste had gone close to the king, that social group monopolized all positions in the administration, judiciary and even at village assembly level. Thirdly in religious and cultural spheres, hegemony continued in the form of authority to wear Janeo (sacred thread). Khasas and Doms were not allowed to wear sacred thread. Even in wearing clothes and food, restrictions were imposed on Doms. This paper talks about social status of different castes and power and authority that went along with the caste. Using historical method, this paper explores the ways and means through which caste dominance was maintained and sustained over the time.

Key Words : Khasa, Thuljat, Immigrants, Doms, Service castes, Bhotiyas, Ritual superiority

INTRODUCTION

Social make up of the society during Ancient period :

The society in Kumaon is different from the rest of India. It was not fourfold division of the society as was generally thought. The society was constituted of three major groups: the Thuljats, the Khasas and the Doms. Thuljat and Khasas together constituted the Bith and Doms lower. Doms were the service castes: ironsmith, coppersmith, carpenter, drummer, tailor etc. They also worked as *hali* and agriculture labourers. The Khasas or Khasiyas, who constituted the largest number, were agriculturists and cultivated land both as proprietors and as tenants. They were originally not part of the caste order, but centuries of contact with the Thuljat had its impact. Brahmins and Rajputs emerged amongst Khasiyas, although they managed to retain the distinctiveness of their customs and traditions. The Thuljats, later immigrants from the plains, were composed of Brahmins and Rajputs. Apart from claiming ritual superiority they monopolized political and economic

power in the ancient period.

Evolution and Development of three layer social structure :

The three tiered social structure evolved through a historical process. It was argued that the Doms were the earliest settlers in the region. Later the Doms were subdued by the Khasas, a powerful tribe, who set up their rule. Finally the Khasas were conquered by the Rajput immigrants from the plains who set up the Chand dynasty in Kumaun and the Panwar dynasty in Garhwal some time between tenth and Fourteenth centuries. These dynasties continued to rule till the Gurkhas defeated them. The region finally came under the British in 1814. However, the Tehri Kingdom, created after the division of Garhwal by the British, was ruled by the Panwar dynasty till 1949. During the rule of these dynasties a large number of Brahmins and Rajputs immigrated to these regions. Thus conquests and immigration flows played an important role in the evolution of the social structure of the region.

The Thuljats considered themselves ritually superior to the Khasas and the Doms. This was expressed in their strict observation of religious practices and Atkinson argues that Doms are descendants of the Kol tribe and were the earliest settlers in the region. William Crooke argues that they are descendents of the Dasyus of the Veda' and were conquered by the Khasas and the Nagas. Others also agree that the doms were the earliest settlers and later subdued by the Khasas. Scholars differ on the exact date of the foundation of these dynasties but most accept that it was between the tenth and 14th centuries. Thuljats have maintained their genealogies and know the name of their first immigrant ancestor. They have retained their gotra although have adopted new sub-castes taken from the village they first settled or from the office they held under the Raja.

Hegemony through ritual superiority :

The Thuljats sought to conform to the practice of orthodox Brahmanism while the practices of Khasas and the Doms could not be accommodated within the structure of orthodox Brahmanism. The Thuljats put on *Janeo* (sacred thread) which distinguished them from Khasas. The Thuljats took dowry while brideprice was the norm amongst the Khasas. Levirate was prevalent among the Khasas. The social superiority of Thuljats, and the ritual practices that sustained it, was maintained through politico-legal sanctions. Marriage of high caste women with the lower caste men was an offence. The Khasas and the Doms could be punished for wearing *Janeo*. Violation of caste rules was punished by dharmadhikari, an important official in the court of the Raja. 8 Traill writes that there was capital punishment for infringing caste rules by the Doms. Caste superiority was thus maintained through political dominance.

