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Pratyush Kumar

Homo Connubialis Brahmanicus

Marriage Relations Among Brahmins
as Described in the Work

Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar [History of Brahmins]



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Preface

This is a work which emerged out of my current engagement with societal constitutionalism of Gunther Teubner and systems theory of Niklas Luhmann and a search for possibilities for the study of caste as an example for it. The main ongoing work is a work of law including sociology of law, legal theory and constitutional law in a societal constitutionalism and systems theory framework, among others, whereas this current essay is a work of sociology and social and cultural anthropology which offers as one of the undercurrents for my research. It forms the environment of law in India irritating and helping in the self-transformation of its political system, social system, economic system and legal-constitutional system. Whether caste, *jati* or *Varna* or an approximation of all three and something else helps explain Indian social reality, eludes as well as animates scholars and thinkers since Gautam Buddha till Mahatma Gandhi and beyond. In today's context, when elections are fought, party-tickets are given, governments are formed, economic self-help organizations are set up, constitutional entrenchment is done through fixed caste-based reservations not just in educational institutions, but also in all public jobs, promotions and emoluments, "caste", if that's the most identifiable Indian social system, does not seem to disappear anytime soon. And if history provided any lessons, then what is "caste" has transformed and mutated over millennia but has not died. It is not specific to Hinduism and has survived Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity, different social reform movements across time and across the length and breadth of the sub-continent (Balagangadhara 2012:3-4). Caste is not class and caste is not race. And yet, and because of India's long and complex history and society, caste eludes definition. And what is "undefinable" is "unenumerable", shows the futility and malafide-intention of colonial caste censuses. With the Indian diaspora being the biggest in the world, the fact of its social identity finds presence in the rest of world, more particularly in the Anglosphere because of the huge number of Indians present there. There are attempts to define the system of Indian society in these host countries bringing multiculturalism and the conflict of laws issue to the fore. In India itself, with a demand for caste-census by some politicians and political parties, the "colonial" exercise is again returning to haunt us even after seventy-five years of independence. No wonder, caste census was done in the most economically backward state of Bihar in the country in 2022, which is ruled by the higher *Sudras*, otherwise called backward castes, uninterruptedly since 1990 but dominating the politics of the state since late 1970s, i.e., nearly fifty years. Who is then to be blamed for the destitution of the province which in the 1950s was among the best-administered and having one of the most vibrant and upcoming economies under the able leadership

of Dr. Shri Krishna Sinha? The backward caste leadership and their narrow agendas themselves of which the recent din for caste-census is one of them.

All the translations from the original “Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar” and other works in Hindi have been done by me unless otherwise indicated. As far as some of the organization of the manuscript is concerned, I have avoided using diacritical marks except while quoting someone else. “Brahmin” instead of Brahman/Brāhmaṇ/Brāhmaṇa has been used unless quoted.

Pratyush Kumar
Feb. 12, 2025
Frankfurt am Main

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I am infinitely indebted to the towering intellectual Prof. Dr. jur. Dr. h.c. mult. Gunther Teubner for guiding me since my final days of submitting my PhD thesis in University of Eastern Piedmont, Alessandria, Italy. He is my constant intellectual guiding light and all my works have his imprint on it, directly or indirectly. For this monograph also he is an inspiration even though he could not provide comments on this particular draft. Therefore, all its shortcomings are mine alone as much as its strengths are inspired by him. I do hope to be his worthy student.

I am ever grateful to “Baba”, Mahamahopadhyaya, Sahityacharya, President Medal Awardee (2006), D.Litt. Prof. Dr. Munishwar Jha (1928- Nov. 6, 2020), Professor and Head of Department, Sanskrit College, Calcutta (now Kolakata) who has had a profound influence on me and in kindling an interest in the society of North Bihar and Mithila in particular. He considered me his *Dharmaputra* (intellectual son, according to Dharma). I hope I live up to his expectations.

