

2. Marriage relations among Brahmins as recorded in “Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar”

This sub-chapter deals with marriage relations among horizontally equal Brahmin caste-communities of Maithil Brahmins and Pachchima Brahmins (Bhumihar Brahmins) and Bhumihar Brahmins and Saryupareen Brahmins; discusses about Dogamia Brahmins for the first time in academic literature; critically assesses Louis Dumont’s writing on North Indian Brahmins because of the overbearing impact and influence he has had on Indian sociology ever since the publication of his work *Homo Hierarchicus*; critically assesses Maithil Brahmin genealogical records called Panji-Prabandha and discusses the dispute between Bhumihar Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins in the journal *Bharat Mitra* in 1916; based on the work “Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar” by Swami Sahajanand Saraswati. This part also helps discredit the colonial caste census for one more reason of enumerating Brahmins and Bhumihar Brahmins separately because both in text as well as practice/social fact they are one and the same. In the process, it also helps discredit, for example, the sociology/social history/culture of understanding Bhumihar Brahmins solely on the basis of a faulty colonial caste census for at least the last century.

Swami Sahajanand Saraswati writes how Yachak/Shat karma Brahmins like Kanyakubja, Maithil, Gaud, Saraswat, Saryupareen Brahmins as well as Ayachak/Trikarma Brahmins like Tyagi, Mohyal, Pachchima, and Bhumihar Brahmins emerged from the same social group of Brahmins and with the passage of time developed these divisions and sub-divisions based on differences of profession, region, language, scholarship, etc. (Saraswati 2003a:308). Ayachak Brahmins have marriage relations with distinguished families of Maithil, Kanyakubja³⁰, Saryupareen and Gaud Brahmins (but with root, group and clan exogamy) [Saraswati (2003:a308)]. ‘Root’ (“*mul/mool*”, *dih*) is based on the first male member of a family who settled in the village. This is more particular of Saraswat Brahmins, Bhumihar Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins. No matter how many generations expire, still those of the same *mool* cannot inter-marry. Therefore, there is caste endogamy but *mool* or *dih* exogamy. In addition to this, Bhumihar Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins do not marry within the same clan (*gotra*) like the rest of the Brahmins of India. But interestingly, and making the system of marriage alliances more complex, the Bhumihar Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins have double exclusions of both *gotra* as well as *mool* or *dih* exogamy. This is another similarity between these two sub-castes of

³⁰ The Kanyakubja Brahmins also have something similar where *āṅk/purushā* is the root ancestor, *āspads* (titles/last names based on scholarship) which could change every generation and *susthān*, the original place of habitation with proper observation of rituals (Khare 1970:19-20).

Brahmins which is why they intermarry. Besides, the Bhumihar Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins share many common *mool* or *dih*, both suggesting a common origin as well as scrupulous practice of *mool* exogamy. The common *mool/dih* (root) of Bhumihar Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins are Jalewar/Jalaiwar, Anrai/Anwar/Arewar/Anraiwar, Barhampur/Brahmapur/Brahmpur, Beloncha, Bhusaware/Bhunaware, Darihare, Dharwar, Dighwe/Dighwa, Domkatariye/Domkatar (Tiwari of Dumtikar, See Appendix III below:70-71), Dumrait, Gaur/Gaul, Jaji, Katewar, Kunjalwar, Mangrauni, Nikatwar, Nonaitwar, Okinwar/Oinwar/Oini, Sakarwar/Sakariwar/Sakardhiwar, Sorawar, Suargane, and so on (Kumar 2016:279-282, 289-290). The Tiwari of Dumtikar are Saryupareen Brahmins settled in Magadha and Mithila; in Magadha they became one of the mools/roots of Bhumihar Brahmins (including the Maharaja of Tikari/Tekari) and in Mithila they became one of the mools of Maithil Brahmins (Appendix III below:70-71). Unfortunately, on *mool* or *dih* nothing much has been written (Kumar 2016: 61) unlike on the issue of *gotra* on which there is available academic literature (Brough 1946/47, Gajendragadkar 1942, Kosambi 1953, Kosambi 2009:87-188, Madan 1962, Rahurkar 1972, Seyfort Ruegg 1976). On *gotra*, Irawati Karve who was both a Sanskritist as well had extensive field-work experience wrote, “[...] among the ancient Aryans the rule of marriage was that one could marry a person who was not a near relation on the father's and mother's side. [...] The Brahmins starting from the same marriage regulations established in the end truly exogamous patri-clans independent of the locality in which they lived. These are called *Gotras*. [...] Among the Brahmins [of north India], who possess *Gotras* in the old Brahmanic sense, a man marries outside his own *Gotra* and also that of his mother's. Just as the taboo on the father's kin embraces the patri-clan so the taboo on the mother's kin embraces the whole of the matri-clan (Karve 1953:65,117).” T.N. Madan while identifying the differences between the approach and definition in understanding *gotra* among five important scholars (John Brough, Indologist; A.L. Basham and D.D. Kosambi, historians; S.V. Karandikar and G.S. Ghurye, sociologists)³¹, gives us

³¹ Madan (Madan 1962: 61) provides relevant excerpts of the view of these five important scholars who have written on *gotra*,

“The exogamy of the Hindus has two sides—sept exogamy that prohibits marriage between members of the same sept or *gotra* who are all believed to have descended from one common ancestor. . . (Karandikar 1929:2).

The Brahmanical *gotra*, which persists with little modification to the present day, may be defined as an exogamous patrilineal sibship, whose members trace their descent back to a common ancestor (Brough 1953:2).

The original meaning of *gotra* is “a cowshed” or “a herd of cows”; in the *Atharva Veda*, the word first appears with the meaning of “a clan”, which it has retained with a special connotation (Basham 1954: 153).

Since the time of the *Sutras* sept exogamy based on *gotra*, as designed in the scheme of Baudhayana linking up the actual families into ten large divisions on the basis of their spiritual affiliation, has been the rule among high castes (Ghurye 1955:91).

on how all five are agreed upon, “that the gotra is an exogamous group of persons who are descended from a common ancestor (Madan 1962).”

Families of the same *mool/dih* (root) will always have the same *gotra*; but those with the same *gotra* need not necessarily have the same *mool/dih* (root). It is quite likely that since the concept of *gotra* (which was often compared/translated as kinship) has Dharmasastra, Indian classical law books references and sanctions, so there is available literature and there were modern intellectuals interested in its study. Whereas, *mool/dih* (root) does not have classical references or Dharmasastra sanctions so it has escaped the attention which it otherwise deserves because it is part of the living reality of a section of Indian society. Both *mool* and *gotra* exogamy is observed by Bhumihar/Maithil Brahmins in Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh as part of their societal constitutionalism of the system of marriage. Many of the mools of Maithil/Bhumihar Brahmins are the same showing the same ancestry which could be with place in instances of migration and/or *mool purush*, or primal ancestor like in the case of Dronwar Mool Brahmins, whether Bhumihar Brahmins or Maithil Brahmins, who have all descended from the same primal ancestor, Raja Abhiman's son Rai Gangaram (Saraswati 2003a:321). The entire Dronwar ancestry is traced to the nine sons of Rai Gangaram; first six sons were born to Bhag Rani, a Maithil Brahmin princess and daughter of Raja Singh Chakwar of Chakwar mool and the last three sons were born to Mukta Rani, daughter of Pandit Gopi Thakur, a Maithil Brahmin resident of Tiswara village (Saraswati 2003a:321; See Appendix I). *Gotra* can be shared by different community-groups/castes for having either descended from the same ancestor/primal *Rishi* (sage) as in the case of Brahmins or those who were his pupils as in the case of other castes. Mools of two castes cannot be the same when ancestry is traced to a mool purush/primal ancestor but in some isolated instances it can be the same when it concerns *mool/dih* as the original place of settlement of ancestors of different castes who for whatever reason chose to migrate together to newer settlements. Such cases of internal migration of entire society from one place to the other could be for better prospects or as a result of some war or duress like famine, etc., from their “original” place of inhabitation. And as nearly all marriages in India, including in Bihar, follows caste endogamy, and *gotra*/clan exogamy; *mool/mul/dih* also deserves to be studied as part of the regional orientation of sociology and social anthropology to understand the social system of marriage among Brahmins in the middle-Gangetic plain. And most importantly, *gotra* and *mul/mool* exogamy is observed by inter-related marriages of co-equal

There are innumerable *gotras* in seven main divisions of the brahmins, each of which must marry outside its own *gotra*, which thus corresponds to the Latin *gens*. . . . In theory, each of the seven larger groups or any sub-group thereof betokens common descent from a *ṛṣi* sage, whose name the *gotra* still bears (Kosambi 1956:96-97).”

Pachchima/Bhumihar//Dogamia/Maithil Brahmins without any law or legal sanction or enforcement by the modern Indian state and its Constitution.

In this context it is remarkable to note how the Maithil Brahmin Mahasabha in its reference to marriage relations between Bhumihar Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins at its Bhagalpur Convention in 1911 also recommended its discontinuance (Saraswati 2003a:312). Swamiji suggested the impracticability of such a recommendation because Ayachak Brahmins (non-priestly Brahmins) also have Yachak or priestly Brahmins among them and Yachak Brahmins also have Ayachak Brahmins among them because it is just a distinction based on professional competence besides it would deny the existing social reality of inter-marriage among them (Saraswati 2003a:309). Swamiji makes special mention of an extremely old, learned and experienced Pachchima Brahmin gentleman Shri Parasmani Singh from Naya Nagar in Darbhanga who was instrumental in listing out the marriage relations among Pachchima (Bhumihar) Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins with their complete details (with family trees, addresses and relationships) and hailed him as a Pachchima Brahmin Ratna, a jewel among Pachchima Brahmins (Saraswati 2003a:313). And then he thanks Maithil Brahmin scholar, Paramhans Mahopadeshak because of whose work “Brahman Sambandh (Marriage relations among Brahmins)”, Swamiji’s own quest for writing a comprehensive work on the history of Brahmins in general and marriage relations among Brahmins in particular, started (Saraswati 2003a:313). Mithila Mihir, a Maithili language journal run by the Maharaja of Darbhanga, in its June 3, 1922 issue records how from 4 kos (12 km) east of Darbhanga to the south, even across the Ganges, there is no difference between Maithil Brahmins and Bhumihar Brahmins, they share commensal (and connubial, otherwise inter-dining was not possible) ties (Saraswati 2003b:69).