Dominance in Administration :

The Thuljats monopolised administration under the Raja. All important offices like that of the Diwan, the Vazir, the Dharmadhikari, the Daftari, the Bhandari etc. were held by either Brahmins or Rajputs. The Kingdom was divided into circles which were under *Faujders*. *Faujders* were commanders and thus both civil and military administrators. There were *Thokdars* and *Sayanas* under them who worked as their agents. There were other subordinate officials as well. At the village level there was a *padhan* who represented the *Sayanas*. All these offices were held by the Thuljats. All officials, high and low, got *Jagirs*. All of them were landlords with superior rights in land.

Faujders were also in charge of civil and petty criminal justice. In the interior, justice was

administered in civil and petty criminal cases by Faujdars or governors. while the cases of magnitude, and those originating in the capital or neighbourhood were determined in the Raja's court under the superintendence of the Diwan. At the village level there were *panchayats* which were dominated by the Thuljat proprietors. Judicial administration was controlled by the Thuljats and was geared to maintain their status superiority. The Thuljats extended their control over land by getting grants. All officials of the Raja got grants, in lieu of their salary; non-officials could get grants for bravery or for erudition. The religious establishments were also given grants.

Land Grants and Dominance :

Before immigration of Thuljats, Khasas controlled the land and cultivated it with the help of Doms. The land grants to Thuljats changed agrarian relations. The grantee was known as *thatwan*. The cultivators were his tenants. The grantee had a right to *haq-dastur*, the right to customary dues and revenue from tenants. The grantee also had a right to bring one third of the land he was granted under his own cultivation, to be cultivated by himself or tenants. The grantee could not have ejected tenants but if they fled he could assume total ownership of the land and its produce. He could settle new tenants on this land for cultivation but such tenants were called non permanent tenants or *kaini* or *khurni*. Thus the system of land grants strengthened the dominance of the Thuljat.

Exploitation of Doms :

Thuljats exploited Doms in all spheres of life. There were separate well for both bith and dom castes. Only flowing water was allowed for Doms. Bith castes did not allow Doms to enter their houses, although they were allowed to do so for repairing the houses, bring firewood or corn etc. Gautam Dharm Sutra tells that Shudras should wear worn out clothes and used shoes, mats and umbrellas. They should not wear a Dhoti hanging below ones knees. In the same way there were restrictions on food and drink on Doms. In the same way, Doms were not allowed to cremate their dead in common crematorium but had to do it in a separate cremation ground.

Conclusion :

Thus, Thuljats monopolized political and economic power and claimed ritual superiority. They were not only divided into Brahmins and Rajputs, but were further divided into various groups or parties who competed among themselves for power. The power of a particular group depended on its influence at the court of the Raja. The most influential group in the court secured high offices and large grants. The grants of the opposition groups were resumed and redistributed. The struggle for power among Thuljats led to a shift in dominance from time to time from one group of sub-caste to another. However, all of them together guarded their interest against the Khasas and the Doms.

REFERENCES

- Atkinson, E.T. (1973). *The Himalayan Gazetteer*, Delhi, Cosmo.
- Bererman, Gerald, D. (1973). *Hindus of the Himalaya*, Berkeley.
- Crooke, William (2005). *The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, (first published in 1896), New Delhi, Reprint, vol. 1.
- Dhasmana, M.M. (1987). 'Changing Milieu and Developmental Strategies in Garhwal' in M.K. Raha (ed) *The*

Himalayan Heritage, Delhi.

Joshi, L.D. (1984). *The Khasa Family Law*, (Allahabad, 1929) rept. as *The Tribal People of the Himalaya: A Study of Khasas*, (Delhi, 1984) .255)

Oakley (1905). *The Holy Himalaya*, Allahabad.

Randhawa, M.S. (1970). *The Kumaun Himalayas*, Delhi.

Sanwal, R.D. (1976). *The Social Stratification in Rural Kumaun* Delhi.

Shekhar Pathak (1988). 'Kumaun society through the Ages', in K.S. Valdiya (ed.) *Kumaun: Land and People*, Nainital.

Turner, A.C. (1931). 'Castes in the Kumaon Division and Tehri Garhwal State', *Census of India*, vol. 18.