Prof. Jörg Luther’s training and Prof. Domenico Francavilla’s continued support and encouragement provide me strength and perseverance to continue. I would like to thank my dear friend Piotr Piekut for his constant willingness to give valuable suggestions and detailed comments despite pressing professional and academic commitments. I would also like to thank Shri Kailash Chandra Jha, long-time collaborator with Prof. Walter Hauser the pre-eminent Swami Sahajanand Saraswati scholar, for his kind and helpful suggestions. I would also like to thank Prof. Ramchandra Pradhan, the translator of Sahajanand’s autobiography in a lucid volume and the author of forthcoming translations of several of Sahajanand’s works in four-volumes. He has been very kind and generous with his time and I have benefitted from my long discussions with him over the years. I would also like to thank Raghav Sharan Sharma the editor of selected writings of Sahajanand in six volumes and Harishchandra Sharma, its friendly publisher, and my long-standing interactions with them. The friendships of Shri Arun Kumar Singh, former Deputy Comptroller and Auditor General of India and Shri Surendra Kumar, former Secretary, Gandhi Peace Foundation has been invaluable. I would like to thank Prof. Roland Hardenberg along with Prof. Holger Jebens for facilitating a reviewer who gave a very detailed, comprehensive and critical review which helped me improve my text without changing my line of argument and keeping my original framework intact and develop it into a monograph what was initially planned as a research article.

My cognitive interest in Sahajanand’s life and work is fuelled by the fact that my dear father, Prof. Dr. Sachchidanand Sharma as a five-year old motherless child was sent packing to Sahajanand’s Sanskrit boarding pathshala/school at

Sri Sitaram Ashram in Bihta. Besides, I have located archival references to my grandfather; revolutionary, democratic socialist and trade unionist, Shri Basawon Singh's active involvement in the peasant movement led by Sahajanand in 1938-39, further fueling an interest in his life and work. I would also like to thank my grandmother, Mrs. Kamala Sinha *née* Mukherjee who sustained a culture of learning and formal education for the women in the household which has a percolated influence among all her descendants. Prof. Deepak Banerjee and Bina Banerjee (Bina Ma) from Jodhpur as part of my "extended family" have had a lasting impact on me. Last but not least, I would like to thank my loving family of Adi, Anku and Ma who make my life worth living and pursue my intellectual interests without any let or hindrance.

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Contents

Abstract and Keywords	13
1. Introduction	15
2. Marriage relations among Brahmins as recorded in “Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar”	33
2.1. Critique of Dumont’s views on marriage relations among North Indian Brahmins in light of “Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar”	48
2.2. Critique of Panji-Prabandha the practice of genealogical record-keeping among Maithil Brahmins	51
2.3. Marriage relations among Bhumihaar Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins	54
2.4. Dogamia Brahmins	56
2.5. Marriage relations among Bhumihaar Brahmins and Saryupareen Brahmins	58
2.6. Debate in the journal Bharat Mitra, Calcutta, 1916	58
3. Conclusion	61
Appendix I: Marriage Relations among Bhumihaar Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins as recorded in Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar (Raghav S. Sharma 2003a:313-321)	81
Appendix II: Marriage Relations among Bhumihaar Brahmins and Saryupareen Brahmins as recorded in Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar (Raghav S. Sharma 2003a:321-325)	93
Appendix III: Marriage Relations among Bhumihaar Brahmins and Kanyakubja Brahmins as recorded in Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar (Raghav S. Sharma 2003a:325-329)	97
Appendix IV: Marriage Relations among Tyagi Brahmins and Gaud Brahmins as recorded in Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar (Raghav S. Sharma 2003a:329-333)	105
References	109
Glossary	123

Index of Persons 125

Index of Concepts 127

Index of Places 129

Abstract and Keywords

Abstract: Replicating European (mis)-understanding of communal identity leading to communal identity formations as a result of forced lop-sided colonial modernity imposed on 'natives' had disastrous consequences. Likewise, the colonial (mis)-understandings of Hindu society and *varnas*, *jātis* or *castes* (overlaps but not synonymous) which constituted it, through colonial caste censuses were reduced to rigid 'caste' identities. Through discursive study of a 'native' text *Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar* [History of Brahmins] for the first time, written by a 'native' scholar Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, this book shows how different Brahmin castes and sub-castes did not and still do not have rigid boundaries *inter-se* Brahmins as colonial writers and post-colonial westernized natives would conclude. This monograph hopes to start the debate yet again to upend received wisdom in sociological-cultural-anthropological research resonating in post-colonial societies through study of Indian society's identity formation around which purportedly its politics, voting patterns, horizontal social affiliations and fixed caste-based reservations under its constitutional framework are structured.

Keywords: marriage relations, Pachchima Brahmins, Maithil Brahmins, Dogamia Brahmins, panji-prabandha, caste census.