Sahajanand expressed his disagreement with the then Maharaja of Kashi (King belonging to the Narayan dynasty of the Princely State of Benares), ‘King of Brahmins’ (Dvijraj) Kashiraj presiding over the Bhumihar Brahmin Mahasabha in its Kashi (Varanasi) session, who while acknowledging the marriage relations of Ayachak Brahmins (Babhans or Bhumihar Brahmins) with Maithils, Kanyakubjas, Saryupareens and Gaud Brahmins, expressed opinion for its discontinuance because in Kashiraj’s view Ayachak Brahmins should marry only Ayachak Brahmins (Saraswati 2003a:308–309) Sahajanand understood all too well the importance of marriage-relations for horizontal solidarity among Brahmins and thus opposed the Maharaja’s view. Such marriage relations also nullifies the separate enumeration of Bhumihar Brahmin and Brahmin in the colonial caste census of 1911. It should be pointed out here how the Maharaja of Kashi is hailed by different Brahmin community organizations as Dvijraj (literally meaning ‘King of Brahmins’),³² which is also part of their royal

³² On the millenium old current ruling Bhumihar Brahmin family of Kashi, H.A. Qureshi and Shreya Pathak write, “Mansaram was a Trikarma brahmin or Gautum Bhumihar and the

insignia with Dvijraj inscribed in it and kept in the Ramnagar Fort Museum and I attest to its presence during a visit to this museum. It is interesting to note how unlike other Brahmin principalities different Brahmin community organizations called *sabhas* or *mahasabhas* held the Maharaja of Kashi, or Kashi Naresh as he is often referred to, as the King of Brahmins (Saraswati 2003b:67–69) and not just king of Bhumihaar Brahmins. The prestige of Kashi Naresh was not just because of heading the ruling Brahmin Narayan dynasty of Benares and being the chief officiating priest of the famous Shiva temple of Kashi Vishwanath and who was given widespread regard not just among Brahmins of the region and beyond but also as a popular and learned monarch highly respected for their personal integrity and scholarship (Upadhyaya 1983). It was the spiritual and temporal prestige enjoyed by Kashi Naresh which led the British to acknowledge it as a Princely State whereas few other estates which were bigger or provided more revenue to the British were never recognized as Princely States. The last ruling king Dr. Vibhuti Narayan Singh (1927-2000); as King and head of the Narayan Dynasty of Benares from 1939-1947) was personally renowned for Sanskrit scholarship and for the promotion of learning and scholarship through his All India Kashiraj Trust which played a significant role in bringing out excellent volumes and perhaps the only ones which have given a “modern” intellectual treatment to the Puranas through a journal published by the Trust called “Puranam”, apart from supporting original translations and works by Sanskrit scholars like Dr. Ganga Sagar Rai and many others (Upadhyaya 1983). Land for both the campuses of Benares Hindu University were gifted by Kashiraj; the land for the old campus was gifted by Maharaja Prabhu Narayan Singh at the request of Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya; whereas the land for the second campus was gifted by Maharaja Aditya Narayan Singh

zamindar of Tetharia (Ootataria of Curwen) or Gangapur village that he inherited from his father Manoranjan Singh (referred to here as Miranji, which seems to be a corruption of Manoranjan Singh when written in the *shikash* mode of writing Persian; Curwen reads it as Mutrunjun Singh), who, contrary to the desire of his brothers, gained his livelihood in his own way by agriculture. Nearly half of the aforementioned village was a part of Manoranjan’s *zamindary*. The origin of this family is traced back to the eleventh century when there was the rule of Raja Banar in Banaras. his purohit Kithoo (Shri Krishan) Misr is a known ancestor of this family. He was a pious Brahmin leading an austere life in the village Utataria (Ootataria), 6 mile away from Banaras. Raja Banaras made many offers of money and land to him, but he invariably denied and didnot accept any of these. Eventually, one day, the Raja, without his knowledge, tied a grant of rent-free land to his turban. When he discovered this concealed grant in his turban, he prophesied that the Raja’s rule would pass on to his sons in future. It happened to be so that the rule of the said Raja soon came to an end after the Ghaznavid attack in 1029. The descendants of Kithoo (Shri Krishan) Misr joined the services of the new rulers. They gotranks androsedaily into great favour. [...] Though Mansaram successfully acquired the zamindary, he could not enjoy it for long and passed away in 1740. The zamindary continued under his son Balwant Singh with all his possessions, comprising eighteen mahals and generating an annual revenue of Rs. 24,50,881 (Qureshi & Pathak 2024:5, 7).”

(Pathak 2014). The Kashiraj has been the official patron of the month-long remarkable Ramlila at Ramnagar for around two and a half-centuries when Maharaja Udit Narayan Singh turned it into a grand operatic cultural-religious pageantry from the early 1800s (Kapur 2006; Pathak 2014). The Kashiraj has a huge and rich personal library including the handwritten manuscripts of Goswami Tulsidas, the celebrated author of “Ramcharitmanas”; besides during Dussehra after praying to his ancestral mother deity, until very recently an annual Durbar (council) used to be organized at the Ramnagar Fort, the seat of residence of the erstwhile King when he would meet ordinary citizens of Benares which held cultural appeal, despite India being a republic and *zamindari* and privy purses being constitutionally abolished (Pathak 2014). It is also noticeable, that the last Maharaja Dr. Vibhuti Narayan Singh’s own maternal uncle was Pandit Ramnandan Mishra, son of a leading *zamindar* of Darbhanga and close to the Maharaja of Darbhanga, and who was involved in the Kisan Sabha politics during the fiery 1930s in Pandaul and Amwari (places in Darbhanga, Bihar) with Swami Sahajanand Saraswati against *zamindars* (landlordism), including his father and against the *zamindari* exploitation of tenants and farmers (Jha 2014; Mishra & Kumar 2017). It is also noticeable how Raj Narain, the “maverick” socialist leader who defeated Indira Gandhi from her constituency of Rae Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh and brought an end to India’s internal emergency leading to a reinstatement of fundamental rights, rule of law and other constitutional safeguards and principles, including democracy, also belonged to the Kashi Raj family (Sethi 1979; Singh 1979; Hazarika 1987).³³ The Darbhanga Raj and its family members were close to Kashi Raj, including Sir Ganganath Jha and his family; Sir Ganganath Jha records staying in the Ramnagar Fort as a young boy in his autobiographical notes and being treated as a family member of the royal House of Kashi (Jha 1976). Pandit Aditya Prasad Singh (1850-1936), a Babhan/Bhumihar Brahmin zamindar from Lari in Gaya in the Magadh region was the Dewan of Darbhanga Raj in Mithila during the reign of Maharaja Rameshwar Singh (1898-1929) [Sinha & Sinha 2013].³⁴

³³ Raj Narain was often caricatured demeaningly by media (Singh 1979; Khushwant Singh calling Narain “a court jester and a buffoon”, as one example among many wanting to keep the then Congress government in good humour, it is relevant to note how Khushwant Singh defended internal emergency and was rewarded with membership of the upper house of Indian Parliament, the Rajya Sabha in 1980 when Congress led by Indira Gandhi came back to power) and other academic establishments for his “pedestrian” manners which he consciously and curiously adopted perhaps because of his ideologically socialist commitments. He had given away most of his considerable inheritance to landless farmers and had acquired no personal property or wealth. It should be brought to notice how he did not just belong to an illustrious family but had a brilliant educational career, including an MA and LLB from Benares Hindu University. It is rather surprising how the man who defeated Indira Gandhi and can be held to be prominently responsible for ending the internal emergency is not given enough credit for it let alone having any comprehensive biography written on him.

³⁴ Pandit Aditya Prasad Singh worked tirelessly for the revival of the traditional Indian Panchayati Raj System or the Village Self Government which in his view had kept the fire of Indian

Sahajanand cites how Kanyakubja originally was a geographical determinant, which is the ancient name of what we know of as Kanauj. It is also important to note how Sahajanand attests to Kanyakubja as a place and not a specific community in the ancient times, a fact attested to by historical literature henceforth (Lahiri 1967). It is the city of Kānyakubja or Kanyākubja, inhabited since second-first century BCE and gradually rose into prominence with the decline of Magadha (Lahiri 1967). The many different names of Kanauj/Kanyakubja are Kānyakubja, Mahōdaya, Kauśa or Kuśasthala and Gādhipura; and it finds mention in the epic Mahābhārata as Kānyakubja; in the epic Rāmāyaṇa as Kanyākubja; in Patañjali's Māhābhāshya as Kānyakubji; by Ptolemy as Kanagora; by Hiuen Tsang as Ka-no-Kue-she; in the Nava-Khaṇḍa of Skandapurāṇa as Kānyakubja; in the Padmapurāṇa as Mahōdaya; and by Al-Bīrūnī as 'Kanōj', which is how we know of it today (Lahiri 1967). This further attests to the fact that the ten-fold distinction of Brahmins is a regional attestation rather than any sectarian formulation and which at any rate developed in the medieval age around the 12th century CE (Pandey 2014:4). It could be the case how Brahmins who carried the name of the regions to their self-identification more specifically, over time in the late-medieval and early modern period, styled themselves as more distinct communities like the Kanyakubja Brahmins or Maithil Brahmins, though marriage relations and social fact speaks otherwise and attests to the earlier and original meaning of division of the Indian sub-continent into ten-regional divisions with ten regional variations of Brahmins without any specific sectarian ethnicity formation, which even when formed, is only an approximate categorization. *Gotra*/clan and *mool/mul/dih* (root) and with the onset of late-middle ages and difficulty in movement and mobility with a more inward looking village-based society with regional linguistic and cultural identity formations led to the metamorphosis of earlier geographically-determining Brahmins into different regional and ethnic groups of Brahmins. This fact is attested to by Sahajanand when he cites the verse "Kānyakubjādvijāh Sarve", of how Kanyakubja was the "geographical" land of Brahmins, also called Brah-mavarta or Brahmarshi Desh (another inspiration for the title of his work) from where they kept migrating to different parts of the sub-continent over centuries and therefore all are co-equal Brahmins because what really matters is how Brahmins of the same *gotra*, no matter to which region or what caste/sub-caste/group/sub-group like Kanyakubja, Gaud, Maharashtra, Maithil, Bhumihar or Tyagi they belong, they have the same *Pravar*, *Shakha*, *Sutra*, *Veda*, *Devata*, *Pada* and *Shikha* (Saraswati 2003b:65–66; explained below). Therefore, Sahajanand suggests that despite hundreds of varieties and variations of Brahmins, there is an underlying thread of unity and same ancestry which is maintained

civilization alive through the ages. In 1911 he donated a 40 acre mound in the village Lari (presently in Arwal district) for the construction of the Edward Arbitration Hall, which was to house a village arbitration board, the first of its kind in the country.

and located by all these “kinship terminologies (for the lack of a better word)” meticulously maintained by Brahmins and unite them as a social group across the Indian sub-continent (Saraswati 2003b:65–66).