Viyogi, Naval and Anwar Ansari, M. (2010). *History of the later Harrappans and Shilpakara Movement*, New Delhi, vol. 2, p. 468.

SOCIAL MOBILITY OF SHILPKARS IN UTTARAKHAND 1815-1947

ISHA TAMTA,

Senior Research Scholar,

Department of history,

Babasaheb Bhimarao Ambedkar University,

Lucknow, U.P.

ABSTRACT

Indian Society did not remain static as was assumed by some authors. Society was dynamic and so was the caste system. For a long caste system was also thought to have remained changeless. But recent work has shown that even caste system did not remain as a fourfold varna system. There was proliferation of castes right from Gupta period down to the present times. Uttarakhand society was not divided into four broad caste categories. But we will find that only three social categories were prevalent. By using the historical and anthropological methods this article tries to chart the social mobility of Shilpakars in Uttarakhand and the ways and methods, such as Sacred Thread (Janeo) and Dola - Palki as markers of their status, they chose to achieve social mobility.

Keywords: Social Mobility, Proliferations, Shilpkar, Sanskritization

Recent works have discussed the popularization of the term and a new movement which challenged all forms of social hierarchies and distinctions. The way that identity has been constructed and articulated unveils the exact anger and frustration on the part of the socially excluded communities of Indian society vis-à-vis the repressive caste system. These protests are not something linked only to the temporary political developments, rather they assumed various forms in different periods of history and always challenged the dominant cultural course creating an alternative past giving the socially marginalized an honorable place in history (Bhaskar Basu, 2017).

Social theorists, of late, have differed in their views over the blatant and blanket usage of the term 'Dalit' which too often has ignored the patterns of differentiation that exist among them. There are

others who argue that the category Dalit enables scholars to highlight the large-scale discrimination and injustice faced by section of humanity in the name of caste and jati ordering. In fact, Dalit is not a caste, but rather a constructed identity. Nonetheless, this new identity helps the socially and economically discriminated groups to challenge the processes that have led to their centuries-old subordination (Bharati, Sunita Reddy, 2002).

The Dalit movement is not a homogenous one. It has lot of regional variations. The efforts to recover a past that is seldom presented in dominant historiographical scholarship have been a major intellectual investment for contemporary scholars interested in a more critical understanding of the past through the interpretation of history, literature and religion. This is the reason why Jyotirao Phule and other Dalit intellectuals rejected the

construction of Aryan migration theory to restore the lost respectability of the *Shudras* and *Ati-Shudras*. This search continued with Lyothee Thass and B.R. Ambedkar who were responsible for an alternative discourse, negating the primacy given to the Brahmanical traditions in the writing of Indian religious history (Ibid.).

The social structures of Kumaun and Garhwal are similar. The largest ethnic group is Khasa or Khasiya who comprised the traditional peasantry and the next largest ethnic group are Doms who served the cultivating body as artisans and farm servants. Numerically the smallest but ritually the highest are the Thuljat-Brahmins and Rajputs who claimed to be descendents from the plains. The three-tiered structure-Thuljat/Khasa/Dom emerged out of what were originally distinctions between ruler and the ruled. The structure can be conceptualized as a series of binary distinctions of which the basic oppositions were i) Bith (clean) vs. Dom (unclean) and within Bith, Thuljat (immigrant) vs. Khasa (indigenous) (Ramachandra Guha, 2008). Before the arrival of the British, Khasa and Thuljat castes dominated economically, socially and politically.

It was widely believed that the Doms were original inhabitants who were conquered and enslaved by the *Khasas* (William Crooke, 2005). He opined that Doms in Himalayan districts of the province were the descendents of Dasyus of Vedic times). The *Khasas* in turn were subjugated by the later immigrants from the plains who came to hold both political power and ritual status. The geographical isolation of the hill tracts developed an ambiguous relation with Hinduism. Therefore, caste restrictions and other rules of orthodox Hinduism were singularly lax. With regard to the Dom outcastes, ritual rules of purity and pollution were not defined as exclusively as in the plains. Mostly artisan and tenants formed an integral part of the village community like Bajjis and Aujis (Ibid)

Historically, the shilpkar community had been a part of local village community as rest of India. The word Shilpkar did not denote caste but was used for the community engaged in different

occupation such as : craftsmen, technician, architect musician communities of the region. They actually constituted the artisan class and in fact were also collectively referred to as Shilpkar. This community is supposed to be the descendents of the aboriginal of the hills(S.S.Negi, 2011).