On the spread of Brahmins from Kanyakubja region and the proliferation of Kanyakubja Brahmin castes/sub-castes as linked to region, “country”, “and territorial sub-divisions” and due to “migration” and “immigration”, Suvira Jaiswal writes, “Hence, brāhmaṇas were known by the name of their country, and broad territorial subdivisions emerged on this basis. Later, in early medieval times when indigenous chieftains, in the so-called absence of local ‘pure’ brāhmaṇas, began to send for brāhmaṇas from elsewhere to earn religious merit (in reality to create a class of loyal intermediaries and ideologues), the process of subcaste formation within the brāhmaṇa varṇa received a filip. Immigrant brāhmaṇas generally retained a distinct identity and in some rare cases continued to have links with the parent group, but in most cases loss of contact with the original home and interaction with the local culture transformed them into new brāhmaṇa subcastes, such as the Kanyakubja or Gauḍa sections of Bengali brāhmaṇas. Sectarian, ritualistic and occupational differences contributed further to create a very complex picture of the caste organization. The result was that later myths about the origin of brāhmaṇa and non-brāhmaṇa castes rarely refer to the *puruṣasūkta* myth and are not concerned with the origin of the varṇa as a whole but only with a subdivision, caste or subcaste of a particular varṇa category (Jaiswal 1998:59).” The entire Kulin Brahmin structure of Brahmins in Bengal is based on the idea of migration of Upadhyaya (literally meaning knowledgeable) Brahmins from Kanyakubja/Banaras or from Kanyakubja to Banaras to Bengal or Bengali-speaking parts of Eastern India through Bihar, where they adopted the titles of Mukhopadhyaya/Mukherjee/Mookerjee/Mukherji, Chattopadhyaya/Chatterjee/Chatteraj, Bandopadhyaya/Bannerjee/Bonnerjee/Bannerji and Gangopadhyaya/Ganguly at the invitation of the Sena king, Adisura in the eleventh-century CE, some even take it back further in time to the eighth-century CE (Inden 1976; Raychaudhuri & Raychaudhuri 1981, Ray, 1994:164; Brown 1988:758-759).³⁵ Because of settling in the region of Rārha in Bengal, they are also called Rārhi/Radhi Brahmins (Inden 1976:54; Ray, 1994:164). It is also interesting to observe that unlike in Mithila in North Bihar, where the Srotiya Maithil Brahmins are considered the “purest of the pure, and the highest of the high” which includes the Maharaja of Darbhanga and some of the most notable Brahmin scholars like

³⁵ The exact period or even the historicity of the king Adisura is shrouded in mystery, but the migration and differentiation among the Brahmins of Bengal is an acceptable social fact [Datta (née Sen Gupta) 1989:84-96]. The migration story is contained in the *Kulaji* texts, which are the geneological records of Bengali Brahmins, but which, at any rate, are not older than the sixteenth century CE and are generally not regarded as scientific by historians and are often written off as spurious (Inden 1976: 49-60). Though, Ronald Inden takes the text and the story seriously as a traditional ethnographic document.

Mahamahopadhyaya Sri Krishna Singh Thakur, Sir Ganganath Jha, Mahamahopadhyaya Acharya Tarineesh Jha and so on being *Srotriyas*; in the Kulin Brahmin structure of Bengal, the *Srotriyas* are lower in the rank/hierarchy among Brahmins in Bengal and as compared to the Kanyakubja Upadhyayas who as the most exalted and the most landed, not just among all caste-communities but also among all the Brahmins of Bengal, never performed rituals for others because of essentially being Ayachak/Trikarma Brahmins (Inden 1976: 69-70; Brown 1988:759).

Therefore, in addition to *gotra* and *mool/mul/dih* (root); *Pravar*, *Shakha*, *Sutra*, *Veda*, *Devata*, *Pada* and *Shikha* are all kinship/knowledge based group terminologies which all have their own complex meanings and implications for identifying Brahmins with the same root ancestor across the Indian sub-continent (Saraswati 2003b:65–66). “*Pravar*” identifies and commemorates some eminent scholars who would have been born in a *gotra* in a specific region or field of scholarship. It helps one identify the lineage and location of a Brahmin immediately because such genealogical knowledge is carried over from one generation to the next both as a matter of pride and also as a matter of inspiration for emulation. Brough writes, “The traditional view as given by Baudhayana is that the *gotras* are to be classified according to the eponymous *rsis* – the seven *risis*, that is ‘Jamadagani, Gautama, Bharadvaja, Atri, Visvamitra, Kasyapa and Vasistha’, with the additional *gotra* of Agastya. On the other hand, the *pravaras* are classified under the names of Bhrgu, Angiras, Atri, Visvamitra, Kasyapa, Vasistha, and Agastya, the Jamadaganis coming under the Bhrgus, and both the Gautamas and Bharadvajas under the Angirases. In general, however, the various *ganas* [groups] of Jamadaganis all have three out of the five names of their *pravaras* in common: ... while the Gautamas, ... and the Bharadvajas, ... also form exogamous units. Thus, in spite of the *pravaras* being grouped under Bhrgu and Angiras, the exogamous groups resulting from the *pravara*-rule are those of Jamadagani, Gautama and Bharadvaja (Brough 1953:29).” Although the knowledge of *pravar* might be more present among the more learned and erudite Brahmins.

All the four Vedas have many different branches and there would be Brahmin scholars specialising in one specific branch of one of the four Vedas and achieve acclaim for it. The descendants of such a specialist, *shakha*, literally branch, would self-identify and also get identified by it as an additional list of identity markers to help situate the family and origin of an individual. *Sutras* are also a set of rules and one who has given such a set of rules, his descendants identify as belonging to that *sutra*-giver’s family. It was one of the non-violable duties of Brahmins to learn the Vedas; some learnt all four and became known as *Chaturvedis/Chaubey/Chaube*, literally meaning scholar of four Vedas; some learnt three and became known as *Trivedi/Tripathi/Tiwari*, literally meaning scholar of three Vedas; some specialised in two Vedas and became known as

Dwivedi/Dube/Dubey, literally meaning scholar of two Vedas; and then some are known as *Mishra*, who as having mixed knowledge of different Vedas much like a comparative scholar. Those who specialised on Shukla Yajurveda, adopted *Shukla* as their title. The first word of the Rig Veda is “Agni” (1a. *agnīm īle puróhitam yajñásya devám ṛtvijam | Hótāraṃ ratnadhatamam*|| Nootan & Holland 1994:1) so those who specialised in the Agnihotra ritual adopted it as their title, and so on. With all these aforementioned determinants, coupled with the ten main geographical distinctions of Brahmins since the middle ages, we find a proliferation of multifarious distinctions and identity markers, including professional differentiations and focussing on some specialized branch of knowledge among Brahmins, leading to a proliferation of the number of titles adopted by them. “Devata” signifies *Ishta* or personal deity; every family has their own personal deity, and there are fixed times of the year when the personal deity is worshipped. Also, the personal deity is linked to the settlement of the primal ancestor (*mool/mul/root*) in a specific location. So often, personal deity, “devata” could overlap with “gram devata” or village deity, to identify the root village or location of ones ancestors. “Pada” is literally seat, it is the seat of learning or the seat/s of worship where certain set of villages and settlements are intrinsically linked. It could also be the case how *ayachak/trikarma* and all the other Brahmins support these seats of learning/worship financially and providing a regular portion of the agricultural produce during the harvest. In the pre-modern times, agriculture as the predominant source of revenue was the mainstay of support and identification with a particular seat of learning/worship. All the temples and temple-towns had their own sources of revenue in this way to sustain ritual worship and promotion of arts and learning. It was a system of local economy and culture, for example the House of Hathwa (Hathwa Raj), is a Brahmin ruling family in the name of Thawe Mata, who is one of the many forms/incarnations of Goddess Durga, the mother goddess who is worshipped across the Indian subcontinent (Sharma 2012). “Shikha” is the tuft of hair, and there are specific ways of keeping it much like the performing of Gayatri Mantram or Sandhya Vandanam after Yajnopaveetam (sacred thread ceremony) for a Brahmin. Knotting the *shikha*, or keeping it open, or letting it fall backwards or one specific case of Namboodiri Brahmins from South-West coast of India to let the shikha fall frontwards, “the tuft of hair is worn on the top or crown of the head (Raja 1910:632)” all have very specific symbolic-ritual meaning.

Sahajanand maintains that despite regional, occupational, linguistic and other differences emerging, the different groups/communities/caste-sub-castes of Brahmins such as Gaud, Tyagi, Saraswat, Mohiyal, Kanyakubja, Saryupareen, Maithil, Bhumihar, Utkal, Bengali, and the like and also Tailang, Dravida, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Gurjar and so on, maintain connubial and commensal ties with each other wherever two or more groups of Brahmins are

more numerous and reside in adjoining regions making them all linked to each other in an organized order and web of relationships (Saraswati 2003b:66–67). Although not all the groups of Brahmins are interrelated because not all are present in all the regions, but wherever one Brahmin group's place of residence borders that of another group, these two groups of Brahmins are martially related to each other (Saraswati 2003b:67). Sahajanand's insights from his earlier travels in the early years of twentieth century when he had taken to *sanyas* (ascetic monkhood) and when he had travelled mostly on foot to all of northern, western, eastern and central India finds its way into Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar when he was writing about the history and culture of Brahmins (Hauser and Jha 2015:49-113). It is further bolstered by his field-work in 1915-1916 for the specific purpose of recording marriage relations among Brahmins. His travels to deep southern part of India does not appear in his autobiography during his early years of sanyas or while conducting his field-study for writing "Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar". His visit to the southern parts of India appear clearly when he joined politics and indeed while organizing peasants and addressing them during his Kisan Sabha phase. He was a very keen observer and had impeccable memory and we see signs of it from his earliest reflections when he wrote seven voluminous works including his autobiography "Mera Jivan Sangharsh" (My Life's Struggle/The Struggle of my Life) all based on his memory while in prison from 1940-1942. Sahajanand records in the 20-page addendum which he added to his autobiography in mid-1946, more than four-years following his release from Hazaribagh Central jail in March 1942, and after six years of writing his memoir, "Apart from my memoir, *Mera Jivan Sangharsh* [My Life Struggle], I wrote six other books while in jail, namely, *Kisan Kaise Larte Hain?* [How do the Peasants Struggle?], *Kranti aur Samyukta Morcha* [Revolution and the United Front], *Kisan Sabha ke Sansmaran* [Reminiscences of the Kisan Sabha], *Khet Mazdoor* [Agricultural Labourers], *Jharkhand ke Kisan* [The Peasants of Jharkhand], and *Gita Hriday* [The Heart of the Gita]. Of these six, the first two have already been published and the remaining ones are ready for publication. Of these, *Gita Hriday* was completed just on the eve of my being released from jail (Hauser and Jha 2015:655-656)".³⁶ It is relevant to point this out because in his autobiography/memoir "Mera Jivan Sangharsh"

³⁶ Prof. Ram Chandra Pradhan (1940-2026), a political scientist, intellectual historian and prolific writer who taught at Ramjas College in Delhi University and hails from Dhakaich in Buxar district, Bihar, had heard Swami Sahajanand Saraswati as a small boy give one of his famous and last speeches. After having made a lucid translation of Sahajanand's autobiography/memoir *Mera Jivan Sangharsh* (he has given it the title, "The Struggle of my Life" rather than "My Life Struggle" as given by Walter Hauser) and published by Oxford University Press, he has translated five more works by Sahajanand in four volumes published in 2025 by Primus, including, *Reminiscences and Struggles of the Kisan Sabha* (Pradhan 2025a); *What Should Peasants Do?* (Pradhan 2025b); *Major Addresses* (Pradhan 2025c); and *Major Essays and Other Writings* (Pradhan 2025d).

(My Life Struggle/The Struggle of my Life), Sahajanand provides his reflections of his earliest childhood memories, of the places he visited during his ascetic wanderings across most of India almost entirely on foot besides providing the history and context of writing “Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar” (The History of Brahmins) in graphic detail in this early phase of his life and before getting involved with Congress (1920), the Non-Cooperation Movement, and details of the Kisan Sabha phase from 1927 onwards, with the formation of the West Patna Kisan Sabha (Kumar 2021).

Based on his earlier experience of travelling on foot and his insight while conducting field-work in 1915-1916, he provides how, “In the districts of Farukhabad, Mainpuri and Itawa where Kanyakubjas and Sanadhya live in adjoining and bordering villages, they have inter-marriages. Similarly, in the region of Sultanpur and Prayag, Kanyakubjas and Saryupareen inter-marry and inter-dine and the two together maintain connubial and commensal ties with Bhumihars; whereas in Mithila (north Bihar) Bhumihar and Maithils maintain connubial and commensal ties with each other. In Murshidabad, Jessore, etc. districts in Bengal, Jijhoutia, Kanyakubja and Bhumihar, etc. are settled who maintain marriage relations with each other. And these inter-marriages among different groups of Brahmins is a rule rather than an exception and there are brides and bridegrooms belonging to both corresponding groups of Brahmins (Sahajanand attests to the absence of any hypergamy/hypogamy among these different groups of Brahmins). Similarly, in Delhi, Saharanpur, Rohtak and adjoining districts, Tyagis and Grahi Gaudas maintain marriage relations with each other and in some districts of Punjab, Saraswats and Mohiyals inter-marry (Saraswati 2003b:67).”

The Kanyakubja Mahati Sabha, a leading Kanyakubja Brahmin community organization, and their numerous journals and articles by learned scholars, mentioned profusely in their proceedings of the nineteenth congress in Prayag (1926) and the twentieth congress in Lucknow (1927) by beginning their proceedings mentioning the name of Kashi Naresh as the king of all Brahmins (Saraswati 2003b:67–69). Sahajanand records how the 19th Congress of the Kanyakubja Mahati Sabha (Kanyakubja Brahmin Organization) was held in Prayag (Allahabad) in the summer of 1926 which was presided by the King of Jaunpur, Shri Krishnaduttji Dubey, MLC (Member of Legislative Council), the Secretary elect was Raisaheb Pandit Rajnarayanji Mishra and the proceedings of the meeting was passed unanimously stating, “The society’s (Kanyakubja Brahmin society’s) disintegration and decline precipitates the importance in emphasizing the ideals of mutual affinity, unity and support which the Kanyakubja Mahati Sabha wants to promote and as a community organization it considers it important to stress upon these ideals of unity and makes further appeals to the community towards that purpose. [] A significant proportion among the groups/communities of - Saryupareen, Sanadhya, Jijhoutia,

Bhumihar, Parvatiya, Bengali, Gujarati – Brahmins consider themselves to be Kanyakubjas. But due to the lack of explicit (apparent) relationship among these communities of Kanyakubja Brahmins, it is difficult to organize them into a unified community. Therefore, for the purposes of communal unity among different groups of Kanyakubja Brahmins through mutual affinity, unity and support; it is the solemn purpose and utmost responsibility of this community organization of Kanyakubja representatives to bring about societal unity among its different groups (across the country) (Saraswati 2003b:68)”.

Sahajanand records, “The same organization’s (Kanyakubja Mahati Sabha) 20th convention held in the April of 1927 in Lucknow under the Presidentship of Pandit Umashankar Vajpayee, MA, LLB, Government Advocate, Allahabad passed a resolution on similar lines which was as follows:

- (a) This Kanyakubja Mahati Sabha, much like last year’s congress/convention, expresses its deep happiness and a sense of satisfaction at finding Saryupareen and the like branches of the Kanyakubja Brahmins present at this convention. For the purposes and ideals of community organization and solidarity, and witnessing the current challenges, this organization prays and appeals for forming a unified, large and comprehensive organization of all Kanyakubjas including Sarupareen, Sanadhya, Jijhoutia, Bhumihar, Parvatiya, Bengali, and so on for mutual affinity, unity and support. We request the definite presence of all these different Kanyakubja Brahmin groups in our annual conventions and to take active part in its proceedings and to play an active role in sedulously implementing the proceedings of this Sabha.
- (b) This Kanyakubja Mahati Sabha also proposes to set-up a committee composed of the below mentioned five distinguished gentlemen, whose work would be to work towards consensus building based on suggestions on this issue (mutual affinity, unity and support among all the different Kanyakubjas including Sarupareen, Sanadhya, Jijhoutia, Bhumihar, Parvatiya, Bengali, and so on) and based on the suggestions and consensus gathered to develop such a Kanyakubja society which would work towards all the groundwork and all the varied means of achieving its above-mentioned objectives passed in its resolutions. The five members of the committee are as follows: (1) Honourable Pandit Gokaran Nathji Mishra – convener; (2) Pandit Ravishankarji Shukla Rai, Raipur; (3) Pandit Jaidayalji Awasthi, Lucknow; (4) Raisaheb Pandit Rajnarayanji Mishra, Allahabad; (5) Pandit Raghunandan Sharma (Kanpur) (Saraswati 2003b:68).”

Sahajanand records how in this said convention (Kanyakubja Mahati Sabha’s 20th convention held in the April of 1927 in Lucknow), the President Pandit Umashankar Vajpayee, MA, LLB, Government Advocate, Allahabad at page twelve of his address mentioned, “The same Kanyakubja Vrihat Vansha’s (ex-

tensive groups of Kanyakubja Brahmins) many branches became Sanadhya, Pahadi, Jujhoutia, Saryupareen, Chattisgarhi, Bhumihar and many different Bengali Brahmins. With the passage of time, and the lack of proper means of transportation, differences in dressing and attire due to regional and provincial differences, differences in eating habits, etc. reasons led to the origin of differences among them and they (all these groups of Kanyakubja Brahmins) forgot about their origin as Kanyakubjas and the old unity became like a dream (Saraswati 2003b:68-69)."

In his inaugural address (at the Kanyakubja Mahati Sabha annual convention of 1927 in Lucknow), Justice Gokarannath Mishra in page four of his address mentioned, "I cannot express in words the amount of happiness I had when in the last year's convention (in 1926) of the Kanyakubja Mahati Sabha in Prayag passing a resolution to unite and incorporate those Brahmin communities who were Kanyakubjas in the past and expressed their interest to unite with their ancient root of Kanyakubjas. At this point in time, my express intention concerns Saryupareen, Jujhoutia and Bhumihar Brahmins and mostly reside in the eastern and southern parts of this province (United Provinces now Uttar Pradesh) (Saraswati 2003b:69)."

Sahajanand further records, "Under the editorship of Ayurvedacharya Pandit Satyanarayanji Mishra, the 'Kanyakubja Hitkari' (Kanyakubja Brahmin community journal), a monthly journal while discussing on the same issue of unity among all Kanyakubja branch of Brahmins in two of its issues of 1926 discussed - 'Many times, from the platform of very big conventions, scholars have given lectures on the history of Brahmins which has proved without an iota of doubt how Saryupareen, Sanadhya, Jijhoutia, Bhumihar, Parvatiya, Bangali, etc. Brahmins are all Kanyakubja Brahmins. Now the question which emerges is how there can be community solidarity among them. Our readers would not have forgotten how in the opportune occasion of the just concluded annual convention of the said Sabha (Kanyakubja Mahati Sabha) in Prayag where the resolution proposed by Shri Pandit Venkateshnarayanji Tiwari, MA and released and supported by Pandit Shivratanji Shukla, Pandit Jagannathji Shukla and Pandit Gurudayalji Tiwari was to this effect (of bringing solidarity among different branches of Kanyakubja Brahmins (November, p. 238." "In accordance with the accepted resolution of 'The Shri Kanyakubja Pratinidhi Sabha (delegates' organization of the annual convention of Kanyakubja Mahati Sabha)', it must invite all the different branches of Kanyakubja Brahmins, i.e., Saryupareen, Sanadhya, Bengali, Bhumihar, etc. all Brahmins must be invited in the annual convention (of the Kanyakubja Mahati Sabha) (December, p. 269) (Saraswati 2003b:69)."³⁷

³⁷ R.S. Khare records how Justice Gokarannath Mishra played a prominent role in the Kanyakubja Community Organization which he records as Akhil Bhārtiya Sri Kanya-Kubja Pratinidhi Sabha, where "Pratinidhi" means representative, which Sahajanand records as "Ma-

In the details of as many as 360 genealogical records (*Kanyakubja Vanshawali*) of Kanyakubja Brahmins itself belonging to the Kashyap *gotra* with titles of Dube (Dubey/Dwivedi), Tiwari (Tiwary/Trivedi), Awasthi, Dixit (Dikshit), Agnihotri and Mishra are held to be descendants of Bhumihar Brahmins (Saraswati 2003a:354). Bhumihar Brahmins are given a very high status by Kanyakubja Brahmins because the primal ancestor (*mool purush*) of Kashyap *gotra* Kanyakubja Brahmins have descended from Bhumihar Brahmins; the name of the primal ancestor is Anantram and his son's name was Garbhu from whose descendants they have emerged (Saraswati 2003b:97). They were from a place called Madarpur in Kanpur and its record is found in Kanyakubja genealogical records and has been discussed at length in Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar (Saraswati 2003b:97-98). The Kashyap *Gotra* Kanyakubja Brahmins belong to Khatkul or the higher Uttama (among the highest group of Kanyakubja Brahmins) among the Kulin (literally cultured/cultivated) cluster of six *gotras* (Khare 1970:96-97) and it is these Kulin Kanyakubja Brahmins who migrated to the rest of the country, including Bengal. It is then reasonable to conclude how "the highest of the high" Kashyap *gotra* Kanyakubja Brahmins, not just in Uttar Pradesh or Bihar but also in Bengal, Odisha, Assam and the rest of the country have Babhan/Bhumihar Brahmin ancestry. Therefore, Kanyakubja Brahmins and Bhumihar Brahmins share the same 'bodily substance'.³⁸ When, their 'occupational substance' changed, a Bhumihar Brahmin became a Kanyakubja Brahmin and a Kanyakubja Brahmin became a Bhumihar Brahmin accordingly (Inden 1976:11-22). On the issue of change of titles based on profession and

hati" or main, or Main Kanyabubja Community Organization, this is one obvious difference between a modern trained scholar like Khare who has stuck to the literal name as recorded, whereas Sahajanand refers to its substance and purpose which was that of being the "main" community organization for Kanyakubja Brahmins; both point to the annual convention of the "main" Sabha being held in Lucknow in 1927 (Khare 1970:33,n.2). One must also keep into account how Khare is doing his fieldwork and recording his accounts nearly half-a-century after Sahajanand. Sahajanand's record of the other prominent Kanyakubja Brahmin distinguished scholars and members of the community and indeed its organization like Justice Gokarnnath Mishra, Pt. Gurudayal Tiwari Raja Shri Krishna Dutt Dubey, Rai Bahadur Raj Narain Mishra, Pt. Ravishankar Shukla (who later became the first Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh) is confirmed by Khare half-a-century later. What Khare has not done is to engage discursively with the proceedings of the Kanyakubja Brahmin Sabha and its journals on who is a Kanyakubja, what all Brahmin groups constitute as part of Kanyakubja, what is its history and so on, or to refer to Sahajanand's "Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar" where he had discursively engaged with the proceedings of the Kanyakubja Sabha some fifty years ahead of Khare (Khare 1970).