The dalits like aujis, darjis, lohar, koli, tel tamta, dhuar, badi, koltam mistru, roria, kevat, dom, kurakia, od etc. are the original inhabitants of the hills. Other dalit castes like valmiki and mochi (chamars) have migrated from nearby places of Uttarakhand (Vivek kumar, 2001). In fact, Atkinson divided doms into four categories: First group consisted of Koli, Tamta and Lohar; second group had Ruria, Agri, Pahari, Bhoor and Chhimyar ; the third category consisted of chamar, Mochi and Bhukhuri and the fourth had Beri, Hudakia and Dholi. The dalit communities suffered a lot of indignities and landlessness and poverty.

MOBILITY AND CONTESTATION

Scant resources on the social structure and relations during precolonial period make it difficult to reconstruct them for this period. Account of early colonial administrators, travelogues and some local histories help of us to draw a picture of the society during colonial period. The three tiered structure evolved through historical process. Many opined that the Doms were the earliest settlers in the region. Doms were subdued by the *Khasas*, a powerful tribe who established their rule. *Khasas*, in turn, were conquered by the Rajput immigrants from the plains who set up the Chand dynasty in Kumaun and the Panwar dynasty in Garhwal some time between 10th and 14th centuries. Their rule continued until they were defeated by the Gurkhas. Finally, the region came under the British from 1814 onwards. During the rule of these dynasties many Brahmin and Rajputs migrated to these regions. Therefore, the conquests and immigration flows played an important role in the evolution of the social structure of the region.

Thuljats considered themselves superior to the *Khasas* and the Doms. This was embedded

their strict observation of religious practices and their rules. Thuljats sought to conform to the practice of orthodox Hinduism while Khasas and Doms could not be accommodated within it. Thuljats put on the *janeo* (sacred thread) which distinguished them from Khasas. Dominance of Thuljats and the ritual practices that sustained it was maintained through politico-legal sanctions. The Khasas and the Doms could be punished for wearing *Janeo*. Violations of caste rules was punished by an important official of the court named Dharmadhikari. Trail wrote that Doms were given capital punishment for violating caste rules. Caste superiority and dominance was perpetuated through political power.

But with the changes under British rule, caste and status were separated to some extent. Education became the new symbol of status. English education became essential to secure government service. Initially there were few jobs under the British but by the end of the 19th century when the bureaucracy expanded the British required large numbers of English educated natives to man the subordinate offices. For many people these subordinate services symbolized prestige. Securing English education became important. Schools were opened in various parts of the hills. Almora, the centre of Kumaun elite, emerged as important centre of education (M.S. Randhawa, 1970, M.M. Hasmana, 1987). Later schools were opened in other parts like Nainital, Pauri, Srinagar (Garhwal) etc.

The Thuljats claimed a major share in the government services and various professions and also dominated the political leadership. They played a crucial role in local administration and perpetuated their caste supremacy by helping their caste brethren. Thus although the pre-colonial monopoly of the Thuljats on politics and administration was broken, they still maintained the power by availing new opportunities.

While the colonial state used this information to serve its own purpose in the society it generated tensions. People were asked to identify

themselves within the given categories. The categories were changed over time as diversity defied simple classification (Rashmi Pant, 1987). People had a wide range of overlapping identities. Since they were asked about their caste and religion it led to self-questioning. The classification was not just of the individual respondent but of the group to which he belonged. This led to claims and counter claims for change in caste status and the formation of the caste associations (Bernard S. Cohn, 1987).