³⁸ Ronald Inden writes quite interestingly and convincingly on the concept of 'shared bodily substance', including among other defining features, the 'worship substance', the 'territorial substance' and the 'occupational substance' (1976:11-22). On the concept of rank dynamics, among Brahmins, more particularly Maithil Brahmins, but the structure of the principle of rank is translatable to Pachchima Brahmins (Bhumihar Brahmins) and also to Kanyakubja Brahmins in general (Brown 1983:49-51).

specialization, but without studying the genealogical records in this article³⁹, R.S. Khare writes:

There is strong evidence that *aspads* (titles or positions based on scholarship and/or specific ritualistic practice) changed as soon as any ancestor in the lineage got name and fame by performing a particular type of sacrifice or obtaining special adeptness in Sanskrit texts. Bajpai shows through his genealogy that his ancestors held the titles of Pāthak, Avasthi, Dixit, and Bajpai successively on account of different sacrifices that they performed. At the present time, the *aspad* as such no longer signifies anything except that it is a common surname suffixed as an easy naming device. It is very common in the genealogies. One *gotra* may have more than one *aspad*, and, conversely, one *aspad* may be found in different *gotras*. For matrimonial alliances, the one principle that is strictly adhered to is the avoidance of *gotra*-endogamy so that two families belonging to the same *aspada* may intermarry if their *gotras* are different, but even those belonging to different *aspad* may not, if their *gotra* is the same (Khare 1960:357–358)

The Saryupareen Brahmin organizations, journals and articles also celebrated and hailed Kashi Naresh as the most exalted and the first among Saryupareen Brahmins. The president of the Saryupareen Brahmin (who are considered Yachak Brahmins) Sabha of Kashi (Varanasi), a resident of Bhadaini, Pandit Vijayanand Tripathi, while writing on the history of the Saryupareen Brahmins titled “Panktipawan Parichay” named Maharajidhiraj Dwijraj Shrimat Prabhu-narayan Singh Kashi Naresh, who is an Ayachak Gautam Gotra Bhumihar Brahmin, as the first famous Saryupareen Brahmin resident of Kashi (Saraswati 2003a:353), thus vindicating Sahajanand’s view of Yachak/Ayachak as merely a perfunctory differentiation and discrediting Kashiraj’s view advocating discontinuance of marriage between Yachak and Ayachak Brahmins.

This sub-chapter enlists how different Brahmin community organizations viewed themselves and aspired to order their society during colonialism and points to the organic unity among different Brahmin caste-communities as against the colonial ordering of differentiation, subjugation and domination.

2.1. Critique of Dumont’s views on marriage relations among North Indian Brahmins in light of “Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar”

While discussing marriage relations among Brahmins it is important to bring Louis Dumont into the debate, who was perhaps the most influential Western thinker who wrote on Indian society in the second half of the twentieth century, casting his shadow on all debates in sociology, anthropology and culture studies ever since (Khare 2006). Much as India is a complex and plural society, so

³⁹ Khare has not referred to the proceedings and unanimous resolutions of the Kanyakubja Mahati Sabha, a leading Kanyakubja Brahmin community organization since colonial times, besides he has failed to mention the Bhumihar Brahmin origin of Kashyap-gotra Kanyakubja Brahmins as per their own genealogical records.

should its intellectual enquiry be pluralistic (Madan 2011).⁴⁰ He had studied in greater detail the Brahmins of Southern India and he was right in assessing the nature and structure of the ordering of Brahmin social life across the Indian sub-continent including in the nature of marriage alliances (Dumont 1966).⁴¹ Brahmins are thus a 'national caste', despite having many castes and sub-castes within them, and despite several millennia of migration, differentiation and settlements, share some similarities amongst themselves. While discussing similarities, Dumont took the example of Saryupareen Brahmins from Gorakhpur district in particular. Though it is rather surprising how he failed to even mention the marriage relations of Kashi Naresh's family as the most prominent example of a Brahmin king and social and cultural leader while discussing marriage relations among Saryupareen Brahmins.⁴² In his zeal for a structuralist understanding of Brahmins as a social group at the apex of its society as part of *homo hierarchichus*, a trait he invariably inherited from his other European forebears, but specially so among his contemporary French sociologists (Steinmetz 2023) studying Indian society, despite being a Sanskritist, he fell into the same loop of superiority of European social sciences in substance and methodology, and thus committed some of the same epistemic violence (Madan: 2006a, 2006b; see pp. 9 and 11 above and the debates below).

There are some finer problematic points in Dumont's article on marriage relations in North Indian Brahmins. He makes a decisive statement at the very beginning of his piece how the generally held view of "village exogamy" being more extant among North Indian Brahmins is not as "general" as it is made out to be (Dumont 1966:90) – he is incorrect because village exogamy is the general norm among North Indian Brahmins with rare exceptions only when Brahmins of different *mool* and also different *gotra* live in the same village (terms explained above). And, therefore, they cannot be *sapinda* or from the same family line for seven generations from the agnatic side and five generations from the matrilineal side (*pinda* is the rice-ball offered to departed ancestors, *sapinda* means having the same ancestors to whom you are obliged/ could offer rice-balls).⁴³ *Mool* and *gotra* exogamy is a practice among Pachchima Brahmins (Bhumihar Brahmins) and Maithil Brahmins of Bihar. But, Kashi Naresh is a Bhumihar Brahmin, and claimed as the king of all sub-groups of Brahmins

⁴⁰ This aspect will be addressed more comprehensively in an ongoing project to be published subsequently.

⁴¹ I would like to sincerely thank Roland Hardenberg to provide me a copy of this article by Louis Dumont which was not readily available.

⁴² He did field research in Gorakhpur district which is not far from Varanasi.

⁴³ To resolve the riddle of *sapinda*, both *gotra* and, even more importantly, *mool* has to be taken into account. More than the Kanyakubja Brahmins or Saryupareen Brahmins, Bhumihar Brahmins have exactly the same structure like the Maithil Brahmins, which is why Maithil Brahmin scholars like Mahamahopadhyaya Acharya Tareneesh Jha, among so many other Maithil Brahmin scholars consider Bhumihar Brahmin themselves to be another branch of Maithil Brahmins. See Brown (1983), Khare (1960), Saraswati (2003).

including Saryupareens, and Dumont did not study the concept of *mool* thus casting a doubt on his results.

Secondly, Dumont writes that '[d]etailed descriptions of kinship in North India are scarce'.⁴⁴ – He just had to look into the *panji-prabandh* of Maithil Brahmins which is the most extant genealogical record in all of India and not just North India to realise the problem with his sweeping assertion. *Panji-prabandh* of Maithil Brahmins is perhaps the most complex and rigorous genealogical record maintained by any community anywhere in the world for close to seven centuries (Brown 1988). It is rather surprising how it escaped the attention of Dumont. Besides, every other Brahmin group, if they are from the higher and more prestigious family background maintain genealogical records in great detail. Additionally, Bhumihaar Brahmins who had the maximum land ownership in the state of Bihar and significant ownership in eastern Uttar Pradesh, with land grants in perpetuity and acknowledged as such in the Mughal Persian records, maintain their genealogical records in great detail, not just to maintain the accepted marriage system among illustrious Brahmins to avoid marriage among sa-gotra, sa-pinda, or sa-mool but also to settle their property disputes.⁴⁵

Thirdly, among Maithil Brahmins and Bhumihaar Brahmins, hypergamy is not particularly favoured because it does not meet the requirement of *kul* or *khandan* (prestigious/illustrious family with family prestige), but marriage among co-equals is preferred to maintain the 'superior bodily substance' which includes 'worship substance, territorial substance and occupational substance' (Inden 1976:11–22, Brown 1983:49–51). Therefore, the likelihood of the marriage of a Srotiya and Yogya Maithil Brahmin among each other and with Pachchima Brahmins both as a rule and as a matter of practice was higher as Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar attests to (Saraswati 2003a:308–321) rather than with Jaibar Maithils who are more numerous but considered lower in the hierarchy because of not following the Brahmanical stricture of strict spiritual discipline with a pursuit of scholarship (Brown 1983).

Fourthly, Dumont's treatment of 'pāṭh pūjā'⁴⁶, as necessarily because of a hypergamous relation, for example, is questionable (Dumont 1966:104–108). He has turned a ritualistic practice into a systemic rule of superiority and inferiority which is arbitrary. For example, among Maithil Brahmins and Bhumihaar Brahmins of North India, 'pāṭh pūjā' is a ritual practice and not a systemic structural rule conveying 'hypergamy' because parallel marriages could be arranged from both sides who would thus be obliged to conduct 'pāṭh pūjā'. Besides, Dumont does not provide any specific instances of 'pāṭh pūjā' being conducted among

⁴⁴ Dumont (1966:90). See Brown (1983).

⁴⁵ See Yang (1989, 1999), Bayly (2012), Ansari (2019), Khan (2022), Qureshi & Pathak (2024).

⁴⁶ It is the ritual washing of feet of the prospective groom before solemnizing the marriage. The bridegroom is called pāhun/mehmān/guest and is honoured as an embodiment of Gods along with mother, father and Guru.

Saryupareen Brahmins inter-se because of hypergamy, who are the subject of his study. There is no sampling provided and there is no record of the exact families with their addresses and genealogies as provided by Sahajanand in Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar.

Fifthly, another related problem in Dumont's particular 1966 article is his reliance still on some of the European or British ethnographic sources of the nineteenth century based on which imprecise, unstructured and in our example faulty caste censuses were conducted. Much unlike 'native' scholars who would be very erudite in the *shastras* (classical scholarship of Sanskrit texts) as well as societal knowledge, these ethnographers often had no specialized training, Indian or western, and no scholarship worth the name in the *shastras* or knowledge of Indian languages and society, to be in a position to comment upon it, which is what explains the obvious errors in their caste census enterprise from 1860s until 1931 (Samarendra, 2008, 2011). If, for a change some British official had some academic background, he was not supposed to and often did not have any redeeming view of Indian religions, societies and culture. At any rate these British officials whom Dumont quotes did not have to have any specialized training in the rich history and culture of India. For nearly a century they were fed on the discredited and polemical work of James Mill's "History of India" (as a compulsory reading for Indian Civil Service examinations) and followed its discredited methodology and clearly obnoxious views in everything Indian they were supposed to evaluate and comment upon (these were precisely the officials who became ethnographers and conducted caste surveys and censuses reeking of racist-colonial tropes who are then cited as "authorities" and referred in sociological writings including those of Dumont).⁴⁷ Otherwise, these officials were dependent upon unnamed, unacknowledged 'native informants' whose qualifications, training or scholarship one is not certain of. In case if this is the methodology or historical architecture of research in European Sociological-anthropological works then it requires serious reassessment (Steinmetz 2023).

2.2. Critique of Panji-Prabandha the practice of genealogical record-keeping among Maithil Brahmins

Panji-Prabandha are detailed genealogical records kept by Maithil Brahmins in North Bihar since the time of the last Karnata Kshatriya ruler in Mithila Harisimhadeva at the turn of the 14th century and continued receiving support

⁴⁷ See Ganguly (2018). This remarkable work is an extremely important addition to understand the intellectual history of colonialism in India, and the damning role of James Mill in it, among other important figures. Other recent works, among others, which upend colonial intellectual history of India include Balagangadhara (2012), De Roover and Rao (2022) and Rao (2022).

and royal patronage by the Oinwara (1325-1526) and Khandavala (1556/57-1962) Brahmin dynasties of Darbhanga Raj. Every Brahmin marriage after being arranged had to receive a certificate of approval from the *Panjikars*, traditional geneology keepers in the payroll of Darbhanga Raj. Only after receiving the certificate of approval could the marriage of Brahmins, at least of the three highest sub-groups of Srotriyas, Yogyas and Panjibaddhs, be solemnised. The records of the Jaibars were not there, so they were considered degraded and lowest in the hierarchy of Maithil Brahmins. Anshuman Pandey writes, “It is said that all Brahmins in the kingdom were asked to report their paternal and maternal ancestries. The information collected was compiled and became the basis of the official genealogical record, which was known as the *mūlapañjī*, or the ‘ancestral record’ of every Brahmin male in the community. In addition to these primary *pañjī* records, there is a *gotra pañjī* attached to the beginning of the *mūla pañjī*, which is a brief classification of lineages according to *gotra*. Another record is the *uterha pañjī*, which is an enumeration of the ancestral details of a particular individual and is used primarily in the selection of a marriage partner. Those Brahmins whose genealogies were recorded were known as *pañjī-baddha* or ‘bound in the registry’ or simply ‘registered’. The *pañjī prabandha* codified that marriages must be made with regard to the following six considerations: a bride must not be 1) a sagotra or 2) sapravara, or 3) a sapiṇḍa of the mother or 4) a sapiṇḍa of the father, additionally she must not be related to anyone descended from 5) her maternal grandfather or 6) her paternal grandfather, and she must not be 7) related to a step-mother of the groom. To these seven the *pañjī prabandha* introduced a new exogamous principle based upon the *mūla*. The *mūla* is the foundational principle in the social organization of the Brahmins of Mithila called the *mūla*, a term that has the sense of an “origin”. It is a named agnatic lineage that is subordinate to the *gotra* and all *mūla*-s that belong to a *gotra* are by extension *sagotra*. The genealogical records are organized according to the *mūla*. The *mūla* is a named agnatic lineage that descends from the apical ancestor, who is known as the *viji purūṣa* ‘primal individual’. The *mūla* is subordinate to the *gotra* and all *mūla*-s that belong to a *gotra* are by extension *sagotra*. The *mūla pañjī* records the ancestry of each Brahmin. It also records each marriage by specifying the *mūla* of each maternal patrline marrying into an agnatic lineage (Pandey 2014:42-43).

“

Much unlike social and cultural anthropologists writing in the English language and some Maithil Brahmin scholars making very positive assessments of the Panji-Prabandha, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati is very critical of it. Genealogical records of Brahmins do exist, which is especially relevant for property rights like succession and partition done by metes and bounds under Hindu law (Mulla 2024, Menski 2009). Without genealogical records, written or oral, succession and partition cannot be determined. But Panji-Prabandha became

an exclusive domain of Panjikar Maithil Brahmins who often manipulated the records to suit their own interests according to Swamiji. It is also interesting to note how such critical insight is coming from a “native scholar” and perhaps much before such readings done by European anthropologists (Evans-Pritchard or Fortes reached such conclusions about manipulation of genealogical records much later than Sahajanand). An example is how several times the Srotriya Maithil Brahmins were reconstituted by the Darbhanga Raj to prop up their numbers (Brown 1983:43-62; Brown 1988:757-782; Pandey 2014).

Swamiji records two kinds of marriage practices among Maithil Brahmins. The first one being ‘marriage relations congregation’ (*vivah sambandhini sabha*) at Saurath Sabha (near Madhubani in Bihar) where brides were sold to the highest bidders and marriages are given sanction by the Panjikars (genealogical record-keepers) who kept genealogical records of Maithil Brahmin families (Saraswati 2003a:309–310). This marriage practice was criticized by Mithila Mihir, a Maithili periodical run by the Maharaja of Darbhanga himself apart from being criticized in another periodical, “Mithila Mod” and condemned by the Maithil Brahmin Mahasabha at Bhagalpur (Saraswati 2003a:309–310). Swami Sahajanand Saraswati is very critical of this practice as the Panjikars were very corrupt and would record names of grooms from dubious backgrounds or even by non-Brahmanical castes in their records if they received huge sums of money and give sanction to such marriages (Saraswati 2003a:309–310). Swamiji refers to the section of ‘old-fashioned’ Maithils who take great pride in the Panji-Prabandha and marriage relations based on it as ‘as obstinate as a mule’ (*likh ka fakir*) and such horrible marriage practice was prevalent only among the in-distinguished and poorer folks among Maithil Brahmins.⁴⁸ The second kind of marriage practiced among the distinguished, rich and landed (*zamindar*) Maithil Brahmins is popularly called ‘*tilakowwa vivah*’: marriage solemnised by proper consultation, background check and with payment of gifts much like among the Brahmins of United Provinces (Saraswati 2003a:310). It is this sort of marriage which is solemnised by Maithil Brahmins with the Pachchima Brahmins or Bhumihaar Brahmins (Saraswati 2003a:310). There cannot be any kind of deception and fraud in this second kind of marriage as both sides are distinguished and landed and personally approach for marriage relations rather than being manipulated by the Panjikars (Saraswati 2003a:310). Swamiji

⁴⁸ Saraswati (2003:309–310). There are some Maithil Brahmin scholars who have written on Panji-Prabandha and who also associate with this cultural practice with pride. See U.N. Jha (1980), R. Jha (n.d.). On the history and cultural history of Mithila in North Bihar, including Panji-Prabandha, see Thakur (1956), R. Chaudhary (1976), I.K. Chaudhary (1988). On the history of origin of Maithil Brahmins in medieval times, an excellent recent PhD submitted by Anshuman Pandey (2014) in the University of Michigan is worth referring. Kailash Chandra Jha points to Panji Prabandh as a dying system today and Saurath Sabha as completely dead. I would like to thank him for bringing this fact to light in the email communication on Oct. 22, 2024.

adds later once again how amongst ‘fake Maithils’ marriages are solemnised on the spot in the marriage *sabhas* like the Saurath Sabha (Brown 1983:57; infra n.29) with the ‘sanction’ of Panjikars without prior knowledge of family details, circumstances and background, whereas in ‘*tilakowwa vivah*’/‘*tilakowwa*’ marriages solemnised among Maithil and Bhumihaar (Pacchima) Brahmins is arranged only after visiting the house of prospective brides and staying in their houses for a few days (when entire family trees, common connections, backgrounds are carefully examined) before making the final decision of actually arranging the marriage or not (Saraswati 2003a:313). Besides among Maithil and Bhumihaar (Pacchima) Brahmins there are marriages solemnised among brides and grooms coming from both the Brahmin sub-groups.⁴⁹ By ‘*tilakowwa vivah*’ or ‘*tilakowwa*’ marriages, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati is referring to *Brahma vivah* marriages, where individual families of prospective bride and groom find out all the details of the corresponding family and then solemnise the marriage with exchange of (movable) gifts from the bride’s family to the groom’s family as her personal property (*stridhan*).⁵⁰

It is also interesting to observe how a substantial section of Maithil Brahmin scholars claim remote antiquity to Panjis or their genealogical records which emerged only during King Harisimhadeva’s reign, the last illustrious Karnata Kshatriya ruler of Mithila at the closing years of the 14th century CE (Pandey 2014). There are some literary, epigraphic and inscriptional records of some ruling dynasties having genealogical records prior to the 14th century CE, but which in any case continued only for some dynasties for short durations and discontinued otherwise (Thakur 1988:362-411). It might have provided an inspiration to develop the Panji-Prabandha as we know of it since the 14th century. But just because some genealogical records existed periodically prior to the Panjis, which discontinued and disappeared in due course, cannot by itself imbue a remote antiquity to the Panjis themselves. Besides, Panjis are genealogical records of Brahmins (later adopted by Karna Kayasthas) started under the supervision of a Kshatriya ruler whereas previous episodic genealogical records were those of ruling dynasties and not that of Brahmins, unless they were rulers themselves. The fact that Brahmin rulers (first the Oinwaras, 1325-1526; and then the Khandavalas, 1556-1962) replaced the Karnatas, after the Muslim Turkic invasion and the killing of the last Karnata ruler Harisimhadeva, might have helped in the standardization and imbuing longevity to Panjis with royal patronage since then. With the death of the last Maharaja of Darbhanga, Sir Kameshwar Singh in 1962, leaving no heir, and a steep decline and pilferage of

⁴⁹ Saraswati (2003:313). Maybe Swamiji is discrediting any practice of hypergamy with the common misperception of how grooms came necessarily from Maithil Brahmin backgrounds.

⁵⁰ On the different kinds of Hindu marriages, see Pandey (2013). On Hindu law, see Menski (2009), Francavilla (2006). The most encyclopaedic and unparalleled work in the modern world in English is Kane (2022).

the riches of the Raj, the royal patronage to Panji Prabandha ended, and with it ended the detailed genealogical record keeping of Mithila. It is also interesting how even Harisimhadeva did not start the Panjis for the Kshatriya rulers, and their approximate community of Rajputs in Mithila.

Panji-prabandha/genealogical records are, therefore, just one source of understanding the social life of Brahmins of Mithila. In fairness to the system, “corruption” through manipulation could be one of the weaknesses of Panji-prabandha like in any other system as highlighted by Swami Sahajanand Saraswati in the early years of twentieth-century but the way the panji-prabandh was structured, practiced and implemented over seven centuries is a unique and remarkable achievement in keeping genealogical records anywhere (Brown 1988; see the discussion below). On the idea of genealogical history and genealogies used for political and cultural justification, Witzel correctly assesses it, “In addition, it can safely be said that virtually no such genealogy, in India or elsewhere, is free from tinkering, interpolation etc. Instead, they have frequently been used to bolster the claims of minor local chiefs and kings to a high rank, and if no such prestigious link was in sight, it has been manufactured. [...] Even if one subsumes that they were originally based on correct lineage lists, they have been used from early on, for “secondary justification” of origin and the social prestige going with it. [...] In the Purānas these pedigrees (vamça) have been systematized as to trace back every local dynasty of the subcontinent to the mythical Sun (Sūryavamça) or the Moon (Candravamça) lineages. Even newcomers, such as the Huns, or the local dynasties of Nepal or Kashmir, simply ‘must’ go back to the beginning of mankind, or, at least to a well known ancient dynasty (Witzel 1990:3-4).”