Census was one way of securing status. Various other practices were adopted to ensure mobility. Adopting the customs and the way of life of a higher caste was a common practice. The Kumaun Rajput Parishad which was dominated by the Khasas exhorted members to emulate higher castes. They were asked to follow the orthodox rituals to justify claims to higher status (R.D., Sanwal, 1976). Turner found that Khasas were putting on *janeo* and were raising themselves to the rank of Rajputs. In the same way Doms of Uttarakhand were also on the path to mobility. One way of doing this was through Arya Samaj.

The founder of Arya Samaj was Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824-83), came from a Samvehi Audich Brahman of Kathiawad in Gujarat. He developed an ritual in late nineteenth century in order to regain those Indians who were lost to other religions. This activity was necessitated because of census reports from 1872 onwards. It was thought that Hindu religion was under demographic threat. Therefore, there was need to go for counter proselytisation through shuddhi. *Shuddhi*- a rite to remove ritual pollution- has been central to the Hindu tradition. It provided a means through which transgressors can be assimilated back into their caste and religion. It was often applied, in nineteenth century, for high caste Hindus who were considered to have incurred ritual pollution by travelling outside India. In 1877, Dayananda Saraswati deployed the idea in a new to reclassify a Punjabi Sikh turned Hindu turned Christian as an 'Arya'. He took this measure as there a lot of conversions in Punjab during previous years. After his death, his followers institutionalized the

ceremony with a series of conversions of individual Christians and Muslims (David Hardiman, 2007).

An initial rite was evolved (usually administered by orthodox Brahman priests) with a bath in the Ganges at Hardwar. Many Arya Samajists considered such holy immersions to reek of old superstitions and in the 1890's supposedly 'pure' Vedic ceremony was concocted with a *havan* (sacred fire), a lecture on the Gayatri and principles of the Arya Samaj, a shaving of the head, an investiture of the holy thread where appropriate, and a final distribution of sweets by the convert to all present (Ibid.) Soon the Arya Samaj started acting as a national organization to counter missionaries.

SACRED THREAD (*JANEEO*) AND *DOLA* - *PALKI* AS MARKERS OF HIGHER STATUS

After the establishment of the colonial rule in this region Christian missionaries also became active in the conversion of lower castes to their religion. Swami Dayananda Saraswati started visiting the hills of Kumaun and Garhwal from 1874. Doms also struggled to improve their status. He started propagating Arya Samaj doctrine among the shilpakars of Uttrakhand. As some sub-castes of shilpakars were planning to convert to Christianity, Arya Samaj started working vigorously among them. The usual rite of purification (*shuddhi*) which was done to reconvert Hindus who converted to Christianity and Islam. But in Uttrakhand they used it to bring about social status of shilpakars. Arya Samaj started purifying shilpakars and started investiture ceremony for them with sacred thread (Naval Vijoyi and M.Anwar Ansari, 2010). Arya Samaj opposed conversion. In this connection, Lala lajpat Rai visited Sunika village of nainital district on the day of Baishakhi 1913 to participate on the shilpakars purification ceremony on the invitation of Khushi Ram and gave *Janeoo* and *dwija* status to nearly 600 hundred doms. Thereafter, editors of local news papers also started in terms of reforming shilpakars (S.S.Negi, 2011). Doms also asserted that they

should be called Shilpkar (Resolution of the Garhwa Shilpkar Sabha, 6 June 1931). Tamtas (coppersmiths) who became rich took to priestly functions amongst shilpakars (Sanwal, year). The Kumaun Shilpkar Sabha and the Garhwal Shilpkar Sabha spearheaded the movement for status mobility. A move expected this move created a flutter among caste Hindus. Traditionally, shilpakars were not allowed to wear *janeoo*. When shilpakars started to wear after *shuddhi* rite by Arya Samaj, there was opposition and reaction against this new move.