The social fact of marital relations between Maithil Brahmins and Bhumihar Brahmins to show how they are one and the same Brahmins needs to be assessed. This sub-chapter showed the problems with genealogical records, social fact of marriage relations and the incongruence between text/law/norms on the one hand and practice/procedure on the other.

2.3. Marriage relations among Bhumihar Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins

Swami Sahajanand Saraswati through his fieldwork records intermarriage among hundreds of families of Bhumihar Brahmins (Pachchima Brahmins) and Maithil Brahmins. He says

Similarly, 15–20 kos [45 to 60 kilometres] North and South and 20–22 kos [60 to 66 kilometres] East and West from Dalsinghsarai station, generally in Saraisa Pargana and in

its adjoining regions, thousands of Maithil Brahmins and Pachchima Brahmins (Babhans/Bhumihar Brahmins) are related. Not all can be listed out here.⁵¹

Sahajanand is meticulous with his details by listing out the names of the bride's family and the groom's family, with their *gotra*, *mool* (both together include the *sapinda*), village (*gram*), *kul*, *khandan*, and even district, *pargana* (villages grouped together as an administrative and sometimes revenue unit within a district) and sometimes even closest railway stations. These are all instances of *Brahma vivah* marriages or what he refers to as '*tilakowwa vivah*' or '*tilakowwa*' marriages. In these marriages, both Maithil Brahmins and Bhumihar Brahmins are giving and receiving daughters in marriage. Since these are instances of *Brahma vivah*, it is most likely that parties of both sides would be from distinguished backgrounds and also well-off. Swamiji records instances of marriage between Bhumihar Brahmins and the highest Maithil Brahmins of Srotriya and Yogya backgrounds including none other than the Maharaja of Darbhanga as well as highly respected Maithil Brahmin scholars like Mahamahopadhyaya Shrikrishna Singh Thakur (Saraswati 2003:321). Many of the Bhumihar Brahmin zamindaris in Mithila, including that of the ancestors of Pandit Ramnandan Mishra, were acquired or settled during the period of Brahmin Khandavala dynasty ruling in Mithila; much like many Maithil, Saryupareen and Kanyakubja Brahmins acquired huge land-ownerships during the Bhumihar Brahmin ruling dynasty in Bettiah. It is also likely that marriage between Bhumihar Brahmins and the 'lowly' (both ritualistically and often economically) Jaibar Maithils would have been less frequent. Bhumihar Brahmins, being the richest *jati*-group (*jati* is usually transliterated as caste, but it is a more complex term than that, See: Béteille 1966, 1996; Srinivas 2002a; Samarendra, 2008, 2011) in the province of Bihar in the early twentieth century in which Sahajanand is recording his field work, would avoid relating with the lesser Jaibars (lowest sub-category of Maithil Brahmins). The lowly Maithil Brahmins would generally go to the marriage market in Saurath Sabha.⁵² Though, both being Brahmins, instances of marriages might still be solemnised between illustrious Bhumihar Brahmins and less distinguished Jaibar Maithil Brahmins, much like

⁵¹ Saraswati (2003:317). Vijay Kumar Chaudhary, a prominent political leader in Bihar today, hailing from Pachchima (Bhumihar) Brahmin family having regular marital relations with both Maithil Brahmins and Bhumihar Brahmins, is characterised as Dogamia Brahmin, making him win elections by getting votes of both Bhumihar Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins as a concrete example of horizontal solidarity among Brahmins (Jaleel 2015).

⁵² "[...]there is a unique institution in Mithila, the Saurath Sabha, a kind of fair whose sole purpose is to bring together Brahmins from all over Mithila to negotiate marriages for their sons and daughters, a fine solution to the vexatious search which every upwardly mobile father undertakes as his daughter comes of age (Brown 1983:57)."

marriages between Srotriya and Yogya Maithil Brahmins on the one hand and Jaibar Maithil Brahmins on the other.⁵³

The way the concept of rank is structured among Maithil Brahmins, it discourages a Srotriya or a Yogya or a Panjibaddh Maithil to marry a girl from a lower-ranked Maithil Brahmin like the Jaibars (Brown 1988). The moment a Srotriya marries a Jaibar, not just him but the whole family loses rank and it would take another seven generations of marrying into Srotriya or Yogya Maithils to improve the rank of the “fallen” Srotriya but it would lead to the simultaneous decline of rank of other Srotriya Maithil Brahmins who would marry into this “fallen” or “degraded” Srotriya. Therefore, the number of Srotriyas and Yogyas keep on declining and over the centuries it has required reordering being constituted by the Maharaja of Darbhanga who is the not just the King of Darbhanga but due to “his superior Srotriya blood; he was the purest of the pure, the highest of the high. He was revered as king, and doubly revered as Srotriya (Brown 1988:768)”. This intermixing of ranks led to seven classes (*shrenis*) of Srotriyas called Srotriya Laukits who were then ranked and grouped based on working on the genealogical records by the panjikars at the behest of Maharaja Rameshwar Singh in 1897 (Brown 1988:768). In addition to Laukits, another category of Bans (good lineage) emerged among Maithil Brahmins due to the marriage of Srotriya men with Yogya or Jaibar girls (Brown 1988:766-767). It is noteworthy that it is this family of the “purest of the pure, the highest of the high” which is maritally related to Pachchima/Bhumihar Brahmins (see Appendix I) along with other Srotriya, Yogya and Panjibaddh Maithil Brahmins. Therefore, Babhan/Pachchima/Bhumihar Brahmins are equal in rank to the Srotriya/Yogya/Panjibaddh Maithil Brahmins of North Bihar making marriage relations acceptable to both without either one losing rank or social esteem. Though marriage with Jaibar Maithil Brahmin is not ruled out either for Srotriya/Yogya/Panjibaddh Maithil Brahmins or for Babhan/Pachchima/Bhumihar Brahmins. The Uttirn Panji containing all the thirty-two male ancestors from mother’s side and all the thirty-two male ancestors from the father’s side, in total sixty-four male ancestors for each individual Srotriya Maithil for seven generations backward, can provide us with a detailed account of marriages between Srotriya Maithil Brahmins and Bhumihar Brahmins (Brown 1988:763-764). Although, the relationship between the Khandavala Dynasty of Raj Darbhanga and its leadership of the Srotriya Maithil Brahmins was strained in the 18th century because Darbhanga Maharaja Narendra Singh (1743-1760), in order to protect the interests of the estate had killed Raja Ram Narayan, a Bhumihar Brahmin, and was thus levied charges of *brahmahatya*, the murder of a Brahmin, against him (Pandey 2014:216). “The Shrotriya community expressed their displeasure by effectively excommunicat-

⁵³ Brown (1983). On the history and culture of Maithil Brahmins, an excellent work has been done by Anshuman Pandey (Pandey 2014).

ing the maharaja in by preventing any future social or marital relationships with his lineage (Pandey 2014:216)”, reflecting the solidarity of the highest, holiest and the purest Srotriya Maithil Brahmins with fellow Bhumihar Brahmins with whom they maintained marital relations. The Srotriyas “left Tirhut and sought refuge with the Shrotriya ruler Indranarayana Singh of the Pahsara estate in Purnea returning to Darbhanga only in the late 18th century when Maharaja Narendra Singh died issueless, washing away the taint of *brahmahatya* with him and Madhava Singh, from another branch of the Khandavalas had ascended to the throne and had requested the Srotriyas to return to Tirhut (Pandey 2014:216).”

These two groups of Maithil/Bhumihar Brahmins are like two sides of the same coin, which is why a Maithil Brahmin litterateur and socialist activist like Sureshwar Jha records how Rashtrakavi Ramdhari Singh Dinkar had Maithil Brahmin roots even though he is counted as a Bhumihar Brahmin today (S. Jha 2014:250). Similarly, the Bhumihar Brahmins of Subhai-Jamalpur village were Maithil Brahmins earlier and now counted as Bhumihar Brahmins with the great leader of India’s struggle for independence, Shri Basawon Singh hailing from the same village (G. Sharma 2022:35n1). Chandra Prakash Narayan Sinha, younger son of Gandhian and leading Congress leader Ram Charitra Singh from Bihat from Begusarai District records in his work how their ancestors were Maithil Brahmins, though now they are counted as Bhumihar Brahmins (Sinha 2010:186).⁵⁴

The titles and surnames extant among Bhumihar Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins are also the same, like: Mishra, Thakur, Chaudhary, Singh, Ojha, Pathak, Jha, Rai, Kumar, Khan, Ishvar, etc. (Saraswati 2003a; Jha 1999:83). It is interesting to note in the genealogical records of how the title of the highest of Maithil Brahmins, the Khandavala Brahmin dynasty, the Maharajas of Darbhanga, changed from Upadhyaya to Thakur and finally to Singh; tracing their origin to MM. Gangadhar Upadhyay from 13th century, to Mahesh Thakur in 1556-1557, the one who established the dynasty, to his descendant Raja Raghav Singh in 1701 (Sharma 2016:312-322, 338-339). It is relevant to note here how the highly decorated British academic, civil servant and member of the British House of Commons, Sir Roper Lethbridge in his famous book published in 1893, “The Golden Book of India”, which is a genealogical and biographical dictionary of the ruling princes, chiefs, nobles, and other personages, titled

⁵⁴ Bihat is a very prominent Bhumihar Brahmin village in the district of Begusarai, with Ram Charitra Singh being one of the tallest leaders from the Congress Party in Bihar hailing from it. He was a Gandhian and active in India’s struggle for independence and was prominent member of the provincial cabinet from 1937 to 1939 as well as between 1946 and 1957. His elder son Chandrashekhhar Singh was a prominent leader of the Communist Party of India whereas his younger son Chandra Prakash Narayan Sinha was a social worker and wrote some highly original works (Sinha 2010). The illustrious writer and former Home Secretary of India and Governor of Sikkim Balmiki Prasad Singh also hails from this village.

or decorated in the British Indian Empire, made a serious error in recording the Maharajas of Darbhanga as Rajputs because of their titles of Thakur and Singh (Lethbridge 1893:107). This grave error in recording the social group of the Maharaja of Darbhanga as Rajputs and not Brahmins also escaped the attention of the renowned historian Mushirul Hasan who wrote the foreword to the reprint of the book in 2005, more than a century after it was first published (Lethbridge 2005:107). It is a common mistake committed while enlisting caste identities based on titles or surnames alone.

Therefore; Thakur, Rai and Singh are common secular and lordly titles of landed and ruling Brahmin families of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, more specifically of Ayachak Brahmins/Bhumihar Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins. Singh, when became anglicised turned into Sinha. Shahi and even Khan (Nath 2023) as secular lordly titles of Brahmins exist in North Bihar, the Brahmin Maharajas of Hathwa have Shahi title/last name (Yang, 1989) and Usha Kiran Khan is an example of a famous Maithil Brahmin writer. Singh as a secular title was also kept by Rajput rulers, but in Bihar unlike central and Western Uttar Pradesh, they are not commonly referred to as Thakurs but are called Rajputs. Thakur as a title/last name is essentially associated with Brahmins in Bihar (Sharma 2016; Thakur 1988) and also Bengal, most famous examples being Kavishekharaacharya Jyotirishwar Thakur (1294-1348), Maithil Kokil Vidyapati Thakur (1350-1448), Kabiguru Rabindranath Thakur (anglicised as Tagore, 1861-1941), the founder of the Brahmin Khandavala dynasty in Darbhanga Maharaja Mahesh Thakur in the 16th century, great Srotriya Brahmin Sanskritist Mahamahopadhyaya Shri Krishna Singh Thakur or Dr. C.P. Thakur (1931-), a highly decorated medical doctor and a public leader in our contemporary times and historians like Upendra Thakur and Vijay Kumar Thakur, just to give a few famous examples. Chaudhary is a lordly title given/adopted by those Brahmins in Mughal times who expanded agriculture and land tenure in the marshy areas of North Bihar (Alam 2025:191). These secular titles were bestowed by Brahmin rulers and feudatories to other castes or they came to be adopted by non-Brahmins as a means of Sanskritization.

2.4. Dogamia Brahmins

The Brahmins of North Bihar who solemnise marriages specifically between Pachchima (Bhumihar) Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins are also referred to as Dogamia Babhans or Dogamia Brahmins, literally meaning two kinds of Brahmins or “followers of two ways (Singh 2008:298)”. The word is a compound of two words, “dvi” meaning two and “gamaniya” meaning path or way coming from the verb “gaman” in Sanskrit, thus meaning, follower of the two Brahmanical way of Ayachak and Yachak, or Bhumihar Brahmin and Maithil Brahmin,

although the distinction being merely conceptual and not factual in the distinction between Bhumihar Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins. Bhumihar Brahmins from other parts of Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh as well as Maithil Brahmins solemnise marriage with Dogamia Brahmins from this region of North Bihar and are therefore related with each other in a more rooted way than they are ready to admit. Sahajanand writes, ‘The word “*dogamiya*” has come into common use describing those involved in this kind of two sided marriage alliance between Bhumihars and Maithils’ (Hauser and Jha 2015:161). Some Maithil Brahmins made superior posturing of Mithila culture and language whereas Bhumihar Brahmins emphasized on their landed wealth and grandeur. Facts based on field work by Swami Sahajanand attest to their being from the same group of Brahmins which has also been confirmed by the experience of Walter Hauser and Kailash Chandra Jha (Hauser and Jha 2015:179). Besides, sometimes Dogamias are shown to be Maithils and on other occasions are shown to be Bhumihars, and thus Dogamias are belonging to both, and finally and more conclusively both Bhumihars and Maithils are belonging to each other.⁵⁵ The Anthropological Survey of India records Dogamia Brahmins as those Bhumihar Brahmins who practice extensive marital relations with Maithil Brahmins (Singh 1998:855). The Anthropological Survey of India on its People of Bihar series records, “Their (Dogamia Brahman) marriage alliances are typical. They acquire mates for their daughters from the Maithil Brahmins; whereas brides for their sons are selected from the Bhumihar Brahmins. [...] This community has synonyms such as Dogamia Brahman and Bhumihar. [...] At present, they are distributed in the districts of Samastipur, Darbhanga, Begusarai and Muzaffarpur. [...] The self-perception of the community, as well as the perception other communities have of them is that they belong to the Brahman category in the Varna system (Singh 2008:298).” At The *Kalyani Kosh*, a relatively recent Maithili dictionary edited by Pandit Govind Jha dubiously and incorrectly mentions “Dogamia” as a term meaning, “having marital relations in two caste groups; continuing for two generations” (Darbhanga: Maharajadhiraj Kameshwar Singh Kalyani Foundation, 1999, p. 319, cf. Hauser and Jha 2015:179). This is deliberately misleading as only Pachchima/Bhumihar Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins inter-marry very commonly for two or more generations to constitute the Dogamia Brahmin community. No two different caste groups are known to inter-marry for two generations in Bihar or anywhere else in the country. Pandit Govind Jha did not know this or deliberately misrepresented it. This lexicographical error necessitates correction in its new edition. Though to his credit, and correctly so, Pandit Govind Jha translates *Babhan*, a term commonly used to refer to Bhumihar/Pachchima Brahmins as “Brahman, belonging to the

⁵⁵ On the history of Maithil Brahmins, see Pandey (2014). Other recent works on the history and culture of Mithila with which the origin and fate of Maithil Brahmins is intrinsically linked, include Mishra *et al.* (2015), Rorabacher (2016), M.K. Jha (2017), P. Jha (2018).

priestly class (Jha 1999:456)". Inter-marriage between any two caste groups, whether *anuloma* (endogamous) which was occasional, or *pratiloma* (exogamous) which was rare, was prohibited by scriptural and religious sanction in early medieval texts, one of the reasons being that the discharge of debt to ancestors equal marriage was necessary (Yadava 1973:66-68; Sharma 2001:52). Mixed-caste marriages are often held to be the origin of Chandalas/Canḍālas, the so-called untouchables (Yadava 1973; Sharma 2001; Jha 2018).

On this concealment and even misrepresentation by a section of Maithils, is recorded by Swami Sahajanand Saraswati while doing field-work for his book *Bhumihar Brahmin Parichay* from the second half of 1915, "I do not know why, but efforts were made among the Maithils to conceal these cross caste relationships. Inevitably this made our task more difficult, but by our persistent efforts we were able to identify an elaborate network of marriage connections between Maithil and Bhumihar Brahmans. We also uncovered a resolution of the Maithil Mahasabha recommending that these kinds of marriage connections should be ended. This confirms that such relationships existed, otherwise why should there be efforts to stop them? We found this web of marriage relationships to occur throughout Maithil society, from the Maharaja of Darbhanga at the top, to other Shrotriyas, as well as to Yogyas, and other categories of Maithils. And beyond this, we found in Raghunathpur Pataur (Darbhanga) more than a score of letters in which the Maharaja of Darbhanga and his *gotiyas* (close relatives belonging to the same gotra) had addressed Bhumihar Brahmans with the salutation *namaskar*, a practice that was and still is used among Brahmans (Hauser with Jha 2015:168)."

2.5. Marriage relations among Bhumihar Brahmins and Saryupareen Brahmins

Swamiji has also recorded thousands of marriages between Bhumihar Brahmins and Saryupareen Brahmins (and also between Bhumihar Brahmins and Kanyakubja Brahmins). He has made a detailed table with all the details of the two sides of marriage relations including *gotra*, *mool*, *gram*, *pargana*, etc. It is quite remarkable to see marriage relations shown in a tabular form much before it being in vogue by 'modern' researchers.⁵⁶ There are higher instances of recorded marriages by Sahajanand where Saryupareen Brahmins are daughter givers to Bhumihar Brahmins of eastern Uttar Pradesh (See Appendix II & III). Though, both Brahmin communities gave and received daughters in marriage,

⁵⁶ A selection of marriage relations in tabular form and detailed list of marriage relations as recorded in *Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar* among different sub-castes/sections of Brahmins is provided in the Annexures below.

again not fitting into the analysis of *pāṭ pūjā* by Dumont (Dumont 1966:104–108).

2.6. Debate in the journal *Bharat Mitra*, Calcutta, 1916

Swamiji provides the authority of a Maithil Brahmin scholar named Paramhans Mahopdeshak who recorded marriage relations in particular between Maithil Brahmins and Bhumihar Brahmins in his short monograph “Brahmin Sam-bandh [Marriage relations among Brahmins]”, apart from mentioning (on page 4 of his monograph) how before the emergence of *panji*, Maithil, Kanyakubj, Sarvariya and Pachchima Brahmins intermarried (Saraswati 2003:309). Paramhans Mahopdeshak’s monograph became the reason for an editorial article in the journal *Bharatmitra*,⁵⁷ published from Calcutta (now Kolkata) on 11 January 1916 pointing at connubial relations among Bhumihar Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins followed by a critical letter to the editor by a Maithil Brahmin Jiwach Mishra from Darbhanga, which was then followed by an editorial response and clarification on 25 January 1916 (Saraswati 2003:310–311). In the editorial response of 25 January, the editor pointed out how the article in question is based on the work of Paramhans Mahopdeshak who had actually sent his book on marriage relations between Bhumihar Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins to be published by them which they could not then publish (Saraswati 2003:311). Besides, they had received additional testimony of marriage relations among Maithils and Bhumihars by a Maithil Vaishnav to the journal (Saraswati 2003:311). The editor suggested to Jiwach Mishra to research carefully and provide authorities and if he still felt the gist of the article incorrect, they were ready to amend their article (Saraswati 2003:311). Jiwach Mishra never came back with a response – whether to the clarification by the editor or the few affirmative letters to the editor published subsequently (Saraswati 2003:311).

After the editorial clarification, there was another letter to the editor on 28 January 1916 by a Bhumihar Brahmin named Sriyut Aditya Narayan Singh from Mokama stating how Bhumihar Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins did not just marry each other but with increase or decrease in wealth Maithils became Bhumihars and Bhumihars became Maithils (Saraswati 2003:311). To prove his point he was ready to take anyone for a field study or survey on the ground and he was ready to hear a response from Jiwach Mishra which apparently he never received (Saraswati 2003a:311).

Finally, the debate of the existence of marriage relations between illustrious Maithil Brahmins and Bhumihar Brahmins was put to rest by Pandit Shyam-

⁵⁷ *Bharatmitra* was a leading journal in the Hindi language started in Calcutta in 1877.

narayan Sharma of Kashi in his article of 8 February 1916 in the edited issue of the journal *Bhumihar Brahmin* journal stating,

The insinuations of Mr. Jiwach Mishra that only dubious Maithils marry Bhumihar Brahmins is unfounded because otherwise their own Maithil Brahmin Mahasabha in its Bha-galpur Convention of 1911 would not have proposed for its discontinuance. A select committee for executing such discontinuance would not have been set up? Otherwise, their (Maithil Brahmin's) own journal 'Mithila Mihir' on its issue of April 29 in the same year of 1911 would not have written how 'Dubious Maithils practiced or still practice bride-selling to solemnise marriages at the famous Saurath Sabha. On the other hand, marriage relations with Bhumihar Brahmins is solemnised on the basis of Tilak/dowry much like the marriage practice in United Provinces and elsewhere which Maithils commonly refer to as "*Tilakowwa Vivah*" (Saraswati 2003:311–312).

Therefore, the debate around marriage relations between Bhumihar Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins as co-equal Brahmins was settled positively and decidedly.