Arya Samaj started working among shilpakars under the leadership of jayanand Bharu Khushi Ram, Bacchi Ram and Baldev Singh Arya et al. Dogadda and Bironkhal were developing as cultural centres for Shilpakars. Along with sacred thread now shilpakars wanted to use *Dola Palki* in the marriage ceremonies which were not allowed earlier. During the marriage of Doms the bridegrooms and brides were not allowed by the higher castes to use *dola* and *palki* (*palki* was used to carry the bridegroom and *dola* the bride. Both *dola* and *palki* were carried by 2 to 4 persons on the shoulders) and were instead to walk on foot. When Doms asserted their right to use *dola-palki* there was often violence. The Arya Samaj played an important role in the movement. On January 16, 1920, in Ramgarh village in Kumaon a shilpkar marriage ceremony procession was organised with *dola-palki* under the leadership of Kushi Ram Arya. There was opposition to this from the village. Jayanand Bharu initiated *dola-palki* in Garhwal. In 1923, a marriage party of shilpakars with *dola palki* from village Khandi was going to Sendhikal, they were prevented and *baratis* were beaten (S.S.Negi, 2011). This actually talks about a number of instances where caste Hindus attacked marriage parties of shilpakars and shilpakars and were beaten and *dola-palkis* were set to fire. For more details please see his article).

While *Khasas* could merge with Rajputs, Doms could not do so. They were considered impure, and there were no middle caste groups in the hills with whom they could identify. Thus the struggle did not result in mobility in caste hierarchy.

however, an internal structure of hierarchy emerged within the Doms. Tamtas emerged as leaders of the Kumaun Shilpkar Sabha. Only a few Doms could benefit in terms of their improved position. For many the situation changed little (Randhawa 1970).

REFERENCES

- ❖ Bharati, Sunita Reddy, Dalit: A term Asserting Unity, EPW, 2002/, vol. 37, No. 42, October, 19-25.
- ❖ Bernard S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays*, Delhi, 1987.
- ❖ David Hardiman, Purifying the Nation: The Arya Samaj in Gujarat 1895-1930, in IESHR, 44, 1, 2007.
- ❖ M.S. Randhawa, *The Kumaun Himalayas*, Delhi, 1970, M.M. Dhasmana, 'Changing Milieu and Developmental Strategies in Garhwali' in M.K. Raha (ed) *The Himalayan Heritage*, Delhi, 1987.
- ❖ Rajasekhar Basu, A Voice to the Dalit Cause, EPW, Vol. LII, NO. 4, January, 28. 2017.
- ❖ Ramachandra Guha, *The unquiet woods: Ecological change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya*, OUP, 2008.
- ❖ Rashmi Pant, The Cognitive Status of caste in Colonial Ethnography: A review of some literature on the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, *IESHR*, 24, 2, 1987.
- ❖ Resolution of the Garhwal Shilpkar Sabha, 6 June 1931, in file, I/8, 1930, Deptt I, Basta year, 1907-37, ERR, Coll. Pauri Garhawal.
- ❖ Sanwal, *Social stratification in Rural Kumaon*, OUP, 1979.,
- ❖ S.S.Negi, *The dola Palki Movement: Dalit struggle for social justice in Uttarakhand during 29th century*, I.H.C, 2011 .
- ❖ Vivek kumar, *Untouchability in Uttaranchal*, E.P.W, Dec. 8, 2001.
- ❖ Naval Viyogi and M.Anwar Ansari, *History of the later Harrappans and Shilpakara Movement*, New Delhi, 2010, vol. 2 .
- ❖ S.S.Negi, *The dola Palki Movement : Dalit struggle for social justice in Uttarakhand during 29th century*, I.H.C, 2011.
- ❖ S.S.Negi, *The dola Palki Movement: Dalit struggle for social justice in Uttarakhand during 29th century*, I.H.C, 2011. He actually talks about a number of instances where caste Hindus attacked marriage parties of shilpakars and and were beaten and dola-palkis were set to fire. For more details, please see his article.
- ❖ William Crooke, *The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, (first published in 1896), New Dehil, Reprint, 2005, vol. 1,. He opined that Doms in Himalayan districts of the province were the descendents of Dasyus of Vedic times